

The Stronghelm Globe

News from the Commonwealth and beyond
Since 229 YC

More than just a scourge?
-Surprising findings
about **the Archons**



Your weapons got rusty and old? Upgrade now to:
**The New Arsenal
mod**



The final part of
Dir. Jenny Evils
leaked war diaries



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-Announcements
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News about Planetfall

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Petracke



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Letter to the Readers

I EAR literate member of Athla, you chose to read the 2nd issue of **The Stronghelm Globe**, and we want to congratulate you on your excellent reading choice. Hopefully this issue again offers something to the interested reader.

II First we are going to dive deep into the lore of Archons - yes you read right - these undead titans scourging the lands once were near godlike protectors of this realm - according to old scripts. Read more starting on page **II**.

XI After this thrilling read we present the second and final part of Dir. Jenny Evils leaked War diaries in which Archons also play a vital role (see page **IV** onwards). Our Interview partner this week is the winner of the Live MP beginners tournament 2017, who is currently also participating in the Live MP Duel tournament 2018. If you want to know more about his way to victory, playstyle and race/class evaluations then read what Petracke has to say starting on page **XI**.

XIII If you are more interested in your own game then reading about others, then we hope that at least our workshop section starting on page **XIII** can give you new inspirations to dive into the game with new units. In this issue Griffith will talk about his modding past and especially about his AoW3 New Arsenal mod that adds 2 new endgame units for each race while keeping an eye on the games balance.

The Horoscope text (starting on page **XV**) in which BloodyBattleBrain again looks upon the stars that might be conquered in the far future will give you something to dream about, before we end this issue with the Announcements (page **XX**), including the current standings in all running tournaments as well as upcoming stuff to keep you occupied until our next issue arrives.

Happy reading!

The Stronghelm Globe

Lore: The Archon Plan For Athla, and Why They Abandoned It

by Prof. Lothar von Dhraco

IN the previous issue of the Stronghelm Globe, the esteemed Professor Doctor Shlumpf provided the readers with a summarised history of humanity, from our arrival on the Blessed Continent to the formation of the Commonwealth. In this piece, the Professor provided an overview of the events surrounding the fall of the Verdant Court... or, rather, what most Athlans *believe* happened at that time. I have spent many years pouring over accounts of the Archons and the few texts they left behind, and they tell a very different story. Simply put, while I can see why it is convenient for Inioch's descendants (who, truly, do not deserve to be tarred by the same brush) to portray him as having been an innocent victim until he was corrupted by Meandor's botched resurrection, this was simply not the case.



Inioch: not as innocent as history claims.

To understand why, we have to look back to a time before recorded history in Athla... and we need to understand who the Archons really *were*. In essence, they were once humans, but have ascended into a higher state through an infusion of holy power. The exact process through which this occurs, and whether it happens on an individual level or is a culture-wide transition, remains a mystery. However, the Archon records remain adamant on one thing: for this to occur, humans must be the clear dominant power on their world. The choice to aspire to holiness is only truly meaningful if the choice to do evil is there - humans cannot ascend in this manner if their choices are constrained by the laws and morality of another race.

The solution to this problem, for the Archons, was to seek out worlds that had fallen to the forces of evil and to redeem them. However, while the Archons were strong in the holy magic they used to fight demons and undead, they lacked the druidic and creation magic re-

quired to restore these worlds to a habitable state. As a result, the Archons came to an arrangement with the ancient Elves, along with other races such as the Giants and Dragons: the Archons would find and conquer new worlds, and then turn them over to the Elves and others in order to make those worlds habitable. These terraformers would be given some time to enjoy the world they had reseeded - exactly how long is not in the records I have found, but it is evidently measured in thousands of years - before the day came when they were expected to move on to the next world (and project) so that humans could inherit that world.



The Elves were entrusted with seeding life on Athla to make it habitable for later human settlement.

Athla was one such world, liberated by the Archons in ancient times. In 800LIR, the Archons came to deliver a message: the time of the handover was coming, and that Inioch should begin preparing his empire for the coming of humanity and, ultimately, to depart and allow humans to inherit the Blessed Continent.

In response, Inioch formed the organisation of the Keepers. More recent Archon records suggest that the Archons later came to believe that the Keepers were formed purely as a smokescreen. Inioch could not lie to the Archons about his intentions directly, as the Archons employ a ritual magic that allows them to detect falsehoods, but if he employed agents that genuinely believed in their ideals as go-betweens, he could hide the fact that he did not share those beliefs himself. For the time being, however, the Archons were fooled. As the Keepers arranged a colony for the human arrivals to settle, Inioch was planning a means to ensure the colony failed without tipping his hand as being the one responsible.

In 969LIR, the house of cards came crashing down when evidence was delivered to the humans that Inioch was responsible for the plagues and raids by orcs and goblins that had beset their colonisation efforts. The outpouring of human anger that resulted exceeded all efforts to control it. Some records suggest that it was an Elf that provided the evidence, but it is likely that he did not expect the massacre that followed. The

Archons, likewise, mourned the Elven dead, but while they would have preferred a less violent means, it had created the nascent human empire that they sought.



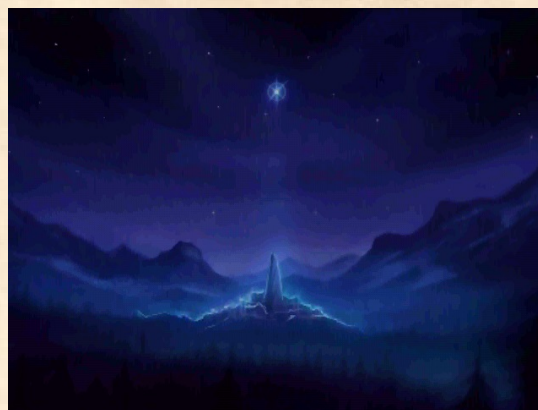
If the Elf who brought word of Inioch's conspiracy survived, he has remained silent about his motives.

In the centuries that follow, there are hints in the writings that it was the Archons that allowed the Trump of the Dead to be found by mortals, resulting in the undead invasion of 1101 LIR. Their motive appears to have been to remind the other races of their importance, allowing the undead to rampage until the Archons arrived on the Blessed Continent in force to demonstrate their power by driving the undead back.

Decades later, after an uneasy peace settled across the land, the Archons placed a new star over the ruins of the Verdant Court. This star was intended to be the herald the age of humanity, but the Keepers and the Cult of Storms saw it differently, viewing it as a call to action. The Archons held themselves apart from the fighting, until Meandor's reanimation of Inioch as a lich granted the previously disorganised undead a powerful and skilled leader. The resulting fighting between the undead, the Cult of Storms, and the Archons gave Queen Julia the opening she needed to lead a Keeper army to reclaim the Verdant Court.

This left the Archons with a deep feeling of betrayal from the Elves, but as Julia was the only one among the other contenders with an interest in allowing humans to live in peace, she was seen as a lesser evil than the alternatives, and the Archons came to support her reign - at least when it came to lending their military forces to stabilising her rule. Despite this, the onset of the Wizard Wars almost lead to the extinction of those humans that were not enslaved by the wizard queen Nimue. The Archons were not able to play a significant role in those wars, perhaps having expended much of their strength aiding Gabriel in defending Evermore against the conspirators, but they did send a force to facilitate Merlin's escape after he was framed for the abduction of Julia.

Phobius' empire split the Archons, with some re-



The star over the Valley of Wonders was intended to be herald of human inheritance over the land.

negedes seeing his magic-hating empire as the means to achieve their original goals, but the majority of the Archons that remained on Athla sided with Queen Julia and the wizards that fought beside her against Phobius and the Shadow Demons, on the proviso that mercy was shown to Phobius' human subjects. During the final battle against the All-Devourer, the Archons ceded their claim on Athla, granting it to the Elves and other magical races in recognition for their efforts in defending Athla against the forces that had threatened it... again, with the expectation that humans would still have a place to live on our world. True to their word, in the wake of the victory, the remaining Archons departed the Blessed Continent through the Shadow Gate, resuming their struggle against evil forces on worlds apart from our own.



Lothar von Dhraco is a Professor of Theological and Mythical History at the University of Stronghelm, specialising in the shaping of Athla and critical investigation of the Shadai cults. In addition to translations of Archon texts, he is known for his biographies on the Wizard Kings.

Sources: Age of Wonders Player's Manual, Age of Wonders 2: Shadow Magic Player's Manual, [The Age of wonders timeline \(online\)](#), discussions with the developers in the [Age of Wonders 2 Heaven forum \(online, will require a lot of digging now\)](#) the games: AOW1, AOW2, AOW:SM

War Diaries

THE following report is from a game reported on the battlefield between SanTil and Fluks. The original report can be found in the Age of wonders forums. And has been slightly altered for better readability because Jenny Evils scribbled handwritten notes are an unreasonable burden to decipher. So we did it for you. This is part 2 of 2, to read the first half of the story we kindly recommend you to read [The Stronghelm Globe issue 1](#). [The Stronghelm Globe](#) does not endorse any of the opinions or views expressed in the following text. We print this text for educational purposes only DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME (but if you do send us the report!).

Director Jenny Evils leaked Progress reports part 2/2

What happened so far: Dir. Jenny Evil of Evil Inc. a turbo-capitalist goblin dreadnought has set her greedy little hands on yet another part of Athla. Last turn she met her adversary SoNaTa, an elven necromancer, and is now hastily trying to rebuild her army towards machines to outproduce the never sleeping undead, because even Dir. Evil can see that a lifestealing cavalry army based only on physical damage might have a hard time against the undead. Also she started a rebranding campaign to keep anyone busy and prevent uncomfortable questions. This is where part 2 starts:

Evil Inc. Progress Report #4 (Days 22-28)

Dear subordinates, we are rebranding your workplaces, to make you enjoy your work for us even more. Yuth-Jun is now named *Flea Market* and Srok the city with the fairy themed amusement park, has been given a name that reflects this attraction. Henceforth it shall be called *Fair(l)y Fun*.

Exciting things have also happened on the surface. We plundered a Hall of the Forefathers and the knight, our employee of Day 20, was blatantly overestimating his durability in the chill and will now stay there accompanying dead frostlings - well it serves him right, the promotion made him quite a prig that looked down on us Goblins on wargs, his job in our army will now go to one of our own wargrider boys. In the hall itself we gained some shiny golden items (see picture attached). Meanwhile we started a selfless educational outreach in our headquarters and offer now free engineering courses to youngsters in the army.

On day 23 we invested in a warhall at fair(l)y fun, we believe the ancient ruins there are a nice training



Miss Evil providing evidence for being a grave robber while turning a blind eye on the lives of her employees.

ground for butchers that will be a welcome addition to our security force mainly to deal with the foul Gryphon riders SoNaTa seems to field. We also spotted a secluded place in the southwest underground that has a crystal tree AND a flowrock quarry. This would be an ideal place for a machine factory, yet we are not sure if we will find the time to erect it and the shipping of equipment from and to there also has to be factored in. Much on our mind that constantly is looking for the shareholders best interest.

Talking of expansion plans, we started a daring expedition to map the southeast underground - Two brave marauders named Siwel and Kralc have set it upon themselves to map the mid underground and if possible even further towards the southeast. This is by no means an easy task as the only way to go there leads on a very narrow path next to a river that is filled with cultists and wild animals. Attached is a picture of our two heroes, let's hope it is not the last we see of them.



Siwel and Kralcs dangerous journey to the unknown. How miserable must the working conditions in Evil Incs factories be to make you embark on such a journey?

In the meanwhile the 2nd security Force lead by Ekko

will go to Finlacial, because we have been getting a request (by fairies I know...) to deal with some giants there. In return they offer us daily payments. A wise decision. They are seeing our companies potential and instead of being outdated and stand in the way they chose to support us for ~~my~~ the benefit of all.

After Ekko has dealt with the Giants he and his trustworthy team of warg riders will make sure future travellers following the footsteps of Siwel and Kralc will not be molested any longer by rabid animals and those damned cultists with their circles. I am on my way to personally have a closer look on the south. We have to make a decision whether or not we want to expand at the Flowrock/crystal tree site or not.



Dir. Evils planned routes to "free" the south and "liberate" the fairies.

Our safety drones keep us updated on things going on on the surface and they bring disturbing news: The Merfolk dwelling of Hinlac has been subdued by SoNaTa. This is most unfortunate because it'll make the overworld an even less appealing place for us. But that's not a big problem because we promised the fairies of Finlacial that we will bring this part of Athla a true grassroots movement for prosperity, wealth and modernisation anyway. So we stay where the grassroots are: Underground.¹

On day 26 we heard news from Siwel and Kralc again. The two explorers have really made it through the passage (even revealing a third! Cultist circle on the road) and met a hostile Archon dwelling (fortunately not in contact with SoNaTa yet) and a dwarven outpost. So there is life in the east, and hopefully soon this life will listen to ~~my word~~ reason and become Evil Inc. subsidiaries.

Day 27 brought a great lesson in what it means to run an efficient army as we could demonstrate that nurturing and caring for a helpless and lost human scout (see day 11) which, as soon as he is promoted, gets overcon-

¹The fairies clearly didn't read the smallprint. Ms Evils Idea of a grassroots movement is to root out all grass to make streets and move machines -The editor.

fidant and dies instead of a long and lasting servitude is absolutely nonsense, you can just buy them off the batch from an underground Inn – the free market takes care of everything!

And so we did, we hope this specimen will be more durable. His first operation with our army was already promising as we explored of a forbidden sanctum and learned how to invoke fire elementals. Furthermore our southernmost security drone valiantly exercised our company values and rescued precious floating valuables from an approaching banshee – Money before life! (company handbook page 1).

Unfortunately the heroic drone was not the only hero we lost on Day 28. Also explorer Siwel was stabbed to death by scoundrels that he tried to bribe, Kralc is now venturing forth alone. Luckily though SoNaTa seems to have gone a bit too far when trying to take the Giant dwelling in the center of the map on the surface. A Giant must have gently touched her with his club and she is now in the void where she belongs! We hope this will give us the needed time to establish a southern UG-flagstore and we ordered a fast quality settler from Flea-market.

Evil Inc. Progress Report #5 (Days 29-35)

Finlacial offered a tribute and shortly we wondered if we should be insulted that they even asked if we wanted gold... but then we just took it and ensured them that we will happily ease their burden and they can let us handle all the gold they find for them, they are just petty minded fairies after all they know nothing of the power gold possesses and we like to keep it that way. In the south we invoked our first fire elemental and named it Hellmut (because he shall send our undead foes to Hell, *hehe* "Go to Hell undead scum, Hellmut will show you the way", see picture). He should be of great help to purge this undead failure from our Evil inc. company grounds.

Otherwise we are still busy dealing in a most goblin manner with some spiders that seem upset about progress coming to their forsaken corner of Athla. But our 2nd security force led by Ekko has to move careful now as they are coming close to a cave entrance that is monitored by one of SoNaTas towers near the giant dwelling (that has fallen under her foul influence) in the middle of the map. She might have some forces in the area. We ~~bribed~~ recruited a draconian flyer at the local inn and will clear a small sidearm of the cave system for now. On other news: We have started to research flame tanks. Until they are researched there is nothing wrong with ordinary cannons. And Kralc has found an enemy underground hideout. Of course it was besieged by communist-bandits obviously she



Hellmut, the most recent elemental unlucky enough to be summoned by Dir. Evil.

can't keep her house clean!



Out of the frying pan into the fire: Kralc - recently escaped the workbenches at Evil Inc. - now stumbles into the undead.

Day 31: Mourn dear employees of Evil Inc. Kralc has been taken from us by a SoNaTa. Our first diplomatic response was to burn her watchtower that had vision on the cave entrance in the center - An eye for an eye. There are also good news: Flea market seems to be the first city in this part of Athla that has its own arcane item forge and therefore the guild of item forgers has congratulated me for my tireless promotion of progress and sent a "Frost witch staff", how very nice of them. It might be handy. Also we received a diplomatic letter from Dhur Fahal, the dwarven outpost Kralc (RIP) had discovered, they must have heard that we have a soft spot when money is involved. They need help to access their goldmine, we feel for them, being separated from your income is a cruel fate that will hopefully never hit us! We accepted their request and hope they might be handy allies in the future.

Unfortunately things are going south in the south (what would you expect), while dealing with (yet another) bunch of undead in a Lich Kings castle we lost a highly ranked (gold medal) warg rider and Yarati Spellstealer got traumatized by a dread reaper and an undying banshee. She is now in psychological therapy in the void. We will keep her place free in our army and hope that she'll recover soon (if only because hiring a new hero will cost us precious gold!). Once we have the flame tanks researched we will focus on that. But for more pleasant news: The settler has arrived at our Evil Assembly site at the crystal tree and tomorrow we will start equipping it with the tools necessary to build flame tanks asap.

Day 33 brought rabid animals, always trouble. Now I personally had to go back to hunt some of them down, they could have become a danger for our evil assembly line otherwise. But that means our group couldn't make any noteworthy progress towards the next promising spot for a fort and another haunted boneyard. We need to bring peace and progress to our south as fast as possible so we can start focusing on SoNaTa. As a small token of the things to come for her we dispatched 2 toadstool fairies to go above ground. SoNaTa is frequently killing our safety drones with her gryphons, we hope that the slightly more subtle fairies might give us valuable intel and even prevent her from hoarding and grabbing more of this lands riches.

The next day gave Ekko the opportunity to go for a tomb in the middle of this world, after we won a small disjunct - cast again - disjunct battle about Whispers of the fallen. At least for a while the dead shall be quiet now! We don't want SoNaTa to get valuable intel about the whereabouts of our 2nd security force just because some dead tattletale told SoNaTa what a great and efficient death it is to be killed by our companies finest. Now the way is free for Ekko to help Ghul Fatel retaining their valuable income.

In our mainlands we soon^(TM) will send a machine reinforcement consisting of golems, 2 cannons and an engineer. They will meet up with our first army to ensure we have a force to be reckoned with until our flame tanks come rolling. The knowledge to produce flame tanks has been gathered, but we still want to finish a few buildings for production in our southern Evil Inc. Assembly line and then we'll have to get those flaming pest controls towards SoNaTas breeding nests.

Evil Inc. Progress Report #6 (Days 36-42)

Our surface disruptor team (the toadstool fairies) report their first success, they picked up a banshee on the east of the giant dwelling. But they'll go further east for now to evade capture by gryphons. We saw

that west of the dwelling there are 2 shrines of winter that could explain why we weren't yet able to find significant parts of SoNaTas forces. We also discovered that SoNaTa has taken direct control of the giant dwelling. Probably we'll have to go there in person. And citizens be careful, a gryphon has been spotted near our capital unfortunately just out of reach of our butcher guards. Underground we are erecting Pop-up south near 2 mana nodes and a mine that was "made operational" this turn.

Ekko completed his contract for Dhur Fahal. But their tribute in form of a forge priest was not satisfaction enough for our hard and selfless work, so we applied some of our physically most convincing arguments to persuade them that submissive mining for Evil is the way to go. We will not take direct control as Ghul Fatel is situated in a somewhat awkward position with good connections only towards the middle of the map and the no-mans land of mid-south so we are outsourcing the risk of defense to Ghul Fatel but reap the rewards of their mining. Ekko will now move towards the independent undead dwelling and I am finishing operation "clearing the south" soon. Then we should be ready to regroup and show SoNaTa that her undead loitering is not welcome here.

Despite our safety drones and toadstool reconnaissance we have yet to see anyone of SoNaTas heroes. To help with the search our propaganda information department has prepared a phantom picture of their expected appearance. Keep your eyes open and report immediately when you spot them.



Again one of Evil Incs. despicable propaganda pieces trying to ridicule the enemies heroes with what they call a "phantom picture".

Day 38: Our south is finally pacified. And we start to assemble an army worthy of Evil incs name, also Yarati Spellstealer should be welcomed back in our midst tomorrow. Due to the expenses coming with producing our war machinery the treasury is nearly empty, but we found lucrative "mudmines" in the north-east of the underground and will start exploiting them soon with a builder and an untouchable, furthermore we hope to add the spoils of plundering the Archon dwelling in about 5-6 days to our treasury.

In an unforeseeable mishap one of SoNaTas Banshees

found a brave Siwel and Kralc fan who was following their footsteps mapping the underground and as we feared SoNaTa really is very prone to singing. The poor little marauder despaired when hearing the banshee sing, thinking he'd never hear the lovely evil cackling and the screeching, stomping and burning of machines again but still fought dishonest until he died. We supported him with a grenade. Unfortunately that distracted us from invoking Yarati out of Limbo and we'll have to wait another day for her to come back, but we think the despaired evil marauder was worth our support, more so than Yarati who already lost to the undead in a Castle of the Lich king a few days ago. Apart from that everything is going according to plan. Ekko will attack the Archon dwelling tomorrow and we hope their dying screams will be heard by SoNaTa who started to listen to the fallen again (stupid necromancer, listening to the dead, if the dead knew what's good for them they'd still live...). She will think danger is coming underground while I plan to make myself ready to go above ground and claim the Giant dwelling. We already sent a small fleet of our safety drones to check the area between the central cave entrance and the giants.



Dir. Evils planning to ruthlessly invade sovereign foreign territory.

Day 40 again brought a few small clashes with SoNaTa who vandalized 2 of our harmless safety drones and even worse also one of our fairies. We also learned that this undead infection has spread further than we anticipated. Already 8 undead breeding places are established in these lands it seems and that in turn attracts more undead. The devil is always shitting on the biggest pile as we should know. It's just a matter of making our pile bigger. And in order to do so Ekko has taken the Archon dwelling without casualties, we will plunder it now! Yarati is finally back and is together with me part of the proud group that is our prime evil security force. In retribution to SoNaTas vandalism a marauder razed an underground tower of hers and single handedly took one of her undead spawn nests, he'll try to burn it to the ground of course! Considering how

far the undead infection seems to have spread so far it is high time we start cleansing this land and darken it with the lovely smoke of our steam engines. We shall not let this promising industrial site become a mossy unproductive silent place for the undead.



At last SoNaTas army is spotted.

We finally lured SoNaTa and one of her heroes out on day 41 she turned up before the burning Archon dwelling to save them (how pathetic!). The hero has a striking resemblance to the phantom picture we distributed before, is called Aye Nara and rightfully hides herself and her army at all times. We should be able to handle this undead rabble, but we ordered Ekko back for now because we want to be part of the fun ourselves. We hope they will follow Ekko right into the arms of our prime Evil security force.

Day 42 We don't know exactly how but Aye Nara caught up to the retreating Ekko and in the following fight we were betrayed by the fairy that turned over to SoNaTa, we should have known, bloody fairies. Still this blunder is not acceptable! Ekko will have to return soon to correct his horrible mistake.



And once again the lack of Evil Inc's. strategic planning shows as Aye Nara obliterates Evil Inc's 2nd security "force".

Evil Inc. Progress Report #7 (Days 43-48)

The Evil prime security force has arrived and Ekko has been forced back from his holidays in the void to lead on some of our troops eager to redeem himself. To our deep regret SoNaTa and Aye Nara prove to be a better (or more lucky) leaders than Ekko and stayed out of our range. So we are now awaiting her retreat. Because surely no one in their right mind would go against our glorious and Evil self!

Back at the Evil Assembly line we finally manufactured the first Flame tank. So production is rolling, even though we unfortunately are held back by money a bit since we were disrupted in such a harsh manner when plundering the Archon dwelling. But until we have the flame tanks moving a small reinforcement force, consisting of a sphinx, an orc-priest and 3 evil butchers are on their way to ensure we continue to be the superior force around the undead dwelling.



Dir. Jenny Evil arrives at the scene of killing.

As Expected the coward didn't attack, but ran and wedged herself in between the corridor that leads to our dwarven subordinates. So we faced her again in an underground mexican stand-off.

Day 45: SoNaTa didn't run further, she took our dwarven subordinates, but they were expendable mining slaves anyway. Her army faces the decision to either walk the rather long route through the southwest or continue this stand-off, meanwhile we dispatched Ekko towards the Archon dwelling again. There is no reason to let SoNaTa have it, we just wish we knew where her 3rd Hero is situated, our safety drones are restlessly hovering the surface but haven't found her yet.



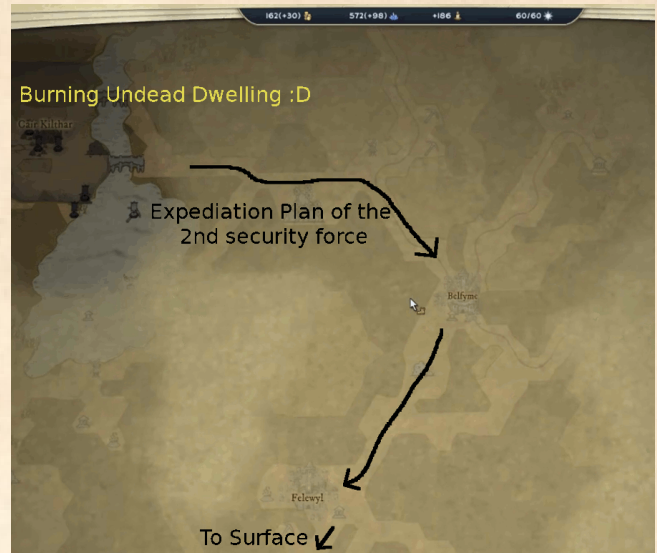
And pins down SoNatas army in a mexican standoff - tunnel edition.

The stand-off continues, SoNaTa is wedged in between the rock corridor towards our former dwarven mining colony and we deny her the way out. Our reinforcements have arrived and the first group including a flame tank has started to travel in our direction. Meanwhile Ekko has taken the Undead Dwelling again without losses.



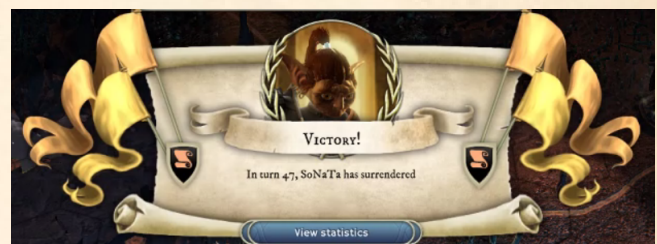
Ekko trying to make everyone forget his previous failure and re-captures the Undead dwelling

The way is now free for Ekko to move towards SoNaTas heartland. On the way he again showed his martial prowess by killing the criminal inhabitants of a dungeon that held two hostages, a Yeti and a Storm sister, are now "voluntarily" part of our security force. While Ekko is on his way to burn down SoNaTas undead filth we'll make sure to tell her over the trenches of Ekkos victories so she doesn't have to listen to the whispers of the dead undead. While we wait for stories to tell the, hopefully heart broken, SoNaTa we prepare to entwine



With SoNaTas main army still in a standoff with the Prime Evil security force, The 2nd Evil Inc's. security force hopes to have free passage through SoNaTas lands.

our Evil Inc. personnel in the shadows and diverted research towards making sure the future towns Ekko will conquer can be swiftly migrated to goblins. Day 48: Victory is mine dear minions! All Hail to Evil Inc. SoNaTa surrendered without a fight. It must have been our brilliant strategical and tactical superiority that made her see how futile her resistance against us is. To celebrate this victory the board of executives has decided to give you a day off work (unpaid!) that you can spend killing the leaderless undead to your liking.



SoNaTa surrenders unconditionally and another piece of Athla has been lost to the greedy hands of entrepreneurs.

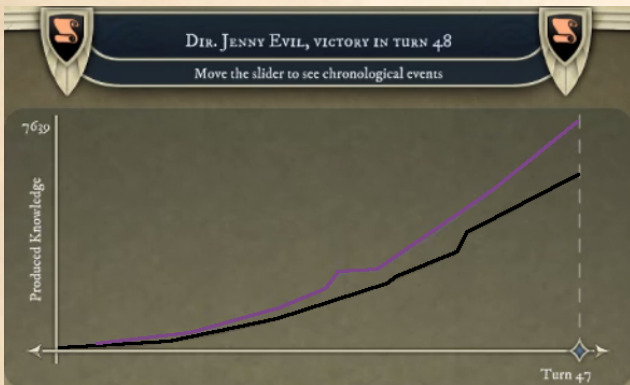
The **The Stronghelm Globe** has afterwards painstakingly uncovered army strength and progression of both competitors and here reveals that the proclaimed dominance of Dir. Jenny Evil is nothing but another of her many blatant lies!



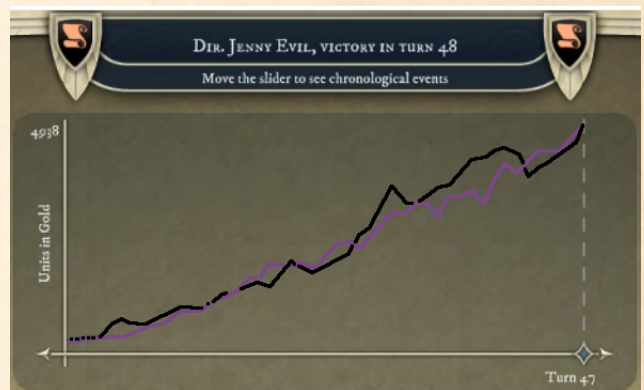
(a) Dir. Evils actually still being behind all things considered.



(b) Only the undead dwelling gave Dir. Evil a minuscule edge in the end.



(c) All the talk of "technological progress" seems blunt, in fact Evil Incss research division was dwarfed by the ancient knowledge SoNaTa could uncover!



(d) Not even her army had a bigger size!

You have reports of war crimes or heroic deeds? send them to:

The Stronghelm Globe

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Stronghelm (Commonwealth)

We offer first class anonymity.

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Famous Generals: Petracke

Stronghelm Globe (**SG**): Hi Petracke. First would you like to tell where you are from and what you do beside playing AoW3?

Petracke (**PR**): Hello everyone! My name is Petru. I am from Romania and work as sports teacher.

SG: Congratulations you won the Live MP multiplayer tournament last month. Would you still count yourself as beginner now?

PR: Thank you! This tournament lasted several months and I played lots of multiplayer games in this period. I have gained experience during all this time and can say I'm not a beginner anymore.

SG: How do you play? Do you listen to a playlist while playing or the in-game background music? Observer mode on or off? Forced high speed tactical combat? Animated movement on the map?

PR: I usually listen to romanian music, but there are times when I play with no sound or with the games background music. I'm used to play at high speed, I don't have time to waste with observer mode, low speed tactical combat, or animated movement on the map.

SG: When did you start playing Age of Wonders? Did you play previous installations before AoW3?

PR: I started to play last year in the summer when a friend told me to try this game. Before I played Heroes III, IV, VI and VII.

SG: Which Heroes is your favourite and why?

PR: My favourite game is Heroes III. I like to play special maps, impossible maps were I used to stay for days trying to finish them. But now I don't play Heroes anymore I only focus on AOW.

SG: What do you think is the strongest race/class/spec combination and why?

PR: I like playing as Necromacer/Draconians, with Shadowborn and Expander spec. I make Draconian Flyers and then I search for 2 Warlord heroes and am ready to go. I also make a pack of six Reanimators early game to clean sites with. The second combination is Theocrat/Halflings, with Keeper of the Peace and Expander. I play with Exalted, in combination with an Arch Druid hero because you can go all over the map and clean all sites, without loss and very fast.

SG: Which race/class/spec are your favourites and for what reason?

PR: My favorite combination is Frostlings/Arch Druid/Grey Guard. I like playing with Shamans in early game because they have frost attack, that is more efficient then poison or fire attacks. In late game I focus on the mighty Horned God, one of the best tier 4 units in the game.

SG: You played Draconian Necromancer in the tournament final against Travastila. Necro is a pretty good matchup against Rogue (which Travastila played) did you anticipate him to play Rogue? Or how did you decide on your race/class combo for the final?

PR: I looked at his previous games to see what race/class he played and believed that this combination will be very good. I thought he will play Theocrat but Rogue was even better for me.

SG: You picked Necromancer when you expected you opponent ot play Theocrat? Isn't Theocrat a somewhat natural counter to Necro with all the spirit protection and damage?

PR: No, I think with 1-2 Warlord Heroes on level 7 with Strong Will and the spell Desecration Necro actually has a good advantage over Theocrat armies.

SG: Did you play other race/classes during the beginners tournament and if so which and why?

PR: First game I played High Elves/Warlord, because they have excellent archers. Second game was with Therocrat/Dwarves, because I like to play with Crusaders and Dwarf Forge Priests. And the last games I played with Necromancer/Draconians ...my favourite.

SG: What was your favourite AoW3 match and why?

PR: My favorite match was the last because it was so intense to play 3 vs 4 armies and I won at the end.

SG: What do you think was the most annoying mistake/blunder you made in a game so far?



As winner of the live multiplayer beginners tournament Petracke is making a name in the Live mp community. During the tournament Petracke remained unbeaten and won convincingly in the final fight. Now he is participating in the 2018 Live MP tournament and we are looking forward to see him test his acquired skills against more experienced opponents.

PR: The most annoying mistake that I made was to lose in auto combat most of my army in the first rounds, this is the worst thing that I didn't want to happen to me ever.

SG: Is there any aspect of the game that you are particularly strong at (tactical combat, economy, strategic movement, clearing sites etc.)?

PR: For the moment I'm very good at one thing and that one is clearing sites.

SG: What do you think is your biggest weakness so far?

PR: I always try to finish games before turn 50, I am not that good to play very long games.

SG: Do you feel you improved during the tournament? And if so at what aspects?

PR: I learned a lot of things, one of them, and most important, is that the some opponents are trying to take your city with sneak attacks, when your main army is far away. So it's always better to have some units to defend your cities.

SG: If you had an advice to yourself as new player before the tournament, what would it be?

PR: Never underestimate your opponent, no matter what you heard or know about them!

SG: You are participating in the recently started Live MP tournament. If you had to bet, how far would you guess you'll make it in the tournament?

PR: I played a few games with some of them and I can say I know them a little bit. If I will win round 1 and round 2, I would say I will play against orlyzz in round 3 and that will be the end for me.

SG: Anything you want to say that wasn't covered by the questions already?

PR: Good luck to all Live Mp tournament players!

Thank you for the interview! And good luck with the tournament to you as well.



The decisive battle near Travastilas realm in turn 38 that crowned Petracke the winner of the live multiplayer beginners tournament!

Workshop

The Workshop - Where new things are created and old favourites improved. This month we have an introductory text from Griffith mostly about the [New Arsenal mod](#).

Modders Memoirs

By Griffith

SREETING to all fellow Atlanteans out there, I first discovered AoW series back in 2005, and it quickly became my go to strategy game whenever I was feeling bored. The setting, gameplay features and online multiplayer support made AoW: Shadow Magic such an excellent game back then. But what really made the game stand the test of time for me, was the good random map generator and modding support. We used to play mods like Dwiggs or BNW once the vanilla game didn't seem as intriguing anymore, and those were great fun. I eventually realized I didn't fully agree with all of the changes on those mods, and decided to try my hand at modding also. Over the years, I made various mods to make the game more interesting once the gameplay started to seem bit stale, namely New Arsenal, CoMA and Strange Lands mods. Could write a long story about those mods, but I've been told no1 cares about AoW:SM mods anymore ☺.



Main menu of the strangelands mod

So then comes AoW3, a different kind of beast. A great game, but it quickly comes apparent there are some balance issues in live play. So after playing the game a bit, I decided to gather some input from live MP players for the basis of a new MP mod.

And I saw the mod, and it was good, and it brought the game back from the darkness..

Unless...

Anyway, as good a game as AoW3 is, it has its limitations. Namely the late game balance. Some classes hard counter some others so bad, you don't even need to play past midgame to see who's winning. Playing team games helps with this issue to a degree, when team members can supplement each other. But not all games can be expected to be team games. And another issue which bothers me, is that lategame armies can be very monotonous, consisting of only 1 or 2 unit types. These issues can't be easily addressed by a simple balance mod, so I'm trying to address them in my newest mod: New Arsenal (or is it my oldest mod, I forget).

The New Arsenal mod adds 2 new units for each race: 1 x Tier3 and 1 x Tier4. I've tried to design the new units in a way which are both thematic, and make the races bit more flexible in lategame (in terms of what the races can counter). I focused on Tier3 and Tier4 units, because those are what people mainly use in live games anyway. The new Tier4 units cannot be hurried though, so you usually can't make a strategy of solely using those units. I also considered it important to have all common unit types represented, to possibly create new strategies for all the classes (although maybe support and monster units have bit of a majority here).

Special consideration has been given to races with special drawbacks: such as goblin vs undead shouldn't be such hopeless scenario anymore. Also things like cavalry units and shadow stalkers shouldn't be completely no brainer units to use anymore, with the new pikeman and support units in game. Some races get units which boost their other units, or just complement some their weak spots. Personally I just want to see more diverse lategame armies ☺.

Obviously the mod couldn't have been made without proper unit models. I managed to grab some cool models made / converted by other modders (cause that's how I roll). This time I actually asked for their permission (dilaguna & charlatan) though, and it seems there are no hard feelings. Some of the new models were made just by recoloring and editing the vanilla game assets, they seem to do their purpose well enough.

The mod is still relatively new though, so balancing it is still a work in progress. Same goes for the MP mod, although it has had bit more time to mature. In the end balance will never be perfect, but perhaps we can keep the game fun and interesting enough for a while (or a long while) longer.



Some of the New Arsenal units: Tier 3 in the top row and Tier 4 in the bottom row.

Hopefully my unscrupulous self advertisement bears some fruit, and you want to test out one of my mods. If not, you only get what you paid for.

Horoscope

BloodyBattleBrains musings about the future

In my last article I talked a bit about Planetfall, and lightly discussed what sci-fi means.

In this article, well, more Planetfall, with my ramblings and wishes. interspersed.

Let's start with what we do know, copy pasted from [this post on the AoW3 forums](#):

1. Six "major" races. Pre-release name: Space Dwarves made it into the game! \o/
2. Various "technologies" which roughly correspond to classes or spheres of magic of the previous AoW games.
3. Permanently flying unit mechanics have returned as the game now has a stronger focus on ranged combat, with cover and overwatch mechanics built in.
4. Larger battlefields than AoW3 with interactive objects that can be used for cover and even destroyed under sustained fire.
5. Leader and hero units with many capable of being upgraded and changed to meet different threats. This keeps low tier units competitive through micro-management.
6. A similar dwelling system to AoW3 with 4-5 races being featured such as the "undead" in the form of cyborg warriors. They may have a greater impact on the game.
7. Sector system is a refined and upgraded version of the mystical city upgrades from AoW3.
8. Sector system lets you snake across the map and effects where your settlements can be built.
9. Sectors can be broken apart by the enemy further incentivizing economic wars.
10. Random Map Generator content during the campaign. Main story lines are fixed, however, most of the maps will be randomly generated. This results in secondary storylines which effect later campaign levels!

So #1 – The known races are:

Dvar (space Dwarves) from Lennart:

"[The DVR] were planetary miners that entered the most hostile places in space and would shield themselves from radiation, heat and what not. Nobody knows exactly what the DVR look like now. When you customise them, you don't customise their face, you customise their suit. You might have a monocle or an old-fashioned diver's helmet—they're quite charming in their own way.

This is sort of like our equivalent of Dwarves, but they do have a bit of a different aesthetic—fully metal, or covered in suits. You don't really see them but they do share similar traits—they're into exploitation of worlds, they don't care for wildlife. Yeah, there are tropes. You could call them spaces dwarves here, but we're always looking to find angles that are unique and not be: these were just elves that grew from the fantasy world."

NB that they are indeed DVAR and not DVR. Which is a shame, as now the DVR jokes and memes must stop.

☺

Anyway, in Hyperion (the book) there is a race called the Ousters. They are basically Space Barbarians who have physically evolved to match the environment, and move in swarms. There are Ousters evolved for zero-g environments, Ousters that have evolved into giant space trees (to absorb sun...err starlight...and use that as a primary energy source.) It'd be awesome if this concept (guided, extreme evolution) were to be explored in Planetfall.



Buy a DVR...



A Dvar next to a Dwarf

This was the best picture I could find of the DVAR, directly comparing them to their source material, the Dwarves. As you can see, the DVAR are ~~deliciously fat~~ very muscular and will make for ~~good eating~~ formidable foes.

Kir'ko (the insects. We shall consume you all)

The Kir'ko confirmed T2 unit is this super cool looking Sniper:



(a) The Kir'ko T2 - a sniper unit.



(b) This is a confirmed Kir'ko hero unit, perhaps THE Kir'ko leader that the player gets to control at some point. It looks very insectoid but not quite as different as an actual insect. I am intrigued.

One hopes and expects that there are multiple T2 units per race. When I first heard Insect, I expected Tyranid or Zerg, because such is the power of tropes. Now I am thinking strongly of [District 9](#).

The Assembly: (apparently, a race that likes to tinker with machinery, is somewhat Cyborg, somewhat Undead, somewhat goblin, and can create nano machines out of corpses. . .)

Could the below be the Assembly, being smote by the glorious Vanguard? Check out the flying unit. One wonders if the flying units will be mechanically, as well as visually, different. Also, it's been confirmed that there is a chance to knock flying units out of the sky, sending them careening onto a random ground tile, blowing up and possibly damaging nay ground unit hit this way. That is not only cool sounding but also a potentially good limiter on the power of true flight in a tbs game.



Vanguard marines firing away at an assembly(?) unit.

Vanguard: aka the Humans. They need you to join them, as the poster says:



(a) By the way, I have a signed copy of this. Any bids?



(b) The Vanguard get cool bikes

Which will stay my Kir'ko wrath for a while. The cool thing about these guys is that the focussed laser array attack will hit with enough force to **physically move the targeted unit**.

Amazons: Female MMA warriors.

Fear not, they won't be titillating or sexy in the least, apparently. This is, one supposes, because everyone knows a bare boob is heresy, but unremitting violence is fine! :P Of all the races, this is the one I find most confusing. I really want to see them in action- game action, not that kind of action, you pervert.²

Race number 6: is apparently a trader or slaver (or both) faction featuring architecture from northern Africa or the middle east (or both?) Little is known, but I am going to jump the gun and declare that there are Space Azracs.

²Shortly before this issue has been published, Tombles published another Dev Journal including the first ever picture of an amazon (and another pretty cool Dvar unit). So by now there are pictures out. Go [here](#) to read the Dev journal.

In Aow Planetfall “technologies” will be roughly equivalent to classes in AoW3. Now here comes my first real query/worry. We know that there is a much greater emphasis on differentiating the units and races this time, which means the previous approach of 6 races and 6 classes isn’t so easily replicable. One of the techs known is called Prometheus, and focuses on purification by fire.



Prometheus units on the left - Xeno plague units on the right.

If you look at this screenshot, the 2 humanoid looking units to the left are confirmed Prometheus units, the big guy being their top tier unit (tier 4, so to speak, although I get the impression the tiered unit system is actually getting changed somewhat.)

So, my question/query/worry is that if the Kir’ko are markedly different from the Vanguard, then how will they use Prometheus tech. Will there be no synergy ☺ or will Triumph go crazy and develop a separate tech tree, that is purely Prometheus + Kir’ko? ☺☺If so, then:



This is something fans have wanted in AoW3 since... well forever. Looking back at that last screenshot, the unit to the right is a confirmed t4/high tier unit of another tech, Xeno Plague (guys the names may have been misremembered, may be changed/different by the time the game comes out.), which is all about bio engineering, and turning your warriors into genetic oddities. This makes sense for Vanguard and Kir’ko (and maybe DVAR?) so doesn’t raise any issues for me just yet.

That screenshot brings me nicely onto something I am super super super excited about – the changes to the battlefields. Behind the giant Prometheus unit, who I shall dub *Matchstick*, you see a field of grass or grain or something. In AoW3 this is decoration, but here it is actual useable space. Tactical maps are confirmed BIGGER.

Rejoice!

Not only that, that grain represents an area of reduced visibility, allowing units therein to enjoy increased evasion, i.e. they are harder to hit. It is, in effect, a form of battlefield concealment. I don’t know what the green canisters are, but I think one of the devs at the convention said they could be blown up. What we know for sure can be blown up is the gas canister in the middle ground of the picture, to the right of our Plaguelord

(who I shall name *Cuddles*). Lastly, by *Cuddles* feet, you see *mini Cuddleses*. I think their role now is to infect enemy units and burst forward from them or reproduce when enemy units die. I'm really not sure, but my, aren't they cute? The boxes in the foreground of the picture are confirmed cover. Yep, battlefield have cover now, and some of it (all of it?) is destructible.

We also know flying units are back, as in permanently flying units, which means they can't be targeted by melee units. I wonder how they'll balance that. In my ideal game, there'd be things such as fuel (leading to range) and ammo and a requirement to heal in dedicated centres (in this case airfields) so things like aircraft would be "overpowered" but with a large logistical chain (a bit like real life.) You'd also have morale and ammo for flesh units. This would allow for very easy differentiation between races. Kir'ko, for example, under such a system would not need fuel or ammo, or suffer from morale. Anyway, faction design should be another article altogether.

Speaking of other articles, in the next few articles, I'd like to:

- Talk about Hyperion (as it is a good book), but more specifically, the themes therein, and how they could be used in Planetfall. I've touched upon one in this article, namely guided evolution. But there are others, such as the role of religion (faith in an age of science, could make for a very unique and interesting faction,) the power of AI (in Hyperion, well, without spoiling things, let's just say the AI is... powerful) and slave races (Androids in Hyperion, and Kir'ko in Planetfall.) Lastly, created/implanted consciousness. A very interesting concept imho.
- Discuss mechanics of Planetfall, both known and pure conjecture. For example, we know the damage formula, and what the values mean for defence and attack etc, so we could go a bit mad thinking about what it means in practice. Also, we know units heal faster in your own terrain as a default now, so in an abstract way one could say we have logistics in the game. Also, what mechanics work well in other turn based games, and how could they be implemented in Planetfall. Also, what we know of the existing terrain (e.g. Arcadian =?)
- Consider possible game modes in Planetfall, namely a battle – or arena- mode and a last stand mode. Also, victory conditions, the power of focussed game design and the problem of games not knowing how to end.
- Gripe about the problems inherent to defining the 4x genre, and why we should/not care.
- Muse on Modding!
- Cogitate the permutations of AI, and the challenges inherent to creating a good AI, and what is meant by "good" AI.
- Bore you all with my extensive Wishlist for the new game.

Announcement Board

Standings in current Tournaments:

The Live MP Duel Tournament 2018: Has kicked off on the first of July and the first results are in: **Petracke**, **Orlyzz**, **Sleeping Dog**, **Griff**, **Spellcaster**, **Dreadreapr** and **Nemesis_Zero** have made it to the 2nd round so far. An interesting match-up could occur if Travastila wins against Loki he would face Petracke which would be a re-match of the Live MP beginners tournament finals. In the losers bracket **advo** and **Lck** made up for their losses in the first game and advanced to the next stage by kicking Fluks^a and Lehmanncup out of the tournament.

^awho should play more and write less...



The PBEM 2v2 team tournament 2016:

Started in 2016 this double elimination tournament is in it's final stage, the finals... Facing off against each other are: Team **Coup de Grâce** consisting of **Tussel** and **Gabthegab** (undefeated until now) and Team **Bastards of the North** formed by **Ezekiel** and **AIXStromrage** that fought their way through the losers bracket and now have the chance to take revenge for being sent to the losers bracket by team Coup de Grâce already in the 2nd round of the tournament.

PBEM Duel Tournament 2017:

The PBEM duel Tournament 2017 is currently determining who will face **Jean_de_Metz** in the finals. Jean beat the previously unbeaten **Gabthe-Gab** as Orc Sorcerer (with Gab playing Tigran Necromancer). Now Gab is facing **Hiliadan**, who after recently beating marcuspers also has the chance to make it to the finals. Hiliadan is also one of the few players that publishes and comments his PBEM turns so players interested in competitive PBEM games can watch his videos on [youtube](#).

3vs3 PBEM Tournament 2018:

4 Teams are participating, each consisting of 1 expert player and 2 newer players. So far no match has ended. The teams are:

- **Team 1st** led by the tournament organiser Skuns453Lirik902 with the other members being Nub Nub and Akinos. They play against:
- **3 fistfuls of wonder** led by Ezekiel and his companions Longinus and DiaEmperador.
- **Dos Equis XX** led by (brew)master \$eer together with El Lobo and Badok is currently facing:
- **Fancy Name Team** led by AIXStormrage with his faithful game assistants Zytozid and Fluksen.^a

We will keep you updated if anything happens!

^aDisclaimer: Fluksen is a cheap smurf of Fluks who writes this text, so beware :D

Mixed:

2vs2 PBEM Team Tournament

Hear ye Strategic Masterminds, teamplayers and exploiters of game mechanics: The 2018 PBEM 2v2 team tournament is near!

So grab your strategically retarded friend and prove that you can win nonetheless.

The sign up will start soon on the-battlefield.



Tactical Challenge - episode 01

You want to improve your skills in tactical battles? Or you think you're already the best and you want some challenging opponents? Come try yourself vs Imanuit, a Frostling Sorcerer AI with an impressive army! So far, six players have beaten the level 1 of the Challenge and only two players completed its level 2! Follow the [instructions here](#) to set up the challenge, design and build carefully your army with the limited resources, fight Imanuit, and share the results with the rest of the community! Maybe the [video of the victory of Blackwill](#) can inspire you?



The Shadow Realms Mod:

Bugs? Shadows? Darkness? Does that tickle your inner Goblin? The gates to the Shadow realm are about to open and brave souls have the possibility to venture into these promising lands even before the gates are fully opened. Want to know more? Contact [Gatekeeper Hiliadan](#) for ways into [the Shadow realm](#).



Writers and Artists needed:

Whistleblowers, Artists, Writers, Poets, Modders and virtual limelight hogs: **The Stronghelm Globe** needs your input!

You have leaked intelligence reports about fights? - Leak them to us!

You wrote a poem/story? - Write it to us!

You drew an okey-ish (or better) drawing? - Send it to us!

Contact us:

The Stronghelm Globe

Inkling alley 13²²/₇

Stronghelm (Commonwealth)

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