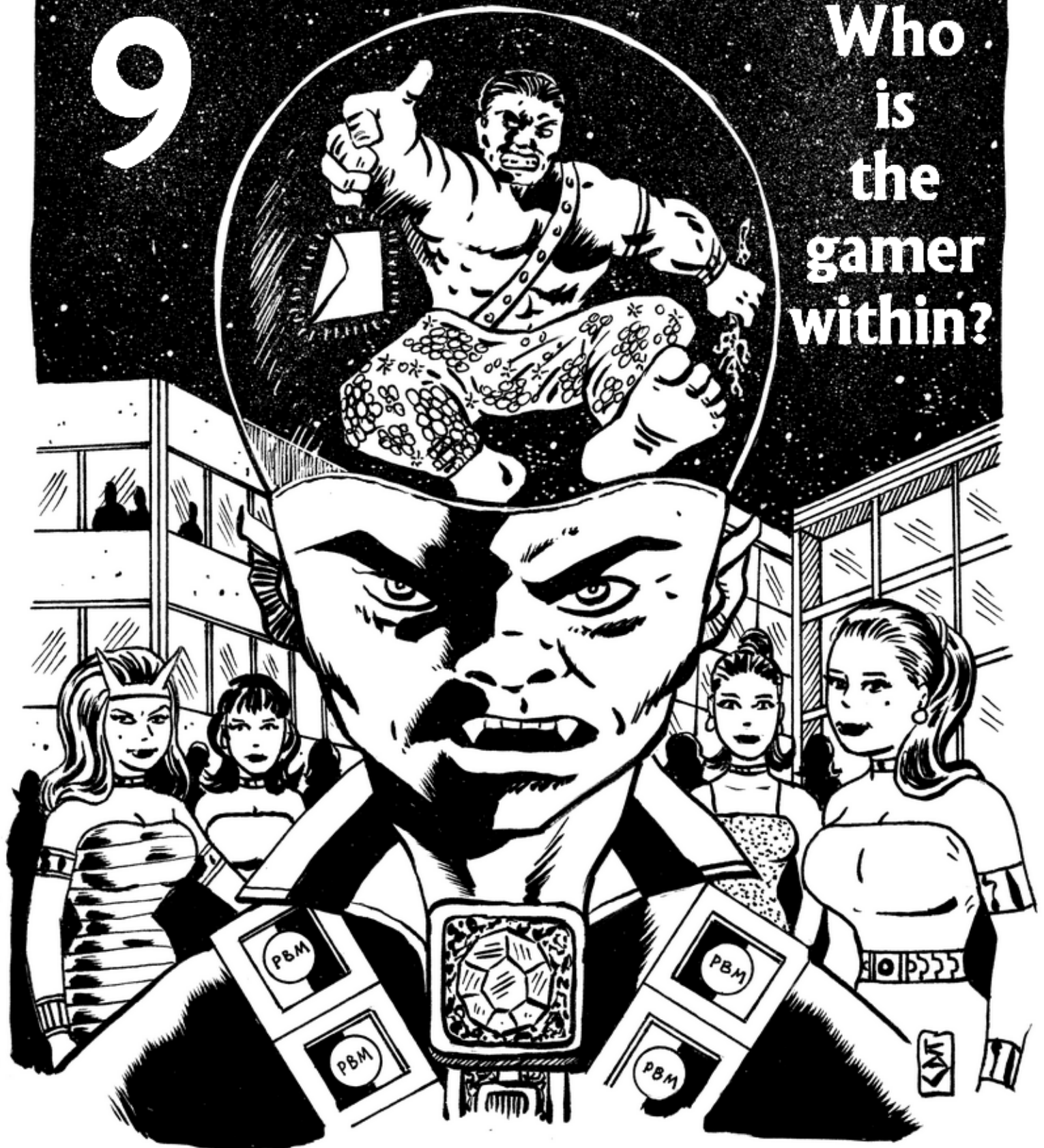


Suspense & Decision

ISSUE

9

Who
is
the
gamer
within?





МІНДЖАММЕР
MINDJAMMER[™]
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

TRANSHUMAN ADVENTURE IN THE SECOND AGE OF SPACE
by Sarah Newton

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SUSPENSE & DECISION ISSUE # 9

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I am a hypocrite. I have escalated my campaign to invite you, dear reader, to pen your own submission to this issue of Suspense & Decision.

I have hounded fellow players and worthy allies in PBM games to put their in-game wisdom down on paper, for all of us to enjoy. And, I have cajoled and heckled my PBM gaming brother, in an effort to get us a sampling of his highly quirky and humorous prose – if only a "Part One." But, me? Myself? I allow the toils and travails of modern life to occupy me nigh unto the very end of the month, smack into our esteemed editor's long-published deadline.

I have some fun ideas to spring on you, but they will have to wait until next issue. For, as I write this, Charles is hacking and slashing his way through page after page of the considerable content HE was able to amass this month. I suggest we all resolve to do two things over the course of this next month – write at least ONE article, letter, or survey-response for Issue 10, and conspire with me to send Charles a case of good beer.

– Bernd

EDITOR'S NOTE: Charles doesn't drink beer.

Response to Rick

Regarding Issue # 7 Article

Mica Goldstone

Rick McDowell's analysis of open-ended vs closed games was a good read, but he missed what is essentially the major failing of commercial close-ended games, this being players' inclination to bail when things are going wrong. Simply put, if you don't stand a strong chance of winning, sack it off and wait for the next game to start. There is no point paying money to flog a dead donkey.

We find that in our close-ended games, the number of players crashes, as soon as it is clear that there is a strong alliance. It is this pay-to-play aspect that separates PBM from table-top, where gaming with your mates, you are inclined to play to the bitter end.

Open-ended games, on the other hand, have contingencies built in, at least the good ones do, in so far as there is always something to achieve, and like the Roman Empire, there is invariably a fall following a rise, though it may take months or even years.

I'll even argue that the intensity of both styles of game are evenly matched, as it is, invariably, the pre-cursor to players dropping out in close-ended games (can't win, don't try) and major upheaval in open-ended games that is responsible, not the actual winning or period of time at the top that gets the blood pumping and eagerly checking for incoming turns.

We see this in [Phoenix](#) all the time. During conflict periods, the number of players logging in and the frequency they log in ramps up, often even if they are not actually involved. There are even periods of burn-out where the toll of an extended campaign results in players taking a back seat and relaxing. Unlike a close-ended game, though, there is no permanent resting on laurels, because the game is over.

For my money, I therefore prefer the idea that I can always pick myself up, reorganise, and come back in this game. I dislike the artificial reset of a close-ended game, and the surety that my legacy will be flushed.

He also glossed over the 'kill them ASAP' aspect of closed games, in that newbs are often driven from the game, before they ever learn how to play, never to return. Historically (mostly before my time), when we had hundreds per week signing up to play games such as Crime and Footy, the management's attitude was 'more fish in the sea'. Those days are gone (though, possibly, not forever, provided we all pull together to push the industry full circle). I even tried to counter this, by implementing newb-only games, only to find that they were almost certainly infiltrated by veterans. Most people find it very hard to want to

continue playing, when they are trounced as soon as the game starts, as every mistake they make is pounced upon by somebody claiming to merely be lucky or simply have grasped the rules a bit better.

As for the topic of wallet wars, the pay to win criteria is, unfortunately, a perennial bug-bear in PBM, though I agree it is a bigger issue with open-ended games. We have looked into methods of alleviating it, such as pay for a position, irrespective of its size, or a subscription model to play. In both cases, it is found that the wallet issue merely supersedes other features, such as either a time or popularity issue. Those that have time to micromanage everything, or those forming the biggest alliance, fair better than those chucking the most money at the game. The bottom line is there will invariably be some means of compensating for lack of expertise, when you can continue to play, or factions have a reason to include new players. I, for one, do not think this is a bad thing, else we would only ever see the same people at the top, and who wants to keep paying for somebody else to grab all the glory?

Deadlines are always an annoyance for any game, especially where missing one can be the difference between continuing to play and sacking it all off in frustration. By the same token, being ganked, and then moving to engage a now-stronger opponent with the remnants of your position, is also not particularly fun. As such, I would be

interested in seeing a game that combines aspects of the two styles. I would like to see a game where you can issue orders as and when, but on any given processing day the orders are split up and processed in time slots. To use Rick's example, the two armies converge on the third, as it moves towards its target. They may, therefore, not intercept it before it smashes its target. Such a game would, however, require two components, the stacking of orders such that they are processed over days as they become possible, and the ability to update the player as to the ongoing situation. This takes the game beyond the realm of traditional PBM, unless the company is prepared to send out letters every day, but is clearly in the domain of PbeM and post-PBM that use online interfaces.

So, to summarise, I largely agree on all the points Rick makes, but only when applied to board-games played with mates (though I would extend it to a newly launched PBM). By the same token, personal preferences - and more importantly - a market capable of catering to them, is the reason Suspense and Decision can exist. As a game designer, accounting for disparate attitudes and preferences is vital. As such, I look forward to reading Rick's next article and his differing perspective.



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PBM Musings

"I'm not on a mission to figure out for the industry what the preferable unambiguous descriptor is for the industry. The industry has had its entire existence to figure such things out on its own. It's had the entire life span of the Internet, to date, to sort that out."

- Charles Mosteller,
Managing Editor of Suspense & Decision magazine

"To rebuild the Play-By-Mail industry, it is going to require investment - an investment of time, energy, money, and effort. If Play-By-Mail companies will not innovate - will not continually innovate - then they deserve to die. Period."

- Charles Mosteller,
Managing Editor of Suspense & Decision magazine

"In the old days, back when the postal service rode the crest of PBM gaming's never-ending wars of every stripe imaginable, treachery was a commodity traded with feverish regularity in PBM circles. Being stabbed in the back while playing the board game Risk paled in comparison to what it felt like being stabbed in the back in PBM games. The pages of such turn results for these correspondence games impacted the player like deadly blades of paper. The text came alive, and was vested with substance and meaning. No, none of it was real, but oh, how very real it was! Like the spice, Melange, made famous by author Frank Herbert in his Dune series of books, treachery was the Melange of play by mail. For the uninitiated, it may seem a bit of a stretch. But, that's only because they haven't experienced it, yet, PBM-style. Oh, sure, we all know what treachery is. We all know what it feels like. But, until you have suffered treachery mid-stream in the PBM river of first-hand experience, you remain relegated to a mild dose of this thing that is like spice to the entertainment aspect of gaming."

- Charles Mosteller,
Managing Editor of Suspense & Decision magazine

GALAC-TAC Startup

Building Your Nest, or Nurturing Your Roc Eggs

Genny White

No, [Galac-Tac](#) (a PBM-style game of galactic conquest) does NOT have Rocs, unless you choose to name your favorite battleship classification for those giant mythical birds of prey! But the success of your gaming strategy relies critically on having a solid cash flow for development and warship production, which makes the somewhat tedious business of establishing your economic system in the first few turns an absolute must.

Those who do not delight in balancing their checkbook or devising (and sticking to) a budget, but want to dive right into creating attack fleets to conquer the galaxy, take heart! In just a few turns, the flurry of exploration and infrastructure creation will be history, and you'll have your chance to challenge the rest of the lesser beings for territory to which they *thought* they had a prior claim. However, if you don't make early economic development a priority at first, you simply won't have the resources to build the fleets to back up your claims and defend what you have.

The concept is fairly simple: take your limited starting resources and make the most of the first handful of turns to establish your holdings and get cash coming back to the Home World as efficiently as possible. There's not much else you CAN do in the first few turns.

Think of it as the slow progress climbing uphill on a roller coaster. Not very exciting, but the higher you go, the more exciting the ride will be once you hit that peak!

So... it's the dawn of a new Empire in a newborn Galac-Tac Galaxy. You get your first turn report, which is identical to everyone else's. Only "You Are Here" differs – your Home World, the stronghold and birthplace of your empire. You and everyone else have a modest stash of cash (Production Inventory, or "PI") and a handful of ships and a map of the Great Unknown. Your job is to take your little starter fleet and go forth and plant your flag on all the stars within reach... before somebody else gets 'em. Then you can start hauling the resources that star system provides back home to manufacture into more ships and more colonization supplies.

To lay claim to a local star, you must first evaluate its potential – Charting it to determine its value, expressed in "PV" or "Production Value", a number from 2 to 10. This is the amount of raw material available for collection on each turn. Your Home World will be a 10, but you'll find a wide range of values in the nearby reaches of space. Most will be in the "average" range of 5-7, but luck will pay a part in the richness of your galactic

neighborhood.

An undeveloped star does not belong to you, but you can pick up its PV if somebody else hasn't collected it that turn before you arrived. The next step is to make it yours: you Colonize the star by taking 10 PI worth of colonizing gear down there and taking two turns to build a new colony. Then, not only is the star officially yours, it will now generate three times as much PV every turn, which can only be collected by your own ships.

Any ship with interstellar capability can visit and Chart a star, but only a ship with cargo bays can transport PI for colonization or return PV to your Home World. You have a few of both types in your initial fleet. The freighters have cargo bays and start out already loaded with 10 PI, ready to colonize any charted stars. You can send them out to Chart whatever stars you find in range, then be ready to Colonize on the next turn with the ship already in system. The scout ships have no cargo bays, so all they can do is Chart or Scout (take a peek at the ownership status of a star and any other visitors present that turn). You can send out your next wave of colonizing ships based on the Chart results they report to you.

Now you come to your first few decisions: where do you send those initial cargo vessels and scouts, and what orders do you give them? There's no reason not to send both the freighters and the scouts out charting. You're unlikely to run into any other empires

this early, as they are probably sticking close to home, too, so using a scout to just... well, Scout... is a waste of an opportunity. Soon enough you'll want to send a flurry of little scouts all around, checking out the neighborhood and observing what the other guys are up to.

Meanwhile, back at the Home World, you'll want to build some more ships with your small starting stockpile of PI. Here's where the born CPA will shine: make your best guess as to what ships you may need in the next turn or so, making best use of your resources. Will you build larger carriers to ferry rich troves of PV to your Home World from your new colonies, or small ones that are cheaper but only carry the minimum 10 PI to start new colonies? What about more little scouts to chart additional worlds so that you have a wider choice of where to send your colonizers? Perhaps you feel the need to build more armed vessels to enforce your claims or for Home World security, although it will be a while (hopefully) before anybody else comes calling.

You can construct new vessels from existing shipyard designs, or build them to your own specifications, using new designs that you Classify before you Build. You won't have enough PI to start building those Battleships and Death Stars yet, but you can start dreaming up your designs while you are building the freighters necessary to fund them. Whatever you decide to build, remember to save some PI for colonization expenses.

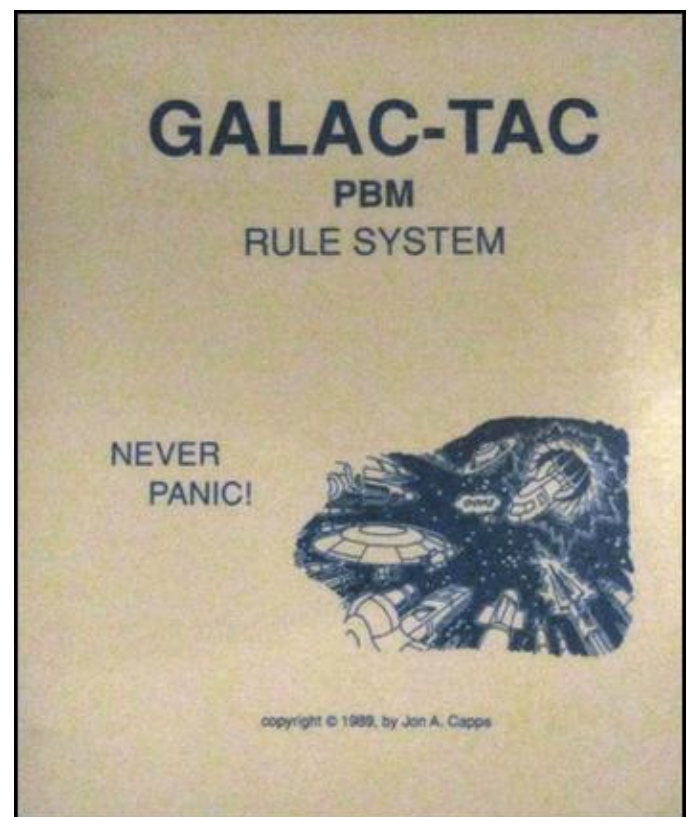
Now the second turn report comes out, and you get the exciting news of the value of the first few stars in your local area. You may have another decision to make: if you've found a measly 3 PV world with one of your freighters that is ready to colonize, but a scout has charted a juicy 8 nearby, do you grab the 3 while you're there, or take an extra turn to send the freighter over to the 8 PV world, establishing the richer colony first and coming back for the little guy later? The key thing in these initial turns is to "get rich quick"... and that may mean making difficult choices.

When you have colonies online and have set up regular delivery runs using freighters with appropriate capacity (easy to do with the Shuttle command, once you have built the ships), you will have a steady income stream. Until then, you will only have 100 PI added to your coffers each turn (the Home World's own production), and your expansion efforts are severely limited. So, go for the most income you can. By the way, "Knowledge is Power". Every star you chart, whether you colonize it immediately or not, adds to your empire's standing in the game, because it is data you *can* use to expand down the road, even if you have to take it from somebody else to make it your own. Be sure not to miss a turn in these early days, or you'll lose a lot of ground in the great land rush across the galaxy!

For the next few turns, you stake your claims, using Chart, Colonize, and Shuttle as your tools. Then suddenly you find that you've pretty much claimed

everything you can reach, and you've encountered several other empires out doing the same, and you have a tense peace at the moment (unless one of you has brought in guns to assert a border claim.) Now, the focus of the game changes. It's time to consider where to push, where to wait, how to defend what's yours, and how to take what's theirs. What you can do now is limited only by the economic base you have established, the efficiency of your operations, the resources you have coming in turn by turn, and your own imagination and cunning.

And THAT, gentle reader, is a story for another day.



GALAC-TAC



"Should've put more shields on this one ...
Did anyone remember to reload the torpedoes?"

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"I'm intrigued by Hyborian War, especially after recent articles in S and D magazine."

"It was the advert for Regime Change in Suspense and Decision that brought me here, (to Agema games) and their article on the forum that brought me here (this forum)."

"I've read two issues of S & D and recommend it!"

"I've read 3 or 4 & recommend it even more! So there !!"

"Many years ago, I played Alamaze once (via snail mail, pre-email, to date myself) and really enjoyed it, before a move overseas ended my PBM career. Recently, I ran across an issue of Suspense and Decision, and thought I'd try and pick it up again."

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A dark, atmospheric illustration of a fantasy battle scene. In the center, a muscular, horned warrior with a large hammer stands prominently. To his left, a figure in a hooded cloak and armor is visible. To his right, another warrior is partially seen. The background is filled with smoke and fire, suggesting a chaotic battle. The title 'ALAMAZE' is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the middle of the scene. In the top right corner, there is a small copyright notice: '© FRANK BRAZETTA'.

RESURGENT IN 2014!

Dragon Magazine

Issue #131

"Alamaze is a treat. Speaking as a game designer, it's one of the finest designs I've seen. I like it and recommend it to experienced gamers."

White Wolf Magazine

Issue #11

"Alamaze is possibly the finest play by mail game in existence. It is certainly the most innovative design since the first PBM game emerged... It should be tried by anyone who considers himself a real gamer."



Paper Mayhem Magazine

Issue #19

"Alamaze has all the strategy, intrigue, fear and paranoia that makes a great game. It's a great value."

Flagship Magazine

Issue #11

"Alamaze is one of the finest PBM games on the market, today. It is fast paced and exciting. It is full of all the action, intrigue and role-playing any player could ask for."

Paper Mayhem Magazine

Issue #28

"Among the many innovations in Alamaze is the truly fantastic magic system, unequalled anywhere in PBM. Not only does the magic system fit in with the entire game system hand-in-hand, it also shows the depth and massive amounts of designing and programming time spent lavishly in this game."

ALAMAZE IS BACK WITH REFRESHED RULES, OUR NEW RESURGENT MAP, NEW CUSTOM GAME FORMATS, TWICE-WEEKLY TURNS, A GREAT VALUE SUBSCRIPTION AT \$19.95 A MONTH FOR ABOUT 7 TURNS – LESS THAN \$3 A TURN. OUR PLAYERS HAVE STARTED MORE THAN 50 GAMES IN THE LAST YEAR AND CREATED MORE THAN 10,000 FORUM POSTS. DESTINY BECKONS: **RETURN TO ALAMAZE!**

Visit the website and Signup at: www.alamaze.co

Register for the Alamaze forum and claim your kingdom at www.kingdomsofarcania.net.

Alamaze Your Way

The Alamaze Game Variants

Rick McDowell

The Alamaze Game Variants

[Alamaze](#) came back to the Episodic Strategy Gaming public (that's you) in March, 2013, after a hiatus of a couple years. Alamaze won the award for Game of the Year for its type at the combined gaming conventions of Origins and Gen Con, and has been enjoyed for over 25 years. Alamaze received a very favorable review in Dragon Magazine and

was extensively covered and awarded in Paper Mayhem, Flagship, White Wolf, and other periodicals covering the hobby.

Here in its resurgence, we have started about 75 new Alamaze games in these last 16 months, so averaging starting about one new game a week.

To give a brief overview of Alamaze for those that haven't played or visited the website (www.alamaze.co):

- Alamaze is an epic fantasy war-game that brings military, political, economic, covert, magical, role-playing and diplomatic aspects to its players. There are over 100 different commands available to all players, plus special orders for each kingdom, and about 70 spells available at different power levels for spell casters, as well as 50-some unique artifacts to be uncovered in the wild.
- There are currently fifteen distinct kingdoms that vary along all those lines of play and strategy. They include fantasy stalwarts such as High Elves, Dwarves, Rangers and Stone Giants, but also very unique kingdoms such as The Ancient Ones, The Demon Princes, The Underworld and the Red Dragons.
- The game is played on a colorful map with a grid to define 676 different areas of various terrain that may contain a village, town, city, or unusual encounter, as well as characters and forces of the fifteen potential kingdoms. With the exception of the major cities, the locations of all of these change from game to game.
- In a typical turn, you might attack a fortified town, have a Baron usurp control of a village, your King denigrate a rival, your High Priestess divine the location of an artifact, your groups move, train recruits, explore areas, your agents perform reconnaissance or espionage, your wizards cast spells and perform research, your possessions increase their production and defense, and pursue your Early Strategic Objective.
- We now run turns 7 times a month. Pricing varies by monthly subscription, but averages about \$2 a turn, which are typically 15+ pages.

When we first came back, we wanted our returning players to be familiar with the game they last played, and so those versions were restored intact and collectively are called

Alamaze Classic:

- **2nd Cycle of Steel.** The full version of the game with 15 players and kingdoms. Players act individually but later can declare enemies and form alliances. A player can win via "The Rex" which is controlling 4 of the 10 regions, or by Secret Victory Condition.
- **2nd Cycle of Magic.** This has 12 players and kingdoms paired up in 4 teams of 3 players. A team can win by controlling 6 regions, although individual victory is still possible.
- **Warlords.** This is 4 players each controlling 3 kingdoms. This is for experienced players only and only available at higher service levels.
- **Titans.** This is just 2 players mano e mano each controlling 6 kingdoms. Only for expert players, the possibilities and resultant complexities each turn are rumored to cause brain damage. We doubt that can be proved.

Meanwhile, we have been busy introducing new formats in 2014:

- **Primeval.** This is our new format intended primarily for new players or those that are newly returning to Alamaze. It is 5 players each with one kingdom, one in each of

the four corners of the map, and one in the center. We have found this to be a more forgiving setup where players have a longer time to develop before engaging in war, and a version where economics are de-emphasized to allow players to better focus on political, military, and magical elements of the game.

- **Anonymous.** This is applicable to any style of game. While in the standard games there is full diplomacy, in Anonymous formats there is no diplomacy allowed, and competitors don't even know who their foes are. This has been popular.
- **Exploratory.** In this format, no kingdom begins with a High Priestess, a powerful diviner of important information on locations of population centers, characters, and artifacts. This places more emphasis on the military and agents locating all of these and so generally allows a longer opening to the game and places more demands on careful planning of how to best use resources to discover what is there, and allows more opportunity to infringe upon what would otherwise be seen as foreign territory.
- **Rex.** This is a format where there is no Secret Victory Condition, a player must win by controlling 4 regions. This generally makes for longer games and changes strategy quite a bit.

- **Draft.** For Warlords and Titan, a game master manages a draft process where players alternate selections of their kingdoms, rather than using the standard pre-formed teams. In discussions of the games in our Valhalla, there is often interest from the other players on the decisions made at the beginning on which kingdoms to draft, which has been quite different in each game.
- **The Unknown.** This is where instead of choosing kingdoms, players can specify 1-3 kingdoms they prefer not to have, and then are assigned a kingdom by the game master.

What to do?

You can enter the fray at our Scout Level Service, which provides one game at a time for \$19.95 monthly = 7 turns. Mention this article when you sign up at www.alamaze.co and you'll get your first month for \$9.95. **If you've read this far, surely you must don your armor, mount your steed and lead your people to glory!**



Alamaze Acronyms Decoded

The Kingdoms:

AN	Ancient Ones
BL	Black Dragons
DA	Dark Elves
DE	Demon Princes
DW	Dwarves
EL	Elves
GI	Giants
GN	Gnomes
RA	Rangers
RD	Red Dragons
SO	Sorcerer
TR	Trolls
UN	Underworld
WA	Warlock
WI	Witchlord

Common Terms:

PC	Population center
ESO	Early Strategic Objective
SVC	Secret Victory Condition
P3	A spellcaster of Power 3
L4	An agent of Level 4
T5	Turn 5 in the game
G146	Game number 146
1AN	The 1 st Ancient Ones Group (etc.)
3	Region 3 of the 10 regions
Alamaze	



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Are Weapons of Mass Destruction ever going to be found?

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We accept Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express, and Paypal.

Suggested US retail prices:

Nuclear War - \$29.95

Nuclear Escalation - \$29.95

Nuclear Proliferation - \$29.95

Weapons of Mass Destruction - \$19.95

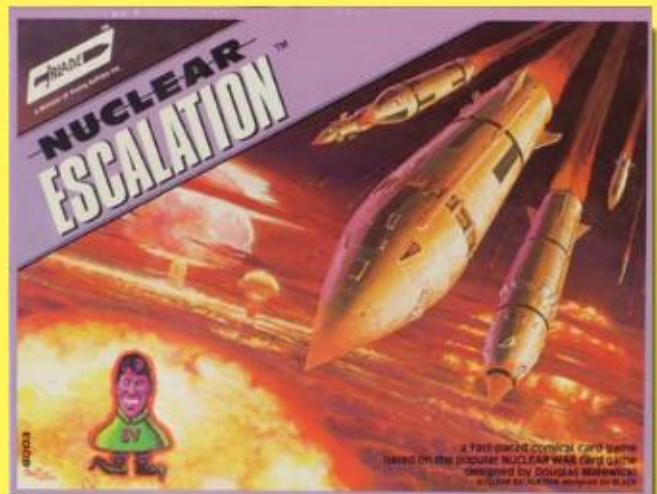
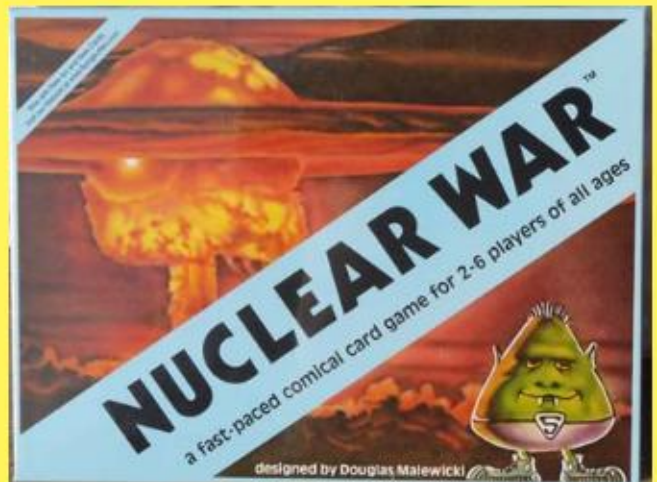
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Nuclear Destruction

ND-842/Turn # 1

Charles Mosteller

Date: July 1st, 2014

It arrived rather unexpectedly at 4:30:17 p.m. on a Sunday. Specifically, it was the 22nd day of June, 2014 - the day after my son's birthday!

A mere two days prior to this momentous moment, Rick McDowell had posted a comment on the PlayByMail.Net blog, saying that he was going to withdraw from this game of [Nuclear Destruction](#), supposedly because it "just wasn't hitting stride" with him, and that he didn't want to go in to the game with a less than positive attitude.

Poppycock!

Clearly, something was up, and Rick McDowell was either fleeing in panic, or he was scheming a schemer's kind of scheme. It all reeked to high Heaven, and the timing seemed a little too convenient, if you know what I mean. Plus, Rick's been known to spend a lot of time hanging out in some fantasy land with a bunch of elves, of all things.

The worst part of it all was not the fact of Rick running for the bunkers, before the game even starts. If anything, that was to be expected. No, the worst part of it was that it would mean that I would now have to actually tackle the rule set for the game. But, fortunately, Nuclear

Game: [Nuclear Destruction](#)

Type: Strategic missile game with emphasis on diplomacy

Price: Setup Fee: \$5.00 / Turn Fee: \$2.50 (10 cents per turn for this special game by e-mail)

Format: Play By Mail/Play By E-Mail

Destruction has some pretty straightforward rules, if I remember correctly.

Plus, I have to be careful about what I confess in this article, as there are likely no end to the number of spies that read this sleepy little publication, not to mention the fact that the Eye of Loomis is likely always on the lookout for rule avoidance. Ssshhh!

Prior to the game starting, I had already begun trying to get into the mindset of the old Soviet style Kremlin boys. So, when my nation assignment arrived in the electronic mailbox, a state of shock swept over me.

Germany!!

What the Hell? What were those people down at the Flying Buffalo mega-headquarters thinking? I'm pretty sure

that the Germans fought the Soviets in World War II, so now I have to perform a Johnny-on-the-spot transition from Kremlin-think to Fourth Reich-mentality.

Or am I approaching this whole thing from the wrong angle?

Nah...

Hey, maybe this isn't such a bad thing, after all. I mean, it's colorful. I can work with this.

As we head toward the processing of turn # 1, let me give you a run down on the other countries active in the game.

If someone could give me a drum roll, please...

Damn! I can't even get a drum roll.

Other players in this game, and their populations:

Player Countries	Population
Argentina	78
Brazil	78
China	78
England	78
France	78
India	78
Japan	78
Mexico	78
Pakistan	78
Turkey	78

For comparison's sake, here is what Germany looks like at the start of ND-842:

Player Country	Population
Germany	78

I'm also sitting pretty, with the following starting assets:

Cash: 100

Missiles: 20

Anti-Missiles: 10

Factories: 9

I suspect that all of the other starting players have equivalent assets. With that out of the way, let's take a glimpse at the Minor positions in this game - which, if memory serves me correctly, are non-player positions.

In other words, positions that are not controlled by players at game start. My brain wheels are starting to click, as I seem to recall something about being able to gain control of those Minor countries' assets (or something like that). Could it be that I am remembering that incorrectly, though? Well, the fog of memory failure aside, I guess that I'll have to review those nasty rules, as much as I would otherwise just prefer to play this one by ear.

Anyway, with no further fanfare, here's the list of those minor countries in play in ND-842:

Minors in this game:

Albania
Cyprus
Denmark
Finland
Honduras
Kuwait
Latvia

Nepal
 Ontario
 Qatar
 Romania
 Siberia
 Uruguay
 Vanuatu
 Wales
 Xanadu
 Zambia

How some of these nations ever managed to acquire nuclear weaponry is a whole other story, in and of itself. But, I deal with the reality that is, not the one that I might prefer to write, myself.

The e-mail that the Loomis Gang out in Scottsdale, Arizona send out notifying Nuclear Destruction players that their game of Nuclear Destruction is about to start contains a handy link to the rules for the game. Thank God that I don't have to waste time looking it up! The Flying Buffalo website may look a bit dated, but the game start e-mail is fairly succinct and to the point.

Oh, and before I forget, here's that link to the rules for the game, Nuclear Destruction:

<http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/ndrules.htm>

The game start notification e-mail has all of the company contact info that you need handy at the bottom of it. Plus, it also includes the turn orders due date for turn # 1, as well. Here's what my game start notification e-mail said:

Turn 1 is due Tuesday, July 8 at 6:00 PM MST

That's pretty darned clear if you ask me.

On a separate and possibly unrelated note, in Issue # 8 of Suspense & Decision magazine, I specifically stated that, and I quote, "*I don't speak German.*" How very convenient ironic, then, that I now find myself at the helm of Germany, of all countries, in this pending game of atomic annihilation. Talk about irony!

Nuclear Destruction was the very first PBM game that Flying Buffalo umpired by postal mail, back in the year 1970. Did I ever mention that my very first car was a 1970 model - *Pontiac Firebird!* Surely, this will give me an edge over my adversaries in this game.

Speaking of which, who are they?

It's bad enough, contending with a set of rules that I have never played by, before. But, on top of that, I have no clue who the other players in the game actually are. Is this the way that it is supposed to work?

It sure is! That's one of the nice things about playing PBM games, whether by postal mail or by e-mail (or by any other mechanism). You get to play with people that you don't know, that you have never met, and that you will likely never meet in person - although, the latter is quite

possible, if you ever bother to attend conventions or get-togethers that other players sometimes participate in.

Speaking of conventions, isn't Rick Loomis just about the convention-goingest person that you've ever encountered?

It's late here, as I write this (11:12 p.m. Eastern Standard Time), so I think that I will wait until tomorrow to actually dig into the meat of those rules for the game, Nuclear Destruction.

Date: July 6th, 2014

As is typically the case with the reading of rulebooks, I pushed back the refreshing of the rules routine several more days. You didn't really believe me when I said tomorrow, did you?

The rules for Flying Buffalo's Nuclear Destruction are brief. They're succinct. They don't take up pages and pages of space. This is not akin to reading War and Peace.

Even still, I had a few questions. So, I fired all three questions off to the staff at Flying Buffalo, Inc. - each one in a separate e-mail. Let's see what the staff had to say on the subjects that I raised with them.

Q. Is there an actual turn sheet for the e-mail version of Nuclear Destruction?

A. No, not really.

Q. For ND-842, how long can a message be to another player in that game, since I am playing electronically, and am not using 3x5 index cards?

A. We haven't set a limit, but please be merciful.

-Chuck, FBInc.

Q. I am new to the game. When should we expect turn results from turn # 1 for ND-842?

A. Games are usually run the day after they're due.

-Chuck, FBInc.

All three questions were replied to promptly, with answers issuing forth from Flying Buffalo staff less than 24 hours after being sent in via e-mail.

Two of the questions were sent in before the turn due date, and one was sent in afterwards. This had no discernible negative impact on the staff's response time. I had questions. I sent them in. They responded. It was as simple as that.

As far as the actual set of turn orders, itself, I managed to get my turn orders in a little ahead of time. Will the miracles never cease?

Surely, this bodes well for how I will do in this game of Nuclear Destruction. Did I mention that I was new to this game? It's been around almost as long as I

have, and I'm just now giving it a go. So, let's get to the meat of the matter - to the decision-making process of trying to figure out just exactly what I am going to do. In other words, what is my strategy going to be?

Date: July 13th, 2014 - Looking Back

The first thing that goes through my mind, of course, is to just boldly declare war, and let the war take its course.

The rules, however, preclude this as my opening gambit. "War may not be declared on the first turn." That's what the rules say, right under Item # 6 on the rules page.

Curses! Foiled in my state of Nuclear Destruction infancy!

OK, so now I would have to come up with an actual strategy. Although I issued my turn orders for Turn # 1 on July 6th, 2014, here it is a week later, before I manage to get around to actually writing about it.

Obviously, with a name like Nuclear Destruction, fire and brimstone from the sky, atomic-style, was only a matter of time, before that reality manifested itself in this game.

Rick McDowell had claimed to have dropped the game, before it started. In all likelihood, he did. But, how do I know for a fact that that wasn't just mere propaganda? Surely, it would be more

fun to detonate a nuke on top of Rick's head, than to escalate to Def Con 5 and beyond with complete strangers.

Bernd Jaehnigen, that scoundrel of an assistant editor of mine, he was still in the game, in any event. Clearly, then, the nukes would have to fall. It was time to raise the atomic stakes of my thinking.

Unlike Bernd, though, here I was, preparing to write a series of articles chronicling my participation in this game of Nuclear Destruction. I had no doubt but that Bernd would remain cowering in his bunker of anonymity. Go on, little man, raise your head. Peek out from your bunker, I say!

Since I couldn't declare war on Turn # 1, I had to come up with a ruse plan of some kind. With a starting population of 78 million, I might just be able to ride this baby out, and survive for a while.

Hear that, Bernd? I'm planning on surviving! Damn you and those mongrel servants of yours!

But, while I knew that my assistant editor had joined this game, also (and at my behest, I might add), I had no idea which country that he had been assigned to.

After refreshing my knowledge of the rules (several times, in fact), I began to craft a plan. This game was decades old. For all that I knew, some Nuclear

Destruction veterans were in this game with me, plotting my downfall and doom. Perhaps a little caution had value, after all.

I knew that ten other players were in this game with me. The name of the game isn't Nuclear Peace, so I knew that every last one of them would likely be jockeying for advantage - plus, they were all in the same boat that I was in. Dire misfortune, indeed!

So, since I couldn't just declare war outright from the get-go, I needed a more subtle approach. I had assets that I had to confer into advantages. The only real question was: How do I do it?

If there was anything that I had learned from playing play by mail games over the years, it was that players of PBM games were quite predictable. They tend to be greedy, self-serving, and all around nice fellows. They were seeking advantage, also. That, to me, seemed the perfect bait.

I would bribe the bastards!

And, so, I set about giving away missiles. I sent one missile to each of my fellow players, not to mention what I sent to some of the non-player positions (in an attempt to gain separate advantage from that route).

On the surface, it had all the hallmarks of a fool's folly. Strength through weakness? Why, who had ever heard of

such an absurd strategy?

Cut me some slack, why don't you? I'm new to this game, after all. I'm grasping at straws, trying to just survive long enough to have some real fun in this game

In addition to missiles, I also doubled up, by sending cold, hard cash, er, Deutsche Marks, er, Euros to the non-player countries that I was seeking to bribe persuade to aid me in my cause.

I also sold a factory, by putting one up for bid. To counterbalance this, I began building new factories.

Turn Results for Turn # 1

Population: 78

Cash: 169

Missiles: 1

Anti-Missiles: 10

Factories: 11

So, as you can see, my missile stockpile has diminished rather noticeably. I'm thinking that I should win a peace medal or something, for my efforts at unilateral disarmament. Would Bernd follow through?

Highly unlikely, what with his known penchant for vengeance. Ever since I had humbled his feeble upstart of an empire in another game, one that shall go unnamed (Psst...It was Far Horizons), he has been the proverbial Itching Finger of Revenge just waiting to pull the trigger

on me. Whatever you do, don't pull *that* finger!

It is bad enough that I put a huge bullseye right on my forehead, by authoring this article for Suspense & Decision magazine, while the game is still ongoing, to say nothing of it being so soon after its start. Yet, the sacrifices that I am willing to make for you, our beloved and esteemed readers. <cough>

After one turn, it appears that my popularity is either first or second in two minor (non-player) countries, Albania and Denmark.

I figure that I should be safe through at least turn # 2, since it takes a full turn for players to declare war.

It does take a full turn, doesn't it?

Or, can they declare war and fire missiles at me, all in the same turn? I had better check the rules, again, just to be sure.

The relevant portion of the rules states the following:

BATTLE TURN: *At the beginning of the next turn (after war is declared) each player will be informed that nuclear war has been started (and who started it). Also each player will be given a list of the minors which will follow his orders on where to fire their missiles (and how many missiles they have). You may then instruct these countries on where to fire, and also say where you want your*

missiles fired. (You do not have to fire any missiles, unless you were the one who declared war. That player (or players) must fire at least one missile from his or her own country. If he does not, one missile will be fired at himself.) You may fire at minors. You may divide up your missiles any way you wish. (The only other things done on battle turns is sending msgs and world news. You do not build, or send spies on battle turns.

OK, so does that mean that the turn that war is declared, players can launch nuclear missiles? Or does atomic destruction have to wait, until the following turn. Damn the fog of war and the uncertainty that it visits upon all mankind!

Once again, I fire off a question to the staff at Flying Buffalo, to resolve this dilemma of uncertainty.

Hey, wait a minute! What was it that the rules said in that last line that I quoted?

You do not build, or send spies on battle turns.

Hmmm...I've got a bad feeling about that. Why didn't someone make me aware of that earlier? If I'm running an entire country, shouldn't I be allocated some staff to advise me, at the very least?

As the full weight of this sentence begins to take its toll upon me, I feel that a slight change in strategy might be

appropriate.

The arms race is on!

Diplomatic Niceties

Turn # 1 brought with it some messages from a few of my fellow players in this game.

On the world news front, I had sent a message out declaring that Edward Snowden had been granted asylum by my country. The denunciation of the National Security Agency's uber spying seemed as plausible a candidate as any to link the real world to this game world. Surely, this opening gambit on the world news end of things would win me at least some friends allies in this game, would it not?

Brace yourself, now, for the release of other world news tidbits from Turn # 1 of this game:

World News:

Pakistan! We still have a little Persia in us ****

Chancellor denounces NSA uber spying; grants Snowden asylum! Germany WILL TRADE SPIES WITH ANYONE WHO SENDS ME THEIRS. BRAZIL

We mourn the passing of the Grand Dragon, Farwell Ed ****

Let's talk! - Fran

All we are is Dust in the Wind... ****

<<One player missed the turn>>

<<Due Wednesday, July 23 at 6:00 PM MST>>

Oh, my God! Somebody missed the turn! I'm just glad that it wasn't me.

I did delete the e-mail address that one player had sent through the world news section.

Does Fran equal France? You can't sign your messages as another player, but deception, clever or otherwise, is not only allowed, but encouraged, apparently.

For the first turn, it wasn't exactly a bumper crop of messages. Did I mention that there were "diplomatic messages" received from other players, that were not part of the world news?

Well, there was. I may not should have waited, to respond to some of them, as it's been a full week, now, since I received the results from Turn # 1 of ND-842, but it is said that absence makes the heart grow stronger.

I fully intend to send out a few messages to players who provided e-mail addresses in their Turn # 1 opening diplomatic salvo (Why didn't I think of that?), either later today or tomorrow.

That's the thing about intentions. They're such wonderful things. It is probably not in my country's best interests to not send out any messages. To take that route would be to allow at least some of my opponents in this game unbridled, uncontested opportunity. *Fat chance!*

What did they say about Issue # 8?

"Just read #8, WOW...GREAT STORY..."

**"As ever an interesting read...the effort
that goes into producing it is amazing!"**

*"What I liked most
about issue 8 was
the contrast of
articles. Game
related fiction as
well as personal
stories from gamers
lives that leavened
the mag by adding
variety to the more
game technical
articles (which are
something that
Suspense and
Decision naturally
does well)."*



*"I just wanted to
glance quickly on
the issue to see
what subjects you
were writing about
before dinner and
I got hooked."*

**The magazine
looks great.**

*"Mind numbing!
For the amount of
content you offer,
it is incredible."*

**"And congrats on the magazine --
you have some great content!"**

**What will they say about
ISSUE # 9?**



PHOENIX

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE

The Caliphate

A New Faction in Phoenix: Beyond the Stellar Empire

Sid Razavi

Background

Long before humanity made first contact with aliens, the Empire of Man faced rebellion. The first of these occurred in the colonies of Tate and Detinus, both of which were swiftly crushed; their protagonists dispersed to distant stars. The most serious division occurred later: when Emperor Paul's eldest son, Samuel, returned after he was long thought to be dead. By rights he should have been crowned Emperor upon his father's death but during his long absence, his younger brother Jasil had been groomed to become heir apparent. Jasil was supported by the megacorporations in his ambitions. These powerhouses of industry and trade, did not trust the Brotherhood sect of the New Harmony Church which had taken Samuel to indoctrinate him in their particular brand of belief in the True One. Standing with Samuel were many of the major noble houses, who were given free reign over star systems and were the entrenched industrial and agricultural titans of the Empire. Their resentments against the megacorporations had grown as they competed over worlds and resources. The most famous and powerful of the noble houses was the House LiQuan (HLQ). The HLQ had amassed a fortune building the Empire's navy during the Tate and Detinus rebellions. It was their dwindling role in this trade that provided the primary rationale for them to quickly rally to Samuel's cause. Other noble houses who had suffered hostile takeovers of their farms and factories by

the Galactic Trade & Transport (GTT) megacorporation joined them. The GTT had arisen from mergers of the Earth industrial monopolies and through clever allegiances with the Carmicheal royal house had begun to expand into the outlying star systems which the noble houses had once dominated. The division at the heart of the Empire split the military, with as many officers and generals siding with the megacorporations as with the nobility.

The civil war that followed was bloody and devastating. After the populated worlds of the Sparta system, which had strongly backed Samuel, was incinerated in nuclear fire, humanity looked on the verge of self-destruction. It was then that the Brotherhood revealed to Samuel's supporters yet another of their many secrets: the route to the New Sol system, where they had secretly based themselves for many years. This was where they had prepared Samuel and because of the vagaries of stellar drift, it would soon be cut off from the rest of the Empire. Facing ruined worlds and a losing tide in the war, the supporters of Samuel left the Empire of Man en masse to start a new life as the Confederacy.

Decades later, as the Empire expanded into the Peripheries, the star systems beyond the original Empire, they once again encountered the Confederacy along with aliens and the surviving rebels of the Detinus Republic (DTR). The civil

war, never fully resolved, resumed at first tepidly, then in a torrent as the Confederate Forces (CNF) earned their reputations with the *Rolling Thunder* fleet that raided Imperial (IMP) systems. They were supported by the old Ministry for Public Order, now dubbed the Confederate Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Brotherhood (BHD). At first the Imperials looked like they might collapse under the pressure but after a change of leadership, Viceroy Simms rallied the chartered affiliations to stand against them. The battle lines settled their respective borders at the edge of the neutral Kastorian system of Yank.

Over the years that followed there were shifting alliances between the Confederacy and DTR; countless side wars and betrayals, before the revelation that both Emperor Jasil and High Lord Samuel were clones of their so-called father. The Inner Empire government collapsed upon this news with the Emperor Jasil imprisoned by the dictatorship of the Galactic Alliance of megacorporations which followed. This made possible cooperation between the CNF, IMP and DTR in order to restore order and save humanity's home, Earth, from destruction. It was also in those years that High Lord Samuel was thought lost in action. It was this renewed sense of connection to their home world that spurred forward two years of peace talks until in 208, exhausted by decades of war, all sides agreed to peace. Thus was born, for a brief two years, the peace of the Commonwealth (CW). The peace allowed the HLQ to manoeuvre Jasil's son, Lysander who had long held sympathy with the Confederates, on to the throne. Jasil stepped aside after being given an offer he could not refuse by Viceroy Simms and thus, the civil war

between Imperials and Confederates came to an end.

For a decade of war and during the new peace, the CNF was governed by Supreme Commander Thomas "Spacewall" Jackson. A man of great honour, who in the end could not hold down his bitter resentment and sense of betrayal towards his DTR allies. When the madman Githyanki became Viceroy of the Imperials, he was swayed to join in a new war against the overpowering DTR. He never lived to see the consequences of his decision.

For this reunited Empire, the war started well with the DTR systems in the heart of Imperial territory quickly falling. With the support of the Confederacy, the IMP and GTT faced down the massive DTR Stellar Armada and despite initially even losses, a foolish DTR incursion into the heart of the IMP system of Titan saw victory for the combined Empire fleet, although at considerable cost. Entire star systems were rocked when the DTR unleashed dark, ancient and terrible technologies from activating the Boltzman Brain to the pervasive use of anti-matter weaponry. Despite this, their Republic faltered, losing a whole generation of leaders due to fatigue and assassination. Worse still, it was unable to arrest the advance of Imperial ground troops that took system after system after system.

As the war against the DTR went well for the Imperials, the Confederacy found no true leader like Spacewall Jackson again. During the ill planned conflict with the hostile alien powers of the Dewiek Elder Nation (DEN) and Flagritz Empire (FLZ), it abandoned all its star systems in the

Cluster Periphery. Rudderless and smarting from a terrible bloodying from the combined fleets of both the DTR and the new Alien Coalition, the CNF became dormant and its Confederate allies hunkered in their bases, fearful of the amassed forces of their enemies.

When the DTR forces took and held the strategically significant Kastor system, on the edge of the traditionally Confederate Darkfold Periphery, even the Imperial ground troops could not drive them back. The DTR made short work of a Confederate naval force sent to stop them as anti-matter weapons radiated the atmosphere of the world below. The future of the Confederacy looked uncertain.

It was then that Senator Darius Shirazi, General of the DTR forces in Kastor was approached by Laton, the shadowy spymaster of the Confederacy. Shirazi had a colourful past: originally an Imperial governor, he had led the Association of Free Traders (AFT) to revoke their Imperial charter and claim the hub system of Solo. He had then disappeared for many years before returning to build the Falconian Republic (FCN) in Acropolis. After a scandal involving the infamous pirate Wolfpack and his GTT backers, he disappeared back to Earth leaving the Falconians to their own devices. His reappearance as a Detinus Senator had heralded a period of expansion and aggressiveness from the DTR that marked a turning point from the sullen years of being under siege of the Empire's ground forces.

It was at the Shirazi Estate on Earth, near the historical site of ancient Shiraz, that Laton met Darius, along with a mysterious and yet commanding man

who had the air of royalty. Following the traditions of his fathers, Darius shared a meal with his Confederate guests, telling them beguiling tales of the people and history of the cradle of human civilisation. Between them they soon plotted a fitting burial for the Confederacy and its rebirth as a new Caliphate, a sovereign state dedicated to the glory of the True One, a state where truth and justice would supplant the greed and conniving of the noble houses that had betrayed the one true ruler of his people: Samuel, the Caliph, may the True One keep him safe.

The Caliphate

The Caliphate is built upon the strong foundations of the Confederacy with the burden of its history. In preparation, Supreme Commander Shirazi moved quickly to disband the old noble houses, going so far as to execute the last scion of House LiQuan. He ended the worst excesses of the old order, freeing slaves and opening up most borders to trade including to those that were recent enemies. Diplomacy replaced reflexive xenophobia; closed-mindedness gave way to a mercantile and legalistic approach.

With the birth of the Caliphate, a new constitution is put in place. Years of military dictatorship have given way to a tricameral system of government. The *Council of Guardians* oversees the constitution of the Caliphate with the leaders of its member affiliations sharing the decision making process.

The Majlis, the lower house of the legislature, gives every star system a voice in proportion to its contribution to the Caliphate. The Brotherhood ensure

the moral path is always taken by taking a third of all the available seats in this house.

The *Council of Experts*, the upper house of the legislature, consists of the great and the good of the Caliphate. Their job is to vet the proposals of the Majlis and approve those they find in line with the needs of the Caliph and his realm.

Whilst the *Caliph* is the sovereign of the realm, the role of leader of the executive branch of government falls on the *Vizier*, his faithful first minister, voice of the Caliphate and head of its armed forces.

The role of *Sharif* is given to a high ranking general to ensure the safety of the realm.

The Member Affiliations

Phoenix is a game of affiliations, groupings of players who run as few as a single solitary starship to fleets, starbases, outposts, platforms, operatives and ground parties.

The Caliphate is a power bloc consisting of four member affiliations, each with a distinctive character and suiting different roleplaying styles.

The Caliphate (CAL) affiliation is both executive branch and military of the bloc. The leader of this affiliation is the Vizier, head of government. His right hand is the Sharif, entrusted with the security of the state and realm. Other players can be Emirs of entire star systems or Generals and Admirals of its military and naval forces.

The *Caliphate Intelligence Agency (CIA)* is the secret police and intelligence

services of the Caliphate. They are sworn to protect the Caliph and his realm.

The Brotherhood (BHD) is the religious order at the heart of the Caliphate. Whilst the Pope is the head of the order, it is the Lord Inquisitor who wields all the power at present. Brothers of the order follow the secretive interests of the order and their own. Whether that is burning heretics, confiscating alien technologies for study or ministering to the faithful, only a brave or foolish soul interferes with their business.

The *Frontier Exploration and Trade (FET)* megacorporation is a front for the Cartel. These merchant gangsters have infiltrated every bazaar and the top levels of the Caliphate government. They are semi-independent franchises that operate loosely under the governance of the Kumicho, an ancient veteran of Periphery politics.

Why the Caliphate?

There are many reasons I embarked on this grand adventure and goaded, poked, prodded, argued my way to convincing both players in the Confederate affiliations and the Gamesmaster, Mica, into making it happen after a lot of hard groundwork was put in place.

1. *The Confederacy was dead*. This is a bit of an emotive thing to say given there were players in Confederate affiliations and what a pivotal role it has had in Phoenix / BSE history. But it had long ago collapsed under the weight of a legacy of a player who had defined it, nurtured it and in his passing, left something none of his successors could manage to make

their own. The CNF was a zombie affiliation and the bloc that was built around it drifting.

2. *Phoenix survives by telling new stories.* I am a role-player as much as I am a power gamer, perhaps more so. The fun in the game is that it changes, slowly at times, quicker than you can adjust at other times. But it is the evolving story of the Empire and the Peripheries that has been at the heart of Phoenix's success for two decades. Sometimes stories come from the interactions of players in the pursuit of tangible things like planetary economies, strategic star systems, military dominance or the humbling of a rival in power. For the Confederacy, this was not the problem. Resources, power and space to build upon are plentiful. Yet, the CNF had remained idle for the better part of a year and spent many years as a single player affiliation despite its huge footprint. It was time to tell a new story.
3. *There was a lack of anything but Westernised themes in Phoenix.* Most roleplaying games, fantasy or science fiction literature draw upon real world cultures for inspiration and Phoenix is no exception. From the Germanic feudalism of the Empire through the British tea and crumpets of the Detinus Republic, the American style megacorporations to the Space Wolf Viking Dewiek, most of the themes are familiar to Western audiences, deriving from European or European

descended cultures. Some affiliations may not obviously fall into this pattern but I could argue they do. The Flagritz Empire for example seems to be partly influenced by pulp sci-fi of the 1950s and Japanese manga (tentacles, tentacles, tentacles) which is a fairly westernised product. The Dominion, power hungry ex-convict traders, has its roots in a sort of Aussies... in Space! I could go on. The possible exception being the recent transformation of the FET into a Yakuza style cartel. So for me personally, an opportunity to portray something other than a Western culture and to do it in a way its rarely done in films and TV was something I hope will give potential players a new choice that perhaps they didn't even know was lacking.

A Final Word for New Players

The Caliphate is something new and original whilst deeply entrenched in the history and politics that makes Phoenix more than just a game but a long lasting hobby for most of its players.


If you want to play in an affiliation that will have a real impact on the big story of the game, to use wit and muscle in equal measure, to wield subtlety as effectively as a squadron of capital warships, then you can probably do no better.

If you're tired of the usual tropes in your sci-fi roleplaying and thought about Phoenix but its never appealed to you before, then I hope you will consider signing up and giving it a shot. You'll be amazed at what stories you can tell if

you try.

The Caliphate is where you can learn with advice and support from a seasoned veteran. It will probably not be your last stop in your many lives in Phoenix but I would welcome you all the same. If you have any questions feel free to email me: *monkeyx AT gmail DOT com*. Or find me on Nexus [here](#).

Peace be upon you.



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AND FREEDOM**



DETINUS REPUBLIC

JOIN THE FIGHT!

HEROIC FANTASY

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On VanQa and Gwen Irima

Part 1

Jim Kemeny

Among all the remarkable women role players in [Ultima Online](#) (UO) on Europa Shard, Gwen Irima was probably the most remarkable. I never knew her player's name, only that she was Dutch. We got into email contact, me with my real name and she with an email using her early character name, VanQa. I have known her all my time in UO, from the earliest days, mainly because she worked in taverns selling ale. A tavern is a great resource in UO, where characters meet for role-playing. The first was in [Valoria](#) around 2003. An important characteristic of any barmaid is to be communicative and chat to the customers, to provide a menu of drinks, snacks, and meals to sell, put in a bound book for customers to read. She did this, and had a store of rumours and stories to relate.

Incidentally, most of my links come from UOGuide, the Ultima Online encyclopedia:

http://www.uoguide.com/Main_Page

The Sword and Shovel Tavern in Valoria

There was a time when players began to organise themselves in village settlements, by building houses close to one another in streets. Valoria was such an settlement, northwest of [Minoc](#), a rough and ready mining settlement.

Valoria grew to a considerable size and had its own website, until fairly recently, when the domain was vacated. The Lady VanQa was barmaid at *The Sword and*

Shovel there, before moving down to Trinsic, where she opened her own tavern. This was at the time I first joined UO, when Jern was a young man, in 2003.

The Lady VanQa had asked if anyone could catch some fish she could use to improve the variety of the tavern fare. All you need to catch fish is a simple rod and line, with a hook on the end, and a convenient pier of landing stage, from which to fish. You can also fish from a ship, but that is more risky, as there are dangerous monsters out there.

"This Tavern was built in the 302nd year after the demise of Mondain (2001) by **Cypher Baralis** and **Ryan Lightblade**. It soon became the Center of the just founded **Township of Valoria**.

In her testament, she handed the Tavern over to the Elf **VanQa**, who has been a loyal Barmaid for many years. With the Lady VanQa running the tavern, more Elves settled in Valoria, and also, the Tavern gained a very good reputation, due to Lady VanQas kindness and excellent service. She managed to attract folk from all over Sosaria, and made the old Sword & Shovel Tavern a famous place."

Enough said. What could I possibly add to that accolade from the official game!

Post Office becomes Serfs' Shop

The Post Office had a history that I am only vaguely familiar with. It was originally developed, as a means of sending letters between in-game characters, and post boxes were devised for this purpose. But, it had lapsed through disuse. The Post Office that the Lady VanQa had owned was located just outside the city of Trinsic, on the main road by the West Gate. It was called Ye Olde Post Office to mark that fact.

The Lady VanQa has been very generous and transferred the post office, in a prime plot just outside Trinsic's West Gate to my ownership, free of charge. I tried to haggle up the price from her zero offer, even offered to buy it on the never-never (with irregular and varying-amount instalments), which is all I could afford. But, VanQa would have none of it. Should I at some future date have to transfer the house, I agreed I'll do so without receiving payment, and I'll find a suitable gift for VanQa. Its the least I can do. For information on Trinsic, see the [preceding issue of S&D](#).

With Sally Buttons as co-owner, I've re-named the building *Serfs' Shop*, and both Sally and I already have vendors there, with hopefully, more serf vendors being employed. There's much to put in order, and that, plus my searching for Nian, leaves little time for smithing.

I must pay a visit to the legal firm *Grabbett and Runn*, to make special proviso for the property in my Will.

At *The Trinsic Rose* the other night, there was much coming and going. Besides Miguen and VanQa, the pixie Ziani was there hovering delightfully, a lady with remarkable green eyes called Quave, and another VanQa called Jade. Cal'ya Luna

was there, too, looking for Taggart, who arrived after she left. Before Cal'ya left, she gave me a bag of gold that she wanted me to give to Sally for the orphanage. VanQa's tavern is remarkably popular with so many there in the early evening - must get even busier after 8 [8 pm was when I used to go offline]. Later, I shorted my online time further, to 7 pm, which meant me leaving the game, just when it was beginning to come to life for the evening (the majority of Europa players were British, though players on the Continent - Dutch, Belgium, Russian - were an hour ahead so, 7 pm was 8 pm for them).

There was a separate German shard called [Drachenfelds](#), which actually predated Europa shard. But, Silverleaf players went over to Europa shard, where they stayed, as Europa was busier. I got around the time-differences by creating characters on Pacific Shard, for online times in the early morning or early evening, mostly used by Californians]. For a while at the end, I was on Pacific, and associated with the Twilight Fellowship that had a particularly experienced gamer living in California.

The orphanage was an attempt to provide a home for the poor and parentless, so some player started up new characters as small children with a background story of their orphan status. It was not a great success, mainly because few players wanted a child as their main character. I had hoped a child character would be seen as someone to grow using UOs speeded up time measure, which occasionally I was doing with my permanent characters, especially when I was away from the game for periods (holidays, etc.). So, I left that attempt after a while.

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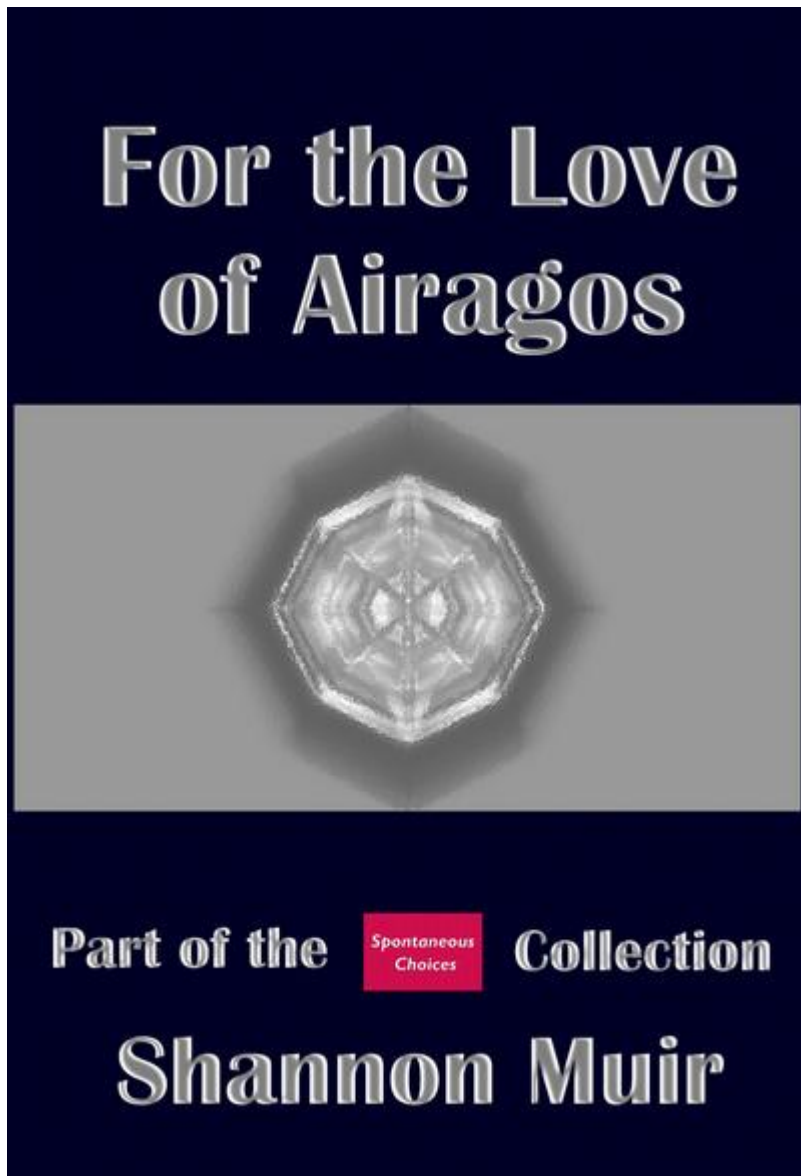
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For the Love of Airagos



Heather grew up playing RPGs with her friend Abe and a group of college friends. One day he mysteriously disappeared, but tried to keep the game going as Play By Mail turns - until one day those turns also mysteriously stopped. Years later, she's put in contact with friends old and new who learn they've been pieces in a larger game for a race from another world to come to Earth...

"Yes?" I replied, not sure what he wanted.

"I know it's a long shot, but did you by any chance keep the rulebook that the Dungeon Master wrote for that play by mail game? I can't remember the game flavor."

"It's in my suitcase," I told him. "Not like we can get to it at the moment. I did read it before I came down. Can't

think of anything that immediately might help though."

Izzy finally chimed in.

"You want me to go run off and save a fantasy world with you? Are you mad?"

Vardarius looked over at Izzy.

"We need you as part of our group," he insisted.

Pick up your copy today!

Kingdom of the Quote

"Because the reach of words knows no bounds!"

I just wanted to lock you into an agreement but you pretty much refused to give me a straight answer to anything. You were very much in character and it made me want to kill Gnomes by the thousand.

- [Lord Diamond](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 100

I particularly enjoyed the rich opportunities to role play and interact directly with some of you, and together fashion a narrative as the game took its course. I may write of it in the days to come.

- [Telrandir](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 109

Turns out the Giant was not a big fan of my kidnapping his baron or the Warlock's (his ally) king... but he was willing to make peace if I would return those prisoners.

- [Kevindusi](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 119

This contest was every bit as difficult and interesting as one would expect from an Invitation Only

Championship match. I was extremely lucky to have made the podium (barely, of course.) Sometimes it is better to be lucky than good.

- [Lord Thanatos](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 118

I had a blast just roaming around hitting things at random for a little while anyway.

- [Hamlet](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 120

A very fun and hair raising game. Getting involved in a war with half of the kingdoms on the board was a first. The diplomatic climate in this game was a quickly changing landscape and I was glad to thread the needle through the storm.

- [Mauler](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 114 - Steel

Then bad time came when Warlocky people appear out of nowhere! Then they eat troll army faces and fly away! Troll no like that so we go hunt Warlocky people and eat their faces

and their momma's faces and daddys too!

- [Tripwire](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 105

What followed was a desperate and at times comical attempt to outguess the Ranger agent or agents, and it seemed like every single turn, I guessed wrong.

- [HeadHoncho](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 111

Then some folks tried taking some towns back and they got themselves a free visit to my dungeons, and suddenly I had prisoners which made me think about my victory conditions.

- [VballMichael](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 121

I thought I was going to win this game. Damn.

- [Hamlet](#),
Alamaze forum
Game 121

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Welcome to Arkers (DM-8)

Part II (Hello Spindly Arms!)

Duel II Fiction by Julius A. Nicholson

Adoric Tyden walked down row upon row of houses with a scrap of paper in his hand. Every once in a while he would look down at the paper and then look around as if lost. The piece of paper had the hastily scrawled address of his new stable: Hildar's Horde.

Hildar, the manager of Hildar's Horde wasn't exactly in league with any of the greats like the many managers that made up the Consortium. Nor was he in league with Mannequin who is one of the star managers in the Delarquan Federation. To be honest; he wasn't even in the same league as Longshot. But it could be worse. He could be buried in obscurity like the members of Beltazar's Sett. Some of the tactics their manager used were insane and all it proved was that his stable could take a hit or bounce back from severe injury. No one in their right mind gave a mortal warrior who is a striker chainmail, a full helm, two hand weapons, and four back up weapons. Strikers, much like lungers and slashers, are creatures of speed. Their goal is to get the jump on their opponent and rain repeated blows upon the unfortunate soul. Some consider strikers to be deadlier than slashers or lungers. The reasoning is that strikers can use any weapon in the gladiatorial games. Lungers tend to use thrusting weapons such as long swords, short spears, long

Game: [Duel2](#)

Type: Ancient gladiatorial combat

Price: US\$3.25 + US\$1.50 for each gladiator that you enter into combat

Format: Play By Mail

Company: Reality Simulations, Inc.

spears, and short swords. Slashers tend to be restricted to weapons like scimitars and axes. But if a striker is well suited to a weapon, he can take any random weapon off a weapon's rack and use it with great proficiency. Not even aimed blows can do that.

Perhaps Beltazar's Sett manager thought that he was taking advantage of the style's ability. When Blade Hunter, the warrior in question from Beltazar's Sett walked out onto the sand, the crowd went silent. But it was not because they were in awe of his fearsomeness. It was just the ridiculousness of the situation. In addition to the fore mentioned chainmail suit, and full helm. He also had a hatchet and a mace to fight with a backup epee, mace, medium shield, and small shield. He looked like a turtle as he walked out! Needless to say, Blade

Hunter became the hunted as his opponent's blade sliced him to ribbons.

Adoric Tyden continued walking and looking for the house. He was so busy looking at the scrap of paper that he hadn't notice the man in front of him. The two crashed, but it was Adoric who landed flat on his arse. The confused and lost young man was about to lambast the man for knocking him over. But once he saw who he had run into, the words died on his lips.

"*Look out there!*" the man exclaimed and offered Adoric a hand up. The man seemed to pull Adoric off the ground effortlessly. Adoric rose with a grunt and looked embarrassed. Their collision had garnered attention. There were people pointing and muttering amongst themselves. Once Adoric was on his feet, the man became more imposing as he towered over Adoric and caused him to look like a child. He was 6'4" with a muscular frame. The big man's hair was black, long, and worn in a ponytail. His face was covered with a day's worth of growth. The stubby beard and mustache gave him the look of a labourer. If he was, his job was most likely a mason or a warehouse worker. He wore a short sleeve blue shirt that showed off his taunt muscular arms that looked tight and hard like steel cable. He wore black pants and high black boots that hugged his calves.

"*You gotta be careful buddy,*" the big man said. He had a broad smile on his

face as he looked Adoric over to make sure he wasn't hurt.

"*Sorry...*" Adoric replied. He adjusted his belt and pack. This caused his fine epee to move back to his side. The big man eyes the blade at the stranger's side. The blade was too nice for someone like the stranger. It was finely crafted. The hilt was extravagant to the point of near gaudiness. This was the blade of a noble or wealthy merchant. The man who wore it at his side looked like a derelict.

Adoric saw the big man eyeing the epee and rested his hand on the hilt. The big man could easily beat him to a pulp and take the blade if he truly wanted to. But Adoric had made a mental promise to make sure he left with marks to remember the day.

The big man noticed the subtle show of aggression from the stranger. The last thing he needed was to get into a street fight with a tourist. The big man place his hand on the head of the war hammer thrust through his belt.

Adoric's eyes followed where the big man had placed his hand. He had not noticed the weapon before. He then looked the big man in the eyes. The assembled crowd grew silent in anticipation of a fight. They looked like two animals in the wild sizing each other up over territory. The big man had blue eyes. Adoric thought those were the eyes of a killer. His breathing was even and his focus was entirely on Adoric. After what seemed like an eternity, Adoric broke and looked away. There was a sigh that

fell over the crowd. Despite the anticipation of a street fight, not one wanted blood on the streets. Keep that for the games. The big man, realizing he had won, moved on. And with that, the crowd began to disburse and go about their business.

"You were smart not to draw your blade, boy."

Adoric looked over at an old woman. She had to be a hundred years old if she was a day.

"And why is that, ma'am?" Adoric asked.

"Because that beast was a Steel Prophet."

"What's a steel prophet? Are they a religious sect?"

Adoric remembered the warrior monks of the Chosen. He wondered if the man was a part of that.

"No," she said in a small voice. She sounded like a child when she spoke.

"They're not a religious sect. They are a stable in the games; and a brutal bunch of bastards too. That one was Blue Flak. He just beat Imerta Loel. Imerta was one of the oldest warriors in the arena and he just shows up and beats her. Can you imagine it? Hitting a lady like that. That is why women should avoid that nonsense."

She hoiked, turned, and spit a wad of yellowish mucus onto the street.

"Imerta had fifty-seven fight to that monster's sixteen. When the dust

settled, Imerta was signaling to the Arena master that she couldn't continue. The bookies made a fortune that day. No one thought Imerta would lose."

Adoric looked back, and he could still see the head and shoulders of Blue Flak moving through the crowds. He made a mental note to be more cautious. He had almost picked a fight with a champion. This Blue Flak character could be the next duel master, and he barely had the skills to handle an initiate.

Since Adoric had the old woman's attention, he showed her the scrap of paper with the address written on it. She chuckled and told him that he was completely turned around. He should have been going in the other direction. Adoric felt like a fool. He had noticed the numbers ascending as he walked down the street, but the name was wrong. Someone had switched the street signs. It did not help that it was in the same direction that Blue Flak went.

After another twenty minutes of wandering, he found the home of Hildar's Horde; his new home and comrade in arms. It wasn't an overly impressive building. The green paint was old and chipping away. Some of the boards on the outside had fallen off and were replaced with plain wood. There were a couple of windows missing and there was yellow paper glued over it to keep insects and cold out. There were three questionably sturdy steps that led up to the door. Adoric walked up the steps and knocked on the door.

Adoric could hear footsteps from inside. The door opened and in the door way stood the biggest man Adoric had ever seen. He easily dwarfed Blue Flak. But where this man had height on Blue, he didn't have Blue's muscle. This man was thin with wiry arms. And where Blue had looks that might make the local women swoon, this man looked like a simpleton. He looked down at Adoric with a childlike grin. When Adoric told the giant man why he was there, he smiled and extended his hand to shake. As he stood there smiling and vigorously pumping Adoric's hand, he introduced himself as Radduck. He then invited Adoric inside and led him down a long hallway. Adoric wondered if every stable had a compulsory giant in their ranks.

Adoric was led to a study and sitting behind a desk was a man. He was fat and looked like he had never done an exercise in his life. He had narrow green eyes. His thick, wavy, red hair was worn in a style that resembled an animal's ears. He was short and had extremely pale skin. He had thick eyebrows that looked like two ginger caterpillars resting on his brow. His wardrobe was expensive. This outfit alone could take care of the repairs that Adoric noticed out front. Maybe he had made a mistake signing up with this team. The fat man got up from his chair and waddled around to face Adoric. He eyed Adoric as if he was his next meal. Adoric stood there feeling a little uncomfortable. He looked over to Radduck and the giant was smiling and giving his a 'thumbs up'.

"Hmmm...I think I can make something of you." The fat man said. HE had an effeminate voice that made him seem softer. He grabbed Adoric's arm and squeezed.

"I am Hildar and I will make you great! Welcome to the Horde Spindly Arms," said the fat man, and he smacked Adoric so hard on the back, he caused him to take a step forward.

Radduck smiled and clapped his hands.

"Hello Spindly Arms!" the giant shouted.



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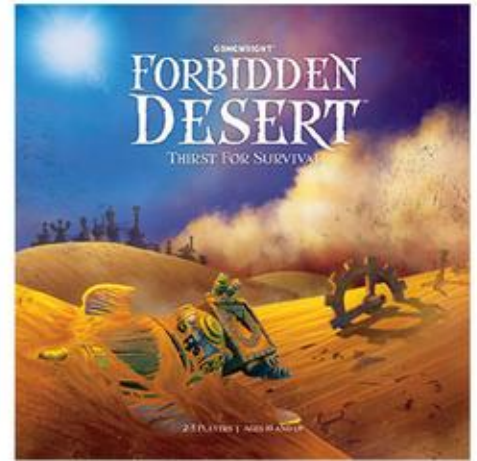
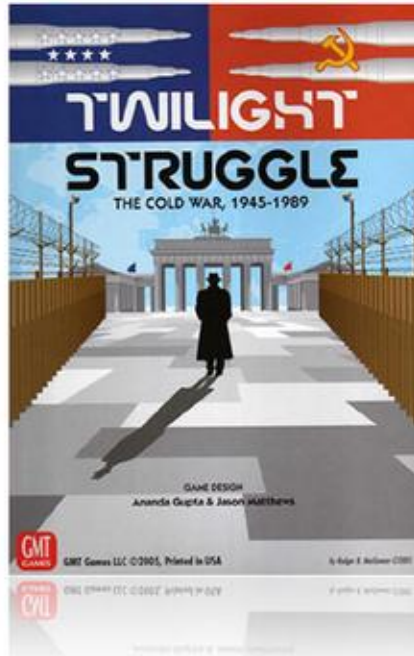
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Hidden Elements in Hyborian War

David Aldag (Olorin)

There are parts of any game that are hard to find information for. In wargames it might be the underlying concepts of how the units can fight. In Hyborian Wars, there are several.

For those of you who haven't played; the Rules tell you there are 3 main elements of play: Troops, Characters and Provinces. Close enough. There are 3 main elements: Armies, Court and Economy.

Armies

Armies have few hidden elements. The combat element seems to be based on "Royal Armies of the Hyborian Age", by Lin Carter, a miniatures warfare rules book. While the RA is not bad for a rulebook of the 70's, it had some problems that have been passed on to HW, and some new ones were added when they translated it to a computer-run game.

Armies are of two types: Provincial Armies (one in each Province), which you can consider National Defense, and Imperial Armies, which is your offensive power. Troops supply the strength of those armies. They list large numbers of them but they break down into a few categories. They come in Heavy, Medium and Light, and Cavalry or Infantry. Heavy beats Medium usually and Medium beats Light, usually. More usually beats less. Heavy about twice as good as Medium, etc. There are finagles and tricks to help but usually Heavy Cavalry rule.

The only thing really hidden for armies

(other than guessing what your opponent is doing) is troop levies and your maximum troop raises. The cost of a Low cost troop is not noticeably larger than a High Cost troop in a single turn. And while the Rules suggest raising only about 10% per turn to start, the cost of exceeding that is not readily discernible. Troop levies we will cover under Economics, later.

The reason I say maximum troop raises are the only thing hidden is the cost relative to raising troops is negligible. To start, most small kingdoms can raise 8 troops a season(or turn) if they are not broke. You can double that in a Peace Year. If you are broke, 5 troops per season. From there how many troops you can raise gets more complex. One of the gentlemen on www.warbarron.com (Road of Kings) is working out the mathematical formula to figure this out. But to deal with it is simple, raise as many as you think you can, and then ask for 5 or 10 more.

Characters or Court

Are mostly unpredictable. This is the part that intrigued Charles for so long. You have NO control over how many you receive in a Peace Year (which is not really a year, most last 20 years!). And no control over how many die of old age. You also can't control what their capabilities are. You only get new ones during a Peace Year. Ones you have can die or be assassinated. You can celebrate getting 10 new characters one PY, and curse the fates the next when your bitter foe gains 17 and you have a total of -2

because three died and you only gained 1.

You will have noticed I said mostly unpredictable. This is because each Kingdom starts with a set group of characters. This is good and bad. You know going in what your court is, but so does everybody else. Alright, those who have gone to www.grimfinger.net or www.warbarron.com have access to all the information on each Kingdom available. So these are a known quality who are going to last most, if not all, of the game.

These are rated POOR, NONE (and they are just that), ADEQUATE (which really isn't), GOOD (which translates to barely competent), EXCELLENT (who are pretty good), and SUPERIOR (really good at what they do) in each category of ability. Then there are the SUPERIOR ++, or the Incredibles, these only show up as SUPERIOR but are even better. Any of these may be improved by sending the character adventuring (if he lives). After surviving 4 or 5 adventures a character will improve in a skill. This illustrates two hidden aspects of this game. The first is that the SUPERIOR rating of a lot of things is elastic and only means they are better than the EXCELLENT ranking. The second is that a number of items are affected by slow increments of additions and subtractions.

Characters have a profound influence on the course of a game. Their ability to get a Peace Treaty or assassinate another character can change the momentum of a war significantly. Oh, for those who have never played this game, you can get a Peace Treaty with a hostile, invading enemy even IF he doesn't want peace! Another oddity of the rules. What characters do is another article, I'm afraid.

ECONOMICS

The economy of this game is where things get REALLY fuzzy. Most games give you hard numbers to work with, so you can plan exactly what you are doing. NOT Hyborian War! What is worse, some of the information given you disguises what is going on.

The Treasury is rated from NONE to SUPERIOR, like the characters. And here is the first hidden nugget. The game doesn't actually use those ratings, it deals in hard numbers. It just tells you where your wealth falls. The assets are rated by comparison to the wealth of a Kingdom of similar size.

Their Ratings are:

Superior: contains more than 160% of the average.

Excellent: between 121% and 160%.

Good: Between 81% and 120%

Adequate: between 41% and 80%

Poor: between 1% and 40%

None: no wealth; potential for being in debt.

What I can tell you is a large Kingdom has a wealth of between 2880-3200 to enter SUPERIOR. So for translation; Poor is 1 to 720-800, Adequate is 721- 801 to 1440-1600, Good is 1441-1601 to 2160-2400, Excellent is 2161-2401 to 2880-3200. Superior is anything above that. For reasons of Programming, I suspect the larger numbers. I'm still working on whether the numbers are the same for smaller Kingdoms or if they have different ratings.

Now this is fairly straightforward, as of yet. Now we come to the part that confuses so many players. The Bar Graph. They include several bar graphs to help you grasp your Treasury's condition. I'm sorry to say they

conceal more than they tell you. First: the bar does NOT tell you your total wealth. The Treasury Bar only goes up to 4000 for a Large Kingdom! If you have over that, it just shows Superior.

If you have 7000 and spend 3000 leaving you 4000, it still shows you are at Superior. Yet, if you spend the same amount when you are just barely at 4000, your Rating drops like a rock to Adequate. And you have no idea why there is a difference. Think of the bar as a busted gas gauge. It only goes up to $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Anything over that, shows $\frac{3}{4}$. Completely full, $\frac{3}{4}$. $\frac{3}{4}$ full, $\frac{3}{4}$. All you know is that the tank is at least that full. The same applies to the Bar Graph!

The next hidden aspect of the Bar Graph fooled Charles. It still fools many who play. When you reach zero, that's it. Zero is the bottom. Spend like crazy cause it doesn't cost. Um, no. Read that line up above again. The Rating for None. "Potential for being in debt". The Bar Graph fools you because, just like it doesn't go over 4000, it doesn't go below zero. The computer keeps track, both above and below the Graph.

There are other clues as to how this works. There are certain payments you make to others OUTSIDE your Kingdom (paying Mercenaries, giving Tribute or Gifts). You can no longer do those once you are at None. The ones you do WITHIN your Kingdom, the computer allows you to do. These internal 'debts' can be covered by, say, debasing the coinage, decreeing a price freeze, etc. All the techniques countries have used for centuries. Anything outside the Kingdom requires hard coin or real items, valued at the marketplace. In the real world, sooner or later, you have to adjust to allow interaction with the rest of the world, usually by inflation. In HW, however, there IS no

inflation. So you have to pay back what you 'borrowed'.

This is why you will find players in games wondering "Why didn't my treasury last longer?" Turns are divided into two types: Peace Years (long periods of recovery during which you replenish your Treasury) and war turns (approx. 3 months each). War seasons last for 3 to 9 turns during which you spend like crazy and hope your Treasury lasts. Someone posts "My Treasury lasted 6 turns last warseason. I got the same income, how come it only lasted 3?" They expended more when at zero. Players have repeatedly asked "Why is the Peace Year earnings so variable?" the answer is, I don't think it IS as variable as it seems. The system is set up so you repay all your debt first. Because the Graph doesn't tell you the whole picture, it is hard to get a grasp on the various affects above and below what is shown.

In addition to all that, there are a number of other things that are obscure in the Economy section of the game. Let us start with the simplest, Trade Routes. Trade Routes produce steady income, however it is produced at ONLY two spots. Yes, I know, the way the Rules read make you think that every Province on that Trade Route should produce income. A Trade Route produces income in the province it originates from (I call them Trade Centers) and the Kingdom it goes to. You can't capture a Trade Route. They belong to the Kingdom regardless of what happens to it. Driven away from the home provinces, in Exile, completely eliminated from the game. Doesn't matter. The Trade Route ONLY goes to one Kingdom. The Trade Center it comes from is attached to a Province and CAN be taken. The big difference is the Trade Route is worth approximately 4 times as much as the Trade Center for income.

Next, important Trade Centers. Zamboula is used as an example in the Rules. So everyone knows that Zamboula is a wealthy target. The wealthy target, right? Wrong. There are Three Provinces with more than 2 Trade Centers in them. Zamboula is not the wealthiest. It has 5 Trade Centers but is a Poor Province. Iranistan Steppes has 5 Trade Centers and is an Adequate Province. It is the richest. The Third is Ilbars Steppes with 3 Trade Centers and is a Poor Province. As an observation, all three together only have 13 Trade Centers, the equivalent of about 3 Trade Routes.

Which brings me to Provinces. There are two revenues you can get from a Province; Tax revenue (a set amount every turn from each Province) and Harvest Revenue (once a year). Tax Revenue is about the same as that from a Trade Center, a little more from a conquered Province, a little less from a Home Province (these provide Levies as well, though). Tax revenue is steady, unless you are raided you get the revenue every turn. It doesn't seem to fluctuate for anything else.

Side note: These three are steady incomes; Trade Centers, Trade Routes and Taxes. You get them every turn they are not raided. They don't go up or down. Trade Centers and Taxes aren't that big compared to the Harvest but they are every turn. Very useful in keeping the Treasury up.

The two things that are most difficult to find information on are Harvest Revenue and Troop Levies. These are both longer-term cycles. Oddly, most players I see on-line are too impatient to follow-up on these. Harvest is a yearly cycle influenced by a number of other factors. When you get Province information when it is rated between None and Superior, that is its base Harvest Revenue. The Harvest Revenue is where

most of your funds for the year come from. It is also the one revenue stream that is most affected by your actions with your characters and other decisions.

Part of the problem here is the fact that a lot of players get used to commands having an effect immediately, when your turn results come back. Harvest isn't that fast. Bless and Curse Spells, both of which are Province magic, are assumed to do very little, for example. Curse says gloom and dead plants, etc. For a Province affected, but it doesn't affect Tax Revenue or Trade. So it's worthless, right? It affected the Harvest, two turns from now. There are four seasons; Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall. Harvest is brought in and counts for you in Fall. Actions taken for Provinces (or Kingdoms) incrementally affect the Harvest. Curse lowers it by a certain amount for each season. Bless, Actively Ruling bring it up. Remember that 10% suggestion earlier? Right, taking more lowers the Harvest and Loyalty. Somebody Raiding the Province does the same.

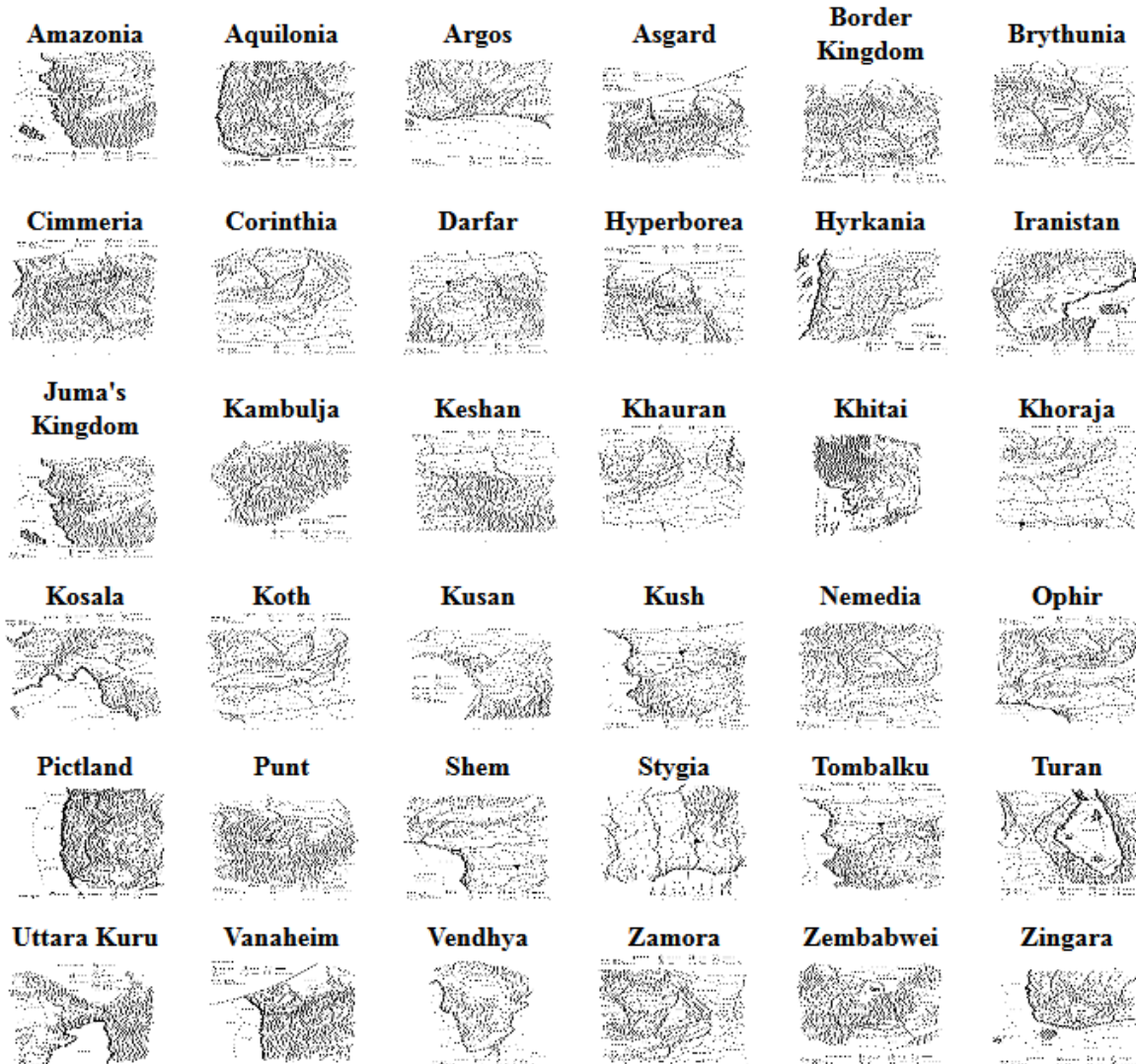
Troop Levies are the same way. You have a chance to get a Levy every Year from a Home Province. It goes up the same way as Harvest. Loyalty also affects it. Incrementally, every season. Harvest gives you a clue as to how your Levy chances are going. If your harvest is above normal for a Province, so too are your chances for a Levy that year. Because if you have enough people for a good Harvest, you can get some to volunteer. If both your Harvest and your Loyalty are high, your Levy is likely higher too.

Some of this can be disguised by other factors, though. Harvest may be high because of Bless Spells and good Rulership by the Monarch and Province Ruler. Each

time you exceed that 10% you lower the population who would have volunteered. Thus your Troop Levies over the next Peace Year is lowered, which is when most players notice it. The comment has been made that the Troop Levy never matches the stated rate in the Province information the Players are given. In my earlier games back in the 80's and 90's, I've exceeded them. Looking back over my information, it was Peace Years where my Raising of troops was under that limit the war seasons before, for some reason.

Those are most of the Dark Holes of the Hyborian War. There are others that I haven't covered, I'm sure. I do have initial guesses as to the actual number value of expenditures and revenue. Those are posted in www.warbarron.com. Another player is working out the sequence for how orders are run. The idea is to give you a better handle on how to run a Kingdom in Hyborian War without having to flail in the dark. Hope to meet you there! (It feels better to fight a knowledgeable opponent than to beat up someone stumbling in the dark.)

Gallery of Maps of Hyborian War



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First Contact (Parts 1 & 2)

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**HAIKEN MARU MAPPING EXPEDITION
UNCHARTED PLANET DESIGNATED B157
STARDATE 3187.9**

Part 1

"Mendez, what do we have?" Captain Wesley Monkman said for perhaps the hundredth time this tour! The Haiken Maru Explorer class ship, Usul had been bouncing all over the sector for the last nine months, going from one lifeless planet to another, and the crew of the Usul had a bit of a routine going.

"Another useless rock," sensor officer Alicia Mendez replied, analyzing the 3D Holographic screen in front of her. "Getting some scanner interference from the Stellar Cloud, but the 1st planet... looks like... no, my apologies Captain. Just, Argon... Carbon Dioxide... Nitrogen... No surface water... No surface infrastructure or signs of life, looks like we have another bust."

"Ok let's make a low orbit sweep before we jump to the next rock," the grizzled veteran Captain said.

"Bringing us in," piped up the last member of the Usul's crew, ship's pilot Charlie Stephenson, only 10 months out of the Maru Space Academy. The Usul was Charlie's first assignment, and even after hundreds of useless planets and

asteroids visited, he still retained his excitement. "Thrusters firing," he said, before the Usul vectored in towards the planet.

"Wait a second Captain... I'm getting something on the Electromagnograph... Faint electronics... looks like it's a repeating pattern but masked" Mendez stated. "I would say not naturally occurring."

The crew waited for the Captain to speak. This was the moment of truth for an Explorer crew. Was it a hostile empire's colony? Was it a pirate base? Was it a new civilization? Or, was it just some piece of space junk someone had forgotten to switch off, that found its way to the planet surface? The bonus paid to the crew for discovering something useful would keep them in alcohol and escorts for a year or more, if that is how they wanted to blow their paycheques. However, the Usul had no weapons, other than the three hand-held pistol blasters in the tiny closet referred to as "The Armoury". If the reading turned out to be something hostile, the crew of the Usul only had one choice - turn and make a run for it, or die.

"Can you get a fix on the transmission?" the Captain asked.

"The reading is faint, sir, but I can get us close," Mendez replied

"Charlie, plot us a course... stay low and land us about 5 klicks away. We'll go on foot from there."

"Should we send off a message to Headquarters before we go down?" Charlie asked excitedly.

"No! If they are hostile I don't want to give them advance notice we are coming."

"Course laid in," came the pilot's reply, as the Usul descended towards the planet's surface.

It had been a long hike from the Usul. Although the gravity was just under Maru standard, the close proximity to the system's sun had made the surface temperature next to unbearable. The crew's respirators were working overtime trying, not quite successfully, to cool the air in their environment suits. The dry wind howled around them in random gusts, beating them back one minute, pushing them sideways the next, then dying out altogether, only to start the entire cycle all over again a few minutes later. Wind twisters picked up the orange and red dust of the planet's surface, and swirled it around them. The blast shields on their visors blocked out the Ultraviolet radiation from the planet's sun and cut down on the brightness, but did nothing to dispel the fact that this was a hot, rocky, dry planet too close to its own sun. By the time the crew got

close enough to use their handheld radio frequency scanners, they were all drenched in sweat.



Reaching a ridge overlooking the mountain, the Captain called a short break. "What do you see Mendez?" the Captain asked, gripping his pistol tightly in his damp palm. Wesley Monkman had been a young pilot, the last time he was in a situation like this, decades ago and far, far away. The reading had turned out to be a hidden pirate base, and he had been the only member of his crew to get away. Sometimes, his nightmares still brought him back to that day and the screams of his comrades.

"Stay alert, Charlie, and watch our backs."

Mendez fixed her digital range-finding magnifiers on the mountain ahead of them, double-checking the heading with the readings scrolling across her data pad. *"Sir, that mountain looks riddled with caves. Depending upon how deep they go, that entire mountain might be hollow. I think the electrical readings are appearing masked, because they are coming from within the mountain."*

"Well, I guess we are not going to find much sitting here. Charlie, you cover us, while we cross to one of those caves. Mendez and I will head in, and see what we can find. If you don't hear back from us in four hours, get back to the ship. Report in to HQ..."

"Wait one..." Mendez interrupted. *"I see movement. It's big! It looks like..."* Her conversation dropped off.

"What is it?" the Captain asked, trying unsuccessfully to see what Mendez was looking at.

Bringing the magnifiers down from her eyes, Mendez turned to the Captain and said, *"It looks like a bug!"*

Part 2

The crew of the Usul tried to make themselves as small as possible, hiding behind the small ridge overlooking the mountain. Only half a klick separated the crew from what Mendez had seen.

The "bug" was huge, more than twice the size of a man. It loosely resembled a dung beetle from Haiken Maru, with a hard black shell on its back and six arms - or were they legs? It was hard to tell the difference, as it would sometimes stand on two, four, or even all six of its limbs. The large beetle-like creature did not spend long outside the cave entrance. It seemed to dislike the surface of the planet as much as the crew of the Usul did, and it entered the cave it had emerged from, with no indication it had seen the humans observing it.

It seemed like hours, when in fact, only several minutes passed, after the "bug" re-entered the cave, before the Captain deemed it safe to talk. *"We stick to Plan A. Mendez and I will go in to get a better electromagnograph reading. Charlie, you stay here to cover us, in case we need to make a hasty retreat. If we don't come back, head back to the ship and contact Headquarters, and report our situation. Maybe they will even send a rescue party."* Although the mention of a possible rescue party was meant to bolster the crew's courage, they all knew that once an Explorer crew got into trouble, they were on their own. In the entire history of the Haiken Maru Interstellar Explorer Fleet, there had never been a successful rescue party. "Rescue parties," if they were ever sent, only ever brought back corpses.

Mendez and the Captain checked their side arms, and then started towards the mountain, leaving a trail of dust as they

sprinted towards the cave. Pistol blasters out, pausing at whatever cover there was to catch their breath in this hot dry heat; they made good time to the base of the mountain. Staying wary of the cave entrance the beetle creature had emerged from, Mendez and the Captain made their way up to a smaller cave, just above and to the right. With a final look back towards the ridge Charlie was monitoring them from, with hand scanners out, they disappeared into the darkness of the cave.

On another ridge overlooking the mountain, a very different observer watched the events unfold with digital magnifiers. With its second set of arms, it carried a powered laser sniper rifle at the ready. It focused its weapon onto the unsuspecting members of the Usul's crew, and traced their path towards the cave entrance. It watched the two humans pause, before disappearing into a cave just above where the Miner had gone into the mountain. The lone observer crouched down to wait, its bio-engineered armour blending into the dry landscape.

The shelter of the cave entrance brought a respite from the inhospitable environment outside, and it even seemed that the temperature had dropped. "Anything on the sensors Mendez?"

The sensor officer's eyes were glued to her datapad. "Sir, I've got a lot more on

the scanner now. This is actually an entrance to a series of tunnels. All the readings are still faint, but I show electronics, communications, lifeforms, even water in the subterranean tunnels below." Mendez continued to cycle thru the menus and screens on the datapad. "These readings just don't make sense, Captain..."

"What is it, Mendez?"

"It's this tunnel, all the rocks, even the walls this cavern is made of... they are all from the deep core of this planet, not surface rocks."

"We are in a mountain, they shouldn't be surface rocks," replied the Captain.

"You're right, but if this were a normal mountain, the rock should be of a similar makeup, and any ore in them should run in veins. These rocks seem to have been stacked here randomly from different deep core mines, and what's even weirder is that the ore mixed in with them seems to be refined. I've never seen natural ore like this, with the impurities removed. It's almost like this is a giant slag pile from different mines, but made up of prime ore deposits."

The Captain was getting bored with the geology lesson. "What are you trying to say?"

"I'm saying that, if these tunnels continue like this, then this mountain is worth a fortune to the empire's mining interests. This could be the richest find an explorer crew has ever made."

"Well, let's go a little deeper and find out. I'm going to enjoy being rich," the Captain chuckled. But, he couldn't shake the feeling in the back of his mind that something felt wrong... very wrong.

Night came quickly on the planet designated B157. It did not, however, dissipate much of the heat. The sandy soil beneath Charlie's feet seemed to radiate heat waves. Mendez and the Captain had been gone for just over an hour, and nothing had happened. No huge alien bugs, no signs of life at all, just the wind howling and battering at him, blowing up the occasional dust storm. Charlie had managed to find a small outcropping of rock along the ridge overlooking the cave the Captain and Mendez had gone into, which allowed him at least a meager bit of protection from the sun's heat beating down on him.

An unusual fatigue was starting to set in. It was one thing to sit hours on end in the air conditioned bridge of the Usul with the Captain and Mendez for company, but to sit in this heat... Charlie repositioned himself, yet again, to try to lessen the beating the wind kept giving him. *"Maybe if I just lie down, I'll be out of this wind, at least,"* Charlie thought to himself. *"I can still see the caves, if I lie down."*

As Charlie lay down on his stomach, he felt the heat rhythmically emanating from the ground. In the low light, the heat waves from the red soil made the

view from that close to the ground a little blurry. He could not remember a time he had felt this tired, before. *"I can still see the caves,"* he reasoned with himself. *"I'll be much more aware, if I just take a break. Close my eyes for a second, maybe..."*

Had anyone been around to see, they might have found it odd that Charlie's pupils glazed over, just before his eyes closed.

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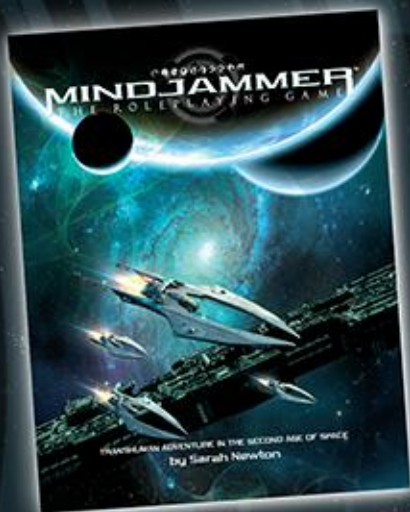
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Brute Force in Comparing Build Strategies

Bernd Jaehnigen

There is a somewhat public game of [Nuclear Destruction](#) playing out on the pages of PlayByMail.net these days. It is noteworthy for a number of reasons. It was the first commercial offering from the first PBM game company, Flying Buffalo. Rick Loomis and friends created this game and ran it by hand for a while until they decided to run it on one of the newfangled computers all the geeks were talking about. I have to imagine it was frightfully expensive at the time, yet Rick charged only 10 cents a turn. Postage alone was 8 cents, so this was kind of incredible. Well, Rick is running this game on that same 10 cents a turn deal.

Nuclear Destruction is quite simple -- the rules fit on one page. Every player is a country, and there are a number of "minor countries" which the players may bribe or attack. Everyone starts with the same setup -- 9 factories, 20 missiles, and 10 ABMs. Each factory can produce 1 missile, 1 ABM, or 1/3 of a new factory. Each incoming missile is stopped by an ABM. Any surplus incoming missiles take out factories one by one. So right at the start, any one player could attack any other player with ALL his missiles, overwhelm his defenses, and put him out of commission.

But of course that would leave that attacker without any means of retaliation should someone else attack HIM. So the game begins as kind of a Mexican standoff. No attacks are allowed on the first turn. The

first person who declares war after that gets an attack bonus, and after that it's war war war. There are also simple mechanics for getting minor countries to join you in war, spying on those countries to find out who controls them, and selling factories to minor countries to generate cash (which can be used to bribe them again.)

Given such bone simple mechanics, such an even starting position, and a level playing field in which any player may attack any other player, the game resembles Diplomacy more than anything else. It is dangerous to the point of suicide to blindly attack, so players must contact each other and negotiate peaceful relations while isolating some chosen targets. In this game, it is not the early bird who gets the worm, but rather the second mouse who gets the cheese.

So, during the early game detente, players are scrambling to develop their position. This comes down to the classic guns vs. butter debate, or rather guns vs. factories. The more you devote to factory building, the better your production line will be, but if your opponents choose to focus on missiles you might be torn down before you even start. This strategic choice is actually present in many (or even "most") PBM games. What's nice about Nuclear Destruction is that the mechanics are so simple that it is easy to plot out different courses and see what would happen to your missile economy.

So I plotted out ten turns worth of production orders using 4 different strategies.

First, have all factory production go into "factory production" (with odd remainders going into ABMs). This gets you to 114 factories by turn 10. That means from turn 10, you'd be able to produce 114 missiles or ABMs -- far more than anyone else could. There is one restriction in the rules, you can't spend more than half your production on ABMs. But with 114 factories, you'd get 57 ABMs a turn -- in two turns you'd be fully protected from any other single attacker. BUT, for 10 turns you remain utterly vulnerable to a devastating first blow.

Second option? Put half your juice into factories, and the other half into ABMs. You won't be much of a threat to anyone, but you'll be as protected as can be with 95 ABMs on turn 10 (and 39 factories!) This is enough of a shield to protect you from all but the most fanatical attacker, and might even shield you from group attacks. At that turn 10 mark, you can presumably start churning out missiles with a respectable factory base, or keep escalating your own defenses and watch the others wear themselves out.

Another option would be to put half into expanding your factory base (as above), but split the rest between missiles and ABMs. You'll still have a nice 39 factories to keep you supplied, you'll present a fairly hard target for attackers, and you'd have a decent retaliation capability ready to go. As such, it would not only be dangerous for others to attack you, but you'd likely survive long enough to buy time, rally your buddies, and bring the war to your new enemy.

Finally, you could go all-out and build nothing but missiles. You'll have 100 of them by turn 10. If at that point you are facing Mr. Factory, your 100 missiles won't look so tough against his 114 factories -- in two turns he could build 114 ABMs to block you AND send 114 missiles down your gullet, easily bypassing your puny starting ABMs. You'd even have a tough time against Mr Factory/Defense, whose 95 ABMs on turn 10 would all but stop your entire barrage. No, the only rational strategy for Mr AllMissile is to attack between turns 4 and 6, where his edge is widest. Even then, he'd have to expend his entire life savings to break through one player's defenses AND knock out his factories. It would take him another 10 turns to re-arm, while his OTHER opponents will no doubt overwhelm him and his puny economy.

Turn	Focus on Factories			Turn	Balanced Approach		
	factories	missiles	ABMs		factories	missiles	ABMs
1	9	20	10	1	9	20	10
2	12			2	11	21	12
3	16			3	13	23	15
4	21		11	4	15	26	19
5	28			5	18	29	22
6	37		12	6	21	33	27
7	49		13	7	25	37	32
8	65		14	8	29	43	39
9	86		16	9	34	50	46
10	114		18	10	39	59	56
Following Turn	114	77	75	Following Turn	39	78	76

There are hybrid approaches, of course -- you could focus on factories for a few turns, then pump out missiles enough to make Mr AllMissile blush. You could give missiles to minor countries and have THEM attack. Etc. But 10 turns seemed like a good small order set to test out the various approaches in laboratory conditions.

Of course, much of this goes out the window when people start forming alliances, backstabbing their allies, and other classic

PBM shenanigans. Then there will be a set of strategic options on a whole different level, and your spreadsheet won't help you out then.

This same method can be employed in any PBM game in which you are building your position over time. Given sharp limits on resources, which allocation will yield the best results over the shortest time with the least risk? I attempted to hew out some rough calculations when I started the current Cluster Wars test game. The immediate concern in that game is how to maximize research, while also developing your production lines and exploring the cluster. Specifically – how many of your precious professional workers do you commit to those expensive laboratories, instead of running factories?

Of course, Cluster Wars is about as far away from Nuclear Destruction as you can get on the complexity scale. The spreadsheets were fun, but I didn't pour in the other variables – mining output, farms, training my people, to say nothing of inevitable war with the other players. The tutorial suggested players put an early focus on factory production, but I ignored this and went for a balanced approach of factories and labs. Other players went all-out for labs from the start.

In Alamaze, players must often calculate time and gold investments in developing their wizards, elite troops, secret agents, and town-based economies. What will the payoff be? Will I be caught with my chainmail britches down if I focus on my wizards tower? Should I ignore magic and focus on an early-game rush into the southern swamps?

Turn	Just Missiles and ABMs			Turn	Factories and ABMs			Turn	War War War		
	factories	missiles	ABMs		factories	missiles	ABMs		factories	missiles	ABMs
1	9	20	10	1	9	20	10	1	9	20	10
2	9	24		2	11		13	2	9	29	10
3	9	29	19	3	13		18	3	9	38	10
4	9			4	15		25	4	9	47	10
5	9	38	28	5	18		31	5	9	56	10
6	9			6	21		40	6	9	65	10
7	9	47	37	7	25		49	7	9	74	10
8	9			8	29		62	8	9	83	10
9	9	56	46	9	34		76	9	9	91	10
10	9	60	51	10	39		95	10	9	100	10
Following Turn	9	64	56	Following Turn	39	20	134	Following Turn	9	100	10

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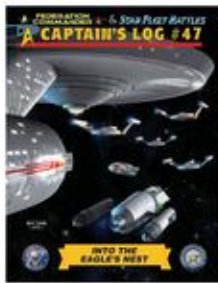
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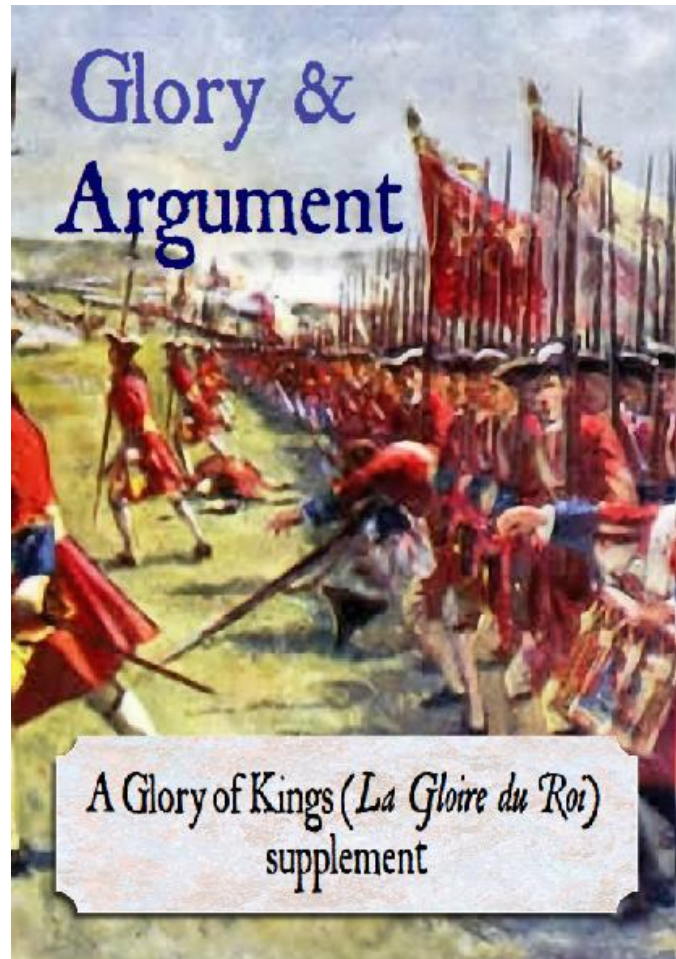
From Game Companies and Game Moderators

Agema

[AGEMA](#) are pleased to announce the release of our latest supplement for our game [The Glory of Kings](#). Called [Glory & Argument](#), it features an eclectic mix of subject matter: Palace guard companies; War dog sections; Mobile vet clinics; Horse artillery batteries; Light infantry companies; Siege breechloading artillery; Improved bayonets; Steel ramrods; Improved heavy cavalry saddles; Conventional battlefield tactics; Extra powder and shot consignments; Parachute rockets; War dog armour; Wooden gun rests; Light infantry tactics; Soldier's families; Canteens; Bandoliers; Retrenchments; Engineer battalions; Old and new muskets; Teaching by officers; Understrength units; Large barges; Line ahead formation and spacing; Flotillas; Long barrel naval cannon; Naval signal rockets; Dhows, large and small; Spanish law on succession; Minors and royal succession; Treaty of Westphalia; Treaty of Karlowitz 1699; County of Ravensberg; Duchy of Montferrat; Duchy of Warmia; Hopsdar of Moldavia; Scotland's Claim of Right Act 1689; Royal Assent in England; Burgage boroughs; Tartars or Tatars; Tonga; Burma; Far Eastern society structure; Matsumae clan; Kingdom of Naples; Meskawki Indians, Quapaw Indians; Coahuiltec Indians; Codified law; Daneil

Fahrenheit; Tomaso Albinoni; Professor Leibniz; Catherine of Braganza; Colonel Benjamin Church; Jeremiah Clarke; Charles de la Fosse; Jakob le Blon; Johann Pachelbel; Guiseppi Campani; Jose da Silva Pais; Jean Maritz; Nicolaas Hartsoeker; Edward Lloyd; Sir John Houblon; Abraham Houblon; Gottfried Silbermann; Andreas Silbermann; Francis Eyles; Giacomo Pylarini; Philip von Hornigk; Albert Bogard; Craft and workhouse institutes; Whaling stations; Creosote; Improved whisky barrels; Refrigeration; Public carriage services; Improved suspension; Dropped axles for carts; Bog iron; Stamp mills; Hydraulic mining; Vintage wines; Brussel sprouts; Retained rotten grain; Jute; Asil horses; Caspian horses; Turkoman horses; Shirazi horses; Baluchi horses; Kurdish horses; Falconry; Human anatomy; Scurvy; Population growth; Missionaries; Lutheran doctrine on divorce and remarriage; Archbishop of Canterbury; Catholics in England; Hajj; Koranic law and wives; Zakat; the Chaldean Catholic Church; churches in Poland; religious status of Western European states; the Holy Lance; Lenape Indians; Ojibwa Indians; Apalchee Indians; mounting an expedition; forging documents; magic lanterns; bulldogs; universities; Chinese spouting bowls; Chinese magic mirrors; the Marine Society; cymbals; copper box

communication; copper wire; ice houses; fasting; and music pavilions!



Harlequin Games

[Harlequin Games](#) are proud to announce that we're launching our first game in our new Legends module - [Blood Tides Rising™](#)

This module was initially conceived by Ian Koxvold and then warped and matured by the Harlequin Games team in conjunction with SSV Graz. It has been prepared over several years to give it depth for the player to explore and to enhance game play. We have striven to

make each faction a distinctly different playing experience!

The God-War broke the land of Yohan and the blood of the Mad God flooded what remained, leaving the oceans a deep crimson hue as the deluge receded. From the wreckage of their world the mortal races have reached upwards for the helping hands of the New Gods, striving to rebuild. Some strive to make sure it never happens again, whereas others look to restore their old gods!

The Eternal Kingdom was forged in 'The Breaking' as it was protected from the flood by 'The Wall', which was raised by Rognard as he ascended. All beyond their borders are rejected and ignored, unless they are a threat of course...

Fabled Thermia was cast down, broken and smashed underfoot. In the power vacuum that followed the fractured tribes of Vikings have coalesced into a coalition that is almost a 'nation' and now all fear the square sails of their ships appearing on the horizon.

The Native Orcs emerged from their burrows after the flood and many races who saw their spread across Yohan now think of them as less than vermin. The freshly arrived Saurians see them far more as a resource to work with their 'New Orcs' and help them crush the Parthians.

The Parthians, the snake people of the swamp, have traditionally been one of the most peaceful races of Yohan, tending Life as it grows and develops.

Now however, with the Saurian incursion, they have bent 'life' into offensive forms and all would do well to get out of their path!

Dwarves/Elves are amongst the 'oldest' races of Yohan. They recall the time when their supremacy covered all the Land. The God-War laid them low and their last City was flooded in Blood. Yet still they hold the keys to many secrets!

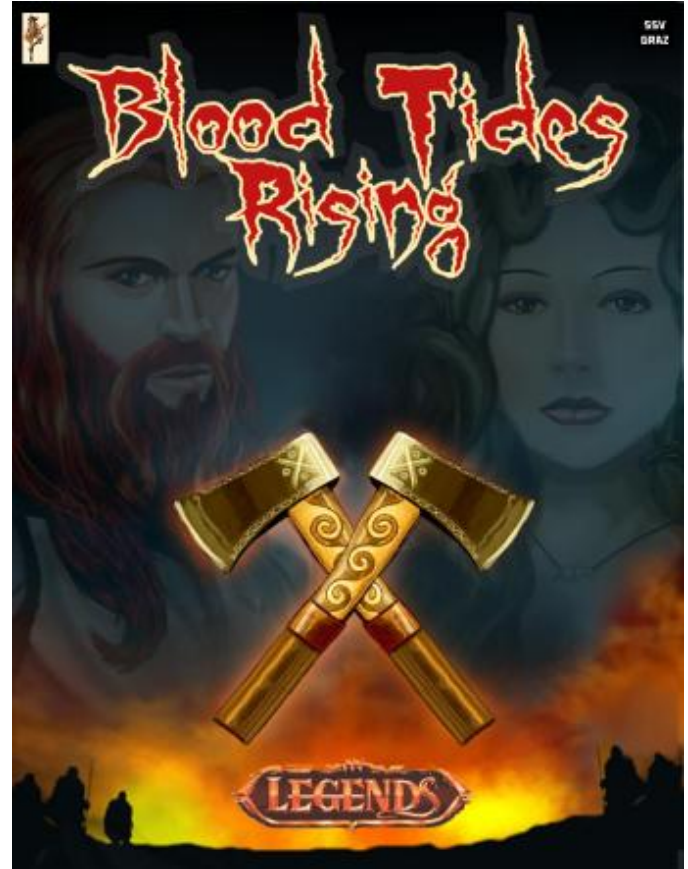
The Children of the Mad-God seek to find what was lost, to grasp it once again in their mind's eye and in the heart of their Soul. Only by focusing on the inner workings of your own flesh can you see through the insanity of a lost deity.

Many of these nations are held together/apart by a strange mortar, The Merchants. Only they have a feel for the new overall shape of Yohan and the varied needs and desires of the myriad races. Always their silvered tongues convince you its better to work with them rather than against, and always they make crowns out of it!

Looking down upon all of this, attempting to guide the lesser inhabitants of Yohan to a better future, are the Masters of Light and Darkness. Empowered by the gods themselves, The Masters research into the arcane fabric of the world, using their power to preserve the Freedom of All, whether they want it or not!

More details are available here <http://www.harlequingames.com/legbtr01.html>

Email pbm@harlequingames.com if you have any questions.



Alamaze News

(www.alamaze.co)

Alamaze Resurgent celebrated its one year anniversary in April, 2014. That marked one year since Alamaze returned to its players in its new format and under the direction of its original designer. In that year, we started more than 60 Alamaze games in 8 different formats, on a new map with new rules, new attractive PDF results, processed more than 10,000 turns, had players make more than 10,000 posts on our forum, and processed and got back in players'

hands all turns within a few hours of the turn deadline for all 10,000. We run games twice a week, at about \$2 per turn, in a game that has won every major PBM Award. Yes, none of that is a misprint.

Alamaze is a game with up to 15 players per contest, each controlling a fantasy kingdom and directing strategy concerning economics, military, political, covert, and diplomatic issues. It has been loved by its players for 25 years.

We don't rest on our laurels, however. In addition to introducing a new map and five new formats in our first year back with Resurgent, we are constantly adding to our players' experience. Our latest strategic change is that we now have changed our unique Early Strategic Objective model so that players select their kingdom's objectives on a creative point system, instead of them being assigned. Similarly, players now can select their kingdom's Secret Victory Objective. These new breakthroughs allow the player to role play and guide his kingdom as he wishes, rather than according to a pre-ordained style.

Here in July, 2014, we have now started 80 games, have more than 13,000 forum posts by about 250 registered forum members. So we are averaging starting about a game a week. In the last week, we started a 12 player experienced Alliance game, and a new player Primeval game – a contest for five kingdoms and players with one player a mentor for the four less experienced.

In support of Suspense & Decision, any player signing up for a new Alamaze account on our website, www.alamaze.co, that mentions Suspense & Decision in his comment field in the brief website signup form will get the first month at Scout Level Service for only \$9.95 (normally \$19.95). That's 7 turns for \$10 bucks. If you have any curiosity about Alamaze at all, how can you not take up that gauntlet? Once you sign up for your account, claim your kingdom on our forum thread for Games Forming which is <http://kingdomsofarcania.net/forum/forumdisplay.php?fid=20>. See you on the fields of battle in Alamaze! Sign up now!

Oplon Games

After six months of commercial release and with a very low advertising budget [Empires at War 1805](#) manages to increase its running games to 10 in total with over 70 active players. The player base comes from all over the world, with strong communities from the UK, USA and Greece. Another 8 games have ended since the time of beta-testing, with the following Game Winners:

Game 1: FRANCE (Bitoulis), runner up: SPAIN (ihatz)

Game 2: AUSTRIA (Enigma), MOROCCO (ihatz)

Game 3: PRUSSIA (Poliorkitis), SWEDEN (akrivopo)

Game 4: SPAIN (Enigma), HOLLAND (Daimonios)

Game 5: OTTOMAN EMPIRE (Zoumpokop)

Game 7: GREAT BRITAIN (marlog)

Game 9: RUSSIA (akrivopo), runners up: DUTCHY OF WARSAW (gingi), DENMARK (ichatz)

Game 11: CONFEDERATION OF THE RHINE (Billdmmd), OTTOMAN EMPIRE (porfirogenis), DUTCHY OF WARSAW (Tywin)

At the moment Game 21 is filling up, you can see which countries are available here:

<http://www.eaw1805.com/scenario/1805/game/21/info>

This will be a fast paced scenario, with 3 turns per week! Eaw 1805 price list is as follows :

 is one "Empires at War" credit.

1 Euro buys 10x 

We are particularly proud of our community, because Empires at War players are on average very competitive while at the same time very friendly, resulting to quite interesting games with high anticipation per turn; it is also quite common player queries to be answered by the community even before GMs have even a chance to reply. To this

end, Oplon Games is examining improvements to the game which come directly from player comments & suggestions, watch this space for more developments as of September!

	AUSTRIA-HUNGARY	8	
	CONFEDERATION OF THE RHINE	5	
	DENMARK	5	
	SPAIN	8	
	NAPOLEON VALEUR FRANCE	10	
	GREAT BRITAIN	10	
	HOLLAND	7	
	ITALY	5	
	PORTUGAL	7	
	MOROCCO	7	
	NAPLES	5	
	PRUSSIA	8	
	RUSSIA	10	
	SWEDEN	7	
	OTTOMAN EMPIRE	7	
	DUCHY OF WARSAW	7	
	EGYPT	7	



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THE AGE OF CONAN

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HELP THE SAVAGE NORTH
LIVE UP TO ITS NAME

The Rallebian Clan

Interceptor Pilot # 247

[Takamo](#) fiction by David Bellar

I answered the call... *"Fighter Pilots Needed."*

When you are born into Rallebian life, you have one of two goals: Accumulation or Commerce. Being a fighter pilot was not on my horizon. Well, all that changed a few years ago. The Rallebian Clan allied with a mining outfit. More of an arrangement for more resources. We would allow certain shipments to go unscathed. Ships intact. Alien lives saved. We get paid in money and ore, and we didn't have to raid them, just their competitor. What a negotiation. (But, of course, this is all truly speculation, with a hint of definite deniability) That's when things changed. Along with the ore, came these tech guys and her.

Everyone knows the reasons why. Some female miner from a nearby colony lures the emperor's son away. I mean, for God's sake, she came from a colony. She keeps him occupied and happy. Parents are embarrassed, for he was already promised to another family. Yes, the elitist still arrange marriages. They believe it is the best way to manipulate (I mean, accumulate) wealth and standing within the empire. You know moms. *"How could this colony girl keep her eldest son happy and occupied?"*

"She is from the Quezallian Empire." You know: blaming Dad, friends, school, and the galactic internet. Then, these mining guys revealed the planet her son went to is supposedly loaded with ore. The miners have the entire galaxy mapped out by ore. The home world planet where this girl is from is Blue: only green is better. Our home world is 4th tier, kind of a pissy, dull yellow. So, the Accumulation of ore began, along with the recruiting.

The elitist cordoned off a section of our capitol city. That is Rallebian for, *"Built a huge wall with keep out signs every 20 feet, along with armed guards."* Then, we saw it. A special space dock labelled Accumulation Development.

We have fighters. But, they are for defense. Hidden in deep, dark subsector space. Waiting patiently for uninvited aliens..... Then, accumulation of scrap metal begins.

These new fighters are different. Faster, sleeker, meant to pack a punch, but not very defensive. Seems like, if anything bigger than your average Cestodial Hegemony dust digger could seriously damage the ship: (That was the first clue something was amiss). The recruiting started right when mass production began.

Training is simple. Complete the mission in the new simulator with more than three kills. You are ready. The simulator is kind of like a life-sized video game, except for the over-zealous, uptight, baton-wielding Sergeant who pokes you in the ribs with a baton, when you screw up or die. After 45 hours of simulator training, I have noticed a high correlation between screw-ups and dying. All I have achieved, so far, was 63 painfully pathetic deaths and multiple sore ribs. Then, it happened. I survived the mission and landed back on base. The Talley counter read, "4 kills."

My Sergeant grunted, "You've graduated." He sheathed his baton slowly, and walked away.

Just under two years ago, we sent our fighters to retrieve the prodigal son. 75 fighters left, and none returned. We waited and waited. When the last moon gave way to dawn, we knew we were outmatched, but our resolve grew stronger, hatred deeper, and the rewards grew bigger. (Got to love mom). That siren should have looked for another favorite son. The second wave of fighters had more success. We sent 150 of our new fighters, 96 were never seen again. The rest returned heroes. We learned the cold-hearted truth - our fighter pilots were not superior. We killed less than 50. Hence, the new simulators.

In response, we did what we do best. Now, the lesson would be ours. 2 fleets of Corsair 3s. The newest of the Rallebian fleet. Stealthy and fast,

definitely superior! We watched them leave from the space dock. All training stopped, to watch the fleets disappear into the stars. 20 ships primed like a Plyuinkian cat. Those stalking eyes ready to pounce on its prey. Determined Corsair pilots: and our most experienced. It seemed almost unfair, but then, revenge never is. They returned victorious. 350 units of loot. Reports of starvation and lack of commerce. An economy in havoc. No Rallebian losses. Take that, you wench of a son stealer!

Now, it's my turn. 150 strong, and better equipped.

DeterminedYes

DedicatedYes

Well trained...If I survive, yes! But, if I die, you suck, you baton wielding, rib-smashing Sergeant.

Green Light and we're off. One wave, one mind, one mission, Ralleb.

HYBORIAN WAR

"I enjoy this game immensely. Nearly getting exterminated and fighting to survive is terrifying and thrilling. 10 straight turns of warfare vs Zamora is the longest slugfest I've ever had, and the most fun."

- Zebhu Varkon

Hyborian War player

Hyborian War Game # **HW-891**

EXPLORE

Enter a new era. Herald the dawn of a new age.

The twilight of humanity coincides with the rise of the Empire of the Race!

Nowhere is forbidden to the explorer fleets of the Fessin Caste.

The galactic map is changing. Humankind has been halted in its expansion across the stars.

CONQUER

Supported by hive allies, the tentacles of the Flagritz Empire stretch forth across a galaxy which yearns to be free from human domination.

New-found comrades in arms champion our cause!

Driven back, humans flee to the sanctuary of their traditional regions of space. Their grip is slipping. The future holds the certainty of doom for all mankind.

DOMINATE

Ours is the destiny of conquest. We claim the right of domination. We ascend as gods!

We are the FLagritz! The universe is ours to rule, to subjugate, to enslave.

The race of man fears our coming. They plot to foil our advance. Yet, we are unstoppable!

Our ways are alien to them. Yet, we know them for what they are. They perceive us to be a threat, but they woefully underestimate our might and our resolve.

Join Us!



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adventure set in
the world of
The Glory of Kings!

High-Fi Gaming in a Low-Fi World

Tribal Starfleet Trade Report #3

Bernd Jaehnigen

The general trend in the computer gaming world for the last couple of decades has been toward bigger, snazzier graphics, 3D animation, super special effects, and kung-fu action. It has reached the point where a gaming title isn't considered serious, if it doesn't have a multi-million dollar budget. Note that this means the budget for the latest version of Call of Duty is likely an order of magnitude larger than the budget for all PBM games throughout history. Combined.

This is curious, because it's not necessarily the same direction the players are going.



These amazing first-person shooters are now competing with perhaps the crudest looking first-person game to come along since we

were loading up Doom on our Intel 386 -- Minecraft.

[Minecraft](#) looks so crude and retro, it is actually appealing. It's a sandbox game, and it's almost a challenge to the players to do something cool with such a limited interface. The results have been astounding. On the creative side, search "Minecraft top 5" videos, and you'll see some remarkable works of art. And, on the gaming side, there are thousands of game servers, where players go head-to-head, in spite of the crudeness. They're not even taking advantage of the sandbox stuff or the complex circuit-simulation stuff -- they are just bopping each other's blocky avatars with blunt-looking swords and no kung fu.

I have written, before, about the Rogue-like games. [Rogue](#) was a text-based dungeon-crawling game in which the hallways and rooms were rendered on simple monitors, using lines and alphanumeric characters. Back when they were first written, this was a necessity -- graphic cards did not exist, then, and most computer monitors could only handle text. But, the game-play was so engaging, it spawned a generation of similar ones -- my favorite is still Net Hack. I have recently learned

of two other popular games that fall loosely into the rogue-like universe.

[Dwarf Fortress](#) is a fantastically complex game. I heard about it through a post on [Slashdot](#), which hailed the first major new update for that game in a couple of years. Basically, you generate a world (with a lot of configurable options) with a map, a rough history, and an overlay of towns, monsters, and legends. You have to set up camp for your band of hardy dwarves, secure the local area, dig out the beginnings of a nice, cozy mine-shaft, and perhaps start trading with some of the locals. As your camp grows into something more like a town, you notice you're playing something like SimCity. There is also an option to play as a group of adventurers, using the same world and history.

The developer wanted to focus on game play, not graphics libraries. So, he built his own crude graphic interface, using a hacked-up character set. There are menu options available using various key-presses, simple reports, etc.. And, you can see your dwarves follow your orders in real-time. *"You -- go start chopping down some lumber."* It's really just a step up from Rogue. Except, the game play is REALLY deep. It has enough rabid fans that it gets talked about on Slashdot (one of the biggest nerd-culture sites there is). Now get this -- the developer started writing it in 2002! This isn't some ancient game with a core of ancient fans -- this is a relatively NEW game. The developer has

been quoted as saying this game shall be his life's work.

There is no way a large game studio with a Hollywood-sized budget would ever attempt something like this.

Another game has become a surprise hit -- [FTL](#). It stands for faster-than-light, and it has been described as a rogue-like game with lots of graphics. You are a starship captain, trying to get across the galaxy, past an unending series of obstacles and dangers, and you have to manage your ship systems, crew, damage control, etc.. You don't ever get to go pew-pew-pew, yourself. You're managing ship operations. And, you die. A lot. (This is perhaps its strongest link to Rogue. In my hundreds of games of Net Hack, I have never come close to winning.)

I draw your attention to these games, dear reader, to highlight that there is a market for good, playable games, even without million-dollar budgets, catchy graphics, and twitchy interfaces.

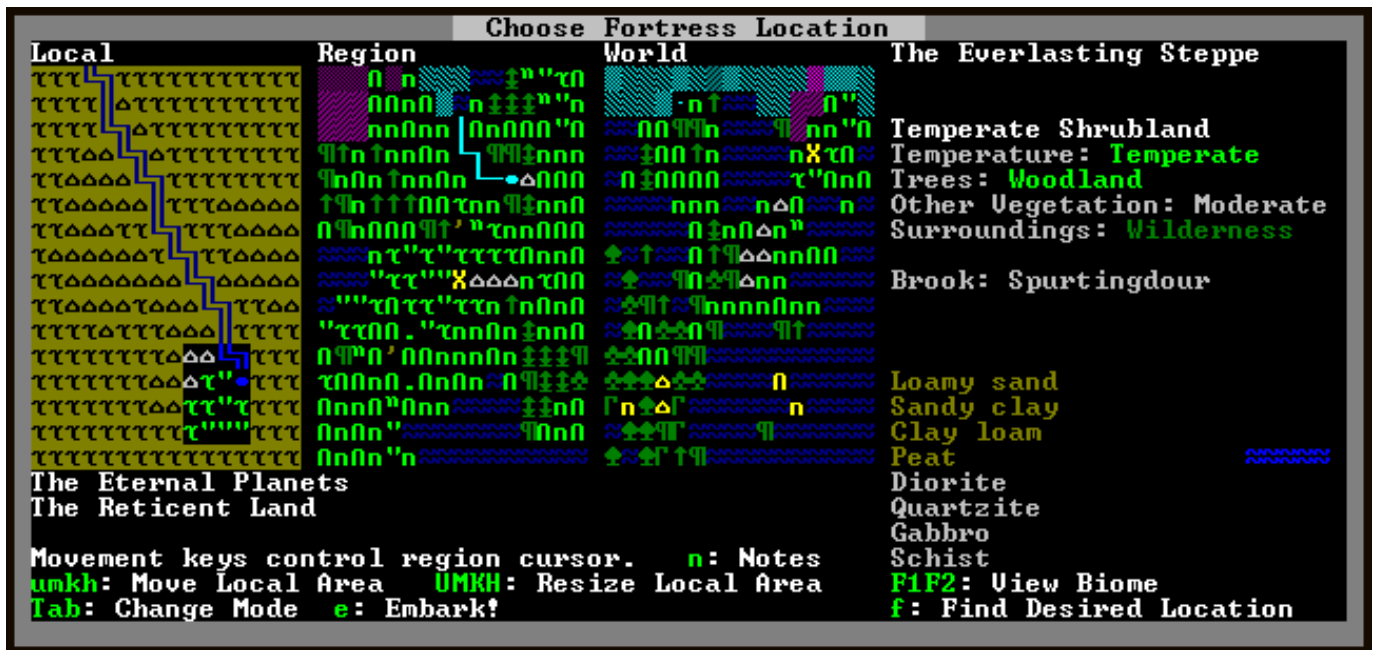
A lot of gamers, it turns out, care more about game-play than polish. PBM games are a natural fit, for players like this.

Recently, I was watching my son at his karate class, and chatting with one of the other karate dads. The topic of hobbies came up, and of course, I went into my pitch about PBM. I described the complexity and wonder of space empires in Cluster Wars, and the diplomatic team-building of Alamaze in some detail. He listened, asked some questions, and in general, was delighted to hear of all this -- not so much that he wanted to sign up for a PBM game, but that it fascinated him to learn of sub-cultures like this. I felt the same way, myself, upon reading of Dwarf Fortress.

I felt the same way, in fact, when I started joining my son in his Minecraft

obsession. It seemed so old and quaint, until I started playing and being caught up by every hook and crook of its elegantly engaging design. I describe it to my brother, and he absolutely can't understand the appeal. Maybe, I'll set him up on my laptop, while we're having some beers, one night. This puny little game -- this game which has generated shockwaves in computer culture -- is now a fixture in our house. Recently, when I informed my son that I had set up a server where he and his friends could play together -- their own world -- he pretty much screamed.

Take that, Hollywood blockbusters!



Nuclear Destruction - Game ND-842
 (a strategic missile game with an emphasis on diplomacy)
games@flyingbuffalo.com
Turn 3 is due Thursday, August 7 at 6:00 PM MST

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Play By Mail - *In pursuit of imagination-based gaming!*

Analyzing Progress - Part 3

Weighing Our Magazine's Success and Failure

Charles Mosteller

Success and failure are relative terms.

The stark reality is that, in some ways, this magazine has already failed, it continues to fail, and in all likelihood, it will continue to prove to be a failure in numerous different ways.

Yet, none of our failures-to-date have inhibited Suspense & Decision from being launched, nor have they prevented new issues from being published - repeatedly! This magazine exists, in the here and now. Continuing it forward should not be unduly problematic.

To be honest with you, quite frankly, there are days that I don't want to bother with it all, anymore. While I'm talking about the magazine, I'm not talking about just and only the magazine.

Say what?!

Yep, I'm talking about the whole ball of wax, the entire enchilada. The magazine. The website. The wiki. The blog. All of it. Every last bit of it. So, if you wake up one day, and find that my end of the PBM rainbow has gone dark, you'll know that failure has won out over success.

But, then there are those days when the mood stirs, when desire strikes, when the imagination comes alive once more! And, you know what? That's a really

good feeling! It really and truly is. God save the king, because on those days, I'm on top of the PBM world.

If I were to shut this magazine down, tomorrow, what would likely happen? I'll tell you what I think would happen.

A lot of people would shrug their shoulders, and breathe a sigh of disgust. Some wouldn't care. Some would.

But, none of that would really matter, not in the long run. What would matter is that you would then likely see one or more individuals rise to the occasion.

Enter the Knights Templar of the Play By Mail Realm!

Somebody would carry on. Oh, sure, it might all boil down to a single, solitary individual, but my gut instinct tells me that a true paladin of the PBM faith would appear on the scene, intent upon restoring the spark of hope in the PBM faithful.

You see, when David Webber died, Paper Mayhem died along with him. Or, more accurately, it didn't continue on without him. But, nobody blamed David. How could they? After all, death comes to all men. It was easy to understand. People grasped that, much like in the Tolkien-crafted universe of Middle-earth, PBM had passed into a new age.

It was a loss, to be certain, one of inestimable size. It was terrible. It was tragic. Yet, life goes on, even if play by mail gaming was all the poorer for a loss of that magnitude. It was, in a word, cataclysmic!

Now, years later, when Carol Mulholland suffered a stroke, Flagship magazine's fate was uncertain. People understood. They always do, in situations like that.

Flagship magazine, like virtually every PBM magazine that ever existed down through the years, had suffered its fair share of missing publication deadlines, and then some.

Yet, uncertainty has a way of making people pause.

Oh, sure, with each passing week and month, it wasn't that Flagship became missed less and less. Rather, it was till there in the back of our minds. Maybe Carol would get better. Maybe her health would improve. Maybe she would resume publishing Flagship, and if she could, then none of us would be any the worse for wear. We could just chalk it up as just another missed deadline, this one far more understandable than any or all of the ones that came before it. People are understanding, you see.

But, uncertainty is a far cry from certainty. If I were to cease publication of Suspense & Decision magazine, and particularly if I were to do so abruptly, it would jar the senses and the sensibilities of the PBM masses that have begun gathering anew to rally around a PBM

magazine that, for all of its many attendant and self-inflicted flaws, had managed to make a go of things and to get the PBM ball rolling, again.

What manner of madness should take hold that, having picked up the PBM Gauntlet, one so casually tosses it down, again? That's just not how life works. It's not how the universe functions - well, at least, not in the PBM corner of the universe, anyway.

When you start publishing a PBM magazine, people begin to take notice. Anytime you start talking utter foolishness, such as launching a new magazine with a heavy focus upon play by mail gaming, people are going to look at you as they should - as if you don't seem to have a full grasp of the true reality of the situation. Plus, to make matters worse, many of them will remember what real PBM magazines were like. Some of them even knew the PBM magazine publishers and editors of years past, personally.

If you're not going to do it right, then why bother at all? Why even go there, to begin with? Why not just spare everyone the headaches and the heartaches of getting their hopes up, only to dash them against the wall? Better to let sleeping dogs lie, than to stir up such a hornet's nest of feelings and expectations.

My daddy once told me to take a stick, and knock a hornet's nest out of a tree in our backyard. I briefly pondered the absurdity of what he had told me to do,

and I opted to not knock that hornet's nest out of that tree. I love my daddy. He's gone, now.

In hindsight, not knocking that hornet's nest out of that tree was a success, in that I didn't get stung by any hornets on that particular day. But, there's more to life than not getting stung by hornets.

What does any of this have to do with anything, though?

Well, right now, I find myself pondering not just whether to knock down a hornet's nest, again (albeit of an entirely different variety), but which hornet's nest.

Now, people have begun to get a taste for some PBM reading, again. The marrow is stirring in their bones. They have begun dusting themselves off, to read the newest issue to come down the pike.

We stand at the precipice of our very first double-digit issue. Issue # 10 is now but a mere single issue away. It would be worse than madness to give up the ghost, now - particularly if I were to so willingly.

David Webber had no choice. Neither did Carol Mulholland. I still do.

So, you see, if I were to just shut down the presses, and abandon Suspense & Decision magazine and scatter its future to the winds, a howl would rise up from within the hearts of those that care. Somebody would seek to right that wrong. It would matter that much to

them. They would rise to the occasion. They would champion the cause.

And that, to me, is one of the true successes of this magazine. Oh, sure, you might feel that I am engaged in yet another flight of fantasy. But, then again, some considered it to be a flight of fancy that I, of all people, was daring to consider launching a new PBM magazine, not so very long ago.

Play by mail gaming, when you get right down to it, is a form of entertainment. People like to be entertained. They like to have choices and selections to choose from.

Nine issues may not be a lot of things, but what these first nine issues of Suspense & Decision magazine have demonstrated is that it is, indeed, possible for a PBM magazine to still be published in this day and age.

So, the natural question that pushes to the surface to be asked is, why shouldn't there be a PBM magazine, even still, no matter what Charles does or doesn't do?

Sometimes, people have a way of creating dilemmas for themselves, and without even trying. Me? I set an initial goal of twelve issues for this magazine. If we couldn't make that, then everything else past that was nothing more than sheer fantasy.

But, now, we find ourselves quickly closing in on that goal. We are in danger of actually achieving that goal. Does this not legitimately qualify as success, if we can pull the next three issues off?

The dilemma for me, though, is less about whether to continue on past Issue # 12, or to just let this magazine conclude its run, and call it a day, and more about the issue that lies just beyond the last page of whatever Issue # 12 will ultimately look like.

That's right - I'm talking about Issue # 13.

Thirteen strikes me as a number that I could just have too much fun with. Do I want to fore go that?

Back before I published Issue # 1, I didn't really ponder the Thirteenth Paradox. Now, I am facing the prospect of it, and I'm finding it to be a very real and tangible thing.

I can sense it. I can feel it. Hell, I can even taste it!

Some within this greater hobby that is play by mail gaming writ large, to include its digital progeny, would prefer that I adopt a more upbeat approach, when I author the various articles on PBM gaming.

Yet, I can't help but to wonder where their own upbeat is? How many times will they milk the same art for the games that they hawk to the masses of the present day?

While readers and game moderators may wonder just what the Hell that Charles intends to do, as far as whether I intend to keep this magazine going or whether I intend to scuttle it, I wonder a few things, myself. As my Day of Reckoning

approaches on the decision of whether to keep going or not, so, too, does their Day of Reckoning arrive, as well.

Each new issue of PlayByMail.Net features new artwork. I don't make that possible - artist Anand Kaviraj does. And, personally speaking, I think that the magazine is all the better for it.

Well, what about those games that you gentlemen and ladies are trying to sell to the public at large, regardless of whether they are free to play or pay to be entertained versions? Can you not grasp that art tickles the imagination? It sparks fire in our hearts and in our minds.

We share a common goal. We have mutual interests. We seek to entertain.

The debt of gratitude that I owe to Kav, our cover artist, is a debt that shall last in perpetuity. It is a debt that can never truly be paid.

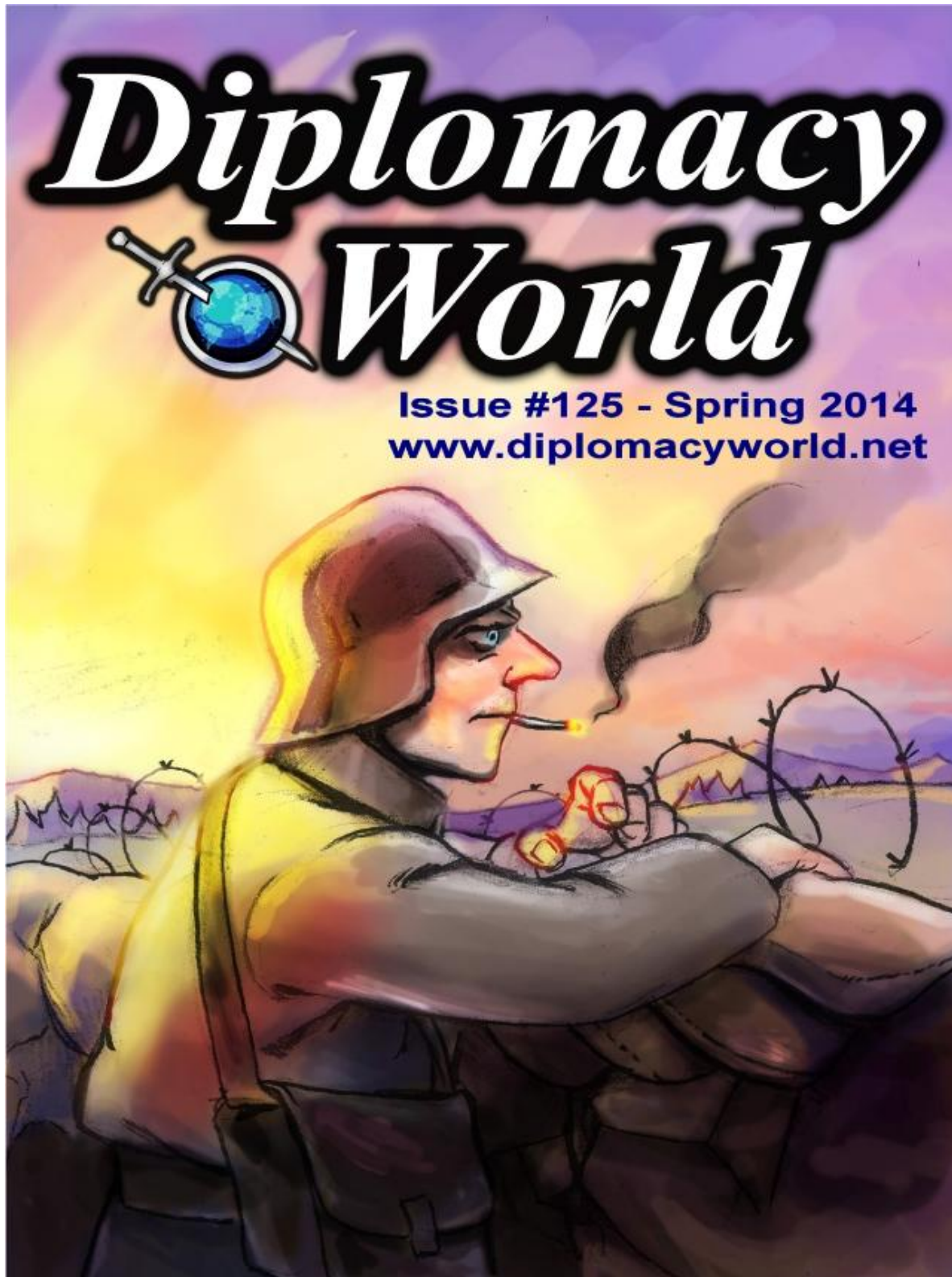
This magazine is not simply a soapbox. It is a vehicle. It's rate of progress varies by how much various individuals invest creative energy into it.

If a picture says a thousand words, then the art that you use to advertise the games that you want to persuade people to try is your voice in visual form.

Nine issues under our belt? What a nefarious feeling that is! It feels good - damned good!

There are many articles that were never written or submitted. Yet, we have succeeded to this point, regardless.

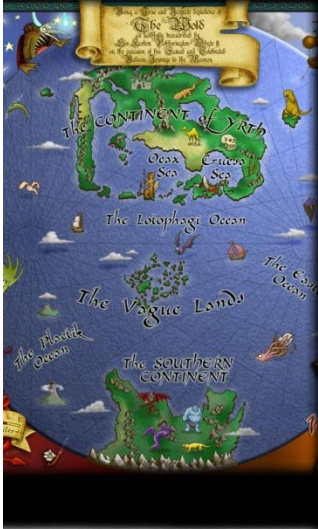
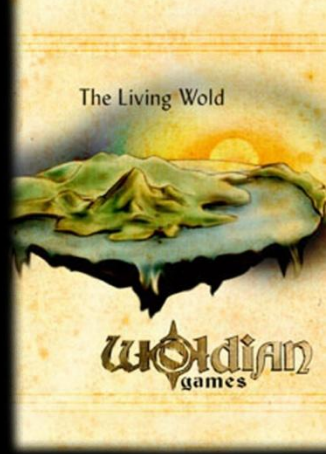
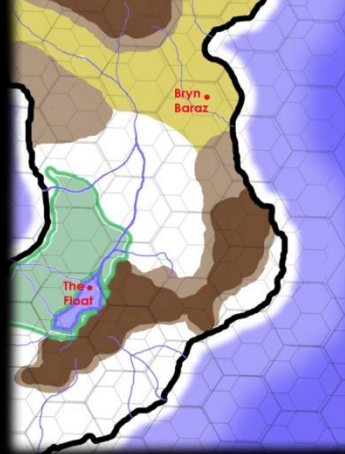
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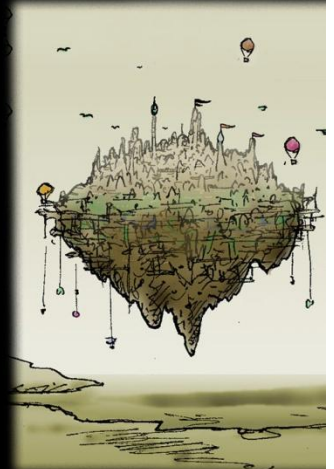
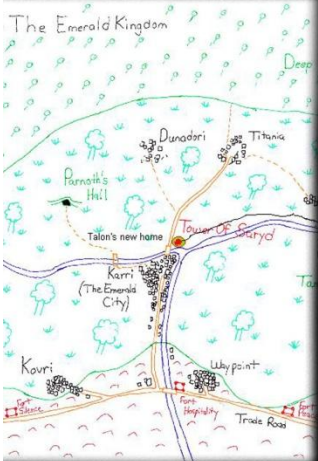
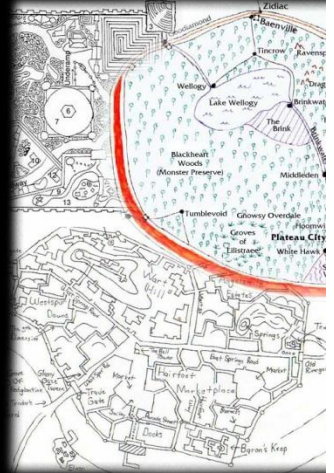
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Suspense & Decision

A look at the download numbers

Issue Number	Downloads for July 2014	Total downloads to date
Issue # 1	51	1,166
Issue # 2	65	929
Issue # 3	49	871
Issue # 4	90	875
Issue # 5	56	866
Issue # 6	44	363
Issue # 7	308	619
Issue # 8	524	524

Total # of all issues downloaded in July = 1,187

Total # of all issues downloaded to date = 6,213

*NOTE: Download statistics are derived from Awstats for PlayByMail.Net.

2014

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Where We're Heading...

Houston, we are at T plus nine, and preparing for ignition of the next stage. All systems remain a go. We are a roger for double digits. Do you copy, Houston?

When you're at the verge of launching a PBM magazine, in the precursor stage to Issue # 1 actually coming into existence, your ability to see forward is limited.

It is limited by a countless number of different things. It is further obscured by a void of experience.

We are now just three issues shy of reaching our initial goal. What now?

Well, obviously, those three issues remain unreached, yet. But, we are well on our way. If recent experience is any indicator, it's a pretty good bet that we will reach those three issues in succession, one after

the other - barring death, illness, or some other aspect of reality that could always lay low even the very best of intentions.

For me, it's now hard to imagine not exceeding our original mandate. The USS Enterprise had a five year mission. Suspense & Decision magazine? Our mission was only planned out to a single year.

Planned out. That has such a nice ring to it, doesn't it? But, before I proceed any further, for any of our passengers who have tagged along for the ride on this issue, but who are allergic to navel-gazing, this is your stop. Proceed only at your own risk!

This do-it-yourself rocket ship of journalistic minimalism is still ~~twerking~~ trekking along. Hopefully, I won't jinx things, by saying that.

Next issue will be Issue # 10. Do you know what that means?

No, it does not mean free beer nor rainbow stew for one and all! Who said that?

It means double digits. It means we cross yet another milestone. It will be a momentous occasion!

Or will it?

For me, personally, it will be, anyway. For my able assistant editor, Bernd, probably not so much so.

This issue did not come to fruition without delays, to be certain. In fact, it is already into the day after deadline that I sit and write this article.

Bernd pleads hypocrisy in his doorway greeting for this issue. *Pah!!* Clearly, he has succumbed to the madness of the undertaking. I tried to warn him. I really did.

OK, actually, I didn't. I cajoled him. I snookered him. I hornswaggled him. This starship to the mind needed a crew, so I did what any good captain of just such a vessel would and should do - *I abducted him!*

You're damned right, I did!

Don't think that he'll be the last (or even the first, for that matter), either. Ever hear of a guy named Jim Kemeny?

Nothing personal, Jim. I just needed a crew, is all.

And passengers, too, of course. I'm pretty sure, though, that we have more than a few stowaways that have managed to infiltrate their way into the crew quarters, here.

Welcome aboard, stowaways!

We can always use more people, no matter what you call yourself, and no matter what names may fly across the bow, now and again.

The navel-gazing can get pretty bad, at times.

Thick as fog. It constitutes a genuine, honest-to-God threat to the future of this magazine. Like dead weight, it weighs us down, slowing our progress. But, you don't mine asteroids by staring blankly out of portholes.

Uh, wait a minute. Maybe that's what navel-gazing is, eh?

People want quality. They want substance. They want me to focus upon what others are doing, rather than upon what I am thinking. Isn't that right, my fine cabal of space-faring critics?

I hate it when they're silent. Just look at them, hoarding all of that criticism, unwilling to send a volley directly into our path.

Maybe they're busy spending all of their time not writing articles. What say ye, Sons of the Phoenix? I'm talking B.S.E., here, not B.S..

It's always good to receive articles from the Phoenix: BSE crowd. The affiliation-based nature of

that game makes its growth especially susceptible to players being engaged and involved.

Yet, so many tales never told to the Audience That Lies Beyond. Entire decades' worth of memories rotting in the space of a forum that requires registration to browse.

It's not the only long-established PBM community that sits under lock and key of the Registration Guards, though. Nobody gets to see the Wizard, you know!

What's the easiest way to get lost in space? By squirreling yourself away behind locked doors. Isolation is not the key to growth. Solitary confinement, even if self-imposed, is not the way to a renaissance of play by mail gaming.

Perhaps I should emulate this example, and only allow downloads of Suspense & Decision for those who register, first. What do you think? *Nah!*

READER SURVEY

1. What was your favorite article from this issue, and why?
2. What's the best thing in PBM gaming you've seen lately?
3. What should the next PBM-type game created be?
4. On a scale of 0-to-10 (10 being best), rate this issue.
5. What is one of your favorite play by mail memories?



Send your Reader Survey responses for this issue to:

GrimFinger@GrimFinger.Net

DON'T DELAY - RESPOND NOW!!

Should the [Hyborian War Wiki](#) be a higher priority?

Did you know that there was an [Alamaze Wiki](#)?

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SSV
GRAZ

Blood Tides Rising



LEGENDS