

SEA of Nyx

"Some E-Mail Adventures"

Issue #6

2025/03/03

SEA of Nyx is intended to be a Play-by-Email magazine, released as a free PDF every four weeks. The idea is to offer a variety of simple games that require no complex rules and allow for a quick start. Of course, this requires not only players but also game masters to host the games.

If you're interested in subscribing to the magazine, if you'd like to contribute, or if you have questions, feedback, etc., email stefan@seaofnyx.com.

Issue #6

Grand Slam and **Beer Powered Word Frenzy** advance to the next round. And we have a nice interview with Fred from the Factorium. A subscriber requested that each section start on a new page. We're trying that out in this issue - feel free to share your feedback on what you think about it!

Deadlines

For players to send in their turn: **2025/03/17**

~~For Game Masters to send in their evaluations: **2025/03/24**~~

For other PBEM relevant stuff for the next issue: **2025/03/17**

The next issue will be released on **2025/03/24**

As soon as I have received all the turns from the players in my games ~~and all the evaluations from the other game masters~~, I will create a new issue, even if the deadline hasn't been reached yet. So, if you want to submit other content, please keep in mind that the next issue might be published earlier than the deadline shown here.

Beer Powered Word Frenzy - Actual Turn



This is a simple word game. The number of participants is unlimited. **You can join the game at any time.**

The rules for *Beer Powered Word Frenzy* can be found at the end of this issue.

Rules:

- Sentences will score one point for every two words, up to maximum (for this rule) of five.
- Players will lose 3 points when using words with three letters in sentences from this point onwards.
- In the event of a tie, never choose the spotty one.
- New rules from now on shall be exactly five words long.
- Each word that contains only one unique vowel (a, e, i, o, or u) earns 1 point.
- If new rules don't rhyme, they ain't worth a dime!
- No emojis allowed 😞😞
- Preexisting rules are for fools.
- Cool rule - two for "school"
- Without "hero", it's counting zero.

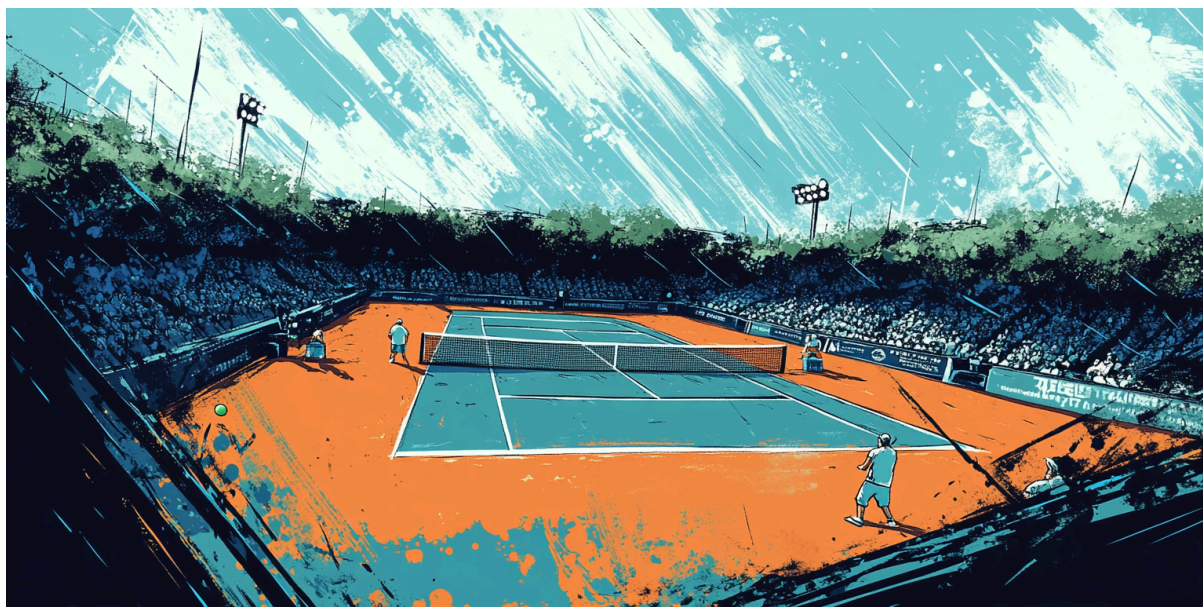
Scoring:

- Fred: 21
- Rich: 16
- Stefan: 26
- Kevin: 14

Sentences:

- *Kevin: Captain didn't always belong to me because he once belonged to a friend.*
- *Fred: BPWF rules stipulates that words need to be written into sentences so that Fred will get more points than anyone else.*
- *Rich: I'm pretty sure I attended their performance when they were supporting Hawkwind*
- *Stefan: Bright stars shine strong along deep winds sweep seas while moonlight glows cold above smooth stone roads with dawn's golden glow spreads across broad lands.*

Grand Slam - Round 5



This represents a simple tennis simulation. The number of participants is unlimited. **You can join the game at any time.**

The rules for *Grand Slam* can be found at the end of this issue.

Tournament #4

Faulty Towers Invitational

Quarterfinals:

1. Ace Racketson (GM) - **Zaloth Zar = 3:2** (6:2 7:6 2:6 2:6 7:6)
2. Chip Baseline (GM) - **Andrey Merano = 0:3** (2:6 4:6 2:6)
3. **Roger Thatlob** - Lob Spinster (GM) = **3:1** (3:6 6:4 6:3 6:2)
4. **Pete Polko** - **Per Kele = 2:3** (6:7 6:2 6:2 2:6 2:6)

Semifinals:

1. Ace Racketson (GM) - VS - **Andrey Merano = 0:3** (4:6 2:6 3:6)
2. **Roger Thatlob** - VS - **Per Kele = 2:3** (2:6 6:2 6:2 6:7 2:6)

Final:

1. **Andrey Merano** - VS - **Per Kele = 2:3** (6:7 6:2 6:2 2:6 2:6)

World ranking list:

1. Per Kele (Strength: 104 / WRLP: 12)
2. Andrey Merano (Strength: 103,8 / WRLP: 11)
3. Roger Thatlob (Strength: 103,4 / WRLP: 9)
4. Zaloth Zar (Strength: 102,6 / WRLP: 7)

5. Pete Polko (Strength: 102,8 / WRLP: 6)
6. Avair Strabain (Strength: 100 / WRLP: New Player)

New tournament:

Racket Science Championship

Since there are actually 6 "real" players, we'll start directly with the quarterfinals.

1. **Per Kele** - VS - **Pete Polko**
2. **Andrey Merano** - VS - **Avair Strabain**
3. **Zaloth Zar** - VS - Lob Spinster (GM)
4. **Roger Thatlob** - VS - Chip Baseline (GM)

The bolded players are real players.

I now need each player to allocate their strength points for this tournament.

Please send these to stefan@seaofnyx.com.

Interview with “Fred from the Factorium”

How did you first discover PBM games and what made them special for you?

My first foray into PBM was in the early 90s as my gaming-group got into metagaming our rpg-campaigns. The main games we played were the Swedish publications that nowadays are getting somewhat of a reach into the international market; Dragonbane and Mutant. Free League (the publishers) aren't the original designers or creators, but boy have they maintained and developed the Swedish TTRPG-heritage well.

In either case, we handed in (or mailed and later emailed) orders to the GM as leaders of the geopolitical factions in the world(s) that created the backdrop for the happenings around our primary characters that essentially were 'Ye Oldsthe Murhder Trobblefiksash' no matter the game.

Later, as I got into tabletop wargaming, I ran campaigns in a similar sense.

Notable memories are from 4th Ed Warhammer Battle where the players fought over a (poorly) hand-drawn map and a Necromunda campaign that was more of a leaderboard-type deal.

(IIRC both campaigns were won by the same player. Great guy, but damn what a powergamer.)

Did you step away from gaming at any point and what brought you back?

Raising a family pretty much put a damper on most gaming for me in the early 00s. Going from sharing apartments with gaming-buddies and essentially having a lifestyle where the daily question was "what do we play tonight or should we just paint minis or make another terrain table", to having a few kids and a house on the countryside where the question was more akin to "has the cat been fed today and does everyone have unbroken bones".

In-person gaming kinda dwindled down to a minimum.

I always had the hankering for slowplay and by chance I found out about 'Food Chain Game' by Greg Lindahl (<https://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/fchain.html>) which I played for a year or two. In the background, tabletop campaigns were puttering away slowly from time to time as well. Of course, a handful of years later, MMOs hit the scene bigtime and gobbled me up like it did most gamers of my generation.

What about PBMs and gaming in general, today?

Fast forward 25 years and life is quite different. The kids are adults (*rolls eyes*), I'm in my 50s and everything is kinda settling down when it comes to the hustle and bustle of life. I remarried a decade ago to a wonderful woman who also happened to become a gamer by heart a few years after we met. This essentially meant that I went from a shoebox with some painting and model nick-nacks to a full office with gaming goodies.

Dedicated gaming computers, 4*6' gaming table, terrain and painted models, board games, rpgs, 3d printers and everything one could need. (Note to self: I'm gonna need a bigger house as stuff spills out into other rooms.) I even managed to find, or rather get discovered, by a great group of local historical wargamers. Still, I kinda want more...
Enter the old friend PBM.

What inspired you to create your own PBEM game and what makes it unique?

I have a longer version of this in part and pieces on my (seldom updated) blog (<https://fredsfactorium.blogspot.com/>) and in the design notes of The Vagabond, but essentially it came down to a chat with my buddy Jonas about us wanting to do some hardcore old-school hexcrawling but noone in our rpg-group are keen on it. A couple hours later I was browsing the internet (as you do) and by complete chance came upon issue 1 of SEAoN which led me down a rabbit hole (as it does). An hour later again, I started writing what became The Vagabond.

I describe The Vagabond as a 'A lonely PBEM journey across the dark reaches of space!' and it kinda sums it up well. It's essentially a somewhat retro-futuristic sci-fi fishbowl-esque hexcrawl which focuses on character management and journaling where the players descriptions kinda creates the environment they are in. Gameplay itself consists of the player sending in their orders & journal after which I process the mechanics as well as writing some narration before sending it back. It runs on a simple Traveller-esque 2D6+modifier/8s are successes-system. One unique aspect is that the character has a clear goal and the game has an end; make enough cash to gtfo and live the rest of life in luxury. This is handled by an evergrowing (oh well) stat called Lux. Once it hits 10 the game is over as the character is now wealthy enough to retire from adventuring.
Narrative boardgame with an Umpire or journaling rpg with a GM-PBM? You tell me.

Another factor to create TV is that I want to get better at narrative writing and prose. While I have always been good at creating stories from simple writing prompts or my own ideas, writing them down is too much work and I always let the thoughts drift into the ether instead.

I come from the background of character-heavy rpgs and tabletop wargaming more so than board games and I think this reflects my design choices as well as narration. I draw a lot from the journaling my players do in conjunction with RNG-tables and the pre-set POI's on the map when it comes to creating their journeys. The feedback loops they get need to make sense regarding on what they are trying to accomplish in their own version of the galaxy they are in.

What were the biggest challenges and strengths for you in designing and running a PBEM game?

Honestly? Neurodivergency (adhd). *laughs*

One one hand, when the hyperfocus of a subject kicks in, my brain writes a complete rulesystem in 20 hours from scratch, makes me build a porch in a day, learns what´s needed to pass an exam for a 12 week course in 5 hours on the last evening or *insert ridiculous idea for normative brains*.

On the other hand, when the hyperfocus shifts.. It takes some major discipline to keep things running. To combat this, TV is played on a 7-day loop meaning that my player has 7 days to make their orders, and when I get them I have another 7 days to reply. This makes for a smoother operation on my part as I can reply as fast or slow as I want that particular day.

Never having ran a "rpg" in a turnbased mode before presents it´s own unique challenge for me personally. One big no-no in ttrpgs is to take player agency away from the player and this is something I constantly battle with when running this kind of game. Where do I make descicions for the character on behalf of the player? When should I end the narration? These are questions that need careful consideration pretty much every time I moderate a players turn.

One additional challenge is to amass the correct sourcematerials, meaning ideas from both myself and others, and curate them into something that becomes a perpetual motion machine of sorts. When it comes to narrative games, it´s easy to go down rabbit holes (again, as one does) instead of keeping the story somewhat focused into one direction.

Something every GM learns early in our careers as roleplayers are that players are _not_ good at figuring stuff out. Coupled this absolute and undeniable fact with running a fishbowl-game (basically plopping the player into a small described setting in a loose world and see what happens) and hints really get lost along the way.

How do you keep players engaged with the game?

Keeping the players engaged is, to be blunt, a them-problem.

I am not a paid online circusmonkey-GM, but rather aswell a gamer that want to enjoy my hobbyspace and _have fun_. We have all been in games or groups where we really haven´t felt it. This can be quite painful when you are younger and try hard to fit in and becomes more of a 'oh well, lets move on to the next thing' as you mature.

It's simply not my job to make a player have a good time, it´s a joint effort from us working together at creating a story. If it´s not fun for a player, then that only means that we really aren´t a match for this type of gaming.

This doesn't mean that we can´t be friends and have a blast in other games or activities.

I probably have like 10 buddies I asked about beta-testing TV who looked at me like I was ready for the loonie-bin.

What kind of players do you hope to attract and what experience do you want to offer?

I have probably answered this if one reads between the lines in the rest of this interview.

The Vagabond suits people who like journaling, creating their own stories and managing a character rather than playing it directly. They probably need to like old-school hexcrawling coupled with a big scoop of lust for exploring. If you like other SCHeMeRPs you are halfway there and reading bad GM prose makes up for the other half.

Honestly, a player who likes TV is probably a player who I would not mind having at the table in my house as we likely are a good match in playstyles aswell as personalities.

TV, now in late beta, will most likely never become a monetized game due to the nature of handmoderating a pbmrpg. The amount of time invested from me into my players journeys doesn't just stop at the 30-40 minutes it takes to process their turn, but is puttering away in the background all the time.

This takes alot of pressure off me as a moderator since I can just pack up shop (meaning not take on more players) whenever I feel like doing something else. Like writing on my next PBM, which will be a multiplayer-ordeal.

Is there anything else you wanna tell the SEAofNyx readers or the PBM scenes as a whole?

As a hobby we need to stop perpetuating the death-spiral narrative about the low playercount, the small amount of games being offered and the this-that-or-the-other. There are alot of PBM-adjacent hobbies where people who play "slowmode" haven't got the slightest idea that something like PBM exists.

Go offer them games.

Talk to them about PBM.

Invite them to play.

Bring them into other peoples games.

For 3 of my players, The Vagabond is the first ever PBM they have played and the feedback to play PBMs is just amazing. One of them is in my DMs as I answer this interview, asking on feedback while creating their own PBM.

PBM is not dead, you are.

Cheers.

/Fred from the Factorium.

Announcements and other stuff



Talos (asking on Discord): How long have you been playing PBMs? Which ones are you currently playing and why? What are the pros and cons of the games you've played and/or are playing?

Sporkles (on Discord)

When I fly somewhere for a board game convention:



-Slavgaard- (on Discord): What I wished, was, back in the late 90's, I would have gotten the code the the game Portinium.... I liked playing that a bunch and wish I would have kept my rules for it to possible re-create it. But I got ride of them

when I moved from Canada to the US in 1998.. should have squirrled them away.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portinium>

werewolf_punch (on Discord about the new game "**Dutchman**"): Still hammering away at the major rewrite of the new integrated combat/magic system that I started working on around the beginning of the year. Working as much as I can on it and looking to make more time wherever possible!

Latest Middle-earth Newsletter:

<https://eocampaign1.com/web-version?p=1ddb9e4e-eeb2-11ef-80bf-fb61522a48e3&pt=campaign&t=1739965264&s=0e11cd256f37caae66425b69faa635ac0d99c9ad2a3880c265d17003788accfb>

Some users complain on Discord about no response from KJC for the game **Monster Island**. 😞

Rich/Ælthric/Natasha Catsclaw (on Discord): Unfortunately, due to me actually having to work in an actual job, **Nukes 'n' Bees** is going to have to be shelved for now. I'm hoping I can find the time to restart development on it soon, but don't hold your collective breaths. I am, however, running **Beer Powered Word Frenzy**, a game about pedantry, which you're all welcome to join.

If you also have something to announce - whether it's about PBEM in general or your PBEM game - feel free to let me know.

Other Possible Games

If enough players show interest, the first evaluations will be included in the next issue. The rules listed here are shortened versions to explain the basics.

Pitch Perfect

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eA6GyyFRKfRPjaDA3btrBM_KbzRtr-q38IIIG5NDHD90/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.vh7wdlcyki1s

Game Master: Jacob / j.andersson@antikvanti.com

Minimum Players: 6

Already registered: 3

High Noon

This is a strategic game set in the Wild West, where players compete to become the most successful gunslinger. The goal is to have the most duel victories by the end of the game, which concludes when at least half of the participants have been eliminated.

Each player starts with 12 life points and must participate in at least two duels per round. For every duel, players receive two bullets to use for their shots. During duels, the opponents gradually move closer to each other, starting at position 20. With each step, they have the option to fire a shot, and the chance of hitting increases with proximity – from 5% at position 19 to 95% at position 1. Players plan their shots in advance and submit their decisions to the game master.

A duel ends as soon as one player hits their opponent. The winner gains an extra life point and collects all unused bullets from the loser. If both players hit simultaneously, they each lose two life points but keep their unused bullets. If no hits are achieved, only the bullets fired are lost.

In addition to participating in duels, players can challenge others to new duels. The number of challenges a player can issue depends on their remaining life points. Challenges cannot be refused, making strategic planning and carefully selecting opponents critical aspects of the game.

The game master evaluates the results, publishes the updated standings for life points, bullets, and duel victories after each round, and announces the new duel pairings. Players whose life points drop to zero are eliminated and can no longer participate.

Game Master: Nyx / Stefan / stefan@seaofnyx.com

Minimum Players: 4

Already registered: 1

TRON

This is a strategic game where players aim to occupy as many fields as possible on a square, torus-shaped game board. The board consists of 2,601 fields (51x51) and has no edges, meaning the left side connects directly to the right, and the top connects directly to the bottom. Players start from randomly assigned positions and move across the board using TRONs.

Movements are made horizontally or vertically across any number of fields. The speed, or range of movement, starts at 1 and can be increased, decreased, or maintained by 1 per turn. Players may only enter fields that have not already been occupied. A driving error, such as reducing speed below 1 or violating other rules, results in the immediate elimination of the player.

Each round, players submit their moves, specifying direction and, if necessary, any changes to speed. Players are allowed 1 to 3 sub-moves per round and must make a move (no skipping is allowed). If a player fails to submit a move, the NMR (No Move Received) rule is applied. In this case, the vehicle continues in the last direction, adjusts to obstacles if necessary, or reduces speed. If the speed drops below 1 or a conflict arises, the player is eliminated.

Conflicts occur when multiple players attempt to enter the same field. In such cases, the fastest player has priority. If multiple players with the same speed reach the field simultaneously, all affected players are eliminated. At the end of each round (= one round is one issue), moves are evaluated, scores are updated, and a new game board is published.

The game ends when no players can move, only one player remains, or after a maximum of 20 rounds. The last remaining player earns a bonus of 20 fields, the second-to-last earns 15, and the third-to-last earns 10. The winner is the player who has occupied the most fields by the end of the game.

Game Master: Nyx / Stefan / stefan@seaofnyx.com

Minimum Players: 4

Already registered: 1

If you'd like to participate in any of these games, send me an email, and I'll add you to the list of players. Once the minimum number of players is reached, the game will start.

Rules Of Running Games

Grand Slam

This represents a simple tennis simulation. The number of participants is unlimited. A player can join the game at any time.

Each player represents a tennis player trying to rank as high as possible in the world ranking list (WRL) and improve their playing strength. Every player starts with a playing strength of 100 points.

In each match round (= one issue of the magazin), the GM offers a number of tournaments and each player may register for a maximum of two tournaments per round.

For every tournament each player allocates their strength points across 5 sets for their first tournament pairing. The allocation must follow these rules:

- a) The total strength is always rounded down.
- b) No set may have the same number of strength points as another.
- c) At least 1 strength point must be used per set.

Examples:

Player A

35 / 25 / 15 / 13 / 12 is allowed

Player B

40 / 25 / 10 / 10 / 15 is not allowed because of the identical set 10 & 10

Player C

31 / 29 / 0 / 15 / 25 is not allowed because of the 0

To determine the winner, the strength points of each set are compared. The player with the higher value wins the set. Once a player wins 3 sets, the match ends and that player is declared the winner.

If the strength points in 2 or 4 sets are equal, each player wins one or two sets respectively. The trailing player is awarded the set first (or, in the case of a tie, the player who would otherwise fall behind without that set).

If the points are equal in a set, the winner is the player whose lowest strength point in any set is higher than the opponent's. If still tied, the winner is determined randomly.

For each round a player wins, they receive WRL points (WRLP) so a ranking could be created.

Game Master: Nyx / Stefan / stefan@seaofnyx.com

Beer Powered Word Frenzy

- A turn consists of a sentence, and a rule
- The rule can either be a new rule, or countermand an existing rule (other than the immutable rules)
- Turns will only be accepted if they arrive by noon (GMT) on the deadline day
- Turns deadlines will be weekly, on Sundays, so you've got no excuse
- A rule cannot stop another player from participating
- New rules will apply from the next turn onwards (until countermanded)

Scoring:

None as yet. That will be decided by new rules.

Order of play:

Turns will be processed in the order in which they arrive. Rules will be applied to the sentence in the order of the rules list

Submitting turns:

Email to Richard.lockwood@gmail.com Title your email [BPWF] – Turn 1 (or whatever), and simply include your sentence, followed by your rule.

Results:

Results will be published in SEA of Nyx, along with the next deadline day.

Game Master: Richard / Richard.lockwood@gmail.com

If you're interested in more complex Play-by-Email games, check this list:

<https://mailchi.mp/d3fee38d9108/pbm-list>

Nyx / Stefan