

Gargantuan



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Expected duration of play: 5 hours

Number of players: Four plus one game master

Tags: Steampunk, tabletop story game, drama, ensemble, disaster

Player type: You like intense relations, you want to bring a fantastic airhip to life through co-creative description and secondary characters, and to play with difficult subjects like race and class.

Game master type: You like pushing the players through NPC's, and you can juggle several things at once without losing track of time.

About the designer: Troels believes fiercely in roleplayers as co-creators, and tends to side with the goblins.

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Print single sided, as landscape.

Introduction

Gargantuan is an enormous airship on its way over The Ocean from The Imperial Elven Republic to The New Territories. The ship is driven by the finest alchemy of the elves and is so well built that it's crash free. The upper classes and the officers on board are elves, the lower classes and the servants are goblins. Elves are beautiful, wise and good whereas goblins are ugly, foolish and mean – some elves are so good, they even think goblins should have rights.

The game is played in three acts. In the first act what's normal is established, as are the main characters and their issues. In the beginning of the second act disaster strikes, and in the course of the act the consequences escalate while most people carry on as if nothing had happened – the ship is crash free after all. In the third act it's obvious that the ship is going to crash, and that anyone who doesn't secure a place in the life balloons will die.

Language and aesthetics make up the point of departure, partly in the form of what images of the concepts "elves" and "goblins" we all have in our heads, partly in the form of concrete rules governing how the players can speak of elves and goblins. Elves are valued and goblins devalued – even though it's established from the beginning that they're really not that different. The language rules are the only "hard" rules of the game, which focuses on dilemmas and relationships rather than mechanical/practical problem solving.

The story revolves around the dynamics of two couples of primary characters, each couple containing one elf and one goblin, and one person who has the material power while the other has power of a more psychological nature. The two couples have more or less parallel storylines that share the airship and the accident as setting and might cross each other, but won't necessarily be tightly interwoven. The players take part in the "other" story through description and player controlled secondary characters. At first everyone pursues their own immediate goals, perhaps

with help from their partners, perhaps secretly. When disaster strikes, it gradually pulls the rug out from under their individual narratives as they themselves see and act on them, eventually stripping away the complexity and individuality until only hard questions of power, life and death remain.

One couple is the rich goblin Dosidicus Gigas and the elf Illex Argentinus, who is of a noble and badly debt-plagued old family. Formally they are friends and lovers, the elf lending the goblin respectability and access while the goblin pays the bills and keeps the elf's family from financial and social ruin. So far, so businesslike, but there's an erotic dynamic between the two that creates cracks in their self images and purposes for the relationship. Perhaps they really do love each other across the lines of race, shame and mutual exploitation?

The other couple is the scandalous young elf, goblin rights activist Taningia Danae, and the infamous revolutionary goblin writer Cass, who Taningia is smuggling to safety from Imperial Safety. The elf doesn't quite feel appreciated by the goblin, who for her part is annoyed by the elf's bratty carefree-ness, but they each in their way need the other. This relationship will be painfully put to the test as the disaster unfolds and the full extent of the injustice becomes clear.

Gargantuan is a character driven steampunk drama of elves and goblins aboard a fantastic airship that physically and thematically resembles the Titanic. With elves and goblins, the game uses classic fantasy tropes to play with racism and classism, and follows the path of prejudice from language and beauty ideals to something that directly causes suffering and death. There's a lot of gray tones and nuances in the characters and their issues, but in the end, as the catastrophe unfolds and there not enough life balloons for everyone, the racism and classism turns very concrete, and might well determine who lives and who dies.

Setting

Gargantuan takes place in an alternate reality where everyone is either elves or goblins, in both cases almost like humans, just with long, pointy ears.

We're at some vaguely defined point between 1820 and 1920 regarding technology and style. There's an Imperial Elven Republic that also has a lot of goblin inhabitants, both in the Motherland and in The New Territories. The elves are the upper classes, the goblins are the lower classes with few and fragile rights. Clever goblins wish they were elves, but they never will be. Foolish goblins are angry with the elves for their superiority, but lack the ability to rebel effectively.

Fashion

The men's fashion for style-conscious elves calls for gold buttons, golden wire brushes on the shoulders and a military cut. The ladies' fashion calls for long dresses with voluminous skirts and maritime decorative themes (sailor's collars, anchors, octopus tentacles etc.). See the fashion illustration. Both ladies and gentlemen wear jewelry with precious stones. An elf without gems is to be considered ridiculously naked.

Science

The most important sciences are *alchemy* and *astrology*. Alchemy can be used as umbrella term and stand-in for the physical sciences, physics, chemistry, medicine etc. Astrology can be used as umbrella term and stand-in for most humanities, psychology, economy, history, philosophy etc.

Technology

This is the golden age of steam engines and alchemical miracles! An age where the enormous airship *Gargantuan* is possible.

Weaponry

If for some reason it should come up, pistols and rifles have just one shot. Then it's swords, bayonets, knives or whatever's handy. The art of swordfighting is highly regarded, though duelling is technically forbidden, and an elf master swordfighter is extremely deadly.

Names

Elves have stately and beautiful names with long, storied traditions behind them.

Goblins have single syllable names, often with nicknames to go with them. Should a goblin try to take a pretentious name, both elves and goblins will usually abbreviate it to a single syllable when using it. Only goblins will stoop to actually using nicknames.

The Difference

There are very few differences between elves and goblins in nature, a bit more in nurture. This section presents the values and point of view of the elves. These are dominant and supported by the language rules of the game. But for good measure: When most goblins are short, crooked and live briefer lives than the elves, it's because they're undernourished and forced to more or less work themselves to death.

Good traits by race

Elves are intelligent, creative, profound, disciplined, civilized, loving and graceful.

Goblins are hardy and cheerful.

Appearance by race

Elves are fair-skinned, fine boned, dignified and wear gemstones as decoration.

Goblins are dark-skinned, have rough features and get dirty easily.

Marriage

Elves have **spouses** of the opposite sex, and marriage is a practical partnership between families. They are characterized by *loyalty* and *obligation*.

Goblins are horny and sneaky; they rut like animals, without thought or grace, and they conspire with each other out of mutual selfishness.

Friendship

Elves have **friends** and **lovers** of the same sex as themselves. Their relationships are characterized by *devotion* and *love*. It is quite acceptable for married elves to have a lover.

It happens that *goblins* seduce elves into animal lust. Goblins can be in cahoots with the same sex and fuck the opposite – there is no order to their affairs.

Progressive Entertainment

Progressive Entertainment is goblins and goblin-ness used as entertainment by such elves as consider themselves progressive and goblin-friendly. Ultimately these people too consider elvishness aesthetically superior, but find goblin-ness attractive as *fetish*, something which is exciting for the exception, naughtiness and transgression of it. Here's a picture from the real

world which sums up Progressive Entertainment pretty well. This is Josephine Baker in her famous banana skirt, in 1925. She was a great performer, but take a closer look at a black woman dancing in a skirt of bananas. This is Progressive Entertainment in a nutshell – a small thing, but an important element of the game's style.



Running *Gargantuan*

Aside from the obvious, moderating and being the one who knows what is to happen, your most important tasks are the following.

You must **teach** the rules and methods of the game to the players and help them use them. That means scene framing, when the players are doing it. You must also enforce the rules for describing elves and goblins, hard. See the language rules in the section "Style, language and rules" on page 6. The guidelines for scene framing are found below.

You must **evoke** the airship and the people on it, and help the players do the same as well as possible, so the players can **feel** the airship. The key is efficient description. Give useful information without over-describing, and put a single piece of colour into people and places. That way the imaginations of the players will have seeds that can grow into beautiful dreams.

It's your responsibility to keep track of **time and pacing** by cutting scenes, rounding off the acts and escalating the pressure on the players in a way that fits the overall timing. It's MUCH more important that the time doesn't run away so the game loses flow and energy, than it is to follow up on all conflicts and loose ends – when the airship crashes, it waits for noone. Do cut the scenes before they stop being interesting. The scenes can be a little contemplative in the first act, but not too much, and as the game progresses you should cut more and more aggressively.

You must **pressure the players** through NPC's and escalation regarding the primary characters' relationships and dilemmas, and through the slowly

unfolding disaster in the latter parts of the game. The pressure that you apply to the players is important for making the game go to interesting places. On the other hand you should also be aware if one of your players seems uncomfortable, and do something. It probably won't be a problem, but it might.

Freeform as system

When you as game master must judge the outcome of uncertain situations. Sometimes the aid sheet for the particular act will give specific guidelines. Here are the general ones, considered as priorities where the first is the most important but the second should also be kept in mind if possible.

1. Let the **most believable** thing happen, considering context.
2. Let that happen which best serves to **gradually confront** the primary characters with their own personal dilemmas regarding race and class. Gradually is important! Matters shouldn't come to a head until the third act.

Effective **scene framing** is one of the keys to making the game flow, and you'll need to help the players with this. Scene framing needs:

- **Who**
- **Where and when**
- **Situation, dynamically**

The last bit is quite important, and means that the scene starts in motion, not that the outcome is given. The game will be much more dynamic if we have an idea of the direction of the scene from the beginning, and won't have to fumble around searching for the action. It's sometimes OK for nothing much to happen in a scene. This is good to know, though, so it's clear that it's just a little snapshot. Scene framing will in practice often happen when you ask a player what their primary character wants to do, and then you, the player or the player of a relevant secondary character will frame the scene, possibly in cooperation.

All players need not have a character in every scene! In fact it is often best if a scene has two or three, or at most four characters in play. If the scenes are fairly brief and you move the spotlight to those who sat out, it's no problem. You can ask questions about the surroundings and passers-by to players who sit out a scene if you like. This can give good colour a a feeling of life aboard the Gargantuan, while at the same time keeping them engaged.

Style, language and rules

The visual style of *Gargantuan* is steampunk, a fantastic, exaggerated and exotic version of the industrial revolution as aesthetic. It's 1820-1920 as it never was, a utopian version. This is the style of the elves, and the goblins are the grubby, ugly shadow of it. For the scenario to really have teeth, it's important that the players engage with the steampunk deliciousness of the ship and the elves; in this way they get some emotional resonance to back up their role as active co-creators of the oppression in the fiction of the game. The fashion illustration helps get them going, and the game's focus on physical description keeps them going.

Steampunk. Think gears, shiny brass and impossible science fiction wonders powered by steam and compressed air, lit by gaslight. Think of the most stylish things that the 19th century had to offer; great skirts of satin and brocade, well-cut uniform jackets with shiny metal buttons and golden string brushes on the shoulders, here and there savagely mashed up with punk and surprising tentacles.

Mechanically the game has no system as such, but it has structure and instructions, and in one respect, hard rules, specifically for player descriptions of elves and goblins.

Style and aesthetics are extremely important in the game. As this is a game of verbal description, it's important how we talk and describe – this is how the style becomes visible. When the style is so important in this game about race and class, it's also because the way these things actually work is in no small measure aesthetic; whiteness and wealth (elves) are first and foremost attractive, beautiful and cool, and socially and psychologically, this justifies the inequality. When poverty and colour is cast as attractive, it's often delimited as *fetish*, something that's exciting as exception, rule-breaking and transgression – this is the point of the "Progressive Entertainment" that we meet in the Progressive Salon aboard the *Gargantuan*, and it colours several sexual situations between elves and goblins in the course of the game.

Language rules

Elf players may describe goblins. Goblin players may not describe elves.

Jewels

- When describing an elf, you **must** describe what jewels they wear (and they do!).
- When stating that a goblin wears jewels, you **must** say "like an elf."

Physical flaws

- When describing a goblin, you **must** name a specific physical flaw. "Goblin" in itself doesn't count.
- When describing an elf with something that could be interpreted as a physical flaw, you **may only** say it in a whisper. Saying it out loud would be rude.

The Cast, GM's overview

Here's an overview of the game's characters and their use, in your hands and those of the players. There's a handy GM's aid sheet, "Characters", for you to use during the game. The primary and secondary characters controlled by the players are only sketched here, you can read the details in the player materials. Each player controls one primary and two secondary characters, all of the same race. One of the two secondaries is in a position to help another player's primary get their desire, if convinced to assist. Aside from cast-of-thousands extras, the GM has eight significant secondary characters; four *challenges*, people who each control access to what one primary character wants (and the player controlled secondaries control access to the "challenges"), and also four *threats* who represent the immediate capacity of the authorities to do harm. The GM characters are described in some detail in this section.

In practice most play time will be primary characters talking with other primaries, or with player controlled secondaries. As game master you'll do a smaller but not insignificant amount of in character play, emphasizing challenges early in the game, and threats in the late game. Noone should play opposite characters controlled by themselves.

Aside from race, all characters in the game are organized around two traits; suspended between them, so to say. They have a *desire* which is what they know that they want, and a *need* which they won't necessarily admit to themselves, but in a pinch it's more important than the desire. This provides some space to maneuver in for the one playing the character.

Generally you can make up more characters as needed, but don't do so unnecessarily. If you make up new elves, use the names on the name list from the "language rules" aid sheet, and of course observe the rules of description when introducing additional characters. Naturally, you're free to make up single syllable goblin names as you please.

Primary characters

There are four primary characters in two pairs, A/C and B/D. In each pair, one has material power while the other has power of a more psychological nature, and one is an elf and one a goblin. The two pairs will probably have parallel stories without that much direct contact, and that's OK. As previously mentioned, each of the primaries has a challenge, a concrete intrigue goal which is important in the first part of the game. Read the full description of the primary characters carefully. See under player materials.

Illex Argentinus (A) and Doss (C). The two men are lovers, elf style.

Illex Argentinus (A) is a young elf man of a distinguished but badly in-debt family. He's become the friend and lover of Doss, and provides contacts and status in exchange for Doss keeping the family's creditors at bay. Illex **desires** to maintain his family's status, and **needs** to surrender to his shameful infatuation with Doss. Illex's **challenge** is the sleazy journalist Jill, who he wants to keep from writing a humiliatingly sensational article.

Doss, or Dosidicus Gigas (C) is a wealthy and successful factory owner striving for social as well as financial success in elf society. He's acquired Illex Argentinus as friend and lover, and is now also looking for an elf wife as a partner in expanding his business empire. Doss **desires** wealth and power, and **needs** acceptance, especially from his lover. Doss' **challenge** is the elf railway tycoon Watasenia Scintillans, who he wants to marry.

Taningia Danae (B) and Cass (D). The elf is helping the goblin evade Imperial Safety.

Taningia Danae (B) is a young, wealthy elf woman and goblin rights activist. She's helping the goblin Cass cross The Ocean disguised

as her maid. Tanningia's **desire** is to rebel against her privileged elf background, and she **needs** to be emotionally accepted by goblins, in particular Cass, who Tanningia is a bit in love with. Tanningia's challenge is the publisher Gonatus Fabricii, who she wants to publish her novel.

Cass (D) is a revolutionary goblin writer of novels and political pamphlets. Cass finds Tanningia Danae well-meaning and indispensable but also annoying. Cass **desires** to retire from the revolution and reunite with her daughter Kiff, who is safe with her father in The New Territories. Cass **needs** to fight the oppression of the goblins. Cass' challenge is the assistant master engineer Kell, who is her man's cousin and knows where her daughter is.

Player controlled secondary characters

There are eight, four of which are connected to challenges and can obviously serve as helpers if the primary characters can persuade them by appealing to their desires and needs.

Player A:

Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa, ship's physician, knows about horrific conditions in the engine room

Desires a friendly ear for awful medical anecdotes, *needs* confirmation of her goodness.

- can help Cass (D) influence Kell

Nautilus Pompilius, frustrated airship crewman

Desires money, *needs* respect

Player B:

Sepiella Japonica, wine & spirits wholesale trader

Desires flattery, *needs* challenge/humour

- can help Doss (C) get access to Watasenia Scintillans, who is a friend of Sepiella's

Argonauta Argo, drunkard fashion designer

Desires excitement, *needs* kindness

Player C:

Fen, ghost writer

Desires respect, *needs* an outlet for her anger

- can help Tanningia Danae (B) influence her employer, Gonatus Fabricii

Jess, ambitious airship crewman

Desires recognition, *needs* money

Player D:

Heck, astral correspondent (telegraph operator)

Desires kindness, *needs* money

- can help Illex Argentinus (A) influence Jill

Moll, exotic dancer

Desires money, *needs* kindness

GM's secondary characters, challenges

Go after two stages: First the primary characters must get an introduction for a more elaborate meeting, later. And then a meeting where serious matters are discussed seriously. Don't let it be one and the same scene.

Jill, challenge for Illex Argentinus (A)

Jill is goblin and a successful freelance journalist. She writes sleazy exposés on the rich and famous, and though her style is scandalous rather than indignant, she sees herself as a sort of champion of the rights of the oppressed, exposing the hypocrisy and debauchery of the rich and powerful. She makes money selling her writings to the colourful press, but she also makes a lot of money by not publishing things – blackmail, pure and simple. She's survived two assassination attempts.

Now she's aboard the Gargantuan, writing a story about the love between Illex Argentinus and Doss, which the family Argentinus would be rather embarrassed to see sensationalized like that. Jill's plan is primarily to use the project to squeeze money out of Illex, but really she's become fascinated with her project. Under the cynical exterior she's a romantic, and badly wants to find proof that Illex and Doss really do love each other across the racial divide.

***Wants** money, **needs** proof of true love.* She has a business arrangement with Heck the astral correspondent operator.

Gonatus Fabricii, challenge for Taningia Danae (B)

Gonatus Fabricii is the owner and editor in chief of the publishing house Silver Hill, provider of controversial, progressive novels and a profitable stream of lurid romances. He's pretty tired of the many, many people who try to talk him into publishing their homemade drivel through his company, and is in the habit of toying with them a

bit, like a cat with a mouse, before dashing their hopes.

But he's not blind to opportunities. His assistant and ghost writer, the goblin Fen, might be assigned to look at manuscripts thrust upon him here on the ship (it happens quite a bit), and if Fen spots a talent, Gonatus might look into it. Or if it's a well-known name, ideally with a nasty scandal attached to really drive sales, he might get Fen to write something worth publishing in that name. Like, say, the not unknown Danae family, now there's some nice potential for a scandal.

***Desires** a manuscript with a marketable scandal attached, **needs** text with talent behind it and something on it's mind (*cough* Cass *cough*).* Fen works for him.

Watasenia Scintillans, challenge for Doss (C)

Watasenia Scintillans is a wealthy, middle-aged elf woman who owns a quite successful railway empire in The New Territories – she inherited it a couple of years ago, and runs it skillfully. She's received a number of marriage proposals, but many of them are from men who are after her wealth and don't really have that much to bring to a partnership. She wants a husband with money and business talent of his own, to help her build a mighty inheritance.

She's had both elf men (inappropriately!) and women as lovers, especially before she inherited the business, but elves don't do that much for her in bed. She fantasizes about goblins with big cocks and not-so-delicate sensibilities, and still dreams of a goblin drummer that she was with just one time, years ago. But of course she doesn't speak of such things when sober.

***Wants** a suitable partner, **needs** sweaty goblin cock.* She's friends (but not really lovers) with wine & spirits wholesale trader Sepiella Japonica.

Kell, challenge for Cass (D)

Kell is assistant master engineer of the Gargantuan. That is, an elf is master engineer and gets a lot of money while Kell keeps the ship in the air by driving his workers (goblins, of course) to work incredibly hard under dangerous conditions. Injuries and deaths are common. Kell is proud of his high (for a goblin) position and wary of revolutionaries, union members and other people out to make a hard job even harder. He doesn't want any trouble, but secretly dreams of *someone* doing *something* about the terrible working conditions.

Kell is the cousin of the former revolutionary Jot, who's had a child (the girl Kiff) with the infamous pamphlet writer and rabble rouser Cass. The year before last, Kell helped Jot and Kiff cross The Ocean to The New Territories, and helped set them up with a place to live in New Gondolin, in the Street of the Coppersmiths. Kell would really rather not be tied to a type such as Cass, though he'd also be reluctant to inform on her.

Desires to avoid trouble, needs someone to do something about the horrible conditions for the workers. He's on friendly terms with the ship's physician Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa, who works as best she can to patch up the injured after the accidents.

GM's secondary characters, threats

The threats embody various aspects of the powers that be, and they're not friends. The threats have personalities, but their function in the game is to pressure the players more than it is to provide opportunities for meaningful personal interaction.

Captain Architeutis Dux (old, stiff, confused)

The honourable and distinguished captain of the *Gargantuan*. *Desires to maintain appearances in spite of his weakness, needs to fish by a little lake in the woods.* His function is to look impressive on behalf of the system early on and then personify how the system falls apart along with the presumption of the crash-free-ness of the *Gargantuan*.

Com. Sepia Officinalis and **Sgt. Sull** of Imperial Safety

The Commissar (older woman, black-clad and cold) *desires to uphold order and the traditional hierarchy, needs to humiliate deviants,* the Sergeant (stocky, scarred, professional killer) *desires to work the Commissar's will, needs to exercise power.* Their function is to be that which goblins, and in particular Cass, have to fear; not enemies to be defeated but a force to be avoided. They tend to brutalize and lock up rather than kill, and it's better for them to give Cass something to avoid than it is for them to catch her. But they must be frightening! They are of course armed with pistols and knives, the Commissar has a sword as well, the Sergeant a truncheon.

Lieutenant Loligo Edulis (graceful, gallant, brutal and deadly)

The Lieutenant is a smiling monster. *His desire is to look like a gallant protector of beauty and goodness, he needs to maim and kill goblins.* To respectable-seeming elves he's polite and warmly charming, to non-respectable elves he is cold and somewhere between over-polite and sarcastic; he ignores submissive goblins and to uppity goblins he is cruel and violent. He's armed with pistol, knife and sword, and he's highly skilled and cool-headed. His function is to give elf arrogance a face in the first and second acts, and to shockingly kill goblins in the third.

Detailed run-through

This is a detailed run-through; there are also GM aid sheets. Read this section thoroughly before playing, and use the aid sheets during play. There's one for starting the game, and one for each act plus interlude/epilogue.

After introduction and casting, the game progresses through a prologue, three acts and two interludes, and an epilogue. In the first act the primary characters and their relations and issues are established, as well as life aboard the airship. In the second act, the accident occurs and its consequences escalate in the background while people go about their business, because everyone knows that the ship can't crash. In the third act, the seriousness of the situation becomes apparent, and social privileges and rebellion become very visible in the struggle for the much too few spots in the life balloons.

The game will be funny early on, and that's OK – you don't have to worry about the players taking the game seriously. As time goes by the funny elements will lose their novelty, and the game will get gradually less funny as it also gets more horrible. It'll happen almost of its own accord. You just have to make sure that you support the gradual escalation, so things constantly get worse without too sudden breaks.

Introduction

Welcome the players and greet each other nicely. Then introduce the concept. Present a rough outline of the themes – it's about race and class, and about how these things work in language and culture. Then introduce the setting in somewhat greater detail, so that people have images and associations ready in their heads. Do use the setting section; follow it closely and show the fashion handout (p. 38) with cool elves to the players. Right from the start you should closely observe the mood of the players and their chemistry with each other – you'll need this for casting.

Then do a little exercise with the players: *Elf names*. Take the handout "Warmup: Elf names" (containing all elf names in the game) and a pen, say the first name on the list, cross it out and pass on the list and pen and ask the next person to do the same. Let the list go round (only take part with the first name) until you run out of names. Then ask the players what thoughts and associations they have from the names just read out. Not lengthy explanations, just a word or three. Note carefully who had an easier time saying the difficult names, and who had a harder time.

Casting

You assign characters to the players to ensure that player abilities and the needs of the characters line up. The two players who had the easiest time saying elf names get the elf roles (A) and (B). Give Taningia Danae to the most cheerful of them, and Illex Argentinus (A) to the less cheerful. Give out the goblin roles (C) and (D) based on who had the most chemistry with (A) and (B), Doss (C) to the one lining up with (A) and Cass (D) to the one lining up with (B). If you're in doubt, give Cass to the angrier of them. Ignore player gender as a factor unless a player has expressed strong preferences of their own accord.

Now give the players time to read their characters, both primaries and secondaries, perhaps ten minutes or so. Mention that you'll be going over the rules for language and jewels, so they don't have to worry much about that now.

Language rules and warmup

Go through the rules for describing elves and goblins, jewels and physical flaws, and how these are different for the elf players (A and B) and the goblin players (C and D) – elves can describe goblins, but not the other way around.

And now for another warmup exercise right before play proper starts, to help the players pay attention to each other and react to each other. They have to count to 20 together – this time you don't take part. If they speak over each other, if they fall into a pattern or if the same player counts twice in a row, they have to start over. Keep going until they get to 20.

Prologue

The prologue is preparation which is in character or which produces fiction. First, you must describe the airship together, and then you play four scenes with secondary characters to set up the challenges for the primary characters in the first act.

In *description*, you take turns saying something about the appearance, style and workings of the Gargantuan. Take notes on the aid sheet Introduction/prologue, and as you play, incorporate the ideas of the players into your descriptions. Your contributions will be partly pre-determined, as some specific things need saying. Remind your players of the steampunk technology of the setting, and then get the party started by saying that the ship is enormous, almost 800 meters long. Go around twice, and on your second turn describe the "astral correspondent", a miracle of the elvish arts that lets you exchange messages with distant cities and ships (telegraph). In my head it's a great fin of metal filigree stretching towards the heavens from the spine of the Gargantuan, but feel free to make up your own version. When all players have made up two things, add one thing that's all your own if you feel like it, or you can just round off by asking them to close their eyes and see the ship.

Do react to player input with discreet but visible enthusiasm – smile and nod. If a player makes up something that's badly off, you can intervene and ask them to correct it, or to say that those are rumours but not true, but if possible accept and incorporate even wild ideas. One thing to watch out for is that a player might make the engine room nice and pleasant. The game needs the engine room to be an awful place where goblins come to grief.

The game also assumes that there are one or more places from which life balloons (floating lifeboats) can be launched, and that there aren't even close to enough seats in them for everyone on board.

The *secondary character scenes* are between one of the four challenge characters that you control, and the player controlled secondary character who can help a primary character get access to the challenge. This introduces the challenge and gives the player of the relevant primary character some handles to reach for, and also gets the players started on scene framing. Start with a scene where the potential helper character is played by a reasonably inventive player, say that this is a scene between the challenge and the potential helper, and ask the player to frame the scene. Feel free to help if it doesn't go smoothly, for instance by having your challenge character seize control of the situation. The scenes take place on the Gargantuan, two days into the journey to The New Territories.

Remind the players of the rules for describing elves and goblins and enforce them, now and throughout the game.

The order is free. The four scenes are with the following people.

Jill the sleazy journalist, challenge for A, and the astral correspondent operator Heck (D).

Publisher Gonatus Fabricii, challenge for B, and ghost writer Fen (C). Establish that Gonatus is cheerfully domineering.

Railway tycoon Watasenia Scintillans, challenge for C, and her friend Sepiella Japonica (B).

Assistant master engineer Kell, challenge for D, and ship's physician Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa (A). Establish that the engine room is a place where people get hurt.

First act and interlude

Start out with intro scenes for the two pairs of primary characters, in the afternoon of a fresh and sunny day. End with the two pairs going to bed. The first act should take an hour or so, and not letting time slip is important.

The main agenda in the first act is to establish both relations and issues for the primary characters, and also society aboard the Gargantuan. The mood is light and witty, in a satirical/absurd way. Racism and classism are serious topics, and they'll add some teeth to the fun underneath the steampunk and the fantasy tropes, but not THAT many teeth, yet. You won't have to work to make it funny.

In the *pair scenes*, set by the players, we meet the primary characters for the first time. Start with the pair containing the player who was best at framing a scene in the prologue, or as you please. There's a special guideline for these particular scenes, that nothing dynamic has to happen. They should dwell on their moments and give us snapshots of the relations at the outset. It's also here that the goblin players C and D, to obey the language rules, must define physical flaws for Doss and Cass. Note them for later use on your characters aid sheet.

Then it's up to player initiative. All the primaries have intrigue objectives to pursue, freshly outlined from the prologue. If anyone wants to send their primary looking for their obvious helper (the obvious move), then let the player of the potential helper frame the scene – but remember, you still cut, and don't let the pace get too slow. If someone wants to talk to their primary partner, seeing a bit more of them together is OK, but cut before the conversation turns to chit-chat. If someone wants to seek out their challenge directly, it'll be pretty steeply uphill without an introduction. It's possible that Illex Argentinus will seek out Captain Architeutis Dux and ask him to do something about Jill. In that case he can have an audience after a wait, and the Captain will drink tea, be a little distant and promise to look into the matter. Keep the spotlight moving. Things will likely go smoothly, but if a player or two have difficulty getting going, help them gently.

If it fits in, bring into play the places The Progressive Salon (where there's "progressive" entertainment with goblins) and the Classical Salon (where elves provide tasteful entertainment) – these are good polar opposites to have in the players' repertoire of places for later. It would be good if someone (not necessarily Cass) overhears Commissar Sepia Officinalis and Sgt. Sull asking for Cass, in the first act or not too late in the second.

When everyone has had one or two scenes after the pair scenes, the hour will about have passed. Fast forward, as hard as necessary, to another set of pair scenes, where the primary characters are going to bed in their staterooms at night. Start with Cass and Taningia Danae, end with Illex Argentinus and Doss. It's obvious and interesting for the game to see the sexual aspect of Illex's and Doss' relationship; ask them to turn up the heat a little if they don't do so of their own accord. We don't need to see them have sex, but some sparks and an idea that it's about to happen would be nice. And right there at the obvious time to cut, instead say that a figure in goggles and a harness appears outside the porthole and points a device at them, a daguerreotype that takes pictures by etching a metal plate with acid. Naturally, it's Jill. For extra effect, and if it makes sense, she's within Illex's field of vision but outside Doss' so he only finds out if Illex tells him. If they try to catch her, she's long gone.

First interlude

Say that time passes, and now it's the afternoon of the following day. Ask the players B and D to frame a scene where we see the secondary characters Argonauta Argo and Moll together. Possibly in The Progressive Salon?

Then ask the players A and C to play a scene, but frame it for them. The airshipmen Jess and Nautilus Pompilius are securing a life ballon that's come loose a bit and is now rattling in the wind. The weather is beautiful if a little threatening; Gargantuan is flying over over a sea of low clouds that hide The Ocean, and ahead to port (shipspeak for left) there's a couple of great thunderheads shot through with lightning rising in the distance. When a little time has passed and the players have talked a bit, something happens: a great

tree, more than a hundred meters tall and with it's own little flying island (see the cover), appears out of the cloud cover, far away but on a collision course with the airship. It's a Laputian Baobab, and they never come this far north. When the airshipmen try to warn the rest of the crew, they simply won't believe them without seeing for themselves. Cut when they've been met with disbelief once – it's the perfect setup for the second act.

This is the last good time for a break.

Second act and interlude

Like the first, the second act should take about an hour. It starts in the afternoon with the accident happening, when the airship collides with the flying tree, and ends when it's clear to all that it actually is a disaster. In the course of the second act the smile freezes, so to speak. The escalation of conflicts and ugliness runs into the players becoming used to the steampunk, the pointy ears and the stiffness of the language rules, so that the value of those things as protection is reduced. If the first act has been a little slow and contemplative, tighten the cutting and press the tempo and the players.

Start by saying that tremors pass through the airship, and people notice it but then everyone goes about their business as if nothing had happened. Ask people what they do, working from an assumption that they continue to pursue their challenges. Throughout the act, drop hints of the escalating catastrophe – more tremors, gaslight flickering and sputtering, crew running around hectically (but insisting that the situation is under control). The secondary characters Jess (C) and Nautilus Pompilius (A) can be aware that there's trouble, and the challenge Kell (assistant master engineer) will realize the full extent of the disaster fairly early on. But generally people go about their lives even though it becomes clearer and clearer how bad thing are.

The Commissar and her Sergeant pursue Cass in the second act, but it's best if they don't run into her directly. You might intrude them into a scene with

Taningia Danae and have them question her. It would be good get Lt. Loligo Edulis into play, so he's a familiar figure in the third act where he'll see use in earnest.

Generally, the meat of the act should be people pursuing their interest – like people on the ship mostly do. Try to be a bit subtle about steering the players away from reacting to the disaster. Do it through secondary characters. Keep the spotlight moving, and provide support if a player is a bit too passive in pursuing their interests.

Useful things for the second act

Cass' challenge, Kell, will find out early on that things are badly wrong, but won't take the time to discuss it with Cass. He's busy trying to save the airship from the unfolding disaster, which not only the passengers but also the ship's command have a hard time reacting to. In this way, Cass might have a leg up on the others in comprehending the seriousness of the situation.

Here's a *scene idea* that comes with my warmest recommendations. It fits in well from about the middle of the act. Possibly Doss has acquired an invitation to dinner with Watasenia Scintillans? In 'The Progressive or The Classical Salon? Illex Argentinus and Sepiella Japonica are probably there too (so only player D sits out the scene, and you might draw them into describing surroundings, people and food). In any case it makes sense that Doss and Watasenia flirt and take each other's measure. She quickly gets businesslike and asks him about his business, factories and plans, to determine how he would do as practical partner/husband. Talk about this a bit and then fast forward, saying that Watasenia has been hitting the wine pretty hard. She changes the subject, tipsily, to what REALLY interests her: Doss' hopefully large, dark, sweaty goblin cock. She wants to know if he's well hung, and will probably query Illex about whether Doss is a good lover. She's tired, you see, of delicate, sensitive elves. Make it embarrassing and

humiliating that when all is said and done, she's more interested in his body than in his talents. Really step in it.

Second interlude

Keep it brief. Ask the players where they (their primary characters) are, just when they realize that the catastrophe is upon them and that their lives are in danger if they don't act. Who's together? What happens? Make a snapshot, not lengthy exposition of plans of action.

Third act and epilogue

The third act should last no more than 40 minutes. Keep the pace fast, cut hard and push at any hesitation. Gargantuan is burning, crashing and/or falling apart, depending on what makes the most sense and what you feel like saying. Now, the big question is those seats in the life balloons. There are much too few of them, barely enough for the elves on board. The crew will try to maintain order – that is, keep the goblins away from posh areas in general, and the life balloons in particular. Several goblins will take part in this, hoping to win a place for themselves. The act ends when the disaster is so bad that anyone not already in a life balloon floating away is doomed.

The third act is about what you do under desperate pressure, specifically whether you'll use your privileges in the form of race and wealth to save your life when others without this privilege die because the people who built the airship (/society) didn't consider it worth the bother to take steps to ensure their survival. And if you don't have that privilege, how far will you go? The way things work on the Gargantuan, if you're a goblin there's no room for you in the life balloons unless you do something quite drastic, either by playing upon wealth and power really aggressively, or simply by using violence massive enough to overpower the authorities for at least a couple of moments.

The goblins will be desperate but lack leadership. They're also spread out over large parts of the ship, many of them working under Kell, trying to save the doomed airship. If a charismatic person (Cass!) tries to take charge, they'll quickly be able to muster a couple dozen goblins willing to use violence. This won't be enough to take over the ship as such or resist an organized counterattack by the crew, but it might be enough to break through the barriers, seize a couple of life balloons and get away. Any effective goblin plan will involve killing several elves, including defenceless civilians.

Most ordinary airship crewmembers, elves and goblins, are armed only with knives, but elf officers have pistols (with one shot, but who wants to go first?) and swords, and trained elf swordfighters are *deadly*. With flashing steel and fast footwork, they'll be able to hold a corridor or similar tight spot against a large number of goblins, and they'll kill and maim without mercy. In the game, this mostly means the threat Loligo Edulis, who will turn up and start butchering goblins with brutal efficiency if a goblin riot gathers pace. Don't have him kill primary characters out of the blue, but a goblin that goes directly against him will die (it might be a mortal belly wound that takes some time to properly kill, and makes it possible to play a scene to round off).

Wealthy elves will be inclined to do less sensible things like retrieving important papers and jewelry from their staterooms instead of heading straight for the life balloons. Here, Watasenia Scintillans might do this, and depending on what has happened already, it might present Doss with a dilemma. If you feel like making an obvious and classic Titanic reference, you might have an elf string quartet play in The Classical Salon as the ship goes down for whoever wants to hear them, elves and goblins alike.

It's important that goblins and elves alike seem like people with lives to lose, not just swarthy hordes or snarling Master Race monsters. Kill a couple of children, both goblin children who can't get to the balloons or stay up in the tumult, and if goblins seize a life balloon or two, screaming elf children thrown into the abyss. The catastrophe must be allowed to be gut clenchingly catastrophic.

Now is the time for all the characters' stories to climax. This might mean one or more of them dying or ending up in the clutches of the Commissar. Force them to choose each other (or not), and to choose what is most important to them.

Will **Illex Argentinus** exploit his high status to get Doss into a life balloon?

Will **Taningia Danae** stay with Cass or will she save herself? Will she find it repulsive when she sees the goblins' struggle in it's purest, most brutal form?

How will **Doss** react when chaos breaks out and it becomes clear that in spite of his wealth, he's still a goblin? Will he use his money and elf connections to save himself, though the circumstances might be humiliating? And how will he feel about the fate of the poor goblins?

Will **Cass** save herself or fight for her people? And how far will she go when the going gets bloody? Will she have kindness to spare for "Tan"?

Weave the stories of the two pairs in and out of each other. They can meet each other, and they'll most likely see the consequences of each other's actions. Humour will be out now, and it's possible that players will instead turn to storytelling for distance, that is go for steering their primary character's story towards a predictable or edifying end, instead of engaging with the desperation and injustice. Some degree of storytelling can be OK, and it's possible that a player can have some need for distance. If you think they can take it, go ahead and do grievous harm to their storytelling. If they go for a romantic hero's death, let them be beaten but not killed. If they try to hold speeches, let busy people push past them. Make it ugly and real, not nice and edifying. Be ready to kill primary characters if that is what would seem most believable.

Epilogue

Slow down. Now, all is settled and it's time to contemplate the destruction and the fates of the characters.

Start by describing how the life balloons fly away into the night. Ask the players to take turns describing the doomed ship, two times around the table, just like when you built the ship, but now you must destroy it.

End by asking them to briefly describe their primary characters seen from the outside, wherever they are, living or dead, as the balloons fly away and the Gargantuan crashes. The rules for description still apply.

Debriefing

If you feel that it's needed, run a debriefing. Do it so: Everyone takes a turn stating briefly what they feel right now, without questions or other interruptions, and it's OK to not feel a lot. Then talk freely, but not too long. If it seems like it's going to take a long time, or it turns into lengthy explanations and war stories, take it to the bar or something like that.

So what happens?

Experiences from playtesting show that the goblin airshipman Jess kills Loligo Edulis, and dies of it himself. A third little parallel story about friendship between Moll (D) and Argonauta Argo (B) can crop up, and that's OK as long as it isn't that time-consuming.

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GM's aid sheet – Characters

Challenges

Jill, sleaze journalist, for Illex Argentinus (A). *Desires* money, *needs* proof of true love. In cahoots with Heck (D).

Gonatus Fabricii, publisher, for Taningia Danae (B). *Desires* a manuscript with a marketable scandal attached, *needs* text with talent behind it and something on it's mind. Employer of Fen (C).

Watasenia Scintillans, railway tycoon, for Doss (C). *Desires* a suitable partner, *needs* sweaty goblin cock. Friends with Sepiella Japonica (B).

Kell, assistant master engineer, for Cass (D). *Desires* to avoid trouble, *needs* someone to do something about the horrible conditions for the workers. Works with Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa (A).

Threats

Captain Architeutis Dux (old, stiff, confused), *desires* to maintain appearances in spite of his weakness, *needs* to fish by a little lake in the woods.

Commissar Sepia Officinalis (older woman, black-clad and cold), *desires* to uphold order and the traditional hierarchy, *needs* to humiliate deviants.

Sergeant Sull (stocky, scarred, professional killer), *desires* to work the Commissar's will, *needs* to exercise power.

Lieutenant Loligo Edulis (graceful, gallant, brutal and deadly), *desires* to look like a gallant protector of goodness and beauty, *needs* to maim and kill goblins.

Primary characters

Illex Argentinus (A), *desires* to maintain his family's status, *needs* to surrender to his shameful infatuation with Doss. **Challenge:** Jill, journalist.

Taningia Danae (B), *desires* to rebel against her own elf privilege, *needs* Cass to accept her. **Challenge:** Gonatus Fabricii, publisher.

Doss (C) (Dosidicus Gigas), *desires* wealth and power, *needs* elf acceptance (esp. Illex's). **Challenge:** Watasenia Scintillans, railroad tycoon.
Physical flaw:

Cass (C), *desires* to retire and find her daughter Kiff, *needs* to fight the oppression. **Challenge:** Kell, assistant master engineer.

Physical flaw:

Player controlled secondary characters

Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa (A), ship's physician, *desires* a friendly ear for awful medical anecdotes, *needs* confirmation of her goodness, contact for Kell

Nautilus Pompilius (A), frustrated airshipman, *desires* money, *needs* respect

Sepiella Japonica (B), wine & spirits wholesale trader, *desires* flattery, *needs* challenge/humour, contact for Watasenia Scintillans

Argonauta Argo (B), drunkard fashion designer, *desires* excitement, *needs* kindness

Fen (C), ghost writer, *desires* respect, *needs* an outlet for her anger, contact for Gonatus Fabricii

Jess (C), ambitious airshipman, *desires* recognition, *needs* money

Heck (D), astral correspondent (telegraph) operator, *desires* kindness, *needs* money, contact for Jill

Moll (D), exotic dancer, *desires* money, *needs* kindness

GM's aid sheet – Language rules

Elf players can describe goblins. Goblin players cannot describe elves.

If a player breaks one of the rules below, stop the game and ask them to do it properly.

Jewels

- When describing an elf, you **must** describe that jewels they wear (and they do!).
- When stating that a goblin wears jewelry, you **must** say "like an elf".

Physical flaws

- When describing a goblin, you **must** name a specific physical flaw. "Goblin" doesn't count.
- When describing an elf with something that could be interpreted as a physical flaw, you may only say it in a whisper. Saying it out loud would be rude.

Guidelines for scene framing

- Who
- Where and when
- Situation, dynamically

It's OK if there are only 2-3 characters! Others can watch or describe.

Expensive stones

Diamonds (translucent, usually white w. rainbow sheen)
Black opals (black w. coloured flecks, opaque)
Rubies (red, translucent)
Sapphires (blue, translucent)
Emeralds (green, translucent)

Semi-expensive stones

Garnets (red, translucent)
Jade (white or green, opaque)
Opals (blue-white w. coloured flecks, opaque)
Pearls (small, round, usually white)
Amber (yellow-orange, semi-translucent)

Cheap stones

Agates (whitish, opaque)
Amethysts (purple, translucent)
Quartz (white or rose, translucent)
Mother-of-pearl (uneven, rainbow sheen)
Turquoises (blue-green, opaque)

Elf names

Alloteuthis Subulata
Berryteuthis Magister
Ommastrephes Bartramii
Rossia Pacifica
Sepia Esculenta
Todarodes Sagittatus

GM's aid sheet – Introduction/prologue

Introduction of themes (briefly)

Introduction of setting (a bit more extensively)

Elf names and associations (see Warmup: Elf names)

Casting (based on elf name reading and chemistry)

Reading characters (approx. 10 min.)

Rules for description

Counting to 20

Prologue

Describe the Gargantuan, two rounds

- Size (800+ meters)
- The astral correspondent (telegraph/radio)

Secondary character scenes (day two, the afternoon, in any order)

- Sleaze journalist **Jill**, challenge for A, and astral correspondent operator **Heck** (D).
- Publisher **Gonatus Fabricii**, challenge for B, and ghost writer **Fen** (C). *Establish that Gonatus is cheerfully domineering.*
- Railroad tycoon **Watasenia Scintillans**, challenge for C, and her friend **Sepiella Japonica** (B).
- Assistant master engineer **Kell**, challenge for D, and ship's physician **Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa** (A). *Establish that the engine room is a place where people get hurt.*

Facts about the Gargantuan

Mark off when they've seen play, make sure they all do.

GM's aid sheet – First act/interlude

Approx. 1 hour. Starts in the afternoon, after the prologue. The first act establishes the relationships and society aboard the Gargantuan. Keep the pace moderate, give yourself room to press harder later.

Pair scenes. Note the physical flaws of Doss and Cass on the aid sheet "Characters".

Places to use:

- The Classical Salon
- The Progressive Salon

People to bring into play:

- Commissar Sepia Officinalis and Sgt. Sull, hunting Cass, preferably questioning people other than Cass.

End with the primary characters going to bed (skip forward if necessary).

- First Cass and Tanningia Danae.
- Then Illex Argentinus and Doss. And then, Jill outside the porthole with a daguerreotype apparatus (steampunk camera).

First interlude

Skip forward to the afternoon of the following day.

Scene with the secondary characters Moll (D) and Argonauta Argo (B), possibly in The Progressive Salon?

Scene with the two airshipmen Jess (C) and Nautilus Pompilius (A), outside by the life balloons. After a while they see the Laputian Baobab on a collision course with the Gargantuan. When they try to raise the alarm, they are met with skepticism and hesitation.

GM's aid sheet – Second act/interlude

Approx. 1 hour. Starts in the afternoon, right after the first interlude. In the second act, (almost) everyone act like there's no catastrophe. Gradually turn up the tempo and the oppression, but leave yourself room to go all out in the third act.

It's TOTALLY OK if the players don't "finish" their plans, intrigues and stories. The interruption makes the disaster feel more real.

People to bring into play:

- Lt. Loligo Edulis, so we see him before he starts killing
- Commissar Sepia Officinalis and Sgt. Sull (again)

The gradual unfolding of the disaster. Make little hints and escalate. Assistant master engineer Kell will realize that the situation is serious fairly early on, and he'll be fighting for the survival of the ship.

Scene idea

Dinner with **Doss** and **Watasenia Scintillans**, perhaps Illex Argentinus and Sepiella Japonica. First, Watasenia will talk about business, later on (*cut forward, she's drinking*) she wants to know if he's well hung and good in bed.

Second interlude

Where are they when they realize? Snapshot, not problem-solving.

GM's aid sheet – Third act/epilogue

40 minutes at most. Push the tempo, cut hard, press the players as much as you can. Will the primary characters live or die?

The way things work on the Gargantuan is that unless someone does something pretty drastic, either in the form of drawing on their power and status in a truly brash and aggressive manner, or simply by using overwhelming violence, there's room for elves in the life balloons, but not for goblins.

Doss' wealth might help, but he'll have to bribe someone hard and very directly, or have an elf step up for him.

Cass can probably only win a place through either trickery or a violent goblin riot forcing access to the life balloons.

- **The Goblins** are disorganized and desperate. Cass can gather a solid handful by taking charge (or Doss could, for that matter?), but raising an army of goblins is impossible without an organization.
- **Rich elves** (Watasenia Scintillans?) might decide to retrieve papers and jewelry in their staterooms.
- **The crew**, elves and goblins alike, will try to maintain order. If a riot breaks out it'll surprise them, but after a while Lt. Loligo Edulis will turn up, backed up by a couple of airshipmen, and start slaughtering goblins.

Kill children. Doomed, weeping goblin children driven away from safety, screaming elf children thrown to their deaths from waiting life balloons by murderously desperate goblins.

Trample "nice" storytelling if you think the players can take it.

Epilogue

The life balloons float away.

- Describe together, in two rounds, the destruction of the Gargantuan.
- Each player describes their primary character from the outside, alive, dead or dying. The rules for description still apply.

Debriefing

Debrief as needed.

- Everyone in turn tells they others how they feel right now, noone may comment on the others.
- Then, a brief free discussion.

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Illex Argentinus, elf (player A)

I'm respectable. Old money, you know. Though the Argentinus fortune has turned into debt so vast that we're teetering on the edge of the abyss, where old friendships and alliances are no longer enough. Now only I stand between the family and humiliating financial and social ruin. Uselessly well-read, slightly anxious I. I do this by serving as friend and lover, in the elf fashion, to the rich nuts-and-bolts factory owner Doss (or Dosidicus Gigas, as he prefers to be called). He pays the bills as long as I help him with my insight and respectability, and keep his bed warm.

I, an elf of an ancient, noble family, a sage of the poetry of the ages, on a goblin's arm. Now, Doss is clever and driven – he has "fire in his belly", a will to fight that father says The Imperial Elf Republic could do with some more of in these times, and he's pale enough that you could almost mistake him for an elf. Almost. We must all do what we can. The family house and my talented younger sister's education as astrologer at the Ivory Tower University, all the family's outward reasons for pride, they depend not upon them but upon me.

An Argentinus does what is necessary. And I'm proud of it, of my sacrifice and of being so well-bred and disciplined that I can serve my function as friend and assistant to a goblin with a dignity that few elves could muster. But even though I show no visible reaction to the looks, I feel them. I'm a goblin's boy whore, and everyone knows.

Even worse, my inner fortress of contempt for the upstart is breached. Not only can I perceive his iron will under the slightly too showy clothes and the slightly too expensive jewelry, I have feelings for Dosidicus. Shameful, lustful feelings that no elf should have for a goblin, but Doss' greedy possessiveness in bed lights a fire in me that no elf, man or woman, ever has. He makes me feel like a filthy goblin, and I love it as much as I despise myself for loving it.

We're supposed to pass for carefree friends and lovers, after the ancient and beautiful elf custom, but in our mutual dependence and practical cooperation, we're rather like spouses. It's a shameful mess, but there's nothing for it but to stand up straight and carry on. It's my duty.

Challenge: Jill

Jill is a goblin sleaze journalist who sells her scribblings to colourful publications of the worst sort. She intends to publish a piece on Doss and I, and that could get truly humiliating, not least for the rest of my family. And she's aboard the Gargantuan! Probably to stalk me. Somehow it must be possible to persuade her to refrain from her intention, with money or other arguments.

To persuade Jill, I'll need help. Yesterday I saw Jill in close conversation with a goblin that I recognized – **Heck**, the operator of the astral correspondent, the wondrous device that allows the Gargantuan to converse with distant ships and cities. Perhaps Heck could be persuaded to help?

Secondary characters (player A)

You have two secondary characters who are potential helpers for the other players' primary characters (but not your own). Your secondaries have a **desire** and a **need**. The **desire** is what they know they want. Say it straight up as soon as it makes sense, and play upon it. The **need** is that which they might not quite admit to themselves, but it's stronger and more important than the desire. Do drop strong hints about the need, especially when drunk, emotionally excited or otherwise vulnerable.

If a primary appeals to the **desire** of your secondary, be cooperative but don't make sacrifices. If they appeal to your secondary's **need**, do pretty much anything for them if it makes any sense at all.

Feel free to help with a bit of a twist, and if they insult or abuse you, you can be a hindrance instead. Your most important goal with your secondary characters is to produce believable fiction that the others must deal with.

The other primaries seen with secondary eyes

Taningia Danae is a young elf lady, dressed in a very modern fashion and charming in a somewhat brash way. Rumours whisper of scandalous behaviour and sympathy for goblin rights, but these things usually pass with the onset of maturity.

Doss, or **Dosidicus Gigas**, is a slightly too expensively and ostentatiously dressed gentleman who almost looks like an elf. Really, it's mostly the posture and clothes that give it away. He's known to be a successful manufacturer, and his elf friend does quite a bit for his status.

Cass is a somewhat scowling, boringly dressed about half blood she-goblin. A common name, and there's nothing about her that you'd connect with the infamous revolutionary Cass who can set cities on fire with a few pamphlets. Other than the furious spark in her eye, that is.

Helpers

Dr. Eledone Cirrhosa, ship's physician, knows about horrific conditions in the engine room

Dr. Cirrhosa is the airship's physician, and it's her duty to keep everyone healthy and alive. Especially the horrific conditions in the engine room make it a challenge, and though it's just goblins being harmed, it bothers her sense of medical ethics. **Desires** a friendly ear for awful medical anecdotes, **needs** confirmation of her goodness.

- Dr. Cirrhosa can help Cass make contact with assistant master engineer Kell.

Nautilus Pompilius, frustrated airship crewman

Nautilus is a hardworking airship crewman. His jewelry is cheap, and people only respect him slightly more than they do goblins – and that's goblins that don't have loads of money, like some goblins nowadays. **Desires** money, **needs** respect.

Rules for describing (player A)

As elf player, you may describe goblins. Goblin players may not describe elves – they might ask for your help.

Jewels

- When describing an elf, you *must* describe what jewels they wear (and they do!).
- When stating that a goblin wears jewels, you *must* say "like an elf".

Physical flaws

- When describing a goblin, you *must* name a specific physical flaw. "Goblin" in itself doesn't count.
- When describing an elf with something that could be interpreted as a physical flaw, you *may only* say it in a whisper. Saying it out loud would be rude.

Elf names

Elves have stately and beautiful names, with long, storied traditions behind them. Use these:

Alloteuthis Subulata	Berryteuthis Magister
Ommastrephes Bartramii	Rossia Pacifica
Sepia Esculenta	Todarodes Sagittatus

Expensive stones

Diamonds (translucent, usually white w. rainbow sheen)
Black opal (black w. coloured flecks, opaque)
Rubies (red, translucent)
Sapphires (blue, translucent)
Emeralds (green, translucent)

Semi-expensive stones

Garnets (red, translucent)
Jade (white or green, opaque)
Opals (blue-white w. coloured flecks, opaque)
Pearls (small, round, usually white)
Amber (yellow-orange, semi-translucent)

Cheap stones

Agates (whitish, opaque)
Amethysts (purple, translucent)
Quartz (white or rose, translucent)
Mother-of-pearl (uneven, rainbow sheen)
Turquoises (blue-green, opaque)

Taningia Danae, "Tan" (player B)

I'm young and noble enough to get away with a lot of things. Such as with being a loud goblin-friend, which makes my fine old elf family curl their toes in embarrassment. Now I'm on my way over The Ocean aboard the Gargantuan, on something that's supposed to be a holiday. But my "goblin maid" is not what she appears to be – she's the infamous goblin revolutionary writer Cass, and I'm smuggling her to safety in The New Territories. It's a fantastic adventure, and deadly serious.

The goblins have an admirable ability to live cheerfully and in the moment, in spite of their brief, hard lives. I do my best to learn from them, and I just laugh off all the raised eyebrows. Well, I've got into trouble a couple of times, and it's OK as long as it's just a few borrowed horses, some stains on the hand-knotted carpets, a little inappropriate political debate at dinner parties. If my family found out that I'm helping a dangerous revolutionary, I might get into real trouble. They might even disinherit me! But I'm not afraid.

It's not hard for goblins to believe in the cause, in goblin rights, but I, an elf, must fight injustices that benefit me. My family's fortune is built upon the blood, sweat and tears of goblins. But my eyes are open now, and I can't close them again. People are talking about how I'll settle down when I get older and I've partied enough, but they're wrong about me.

Sometimes it's hard for me, though, that I can't seem to get goblins to talk about really important things. I hate it when they deflect and play along without looking me in the eye. I need to see that they understand that I'm on their side. I need them to accept me as a person, not just another elf. I need to feel that there's a real connection, and far too often, there's just nothing.

Cass is a bit of a riddle. She doesn't seem as fierce as I'd expected. Or as glamorous; honestly she's a bit of a little grey mouse. Figuratively, of course, I'm not disparaging her skin colour! There's a gravity to her silence and a glow in her eyes, though, even if she dodges real discussion. And her pamphlets and novels! I have a good handful in my suitcase, and they make me hot and cold and send shivers up my spine. If only she'd take me in her arms and show me that fire, it would be much better – right now it's actually a little awkward between us.

Challenge: Gonatus Fabricii

Gonatus Fabricii runs the publishing house Silver Hill, and it would just be totally amazing if I could persuade him to publish my romantic, revolutionary novel manuscript. It would be a huge success I'm sure, and it would open the eyes of many young elves to the importance of the goblin rights cause. It's about an elf and a goblin, and they're friends, and they're on a secret mission for the revolution, on their way over The Ocean on a great airship...

To persuade Gonatus Fabricii I'll need help. He has an assistant, a she-goblin named Fen, and he listens to her. Maybe she'll listen to me?

Secondary characters (player B)

You have two secondary characters who are potential helpers for the other players' primary characters (but not your own). Your secondaries have a *desire* and a *need*. The *desire* is what they know they want. Say it straight up as soon as it makes sense, and play upon it. The *need* is that which they might not quite admit to themselves, but it's stronger and more important than the desire. Do drop strong hints about the need, especially when drunk, emotionally excited or otherwise vulnerable.

If a primary appeals to the *desire* of your secondary, be cooperative but don't make sacrifices. If they appeal to your secondary's *need*, do pretty much anything for them if it makes any sense at all.

Feel free to help with a bit of a twist, and if they insult or abuse you, you can be a hindrance instead. Your most important goal with your secondary characters is to produce believable fiction that the others must deal with.

The other primaries seen with secondary eyes

Illex Argentinus is a nice young elf gentleman, tastefully and expensively but not ostentatiously dressed. Rumour has it, though, that the wealthy he-goblin that Mr. Argentinus is with must have some sort of terrible hold over him to be able to keep him in that manner.

Doss, or *Dosidicus Gigas*, is a slightly too expensively and ostentatiously dressed gentleman who almost looks like an elf. Really, it's mostly the posture and clothes that give it away. He's known to be a successful manufacturer, and his elf friend does quite a bit for his status.

Cass is a somewhat scowling, boringly dressed about half blood she-goblin. A common name, and there's nothing about her that you'd connect with the infamous revolutionary Cass who can set cities on fire with a few pamphlets. Other than the furious spark in her eye, that is.

Helpers

Sepiella Japonica, wine & spirits wholesale trader

Sepiella Japonica is a friend (but not really lover) of the rich and successful railroad tycoon Watasenia Scintillans. Sepiella runs a moderately successful business as wine & spirits wholesale trader, and is married to a respectable, dull man with a head for numbers. Sepiella is a little bored. *Desires* *flattery*, *needs* *challenge* / *humour*.

- Sepiella can help Doss make contact with Watasenia Scintillans.

Argonauta Argo, drunkard fashion designer

Argonauta Argo is an experienced and flamboyant fashion designer and high society woman. She's not young, and though her name is famous, it's been some years since she really had success setting the trend with her creations. She's frustrated and unhappy, and hides it with alcohol and loud, festive cheer. *Desires* *excitement*, *needs* *kindness*.

Rules for describing (player B)

As elf player, you may describe goblins. Goblin players may not describe elves – they might ask for your help.

Jewels

- When describing an elf, you *must* describe what jewels they wear (and they do!).
- When stating that a goblin wears jewels, you *must* say "like an elf".

Physical flaws

- When describing a goblin, you *must* name a specific physical flaw. "Goblin" in itself doesn't count.
- When describing an elf with something that could be interpreted as a physical flaw, you *may only* say it in a whisper. Saying it out loud would be rude.

Elf names

Elves have stately and beautiful names, with long, storied traditions behind them. Use these:

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Amber (yellow-orange, semi-translucent)

Cheap stones

Agates (whitish, opaque)
Amethysts (purple, translucent)
Quartz (white or rose, translucent)
Mother-of-pearl (uneven, rainbow sheen)
Turquoises (blue-green, opaque)

Dosidicus Gigas, "Doss" (player C)

I'm a wealthy and successful manufacturer of nuts, bolts and gears, on my way to The New Territories to open a factory there. By blood I'm three quarters elf, so in the eyes of society and the law, I'm a goblin. I'm travelling with Illex Argentinus, my friend and lover, who serves me as companion and in practice also as advisor and secretary. I keep his respectable but debt-plagued family afloat, he affords me respectability and access.

My elf father gave me the respectable name Dosidicus Gigas; some people goblin-abbreviate it to "Doss". Though people who know my background consider me a goblin, I wear jewelry with precious stones like an elf, even if some consider it inappropriate. My favourites are emeralds and rubies – I have an amber set too. Rich as I am, the elves don't accept me as their equal, and finding an elf wife who's not a horrible gold digger is hard. I don't hide my wealth – with my riches on display, they respect me for something after all, if only out of greed.

I guess you could call me ambitious. My enterprising mother gave me a good financial start, but I haven't come into my wealth without effort, and I haven't been carried through my crises by my network, the way elves often are. My goal is to amass so much money and power that I don't have to care what people think – but on the way there I must keep my ears straight and steady, as I need people. Elves.

The ordinary poor, dark-skinned goblins have a close-knit community and not much to lose, and the elves stick together thick as thieves, always singing each other's praises. I'm cut off from everyone and everything, and have only the company that I buy. I hope and believe that a good many goblins see me as a role model, but I can't afford to socialize with them.

Does Illex love me? Would he stay if I lost my money? It's a naïve thought, but when I take him and do with him as I like and his eyes go all soft and dreamy, I can believe it. Then I feel like an elf. We're supposed to be carefree lovers after the elf custom, but in our mutual dependence and practical partnership we're almost like spouses, though we're two men.

Challenge: Watasenia Scintillans

A fine and very wealthy elf lady with interests in railway lines in The New Territories. I could make a lot of money by convincing her to place orders with me, and even more by persuading her to marry me – it would be a most sensible match. This connection could give me power, respect and maybe even heirs for my fortune.

To win the hand of Watasenia Scintillans I'll need help, both from Illex Argentinus and from others. Perhaps from Watasenia's friend Sepiella Japonica, a wine & spirits wholesale trader that I've traded with, doing some price speculation? She seems sensible, maybe she could be persuaded to put in a word for me.

Secondary characters (player C)

You have two secondary characters who are potential helpers for the other players' primary characters (but not your own). Your secondaries have a *desire* and a *need*. The *desire* is what they know they want. Say it straight up as soon as it makes sense, and play upon it. The *need* is that which they might not quite admit to themselves, but it's stronger and more important than the desire. Do drop strong hints about the need, especially when drunk, emotionally excited or otherwise vulnerable.

If a primary appeals to the *desire* of your secondary, be cooperative but don't make sacrifices. If they appeal to your secondary's *need*, do pretty much anything for them if it makes any sense at all.

Feel free to help with a bit of a twist, and if they insult or abuse you, you can be a hindrance instead. Your most important goal with your secondary characters is to produce believable fiction that the others must deal with.

The other primaries seen with secondary eyes

Illex Argentinus is a nice young elf gentleman, tastefully and expensively but not ostentatiously dressed. Rumour has it, though, that the wealthy he-goblin that Mr. Argentinus is with must have some sort of terrible hold over him to be able to keep him in that manner.

Taningia Danae is a young elf lady, dressed in a very modern fashion and charming in a somewhat brash way. Rumours whisper of scandalous behaviour and sympathy for goblin rights, but these things usually pass with the onset of maturity.

Cass is a somewhat scowling, boringly dressed about half blood she-goblin. A common name, and there's nothing about her that you'd connect with the infamous revolutionary Cass who can set cities on fire with a few pamphlets. Other than the furious spark in her eye, that is.

Helpers

Fen, ghost writer

Fen works for the publisher Gonatus Fabricii as ghost writer and manuscript sorter, writing usable, exciting text instead of the useless drivel that people with money or a famous name would be able to write on their own. It pays the rent and puts food on her family's table, and it lets her write and create, but it's not fair that others get many times more money for taking credit for her work than she gets for doing it. Not that Fen is letting it get to her, mind you. *Desires* respect, *needs* an outlet for her anger.

- Fen can help Taningia Danae make contact with Gonatus Fabricii.

Jess, ambitious airship crewman

Jess is strong, clever and ambitious. He plans to get ahead in the world, and keeps his eyes open for opportunities to improve his situation. He also drinks booze of elf quality, and has debt. *Desires* recognition, *needs* money.

Rules for describing (player C)

As goblin player, you may describe goblins but not elves. If you need an elf, ask an elf player. Elf players may also describe goblins.

Jewels

- When stating that a goblin wears jewels, you *must* say "like an elf".

Physical flaws

- When describing a goblin, you *must* name a specific physical flaw. "Goblin" in itself doesn't count.

Goblin names

Goblins have single syllable names; some have nicknames. Only goblins stoop to using nicknames.

Mag (the scissors) **(nine finger) Joff**

Nef (laces) **(pretty) Min**

(cocky) Kish **Rob (the lip)**

Make up more as needed.

Expensive stones

Diamonds (translucent, usually white w. rainbow sheen)

Black opal (black w. coloured flecks, opaque)

Rubies (red, translucent)

Sapphires (blue, translucent)

Emeralds (green, translucent)

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Amethysts (purple, translucent)

Quartz (white or rose, translucent)

Mother-of-pearl (uneven, rainbow sheen)

Turquoises (blue-green, opaque)

Cass (player D)

I'm infamous, a danger to public safety. I write the truth, in novels and pamphlets, about the "good" elves and "bad" goblins. Now I'm on my way over The Ocean, on the run from Imperial Safety. In The New Territories I hope to find a hiding place, and I hope to find my daughter Kiff who's seven years old. Her father Jot got enough of struggle and danger and took her with him over the sea the year before last. My cover on the journey is as maid for the young elf and goblin friend Taningia Danae. Idealistic, helpful and ...she sees this as a romantic adventure. It's going to be a long trip. I hide my fire and longing behind a dour face and downcast eyes.

Though everyone sees me as goblin, and my dark skin leaves no doubt, half my blood is elvish. I have it from my father who fooled around with a goblin maid, and then was sentimental enough about it to see to it that I had a bit of schooling. This is the blood that makes it possible at all for me to protest the oppression and degradation. I can still feel my fathers pale elvish hand patting me patronizingly on my head. He's a part of me and I hate it. I hate him. A "decent man".

Being on the run wears you down, hiding from Imperial Safety. I long to settle down, make do, tell Kiff stories that aren't supposed to serve a cause. I'm ashamed of it, but I feel like abandoning the revolution and the struggle for justice. I'm tired.

But tired or not, the truth about the injustices burns in me and wants out. I can fill the pale ones with doubt and the oppressed with hope. They call it "anger" but it's hope. Hope of true justice that's not just scraps from the table of the wealthy. Words do my bidding, and in them I have a weapon against the oppressors. Using that weapon is a sweet and terrible thrill, a fire in my blood that screams, I am alive.

My travelling companion Taningia Danae wants me to call her "Tan" as if she were a goblin. Sometimes I feel like ripping her head off, but in all her indignation at the oppression of goblins she's so innocent that it's hard to get really mad at her. She's running a risk for me, though it's an elf risk of house arrest and lost money – I risk being whipped until the ribs stick out of my back. Also, she'd really like to get in my pants, what with me being a hero.

Challenge: Kell

Kell is the assistant master engineer of the Gargantuan, a high position for a goblin. He's also a cousin of Jot, the father of my daughter, and I'm sure he knows where I can find Jot and Kiff. But Kell is the type who doesn't want "trouble" and looks down on "politics" because he doesn't understand that the conditions under which we live ARE political. I have to find some way to reach him.

To persuade Kell, I'll need help. Maybe the ship's physician dr. Eledone Cirrhosa could help? She is, if not a goblin friend, at least helpful to goblins as well as elves, and she seems like someone that Kell would listen to.

Secondary characters (player D)

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Doss, or *Dosidicus Gigas*, is a slightly too expensively and ostentatiously dressed gentleman who almost looks like an elf. Really, it's mostly the posture and clothes that give it away. He's known to be a successful manufacturer, and his elf friend does quite a bit for his status.

Helpers

Heck, astral correspondent operator, knows Jill the sleaze journalist

Heck has an important and technically demanding position aboard the Gargantuan – he operates the astral correspondent which allows him to communicate with faraway ships and cities (think telegraph). To the elves, he might as well be a part of the machine, not a person, and he's pretty tired of it. He makes such money as he can on the side, among other things by spying on messages for Jill the sleaze journalist, and by sneaking through her messages outside the schedule. *Desires kindness, needs money.*

- Can help Illex Argentinus make contact with Jill

Moll, exotic dancer

”Progressive entertainment” is fashionable, and Moll makes good money by acting the part of an erotically dancing ur-goblin in a grass skirt. She's good at giving smut-hungry elves what they dream of. But how long will the fashion last, and how long will she? And Moll has two little children living back home with her poor mother. She pretends to be an ever innocently cheerful goblin, but it's beginning to require a lot of crying out back to keep up that act. *Desires money, needs kindness.*

Rules for describing (player D)

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Jewels

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Physical flaws

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(cocky) Kish **Rob (the lip)**

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Opals (blue-white w. coloured flecks, opaque)

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Amber (yellow-orange, semi-translucent)

Cheap stones

Agates (whitish, opaque)

Amethysts (purple, translucent)

Quartz (white or rose, translucent)

Mother-of-pearl (uneven, rainbow sheen)

Turquoises (blue-green, opaque)

Warmup:

Alloteuthis Subulata

Architeutis Dux

Argonauta Argo

Berryteuthis Magister

Eledone Cirrhosa

Gonatus Fabricii

Illex Argentinus

Loligo Edulis

Nautilus Pompilius

Elf names

Ommastrephes Bartramii

Rossia Pacifica

Sepia Esculenta

Sepia Officinalis

Sepiella Japonica

Taningia Danae

Todarodes Sagittatus

Watasenia Scintillans

