

BOARD GAMES THAT TELL STORIES

BY PORTAL GAMES

# MOUCH

monthly

ISSUE 01  
FEBRUARY 2022

## Gutenberg

DESIGNER DIARY

MAKING GOOD CONTACTS GAME DESIGN CORNER

51<sup>ST</sup> STATE: NO MAN'S LAND THE COME BACK

# TOP 10 GAMES OF 2021

BY IGNACY TRZEWICZEK





## I ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK FOR A NEWSPAPER

The energy, the speed, creating new issues every day, new stories, headlines, things happening at the last minute, working late into the night, editing, changing, debating, and making the final call. Send it to print, and bam - in the morning the whole world is buying it while heading to work and reading it. You have a few hours break and the whole craziness starts over again. My dream job.

I started the Portal Games company as a publisher of a bi-monthly magazine about RPGs. I had the energy, I had new stories, headlines, I worked into the night, editing and changing.

I had no money; the whole business plan was a joke, but I loved every minute of it. Then I was also the editor of Star Pirate, a monthly magazine about RPGs, and a few years later I was the publisher of World of

Boardgames, a monthly magazine about board games.

Yep, I love creating magazines.

So here we are again - I am starting another venture - Moloch Monthly. My editor-in-chief DNA wouldn't give up. I missed the energy, new stories, headlines, missed working into the night, editing, and changing. So I told my team I am starting my side project. A monthly magazine for board games fans.

If you are like me - if you ever wanted to create a board game magazine, if you always wanted to write and create - you are invited. Join my team and let's make the best magazine about board games ever!

*Ignacy Trzewiczek*  
*editor in chief, Moloch Monthly*

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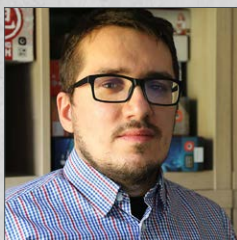
We have some questions to you!



Cover art by Sergey Zabelin,  
from 51<sup>st</sup> State: No Man's Land expansion



# PORTAL GAMES NEWS

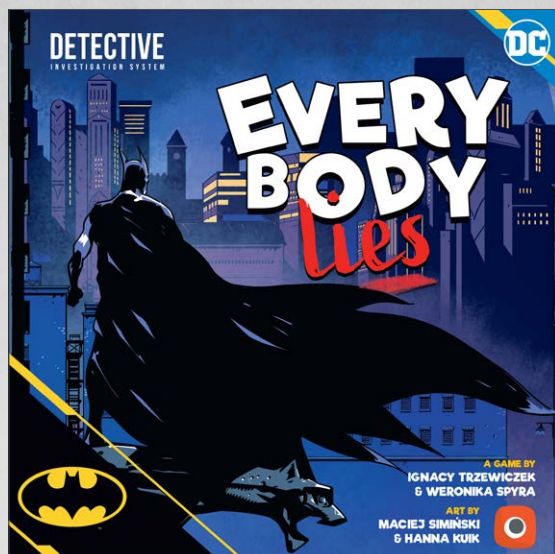


## Greg Polewka to rule them all!

Grzegorz Polewka has been promoted to a new role as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the Polish division of the company! At the same time, Ignacy Trzewiczek, while still being the President of the company, will focus on creating new designs as the Head of the Development department.

Grzegorz Polewka joined Portal Games in 2014. First, he worked in the production and logistic department, and then as the Director of Licensing.

Over the past 5 years, the Polish division of Portal Games grew rapidly, having now 43 full-time employees and more than 20 contractors. In 2021 the company released 52 new products for the Polish market including board games, expansions, and role-playing games.



## Detective line meets Batman series!

Portal Games, in partnership with Warner Bros. Consumer Products (WBCP), DC, and Genuine Entertainment, will produce officially licensed tabletop games set within the DC Universe featuring Batman characters.

All Batman games will feature new and inspired iterations of the story-driven, cooperative deduction game system from Portal Games' award-winning Detective game series, delivering deeply thematic games that challenge 2-4 players to team up with the Caped Crusader and bring the theatrics and themes of Batman to life in a fully immersive tabletop experience. "While many games fight like Batman, our games will challenge you to think like Batman," says Ignacy Trzewiczek, CEO and lead writer/designer of the game series. "Every fan has dreamed

of what it'd be like to stalk the Gotham City streets and solve crimes alongside the world's greatest detective, so working with WBCP and DC on our own line of Detective cases in this iconic universe has been a dream come true for everyone involved."

The first game, Batman: Everybody Lies, will feature an original narrative in a crime-solving deduction game where players need to gather evidence and connect the facts to unravel the mystery. Fully anchored in rich comics lore, Batman: Everybody Lies challenges players to take on the roles of four key investigators – instinctive journalist Warren Spacey, tenacious reporter Vicki Vale, brutish detective Harvey Bullock, or the cunning Catwoman – who are drawn into a series of mysterious events unfolding in Gotham City for their own respective agendas, ultimately becoming unlikely allies entrusted to help thwart villains new and old as only the World's Greatest Detective can!

## Reprint of 51st State in a new form!

We are bringing 51st State to Gamefound in February 2022 with component upgrades, reprints of hard-to-find content, and a new expansion, No Man's Land, designed by Ignacy Trzewiczek!

The 51st State Ultimate Edition coming to Gamefound will combine all the current content for the 51st State into one box.





This will include all eight faction boards, promos, mini expansions, and all three expansion packs: Allies, Scavengers, and Moloch. There will be significant component upgrades to the resources as well, and additional content.

The Gamefound campaign is also bringing an all-new expansion, No Man's Land, designed by Ignacy Trzewiczek, that adds a unique twist to the core game: area control. Players will fight for dominance of the no man's land scattered throughout the wastes. There will be a pledge option for players who only wish to receive the No Man's Land expansion. The new expansion will fit into the 51st State Ultimate Edition box.

The 51st State Ultimate Edition campaign is set to launch on February 22nd, 2022, and run for 14 days. The draft page goes live on January 17th for fans to get an early look at the exciting new content.

## Gutenberg from Portal Games!

Gutenberg from Polish company Granna will be co-published by Portal Games, enabling gamers in North America, Australia and New Zealand access to this great game from the friendly local and online stores in these markets. Gutenberg, after its release at Essen Spiel 2021, is one of the most anticipated euro games coming to retail.

Gutenberg is a mid-weight strategy game taking place in Europe in the 15th century. Each player takes the role of the printing pioneer trying to build their wealth and fame by developing their production capacity and gaining the support of patrons. Through bidding for specific actions the players develop their printing workshops, acquire new fonts, inks and decorations. The unique system of rotating gears allows players to combine bonuses and earn large amounts of points. The game lasts six rounds and the player with the most points at the end wins.

Portal Games will publish Gutenberg alongside the set of promotional tiles, which were offered during the European premiere of the game at Spiel in Essen, Germany in October 2021. The promotional tiles will be available with preorders at the Portal Games North America store.





# GUTENBERG

## Designer Diary

Katarzyna Cioch and Wojciech Wisniewski, Gutenberg's authors, discuss their way to create one of the most exciting euro games that launched at Essen Spiel 2021.



by Katarzyna  
Cioch & Wojciech  
Wisniewski

### 1. CONCEPT

I was thinking about creating a board game in the universe of the RPG Clanarchy. I was inspired by the card game Elekt and its Library of Forbidden Books. Granna's game requirements were related to family and "nice to look at" theme, so books seemed very good to me. This idea also seemed good because of its uniqueness - it is not a very common theme in board games.

It was March 2020, and the pandemic had started, so we decided to make a more complex game together to keep our minds focused on something enjoyable. Over time, "enjoyable" became a keyword for Gutenberg - almost every playtester used this adjective when describing their first impressions of the game.

The initial vision was of atmospheric, beautifully calligraphed books, but for mechanical reasons, we went in the direction of book printing. The historical figure



Gutenberg and the story of the first printing houses immediately came to mind. We adopted “Gutenberg” as a working title, which stayed with us to the end. We also considered the title “Work of Books” (in a document from 1455, Gutenberg’s printing house, for which he borrowed 800 guilders from Johann Fust, was called *Werk der Bücher*, or “Work of Books”). But we rejected that idea, since “Gutenberg” directly suggests the game’s theme, and it’s an easier title to remember.

From the start, it was conceived as a eurogame. There was order fulfillment, resource collecting, and book-creating: Printing and refinements. There was paper, quill pens, inkwells and candles. And Latin quotations. This was visible already in the first version of the board and cards.

## 2. MECHANISMS

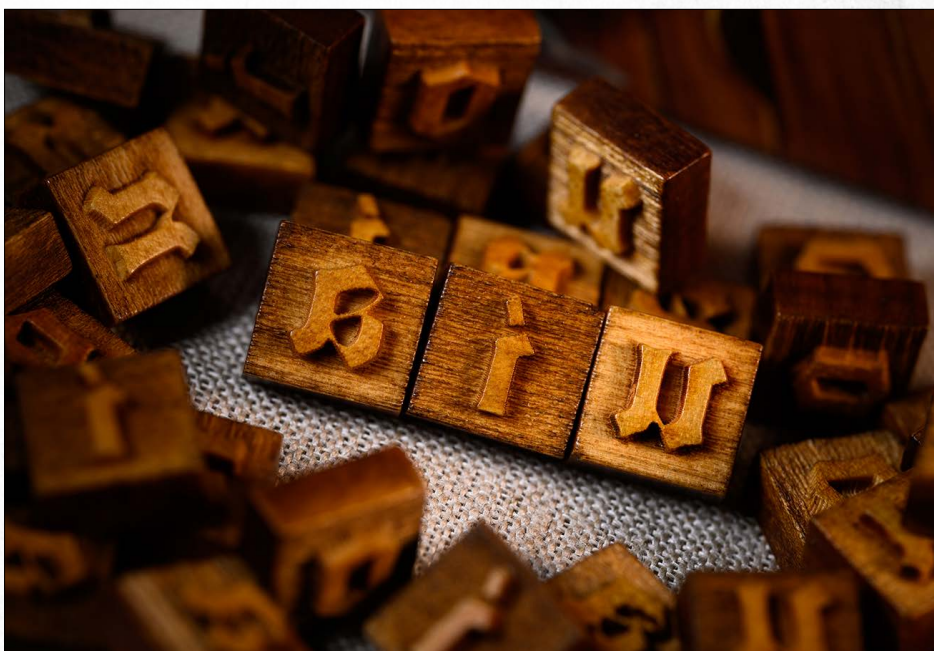
The game’s first prototype had a set of initiative tokens for each player (the word “tokens” is a bit of semantic abuse; they were simply paper slips that flew from the board with a deep breath, for which I sincerely apologize to the playtesters). They had fixed initiative values on them, and there was no way to distribute one’s pool in any other way (e.g. to fight harder for priority in taking one action at the expense of another).

At some point, we realized what players needed, so we moved away from those tokens to a set of markers that everyone could distribute however they wished, and the game “took off”, becoming more and more fun for playtesters. It is not reasonable to have unreasonable restrictions in a game. ;)

There were problems with initiative tie-breaking, so playtesters initially



pushed to remove this bidding from the game and replace it with worker placement. But we wanted to do something a little more interesting and less common, so we sought other ways to solve the first player advantage problem, and we found it by varying the number of initiative markers by player order. Avoiding worker placement was worth it when we heard a playtester say “I love this first player token and everything we do with it” during a playtest.





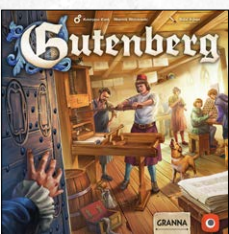


### 3. HISTORY

As game designers, we wanted to keep the game as historically accurate as possible. The publisher in turn wanted to add educational content. We all saw Gutenberg as a beautifully atmospheric game, which its artist, Rafał Szłapa, successfully accomplished. From the start of our work, we benefited from Mateusz Czekala's enthusiastic support and historical research. His valuable advice influenced the content, iconography, terminology, colors, and even some mechanical solutions in the game. It was especially interesting to work together on the characters

and their special abilities. Mateusz even met the challenge of researching to find historical women who were important in the 15th-century printing world. In the first period of work on the characters, we learned from Mateusz, for example, that Gutenberg printed the Bible but was left penniless by his sponsor Johann Fust, who took over his printing house. Also that Aldus Manutius introduced pocket formats, in the sense that his books resembled our modern books in size, instead of the large table-sized codices of his day. Oh, and the most important thing - Gutenberg did not invent printing.

**...next episode coming in MOLOCH MONTHLY #2!**





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# MAKING GOOD CONTACTS

## Game Design Corner

If, like me, you came to 51st State after playing Imperial Settlers, you'll likely notice a few things that can lull you into a false sense of familiarity. You'll maybe recognize: Faction boards, a deck of common cards (but no faction decks), lots of resource tokens, and a score track. Your faction board breaks your tableau into three rows of cards: Production, Features, and Actions. This all feels familiar, right? The rules are oddly familiar as well. Players take turns until everyone passes. The phases even seem to be the same: Lookout, Production, Action... does this seem a bit too similar? It's a trap!



### by Chevee Dodd

Chevee started in hobby gaming in the early nineties with games like Car Wars, Battletech, and Magic the Gathering. He began working for United States Playing cards on The X-Files card game in 1996 and has been involved in the gaming industry in some capacity ever since. He joined the Portal team in 2014 with the release of Imperial Settlers and, despite our best efforts, he keeps showing up.

You see, 51st State works much like you'd expect from its predecessor. You build Locations, they produce Goods, and you use those Goods to gain victory points and build new locations. There's a big, BIG difference in 51st State however: Contact tokens. A typical first round of Imperial Settlers begins with players bolstering their production. Production is going to be important in 51st State, but not as important as you might think. The game runs on a two-tiered economy. Goods are used to pay for Actions while Contact tokens allow you to Build, Deal, and Raze locations. Without a good supply of Contact tokens, you'll find yourself in a world of hurt!

Faction asymmetry in 51st State is subtle. Your faction board grants you slightly different production and, more importantly, a different set of Actions for converting Goods into Contact tokens. You're going to want to pay close attention to these

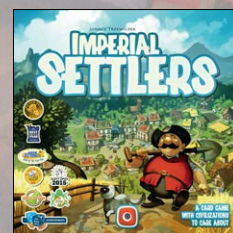
Actions. There are three different colors of Contact tokens and they are each used differently: Grey = Build, Blue = Deal, Red = Raze. Every faction has a way to generate all three, but each faction also has a unique starting Production. If you're playing The Merchants Guild, you have the ability to convert 1 Gun into 2 red Contact tokens, but you don't start with Gun production. If you want to be able to Raze cards, you're going to need to figure out how to get some Guns!

The trap that new players fall into is remembering that you can only use these actions once per round. The Merchants Guild is only able to convert 1 Gun per round, so producing more than 1 Gun isn't useful unless you have a way to spend or store the extra. Oh, by the way, you lose everything you don't have stored at the end of the round and your faction doesn't provide you any storage. Use it or lose it!



A little strategy tip thrown in here for playing *The Merchant's Guild*... you aren't going to Raze much. Unless you get a great starting hand with lots of Gun conversion, I'd suggest skipping Gun production. Having 2 red Contact tokens isn't that great. You'll need 3 or more to be a nuisance to your opponents and Razing from your hand is going to make your blue tokens less useful. If you want to Raze as *The Merchants Guild*, fight for those Connection Cards. They are your best bet for gaining red Contacts. Or, you know, play your way and don't listen to me. That's fine too.

You'll find that 51st State is all about maximizing potential without waste. You'll want to generate just enough Goods to take advantage of each round. Seek out cards that give you a way to spend Goods before you commit to producing new Goods. You want to have a solid plan of action for each Good you produce. In *Imperial Settlers*, you might get away with having a ton of production before figuring out how to spend it. If you do that in 51st State, you're likely going to end up throwing lots of those Goods away and wasting precious turns. This game is a race to 25 points; you must make the most out of every turn you take!

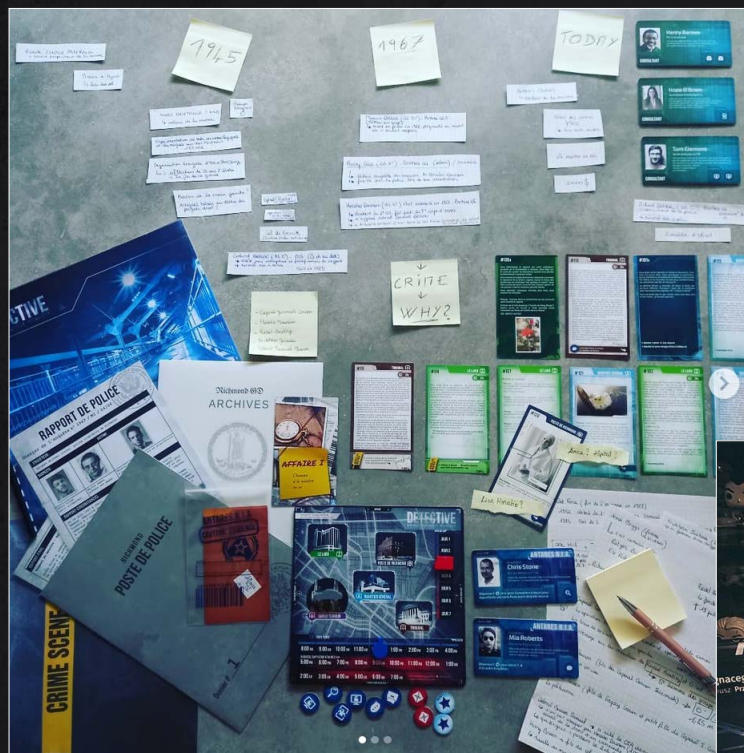




# BOARD GAME PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Each month, one winning photo earns a \$50US credit at PortalGamesUS.com!

Remember to use #portalgames on social media AND make your posts "public" so we can find your amazing photos and publish them in Moloch Monthly!

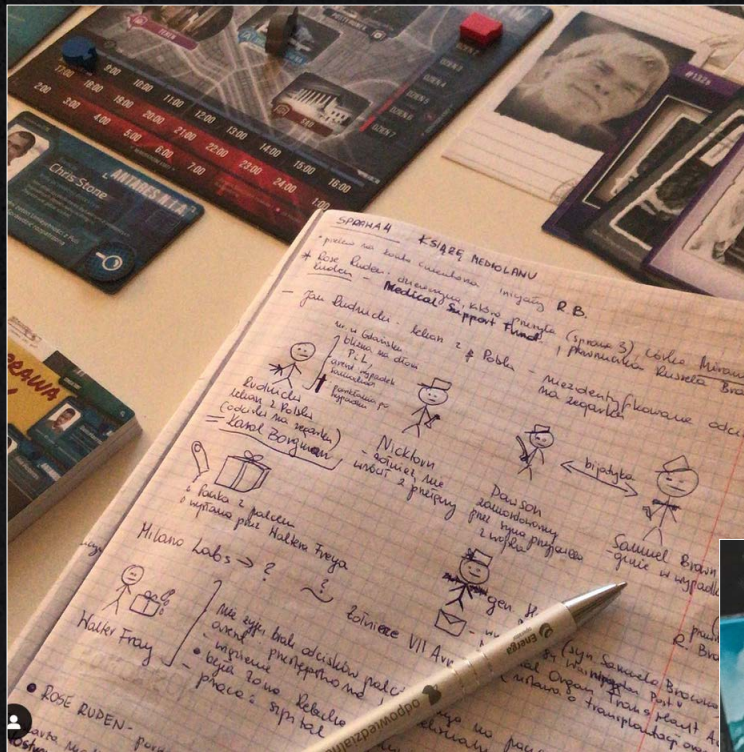


@destinationbubulle



the winner:  
@boardelv





@lopek\_thebug



@spellejelle



@boardgameoftheday

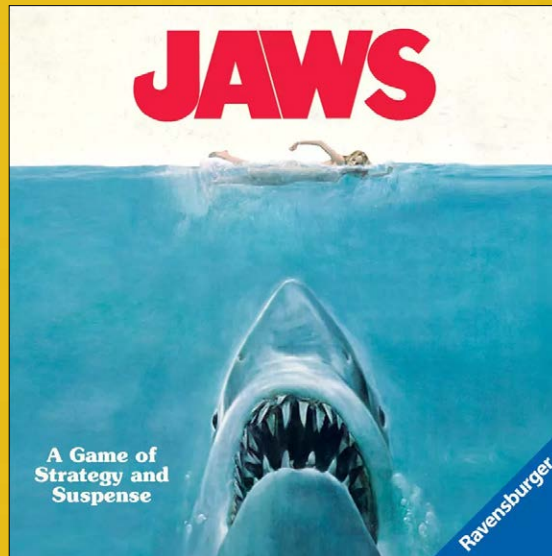


# IGNACY TRZEWICZEK'S TOP 10 GAMES OF 2021

Before we start, a few clarifications. I decided to not put games published by Portal Games on this list. Dreadful Circus would be on this list for sure, but I disqualified it. I also decided to not put any miniatures games, and again, Frostgrave would be here and would be high! On the other hand, I did not care if the game was a new release in 2021 or not - I just listed games I discovered in 2021, regardless of the release date.

## 10: JAWS

In JAWS, one player takes on the role of the killer shark from Amity Island, while the other 1-3 players take on the roles of Brody, Hooper, and Quint to hunt the shark. It's super thematic, and a pretty simple game that can be played in 45 minutes - always telling a dreadful story. A perfect choice for a family game night. Strong recommendation.



## 9: UNDER FALLING SKIES

One of the biggest, if not the biggest surprise of the year. The day after I bought it, I was already playing it over and over again. Brilliant use of dice, thematic gameplay and challenging - but reasonably challenging - missions. It's a perfect adaptation of video games and I applaud the designers for what they achieved here. One of the smartest and not overly complicated solo games out there. Bravo!

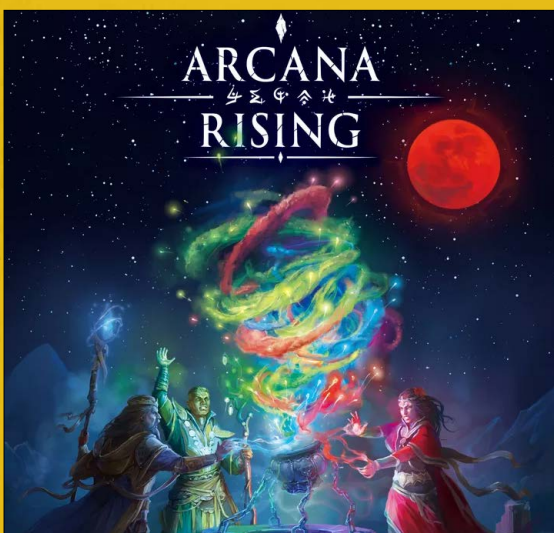






## 8: IT'S A WONDERFUL KINGDOM

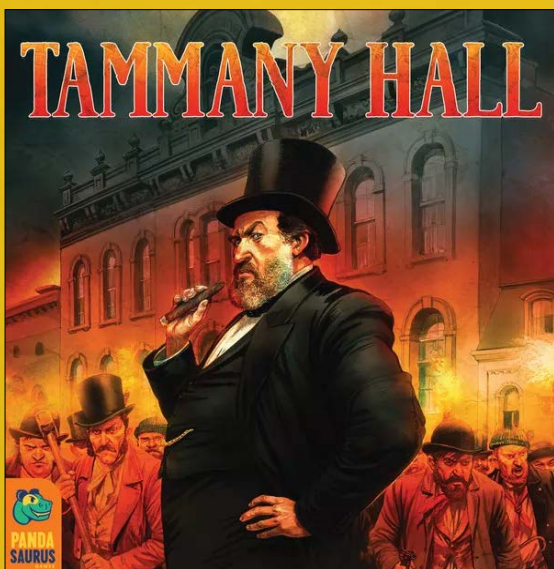
This game took me by surprise. It's a Wonderful World, released two years earlier, was a game that I enjoyed, but after a few plays I gave it to a charity auction, as there was not enough strategy depth in it for my taste. It's a Wonderful Kingdom does exactly the same as its predecessor, but somehow feels so much more deep and interesting. It's a great two-player game that has engine-building elements, has bluff elements, has - our beloved - not enough time to do all we want! Played many times, and still want more! Great, smart design.



## 7: ARCANIA RISING

If we talk about surprises, here I was taken by shock! I knew nothing about this game beforehand; I just received a sample for consideration for the Polish edition of the game. Read the rules, didn't see much innovation, and played it.

OMG! It happens so many times - you have a card game and it all looks simple and even meh at first glance - and then you play; you see the effects and card abilities in action, and immediately everything changes. Arcana Rising is an engine-building game (my favorite genre) with very smart gameplay, drafting spell cards, using poker chips as one of the major components. Loved it!



## 6: TAMMANY HALL

Random buy. Seriously. I went into the game store, and the game was on the "New releases" shelf. I took it, bought it, and went home. No research, nothing.

I should go to Vegas, cause clearly, I am a lucky bastard.

Tammany Hall is an area control game with one of the cleanest rulebooks possible; it feels like it was designed by some of the greatest minimalistic designers (like Emerson or Seji Kanai). And yet, there is so much meat, so much tension, so many ways to backstab your opponents. It's pure and it's genius.

Fun fact: Two of my employees, after playing Tammany Hall with me during after-hours game night, bought their own copies of the game so they could play with their gaming buddies. Yep, we have 3 copies among the Portal Games team!



## 5: SAVANNAH PARK

From the best design duo ever - Wolfgang Kramer and Michael Kiesling - Savannah Park is a magnificent abstract game. This is no surprise, knowing that they have bestsellers like Azul or Torres under their belt. In this game, we start with the board full of tokens representing different animals and in each round, we must move exactly 1 tile to a new space. Let's face it - you cannot create simpler rules. And yet, you won't imagine how brainburny and challenging this game is. How many times you raise your hands whining and how many times you curse the situation on your board, and the difficult choices you must make.

Simplest rules possible, deepest gameplay possible. That's Savannah Park.

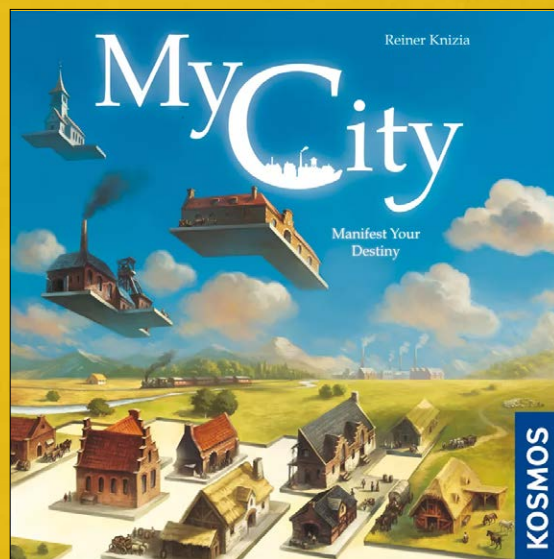
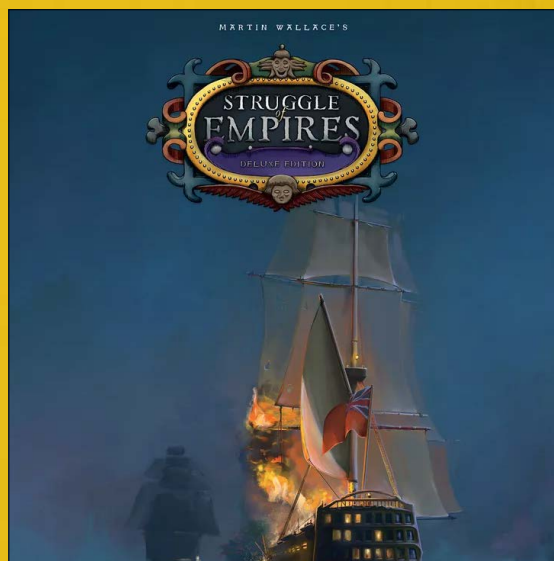
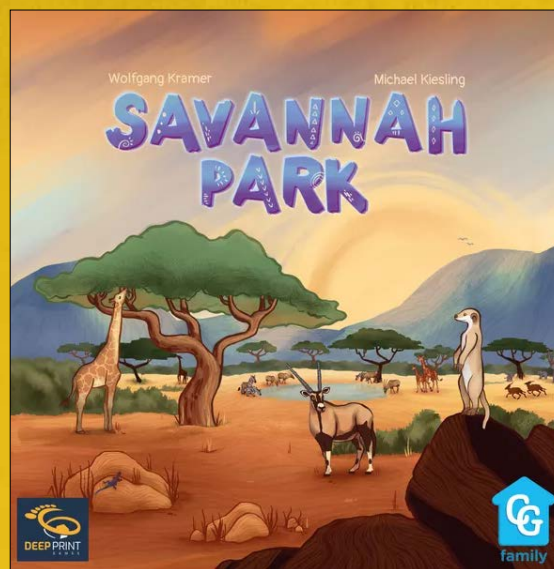
## 4: STRUGGLE OF EMPIRES

The only KS game on the list. A brand new edition of Martin Wallace's classic. Revamped and published in the stunning version by Eagle Games became one of my highlights of 2021. It's a heavy strategy game with players fighting for control over the whole known world. It's a game of pacts, negotiations, the game of war, and betrayal. It's a game of very tight economy and a game of too many goals, too many countries to conquer, too many achievements to grab. It's a game of tough choices and sacrifices. It promises and delivers a magnificent game night for a bunch of friends who want to rule the world. At least in the cardboard version.

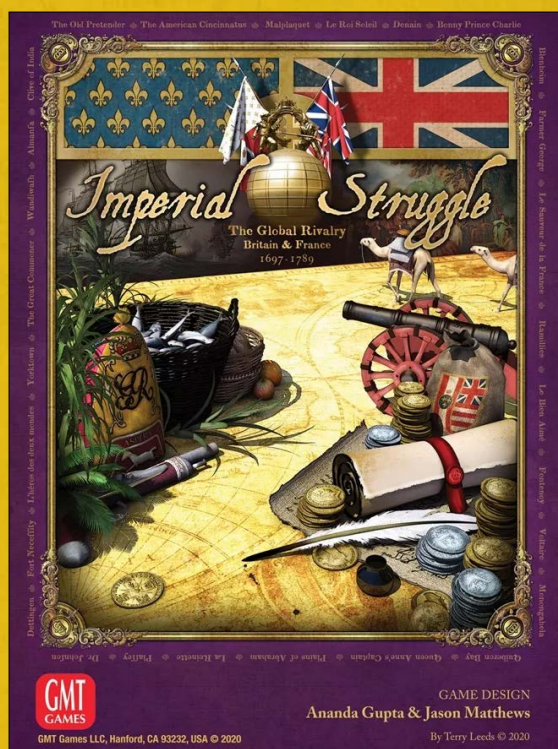
## 3: MY CITY

I am a sucker for legacy games, so when I saw one from Reiner Knizia, I said, "Color me interested." Reiner Knizia is a master designer who can create a game with very few rules and make it challenging. This is where my hopes were put - he will start with a simple game that is already interesting and then he will slowly add more and more.

It's my number three. Yes, I had a blast. My wife joined us for the whole 12 game arc over one weekend. We just couldn't stop and leave the table. The game has a perfect execution of legacy concepts with small tweaks and changes over the course of the game. It keeps you engaged and interested in what's next.







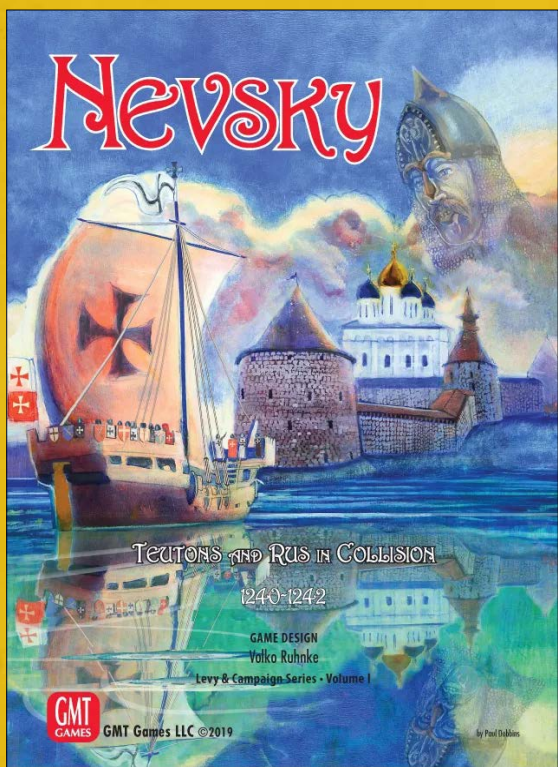
## 2: IMPERIAL STRUGGLE

It has nothing to do with Twilight struggle. OK, the designers are the same. OK, the title is similar. OK, fight for control and influence in the world - the same.

But trust me, this is a totally different beast. And it is as brilliant as its predecessor.

It's a heavy two-player game that might be intimidating at first - but when you play it, you quickly grasp it and play fast and fluently. The action selection mechanism is brilliant, the played cards are powerful, and the different ways to score points reveal many strategies. Then you add the whole war and battle system that is very abstract, but interesting at the same time and you have it - a full-blown strategy game for two players that takes 3 hours to play and leaves you with complete satisfaction whether you lose or win!

Warning: Not very thematic, compared to Twilight Struggle.



## 1: NEVSKY

You cannot have a more niche theme than this. It is the end; there is nothing more unusual, unpopular, and unsexy than that - Nevsky is portraying military operations of the mid-13th century. You deal with snow, sleds, provender and disbanding Lords who are tired of war.

I loved almost every piece of this game and the experience it provides. The unusual perspective of looking at the war as a logistical puzzle, where battles are important and are fought - but in most cases, they won't happen because some lords decided there was not enough loot and headed home.

It's my biggest surprise; biggest discovery - but at the same time it is not my biggest recommendation. I am aware of all the limitations of this title - with the awkward theme, thick rulebook, and lack of wider availability.



# QUITE A THUNDER ROAD

Interview with Rob Daviau



## Rob Daviau

A 20-year industry veteran, Rob has worked on over 80 published games. For 14 years, Rob was at Hasbro Games, where he worked on Risk 2210 AD, Axis & Allies Pacific, Betrayal at House on the Hill, Star Wars Epic Duels, Heroscape, Clue DVD, Clue Harry Potter, Risk Star Wars, Risk Lord of the Rings, and many

**Hello Rob, how are you! I don't even know where to start. Should we chat about your experience with Detective? Should I open an ancient gate and ask you questions about Role Playing Games? Talk Restoration Games? Chat about your time at Hasbro? Ask you how you invented the Legacy concept? Rob, this is insane! Did you predict this insanity when you were a kid? Did you plan to become a doctor, musician, or taxi driver, or the game design insanity was on the table from the start? At what moment did you realize you were going for a career in gaming?**

You are as much of a fire horse in writing as you are in person. I'm going to pick just one of those questions and it is the last one (two really). I had no plans to being a game designer when I was younger. I played games. I did puzzles. I fell in love with rpgs. But I never thought of being a board game designer. Because, really, is that a job? Who has a job like that? I went through various career goals: stunt man (age 6), Jedi (age 7), computer game designer (age 14), SFX programmer (age 17). I went to college all in on doing some-



thing fun with computers. Then I started taking computer classes and they were very not fun. So I had the brilliant idea of being a comedy writer. I still think I could've done a good job. But I don't like Los Angeles and I didn't like New York that much (this was in 1992 where those were the only two options). So I didn't know what to do. I did advertising writing for about 5 years, which was a great way to learn how to take a big idea and convey it quickly. I finally got very lucky and got a game design job at Hasbro. It sounds like it came out of nowhere but I had been preparing for it my whole life. And it's a story for another day.

**I'd say that Restoration Games is doing what Days of Wonder wanted in their early days – bring the best memories from our childhood and translate them for grown-up kids. I absolutely love and respect how you remaster old games into gems that combine**

**modern design with the sentimental vibe. How many people work in the dev team, how much work it is, how many changes do the contracts allow you to make in base game rules? Tell us about the process.**

We've grown our little company to around 10 people; some full-time, some part-time. Given the size of the company, no one is exclusively design and development. We all have to do many things. Justin Jacobson and I own the company and we both do a lot of time designing. He's the president and does a lot outside of design/development but that is where most of my energy goes. We also have two developers, Brian Neff and Noah Cohen. They are primarily developers but Brian also helps with scheduling and project management and Noah does a lot of computer back-end stuff for us.

more. He was editor of Trivial Pursuit for 8 years and ran the editorial department for 1.

His last game with Hasbro was Risk Legacy, which led into a solo career whose games include Pandemic Legacy (Seasons 1, 2, and the upcoming 3), Seafall, Mountains of Madness, Ultimate Werewolf Legacy, the upcoming Ship Shape (Calliope Games) and Betrayal Legacy.

Since 2016, Rob has also been the Chief Restoration Officer at Restoration Games, a publisher whose goal it is to bring all the best out-of-print boardgames back to life. Restoration has published Downforce, Stop Thief!, Indulgence, Dinosaur Tea Party, and will release Fireball Island in November 2018.

Rob has been a professor of Game Design at Hampshire College and NYU, has contributed articles to various books on game design, and has been a speaker at dozens of conferences.



Restoration Games team at Origins. L-R (rear): Patrick, Jenn, Asdrual, Ronnie, Mandy, Lindsay. L-R (seated): Dominique, Rob. Not pictured: Justin, Matt, Maxine, Nick, Will. (source: restorationgames.com)





At a convention table with a "Return to Dark Tower" prototype  
(source: restorationgames.com)

Every project is very different. In some cases, the designer is alive and we license it much like any other game. Those are usually light development projects. Others, like Return To Dark Tower, have very complex rights and require a radical rebuild from the ground up. We have gotten very good at creating very large projects that we have no idea how to complete and then completing them.

**We all wonder what games Restoration will bring back. I know your fans reach the company with their ideas for treasures from the past and ask you to bring them back. I know it is not time to announce what's next from Restoration, but maybe you can tell us about the game you'd love to bring, and for some reason, you never will. Is there a title you wanted to resurrect and hit the wall?**

We've already announced a number of things we have planned for the next year. As these things go in 2022, some will be late. As a kid and teen I adored a game called Pathfinder (not the rpg). It was

a two-player maze building game. I've brought it out over the past few years and played around with it in the hopes I can figure out how to restore it to something more modern and cool. I have no ideas as of yet.

**I am a huge fan of racing tabletop games. I own an old Asmodee Formula D, I have Thunder Alley from GMT, I even have a miniature racing game called Gaslands. I know I also need Thunder Road: Vendetta in my collection. I saw explosions, choppas, and I was immediately sold. How about readers who are still on the fence. Why do they need this game?**

First off, Thunder Road: Vendetta is more of a shooting game than a racing game. It does involve cars and you do want to be the first to get to the end, but it's far more important to slam into people and shoot them to get what you want. There are a number of racing games that turn the fastest sport in the world into the slowest board game. What the designers brought to us has a simple core system that allows it to play quickly, which we liked. It creates moments of high cinema that I haven't seen in other games. At the end of a turn, it is rare that you haven't pictured a whole cinematic sequence in your head. I guess you could say it's a board game that tells a story. If you are into that sort of thing.

**What have you been playing lately? Any game we all need to pay attention to? Rob's Seal of Strong Recommendation?**

I've been finishing up a non-Restoration game for a publisher. I've been solo play-testing it non-stop this month and haven't played anything else. You personally will love it when it comes out. Thank you for the chat!



# THUNDER ROAD VENDETTA



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# I LOVE ALL GOOD AND ENGAGING STORIES

Interview with Przemyslaw Rymer,  
scenario author for Dune: house Secrets

Someone had to hunt Baron's servants in dark alleys, someone traded weapons and bribed the Guild so it would turn a blind eye on the Southern Pole. Someone had to form alliances... That's my story.



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**We have to start from the beginning, of course. Do you remember your first encounter with Dune?**

Przemysław Rymer : I was 11. I think it was a fictionalized fragment of Lynch's movie script that was published in a printed newsletter of the Polish Fans of Fantasy Society "Sfera" in 1985 or 1986. That was quite an experience. There was not a lot of fantasy literature on the market, western authors in particular. It couldn't be published for political reasons, or someone didn't want it published. Most critics and "connoisseurs" despised it, and deemed it as nothing more than children's stories about robots. The stories considered worthy of publishing were about the existential problems of an alcoholic writer alone against the whole world, struggles in trenches, or memories of Treblinka. These were different times.

Then I had to wait a year in a queue in a public library to borrow the first Polish edition—two volumes translated by Marek Marszał. That's how my long romance with the series started, interlaced with a divorce after Łoziński's translation. Some of his interpretations of proper names were just too much.

**The book includes an enormous number of plotlines, characters, and layers of political intrigue. When you began working on the House Secrets plot, did you have to choose from dozens of compelling options, or did you know from the beginning that you were going to work on a plotline revolving around a secret of the Atrides?**

P.R.: No. I did consider different options. One of them was of a more detective nature. After all, it was supposed to use



the mechanics of the Detective. But I scrapped this idea, knowingly. There were a few reasons, one mundane: The book doesn't elaborate on the Arrakis court and law enforcement systems. Herbert didn't need that. That wasn't what he was writing about. It created lots of difficulties. I could "go around" them, of course.

I could, for example, create a character inspired by an Anglo-Saxon coroner, who was initially a royal official, and apart from taking care of the finances, they also investigated unusual death cases, among others. The only known official in the book is Liet-Kynes, Judge of the Change. But there were other complications, too. Besides, it was supposed to be a game and a story for a broader audience, not only the hardcore masters of puzzle-solving. An adventure game. The movie itself is more adventurous and straightforward than, let's say, House of Cards with its political intrigues. The novel also pictures gruesome atrocities without going into much detail.

### **Przemysław Rymer**

The writer behind the base game of Detective as well as Vienna Connection and Dune: House Secrets.

He works as an architect. Lives in Katowice, Upper Silesia, Poland.



**What does the research to write the plot look like? Could you briefly describe the process?**

P.R.: Every story or script I write requires a different approach. It was different with *Detective* or *Vienna Connection* and different with *Dune*. And it was even different with... Okay, I'm silent now.

*Detective* was supposed to roughly imitate the work of an investigator. There's overtime and a bureaucratic fight with the system. It was also based on real systems that could support detective work. Otherwise, it was something completely new. The search for the game's form also influenced the presentation of the plot. In the case of *Vienna Connection*, it was the broad knowledge of the historical era on one hand—from fashion and cars to social

and political events from that time—and the research of the documents and other materials concerning the secret intelligence war on the other. Knowledge of the activities of secret services and terrorist groups. Searching the archives of the CIA, FBI, or the Institute of National Remembrance. Reading specialized magazines.

*Dune* is a made-up world that has existed for half a century. It has its canon, fan-base, admirers, malcontents, opponents and all those in-between.

I had an idea for a story connected to the Fremen rebellion fighting the Harkonnens for a few decades, of conflicts between different guerilla factions sometimes fighting among each other. That's how I created Azrakhel, the Red Leaf. There was still a matter of fading them into the events depicted in the novel and the movie but on a different level. That's why I had to imagine how it is to be an inhabitant of *Dune*—but not the prince (we already know this story). A street vendor of the spice - the most valuable substance in the world, and highly addictive drug - a beggar fighting for a sip of water, an adventurer, or a mercenary working for local big shots. *Dune* was a destination for people who simply wanted to make a pile, similarly to the cities of the Wild West, engulfed in a gold rush.

If you look at the events from the movie, there are multiple unsaid individual tragedies behind the scenes of a great conflict. There were soldiers left at the mercy of the enemy, citizens living under an oppressive and brutal government, artisans, merchants, prostitutes, and dealers... of drugs. Disabled people were expelled from the Fremen sietches because they were useless to the community. Lesser gentry were blackmailed into submission. These are the

Photo: @zaku\_boardgames







backgrounds of Dune. It was a challenge to find a free space in a complete story. I think I've found that space in a few sentences. And the proof can be found in the text of Frank Herbert's novel.

**While working on House Secrets, were you planning the next parts of the trilogy right away? How much did you know? How much of the plot and the intrigues of the consecutive parts were ready?**

P.R.: Yes, the story was created as a whole from the beginning. The consecutive parts are connected, not by a multi-layer intrigue, but... Hm. Okay, maybe they are a bit connected. I wouldn't be myself if they weren't. But it's more about the stories of player characters, and people from their surroundings intertwined in the events known from Dune and other novels. The main story is silent about them. But someone had to hunt Baron's servants in dark alleys, someone traded weapons and bribed the Guild so it would turn a blind eye on the Southern Pole. Someone had to form alliances... That's my story, prepared with respect for Herbert's masterpiece. A story of people Paul Atreides could do nothing without.

**Your stories: Detective, Vienna Connection, and Dune: House Secrets alike, are full of references to movies and literature. Przemysław Rymer's favourite writers are...?**

P.R.: I love all good and engaging stories. Romances, crime fiction, a slice of life, action. I'm a book addict. Right now, several authors are constantly appearing on my reading list. I think that one or two decades ago I would name other writers.

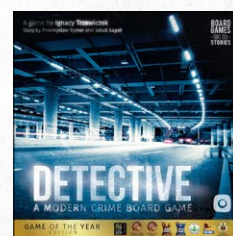
In my opinion, Henryk Sienkiewicz is unmatched. He's a master of words. Brilliant use of Polish, and passionate poetic descriptions. Usually once a year I reread or listen to some part of his Trilogy, and I'm amazed every single time. I adore J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Feliks Kres, Diana Gabaldon, James S.A. Corey—or the duet of Ty Frank and Daniel Abraham under a pseudonym. I'd also throw in Siergiej Łukjanienko, and... Eliza Orzeszkowa's On the Niemen. Pride and Prejudice or Wuthering Heights pale in comparison to it. Beautiful romance. Wonderful literature.

**What are your opinions after watching Dune? As a creator of the game, you had access to some movie materials—concept arts, visualizations. Even so, was there anything that surprised you in the adaptation?**

P.R.: The visual layer is breathtaking. The only thing that surprised me was the relatively short screen time of Thufir Hawat—the Atreides' mentat and master of intrigues.

**Thank you for the interview. We're looking forward to the second part of the trilogy!**

P.R.: I can't wait either. There's a lot of work ahead of us. Greetings and thanks to everyone involved in this project.





# TORNADO BLUES

Short story in the Neuroshima universe



Art by Michał Sztuka



# INTRODUCTION

So, the new kid wants to hear a story? Do you want some warm milk and a teddy bear too? Alright, I'll tell you a story. I'll even make like your Mommy, tucking you in at night. But the rest of this ain't like any fucking story your momma ever told you.

Once upon a time (that's the mommy part), there was this guy, Vincent - a wealthy Vegas fixer. He was the kind of guy that moved dirt around but never got a smudge on himself. He was a true professional, and things got done if you met his price. He had been shopping for someone to complete a customer's contract and offered top-dollar with a massive upfront bonus. It was a hell of a job; most would say impossible. We had no idea how to complete it, but the cash was more than tempting to a couple of shit hole diggers like us. We could have used the upfront money to buy supplies, pay for research, and, you know, set ourselves up for success.

Instead, we decided to take a dump on one of the most powerful and connected men in Vegas, and we did it in the most asinine way possible: We took the bonus and didn't complete the job. Right?! Of course, we should never have taken the money. Even a green newb like you would know this wouldn't end well. But we had shit for brains and took the fucking money.

It was easy pretending to be high rollers. It was all tornados and clean kittens until we found ourselves strung out in a Vegas suite within the week. Man, that was a great week, but we had run through Vincent's investment, and now the rent was due.

Vincent found out we were screwing him and sent some nasty thugs to even our accounts. We snubbed those bastards out and ran like hell. Vincent went from mad to furious. The shit got real when we saw wanted posters in every settlement from here to New York. He was offering top dollar for our heads, dead or alive. There was no place left to run. No matter where we went, someone was always on our trail. We were fucked, horribly fucked, and left with nothing to lose.

That's when Spider convinced me that we should actually try to complete the job for Vincent. Maybe we could buy our way out of trouble if we got some cash. Today, I know the idea was idiotic, but at the time, we were twenty-somethings, and as established earlier, we had shit for brains. What was this impossible task we had to finish with every gun-slinging thug in North America trying to track us down? It was only to find the most sought-after, hidden gem - the miracle cure for all the sickness and suffering in our world. We were to discover the equivalent of the modern-day Lost City of Eldorado - The Legendary Rotkin's Pharmacy.

## PART 1 THE SHOPPING TRIP

"Holy shit, what the hell is going on?" Herman blurted out, far too loudly, as usual. The settlement was more extensive than most, and it seemed like everyone in town had arrived at the same time. In front of us were an open gate and a horde of people funneling into the entrance. In that crowd, you could barely walk down the street, much less try to drive down it. So, we had to leave our rides at the post office. They had an actual post office.

by Marcin Barylka



translation by  
Cpt. Eric Link

In a collection of over 400 games, Neuroshima Hex is The Captain's favorite. In 2017 Eric began discovering the lore of Neuroshima through both Neuroshima Hex and 51st Sstate. After pestering Ignacy with endless questions, he now streams The Captain's Hour - a Neuroshima Bootcamp on Twitch - and works with Portal Games volunteering for events and playtesting. He lives in Nashville with his wife, Lisa, and owns a company specializing in the water industry.



We stepped into the crush of humanity and immediately began struggling to stay together. The heat poured from the sky, and sun-dried dust rose from under each step of the shuffling masses. The resulting cloud of dust and numerous people made it impossible to see more than a few feet at a time. Despite our friend's immense size, we managed to lose sight of 'The Wall' as soon as we entered the bazaar.

Spider, Herman, and I continued slowly squeezing through the crowd. We made it to the scrap market. There were stalls with the remains of old radio receivers, parts for computers and cars, portable kitchens with rat and snake skewers. Just about everything was here and for sale. The buildings that made up the settlement were not much to look at compared to prewar buildings. They were only plywood, corrugated sheets of metal, and pieces of carelessly bonded rubble.

Inside the market, the crowd continued to pulse, shove, rush past, or sweep us away. We had to cleverly step in and out of the stream to keep our bearings. Spider walked a little ahead of us. From time to time, all I could see were flashes of Spider's fair hair. Unlike us, he had been here once before. Only once. He may not have known where he was going but never let on.

When I got close enough, I yelled above the chaos, "Wait up Spider! We'll get lost without you." Spider stopped and smiled widely at me.

Herman suddenly appeared out of the crowd, relieved to see us. "Holy fuck, this is nuts!"

As we pushed back into the crowd, I leaned into Spider and asked, "Is there a

place to buy drugs here?" Running out of my supply could mean serious trouble.

At that very moment, we rounded the corner and ran into something even better: A pharmacy. Can you imagine? A regular pharmacy, like before the war. Spider looked at me and made a grand gesture as if he had conjured it himself. He opened the door, and the two of us went in. Herman stayed outside to watch the street.

Behind the counter was a buxom dark-haired babe in a chemically stained lab coat. Spider saddled right up and gave her his best grin, but as hard as he tried, she didn't even notice him. I saw Herman through the window. He was talking to some kid, patting him on the shoulder and giving him a few cigarettes.

I pressed the back of my hand against my lips and gave a forceful, "Ahem!"

Without looking up, the clerk said, "Throat lozenges are on aisle 4."

"No, I... umm... I need seizure meds if you have them"

"We do," she replied, "But I'm not sure how that is going to help your throat."

As I was finishing my explanation of what I needed and why, Herman stuck his head through the door, looked around, saw the girl, and blurted out, "Now that's a helluva rack!"

The pretty pill pusher didn't bat an eye. She continued getting my meds together and mumbled, "The racks aren't for sale... we need them to hold the meds."

Herman looked confused, "What?"

Spider looked sharply at Herman, "What?!"

Herman seemed to suddenly remember why he came in, "The Wall is waiting at



Eddie's Pride. He got us a guide." He began his retreat back out the door but then barked, "Oh, and Morgan Ratkiller."

## PART 2 EDDIE'S PRIDE

Eddie's Pride was a shithole, just like every other swill peddling joint outside of Vegas. The guide was obviously from Warhead Heights and - obviously a woman. Warhead Heights is known for their guides: Low prices and good quality services. Her bald head and crystal blue eyes gave her origins away without diminishing my attraction to her. She sat stiffly on the bench, trying to ignore The Wall and Morgan as they were drinking heavily and talking too loudly about old times. Morgan was the type to never let business get in the way of a good time.

As we sat down, she stated more than asked, "You're looking for safe passage."

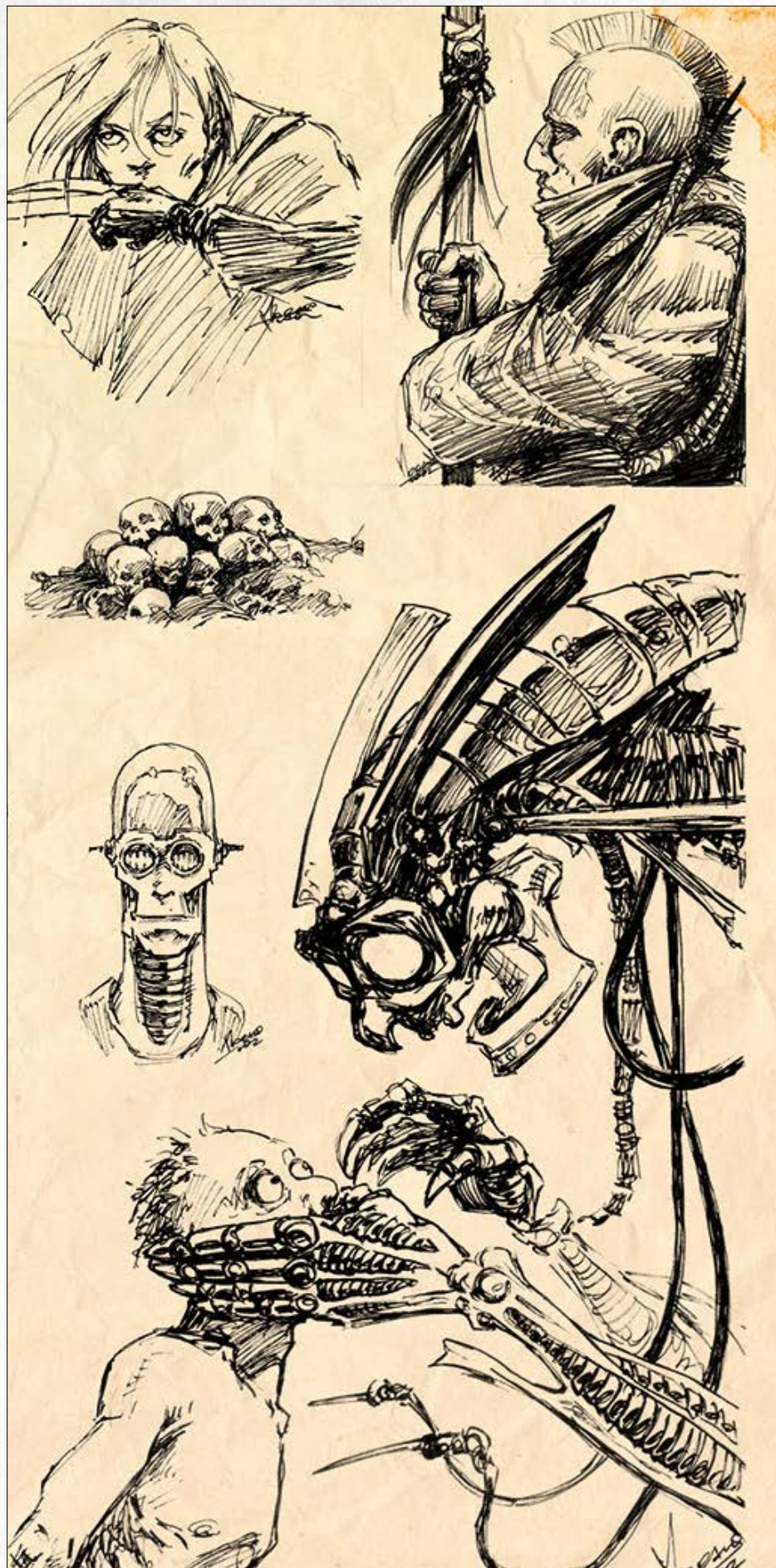
"I am... looking," I confirmed as I indiscreetly looked at all the curves she had packed into her tight leather jumpsuit. Herman and Spider chuckled at my blatant attempt at seduction.

She met my eyes and held them a moment, "You're in trouble." Again this wasn't a question.

I scowled at her. How the hell did she know?

"If you're in trouble, why are we talking in front of this stranger?" She poked a thumb at Morgan.

"Morgan is not a stranger." interrupted The Wall. "He's an old friend, and we trust the son of a bitch completely." With big belly laughs, The Wall and Morgan made their next toast and turned back to their drinking.





She let out a sigh and thought for a moment. This section of the highway was heavily in dispute by both mutants and Los Diablos. While the mutants mostly roamed about, causing general mayhem for travelers, the Devils actively patrolled their claimed territory. The brutal motorcycle gang did not bother with stopping vehicles and collecting tolls. They attacked everyone on sight, smashed them down, and picked over the corpses. We couldn't go further without an escort or guide who could get us safely through the area.

"There is a merchant caravan," she continued, "They will be leaving for Brickett Valley in the morning. I'm sure they are taking the only passage not guarded by both sides. Maybe you can travel safely with them?"

I didn't like it. Traveling with people we couldn't trust wasn't the smartest thing for wanted men to do.

"No," I decided. "We're going it alone, and you can ride in my sidecar."

She didn't seem to disagree. I liked this girl.

Norman spoke up, "How in the hell is there a place that the mutants and the Devils don't go?"

Ignoring the question, she said, "I suggest we start tonight. Although it's not entirely safe, we will head out before sunset and spend the night in the desert. That will put us ahead of the caravans and let us avoid accidental meetings when they start at dawn."

"Great!" Morgan said as if to seal the deal. "We'll throw a Tornado under the desert stars. I've got plenty to share."

## PART 3 DESERT WINDS

They say the world died thirty years ago. From the sky fell the star Wormwood. The Angel of Death descended on us all, leaving a world of bitterness and pain. The poisoned seas roared as man's cities exploded. They say the world died in a thunderous eruption of sound.

It was all bullshit. When you stand at ground zero, you don't hear a roar. You only see a flash, a monstrous, frightening flash. It shines right through you. Covering your eyes won't help. You see your hands, all your bones, each joint, every nerve ending. It lasts a fraction of a second before you are carried away by the shockwave. You won't hear the explosion because you won't make it that long. The end is fast and painless.

"Bullshit," I thought aloud as I lay huddled near the warmth of the desert campfire. I tried to open my eyes and focus. My back was against the massive boulder that hid our fire, and Patti spooned her slender body against mine. I had just returned from the Tornado. My head was sore, and my soul was empty. I was struggling to pull myself together.

"Are you up?" Patti asked as she rolled over to face me. Her hand explored the length of my body until she confirmed my status, "Still asleep? Maybe I can fix that."

The people of Warhead Heights can see without light. Her big blue eyes shone in the dark, and I found myself lost in my melancholy as I looked into them. I couldn't imagine anyone having eyes as deep or as blue as hers.

"Patti?" I asked, "Are people in the



# STARSHIP INTERSTELLAR



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If mankind is to be saved, whichever nation will be deemed the greatest contributor will have the honor of guiding humanity on this new Earth.



## JOIN THE KS





Heights born with different eye colors?

She looked at me, confused or surprised, maybe both.

“Well, not only blue.” I tried to explain, “I mean green, or black, or...” “I felt very self-conscious, “damn... I don’t know. You want a beer?” I sat up, thinking it was just the Tornado. I tried to play it cool.

She didn’t reply. She just cocked her head like a bird, staring at me even more intently. I was losing it, and I probably would have said something I would have regretted, but Spider suddenly appeared.

“Where have you guys been?” Spider asked enthusiastically, “Because I was in the city. I was standing on a tall tower only half a mile from the birthplace of this hell we call home.”

Spider chuckled at what he thought was a joke. I felt utterly shattered. I wanted to cry. I poured some water over my head and wiped my face. The water’s coolness in the night breeze felt good, and the shock of it helped to hold back the tears. Patti rummaged in her pack and produced a canteen. She gently put the metal flask in my hands and pressed it to my lips. It was strong alcohol. I took a swallow and nearly choked.

“It’s from Warhead Heights,” she said, seeing my surprise. “We distill cactus vodka there, something like tequila.”

“Wow. That’s just what I needed.” I drank again.

Spider grabbed the canteen, smiled at me, and started to take a drink. Before any liquid hit the blond ruffian’s tongue, he hesitated. He closed his eyes, clearly fighting with himself. He handed the canteen back to Patti and muttered

something under his breath about “fucking magic”. He began to walk away over the hill.

Tornado is unique. After vodka, you have a hangover; after drugs, you have withdrawal. After Tornado, you have the blues. Patti’s alcohol helped. My spirit was coming back and just in time.

Suddenly Spider yelled out, “I see some lights on the highway, Boss.” He began counting, “One, two...”

Herman popped out from behind the rock, “Fuck! More than ten bikes are coming this way.”

With the blues behind me, I stood up in full crisis mode. I started barking orders, “Patti, put out the fire. Spider, pack our shit. Morgan,” I looked around frantically, “Morgan, where the fuck are you?”

Morgan had raced to his motorcycle and was trying to start it. Morgan began cursing his unwilling machine. His hands were shaking, and he was losing his shit.

As Patti put out the fire, The Wall woke up and looked at us quizzically.

“Get up big fella,” I said. “We have visitors, and it seems your friend,” pointing to Morgan, “wants to do something stupid to get us all killed.”

## **PART 4 DEVILS AND DOUBLE-DEALERS**

Everything would have been fine if it wasn’t for Morgan.

The fire was out, and we all hid behind the huge rock as a stream of bikes rode past on the highway. The last two riders slowed as they approached and stopped



on the other side of our hiding place. I figured they needed to take a leak, and our boulder made the perfect target. They would piss and move on. There wouldn't be a problem as long as we continued to sit quietly as church mice.

But fucking Morgan couldn't take it. If the jack-ass wanted to kill these guys, he could have waited until they dropped their pants and started spelling their names. But Morgan acted like a drunk teenager. He dashed around the boulder with his automatic and spewed the entire clip at them. It was only two seconds of machine-gun clatter, but we were sure the other riders had heard us. The Wall hid his face in his hands, Herman cursed loudly, and I, in turn, lost my freshly-recovered cool.

"Is he the greatest fucking idiot ever?" I growled to no one and everyone, as I kicked at the dirt in frustration. "Patti, get in my sidecar. Herman, Wall, quick, get what you can off those corpses!"

Looking up the highway, we saw the red flare of brake lights. Soon several headlights broke away from the group and began to circle back towards us.

Without me asking, Spider got our rides fired up one by one. He looked at me and grinned proudly, then pointed to Morgan's cold bike. I shook my head, and he understood.

Turning, I called to the Wall, "Devils?"

"That's right, Los Diablos!" he confirmed. "Got a Beretta and some Colts with ammo. Roll the fuel?"

"There's no time!" I decided. "Open the fuel caps and lay down the machines!"

The first bullets ricocheted against the cracked concrete of the highway.





"Team, get on your horses! We gotta ride!" I ordered.

Morgan had gone back to struggling with his motorcycle. Spider had ensured Morgan's frustration with a potato jammed in the tailpipe. Meanwhile, Herman lit some dry grass near the Devils' overturned machines. It didn't take long for the fuel to ignite. The blast was hot and nearly knocked us all over.

An explosion. A hot flash and a loud sound. This time I heard it. At that moment, the blues were back.

Somewhere in the distance, I heard Spider's voice, "Boss! Boss!" I looked at him, dazed. "We have to go. They'll be here soon!"

As if to confirm his words, small fountains of sand sprouted in neat rows next to me. I jumped on my bike with Patti in the sidecar and took off.

"Left!" Though she screamed at the top of her lungs, I could barely hear Patti amid the roar of the engines. "Turn left now!"

## PART 5 THROUGH THICK AND THIN

We rode hard all morning and somehow lost our pursuers. Morgan managed to catch up with us, and by noon, we had reached Patti's secret passage. She said that neither mutant nor ganger would look for us there. What she didn't say is that we would probably glow afterward. At one point, the road started heading downhill. All told, we might have descended a thousand feet with the radiation levels climbing as we went. Off to the south was a vast crater. On impact, half-melted rocks were thrown north across the highway, creating a radioactive

obstacle course. We carefully worked our way around the rocks as fast as possible. Nobody wanted to linger in that hellscape. Once we cleared the rocks, it didn't take long to clear the radiation.

On the other side, Spider called for a stop. The Wall grabbed Morgan, pulled him off his bike, and threw him to the ground.

Herman smirked and leaned over the fallen man, "Come on, dude, you did a real fucking number on us back there! I have a damn hole in my engine now, and my fucking friend almost bit it because of your fucking ass!" He pointed at Spider's Head.

Spider pulled off his helmet and stuck his finger through a large hole that blew in one side and out the other. Spider's face went white as a ghost, "Holy shit!"

Herman didn't let up on Morgan, "If you've got a score to settle with those damn devils, don't involve us, man! Do you think we want to take on the whole Los Diablos gang? Don't you think that might be chewing on more than you can bite?

Morgan sheepishly corrected Herman, "You mean, biting off more than you can chew."

Herman's eyes flashed with pure rage as he pulled out a pistol. "I mean, you're a shit bag who could use a few more assholes to let all that fucking shit out!"

The Wall pushed Herman's gun aside before he could shoot and began calmly addressing Morgan, "We've been buddies for a while. Things haven't always turned out the way we wanted them to, but we stayed friends. This time you've gone too far; friendship doesn't cover everything. I should probably let Herman fill you full of holes."



Herman raised his gun again, but The Wall continued talking calmly, "However, due to our long history, I don't think I will. I will say this: You put us at risk, then we put you at risk. You somehow managed to save yourself even though Spider clogged your exhaust pipe. That makes us some kind of even. I think this is where we part ways. What do you think, Boss?"

"Sounds about right to me," I replied. "But a man out here to face the Mutants, the Devils, and who knows what the hell else alone, might as well take a bullet to the head. It's not right to leave you for dead, so hand over your weapons now without complaint, and I'll let you ride out of here with us."

Morgan began to disarm, "Sorry, guys," he mumbled. "I got spooked; that Tornado I shared with you, I stole it from some of those gangers. Well, I just didn't pay. I was supposed to pay. I meant to pay, but somehow the money kind of ran out on me. You know?"

We all looked at each other. How well we knew. Spider nodded thoughtfully towards me. We all mounted back up and rode on. Fortunately, Patti knew which way to go because no one bothered us the rest of the day. Eventually, she pointed to a rocky outcrop on the horizon.

"Beyond those bluffs, the area I know ends. I can't lead you any further. I just need you to pay me, and I will disappear."

I nodded silently. It's a pity, I thought, because I had gotten used to Patti's company. Lost in thought, we were at the bluffs in no time.

"As promised, All I need is our agreed price. No one would have moved you cheaper." Her hand brushed against my

chest as she grabbed the cash with the other one. "Don't worry about me. In a few hours, I have," she paused as her lips turned up slightly, "let's call it an appointment."

The people of Warhead Heights never cease to surprise me. She had no water, no guns, and no vehicle. She took a dozen steps away and turned around. I waved goodbye, and she smiled at me. I knew that I was going to miss her. That pretty smile and deep blue eyes betrayed what others took her for, a tough, cold-hearted loner. I saw something in her that made this fucked up world a little bit better because she was in it. I liked her... a lot.

She called back to me, "Goodbye, Boss." And then I swear she mouthed the words... I like you too. She turned, walked away, and never looked back. As I watched her walk away, I wondered: Are people from Warhead Heights telepaths?

Patti was gone, and the day was running on fumes. We needed a place to stay for the night.

Morgan, looking at a map, spoke up. "There's an abandoned factory about two miles from here. I spent the night there a few times. I think it'll keep us safe from the mutants. Follow me?"

At dusk, Morgan got us to the factory. He was right. It looked abandoned and abused for years. The security fence that surrounded the facility was in shreds. The once tall smokestacks lay in crumbling piles of scattered bricks. The building itself was bent and buckled. Sharp shards of broken glass clung precariously to window frames, as warped metal doors creaked open and closed in the desert wind.

Following Morgan's lead, we drove full





throttle into a wide-open bay. Quickly we realized our mistake. Inside the expansive room, we encountered the last thing we expected to see... seven familiar faces, all with loaded weapons. Green Eric, Delgado, Windy Bob, Buscemi, Quentin, Keitel and Carlos Romoli - each man a known associate of our nemesis, Vincent, the fixer from Vegas.

## PART 6 HINDSIGHT

Just when we thought things couldn't get worse, a voice rang out from the metal catwalk above, "We didn't expect you so soon." It was Vincent's enforcer, Kiki. He was a ruthless, cold-blooded killer.

"Look, Kiki," I started, "Maybe we could... I don't know, come to an arrangement, huh?"

Kiki's smile widened. "You know, Boss, maybe you could offer me something. I'm not sure you would have anything I would want, but maybe you could convince me to save your miserable hide. Your problem is that I am not a selfish man. How could I forget about the boys here? Surely you wouldn't expect them to sit idly by and not get something in the deal as well. Now how could you possibly offer anything of value to all of us?"

The seven spread out to surround us as Kiki approached down a staircase. What else could we do? We got off our bikes and put down our weapons.

"Oh, and let's not forget about Morgan." Kiki went on, "Such a useful idiot. You offer a fool enough money, and he'll agree to do nearly anything, including setting up his friends."

"I got them here just like we planned,"



Morgan said, stepping forward with thinly veiled false bravado. "And I told the gang we were coming your way. I was worried they wouldn't come to the factory, but I talked them into it. So? I did my job, just like I promised."

"Fucking Asshole!" yelled Herman, "I should have killed you back by the fucking crater. Now you have fucked us all!"

"Oh yes, gentlemen," agreed Kiki. "You're fucked." Turning to the armed henchmen, he started issuing orders. "We need to sleep in here tonight, and I don't want to smell the stench of their rotting corpses. Take them outside and shoot them. Oh, and take Morgan as well."

"What the fuck, Kiki?" Morgan protested. "We had a deal. I did my part."

"Yes, you did, and now you are only a liability to me. I always clean my debts, one way or another. Your death will be both practical and efficient."

They led us outside. To be honest, I didn't see a way out of this one. We had run a long way, but our stupidity had finally caught up with us; I wished we would have found a way to clear our names. I thought of Patti and those deep blue eyes and how I would miss them.

And then it happened, something I don't think I can explain. Suddenly, I felt dizzy. I got a painfully intense headache and puked right there on the concrete. Before the lights went out, I thought I saw a soft-skinned hairless beauty with huge blue eyes.

When I woke, the desert sky was full of stars, and I could hear the sound of crickets. Spider was waking too.

"Boss, what was that?" he asked. We were both still in shock, and I didn't have an answer.

Everyone was laid out in rows, unconscious on the ground. Spider and I picked up some guns. Then we slowly went to each of Vincent's men, from Kiki on down, and shot them once in the head. We left Morgan for the end. Once Herman woke up, he unloaded an entire clip in the shitbag. If I had let him, he would have reloaded and kept going.

When we finished 'putting to rest' each of our problems, The Wall, Spider, Herman and I turned back to the factory. It was there, bathed in the moon's light, that we saw something that would change our lives forever. On a faded sign above the factory door, visible only from the proper angle, was the inscription: ROTKIN'S PHARMACY.

## EPILOGUE

As we were leaving, laden with bags of powdered Tornado, knowing that we were probably in even more shit than ever before, I saw a group of people on the hill. They were obviously from Warhead Heights, and one was obviously a woman. I waved to her, and I'll bet my life she smiled back.



# THEME IN 51<sup>ST</sup> STATE

More than just some flavor text



by Ignacy Trzewiczek

The designer of Robinson Crusoe, Imperial Settlers, and Detective. Founder of Portal Games. Works at Portal Games as the Head of Development team. Lives in Gliwice, Upper Silesia, Poland.

\*Michał Oracz

Game designer and developer, graphic designer, the author of - among the others - Neuroshima Hex and This War of Mine. Long time Portal Games employee, co-running the company with Ignacy Trzewiczek.

‘Mariusz sent us new artwork. Look at Mr. President’s card. It is awesome,’ said Michał Oracz\* and showed me the artwork.

‘You must be kidding,’ I said.

‘What?’ asked Michał. ‘What’s wrong with this illustration?’

The artwork was really nice. Smiled showman was pointing at us.

‘Mr. President is a man who rebuilds the city. He is a tough guy. Not a showman’

‘What?!’

‘Look at the card. He gives one free rebuild action and he gives you Victory Points anytime you do the rebuild action again. He believes he is the new president of the U.S. It is clear. Obvious. He is a tough guy with a mission,’ I explained.

‘Do you, really, believe that anyone finds it obvious?’ asked Michał.

Michał might be right. I may be the only one man on this planet who sees the

theme and story in 51st State. I am the guy who knows exactly why Excavator gives you – while Invaded – two bricks, and why Bulldozer ignores the type of card when you use a rebuild action.

So here I am. I’ll tell you about the story in 51. I hope you will have more fun with the game when you understand what is happening at your table.

## CARD ICONS

Every card in 51st State represents a location that you can find in the neighborhood. What you have in your hand, these few cards represent locations that you’ve heard about around your home. That is why the draft phase is called the Lookout phase – when you take cards, you are looking for interesting places near your Base. When you have cards in your hand, it means that you know about these locations and that you can try to make contact with them.





That is why when you put Pub into play: You may – during every turn – take new cards. You have Pub - Pub is a place where people share information. You listen to stories from wanderers and you know what is interesting over the horizon.

If you have Noticeboard, you take more cards during the draft – you have access to information. When you Invade it - which means burn and destroy - you take all announcements that were there and that's it. You take 3 cards – representing knowledge you get by reading these announcements.

If you put Tavern into a game, you will be able to sell information. That's how it works – discard a card from your hand (which means you share some

information about interesting Locations) and gain a Victory Point.

What does Baby Swift do? She discards cards, which means she sells information... I will not describe it in more detail. You get the picture, don't you?

## VICTORY POINTS

Victory Points represent power. Victory Points show how your faction is perceived by others. If you have a Wreck of a Tank it makes an impression, doesn't it? Size does matter. That is why you get 1 Victory Point when you have the Tank. Everybody in the neighborhood knows that you are the one with the Tank at your doorstep. You do more, you put the Wreck of a





Plane next to the Tank and you will rock. You will be famous. You will get many VP.

What about the Museum? You Invade it and you get 1 VP – everybody's heard that you were the guy who destroyed this big, famous building. And you get 1 card. Why? There were some old maps and you know something interesting now...

## GUNS

Arena gives you possibilities to attack other places. When you have Arena, you have thugs who can invade. That is why Arena produces Guns. Gun trading makes you famous in the area. You are the guy from whom everybody can buy a gun. That makes you rich. Powerful. That gives you VP. Well, when you build the Gun shop, it will be something!

I really do like Kelly's Pawn Shop. Kelly is a big fish, as you can see when you look at the card. If you have an interesting Spoil, and you do not use it, go to Kelly and give it to him – you will gain lots of VP. Everybody will notice that you are Kelly's good buddy. You conduct business with the big fish. You got 2 VP. Your power grows.



## OTHER

In Old Depot, you will find lots of iron. With Radiostation, you may contact other locations and sign deals. At School, you will find free workers. In Old Factory you have space to hide good stuff... I believe that 51st State has interesting rules but I also do believe that there is a great story behind the cards. When I play 51st State I always imagine my faction growing stronger and stronger with new buildings, deals, and spoils...

## POST SCRIPTUM

About those Bricks in Excavator... You sent your thugs to bring you stuff. You say: 'Over there, two miles from here, there is Excavator. Do your job!'

A few hours later they are back. They are happy as hell.

'Boss, you will be proud of us. We hunted it down. You won't believe it! It had a locker in front and lots of stuff there. We have it!'

And then they give you two backpacks full of Bricks. Stuff they found when destroying Excavator...



# BOARD GAMES CHAMPION!

What do YOU know about the games?



## DESIGNERS

What is Friedmann Friese's favorite color?

- a. Black
- b. Red
- c. Blue
- d. Green

What is Eric Lang's favorite animal?

- a. Fox
- b. Panda
- c. Cat
- d. Cow

## GAMES

In Imperial Settlers, to draw a card you must:

- a. Spend 2 workers
- b. Spend 1 worker and 1 resource
- c. Exhaust any card on your table
- d. Exhaust any Action type card on your table

In Codenames, you lose the game if:

- a. You pick a card from your opponents set
- b. You pick an assassin card
- c. You cannot give a clue before the hour-glass ends
- d. You were picking cards for more than 6 rounds

## PUBLISHERS

Hans um Gluck has in their logo:

- a. Dice
- b. Pig
- c. Castle
- d. King

Devir is a board game publisher from

- a. Italy
- b. France
- c. Poland
- d. Spain

## HISTORY

Which game did not win Spiel des Jahres?

- a. Niagara
- b. Tikal
- c. Mexica
- d. Just one

The first version of Dirk Henn Shogun was called

- a. Seven Kingdoms
- b. Emperor
- c. Wallenstein
- d. War of Shogun

## POTPOURRI

Pax Unplugged takes place in:

- a. Philadelphia
- b. New Jersey
- c. Seattle
- d. Vegas

On which platform are you not able to play board games:

- a. BoardgamePlay
- b. Tabletopia
- c. Tabletop Simulator
- d. Boardgame Arena

Your result:

10 POINTS - You are a Boardgame Champion

8-9 POINTS - You are a Boardgame Master

6-7 POINTS - You are a Boardgame Enthusiast

4-5 POINTS - You are a Boardgamer

2-3 POINTS - You want to be a Boardgamer, huh?

1 POINT - Did you download Moloch Monthly by accident?!

Correct answers: d, b, a, b, d, d, c, c, a, a, a



BOARD GAMES THAT TELL STORIES

BY PORTAL CRUISE

# MOULOCCH monthly

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## THANKS FOR READING!

PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD  
ABOUT THE MAGAZINE!  
AND SEE YOU NEXT MONTH!

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TRAINING GOOD CONTRACTS

GAME DESIGN CORNER

ST. STATE: NO MAN'S LAND

THE COME BACK

### TOP 10 GAMES OF 2021

BY IGORACE TRZEWICZ