

THE NEVERENDING DRACHENSCHWANZ

A FREE KRIEGSSPIEL REVOLUTION ZINE



T: ZEPPELINS AND WAR



**Play worlds, not rules.
Read books, not systems.
Use tools, not rules.**

So what is Free Kriegsspiel?

Norbert G. Matausch

In a sense, Free Kriegsspiel was a revolution in the military wargame sector. The old wargames (Kriegsspiele) had increasingly become cumbersome and highly complex – and sometimes, the result of their dozens of random rolls and tables were highly questionable and not very close to real life.

1876: Enter General Julius von Verdy du Vernois. He proposed „dispensing with all the rules and tools completely and allowing the umpire to arbitrate the game entirely as he saw fit. This form of Kriegsspiel came to be known as free Kriegsspiel.“ (Wikipedia).

In a nutshell: Arbitrate the game entirely as you see fit.

Almost 100 years later, in 1967, major David Wesely created Braunstein, a tabletop game that had no written rules – except the ones he came up with on the spot, or had prepared, but didn't tell his players. Wesely also arbitrated the game entirely as he saw fit.

Only four years later, Dave Arneson, one of the players of the original Braunstein game, came up with a fantasy Braunstein that, too, had no written rules... arbitrated entirely as he saw fit. Three years later, the game with the dungeons and the dragons was published. But Free Kriegsspiel and Braunsteins came first.

So there you have it: Free Kriegsspiel is playing fast and loose, and it is not important if you play with miniatures or without, huge battles or one-on-ones, epic fantasy campaigns or sword& sorcery roleplaying adventures. Free Kriegsspiel is an attitude, liberating and exciting. And Free Kriegsspiel Revolution is our battlecry: You don't need rules, you need friends, a hunger for adventure, trust and well-meaning dice.

...but how do some of the contributors to this edition define the Free Kriegsspiel Revolution?

„Rules that are referee-facing, but not player-facing. To aid in player immersion and prevent the "picking actions from a list" syndrome“ – Underwater Owlbear

„Tools not Rules: sometimes keeping track of everything is a pain. Sometimes randomness is fun, dice based mechanics can be used, but they should always be seen as fluid and replaceable. Ultimately the highest level of detail can be achieved through dialogue and not through mechanics, but this can sometimes be boring.“ – kestrelpeak

„For me its mostly a combination of attempting to use an almost free-form to get to the goal of "play worlds not rules." Its kind of a loose set of tools and practices for a ref and a table to keep the fiction flowing and engage with the world and characters instead of systems and sheets. So at least for me its always asking "could I have the same effect if we just making a ruling and agree on it? Is it fun if we attribute two or three or however many outcomes to dice? Is the rule beneficial or fun enough to add it?“ – Justin Hamilton

„What it is not: an exclusive set of mechanics; a specific tone or setting of play. What it means to me: going from the oldest of the OSR (I'm a big 3LBB OD&D guy) and focusing solely on diegetic resolution. Emergent rules from Referee rulings instead of pre-written rules/house rules. Simple but not necessarily streamlined. No need for players to know rules to the point where I actively push for the players to NOT read them at all. It doesn't matter because they'll only play the game, never the system, and I AM THE LAW - not because I'm power hungry but because I enjoy providing a world for the players to adventure in and having rules be more important than my own common sense and understanding of the fictional space would lessen the immersion for the table - just like how DuVernay offered to reduce the bulk of rules reference in Kriegspiel to leave more to the Referees.“ - Wizard Lizard

„What it is not: a burden, a binding, or a limitation. It's responsible and internally consistent, not because it is constrained by regulation, but because it is enjoyed by earnest and thoughtful people. It requires buy-in and willingness.“ - Jim Parkin

„My definition: freeform or almost freeform, Braunsteinian gaming with dice, relying on rulings and non-D&D mechanics (solely for the reason D&D hadn't been published yet when people were already roleplaying). Fixed damage and hits, instead of variable damage and hit points.“ - Norbert G. Matausch



<https://discord.gg/jWVdXJV>

Blitzkrieg Blimp

(Norbert G. Matausch)
darkwormcolt.blogspot.com

This scenario is inspired by an old Theatrix rpg adventure.

The situation: Weird War II, 1935 (4 years before Hitler's attack on Poland)

The Good Guys (player characters): A group of secret service members and private security specialists of different nations.

Their mission: Sabotage Nazi Germany's growing military power by disarming, destroying or deactivating a new kind of zeppelin.

What they don't know: This new kind of zeppelin is a nuclear-powered Zeppelin armed with an atom bomb, and the commanding officer is a cyborg.

I. Danger: Paris gets nuked

If the characters don't destroy the Zeppelin, Paris will be nuked.

I.I Description & Non-player characters

Herbert Mirskofen; brown buzz-cut, lanky, civilian clothes; round glasses; a spy working for Hitler, speaks perfect, flawless American and French, might give himself away when counting with his fingers (in Germany, counting "one" with your finger is done with the thumb instead of the index finger), someone in the player characters' secret service has ratted them out; Mirskofen will try to befriend the characters and alert Feldlager Freiheit when they're on their way

Baron Fritz von Gräuelberg; uniform, heavy-set, monocle, scarred face; general in the Waffen-SS, full cybernetic body, enormous strength, 350 lbs bodyweight, combat veteran, can't die, megalomaniacal mastermind, total loyalty to Hitler; prone to fits of boasting (if he captures the character's, he'll tell them his plans to nuke Paris), will try to kill himself and everyone else when captured

SS Soldier ("soldat"); uniform, tired faces, weapon training, basic hand-to-hand training, loyalty to Hitler, brave

SS Mechanic ("mechaniker"); overall, greasy hands and faces, rudimentary weapon and hand-to-hand training, loyalty to Hitler

I.2 Locations

Obermoos: small town 3 miles away from Zugspitze mountain, population 300 (50 of them able to fight), this is where the Feldlager Freiheit chefs do their daily grocery shopping; the armored cable-car to Feldlager Freiheit starts here

Feldlager Freiheit: Hitler's secret research lab on the highest peak of the Zugspitze mountain, walled, heavy security, vehicles (20 Horch 901 all-terrain vehicles; 2 rocket backpacks), 2 pallets of odd-looking rockets and bombs, 70 SS soldiers and 30 SS mechanics with Walther P38 pistols or Maschinengewehr 34 machineguns

Horch 901



Zeppelin Hangar: located in a fenced area within Feldlager Freiheit, this is where the Zerstörer-Zeppelin Typ 1 is being built. Several crates of timed bombs (which take a while to defuse or activate).



Walther P38

Zerstörer-Zeppelin Typ 1; not yet finished (possibly malfunctioning steering units, etc), but ready-for-takeoff; 50 crew, reinforced cell structure and hull, four independent atomic jet propulsion engines in working condition; all other vehicle weapons are not working; in secret room: atomic bomb, armory, infirmary, officer's mess, sleeping quarters with rest rooms, kitchen, commons, gym, library, Baron Fritz von Gräuelberg's private rooms, 5 emergency blimps



Maschinengewehr 34

I.3. If the characters do not intervene

- Feverish preparations for takeoff (1d6-2 rounds to next circle, minimum 1)
- Zerstörer-Zeppelin Typ 1 takes off (2 rounds to next circle)
- The Zeppelin is airborne for the first time (2 rounds to next circle)
- Three Luftwaffe escort planes (Focke-Wulff Fw 190) join the Zeppelin (1 round to next circle)
- The Zeppelin is on its way to Paris (1d6+5 rounds)
- Paris is nuked

Start the adventure by marking the first circle. Whenever you mark a circle, the event written next to it takes place. If the player characters have any way of knowing about the event, tell them what they would know. If they do not interfere, mark the next circle when the indicated number of rounds has passed. To increase pressure on the players, tell them you're marking a circle, but don't tell them what this means.

This adventure can be played in theater-of-the-mind style, or with maps and/or dioramas.

2. General inspiration table

fire	gas	slower
weapon	armor	cell
stabilizers	loud	sleeping
explosion	silent	faster
surprise	leg	hydraulic
arm	body	head
quick heal	atomic	waste
imbalance	weightless	vacuum
pilot	heathen gods	crimson
energy	hanging on	rope ladder
abseiling	ricochet	giant
invisible	shell	poison

Pictures:

Horch 901: Willi Ude, CC BY-SA

Walther P38: CCO

Maschinengewehr 34: Armémuseum (The Swedish Army Museum), CC BY-SA

POT-AU-FEU

A Free Kriegsspiel Renaissance Manifesto

by Tanaël Ghazarian, also known as Wizard Lizard

Kriegsspiel

In the XIXth century, German officers started to use modified chess pieces and boards to simulate warfare, a game they simply called **Kriegsspiel** – The Game of War. Being essentially a hack of Chess though, the board and pieces made it too unrealistic, until in 1812, a Prussian nobleman and wargaming enthusiast called George Leopold von Reisswitz came up with a more **free-form** version of the game, with tokens to represent units and a table with 3D terrain instead of a board, to allow for more realistic troop movement, formations, etc. This quickly became a popular game for officers of any military to play as the more open-nature of the game. Reisswitz's son perfected the rules, most notably adding an **impartial Referee** called the Umpire, and used accurate large-scale topographical maps for added immersion and realism. Later on, in 1873/75, Lieutenant Wilhelm Jacob Meckel published two treatises with complaints about the overcomplicated rules: they slowed down play, prevented the Referee from applying his expertise, were too rigid to model all possible situations, and all that made officers unwilling to learn how to run it, which meant the one unlucky sob who did learn the rules was stuck in the Referee role forever. Rings a bell?

Free Kriegsspiel

In 1876, General Julius von Verdy du Vernois addressed these issues by getting rid of all the non-diegetic stuff: no more rules or tools, the umpire is the absolute authority and arbitrates the game as he sees fit. It was well-received as it allowed Referees to use their own expertise and for games to be as elaborate or as simple as required. I believe that this new approach to game design – having a Referee use the rules to inform decisions without necessarily having to follow them to the letters, finishes the shift from board game to wargame, and also is the first step towards adventure games.

Braunstein, Blackmoor & Greyhawk

In 1967, David Wesley started running Braunstein, an experimental-informal Napoleonic miniature wargames where Players took the role of individual characters, essentially a proto-adventure (roleplaying) game. Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax played in the same circles and enjoyed Braunstein so much that they came up with their own adventure games – Blackmoor and Greyhawk. These games were all played using Free Kriegsspiel – though random number generation and dicing was involved, there were no rulebooks to study and the Referees often changed rules that didn't work out or to experiment further.

Dungeons & Dragons

In 1974, D&D was published by TSR as a product of both Arneson's Blackmoor and Gygax's Greyhawk, and other contributors from their gaming group. The game then was still played very much in Free Kriegsspiel fashion, though its immense popularity meant that eventually, the traditional way to learn wargame and D&D – to have an already experienced Referee teach you how to play, couldn't sustain the number of people who got into the hobby. This contributed greatly to the variety of game styles and *games* that followed as people started writing their own sets of rules and settings in the 70s (like *Tunnels & Trolls* or *Traveller*), yet it also meant Gary and Dave started getting a lot of fan mail from people who didn't have anyone to teach them the game (which assumed familiarity with wargames to parse efficiently) and had questions about the rules and a need for authorial adjudication. How **should** X or Y be handled? As every Player at a new table would read the rules, debates over interpretations would come up since people didn't have the Free Kriegsspiel framework assumption (which isn't mentioned anywhere, as obvious as it was to the authors, in D&D). While the original gamers kept to their free-flowing style and still passed down that technique to outsiders, a parallel and wider audience started to grow as a community around the notion that the rules would be updated and clarified: Homes' Basic would introduce AD&D while Moldvay and Mentzer wrote their own Basic Sets. Many exciting rules additions contributed to make D&D a less nebulous brand and what was conceived as a toolkit to run *anything* became the reference in what was now called "RPGs".

From Adventure Game to Roleplaying Game

Games are popping up left and right, very few people learn about RPGs from the original gamers anymore, small companies become medium-sized companies and it's now pretty well established that RPGs have rules, like board games, *and* a Referee, like...wargames. Except now the "so obvious nobody states it outright" notion that the Referee comes **before** the rules and should really not feel bad about changing what doesn't suit them or come up with their own stuff is mostly gone. So you've got an ever-growing wide audience of people learning about games with one Player having a specific, difficult-to-tackle role that has a built-in dissonance from one lacunae: they're supposed to create and play the world, are "the law", but also follow the rules of the game. It's as if the rules are there to stop the Referee from controlling the whole game – as if there is a **narrative** being **told by the Referee** and the rules is the playground where the Players get to affect that. Add to that monty haul Referees that nurture power fantasy, killer GMs just out to dominate their friends in petty "haha, I get to kill your guy if you don't act like I want you to" and suddenly it looks like there's a lot of problems that should be solved by...more rules! Also, big rulebooks sell – remember these people in the 70s who sent mail for rules clarifications? Big rulebooks don't lessen the need for clarifications. And it works well for medium-sized publishers because they can make more books to add more details to the world and more **play options**, that is, more rules, because **that is where the game happens**, remember? That's why I say there's a shift from adventure game (ie: you go on adventures, dangerous journeys and missions where you risk life and limb to reach your goals) vs roleplaying game (ie: the focus is on **being** a character now – like in a movie! That comes with built-in assumptions about a story arc instead of emergent narrative, characters only dying when "dramatically appropriate", etc. Lots of stuff that puts pressure on the Referee who is supposed to be impartial but also follow arbitrary rules but also "tell his own story" if you go by typical 90s RPG advice section).

The Last Two Decades

RPGs/Adventure Games are starting to be old enough to be deconstructed and analyzed! The Forge happens, then Storygames happen and people are talking about how to model different theories of game design and start to use fancy words like principles of play, diegesis and external engagement to talk about games, which is great because it means people start to be critical of every rulebook and to understand what makes a given game do what it does at the table! There's also people getting tired of the now corporate-funded big editions of the big game and the adjacent crunchy game books that take hours to set up. Some of these peeps think "hey, back in the 70s/80s/when I was a kid, we used to have way more fun playing the simpler, older stuff" and they go back to B/X or OD&D or AD&D or Traveller. Bloggers blogged, G+ was still alive, and eventually the zeitgeist saw the emergence of the Old-School Revolution (or Renaissance). People played the old games, or made their own in that style, or took lessons from these games' design and made new things with it. It also was a refreshing new step forward in developing TRPGs as a community – people noticed there was a lot to talk about beyond character builds and "how do I make this adventure work it doesn't make sense" - stuff that would again make everyone learn more about the hobby's nature. The OSR and associated movements set new quality standards for the industry while simultaneously managing to push forth the idea that really, you should go ahead and make your stuff.

Free Kriegsspiel Renaissance

There's always been people who stuck to OD&D, and these people learned from the original gamers so they have that FK-style internalized. There's also a strong community of Traveller fans with a lot of love for the Classic Traveller line which Mark Miller still plays (in FK-style). The new wave of the OSR led to more minimalistic takes on rules, stripping down the unnecessary to keep the best parts of games. The more you take away, the more you put on the Referee, the more porosity there is between OSR and Free Kriegsspiel. G+ is dead but Discord and MeWe have solid bases, and blogs are cool again. And people are getting interested in the earliest days of the hobby, and how **that** can inform their gaming and game design today. I'm talking trusting the Referee wholeheartedly to run the world and its inhabitants in a way that is both realistic and fun, trusting Players to be self-motivated, without the need for an XP carrot – adventuring for its own sake and seeing where the next wonder lies. I'm talking playing any world because the rules are all in your head, so you can dedicate all your energy to actually playing the game – whether you're a Referee or Player. There's games coming out right now that look bare-bones even for the OSR, that are open to interpretation enough that you **have** to come up with your own way of doing things. Take back your imagination.

How to Play Any Game

Referee, read (or watch, or listen to) the world. Make it your own. Draw maps abstract or realistic, take notes of interesting themes, places, people, things. Make or find random tables. Then, introduce the Players to the world – they only need to know about what will be directly relevant in play, don't exposition dump when you could already be halfway through character generation. Then, make characters. If you're using an RPG game world, you can use pregens or a simplified version of the game's chargen: roll stats, pick some abilities, write down some description, keep it fast and loose. Introduce a situation to start the game, then play – it's a conversation between the Referee describing the world to the Players – give them information so that they can make meaningful, informed decisions. They make these decisions based on their own (characters) goals, and you reward them with consequences, positive or negative. There is no story, only an emergent narrative. Nobody knows what will happen next (at least, not around the Player-characters) and that's what makes the medium unique. If you're going diceless, literally just say what happens, every time. Negotiate when unsure. If you want to roll dice (it's fun), use them as an oracle: only ask them questions you want them to answer for you, and commit to their answer. See where it leads. There is no story, and the world is a real place – that Referee impartiality comes into play there, as you need to figure out what will happen based on the fictional circumstances. The exact rules you use aren't important – if they're taking so much space as to not be invisible, they're probably hindering your ability to make unrestrained adjudications within a game of endless possibilities. Let rules emerge naturally through play, even though a basic framework like “we'll use 2d6” can be reassuring. If all rules are a byproduct of play, then you don't have to worry about them not fitting together, or being “broken” - if something doesn't work, don't use it. This doesn't even need to be an involved process: you'll naturally forget about bad rules and remember to use the ones that work well for your group.

Players, imagine what you would do in your character's position. Don't let them run you though – you decide what's interesting to pursue. You are responsible for your own fun and that of the group – go where the excitement is, trust the Referee and your fellow Players, and express yourself, be it to add to the immersion of the experience, encourage others or let the group know of something that bothers you. That's literally all you have to do.

I'm hoping this short-ish presentation will make people who are still on the fence about the FKR want to check out the freedom it promises. That those who are interested in adventure games but can't be bothered with learning rules and are willing to trust the Referee to do a better job at simulating the world that words can, or simply don't know anything about RPGs or D&D and stumbled here (hello!) will be reassured that things don't have to be, and won't be complicated. We can just sit down and have fun with one of the most entertaining, immersive and powerful hobby I know of.

Further Reading

- **Der Tresor**, an online repository for the Free Kriegsspiel Revolution
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_4llrBbn4ddoq-9dYlSnaluDbJmX20rvAKzL31vxK4/edit#heading=h.wu6hoz3jk8lv

AERODYNAMIC TRANSVERSE FORCES AND DAMAGE CONTROL

BY JOSH B.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT AERODYNAMIC STRESSES ARE THOSE CAUSED BY TRANSVERSE FORCES."

-TECHNICAL MANUAL OF AIRSHIP AERODYNAMICS (WAR DEPARTMENT, 1941)

DURING A VOYAGE, THE REFEREE MAY DECIDE THAT CERTAIN ACTIONS OR EXTERNALITIES RESULT IN UNFAVORABLE RESULTS FOR THE PLAYERS' RIGID AIRSHIP. A PLAYER CAN "PUSH" A VESSEL TO INSTEAD SUCCEED AT A COST. IF ALLOWED BY THE REFEREE, THERE IS A 2-IN-6 CHANCE OF AN EMERGENCY SITUATION:

D6	DAMAGE
1	ENGINE FIRE. RESOLVE IN D3 TURNS OR LOSE ENGINE.
2	RUPTURED ENVELOPE. RESOLVE IN D3 TURNS OR RISK SUBSEQUENT RUPTURES.
3	LEAKING GAS BAG. LOSE ALTITUDE. RESOLVE IN D3 TURNS OR BAG BURSTS. POSSIBLE EXPLOSION.
4	TWISTED FRAME. RESOLVE IN D3 TURNS OR SUFFER DURABILITY.
5	DAMAGED AIRFOIL. RESOLVE IN D3 TURNS OR LOSE MANEUVERABILITY.
6	CONTROL PANEL MALFUNCTION. UNABLE TO STEER, ACCELERATE, OR DECELERATE UNTIL RESOLVED.

CONDUCTING DAMAGE CONTROL PUTS A CREW AT AN OPERATIONAL DISADVANTAGE. THEY CANNOT PERFORM THEIR NORMAL ACTIONS AND CONDUCT DAMAGE CONTROL SIMULTANEOUSLY. CONDUCTING DAMAGE CONTROL REQUIRES SPECIAL TOOLS BUT RESOURCEFUL AIRSHIP PERSONNEL MAY USE INGENUITY.

Playing It Wrong

By Cynocephalus

Two warriors square off in the pounding rain, their grim visages highlighted only by the occasional flash of lightning. They stand not on solid ground but atop a massive zeppelin flying above a raging sea. Their final, fated duel comes at the end of a long and strange saga which has shaken up kingdoms, brought lovers together, torn dynasties apart and changed the very landscape of reality.

Kermit the Frog, Knight of the Square Table and wielder of Excalibur, narrows his eyes. He's at home in the rain. His opponent, the towering figure known as Macho Man, already bears the scars of many battles. He's lost count of the number of dead men behind him in his conquest of the Seven Realms. His own reaction is hidden behind dark glasses and a stoic grimace which rarely leaves his chiseled face.

In an instant, lightning strikes once more, and the silhouettes of the two titans of power and valor clash after the fashion of Samurai of old. Only one crumples to the ground. The mighty Macho Man had fallen. Suddenly, a thundering voice from above cries out in consternation:

"Bullcrap! Kermit would never beat the Macho Man in hand to hand combat!" This voice belonged not to a deity or a titanic being looking down from above, but from my younger brother. He and I sit cross-legged in our shared bedroom, staring down at the strewn toys on the floor below us. The year was roughly 1993 or thereabouts. The location was somewhere in rural Tennessee.

"Look, I realize Macho Man is much bigger and stronger, but Kermit has more notches on his belt, and he's wearing armor" I was quick to point out. The toy used to represent Kermit had indeed been part of a medieval playset, and was wearing plate mail. This was a valid point. In our imaginary world, the design of the figure often informed its attributes within the fiction. It was simple and straight to the point that way.

"Well, I don't care how many notches he has. He's two feet tall!" my sibling exclaimed, anger rising in his face. I regret to inform you, dear reader, that we came to blows over this point, but in the end my logic won out. Notches, after all, are the tie-breaker, and in our imaginary world, whoever has more notches has won more battles and higher acclaim in the Realms. That's just how it is. Those were simply the rules we agreed on, and we obeyed them like the faithful acolytes of imagination we were.

After all, we were simply following in the footsteps of every kid who ever took it upon him or herself to play childhood games like Cops and Robbers, or to give voices and personalities to their toys, or to make up wild stories around the campfire. It's just that we decided to combine elements of all these in a free-form but loosely codified fashion. You might assume we came upon this idea after being inspired by some tabletop roleplaying system or another, but this was a year or two before we even discovered that concept existed. In essence, like many kids before and presumably after us, we accidentally discovered key aspects of roleplaying games independently of knowledge of the genre.

In fact, before ever learning about the system currently called "The World's Greatest Roleplaying Game" by its license holders, we had played video games steeped in rpg tropes. Inspired by these tales of swords, sorcery, heroism and strange lands, we thought to ourselves "Wouldn't it be cool if you could do anything and go anywhere in these games?" We thought we were blazing new ground with this idea. Little did we know the concept was already at least two decades old when we stumbled upon it.

We would discover the widely distributed and more heavily codified version of our little game of make believe soon enough. While excitedly regaling a classmate with tales of high adventure, I was informed by a passer-by that this sounded an awful lot like a slightly more gonzo version of a game some of the kids were already familiar with. A game involving dice, grids and around the same amount and type of imagination we already possessed. I was intrigued, to say the least, and within a week or two I had a painted miniature Dwarf figurine and a character sheet. Not long after I had dice of my own, and a badly photocopied set of the basic rules for this more commercial game.

True to my nature, I found certain aspects of these rules too stifling or codified for my imagination, and when it was my turn to run the game, I always "played it wrong", at least according to some modern-day rules lawyers, but nobody ever complained about these loosey-goosey, kitchen sink games of yore. In fact, when I look back at those halcyon days shared with friends and siblings, those were some of the finest and most memorable tabletop adventures of my life.

After all, while published wargames and tabletop rpgs are great sources of inspiration, their complexities and volumes are off-putting to many. I could appreciate the sheer volume of material available for fleshing out an imaginary world, but as I had done that already with no printed material at all, I eventually discovered that I required very little of said material to continue expanding and refining the Seven Realms. Just a bit of inspiration. Our games continued in "cheap and dirty" fashion, freed from the burden of what my brother and I came to call "too much stuff" standing between our imaginations and the fulfillment of those stories.

Alas, as is often the case with young people, we became too "grown up" and "important" in our own minds for playing make believe after a while. That nefarious and universal condition known as puberty diverted our attentions away from gaming for a blue moon or three, and when we came back to tabletop, we found that the rules the kids were using were even more codified and complex than before. In short, mainstream expectations for the hobby had left us behind. There didn't seem to be an easy place for the likes of Sir Kermit in these new, strange worlds. His prowess and legend were not of the types to be found in lengthy hardcover tomes. Those came from the pure, unfiltered imaginations of children. We had grown older, but our inner children were very much active, and yearned for days of yore.

Sadly, during the days of the early internet, there was not yet a concerted effort among a critical mass of people to recapture those heady days of old. I had simply assumed that the hobby had entirely left the likes of my siblings and me behind. Dejected and seemingly up against a wall, I gave up on tabletop and focused on work and other adult obligations for a while, occasionally peeking in on RPG discussions online to see what folks were up to. It was about this time that I discovered the rabbit hole people were calling OSR, which led me through familiar paths, expressed by strangers from across the world. Could it be that they had similar experiences and expectations to mine? Could it be that the key to the Seven Realms was easily within my grasp once again? The time had come to embrace "doing it wrong" yet another time.

In a private chamber of his castle by the sea, Sir Kermit's eyes opened once again from his long meditation. There were rumors of strange creatures on the horizons. Of stormclouds and zeppelins, and ferocious warlords cut from the same cloth as the vanquished Macho Man. Apparently the Higher Powers were interfering in his world again, calling him to even greater heights than before. With grim determination, he strode forward and took Excalibur down from its ceremonial place above the hearth. His time had come again. The time for simple heroics and pure imagination. The time for "playing it wrong" and having the time of his life. He closed his eyes a moment and breathed in the clean air blowing in from the sea, and set out once again with steely optimism upon his face.

GROUND ATTACK DOCTRINE

ARMY AIR CORPS

by Tyler F aka Underwater Owlbear

Section 1: Reconnaissance

Obtain aerial photographs of target locations. Apply 1" grid to target location to create a die drop table. Note important buildings, military positions, infrastructure, or landmarks on the die drop table.

Section 2: Airframe Capabilities

<u>Airframe Type</u>	<u>Bomb Payload</u>	<u>Alternative Attack Methods</u>
Fighter	None	Strafe
Fighter-Bomber	2	Strafe
Dive Bomber	1	Strafe, Dive
Heavy Bomber	4	
Zeppelin	8	

Section 3: Bombardier Procedures

For every bomb dropped on an attack run, roll a d6 on the die drop table. Results of 1-3 are duds - they land in fields or creeks, or fail to explode. Results of 4-5 are hits - they damage the target in their grid square. Results of 6 are direct hits - they destroy the target in their grid square.

Section 4: Alternative Ground Attack Methods

Fighters, fighter-bombers, and dive bombers can strafe the ground with their machine guns during an attack run instead of bombing. Pick a grid square - all exposed infantry or light vehicles in that grid square are damaged. Dive bombers are accurate - they can pick which grid square they are bombing before rolling for effect.

Section 5: Anti-Aircraft Fire

After the attack run is complete, if the area has anti-aircraft cover, roll for flak effects. Each airplane has a 1-in-6 chance of taking flak. Zeppelins have a 2-in-6 chance due to their large size and slow speed (but are much more resilient than airplanes). If a zeppelin is damaged by flak, roll on the ZEPPELIN DAMAGE CONTROL TABLE by Josh B. If an airplane is damaged by flak, it is likely downed with one hit.

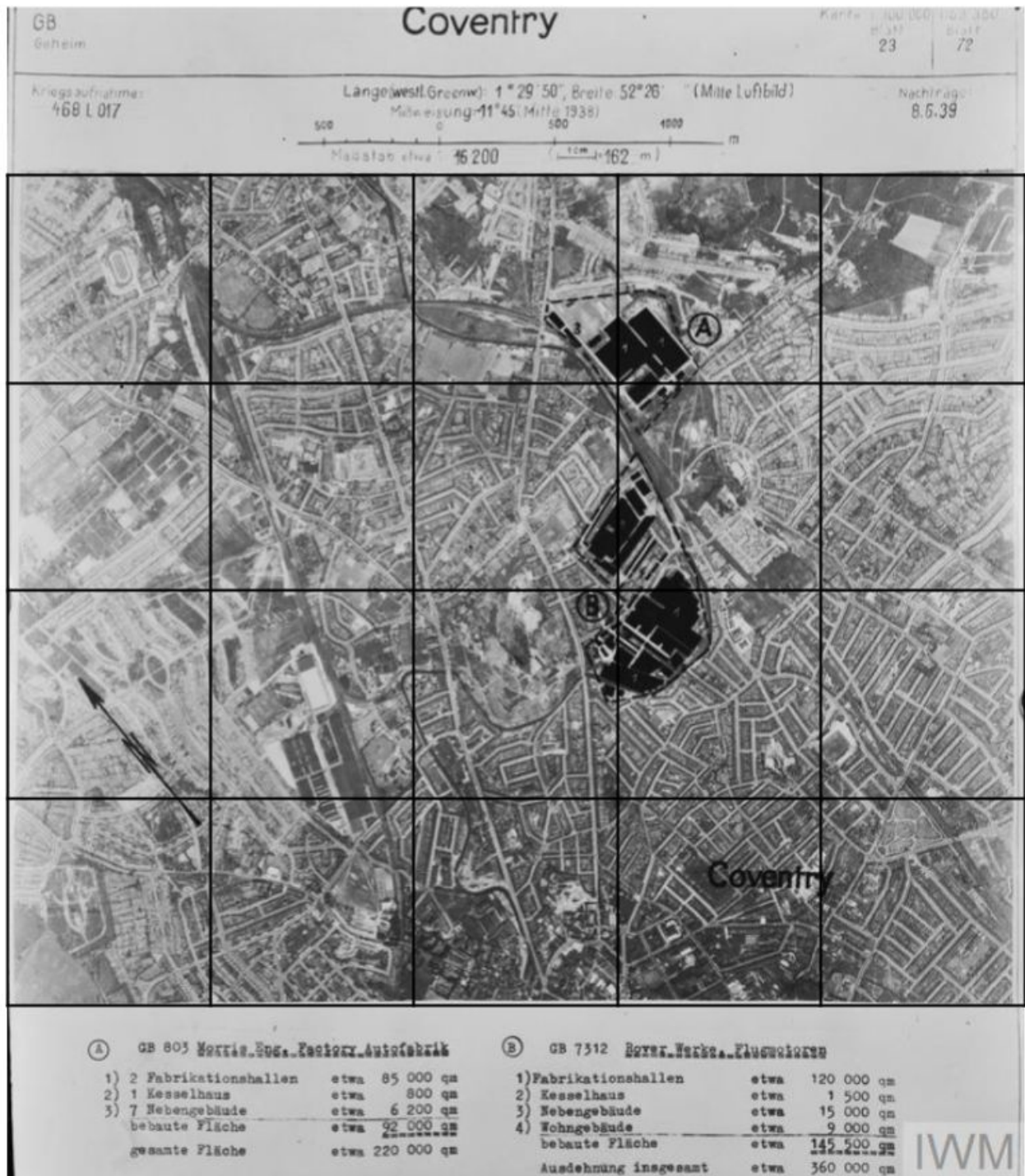
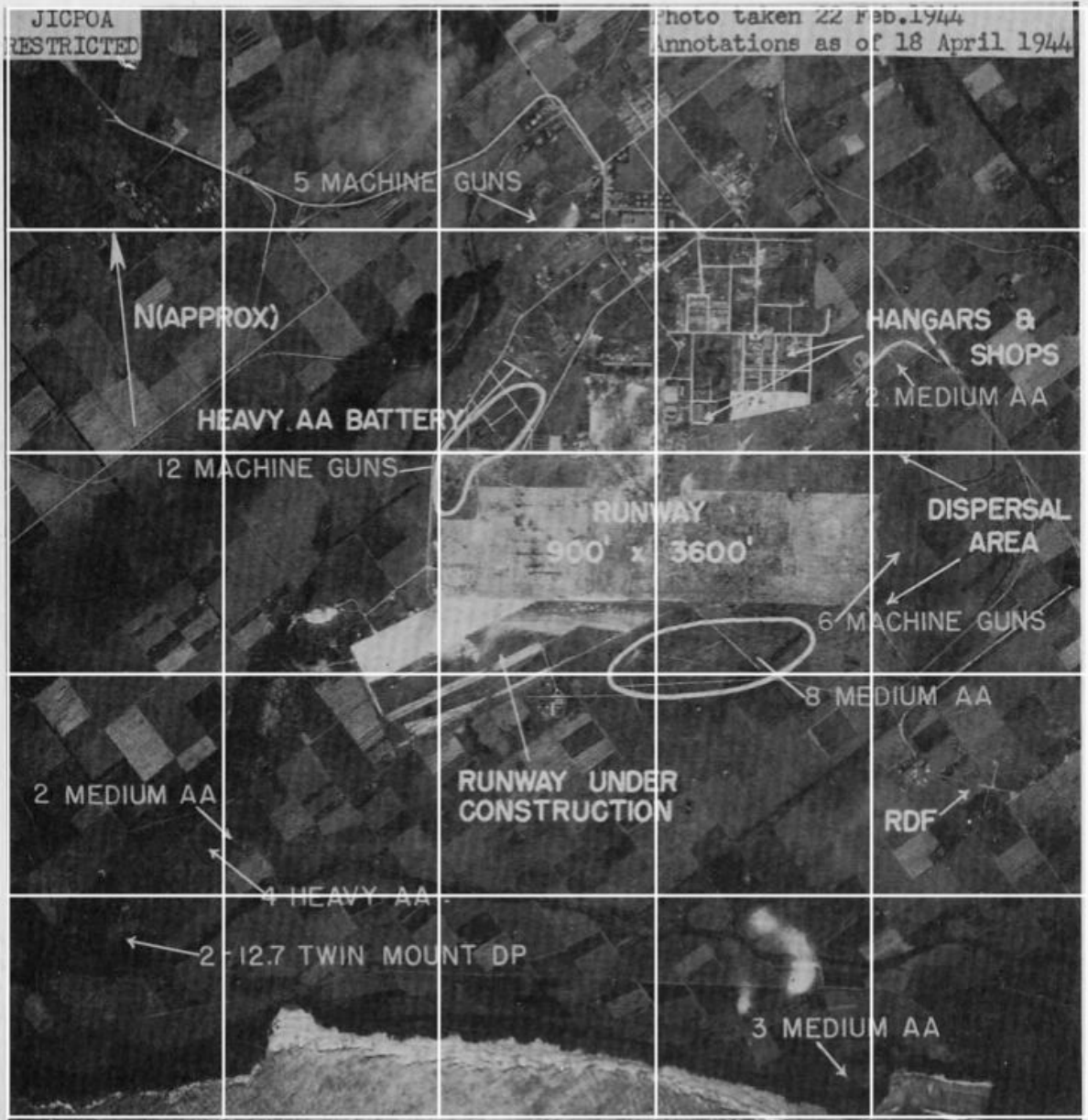


Figure 1: Coventry Industrial Zones

Source: Imperial War Museums, Air Ministry Second World War Official Collection C 5514



DETAIL PHOTO

ASLITO AIRFIELD, SAIPAN

77-B 22 Feb. 1944 PAGE 13

Figure 2: Aslito Airfield, Saipan

Source: worldwarphotos.info



Figure 3: Fortified Village of Galmanche

Source: Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies 0309-4180





„Airships over Horoa“ by blastwaves, CC BY-NC 3.0

Villains Fly Zeppelins

This game is an homage to *Indiana Jones*, *The Rocketeer*, *Up*, and other media about daring, adventure, and nefarious antagonists who inevitably get away aboard their lighter-than-air dirigibles. It's a game of hijinks, madcap action, and risky business in the name of archaeology, fortune, and astonishing renown across the globe.

Each player rolls against the following three tables to randomly generate their character. Alternatively, players are free to choose the options they like best. The remaining tables are for referee use.

Who Are You?		You Get:
1	Journalist	Flashbulb camera
2	Soldier	M1989 BAR rifle
3	Professor	Relic grimoire
4	Bureaucrat	"Official" documents
5	Mercenary	.45 Thompson SMG
6	Explorer	Heavy machete

You're Good At?		You're Bad At?
1	Snooping	Subtlety
2	Brawling	Etiquette
3	Requisitions	Conflict
4	Contacts	Money
5	Mechanics	Caution
6	Pathfinding	Driving

Take An Item:		And Another:
1	.32 Colt pistol	Flashlight
2	Handcuffs	Painkillers
3	Shotgun	Smoking pipe
4	Knife	50' length of rope
5	Dynamite	Holy rosary
6	Fine clothes	Heavy backpack



Who Is Your Rival?		Their Post?	Their Signature?
1	Marcos Luz Nogueira, from Brazil	Agent	Explosions
2	Magdalene Shönborn, from Germany	Collector	Connections
3	Kitanova Vadimovna, from the USSR	Captain	Wealth
4	Alistair Griffiths, from Great Britain	Hired Gun	Enforcers
5	Harvey Grant, from the United States	Cultist	Guns
6	Salwa al-Majeed, from Saudi Arabia	Anthropologist	Esoterica

What Is Their Zeppelin?	
1	Bristling with heavy weapons
2	Sleek, fast, and maneuverable
3	Luxurious, elite, and renowned
4	Heavily armored and defensible
5	Actually a trio of racing blimps
6	A household name, beloved by all

What Is The Artifact?			
1	The golden	monkey	of Ibn Fatullah
2	The sacred	eye	of Zheng He
3	The jade	cross	of San Marquez
4	The cursed	talisman	of King Phaoris
5	The ebon	idol	of Lost Atlantis
6	The ruby	goblet	of Xil Coatl

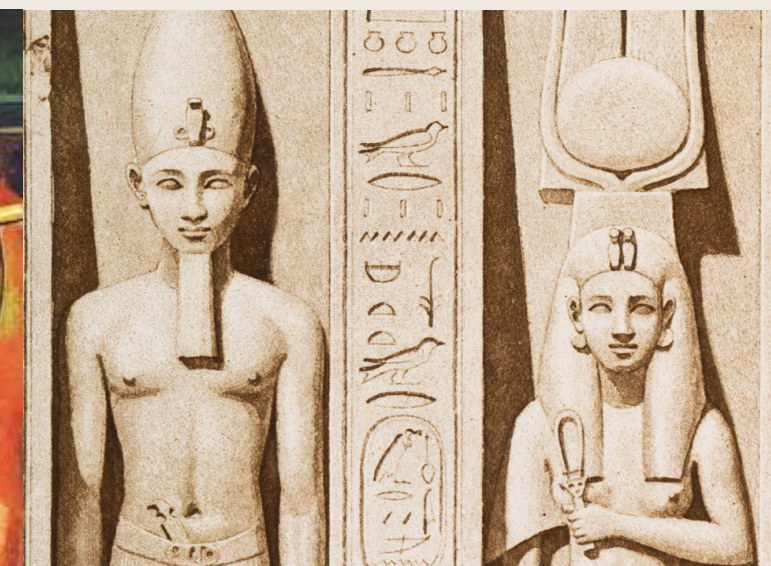
Who Is Your Contact?	Their Post?
1 Ol' Toomba	Demolitionist
2 Barnaby St. John	Scout
3 Ludya Arpov	Performer
4 Kinjo Noburo	Fixer
5 Sadie O'Brien	Machinist
6 Laylah Calhoon	Pilot

What Is The Complication?	
1	Illuminati meddling
2	CIA/KGB involvement
3	Third-party global investors
4	Errant playboy millionaire
5	Resource shortage
6	Active and entrenched war

Players are “the good guys,” whether they are treasure hunters, museum curators, or average joes down on their luck and looking to leave their mark on the world. They band together as a team to go on globetrotting expeditions to find lost artifacts and solve incredible mysteries.

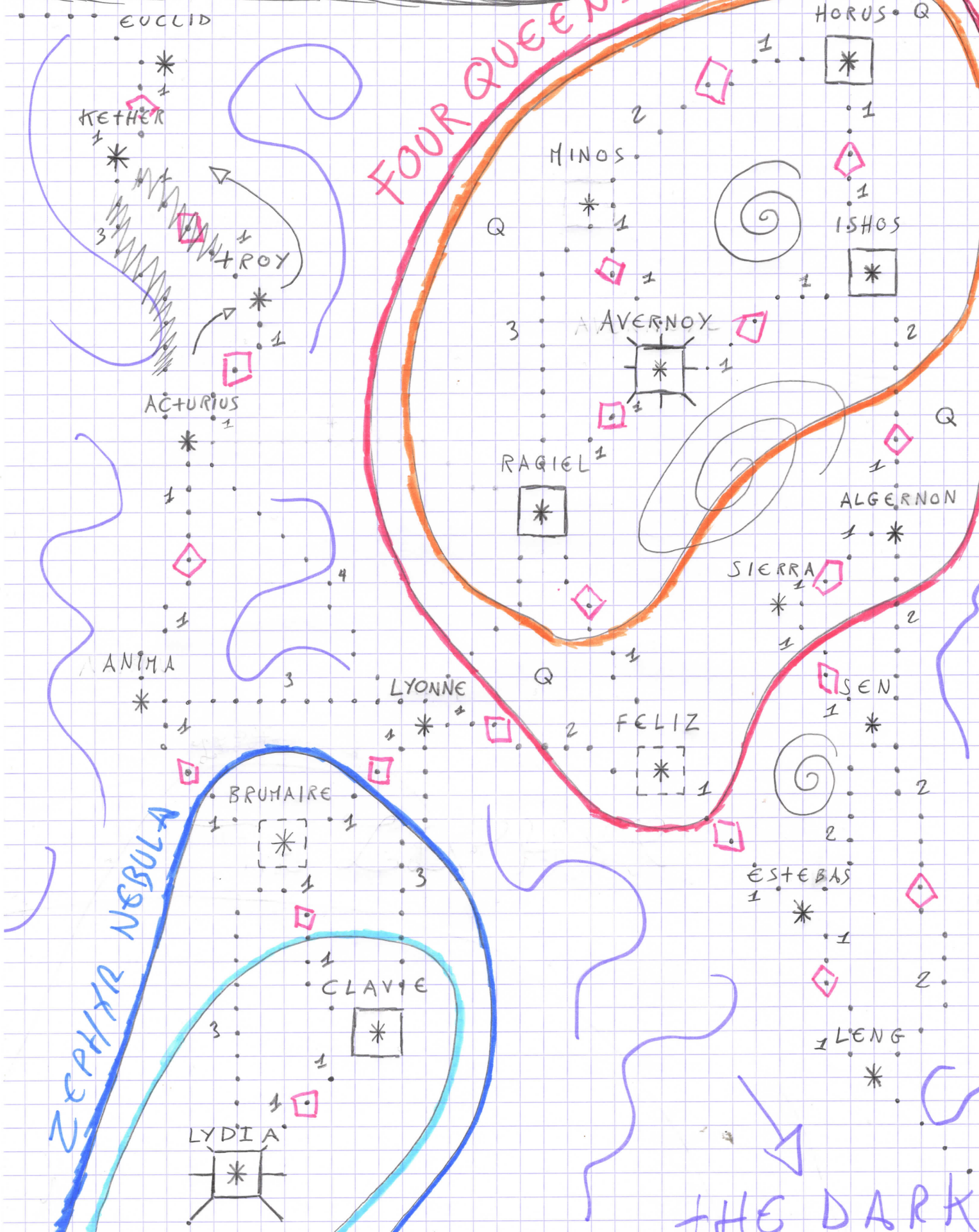
Pitted against the players is their rival, a powerful, well-connected, and talented daredevil working either for themselves, a world government, or an inscrutable cabal. The rival is after the same invaluable artifact as the players, and has backing and resources far beyond their capacity. Also, they always travel by zeppelin, because that’s what villains do, of course.

The referee describes the world and the players state their actions. Most circumstances in play are adjudicated by common sense and judgment by the referee. When in doubt, or when exciting risk is involved, the referee describes possible outcomes and they and the active player roll 2d6 against each other. The higher result dictates whether the outcome is positive (the player wins) or negative (the referee wins), with higher margins between the two expanding the scope of the consequence. When rolling in this way for combat actions, the margin between results dictates how severe the inflicted damage is. Consider the weapon used and overall context to adjudicate.



THE SKYWARD MARCHES

FOUR QUEENS



EUCLID

KETHER

TROY

ACTURIUS

ANIMA

LYONNE

FELIZ

BRUMAIRE

CLAVIE

LYDIA

MINOS

AVERNOX

RAGIEL

SIERRA

SEN

ESTEBAS

LENG

HORUS

ISHOS

ALGERNON

THE DARK

ZEPHYR NEBULA

THE SKYWARD MARCHES

A Sector for Any Planet Is Earth
By Wizard Lizard (Tanaël Ghazarian)

INTRODUCTION

Hi. This is a sector I built from scratch using random tables from APIE, bits and pieces from various works of fiction and non-fiction I find interesting, and a little bit of imagination. The goal is to provide you with an example of how one *might* organize data for playability, a framework for building further personal details to make the sector work in *your* universe. Essentially, there's going to be a lot that is left implied or unexplained - make it up! I hope you have fun, and safe travels!

FOUR QUEENS

Former Imperial Colony, only remnants of the Navy remain after the Silent Era - as an independent military force. Great Houses still hide in its shadow, longing for the day they can seize back the power they had in the Perfect Era. For now, these two forces must work together with the Guilds and planetary governments in an uneasy balance, constantly threatened by war, piracy and the Laws of Acquisition.

The subsector is named after four gargantuan sarcophagi (Q) floating at the edges of the territory. Sensors pick up music from within, but nobody ever managed to open them.

Avernoy

Terrain: Flat
Population/Size: 1M+, 1/2g
Main Faction: Scholastics
Guild: Seers (neuroscience)
Trade Goods: Plastics (+), Biotech (-)
Crises: Tectonic Shift
Rumors: Unknown Signal

Former imperial paradise world, the verdant plains of Avernoy are dotted with glass spires inhabited by tall elfin people fascinated by the powers of the mind. Their dwindling population is split into three castes - scientists, philosophers and traders. Thinking machines handle most other jobs, from menial labour to administrative processes. Recently, major tectonic shifts have caused natural catastrophes, putting a dent in recent efforts in fertility-focused bioengineering research. A mysterious signal has been broadcasting from the largest, abandoned moon.

Ishos

Terrain: Mobile
Population/Size: 1B+/1g
Main Faction: Agrarians
Guild: Travellers (starships)
Trade Goods: Textbooks (+), Medkits (-)
Crises: Revolution
Rumors: World Blockade

Ishos's surface is clouded in a lethal fog and its ancient ruins are inhabited with monstrous fauna. To survive and prosper, the people of this world have grown in a symbiotic relationship with gargantuan plant-animal hybrid creatures carrying whole cities on their backs. The Dingir are the spiritual leaders of Ishos, while the Navy operates from the local class A starport. The world is currently in the midst of a civil war as the proletariat is rising against the priests, and the world blockade established by the Navy's flagship leaves little doubt as to who is responsible.

Horus

Terrain: Ferrous
Population/Size: 1K+/Asteroid
Main Faction: Militia
Guild: Safekeepers (banking)
Trade Goods: Magistrate (+), Firearms (-)
Crises: Pandemic
Rumors: Trade Convoy

The crystal caves of Horus shelter the Safekeepers' Guild from smaller rocks in the asteroid field orbiting the local star. Fairly recent housing facilities share space with ancient imperial vaults that still hold a trove of spice that can be refined into fuel for starships or the visions of navigators and seers. To guard these vaults, atomics from the Great Era serve as a deterrent to wannabe raiders unwilling to lose their precious ships. This outpost for the safekeepers is dying to a star plague though, struggling to hide the crisis from the world, helped by CRESUS, a Deep Thought Machine, which is currently trying to organize a massive trade convoy to export legalists and hopefully bring back a cure, or the means to finish off the infected.

"Nowhere in the 'verse are the stars as radiant as the Four Queens. It's as if they [the statues] command...no, tease the skies into shining brighter than anywhere else. That, or they're going supernova way sooner than they should reasonably do."
-Heard in a Cantina on Avernoy

Minos

Terrain: Mountainous
Population/Size: 5B+/1G
Main Faction: Cyberneticists
Guild: Manufacturing
Trade Goods: Chemists (+), Pilots (-)
Crises: Oppression
Rumors: Worker Strike

The Black Pyramid stands above the highest mountain top on the rocky world of Minos. In Elysium live the Heavenly Ones with perfect bodies of unmoving gold - descendents of a Great House who chose to fuse into one massive sculpture of stone to become the image of perfection. Under them, the Humble Ones live in the Garden. Beautiful flora and fauna from all around the galaxy, the finest delicacies and augmented bodies lined with silver. They rule in beatific apathy, as everything is as it should be. Under the Garden is the Factory, where billions of Penitents toil, great cogs in a machine that provides the Four Queens with all sorts of consumer and industrial goods, and feeds the population. The Underground below hides the Nameless Ones, abandoned by the gods for their spiritual and physical difformities, living like rats in the abandoned access. Yet a new wind blows in the Factory and under, and fear has become known to the Humble Ones: people say that one of the gods has been murdered.

Raqiel

Terrain: Volcanic
Population/Size: 1B+, 1g
Main Faction: Libertarians
Guild: Chefs (Food & Drink)
Trade Goods: Biotech (+), Naval Off. (-)
Crises: Radiation Leak
Rumors: Revolutionaries

Raqiel's domed island-cities are a loose federation of ultra-libertarians, controlled by the Corporate Council, made up of representatives from the ten most powerful current guilds of the planet. At the moment, the Chefs' Guild holds the place of Corporate Arbiter as massive volcanic eruptions have transformed the world's paradise-like terrain beyond the domed cities over the last decades. Their abilities to turn *anything* into not only decent but delicious foodstuff has literally saved the population. Despite that, dissent keeps growing as people speak of a unionist uprising in the making, precipitated by very poor handling of nuclear "accidents" that occurred during the Chefs' Guild hostile takeover of the former leading corp.

Feliz

Terrain: Unbalanced
Population/Size: 1K+, 1/2g
Main Faction: Capitalists
Guild: Doppelgangers (cloning)
Trade Goods: Swords (+), Cultists (-)
Crises: Trafficking
Rumors: New Colony

Feliz technically belongs to Raqiel's Chefs' Guild, but the Doppelgangers Union pays only lip service to their authority. The world is Earth-like, with many various biomes, which quickly led to a fractured civilisation. The low population stalled technological growth, and the low gravity makes the use of spectacular melee combat preferable when resolving violent conflicts, as it is also less lethal. Inhabitants of Feliz have a strong sense of honor and duty, and are somewhat open-minded, except when it comes to faith: they are strict atheists and are looking for ways to ship their "cults" off-world as soon as possible, preferably by making a profit. Psi users count as "cultists" as far as they're concerned.

Sierra

Terrain: Forested
Population/Size: 1K+/Asteroid
Main Faction: Subterrists
Guild: Travellers (starships)
Trade Goods: Lumber (+), Urchins (-)
Crises: Loss of Morale
Rumors: Smuggling Ring

Sierra's planet is a forest world with a dense flora and fauna, only vaguely bothered by the massive lumber industry of the Subterrists. In underground networks, a pre-starfaring civilisation of humanoid sophonts thrive, with limited contact with the local Travellers' Guild Space Station. Aboard the Space Station, things are looking dire: those who won't live with the subterrists are trying to find a way out as the place is slowly being overrun by pirates, smugglers and other unsavory types. The Navy is silent on the matter.

Algernon

Terrain: Temperate
Population/Size: 1K/Moon
Main Faction: ???
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: N/A
Crises: Religious Zeal
Rumors: AI Mishap

>>Encrypted Transmission from *****
THERE IS NOTHING HERE. TURN BACK. LEAVE.
BREAK YOUR LIGHTS, AWFUL CHAINS. ĨA! ĨA!

ZEPHYR NEBULA

The Zephyrian Hegemony is peopled by a race of intelligent, vegetarian humanoid with furry hair, elongated ears and powerful legs. Theirs is an utilitarian socialist society, using transhuman technology and a star-spanning data cloud to allow every single citizen to participate in most decision making. They have no real hierarchy or subcultures beyond the Hegemony itself. They hold the value of life in high respect albeit not sacred, which has sometimes prevented conflicts with neighbors to escalate into full-blown war.

Lydia

Terrain: Plains/Warrens
Population/Size: 10B+/1g
Main Faction: Socialists
Guild: Charioteers' (vehicles)
Trade Goods: Plascrete (+) / Plastic (-)
Crises: Loss of Morale
Rumors: Resource Boon

Capital of the Zephyrian Hegemony, this earth-like planet has been terraformed into a fairly flat paradise of meadows and prairies. It would appear deserted if not protected by a vast planetary shield, as all zephyrian architecture is built underground. In fact, most of the planet's underworld is occupied by maze-like warrens where locals navigate aboard giant mole-crawlers or speed through the highway on cyclon bikes, all innovations of the Charioteers' Guild. Productivity is always high on Lydia, though recent issues with overpopulation which have yet to be solved by the consensus system have led to a growing doubt in the perfection of Zephyrian culture and policies.

The Zephyrian Navy is a powerful force that can be encountered in great numbers not only in the Nebula, but also throughout the Dark. Zephyrians have long held the belief that answers as to the origins of sentient life in the 'verse must be held somewhere in there, beyond the reach of the Empire or any other interstellar polities. Without a strict hierarchy, all Zephyrians wear the same black uniform with light ceramic armor, an electric baton and a bullpup slug thrower. Exceptionally, the Navy is conferred with the ability to disregard Hegemony consensus when its own elements reach the conclusion that it would benefit Zephyrians more for the Navy to go against the consensus - usually because the cloud doesn't extend beyond the Nebula, meaning that Zephyrians outside of the Navy don't have first hand information upon which to rely on and make do with often dated reports.

Clavie

Terrain: Temperate
Population/Size: 10K/1/2g
Main Faction: Ecologists
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: Labor (+), Tools (-)
Crises: Pirate Raids
Rumors: Ancient Ruins

Clavie is the home of a race of sentient horse-like creatures with limited technological achievements. Clavians have long been assimilated into the Zephyrian Hegemony, who request of them assistance in industrial labor and war, in exchange for which the planet's many natural resources stay untouched - as is the wish of the nature-worshipping locals. Sadly, space pirates have recently started raiding the area for slaves and the occasional attempt to set up mining or draining operations. The Zephyrian Navy stands watch, but cannot be everywhere at once. These raids have brought something unexpected to interstellar attention: some miners uncovered ancient ruins that may be linked to the precursor races.

Brumaire

Terrain: Small Islands
Population/Size: 1K/1/2g
Main Faction: Transhumans
Guild: Cyberneticists
Trade Goods: Clones (+), Medicine (-)
Crises: Revolt
Rumors: Navy Involvement

Brumaire is a small water world constantly shrouded in mist. Its many islands are mostly populated by animals and plants, though a few islands hide research laboratories where the greatest minds of the Hegemony work on the Cloud and technology with which it is interfaced. Nobody knows why, but the Zephyrian Navy has placed the world in quarantine for a few years now. Yet new technology keeps coming out of the planet. Mercenaries were heard saying the scientists there have realized the terrible secret behind the Consensus System, and must be kept alive, yet silent, for the good of the Nebula.

"It's not that Zephyrians are particularly tough - they're gorram talking rabbits! It's that you can't stop them without taking nearly all of them out. There's no chain of command, no head to cut. They'll only surrender when no other viable option is available. Morale is irrelevant to them."
-Gunnery Sgt Meyers, Imperial Navy

THE DARK

Those who have never sailed the Dark think that all of space is just vast emptiness occasionally dotted by rocks and fireballs. They say it's all dark anyway. They haven't sailed long, or are fools. Old travellers know that there are places between the stars where a strange shadow lies, making every light dimmer. Known routes shift and change there. Star systems disappear, or aren't where they're supposed to be. Sometimes a light isn't a star but a gigantic bait for something toothy and so colossal it drives men insane. Then there's the voices - the superstitious call them ghosts. The scientists say they're electromagnetic echoes, which is a fancy way to describe the intrusion of the supernatural into our verse. Things don't make sense in the Dark.

Estebas

Terrain: Desert
Population/Size: 1K/2G
Main Faction: Assassins
Guild: Assassins
Trade Goods: Specialists (+), Water (-)
Crises: Ancient Rites
Rumors: New Leadership

The blades of Estebas are whispered about in tales of frightened kings living in golden cages, knowing deep down that none of their security bots and surveillance grids can protect them against Those That Walk In Walls. The homeworld of this race of men/ghost hybrid is a barren monochrome world of white sand blasted by a dying sun. In monolithic towers, its people live in monastic orders, training day and night to hone their exceptional skills at taking life. In a few days, it will be time for the Festival, where the weaker half of the population must be purged to strengthen the gene pool. Some are hoping to use this opportunity to get rid of Father-Mother, the hierophant of Estebas.



Leng

Terrain: Ethereal
Population/Size: <10/2G
Main Faction: Objectivists
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: Chemists (+), Pilots (-)
Crises: Occult Rites
Rumors: Derelict Ship

Leng's star seems to flicker in and out of existence, leaving only its shadow where it used to be light. Its world is a giant ball of gas and electric storms, deserted except for a derelict ship - an ancient imperial science vessel that tried to understand Leng and got trapped in its neverending dream. The planet is alive, and holds life as sacred above all else - thus it trapped the survivors' minds inside the derelict and gave them new bodies. They have been playing humans ever since, slowly losing their sanity as they are forbidden to die. They have recently taken to ancient occult rites in the hopes of conjuring something from the Dark that might help them die.

Sen

Terrain: Jungle
Population/Size: 0/Asteroid
Main Faction: Daemonics
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: Food (+), Water (+)
Crises: Invasion
Rumors: Nightmares

Those that travel near Sen are first assaulted by terrible nightmares - giant alien shadows plucking their memories away from their brains, taking their souls alongside them. The asteroid is covered in giant hair-like red tendrils that don't seem to mind hard vacuum. In fact, they somehow generate a breathable mix, allowing people to walk on the surface without helmets. Hidden in the canopy are strange, red fauna and flora, whose genetics seem to include a little bit of every living things known in the galaxy. The biosphere is surprisingly welcoming, with most plant and animal being edible (and quite delicious) by any alien or human-like species. The whole asteroid and its dwellers are actually the seeds of a race of sentient spiders functioning as a hive-mind. Their billions of eggs are hidden in between bits of genetic code, and multiply when mixed with humans or other useful beings. After a few days, they'll hatch simultaneously, the best specimen taking over the host's brain while others will be ejected through pores and holes, quickly coalescing into more red matter somewhere dark.

Lyonne

Terrain: Ferrous
Population/Size: 1K+/Asteroid
Main Faction: Anarchists
Guild: MicroMachines (nanomachines)
Trade Goods: Recreation (+) Vehicles (-)
Crises: Loss of Goods
Rumors: VIP Kidnapping

Former Deep Space mining operation from MicroMachines Industries, Lyonne was bought back by its workers after centuries of planning and shady deals with other guilds. They now operates as an anarchist commune, still engaged in mineral trades with their former employer on an exclusive basis. Delta Red, the attached space station, is a massive entertainment complex for rich tourists and weary travelers. Caysino, bordello, drug den - they've got everything you want and more than a little you probably don't. Recently, threats of terrorist attacks from an unknown party have been largely ignored, until one of the corporate executive's child was kidnapped. The anarchists do not seem to be aware of who's responsible, and corporate demands answers now.

Anima

Terrain: Unbalanced
Population/Size: 1K+, 2g
Main Faction: Hunters
Guild: Artificial Inc (AIs)
Trade Goods: Fungus (+), Prefabs (-)
Crises: Fungal Bloom
Rumors: Starship Crash

Anima is a prehistoric world of steaming jungles, misty swamps and burning deserts. Giant insects fight with neolithic megafauna for dominion, while the few local humans have degenerated into savage tribes, having forgotten all of their ancient ties to modern civilization. Underneath the overgrown ruins still lie great vaults of ancient technology, guarded by a powerful self-upgrading AI trapped underground by its programming. A recent meteor shower infected parts of the land with an alien fungi of unknown intelligence. Perhaps this is an opportunity for the AI to seek another way out of its prison. Ships passing by will be attacked with hacking attempts to force them on the ground.

"I'm no stowaway, I swear! I'm just a space tramp on a cosmic highway ♪ Just a space hobo on his way to nowhere ♪ Wherever the wind blow is where I go- Hey, wait, NOT THE AIRLO-" -Unknown

Acturius

Terrain: Radiations
Population/Size: 10K+/1G
Main Faction: Space Pirates
Guild: The Muster (slaves)
Trade Goods: Specialists (+), Weapons (-)
Crises: Skirmishes with Navy
Rumors: Precursor Data

Space Pirates are hounded restlessly by both the Imperial and Zephyrian Navy. Most Guilds aside from the Muster refuse to trade with them. Their "homeworld" is an irradiated mess in the middle of nowhere. So they stick together, regardless of species, goals or methods. Acturius is a dangerous place, but it is home for the lawless. The space port has adequate facilities for repairs and outfitting with new tech, though the local experts aren't the best in the 'verse. Recent battles against navy scouts have made the locals particularly wary of strangers. Aside from criminals, xenarcheologists are fascinated by the ruined surface, as it is believed to be one of the few worlds left that had been colonized by the Precursors, eons ago.

Troy

Terrain: Overgrown
Population/Size: Asteroid
Main Faction: N/A
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: N/A
Crises: /
Rumors: Black Hole

This asteroid emits strange signals, including a long range radiowave which sounds just like someone playing a mournful tune on the harmonica. At close range, one notices that the large rock looks more like a strange ball of wood or bramble, riddled with misty holes. Some large enough to accommodate a courier ship. The space lane's aetheric wind goes through that hole, and doesn't seem to come out on the other side. Going inside reveals a space much larger on the inside, clouded with tan fog. Lights shine inside like distant stars. One of these is a spatial anomaly leading to the "other side", lost coordinates that allow one to finish the Dark Road up to the fabled world of Kether and its wish-granter. The other is the bait of a gigantic lantern-fish.

Kether

Terrain: Prairie
Population/Size: 1K/1g
Main Faction: Dream Worshipers
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: N/A
Crises: Trap
Rumors: Wish Granter

This paradise world is the final stop for most of the intrepid travelers that seek the secrets of the 'verse. Like the sailors of old, spacers are fond of their legends and superstitions, yet none is spoken of in more respectful whispers than that of the Wish Granter. They say that coreward, not too far from the Four Queens subsector, on a hidden space lane beyond the horrors of the Dark lies a paradise world. There, an ancient race of wise caretakers protect a black monolith that grants one's deepest desire. The truth is less romantic: the Dream Worshipers are little more than savage cannibals, turned feral by the psi emission of a strange alien artifact - said monolith, which seems driven to please the imagination of those in contact with it. The longer one stays on this "paradise", the more dissociated their idyllic visions will grow from their actual minds and bodies, until their consciousness lies trapped in a fantasy world of their own devising while the real them rots in a green hell.

Euclid

Terrain: Psionic
Population/Size: 0/1g
Main Faction: N/A
Guild: N/A
Trade Goods: Knowledge (-)
Crises: Time Maelström
Rumors: Precursor Data

The Precursors are a strange species - gargantuan beings of hyper-light walk a world that appears only as a half-awake fever dream of impossible colours and odd music. Their calendar is a countdown to their own extinction, racing forward to the beat of mankind's progress. Eons ago they built constructs of flesh, bone and sinew, and imbued them with the highest form of artificial intelligence, granting them complete autonomy. Eventually they reached out to the stars to leave their mark upon the 'verse, until they ran their course as mortal beings and a mortal species, and now only cryptic ruins remain. Did these constructs plant the seeds of our own civilization, or are we their descendants? Perhaps the Precursors hold some answers.

ENCOUNTERS IN CIVILIZED SPACE

- 1-3 - Navy/Zephyrian Patrol
- 2-5 - Space Pirates
- 3-6 - Distress Signal (out of fuel)
- 7-8 - Distress Signal (pirate ambush)
- 9 - Distress Signal (derelict)
- 10 - Special Encounter
- 11 - Asteroid Field
- 12 - Electromagnetic Field
- 13 - Free Trader
- 14 - Guild Ship
- 15 - Cargo Hauler
- 16 - Courier Scout
- 17 - Science Vessel
- 18 - Vengeance Crew
- 19 - Local Patrol
- 20 - Military Escort

Special Encounter

- 1 - Space Kraken
- 2 - Space Barnacles
- 3 - Battlefield
- 4 - Assassin
- 5 - Ghost Ship
- 6 - Rogue AI

ENCOUNTERS IN THE DARK

- 1 - Space Kraken
- 2-5 - Space Pirates
- 6-7 Distress Signal (out of fuel)
- 8-9 - Distress Signal (pirate ambush)
- 10-11 - Distress Signal (derelict)
- 12 - Space Barnacles
- 13 - Ship Graveyard
- 14 - Assassin
- 15 - Ghost Ship
- 16 - Electromagnetic Field
- 17 - Asteroid Field
- 18 - Rogue AI
- 19 - Courier Scout
- 20 - Other

Other

- 1 - Shadow of a Precursor
- 2 - Doppelganger Ship & Crew
- 3 - Strange Signal (xenomorph planetoid)
- 4 - Space Wizard
- 5 - Time Travel
- 6 - Daemon Incursion

A Note on Space Lanes

On the following map, I've included dotted lines to represent space lanes. Those between civilized (squared) stars are well-known. Others require a skilled navigation to determine, or up-to-date charts. Each pink square represents enough distance for 1-fuel to be spent. In the dark, toss a coin for every pink square. Heads, spend an extra fuel. Ships wishing to travel the Darks should get outfitted with the equipment to skim fuel from Gas Giants - both the Imperial and Zephyrian Navies have the know-how.

Bestiary of Sky Creatures

by Justin Hamilton

Lightning Bird



An intelligent bird, the size of an eagle and feathered black and white, this creature feeds off of the blood of other birds. It possesses the unusual quality of being able to shapeshift into a human, feeding upon their blood.

While in bird form the creature is able to summon lightning strikes through significant physical effort. This has led to magic-users speculating that it may be using the lifeforce siphoned by blood to power its magics, and that some part of the creature may be used as a powerful spell component.

When in human form the creature always has one distinct tell, sometimes it is a shock of black and white feathers can be found under its hair, other times its feet remain taloned, and often other birds will not stand the vampire's presence.

The creature attempts to deceive its prey as much as possible, utilizing its lightning strikes only when necessary, or when on the defense.

art by zlivkun / IG : ham_hamh



Sky Gnome

No-one knows what caused these traditionally subterranean fae beings to take to the skies, but the recent animosity being Gnomes and the Dwarves raise a number of questions, especially for the more industrious digging folk.

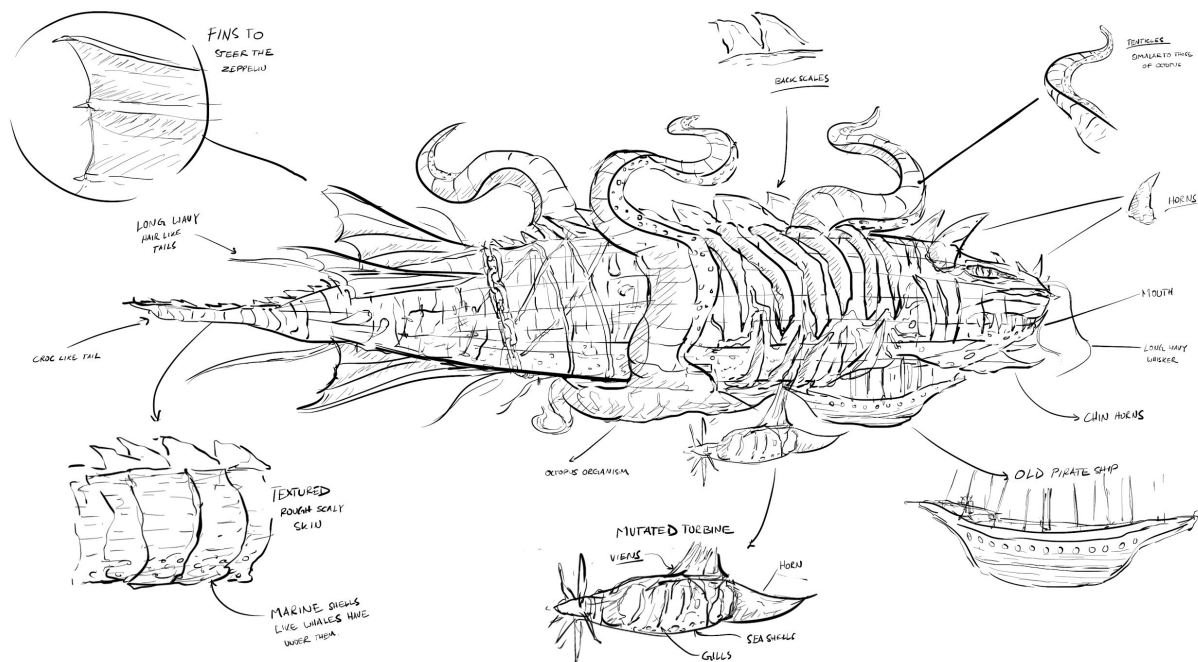
Whenever they manage to commandeer a zeppelin it seems to operate under the strange laws of faerie “science.” Kept afloat magically, possessing a motley of impossible contraptions and devices strapped to it.

They have successfully utilized this arcane engineering to outfit themselves with reliable sky crossbows and rockets allowing for short distance flight.

While not necessarily malicious, communities of Sky Gnomes are certainly mischievous, and have to seem somewhat of a liberal definition of “property.” They prefer hit-and-run tactics, and seem more interested in collecting unusual trinkets than performing harm.

art by Erdem Yücel

Chaos Zeppelin



A looming mass of shadow and tentacles, this sky behemoth is perhaps the most dire of sights among the horizon.

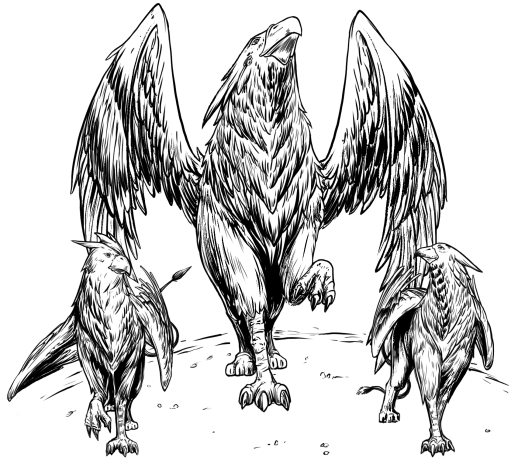
When a zeppelin is taken by one of the many chaos cults, a powerful hierophant to the outer gods is able open a rift to the daemon realms, inviting primordial chaos into the body of the flying device. Daemonic flesh almost causes the zeppelin to burst at the seams, eyes and mouths adorn the hull, tentacles and claws jut out from many directions.

It is not known if these monstrosities may travel through the gates used to summon the parasitic being housed within, but they somehow are able to spring upon settlements from out of nowhere, ravaging whole communities as sacrifices to the dark gods empowering them.

art by ahsansiddiqui10

Ziz

Almost as massive as a mountain, the great Ziz is an awe-inspiring sight to take in. Whether she is the god of griffins, or just a particularly primordial one, Ziz is certainly the largest of the creatures ever witnessed.



Scholars of the School of Beastmancy debate as to whether or not Ziz is indeed a gigantic griffin or another creature all together. She wakes only periodically to go hunt and to lay eggs, although none know if she has another partner elsewhere, or if her eggs are fertilized through some divine or magical means.

Once an entire town was flooded when a group of mountaineering adventurers sought to steal many of Ziz's eggs from a hidden nest. They failed to safely retrieve the eggs, sending them rolling down the mountainside, crashing into the village and swamping it in yolk.

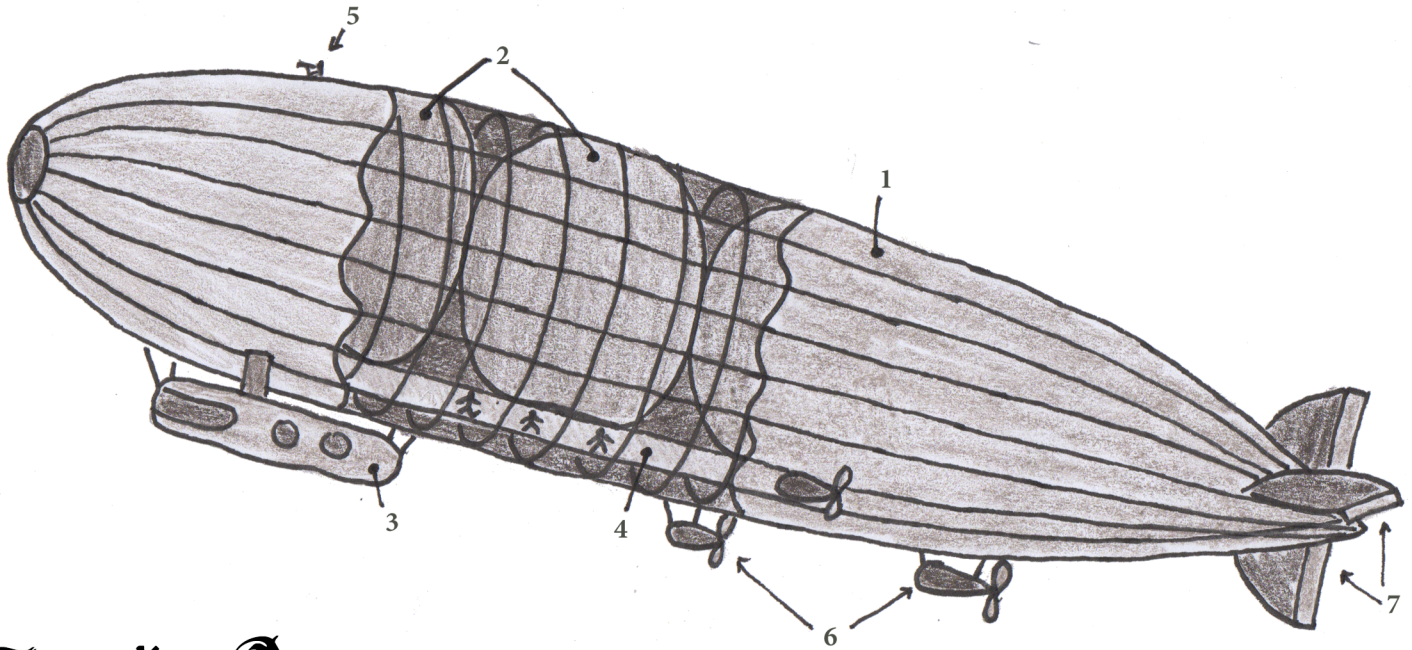
Ziz will not typically hunt prey as small as the typical adventurer, but may strike at zeppelins that she sees as a threat. She has also been seen attacking with fury against any who harass her children, utilizing her massive size and ability to soar to strike from above.

art by yozart / Instagram: missyozart

[REDACTED] secret to playing RPGs is to play them like people who heard of RPGs all second hand, but didn't have the money to buy the stuff, so they make it all up.

Selected Zeppelin Facts

which may be of use to referees; compiled and illustrated by Sam Sanford



Zeppelin Anatomy

1. The **envelope**, an outer shell of canvas stretched over a rigid framework. The fabric is treated with **dope**, a type of lacquer, sometimes **aluminized** to reflect heat. The frame is strengthened with high-tension wires stretched between the frame members.
2. **Gas bags**, one or several, filled with **lifting gas** and made of **goldbeater's skin** - a tear-resistant material made from ox intestine. The gas bags are fitted with **valves** at the top of the ship for releasing gas to reduce buoyancy. The gas bags are surrounded by a netting of cord and/or wire within the frame.
3. A **gondola**, suspended from the ship's keel, containing the **navigating room** and a vertical **shaft** for ascending into the interior of the ship. The gondola may or may not also contain passenger accommodations.
4. A **keel corridor** within the envelope, leading to crew quarters, sleeping berths, storage for fuel, and possibly passenger accommodations. A **speaking tube** is used for communication between the keel and the navigation room. **Water ballast bags** in the keel corridor can be filled after cargo or passengers are unloaded to maintain the proper buoyancy.
5. An **observation platform** on the top of the ship, reached by a ladder from the keel corridor.
6. A number of **power cars** comprising propeller engines or other propulsion devices.
7. Horizontal and vertical **fins** and **rudders** for stability and steering.

Some Numbers

M Class Zeppelin:

- length 518 ft (158 m)
- gas volume 794,580 ft³ (22,500 m³)
- carrying capacity 20,062 lbs (9,100 kg)
- 3 engines
- top speed 52 mph (84 kph).
- 13 crew, 20 passengers
- range 900 mi (1400 km)

LZ-127 Graf Zeppelin:

- length 776 ft (236 m)
- gas volume 3,707,550 ft³ (104,986 m³)
- carrying capacity 43,900 lbs (19,900 kg)
- 5 engines
- top speed 80 mph (128 kph)
- 36 crew, 20 passengers
- range 6,200 mi (10,000 km)
- typical cruising altitude 650 ft (200 m)

Lifting Gas

Helium is produced by the radioactive decay of uranium and thorium. It can only be found in significant quantities in pockets of natural gas within the earth.

In order to be used for lifting gas, the helium must be separated out by the difficult and technologically advanced process of subjecting the mixed gases to extremely high pressures at low temperatures. This liquefies the heavier gases and leaves gaseous helium behind.

Being a monatomic gas, helium is difficult to store as it eventually permeates most materials.

Helium is **non-combustible** and has a lifting power of **1.16 g/L**.

Hydrogen is much easier to produce than helium. The main historical method of interest to referees is the **steam-iron method**:

Steam is brought into contact with iron in a high-pressure chamber (nowhere near the pressure needed for the separation of helium), converting the outer layer of the iron to iron oxide and producing hydrogen gas. The iron oxide is then reacted with **blue water gas** (a mixture of carbon monoxide and hydrogen made by passing steam over coal) to turn it back into iron in a cyclic process.

This process is technologically simple and fairly cheap, requiring only water, coal, and iron (which can be used again and again) and relatively low temperatures and pressures. The hydrogen produced is quite pure, requiring no further purification to be ready for use as a lifting gas.

Hydrogen is **explosive** and has a lifting power of **1.21 g/L**.

Ammonia can be used as a lifting gas. It can be produced rather easily by reacting **quicklime** (calcium oxide, formed by heating limestone) with **sal-ammoniac** (ammonium chloride, a mineral that forms in coal-burning furnaces). Ammonia gas is **highly toxic** and has a lifting power of **0.53 g/L** – meaning an ammonia airship would have to be twice the volume of a hydrogen ship to carry the same weight.

Natural gas, composed primarily of **methane**, can also be used. It occurs naturally in pockets underground, making it perhaps the easiest lifting gas to produce. It is **flammable** but not explosive, and has a lifting power of **0.58g/L**.



Beowulf in a Balloon

This article asks that vital question: can Free Kriegspiel get Beowulf into a balloon?

For a couple of years, I have been working on *The Wyrd Lands RPG*, a historical RPG set among the pre-Anglo-Saxons of Scandinavia. I've read history, fiddled with rules, play-tested, written and drawn all with one aim: simulating my view of this time and world. The game has increasingly slimmed down since its first days as a DnD 5e hack. But now I have come across Free Kriegspiel and I'm asking, 'isn't this what I had been intending to do from the start?'

Thinking you might have to re-design the game (yet again) leads to a little cognitive resistance. So, I am asking do I need the FK way. Do I need this almost child-like freedom? Does my game need the freeform rules that would allow my players to take their Spear-Danes to the sky, riding mighty Woden-Balloons into battle?

To answer that question, I need to know if it is the right question to ask. I need to know what we are talking about when we say Free Kriegspiel.

This article is not an attempt to explain or argue for Free Kriegspiel (FK). Instead it is a presentation of a simple bit of coding analysis of what people are already saying.



Welcome to the Wyrd Lands

Using the Discord Channel 'What is free kriegspiel' as my starting point I generated several codes (categories) to fit people's comments into. These codes might include 'Not Arnesonian' or, equally, 'Arnesonian'. I cross referenced across the discord and against a handful of the most mentioned blogs and articles as well as some of the games that are explicitly FK, such as Landshut.

When people matched a code, or agreed with one, I counted the result. I looked for codes for which there was broad agreement or no explicit disagreement. So, for my results I set aside codes like 'Arnesonian' as they were explicitly disagreed with. This impacts on my results as you will not see any mention of the referee. Even though for some the referee is the 'LAW' others are thinking about FK in GM-less and solo ways. I also did not include suggested mechanics; I am looking to more conceptual answers.

Results

The most cited code was: 'Fictional realism overrides story/plot/game'; followed by 'Mode of play chosen by table' and 'rules/negotiated in play'. That last code was strongly aligned with 'world complexity negotiated in play'.

Some of the other interesting, though slightly less commonly cited ideas, were: 'The true FK is not the FK that can be described' and a couple about the importance of childhood both as a source of FK and as a target for it.

Putting the play in Roleplay

Putting this together has given me a working answer and some FK principles:

FK is gaming where formal rules and/or mechanics are not required to resolve the outcome of an event.

Principles:

1. Rules and world-content are principally created and/or used only as relevant to the needs/wants of the table, at the moment that they become useful.
2. Fictional-world elements or verisimilitude precedes plot/generic/game elements.
3. Players and characters are motivated by in fiction factors above all else.
4. FK is a style of play that can be chosen and adapted at the table.

My answer is quite broad, coming close to children's play itself. I think this a positive approach, and makes FK seem like it is almost putting the play back in roleplaying. Play seen in the child-like way as being almost the ultimate form of learning through experimentation.

The principles are essentially write-ups of the codes. Principle 2 is a long way of saying the key phrase of 'play worlds, not rules'. It is clear from the way people talk about FK that the 'rules' also includes the rules of genre, or the rule of cool. I think in the narrative respect there are fruitful avenues to explore. It seems that a lot of the discussion of FK is coming from players and designers of the OSR and there doesn't seem to have been too many attempts yet to bring more narrative approaches and FK together.

Principle 4 is interesting as it presents an un-answered question: is FK a game design philosophy or simply a GM/Game running philosophy? Where this is explicitly addressed the answer is that it

is a GM or Game-running philosophy, encapsulating the idea that, 'You can run any game in free kriegsspiel'. The questions may be a false dichotomy if we recognise that the GM and designer are essentially the same person. But it is worth addressing as it might guide those of us who are interested in creating FK products to think about who our audience actually is.

Back in the Balloon, Beowulf!

Phew. Well I do think this answer to the question and the principles do help me answer whether or not I can get Beowulf into that balloon. In short, the answer is yes. I can do whatever I please, I have an imagination and a plethora of mechanics in my mind to use as I see fit. If I need to learn more about balloons to feel confident about what they will find in the balloon, a read through this zine should help there.

I don't yet know what impact FK will have on my design personally but I feel rather liberated by the play of FK. I can let my imagination loosen and see where it takes me.

Yours,

The Thulr

Bonus Thought: The Name

With a little space on the PDF I thought I would mention the name.

The name Free Kriegspiel is by no means set in people's minds. The acronym of FKR is variously referred to as Free Friegspiel Renaissance and Roleplay. Some call it Arnesonian others strongly reject that. Some say a name like freeform roleplay is good, others not. Some think it should be adventure game, getting rid of roleplaying and wargaming altogether.

The word Kriegspiel itself causes a bit of confusion and I feel that has to be some serious consideration of that. It sounds cool, it gains some kind of authority from history and perhaps ties it into the also slightly opaque name OSR. But it's not clear that it is the best name.

Translated into English as Free War-Play (or Wargame) it doesn't quite work. Some of us reading this would love to design and play a Free War-Play game, but not all of us. Perhaps a Free Play Roleplaying game might work?

No one can control these things but we should be conscious of it, particularly if people are interested in growing this group in the future.

Art by: @Markliamsongs (Instagram)

Gob-Zeppelins

*Zeppelins for your fantasy setting,
cobbled together by one of fantasies most
infamous baddies.*

No matter the fantasy setting there are usually small green skinned creatures known as goblins. Goblins are notorious in fantasy for living in hoards under mountains, tinkering on machines made from junk and often powered by magic or steam. Their ingenuity is only matched by their chaotic nature. Their flying war machines should match these qualities and I will be giving some advice on what they should look like, be made of and a few ways to use them in your campaigns. What follows should be all you need to get

your creative juices flowing to help spice up the world your player's characters are adventuring in.



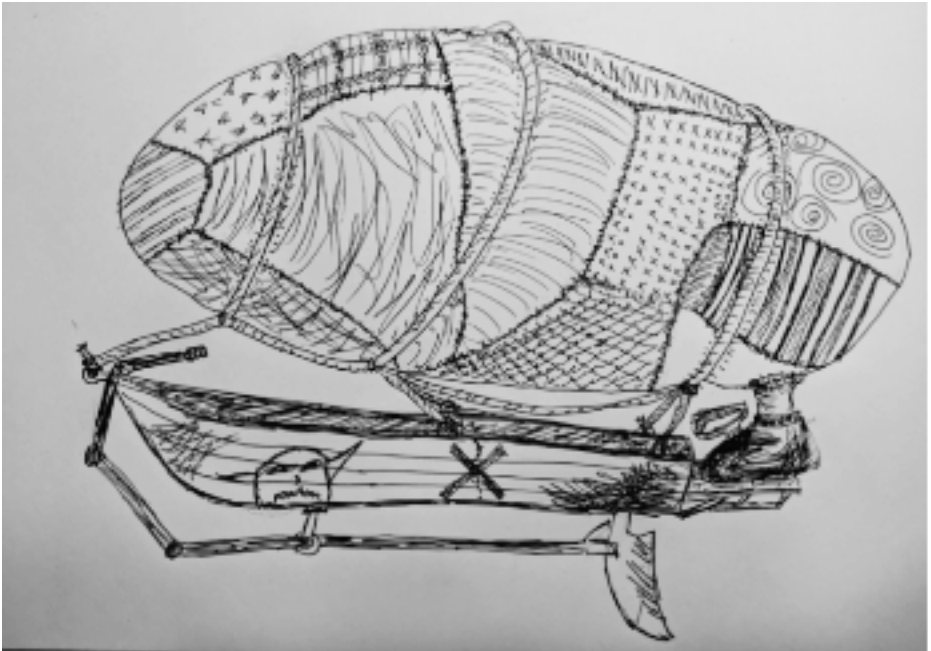
Opportunistic, filthy and scavengers just a few of the words one might use to describe goblins. We all know these small green creatures whether from reading Tolkein, perhaps you first met the green critters playing in your first game of D&D back when you were first introduced to role

playing game, or maybe you have played Magic the Gathering and someone you know made a deck based around goblins (there's always one in the group, and in my group I am "that guy"). However you were first introduced to the nasty group of beasts, you have probably heard the word crafty used to describe them. While they are best known for their improvised hand held weapons pieced together with the dross they find on abandoned battlefields, it is easy to forget that these creatures are able to build bigger and deadlier things from the refuse they find.

The mighty Gob-Zeppelin is a work of art, a masterpiece to be viewed and one of the finest examples of flawless machinery, or at least that may be what their creators think of them. In all actuality there is a good possibility that these flying machines will be completely aesthetically displeasing, unorganized and downright ugly. However, the functionality that a flying warship provides could be just the advantage that goblins need since they tend to be weak in strength and constitution, in a battle. The use of one could easily turn the tides of a war in the goblin's favor.

The size and composition of a goblin built zeppelin will vary depending on the debris that is abundant at the time of its building. A greedy goblin is adept at pilfering everything and anything it can find.

A set of sheets stolen from another goblin's linen closet could produce the balloon easier than completing the process of tanning a bunch of animal hides (though most



goblins would be more likely to steal the set of hides.) A fire contained and stoked would produce the hot air needed to raise the balloon into the sky, or perhaps a local wizard was kidnapped and forced to create a device that has magical properties to fill and lift the balloon into the sky.

An old boat or ship washed ashore from a recent storm would need only the barest of repairs; even the dumbest of goblins knows a ship in the air does not need to be watertight. A wagon stolen from a merchant passing by on the local road would also suffice, and the horses make for a tasty snack when expending the type of energy needed to make a zeppelin.

The shape and size of the final product could be the result of a fully thought out set of plans or solely based on the materials available at the time of its construction.

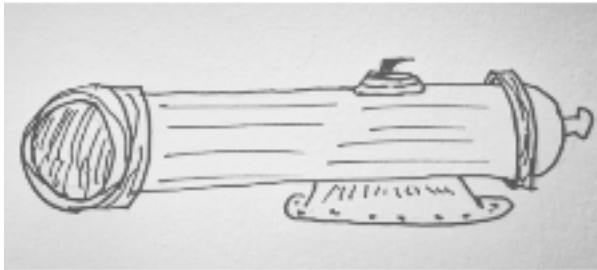
Gob-Zeppelins may range from the largest transport ship able to move hundreds of troops to a battle or only fit for a small tactical unit of reconnaissance goblins. Your game's world may need one or both of these depending on what you are looking to throw at your players. One important rule to remember is that no two Gob-Zeppelins should look the same.



Weapons. What would these high riding goblins do without some sort of armament? Sure a zeppelin may simply be used as a transport ship to ferry large groups of creatures from one location to another, but let's be honest, any goblin worth his spit who builds a

sky warship will include an arsenal of weapons to rain fiery death upon his foes. This may include anything from a row of molotov cocktails waiting to be lit and thrown, to a full on cannon used to blast holes in other airships or rain down whatever junk is shoved into the cannon. If the goblins

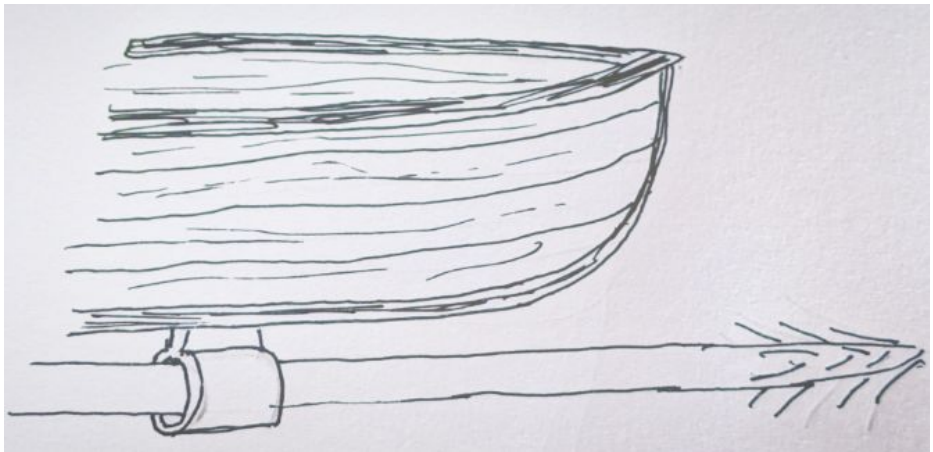
do encounter resistance in the skies it could be beneficial to have a battering ram attached, but goblins know how to



cause destruction and may fashion their ram with perhaps a giant spike utilizing pneumatic power, or maybe some kind of magic, nothing beats a big pointy

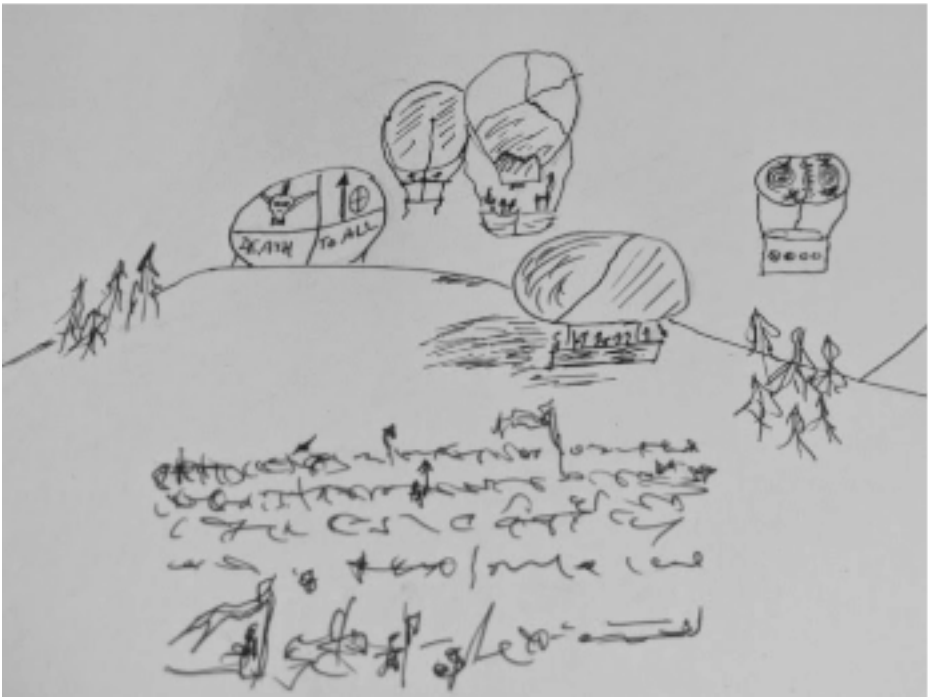
stick when it comes to inflicting massive amounts of damage to a waiting castle wall.

Now that you have seen the wonderment that could be a fleet of Gob-Zeppelins it is time to talk about why you might want to include these in your campaign's world. A horde of goblins is a force to be reckoned, but any adventuring party



can tell you that a single goblin is weak and easily killed. Goblins make up for their small stature with cunning and ingenuity. A zeppelin is just what is needed to overcome the odds of being puny in stature.

A ship able to deliver hundreds of goblins armed to the teeth would be a big change for the tide of battle. Weapons firing massive volleys of junk will clear out a field of battle quicker than you may suspect. What was once a small pathetic creature now has become a force to be reckoned



with. A walled city could easily be invaded with a long enough bombardment from a persistent enough army.

Your players now have a challenge ahead of them. And as with anything else you throw at them in your game they will almost inevitably find a way to use it and throw it back at you. Please consider the following, a war has broken out amongst the goblin hordes and their biggest foe the longshanks (that is Goblin for humans). The goblins arrive on the battlefield with a fleet of airships.

Let's now assume you have a clever group of players at your table and they have gotten intel about the goblin invasion. The band of adventurers have devised a plan to counter the attack. While the army that your players have amassed to fight against the ground units. Your group decides to engage in a stealth assault on the flagship of the goblin fleet, if the group of characters is able to take down the ship without destroying it, maybe they get to keep it, maybe they in turn are able to maneuver it in a way that they can take out the rest of the fleet and assist the annihilation of the ground troops, let the players explore the world with their new ride.

A word of warning about giving your players something as powerful as a flying machine, a whole world of possibilities will present itself once the group can zoom through the sky. Just make sure you are ready for what awaits your group having an airship. Perhaps the great dragons of your world patrol and consider themselves the kings of the sky and they

may not appreciate your group's new adventuring vessel parading about their domain. Or even more likely is that the haphazard way in which their new air ride was built will have lasting effects on how the ship will function. Without some real engineering your players may find themselves stranded on a faraway island or even worse behind enemy lines with no means of egress.

The sky's the limit when it comes to these goblin balloons, use your imagination and let the construction of the zeppelins inform the players of the world. Have fun and enjoy your game, the referee may always get the last laugh but remember it is the players who will give you the opportunity to do so. So do not let them down and hold their spirits aloft as they fly around your world truly letting the wind take them where it will.

Always remember, all is fair in goblin war.

Your Skybound Referee
-Derek Bizier

Goblin Image by GDJ. 2018. *Goblin by Ladyofhats* [PNG]. Retrieved from <https://openclipart.org/detail/310904/goblin-by-ladyofhats>.

All other images by Derek Bizier, 2020.

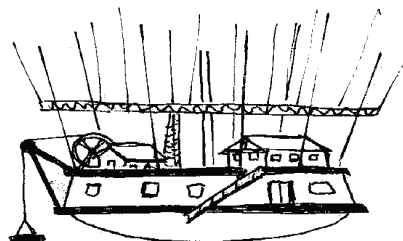
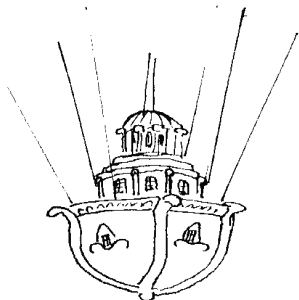
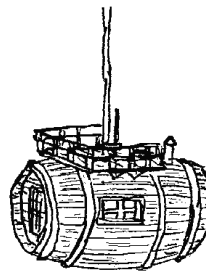
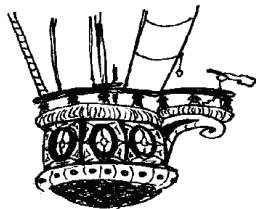
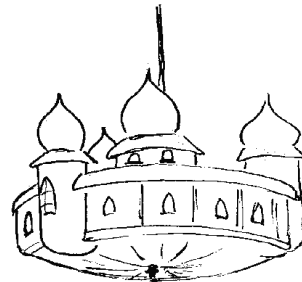
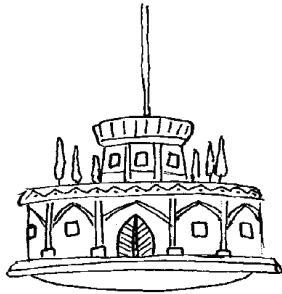
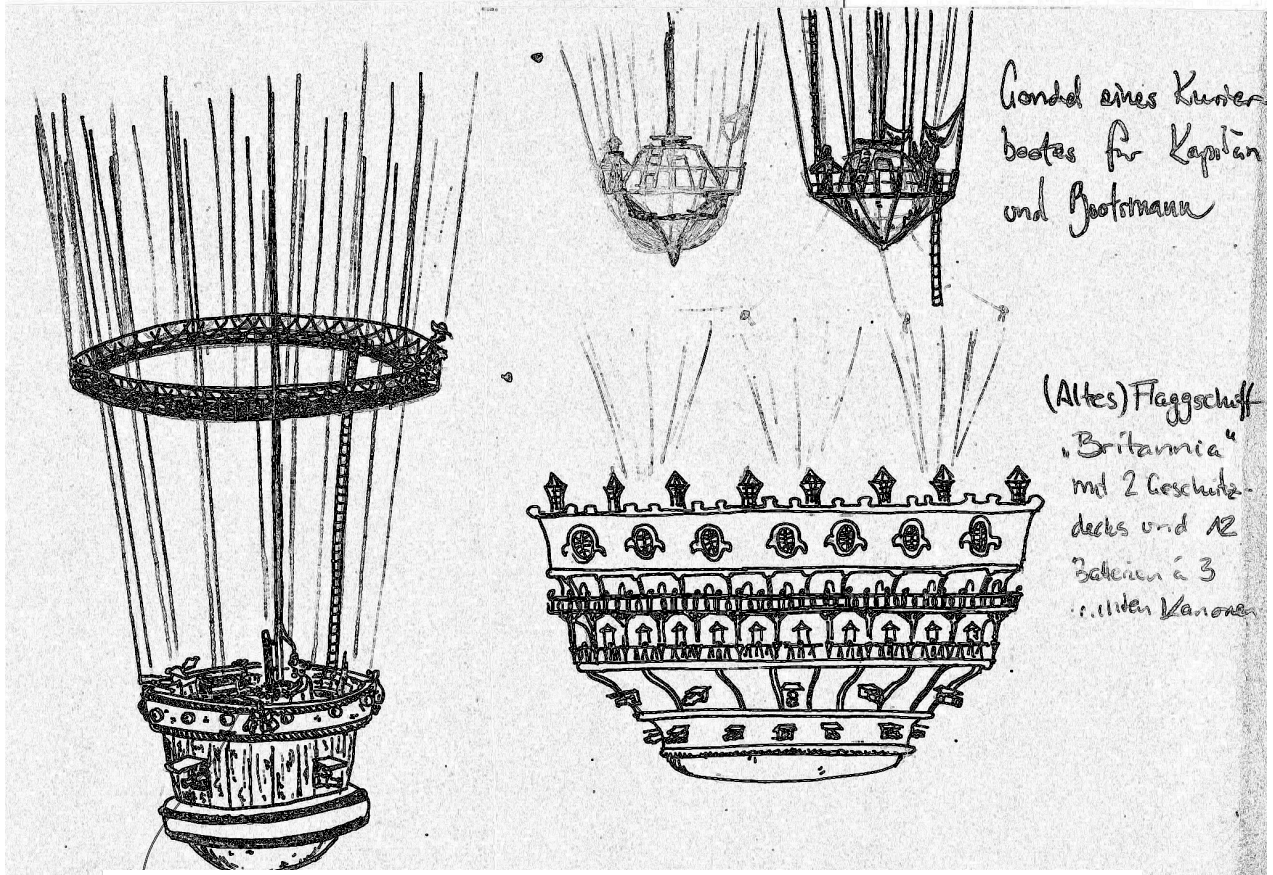
Historic Sky Vessels

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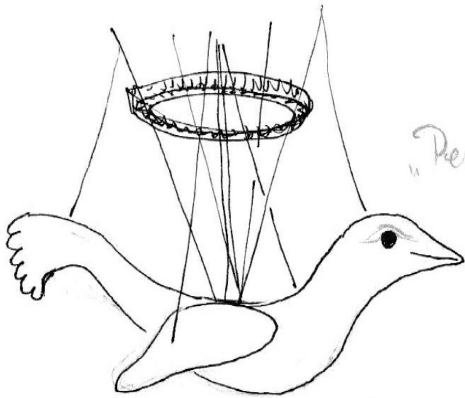
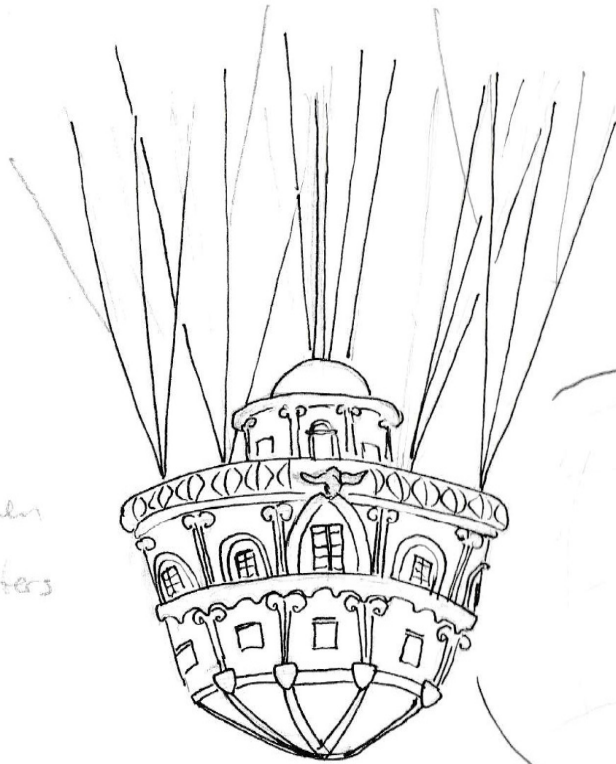
Himmelsschiffe und der Kampf um den Mond

by Theodor v. Straate, Universitas Argentorati

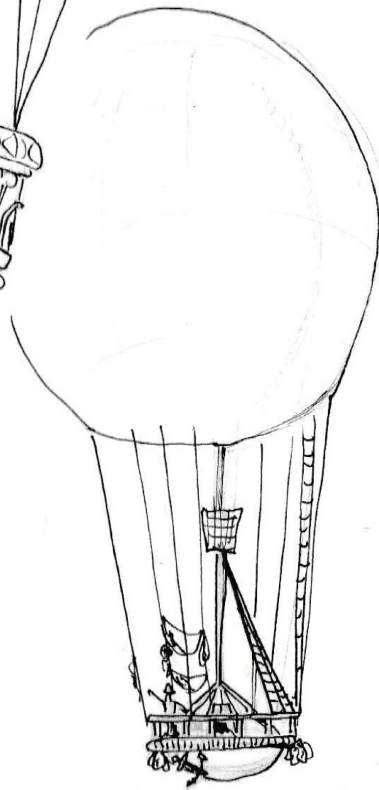
Straßburg, 1815



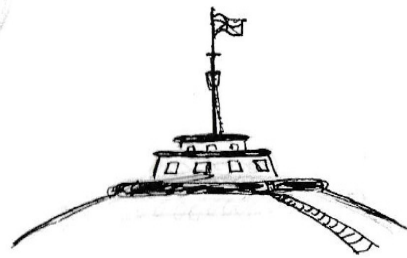
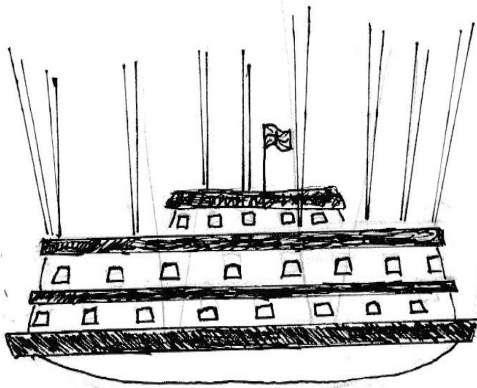
„L'Égale“,
Schiff des
französischen
Mondministers



„Perpetua“



Kurierboot „Fox“



schweres brit. Schlachtschiff mit fortifiziertem Ballonankern

Fantasy Mass Battles in the Free Kriegsspiel Tradition

By Amun100

Equipment needed

- Fantasy miniatures, element-based or on movement trays. Alternatively print units on cardstock, or stick labels onto MDF/plastic bases
- Polyhedral dice
- Measuring tool, such as a pen or ruler
- Paper or notebook
- Battlefield and scenery. Perhaps a sheet of felt in an appropriate colour, draped across a table, with smaller sections of felt depicting rivers, marshes etc.

The basic mechanic

All matters of uncertainty in a battle are handled by means of opposed rolls.

The difficulty of the roll is set by the referee, who chooses the exact die size that will be thrown by each player. A player assessed to have a greater chance of prevailing in a situation should roll a larger die than his opponent. The greater the disparity in die sizes, the greater the chances of that player succeeding.

The player that rolls highest prevails, and the referee determines the results of the action. Very close rolls and ties indicate a deadlock.

Assemble your forces

Reveal your forces to your opponent and referee. Each base represents one unit. Agree on the strengths and weaknesses of each unit, along with the movement rates, missile weapon ranges, and the list of spells. You may wish to write notes of what is agreed.

For example, a war mammoth could be described as: strong, slow, causes fear.

There is no need to 'balance' forces. Just go with what feels right for a fun battle or the needs of a particular scenario.

Deploy the troops

The referee will outline the terrain, deployment locations and objectives of the battle. The players make opposed rolls, with the winner choosing whether to deploy first or second. The first to deploy also takes the first turn. Thereafter play alternates between opponents.

After an agreed number of turns or upon completion of the objectives, the battle concludes.

Phases in a turn

Movement

Units can move across the battlefield, wheeling and changing facing as required, or charge into combat. Standard units move up to the length of a pen (or other agreed distance). Faster troops move further (perhaps an extra 50%), and slower troops move a shorter distance (perhaps 50% less).

If charging, a small distance bonus may be granted by the referee in order to fully align combatants. A player's unit that is charged in the flank or rear may turn to face their attacker in that player's next movement phase. If a fleeing unit is charged it is immediately destroyed.

If a unit wishes to break from combat the referee will call for an opposed roll as per the melee rules below. If the unit wishing to break wins the roll, they can move as normal, but no disorder markers are added to the enemy unit.

Terrain conditions affect movement. Some terrain is impassable (such as cliffs), offers greater protection (such as city walls), while other areas may be classed as bad going for certain troop types. For example, mounted knights will find woods difficult to traverse, but sneaky goblin skirmishers will move

with ease and lay ambush to unsuspecting troops.

Shooting

Check for range and line of sight. Some missile weapons require direct line of sight, such as pistols. Others, such as longbows, can be fired over intervening units. Elevation also influences line of sight and range.

War machines and artillery may take longer to reload and fire, but the effects of a successful hit will be devastating.

The referee determines the difficulty of an opposed roll. If the shooting unit wins the roll, the target unit takes a disorder marker (or two in extreme cases). If a target unit already has two disorder markers, it is destroyed.

Melee

The referee assesses the relevant strengths of the units, factoring in such details as the terrain, support from allies engaged with the same target, attacking from the flank or rear and the number of disorder markers per unit. Then the players make an opposed roll. The highest roll wins, and the losing unit takes a disorder marker (or two in extreme cases). If a losing unit already has two disorder markers, it is destroyed.

The winning unit can then choose whether to follow up into the space formerly occupied by the destroyed unit. Some units are impetuous and will always follow up.

Morale

The player attempts to rally troops by making an opposed roll against the referee. The referee determines the difficulty of the roll, factoring in the number of disorder markers a unit has received and the character of the troops.

If the player wins the roll:

- Units marked with one or more disorder markers remove one marker
- Fleeing units stop and reform, coming back under control

If the player loses the roll:

- Units already marked with two disorder markers flee at full speed. If they leave the table they are considered destroyed. If they are unable to flee, they are destroyed

Personalities

A personality (e.g. general, hero, wizard) and their retinue are usually mounted on a smaller base and operate as a separate unit. They can generally move very swiftly. They can inspire from a distance, improving the chances of winning combats or rallying units.

Personalities can attach to a specific unit in combat for a significant bonus in that particular fight. If a unit with an attached personality flees or is destroyed, the personality detaches and leaves.

Magic

Spells can be cast by either player at any appropriate moment in play. Offensive spells are usually resolved with an opposed roll between players, whereas defensive or spells are normally between a player and the referee.

The list of spells, and the number that can be cast per turn and per battle should be agreed before the game with the referee.

For example, players might be allocated a pool of tokens at the start of the game that can be spent when desired during the battle. Or a high die roll at the start of each turn may indicate that the winds of magic are strong enough for a wizard to cast a spell during that turn.

Novels, movies, RPG supplements and so forth are all good sources for ideas for spells that can be cast.