

# THE VARIANT BANK

## Rather Silly Diplomacy 2<sub>1/2</sub>

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[1] The rules of Standard Diplomacy will be used except where modified below, but let's face it, the designers have left few of them untouched in this one!

### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

The Seven usual Powers

The JESTER.

The MASTERMIND.

The DOCTOR.

The SOOTHSAYER.

### *Non-Players*

The BORG; SEA MONSTERS; SPACE MONSTERS; LLAMAS

BIRDS; FEMALE ARMIES; DIRTY OLD MEN ARMIES; GAY FLEETS

[2] BORG is an enormous, indestructible creature who exists only to eat human units (armies and fleets) and BIRDS. He begins the game off-board and appears on board after the Spring 1901 moves to eat the unit with the most neighbours. His moves thereafter adhere to the following criteria:

- i) If there is only one adjacent unit, he eats it.
- ii) If there are two or more adjacent units, he eats the unit which borders on the most additional units. If each borders the same number of units, the neighbours of these bordering units are counted and so on until his move is decided.
- iii) If there are no adjacent units, the same criteria as for ii) above is used; the object being to move him towards the best chance of a meal.

BORG doesn't necessarily have to move. He has no combat value, so units may move to occupy the space he exists in, and if players wish to feed him in this way, then BORG will be quite happy where he is unless an adjacent space offers him a larger meal BORG is amphibious, so fleets at sea and overseas units are all included in the movement calculations. He is not attracted by SEA or SPACE MONSTERS but would eat them anyway if they were in any province he moved to. The DOCTOR does not attract him, and should BORG move into the province in which the DOCTOR is located, he will not attempt to eat him or his TARDIS. If BORG is located in a supply centre during the adjustment phase, the centre is rendered neutral. BORG can use the MONT BLANC UNDERPASS should his quest for food lead him through it.

[3] LLAMAS are shy, amphibious quadrupeds; so shy that you don't know they're there until they blow themselves up (along with your unit) by detonating the high grade TNT they just happen to have with them. In the Winter 1900 phase the players controlling the seven major powers may place a herd of LLAMAS in each , of three non-supply centre provinces or sea spaces. More than one herd may exist in the same location. The herds may not move, but may be ordered to explode in a given season under given circumstances, and they would thus destroy any unit residing in their location at the time. They can destroy any unit except for BORG, other LLAMAS and the TARDIS, and cannot be re-used once exploded. LLAMA explosions take place after normal movement, but immediately before retreats (see rule 17).

[4] After each Spring retreat phase, a group of SEA MONSTERS will appear in an unoccupied and randomly-determined sea or coastal space. This is basically a fleet of double strength. It's aim is to capture supply centres, and it moves according to the following criteria:

- i) to an adjacent centre with no units in it;
- ii) to an adjacent centre with a unit in it, but no neighbouring units;
- iii) to an adjacent centre with a unit in it and with neighbouring units.

The movement criteria is essentially the same as for BORG, but with units acting as a repellant instead of an attraction, and the object being to occupy a centre as soon as possible. A SEA MONSTER may move from one centre to an adjacent one if the second centre has fewer units adjacent to it, but it will never vacate a centre to move to a non-centre province unless forced to retreat. After each Autumn retreat phase, a group of SPACE MONSTERS will appear in a vacant and randomly-determined land province.

This is basically an army of double strength and it behaves in exactly the same way as SEA MONSTERS. Neither types of MONSTERS can breed on earth - new MONSTERS are not built through control of centres.

[5] At the end of the main movement phase, but before retreats, any conventional unit may be ordered to sell its soul to the Devil. This doubles the unit's strength for the following two seasons, though the unit requires only one centre to maintain supply. Should the unit be destroyed (or eaten) whilst enjoying this extra strength, it would still require a centre to maintain its soul; hence the player plays with a unit down. If such a unit is exorcised by the DOCTOR then it returns to normal strength with no penalties. Units created due to MASTERMIND questions or by SOOTHSAYER mergings may not sell their souls; nor may FEMALE ARMIES or DIRTY OLD MEN ARMIES.

[6] Switzerland remains an impassable province, but a new tunnel, called the MONT BLANC UNDERPASS has been built which renders all provinces next to Switzerland adjacent to each other. Any number of moves may be attempted through the UNDERPASS, and the moves will not affect each other unless destinations coincide or units are attempting to change places (ie. A(Mun)-Pie and A(Tyr)-Bur would not get in each other's way). Only human units and BORG may use the UNDERPASS, but this support may be cut by any use of the UNDERPASS by units belonging to another player.

[7] Each season, each player may submit a vote for a HYPERSPACE LINK. The LINK with the most votes is active for the following season only, and renders the two named provinces adjacent for all purposes during that season. If more than one proposal ties for first place, the GM randomly determines which is selected. HYPERSPACE itself and the MONT BLANC UNDERPASS may not be named. The selection takes place at the end of each season, and remains in force until the selection for the following season takes place - thus proposals may be made conditional on anything preceding them.

[8] As an alternative to building conventional units, a player may build a flock of BIRDS. BIRDS may fly three spaces unladen or two spaces if carrying an army. Fleets are too big for their talons however, so they cannot carry fleets. To pick up an army, the BIRDS must be in the same location, and the orders for both units must be consistent: ie. B(Lon) PICK UP A(Lon), A/B(Lon)-NTH-Den. BIRDS have no combat value and cannot contest ownership of a space; an army being carried by a BIRD also has zero combat value until it has landed on the ground again. BIRDS may co-exist with any unit except BORG (who will of course, eat them). Mixed nationality A/Bs are possible, but both parties must be giving consistent orders or they will separate after performing the common part of the order - the army surviving only if it is over unoccupied land when dropped.

If the space to which the A/BB is moving is occupied, or the A/BB is stood off, then it stops in the intervening space if possible. If this space is a sea space, then the army drowns, and the BIRD continues on to the ordered destination.

Any unit given the order to hold may also "Shoo" BIRDS, whereupon no BIRDS (even friendly ones) may end their move in the Shooing unit's location, or in any space adjacent to it. If a BIRD is attempting to enter this zone, it is stood off before entering; if it tried to remain within the zone, it must retreat outside the danger area. It is possible that a combination of Shooing units will leave the BIRD with no legal retreat (even by dropping an army, should it happen to be carrying one), in which case the BIRD dies of fright. Any army dropped on to another army or fleet is destroyed, whilst the original occupant is unhurt. In the event of a player not submitting retreat orders for his BIRDS they will die of neglect and the RSPCB will be informed.

[9] In addition to normal building, each five centres owned by a player during the adjustment phase permits him to build (at no cost) a FEMALE ARMY. She moves as normal, but has no combat value, and may co-exist with any other unit except BORG (who would eat them). FEMALE ARMIES may "distract" any conventional armies or fleets by so ordering: eg. FA(Bur) distract FRENCH A(Par). The distracted unit must attack the FEMALE ARMY regardless of the player's original order or of any subsequent re-order by the JESTER. A FEMALE ARMY in a land-locked space may not distract a fleet. A FEMALE ARMY may distract a unit with which it shares a location, and may distract units belonging to the owning player. When the distract order is used, if the affected unit ends its move in the same space as the FEMALE ARMY, then the FEMALE ARMY must retreat (unless she prefers death to dishonour).

[10] In addition to normal building, each five centres held by a player during the adjustment phase permits him to build - at no cost - a DIRTY OLD MAN ARMY. This moves as normal but has no combat value and may co-exist with any other unit

except BORG (who eats them as well - it's no fussy). It's speciality is that it can give the "EXPOSE" order, which nullifies the effect of any FEMALE ARMY in any adjacent space. The number of DIRTY OLD MAN and FEMALE ARMIES a player can own is adjusted according to the five-centre criteria each adjustment phase.

[11] From the Winter 1901 adjustments onwards, every fifth fleet built by a player is GAY. It is thus immune to distraction by FEMALE ARMIES, but when in a coastal province, it must be attacked by any adjacent straight fleets and normal armies belonging to other players. If there is more than one unit adjacent to do the attacking - or if an attack on the space had already been ordered but without support - the GM will amend the orders to produce a supported attack wherever possible. This is a particularly bigoted rule and would never have been allowed if it were not for 17 years of Tory prejudice.

[12] A player may build one pair of SIAMESE UNITS in the same adjustment phase in adjacent provinces once during the game, which shall count as a single build. The two units must always be adjacent and are both destroyed if forced to split up. Orders given by the owning player must be so that the units would remain adjacent regardless of whether the given orders succeed or not. If illegal orders are given for SIAMESE UNITS, the units will hold. Each move, regardless of any other orders, each will also support what the other is doing; thus, if they are ordered to support each other, they have in effect two supports each. If a SIAMESE UNIT is attacked whilst giving a support order, this support would be cut before that for its twin, which would require a second attack, or one supported attack before it in turn would be cut. By a curious tear in the space time continuum, a player may build these units as a fleet and an army; the mutual support they give each other would not be affected by the fleet being at sea while the army was on land. SIAMESE armies may convoy each other while supporting each other.

[13] There is an eighth player in the game called the JESTER. He never has any units, but each season, he may order any one unit belonging to any player which will override the original order for that unit. He may answer MASTERMIND questions, but instead of building a unit, the following season he is allowed to re-order a second unit belonging to a different player to the first ordered by the JESTER that move. The JESTER wins by dragging the game on past the WINTER 1920 adjustments.

[14] The ninth player is called the MASTERMIND. Each season, he sets a question for the other players to answer, and supplies the GM with the correct answer. If nobody gets the answer right to what the GM considers to be a reasonable extent, then the MASTERMIND gets to build a free unit in Iceland or Corfu. Iceland borders NAO and NWG while Corfu borders AEG, EMS and ION. These two building provinces remain impassable to all other player's units. If one or more players get the right answer to the question, they share a free unit, with fractions being accumulated until they can build a whole extra unit in a home centre. Such builds have to be nominated as such, do not require centres to support them, but are not replaced if destroyed. Units gained from answering questions can be built in Summer or Winter or such builds may be deferred until later - though not more than one free unit may be built in any season. If the MASTERMIND NMRs, all remaining players share in a free unit.

[15] The DOCTOR starts the game with only one unit - the TARDIS - from which he can never be separated and which can never be destroyed. He starts the game in Winter 1900 in hyperspace. When he subsequently moves - via hyperspace - there is a 50% chance that the damn machine will malfunction and materialise in a random space rather than as ordered. If he lands in the sea, he hops a ride with some dolphins, so he's okay. He cannot be eaten by BORG and is not attracted by BORG. He can capture supply centres by being lone in them in a Winter season and may raise units, if they are due, in any centre he owns. The TARDIS needs no centre to maintain, but may share a province with other units. The TARDIS does not affect ordinary units, but it may be held by any unit whose space it is in, provided the unit does not attempt to do anything else. If the unit holding the TARDIS is dislodged, then the TARDIS may move to hyperspace, otherwise it must remain where it is. The TARDIS may also be carried by a unit if they share the same space and both are ordered accordingly; otherwise the TARDIS may move only to and from hyperspace. The DOCTOR may eliminate MONSTERS if the TARDIS arrives at the same location as a group of them, either under its own steam or as a result of being carried. The DOCTOR gains one Victory point for destroying a MONSTER. Similarly the DOCTOR gains one Victory Point by materialising in a space occupied by a unit which has sold its soul to the Devil and thus exorcising the unit (which then returns to normal strength). The DOCTOR's Victory Points are added together to the number of centres he held during the last adjustment phase, and if this totals 30 or more, he wins the game. Note that it is thus possible for the DOCTOR to win the game in a Spring season.

[16] Finally, there is an eleventh player called the SOOTHSAYER. Each season, he may predict two provinces over which he believes there will be either a stand-off between two or more units belonging to different Powers on the board (nb. this excludes MONSTERS) or a self-standoff (two units belonging to the same Power ordered to move to the same space). If he is right, all regular units (including FEMALE, DIRTY OLD and GAY units) directly involved in a predicted stand-off will merge in that province to form a single unit belonging to the SOOTHSAYER. The new merged unit will be of the type which is in the majority in forming that unit, otherwise the SOOTHSAYER can specify whether he wants a multiple fleet or a multiple army. Units which have sold their soul to the Devil are exorcised in this process and the sexual identity of all units thus created is 100% red-blooded young healthy heterosexual male. Powers which lose units in this way may of course rebuild in an autumn season if they have more centres than units. If the SOOTHSAYER takes centres, he may build as normal in any centre he controls. If the SOOTHSAYER answers a MASTERMIND question correctly he does not get free unit(s), but he is allowed to predict three stand-offs in the following season (instead of two).

[17] The order of play is as follows:

1. Human units, BIRDS, TARDIS, MONSTERS move simultaneously;
2. Units merge to form SOOTHSAYER units where applicable;
3. Units with sold souls revert to normal on their second turn;
4. New soul selling occurs;
5. BORG moves and eats;
6. LLAMAS detonate where ordered;
7. Retreats take place;

8. MONSTERS arrive;
9. Adjustments occur after Autumn seasons.
10. MASTERMIND questions are answered and free units built;
11. Current HYPERSPACE LINKS end and links for next season are decided.

Orders for each phase may be conditional on any earlier phase that season.

[18] Victory Conditions: Any player except the JESTER may win by achieving control of 18 supply centres during an adjustment phase. The DOCTOR may also win by achieving 30 Victory Points (which raises the possibility of a tie between the DOCTOR and another player). The JESTER will win the game if it continues past the 1920 adjustment phase. Draws may be agreed at any time according to the House Rules of the zine it is played in.

[19] The GM is in complete control of the game from the word GO. He is always right and if you can prove he isn't then he can change the rules retrospectively to make himself right. The GM reserves the right to change the rules as he pleases.

[http://www.variantbank.org/results/rules/r/rather\\_silly.htm](http://www.variantbank.org/results/rules/r/rather_silly.htm)