



BLACKOUT

BLACKOUT

A Game about Women & The Blitz



CD

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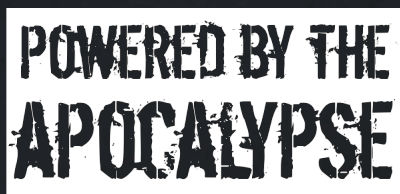
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**FREEDOM IS
IN PERIL**

**DEFEND IT
WITH ALL
YOUR MIGHT**

Though the United Kingdom declared war against Nazi Germany on the 3rd of September, 1939, they stood by as the Wehrmacht invaded and occupied Poland. They called it a phony war, and nobody was willing to send their sons to die for Danzig.

Then, on 10th May 1940, German tanks rolled through Belgium and into France. France was forced to surrender in just forty days, their forces surrounded, cut off, and cut to pieces by fast-moving panzer divisions. Almost half a million British troops and allies were trapped in pockets on the north coast. Those who could not be evacuated were taken prisoner, to be worked in Nazi industry for the rest of the war.

Now, Britain faced the Axis powers across the English Channel. The Nazi war machine was a seemingly unstoppable military juggernaut which had rolled across most of Europe in less than a year. Defeat seemed certain.

The German air force, the *Luftwaffe*, sent their best fighter squadrons over the channel to engage the Royal Air Force, determined to destroy them and establish undisputed air superiority. Once the RAF's fighter wings were destroyed, German bombers could make easy targets of Britain's war industry, forcing surrender without landing a single boot on English soil. It was only through the bravery and tenacity of the fighter pilots and their support crew that Britain held on.

Once it was clear to the *Luftwaffe* that air superiority was beyond their grasp, they switched tactics. Their bombers now flew at night, at high altitudes, a combination that made them nearly untouchable to fighter interception and anti-aircraft fire. Instead of precision strikes, they indiscriminately dropped high explosives and incendiary bombs on civilian populations, attempting to terrify Britain into compliance.

For eight harrowing months, German bombers thundered over London nightly, dropping nearly 20,000 tons of bombs on the city. Most civilians doused their lights and huddled in homemade shelters or the Underground when the sirens wailed.

But some ventured out into the dark streets and braved the Blitz to save the city and the people in it. This game is about them.

INTRODUCTION

BLACKOUT is a *Powered by the Apocalypse* game about female auxiliaries involved in Civil Defence during the London Blitz. As members of the Women's Voluntary Services or the ARP, you stray out into the streets of London at night, responding to danger, treating victims, and putting your life on the line in the struggle to keep calm and carry on.

BLACKOUT is designed for one-shot play; a single session lasting 3-4 hours, representing one night of the Blitz and a small snapshot into the lives of these women. It won't really hold up to multiple sessions, and it's not intended to; it tells the complete story of a single night.

This game is designed for a game master and 2-5 people. The traditional HO role is taken by the Home Office, or "HO". The HO is responsible for managing the world, while the players take the role of the Civil Defence volunteers attempting to hold the city together.

If you're playing the Home Office, read this entire book. You need to know all the rules contained in it, and you'll want all the background details to flesh out the world. If you're a player, you really just need your playsheets, but reading the basic rules couldn't hurt.

What you Need

To play, you need at least two six-sided dice, preferably two for each player, note paper, and pencils. You also need to print out copies of the game's Playbooks; they can be downloaded at the link below.

<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/217590/BLACKOUT--Playbooks>

To enhance the atmosphere of your game, try playing in a basement or with the curtains drawn, with lights only over your playing area. Prepare a strictly limited amount of food; rationing is in effect. Put on some quiet period music in the background.

For maximum authenticity, play during a thunderstorm.

Keep your gas masks and helmets close. Hitler will send no warning.

THE BASICS

We both know this isn't your first roleplaying game, so let's just cover how this particular game works if you're unfamiliar with the particulars of this system and format.

Powered by the Apocalypse games centre around The Conversation. That's the exchange of what-do-you-do's and what-happens-now's which is familiar to anyone who has played a roleplaying game before. You just talk, and the story emerges.

What you say is important, though. The mechanics in this game are segmented into little packages called Moves, which have a trigger and an effect: when this happens, do this. When you do this, this happens. By following those rules when they come up, the story takes twists and turns you weren't expecting. Sometimes a Move will lead into another, and sometimes the HO will just ask "what do you do now?"

You keep following these rules and making these Moves until the night ends and the sirens stop.

Dice

When you roll dice in this game, you roll 2 dice at once (2d6), and add the results together. Then, you add the stat you were asked to roll (+Stat) to the roll to modify it.

A 7 or greater is a Hit; a 7-9 being a partial success and a 10+ being a full success. 6 or less is a Miss.

When you take +forward, you add that bonus to the next roll. When you hold something, you can spend it later for an effect.

Why Women?

Men and women alike participated in the defence of London, from RAF pilots and ack-ack gunners to hospital workers, police, and civilian volunteers lending a hand.

BLACKOUT focuses on the women involved in civil defence because the stories of women, especially in wartime, often slip through the cracks. We often undervalue the work they did, be it right in the thick of things or behind the lines as codebreakers, technicians, secretaries, nurses, and auxiliaries.

Bonds & Helping

Bonds are two-directional resources that represent your connection to your teammates. You share them with your friends, and either of you can use them: “I share 2 Bonds with Margaret”.

When you Help somebody, tell everyone what you do. They then add another d6 to their roll. If you really want to throw yourself to their aid, you can spend your Bonds to add additional d6s, 1-1.

After the dice are rolled, the player chooses the two highest dice to be their final results. The rest are discarded. They succeed or fail as they normally would on these dice. Furthermore, if they score a 10+, you gain 1 Bond with them.

If one of the discarded dice are 1s, that’s called a “*Fault*”. The Move may have gone off without a hitch, but the HO makes a move against the person who helped instead, as they’ve put themselves in harm’s way. More faults means worse consequences.

Any number of PCs can Help with a roll; dump all the dice together. In these situations. Don’t bother tracking where the dice came from for faults; the HO makes their moves against whichever target makes the most sense.



CHARACTERS

In this game, you play female volunteers, working for the ARP, WVS, and similar organizations. Characters are created by welding together a pair of character sheets: who you are (your **Identity**) and your job in Civil Defence (your **Role**).

Characters have a Harm Clock and an Exhaustion Clock on their Role sheet. When they fill up the Exhaustion Clock, they Break Down. If they fill up the Harm Clock, they are incapacitated or dead.

Identities

Your Identities are who you are as a person; your social and economic class, your age and background, and the unique perspective you bring. The Blitz brought together people from all walks of life, united in a common goal of holding their country together for one more night. They are explored in more detail starting on page 21.

Queer Characters

The women's auxiliary services tended to attract queer women,, probably because they were female-dominated spaces that often flaunted gender roles. A great many lesbians and bisexual women served in these organizations, sometimes openly.

There wasn't much transgender anything in the 40s, especially after the Nazis burnt the archives of Magnus Hirschfeld's *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft*. But it's your game; I'm not going to complain if a trans woman ends up working for the ARP in your version of 1940s London.

There are six Identities, a cross-section of London life. They are...

- » The Young Housewife
- » The Noble Heiress
- » The Educated Woman
- » The Working Lass
- » The Old Bird

These Identities are born partially of stereotypes, but also in the realities of Britain's stratified society. It's up to you how you play out that identity.

Your Identity gives you a lot of information: a selection of personal Moves, your Victories, your Breaks, personal details, and your basic stats; Bold, Soft, Nerve, and Wise.

Roles

Civil Defence was a dizzyingly complex job requiring dozens of speciality roles, many fulfilled by people with little training or preparation. The relevant ARP roles are reduced to five simplified specialities, each giving players Role Moves and personal equipment. They are explored in more detail on page 33.



Air Wardens

The Air Wardens (W) enforce the blackout, seeing that regulations are followed, guiding civilians, and rallying the other branches of Civil Defence. They are leaders and all-rounders, always willing to help.

Rescue Services

The boldest, bravest, and strongest, Heavy Rescue (HR) pull casualties from wreckage, find unexploded munitions, and are the first into any bombed-out structure. They specialize in making their way into buildings to find bodies, trapped people, and unexploded munitions.

First Aid

First Aid Parties (FAP) tend to the health of both bombing victims and other members of ARP. They tend to be the smartest and most level-headed, usually having previous medical training.

Fireguard

The Fireguard (FG) accompanies Rescue Services, having an engineering bent. They keep structures up as long as they can, put out fires, and defuse unexploded munitions, doing the most to mitigate damage to structures themselves.

Welfare

Welfare (WVS) are responsible for managing psychological casualties, civilian or otherwise. They have to deal with people suffering from shock and loss, and keep the rest of the team going. Their job might seem the least dangerous, but is enormously stressful.

The Section

Put together, the player characters (PCs) form a Section, a squad of air raid responders who can work together to solve problems on their own initiative. When the siren blares, the Section gets together, reports in, and gets out there to do some good.

Variety in the composition of your Section is best; you shouldn't have duplicates of roles or backgrounds. That way, you get your best chance of experiencing everything the game has to offer.

Your Section is one of many in your community; these teams are subordinate to a Report & Control centre established nearby. In addition to your action teams, there are a variety of other roles scurrying around, like young bicycle messengers relaying information between HQ and field teams, specially trained Gas Decontamination squads, and telephone operators.

Rescue Teams & Gender

Though women were not permitted to serve in rescue teams, in practice anyone able-bodied could contribute. Women were valued for being able to crawl into places men couldn't fit and were perceived to have a better eye for small details that could save a life.

You also work in close concert with military forces in the city. The Army and RAF operate anti-aircraft guns and searchlights, and if your borough is on the water you likely work alongside the Royal Navy. The military tends to be fairly dismissive of you, both because of the ad-hoc nature of the ARP and because of your gender.

Finally, you will frequently be working alongside the Home Guard, a military reserve of teenaged boys and old men preparing for the possibility of a German invasion. The Old Guard is just about as ad-hoc and rag-tag as you are, so you tend to get along well with them.

As a group, with the input of the HO, decide what kind of connections your Section has to others. What other teams does your Section work with? What resources never made it to the local ARP stations? What roles are desperately understaffed? Come up with a name for your local commander. How do they regard your team?

THE COMMUNITY

Your Section is responsible for a small area inside London, your Community. These streets are your home; you and your family probably grew up here. You know these streets like the back of your hand, every nook and cranny and crack in the sidewalk. It might not be much, but this is your corner of the damp and dreary island you call home.

Unless you live in London and want to use your actual surroundings, the community you'll be protecting is not a real place. Rather, you create this neighbourhood together as a group before play begins. This allows you to define the place where your character lives and gives you an idea of what the lives of your characters are like before the bombs came to disrupt it.

Community Sheet

Your Community is enough of a character that it has its own sheet, with an area you can sketch a basic map on. Your community will need a name; real London communities have names like Mayfair, Kensington, Camden Town, and Paddington. At the top of the sheet are some tags you can use to define the feel of the community; circle the ones you think should apply to the place you call home, or come up with your own. Discuss everything as a group; you all live here together.



On this sheet you can mark down local landmarks and important places and write some important details about them. Everyone's Identity sheet has some suggestions for places you should add to the Community sheet, which you can use for inspiration, but you can feel free to come up with your own.

By the time you're finished, your Community should have roughly 8-10 landmarks. Make sure you know where everyone lives and works, where people gather at the end of a long day, and at least one special thing that can act as the pride of the town. You can have more if you want, but the map might get a little crowded.

Local Figures

Small, tight-knit communities like this tend to have local figures that stand out, important people that everyone knows. The popular foreman or union rep, the barkeep at the local pub, that sort of thing. For every location not your own home, come up with a character who defines that place and one or two details about them, and mark it down in the appropriate space on the community sheet.

These people may or may not come up during play, but it's nice to have a human face to landmarks and buildings. The HO can use these people to tie you to the places that come under attack.



THE RAID CLOCK

Looming over the night is The Raid Clock, a measure of the intensity and uncertainty of the raid thundering overhead. The clock is placed prominently in the centre of the table, and it looks like this.



Any time you miss on any of the basic Moves, in addition to the consequences the HO inflicts, a d6 is rolled. If the result is greater than the current position of the clock, the clock is advanced by 1 and everyone sighs in relief. If it is equal or less than the state of the Clock, a bomb lands on one of the Community landmarks, beginning a Site.

Sites & State

When a bomb lands, it creates a Site, which is a euphemistic way of saying it blows up and creates a bloody mess of rubble, flames, and bodies dead or wounded. This disaster scene is the enemy.

Sites have a State, which is how bad off the Site is. The State of a Site is 0, minus the Raid Clock's value when the bomb landed (So if the Raid Clock was at 2, the Site State would be -2.)

When they aren't being tended to, the State of an unattended Site takes a -1 every time the Raid Clock advances until help arrives.



German Bombers

The Germans primarily flew three bombers during the Blitz; the greenhouse-nosed He 111, above, the swift Ju 88, and the light Do 17 “Flying Pencil”. All were designed in the mid-30s to outrun interceptors, and thus they had few defensive weapons. But by the 40s they could be easily caught by RAF fighters, which is why they had to be flown with heavy escort or at night.

As first responders, your goal is to raise the State of the site as high as you think you can afford to before moving on, leaving the scene in the hands of others as you move to the next disaster. You can't *fix* the bomb site, you can only try to mitigate the damage.

First Site

Before the first bomb lands, play out the evening air raid preparations; getting people to safety, being on blackout patrol, and so forth. Nobody takes any Exhaustion yet, but when Basic Moves are made, regardless of hits or misses, advance the Raid Clock and roll for a bomb.

Raising the Site State

The Home Office raises the Site State whenever you achieve important Civil Defence goals, like those listed below. Exactly what qualifies is up to the Home Office, but all of these are important and worthy tasks.

- » Rescue civilians.
- » Treat casualties.
- » Recover bodies.
- » Evacuate the area.
- » Save heritage items.
- » Put out fires.
- » Defuse undetonated explosives.

BASIC MOVES

When you're in danger, Press On. When you help somebody, Make Time. When you scan a scene, Size Up. When you need to get help, Take Charge. When you're done, Move On.

These are just the basics; every Role has at least one more unique move like these for addressing their particular responsibilities.

Any Move marked with a * cost 1 Exhaustion to use.

***Press On**

Whenever you tempt fate and keep going in a dangerous situation...

...roll +Nerve.

On a 10+, you do it. On a 7-9, you do it, but choose one.

- » You are injured. HO inflicts Harm or Exhaustion as established.
- » The situation around you gets much worse, very fast.
- » Somebody else is endangered.

On a miss, the Home Office can pick two, or make another hard move.

***Make Time**

When you stop to take care of a person...

...roll +Soft.

On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- » Remove 2 Exhaustion.
- » Gain Bond between you.
- » Give +1 forward.

On a miss, choose 1 anyway, and play out how it goes wrong.

When you Make Time with NPCs, choose from this list instead.

- » They stay quiet.
- » They stay still.
- » +1 forward to the next Move with that person.

***Size Up**

When you look over a site to get your bearings...

...roll +Wise.

On a 10+, hold 4. On a 7-9, hold 2. Spend holds to ask...

- » ... how can I get in there?
- » ... what is going to give way first?
- » ... who is in the greatest danger?
- » ... where are the casualties?
- » ... where is ____?
- » ... who is in charge here?
- » ... what is missing?
- » ... what danger am I overlooking?

On a miss, hold 2 anyway, but do not expect accurate answers.

***Take Charge**

When you rally the troops or begin a confrontation to get your way...

...roll +Bold.

On a 10+, everyone falls in line. On a 7-9, the Home Office chooses one.

- » Not everyone follows along.
- » People go along only while things go perfectly.
- » You will be defied soon.

***Move On**

When you think you've done what you can...

...as a team, roll +Site State.

On a 10+, a job well done! Everyone gets 2 Victories.

On a 7-9, close enough is good enough. Everyone gets 1 Victory.

Everyone take a new Role Move and head to the next site.

CONSEQUENCES

Rescue work is dangerous, awful business. To represent the toil it takes on body, mind, and soul, we have Harm, Exhaustion, and Breaks.

Harm

Harm represents simple physical injury. Every point of Harm you take reduces all your rolls by -1 until it gets patched up. Accure 3 Harm, and your character is either too badly wounded to continue, or is killed, as is narratively appropriate.

Exhaustion

When characters use Moves marked with a *, they take 1 Exhaustion. When they hit 5 Exhaustion, they Break Down, which is why it's important they try to find time to rest.

Stand Down

When you put down your gear and take five...

... roll on the Raid Clock as many times as you wish. Everyone resting each recovers an equal amount of Exhaustion.

If you Stand Down for 3+ rolls, you may also remove one Break.

Break Down

When you reach 5 Exhaustion...

...check off one of the Breaks on your Identity, then roll flat.

On a 10+, recover all Exhaustion. On a 7-9, recover 3 Exhaustion. On a miss, recover 1 Exhaustion.

Breaks

Breaks are a list on your Identity sheet, made up of problems which plague a character as they push their body and mind beyond their limits. When you check them off, you take their effects.

If you take all your Breaks, you collapse from exhaustion.

ALL CLEAR

At the end of the night, you spend the Victories you gathered to buy narrative hooks that let you get through the Blitz as a human being. The worse the night was, the worse things are going to play out.

There are no hard and fast rules for when the raid ends; the raid lasts as long as the session does, and dawn breaks as you reach the end of your playtime. Basically, once you're done, you're done.

Victories

Victories are an abstraction of how your personal contribution has helped the war effort. You are a microcosm of the British Home Front: when you do a good job fighting fires and saving lives, the country rallies, and when you do poorly, morale sags and sacrifices are made.

At the end of the game, pay off Breaks with your Victories, 1-1. If you end up with extra Victories available after that, you can spend them to select stories from the Victories section of your Identity Sheet.

Every Identity has their own Victories, and by answering the questions associated with them, you can craft an epilogue for the characters. Victories are your reward for a job well done.





**KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON**

IDENTITIES

England's class system was (and in some cases, still is) one of the most stratified and entrenched in the world. Class was of overwhelming importance, determining everything from your opportunities in life to the particulars of the English you spoke. Even as urban life brought rich and poor closer together physically, social demands acted to keep them in separate worlds.

The last war had put cracks in this system; a generation of young noblemen, heirs to the fortunes of England, died in France and Belgium side by side with paupers. Socialist movements, galvanized by the end of the war, began the erosion of many of the worst excesses of industry and capital, giving a new sense of agency to the working class through collective bargaining and the rise of the Labour Party. The new war promises similar changes.

Bombs don't care about social class; mansions burn just like row houses and tenements. The rich and poor huddle together in the Underground for safety. Children collect scrap and retirees fill sandbags. Beggars direct rescue efforts and princesses fix trucks.

Either Britain stands together, or it falls.



The Young Housewife

Before the middle of the century, wages were high enough and social expectations were strong enough that, generally, women married in their early 20s and started having children soon after.

Women were expected to tend house, raise the kids, and mostly stay out of public life from that point forward. Being a wife and mother was pretty much all there was supposed to be for you. Not saying it wasn't worthwhile or fulfilling work, but society didn't let you have much say in it one way or another.

War changed all that. The men disappeared into recruitment centres and long shifts in the factories, and mothers were suddenly very important to the war effort. A deluge of new responsibilities poured out of government offices: Grow a victory garden! Knit socks for the front! Set up a home shelter! Have you children collect scrap, or leave them with a relative and get a war job!

It was stressful, frantic, and all-consuming, disrupting what many wives thought was the routine for the rest of their lives. Some resented it, others relished in the chance to step outside the home and make a difference there.

You're one of those Young Housewives. You've got kids at home and a husband either doing important work or in the military, training or deployed somewhere in Africa or Southeast Asia. You've got to do your bit, too. You've got a level head about you and strong starting stats; compared to the terror of raising young children, crawling into bombed and burning buildings is nothing.

Child Evacuees

One of the programs that the UK government pushed to help prop up morale was an effort to get children out of the cities and the path of the bombs. Not only could parents do war work knowing their kids were safe, but if the worst happened and airborne chemical attack wiped out London, the next generation would be safe.

Many of these children simply went out into the countryside to live with relatives or guest families, but others were evacuated overseas in anticipation of German invasion.

Stats

0 Bold, 0 Nerve, 0 Soft, 0 Wise

Moves

Take 3, plus Job Training.

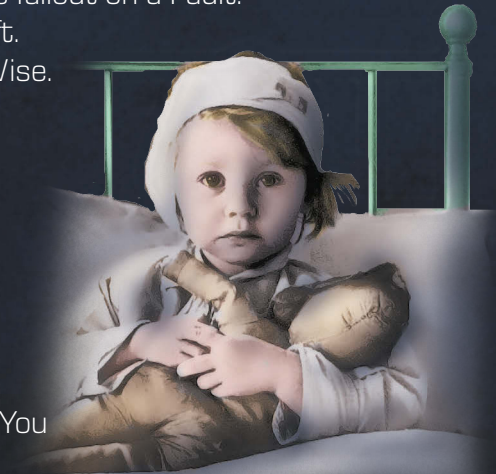
- **Job Training:** When you Move On, you can learn a Role Move from another Role instead of your own by spending your Bond with them.
- **Good Read:** After you Size Up, ask Home Office "Where should I start?" If you follow their recommendation, take +1.
- **Make your Way:** When you receive orders, remove 1 Exhaustion when you follow them. When you defy orders, Take Charge of the person who gave the orders and tell them why they are wrong.
- **Life Lesson:** When you score a 10+ to Make Time with a PC, impart a good habit on them. Whenever they follow that habit, you count as Helping them. You do not take fallout on a Fault.
- **Motherly Instincts:** Take +1 Soft.
- **Mother Knows Best:** Take +1 Wise.
- **Inner Strength:** Take +1 Nerve.
- **Make a Racket:** Take +1 Bold.

Breaks

- **Daunted:** -1 Bold.
- **Short:** -1 Soft.
- **Shakey:** -1 Nerve.
- **Fried:** -1 Wise.
- **Scarred:** Uncheck a Role Move. You can take this multiple times.

Victories

- Your children are taken to safety, in the countryside or the colonies. Who do they stay with? How are they changed when they return?
- When the Blitz ends, you get an important job in war work. How does employment change you? Do you like the work?
- Your husband returns safe from the war with a chest full of medals. Where did he serve? How has war affected him?
- You stay busy after the war even as women are shuffled out of the factories. What do you do to stay sharp?
- When your children grow up, what great things do they achieve?

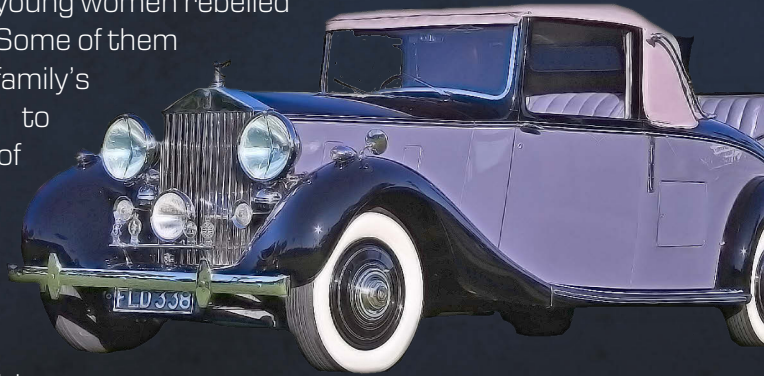


The Noble Heiress

Throughout the 19th century, the declining aristocracy and the emerging capitalist class intermarried, consolidating together their wealth and titles. This resulted in a dizzying maze of interlocking political, industrial, and colonial interests, all of whom considered themselves the only legitimately respectable class in high society.

The young women who emerged from these halls of power were placed in an interesting social position, at the intersection of an extremely conservative strata of society and a rapidly changing definition of the role of women. These women were not merely the eligible bargaining chips they would have been a century prior, but they were also not yet completely free to pursue their own interests.

Unsurprisingly, many young women rebelled against this dynamic. Some of them would use their family's political connections to be at the forefront of feminist and socialist efforts, while others used their time to pursue art or amateur research. Young women with access to enough money to never have to work a day in their lives got jobs just to spite their fathers.



Some even wore pants.

For these women, war work provided a perfect opportunity to go out into the world and prove themselves, in a way polite society would find difficult questioning. There's a war on, darling, it's patriotic.

The Noble Heiress will make a mess of things when they first enter the scene. It's not that they don't put in the work, but they aren't used to rubbing shoulders with rough and tumble types. You will quickly catch up by assisting others, especially with Inspiration, and even if you can't you have plenty of options for making yourself useful.

Stats

+1 Bold, -1 Nerve, 0 Soft, -1 Wise

Moves

Take 3, plus Newbie.

- **Newbie:** The first time you use any Basic Move, take -2. When somebody Helps you with it, share a Bond. When you Help another with a Move you've learned, take +1 forward to using it yourself.
- **Clean Hands:** When you refuse to do something beneath you, recover 1 Exhaustion.
- **Stipend:** Hold 2 in the form of bribery material. Spend holds when you Take Charge of troublesome individuals; a partial success will count as a full success.
- **The Rolls-Royce:** You have a shiny new car. When you use it to Move On, do not advance the Raid Clock on a miss. You can trade off this car as a bribe as per Stipend; your roll will automatically hit.
- **Nicities:** Take +1 Soft.
- **Grammar School:** Take +1 Wise.
- **Silk hiding Steel:** Take +1 Nerve.
- **Inspiration:** Spend a Bond to raise one of your Stats by +1, up to the value held by the other character in the Bond.

Breaks

- **Daunted:** -1 Bold.
- **Short:** -1 Soft.
- **Shakey:** -1 Nerve.
- **Fried:** -1 Wise.
- **Isolated:** Take -1 while working in a group.
- **Start Over:** Reset your First Day on the Job move.

Victories

- You successfully invest money in a post-war technology. What technology? What do you do with the vast wealth?
- Your business efforts make you one of the first female CEOs of a major company in the 1960s. What do you do?
- You direct your wealth charitably. How do you make a positive impact on the world?
- You enter politics later in life. What do you stand for?
- How do you use your wealth and influence to help your ARP friends?

The Working Lass

While the English upper classes was busily discussing how employment would be fatal to the female constitution, the women of the lower classes were as engaged with the work of the industrial revolution as men were. Women laboured in coal mines and textile mills, as house servants, in craft workshops, on farms, and on the streets.

The rise of the free and compulsory education system and changing labour laws had mixed effects on women in the workplace. Unions displaced women from industrial jobs they had worked for generations, codifying the upper-class ideals of female fragility and promising that new living wages could support them as wives instead.

Women thus found jobs in emerging industrial sectors like electronics manufacturing, or in functionary positions enabled by public schooling. A great many more worked transitory or informal jobs, scraping up money any way they could. Notably, street prostitution remained common throughout London, with many districts and streets known for it.

The Working Lass represents a young working-class woman, aged from 15 to 25, who does what she can to get by. She might be single or married, working full-time or finding money where she can, but in any case she has learned to be clever to make her way in the English underclass.

The Working Lass is a very flexible identity. You can make an excellent front-line worker who excels at getting the job done, or a subversive leader who inspires the group with hard work and solidarity. You also have the option of just creating a character who is out to use the chaos of the Blitz to get ahead; who can blame you? No matter what, though, you'll always be in the thick of things.



Stats

0 Bold, +1 Nerve, -1 Soft, -1 Wise

Moves

Take 3, plus It's a Living.

- **It's a Living:** When you Press On, give +1 forward to those following in your footsteps. If they make it safely through, share a Bond.
- **Sticky Fingers:** As a Size Up result, ask "What here is valuable?" If you take it for yourself, claim a Victory.
- **Get your Hands Dirty:** When you do a job somebody else won't, exchange a Bond with them.
- **Elbow Grease:** Do not take Exhaustion on 10+ to Press On.
- **Upstart:** Take +1 Bold.
- **Solidarity:** Take +1 Soft.
- **Yes Guv:** When you follow orders quietly, take +1 forward.
- **Sod Off:** When you disobey authority, take +1 forward.
- **Unionize:** When somebody helps you stand up to authority, share 1 Bond with them.

Breaks

- **Daunted:** -1 Bold.
- **Short:** -1 Soft.
- **Shakey:** -1 Nerve.
- **Fried:** -1 Wise.
- **Directionless:** Take -1 when working alone.
- **Second Wind:** Add +1 to any stat until you next Break Down. Automatically miss when you do.

Victories

- You make a new life for yourself out of England after the war? Where do you go? What opportunities do you find there?
- You come into a windfall after the war. Where did the money come from? Was it gained legally? How do you spend it?
- Britain's emerging post-war welfare state comes to your aid. How do these policies change, or save, your life?
- What luxury do you enjoy after the war you never imagined you could have for yourself?
- How do your children live better than you did?

The Educated Woman

In the latter 19th century, protofeminist movements and changing social attitudes saw some women gaining increasingly consistent access to postsecondary education. Roughly 23 percent of university students were female by the 1940s.

Acceptance as a female student was much more difficult than for men, with fewer placements and higher expectations. It was expected that most would become schoolteachers, but the more ambitious pursued law, science, medicine, or engineering, though they would find nearly insurmountable opposition in those fields. Only about half would marry, so stereotypes abound of educated women as heartless careerists, useless idealists, or man-hating lesbians.

Either you are a student between the ages of 18 and 22, studying in one of the many universities in the London area, or you are a recent graduate working as a secretary or schoolteacher. You might live in a nearby university hall, but perhaps the halls have been bombed out or commandeered.

The Educated Woman has great knowledge and a keen perception; they spot problems nobody else can see. Play this Identity if you want to bring your own knowledge to the story.

These characters can be built to get in trouble with Trailblazer and Debate Club, or to support others with Research and Reasoning. You want to constantly be looking for a chance to show off your brain. On the other hand, you're a bit isolated from the others; you have no special ways of building Bond.

Marriage Bar

Businesses of the period practiced a “marriage bar”, whereby women would be fired if they were married. Supposedly, this practice preserved jobs for single women and married men who had a family to support, but it also has links to the old English practice of coverture, whereby a couple was seen as one legal and financial entity under the husband.

In the UK, married women had no right to money until 1870 and no property rights until 1882; they were not regarded as separate legal entities, could own nothing themselves, and if divorced, they would be left with nothing.

Stats

-1 Bold, 0 Soft, -1 Nerve, +1 Wise

Moves

Take 3, plus Speciality.

- **Speciality:** Specify two classes your character took. When you link your actions to one of those classes, take a +1. When you advise another using that knowledge and they listen, they get +1 forward and you share a Bond.
- **Humanities:** Take +1 Soft.
- **History:** Take +1 Wise.
- **Overachiever:** Select another class for My Speciality.
- **Trailblazer:** When a man tells you not to do something, take +1 forward to do it.
- **Deductive Reasoning:** Take 1 additional Hold when you Size Up.
- **The Midnight Oil:** Hold 3. Spend to remove a point of Exhaustion.
- **Debate Club:** When you try to reason 1 on 1, Take Charge with Wise.
- **Significance:** When you Size Up, as a result, recognize an important document or work of art at the scene.

Breaks

- **Daunted:** -1 Bold.
- **Short:** -1 Soft.
- **Shakey:** -1 Nerve.
- **Fried:** -1 Wise.
- **Lost:** Lose one of your Specialities.
- **Isolated:** Take -1 when working in a group.

Victories

- You get that job you never thought you could. What struggles do you face there? What changes do you bring to the career?
- You find somebody worth marrying after the war. Is he worth your career? Do you go through with it?
- You get a job in military intelligence. What vital information do you catch that everyone else missed?
- You go on to invent or create something of great importance. What is it? How does it change the world?
- You write a book about your time in the ARP. How do you talk about your comrades? What moment is the centrepiece of the story?

The Old Bird

The tail-end of the 19th century and the early 20th saw remarkable changes in the lives of regular people. Thanks to plummeting manufacturing costs and technological advancement, the lower classes suddenly had access to appliances and infrastructure which had either previously not existed or had been only a luxury.

In your lifetime, the motorcar replaced the hansom cab, the electric light, telephones and radio spread from house to house, the Great War forever change the face of Europe, collective bargaining change the nature work, and women gain the vote and took seats in Parliament.

It's a lot to take in for one lifetime, and it's not over yet. When you were a child, you probably heard some old man remark how that newfangled buzzing contraption overhead was going to get us all killed one day, mark my words. It's looking like he may have been right.

As the Old Bird, you're probably not actually that old; you're probably in your 50s or thereabouts. You're still old enough to be the mother of most of these youngsters. They might be a little cruel, and sure, your knees aren't what they used to be, but you can still lend a hand, and god knows these kids need your guidance.

This isn't your first time the huns have flown their damnable machines over your city, but last time they told all the young women to stay inside and wait for death. Not this time. You tire more quickly than anyone else, but you're used to that, so you can deal with it much better than these youngsters who've never done a day of *real* work in their lives.



Stats

-1 Bold, +1 Soft, -2 Nerve, +1 Wise

Moves

Take 3, plus Bone Weary.

- **Bone Weary:** Take a point of Exhaustion to take a +1, or to give +1 to the person you are Helping and take a Bond with them.
- **Put your Back Into It:** When you Press On, take a point of Exhaustion to take +1 result.
- **Not my First Dance:** When you Size Up a site, take a +1 forward, or give it to an ally.
- **Sage Advice:** When you offer hard-learned advice, count as Helping. If there's a Fault, take 1 Exhaustion instead of a hard move.
- **The Old Path:** Once per game, take a shortcut when you Move On. Nobody takes Exhaustion, and the Site State immediately goes up by 2 as you arrive quickly.
- **Hard Earned:** +1 Wise.
- **Take No Shit:** +1 Bold.
- **Grandmotherly:** +1 Soft.

Breaks

- **Stiff Upper Lip:** -1 forward.
- **Stiff Upper Lip:** -1 forward.
- **Faltering:** -2 forward.
- **Daunted:** -1 Bold.
- **Short:** -1 Soft.
- **Shakey:** -1 Nerve.
- **Fried:** -1 Wise.
- **Broken:** Lose a Victory.

Victories

- A child home safe from the war. How did they make you proud?
- How do your comrades repay you in your old age?
- Offer advice to the rest of your Section, and ask them how that advice follows them in their lives.
- Give your remaining Victories out to others, and tell us who is there for you at the end.

Munitionettes

This isn't the Old Bird's first World War. During the last one, she might have worked as a Munitionette; one of the female workers who entered the factories to make weapons, especially artillery shells, for the front lines.

Munitionettes were also known as Canary Girls. The chemicals used to make TNT stained the skin yellow, hence the name. It also caused a lot of liver and lung problems. Ahhh, the days before Health and Safety.



It's the women we need..



**Women ambulance drivers, women wardens,
women for first aid and casualty stations.**

ENROL AT ONCE!

ROLES

Air Warden

Stats

Add +1 to any Stat, up to +2.

Moves

- **Law Enforcement:** When you Take Charge of regular civilians, use whatever Stat you prefer. Act out the scene appropriately.
- ***The Hard Way:** When you resort to violence to get your way, roll +Bold. On a 10+, they immediately back down and obey. On a 7-9, choose one: you were forced to hurt them, you take Hurt.
- **Shotcaller:** When you lay out a multi-step plan, everyone involved takes +1 as long as the plan remains intact.
- **Messenger:** You have a young person (Boy Scout, Boy's Brigade, junior Women's Auxiliary) on a bicycle who can run ahead for you to gather information or send messages. Which team-member do they have a crush on?
- **Report & Control:** When you report a site to HQ, subtract 1 from the Raid Clock.
- **Shelter:** Hold 3. Spend these holds to create nearby shelters or hiding places.
- **Reinforce:** Add +2d when you Help somebody using their best Stat.

Gear

- » A Brodie Helmet
- » An ARP Uniform
- » A Gas Mask
- » A Baton
- » A Whistle
- » A Gas Rattle
- » A Torch



Rescue Services

Stats

+1 Nerve

Moves

- ***Dig In:** When you pull a body free of the wreckage, choose one.
 - » They are intact and healthy.
 - » They point you towards more trapped people.
 - » They give you +1 forward to Press On deeper into the building.
- **Rescue Dog:** You have a dog trained to find bodies. When you Size Up with the dog present, ask “Where are there casualties?” for free.
- **Steady On:** When in danger, Size Up with Nerve.
- ***Closure:** When you retrieve dead bodies, hold 1. Spend Holds for a +1 to Stand Down.
- **Lifeline:** Take a +1 to Press On when leaving the way you came.
- **Spares:** All your gear is refreshed at each new site.
- **Steady Eye:** Add these potential results to Size Up.
 - » How do I get out?
 - » How many are inside?
 - » What path is safe?

Gear

- » A Brodie Helmet
- » An ARP Uniform
- » A Gas Mask
- » A Shovel or Prybar
- » A Length of Rope.
- » A Torch
- » A Flare.



Stats

+1 Wise

Moves

- ***Treatment:** When you treat a badly wounded person, roll +Wise.

On a 10+, they're stabilized. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- » Save them, but take -1 on subsequent patients.
- » Let them die.

The -1 penalties stack until you Move On.

- **Patch Up:** As a Make Time result, remove 1 Harm.

- **Triage:** If skip over a casualty without treating them, take +1 forward to treat the next patient.
- **Relief:** On a 10+ to Treatment, remove 1 Exhaustion.

- **Motor Ambulance:** You have an ambulance truck. It can carry up to six people. If driven to a hospital, those wounded on it will be saved. Alternately, when you use it to Move On, do not advance the Raid Clock on a miss.

- **Steady Hands:** When you Make Time, removing Harm is free, can be done in addition to other results, and applies even if you miss.

- **Understanding:** Make Time with Wise.

- **Ease Passing:** When you Make Time for the dying, take a Victory.

Gear

- » A Brodie Helmet
- » An ARP Uniform
- » A Gas Mask
- » A Basic First Aid Kit
- » A Collapsible Stretcher
- » A Signal Light



Stats

+1 Bold

Moves

- ***Douse Blaze:** When you fight a fire, roll +Nerve. On a 10+, you put out the blaze locally. On a 7-9, choose one.
 - » ... put yourself in direct danger.
 - » ... you need to get more help.
- **Reinforce:** When you help prop up a building, give a +1 forward to anyone working inside it.
- **Form Up:** When you Take Charge of a chaotic site, hold 3. Anyone can spend these holds for to add an additional d6 when Helping.
- **Do Something!:** When you call on NPCs to save a friend in danger, the NPCs provide +1d6 as per Help.
- **It's Coming Down!:** When you Size Up a site, hold 1. When you spend that hold, a part of the structure, of your choosing, collapses from the damage sustained, squashing fires and clearing the way.
- ***Defuse:** When you deal with unexploded munitions, roll +Nerve. On a 10+, you successfully defuse the weapon. On a 7-9, choose 1.
 - » It's gonna go off big in a few minutes.
 - » It starts burning. Hot.
 - » You gotta leave it for the experts.
- **Infrastructure Project:** Hold 3.
Spend those holds to find the tools or infrastructure you need; fire hydrants, bulldozers, underground paths, etc.

Gear

- » A Brodie Helmet
- » An ARP Uniform
- » A Gas Mask
- » A Thick, Fireproof Coat
- » A Fire Axe
- » A Stirrup Pump



Stats

+1 Soft

Moves

■ **Sixth Sense:** When you Size Up a person, ask...

- » ... what do they want? » ... what have they lost?
- » ... what do they need? » ... how can they help?

Take +1 forward to Make Time or Take Charge of this person when you use the information you learn.

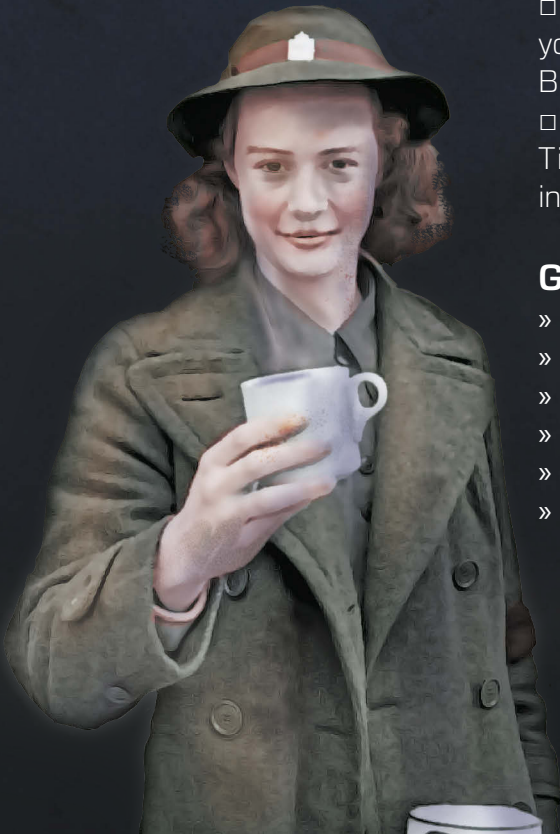
- ***Hold the Line:** When you walk among the exhausted or defeated and offer comfort, roll +Soft. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.
 - » Everyone on-site they work with takes +1 forward.
 - » When somebody Takes Charge of them, they choose +1 result.
 - » Hold 1. Spend this hold to take Help from these NPCs.
- **Would you Kindly:** When you ask nicely, Take Charge with Soft. When you do, a partial hit counts as a full hit.
- **Stiff Upper Lip:** When you Make Time with a comrade, they hold 1. Spend those Holds to negate 1 incoming Harm.
- **Good Job:** When you tend to the group as they Stand Down rather than rest yourself, everyone recovers one more Exhaustion.

□ **Hold Yourself Together:** When you're there for somebody as they Break Down, they take +2.

□ **Bring Hope:** When you Make Time for a child, recover Exhaustion instead of taking it.

Gear

- » A Brodie Helmet
- » An ARP Uniform
- » A Bag of Gas Masks
- » A Satchel of Food
- » A Flask of Tea
- » Sweets



BACKGROUND

The Second World War had been brewing for decades, more or less since the First had ended. The conditions of the Treaty of Versailles had set the stage for not only the rise of Nazi Germany, but also the nationalistic extremism of Imperial Japan with the rejection of the Racial Equality proposal and Japan subsequently cutting ties with America and Britain. After years of inaction in the face of the rising fascist threat, the western democracies received a rude awakening the face of the Nazi *blitzkrieg* across the continent.

Overture

The war for London started soon after the fall of France. After a daring evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches of Dunkirk, the UK was on the back foot, desperately trying to replace the cutting-edge equipment lost in the retreat and expand their peacetime military to compete with Germany. If Britain was ever to liberate the mainland, they would need time to rebuild.

“Here is the grave of British hopes in the war, and these are the gravestones!”

“They are not buried yet. We have no time to waste.”

- Field Marshal Göring & General Milch,
surveying abandoned British equipment at Dunkirk
June 5th, 1940

Dunkirk

As France fell, 400,000 British and allied troops were trapped in a pocket in Northern France. They were evacuated in a daring plan using civilian boats, known as Operation Dynamo.



While some in German High Command moved to ensure that the British would not have that time, their plans for a lightning-quick airborne invasion were dashed by Hitler himself. "Do nothing," he ordered, believing the UK would see their hopeless position.

Instead, the Germans made small moves. They occupied the channel islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, and Sark, and air forces were transferred in anticipation of future campaigns. Maps were laid out for the invasion, and a small number of aircraft flew scouting missions across the channel. Things were mostly quiet.

Unfortunately for Hitler, Britain was in no mood to surrender. The only negotiations were Churchill's government stalling for time as they desperately began assembling resources for a last-ditch defence of the British Isles. They installed forts like artificial islands into the Channel, fortified beaches with pillboxes and mines, and sunk oil pipes into water that could light the coastline aflame.

All the while, they desperately worked to produce the weapons and ammunition to replace what they had lost, and to train a force capable of standing toe-to-toe with the elite of the German military. The RAF had wisely avoided committing the bulk of their air forces to the fight in France, preserving three-fourths of their strength despite the devastating defeat.

Further supporting their numbers was the mechanicians of one Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian-born newspaper publisher who took control of Britain's aircraft production and worked the factories into a frenzy. With production running 24/7 and aluminium sourced from household donations, Britain was building almost five hundred fighter planes a month, far outstripping German production of the same.

Thus, as Germany prepared for the air operation which they believed would simply sweep the RAF from the sky, the British Empire had managed to turn their island into a fortress which could resist attack from land, sea, and air.

The stage was set for the world's first large-scale military operation to be decided entirely by aircraft.

The Battle of Britain

The Germans launched phase one of their operational plans against Britain on July 10th, 1940. With a cry of "*Vermichen!*", 70 German planes stormed across the channel, aiming to attack British shipping and lure the RAF into a fight. In the aftermath of the thirty-minute dogfight, seven fighters (and a merchant ship) had been destroyed, and the Battle of Britain was on.

The German plan was in three phases; first, the channel would be claimed, cutting out shipping and sinking any Royal Navy warships that strayed out of their harbours. Then, bombers would thunder over with the expressed purpose of smashing the RAF's fields, factories, and radar installations to rubble. Finally, the *Luftwaffe* would simply have to provide air cover for German invaders crossing the channel and besieging London.

The British objective was simply to survive.

The basic back and forth of the battle was simple. German planes, a mix of fighters and bombers, would storm towards something vital in Britain; a factory, a dockyard, a defensive installation. If the RAF scrambled fighters to confront them, they would encounter German escorts, and if they didn't, something important was going to end up a crater. The *Luftwaffe* were confident that, through attrition and the slow destruction of airfields and factories, the RAF would be depleted.

Radar

The British had invented radar just before the war, though it had spread to other nations quickly.

To keep the coverage of their radar network a secret, the government spread a rumour that their pilots could find planes in the dark because they ate a lot of carrots, and it had been discovered this would give humans night vision.

Over the next two months, German daytime raids were nearly nonstop. RAF would fly multiple sorties a day, sleeping by their planes and scrambling to meet the oncoming threat over and over. Above the English countryside, hundreds of planes twirled, twisted, and burnt in a ballet of contrails and tracers.

Messerschmitt BF 109

The Me 109 was sleek, fast, and powerful. It usually carried two machine-guns and three 20mm cannons; two on wing-mounted pods and one running straight through the propeller driveshaft.

Just as in the last war, the Germans liked flashy colours, like bright yellow noses and dizzying patterns on the propeller boss.



Day of the Eagle

When the war kicked off, the *Luftwaffe* was both the largest air force in the world and utterly cutting edge. Swift tactical bombers swept ahead of the Blitzkrieg, acting as flying artillery directly supporting forces engaged in battle below. Nobody had ever seen anything like it.

Unbeknownst to their opposition, though, the German advantage was already beginning to slip. The initial funding which the fascist government had galvanized air development and production with had finally been subsumed by cronyism and mismanagement, bogging down programs which would create the next generation of vehicles just as that cutting edge was beginning to dull. The Battle of Britain would quickly reveal these shortcomings.

German bombers, designed to outrun intercepting planes, were now slower than cutting-edge fighters like the Spitfire. The Me 109 was crippled by its short range, which gave it less than twenty minutes of combat time over British soil after the channel was crossed. The Me 110, a two-engined heavy fighter meant to solve the range problem, turned out to be something of a dud in a dogfight. And the much feared Ju87 Stuka, whose sirens signalled death for opposing forces during the Blitzkrieg, ended up being little more than an easy target for RAF fighters. Unable to defend itself during its largely automated dive and recovery cycle, ground fire and aircraft alike ate them alive.

By no means did the RAF have an easy time of it. They were constantly outnumbered, and the *Luftwaffe* made good use of their numerical advantage by cycling out their pilots, keeping up a constant tempo that exhausted the British pilots while allowing their own to rest.

RAF flight tactics had to change in the face of new, high-powered air combat; the close flight formations maintained for communication and defence in the pre-radio days caused many losses before it was abandoned. Attrition among fighter squadrons also meant fears that there would simply be no veterans left to train new pilots.

Leading the charge against the *Luftwaffe* were two of the most famous fighter planes in world history; the workhorse Hurricane and the sleek Spitfire. The Hurricane was rugged, tough, and well armed, while the Spitfire was fast and turned on a dime, being one of the few aircraft which could rival the then-dominate Japanese Zero in manoeuvrability.

British pilots soon learned how to play to the strengths of their aircraft, to devastating results. The Spitfires would dive in on enemy formations, using their handling advantage to force German planes to dive or climb away from their charges. Then, the Hurricanes would sweep in, braving the defensive turrets to shred the enemy bombers.

Other designs included the Boulton Paul Defiant and the Bristol Blenheim. The Defiant was a “bomber destroyer”, laid out like a fighter, but with a second crewmember operating a rear-facing gun turret. The Defiant was designed to attack a bomber from in front of or alongside to avoid the tailgun, but it turned out that German bombers had insufficient rearward guns, so the Defiant’s lack of forward weapons was a liability. A few scored kills when German planes tried to sneak up behind what they thought were Hurricanes, but once the element of surprise was lost the Defiant was pulled from daytime duty. It later proved an able night fighter, and during the Blitz it ended up shooting down more enemy planes than any other type.

The Blenheim likewise was quite obsolete by the start of the war, but its bulk turned into an advantage as they were large enough to mount radar systems inside, allowing them to track down and destroy targets in pitch darkness.



What Was Owed

Though the Germans could gain advantage by bombing out radar sites and airfields, for the most part the battle was one of pure attrition. As the battle continued, the British held a very slight edge, knocking down roughly 5 fighters for every 4 they lost.

Over the course of July and August, hundreds of RAF pilots had died, and as many again were wounded. While plane production was strong, new pilots simply couldn't be trained fast enough to replace losses. The hospitals were choked with wounded pilots suffering horrible burns; they would become known as the "Guinea Pigs" as doctors were forced to experiment in radical plastic surgery to salvage their features. The pilots still flying were beyond exhausted.

Despite the hardship, they had in two months of constant battle bloodied the nose of the *Luftwaffe* and proved that the invasion of Britain would be no easy feat. Hitler was getting frustrated with the lack of progress, and the Germans were dealing with their own problems. When a British pilot bailed out over England, he was recovered and given a new plane, but when a German pilot did, he was simply captured. This was massively magnifying the effective casualties taken by the German air forces.

The Blitz Begins

German bombing efforts were initially focused on military targets. It had to be, because the German plan revolved around knocking the RAF from the sky, so radar, airfields, and aircraft factories had to be an absolute priority. Once there was nothing left of the British air force, everything else would be at the mercy of the bombers.

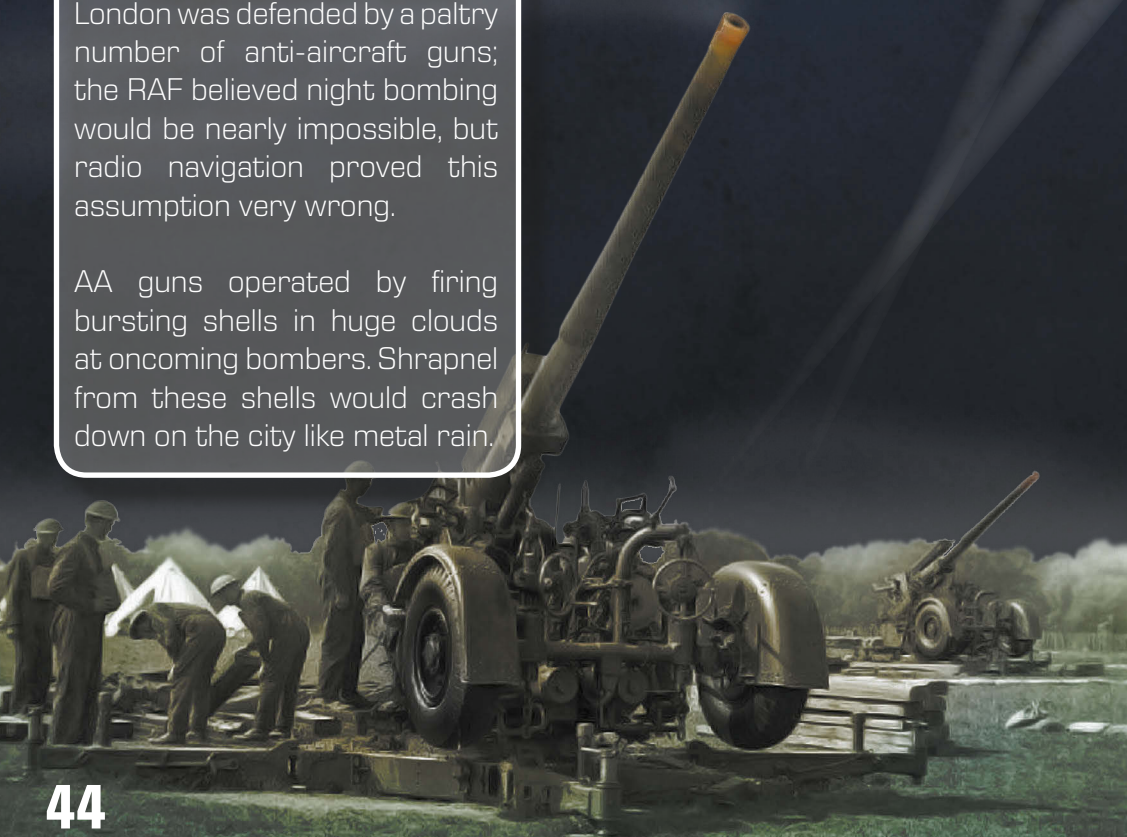
In fact, the Germans had very deliberate orders not to attack the capital; it would give no strategic advantage, and possibly garner sympathy for the British cause. But as the RAF got better and better at intercepting German attacks, bombers began flying more and more at night. The lead planes followed radio beams to their targets, while other planes without that equipment followed those.

On the night of August 24th, one such raid got lost in the night sky. A pair of bombers lost track of their pathfinder, and after wandering into the sights of British flak guns, decided to jettison their bombs and turn home rather than press on in the darkness.

Anti-Aircraft Guns

London was defended by a paltry number of anti-aircraft guns; the RAF believed night bombing would be nearly impossible, but radio navigation proved this assumption very wrong.

AA guns operated by firing bursting shells in huge clouds at oncoming bombers. Shrapnel from these shells would crash down on the city like metal rain.



Flak Countermeasures

Unfortunately for London, flak barrages are ineffective at long range. It could take as many as 20 seconds for a shell to reach the altitudes bombers flew at.



Unbeknownst to them, London lay below.

The bombs, originally intended for the Rochester and Kingston aircraft factories, came down in the heart of London. Dozens were killed, Cripplegate's ancient church was destroyed, and a famous statue of John Milton was toppled.

Panic and outrage took hold, as well as demands for retaliation. Churchill was only too happy to meet those demands; British high command had long made the cold calculus that it would be far better for the Germans to bomb London than to continue their highly effective targeted raids. To spur the Germans into this unwise course, the RAF launched three raids against Berlin, slipping squadrons of Vicker's Wellington bombers past air defences and dropping bombs on targets in the German capital. Though the attacks did little damage, they spat in the face of the Nazi war machine, especially as Hitler had repeatedly promised his people that Berlin would never be bombed.

Hitler ordered German bombers to begin terror bombing operations on the British public as retaliation. This gave the RAF the breathing room they needed to recover, and soon these raids shifted to night attacks to protect the bombers.

The Battle of Britain was over, and the Blitz had begun.

WARTIME LONDON

London was more than the capital of the United Kingdom. It was the shining jewel of Britain and the heart of an empire that stretched the entire world. The bustling metropolis was one of the largest in the world, home to a fifth of the population of the British Isles and the lion's share of its industries. Britain was the world's second-largest economy at the time, and almost all of that economic activity was centered in London. It's no surprise the city the Germans hit the city so hard; as went London, so went the British Empire.

Britain had considered itself safe from attack for hundreds of years; the English Channel was a moat surrounding the country, across which any invader would need to ferry troops and supplies. The last power to even consider attempting it were the French under Napoleon at the beginning of the 1800s, and they believed the invasion might require such outlandish procedures as landing troops by hot air balloon or digging a massive tunnel under the channel.

However, the threat of air attack had actually materialized during the last war, when German airships, and later Gotha bombers, dropped bombs over London. Casualties were few, but the psychological scars the attacks inflicted on the British populace ran deep.

The Blackout

Bombers had to acquire their targets by sight. During the day, it was fairly easy, but at night the only way to find your targets would be to look for lights.

By blacking out, a city could be made indistinguishable from farmland at 20,000 feet. An Air Warden's primary job was to enforce the blackout, patrolling the street looking for errant glows.

"Oi! Put that light out!"

For this war, precautionary blackout procedures were implemented in London before the war had even started, on September 1st, 1939, and it would remain in place for the duration of the conflict. Windows were covered over, streetlights were doused, and headlights were fitted with muzzles.

London went dark, and it wouldn't light up again for more than five years.

Buttoning Up

With the fall of France, it was merely a question of when the German air force would come for the people of London. In fairly good spirits, Britain prepared for the war in all aspects of society. Just as the military was fortifying beaches, expanding their numbers, and preparing their guns, the civilian population was doing what they could to harden their homes and streets against the oncoming storm.

The British government issued their citizens many tools to give them a sense of security and keep them busy. Everyone got a gas mask, and if you had any work to do in civil defence you got a helmet too, though there weren't enough of the British Army's steel helmets to go around so a cheap knock-off had to do for many people. The corrugated steel Anderson Bomb Shelter, meant to be sunk into the ground and covered with earth, was issued to every home, but for most people in urban areas there was simply no place to set it up.

To reinforce the city itself, everything valuable or culturally important was given some form of shielding from attack. Medieval carvings on church walls were hidden behind sandbag walls, statues were boxed in, and works of art were relocated to safe bunkers.

The fortifying process disrupted many lives and businesses. Shops installed airlock-like doorways to prevent light from escaping as people came in and out, and factories installed automatic shutters on their rooftop windows. The civilian population was urged to give whatever they could, be it scrap metal or money, to the war effort, even as intense rationing of fuel, food, and other materials were implemented.

After the last war, Britain had learned that industrial conflict was total. Everyone and everything in the country had to contribute to achieve Victory.



The City Itself

If you're one of the relatively few people on the planet who doesn't live in London, it might help to have an overview of what the city looks like.

London is a city along the Thames river, which leads directly into the North Sea. The river divides it in half; most of the important stuff is historically above the river, but the city sprawls out on both sides.

London is traditionally divided into two broad areas, which are geographically vague but instantly recognizable to the locals. You've got the West End, which is rich, important, and filled with culture, and the East End, which is poorer and filled with industry, dockworkers, and immigrants. Which end of London your game is set in will make a huge difference to the kind of people you play and how you operate.

Ack-Ack Girls

Though women were allowed to operate anti-aircraft guns, Winston Churchill decreed that they were not allowed to actually fire the weapons, as it might damage their fragile minds to think they had just killed one of the men who were burning down their cities.

Of course, it was totally fine for them to aim the gun, set the fuse on the shells, and call out the targets. But a man had to pull the firing cord.

Typical.

Britain has a great many parks and other open, green spaces, though most of these are quiet small and were (or still are!) privately owned. The largest parks are north of the river in the West End, and the largest of those is Hyde Park, a 350 acre space filled with trees, arches, and sculpture. During wartime, these parks were commandeered by the army, which set up heavy anti-aircraft guns and command posts there. Smaller parks, as well as any rooftop that could hold them, often sported 40mm Bofors guns and searchlights.

One of London's most famous features is the Underground, the world's first subway system. The Underground allowed the working and middle classes to move from their residences to their workplaces with ease and contributed greatly to the expansion and wealth of the city. The famous Underground branding was already in place by 1940.

During the war, by day the Underground ferried soldiers between duty stations as well, and at night it became a massive bomb shelter, with civilians packed on the stations and tracks for protection.

Being a very old city, London is built atop of hundreds of years of previous incarnations of itself. Some of these areas are still somewhat accessible, existing as phantom alleys and buried tenements under the foundations and streets of the city proper. Some of these areas still had holdouts living and working in them, occupying centuries-old buildings, and many more would come down seeking shelter.

Morale

It's oft-repeated that the people of London stoically bore the Blitz with a minimum of bellyaching, standing united behind the government just to spite the Nazi menace. Unsurprisingly, that's a bit simplistic.

People reacted all sorts of ways. Some people were excited to have something break up the monotony, others fled the city outright in terror. East Enders were generally unimpressed with the government-recommended attitude to the war, especially as the government neglected to provide them safe shelters, yet had provided them plentiful paper-mache coffins. People crowded into basements and abandoned train yards, wooden houses burnt like matches, and in one incident 450 people taking shelter in a school died from a single blast.

There were nearly riots over that last one; if Buckingham Palace hadn't been hit soon after, showing even the upper crust struggling, it might have turned violent.

Race in Britain

Britain in 1940 ruled a massive worldwide empire, and it is important to remember it was essentially a white supremacist state which exploited large portions of the world for its own benefit.

Despite this, a not-insignificant number of people of colour lived in Britain during the Second World War. London had a Chinatown, then located in the Limehouse district of the East End, a sizable Indian population which included nobles and educated professionals, and Black British populations from the Caribbean, primarily concentrated in the East End.

Oddities

War is filled with a lot of weird things. If you want to make your game as authentic and interesting as possible, work some of them in! Some of these might sound outlandish, but this was the day-to-day reality for millions.

- » Rationing wasn't just for food. Britain bankrupted itself in the war effort, and everything was needed for the front. In particular, fuels like petrol, coal, firewood, and even paraffin became scarce.
 - » A shortage that particularly affected women was the end of the silk trade and the total requisition of nylon for balloons, parachutes, and armour. A pair of nylon stockings could run you £5 pounds on the black market... which is almost \$350 USD in 2017!
 - » The military needed an inconceivable amount of every material imaginable. Households sorted out metals, combustibles, compost, and animal bones, all of which had wartime uses.
- » The Home Guard, under-armed and underfunded, undertook many strange projects to defend against potential German invasion.
 - » Home Guardsmen in urban areas often rode bicycles or wore roller skates; their main priority was getting around the city streets to descend on paratroopers before they could recover and arm themselves.
 - » Guardsmen were taught to attack tank tracks with crowbars, or pour sugar in fuel tanks. Their motto: "Any attack was better than no attack!"
 - » A locally-made anti-tank gun of dubious value was issued to the Home Guard. They were mounted in concrete posts; you can still find many of these posts all over England today.
- » German bombers were so desperately under-armed and vulnerable to fighters that their crews carried personal weapons to use against the RAF. Do-17 crews tried throwing hand grenades out their windows, while He-111s would dangle weighted wires behind the wings to foul propellers.
- » To confuse German invaders, street signs all over Britain were pulled down. This mostly just confused motorists.
- » The British government interned nearly 50,000 foreigners and foreign-born citizens at the outbreak of war, but outcry from the public saw most of them released within two years.

- » RAF Hurricanes and Spitfires suffered a mechanical problem with their Merlin engines where a simple nose down could flood the carburettor and kill power. A female engineer named Beatrice Shilling created the R.A.E. restrictor, a simple metal ring that limited fuel flow and solved the issue. The restrictor was immensely popular, known by pilots as “Miss Shilling’s orifice”.
 - » Mrs. Shilling was also a motorcycle racer, and after the war she and her husband took up racing custom-built cars!
- » Many women soon found their gasmasks inoperable, because they would keep them in their purses where they would become clogged up with cigarettes, makeup, and loose change. Oops.
- » The blackout created a lot of strange circumstances and devices.
 - » The blackout was immensely unpopular, even more than rationing. Many families invested in blackout curtains or simply painted over their windows so they could keep the lights on.
 - » Similarly, the windows of British night trains were painted over in dark blue, because the dim reading lights installed were too weak and quite unpopular.
 - » Traffic accidents spiked during blackout conditions, forcing a nationwide speed limit of 20 mph. Other precautions included painting lampposts in white stripes, installing reflectors in the road, and using bright white paint to mark lanes... practices which all continue today.
- » To this day, unexploded bombs (UX) still lurk in many British cities. Hundreds of thousands of devices have been found since the war during construction, and thousands more turn up every year. There’s a guide for construction companies for what to do when you find one.
- » There were worries that women working in civil defence would discourage men. The same job would have a women’s poster advertising the chance to contribute to the war effort, and a men’s version reassuring the reader it was still masculine work!



HOME OFFICE

As the Home Office, your job is to be the eyes and ears of the players, telling them what they see,

To make that a task a human being can do, you have this section. You've got your Moves; the things you can do to the players to make their lives interesting. Remember those are jumping off points, not mechanics; don't say what move you're using out loud, for God's sake!

HO Principles

As the Home Office, you want to always come back to your Principles. These are the ideas, feelings, and tone you are always trying to push on your players, the things you should always be striving to do with what you say and what situations you create.

- » Always show the human cost.
- » Ask questions that build history with the answers.
- » Always have something that needs doing.
- » Give everyone a chance to work.
- » Challenge the characters to show strength.
- » Make them love each other, then hurt them.
- » Make them love the world, then burn it.
- » Give them victory where they find it.
- » Always make things worse.

Always Show the Human Cost

The most important thing you need to do as the Home Office is to never, ever let the game become sterile. This is not a procedural showing the techniques of a rescue operation, it is an emotional story of a group of people struggling to preserve lives. For that to have meaning, you need to provide windows the people they save.

This does not, and often should not be through dialogue or simple narration. Like any storyteller, you should show, not tell. Relay information about people's lives through objects and circumstance; the layout of a house, where they were when the bombs fell, the clothes they were wearing, the objects they clutch, the photos in their pockets. Before victims can be victims, they need to be humans.

Ask Question that Build History with the Answers

These characters were here before the bombs fell, and they'll probably be here after tonight. They live here; this is their home. They know the faces and the storefronts and have walked these cobblestones before.

Don't tell people about where they live; it's rude and presumptuous to think you know their neighbourhood better than them! When you need to know about a place, ask them leading questions that make them realize their connection to that place. Don't say "it's a store", ask them what they buy there on a lazy Saturday afternoon. Give them a chance to tell you about their lives.

Always have Something that Needs Doing

Players should never feel good about moving on from a place that just got smacked by a kraut bomb. What they're doing right now is the start of work that won't be finished for months or years, first aid for a gunshot wound on the face of their city. They're just here to make sure that the patient won't die before they get to the hospital.

There's always more to do. There's always more smoke pouring forth, more dark rooms unexplored, more casualties and bodies to move, more voices calling out for help. The players never finish anything. They just Move On.

Give Everyone a Chance to Work

A bomb blowing up a building is never something simple and clean. You don't arrive at a site like, shit, we have enough firefighters, but what we really need right now is a medic! No, there's a great big ugly gash through what used to be our beautiful city and everything's proper fucked, and it's all hands on deck to get it fixed.

Always stand by to have something for every character to do. Preferably, everyone should know where to start without needing to ask. You don't have to be obvious about it, but always make sure something is ready to fall down, somebody is hurt, and somebody isn't happy about the situation. You cover those bases, and every role will have their hands full.

Challenge the Characters to Show Strength

The core concept of this game revolves around a group of people whose contributions and strengths have always been undervalued being put in a position where they must show that strength. As the Home Office, that's your job.

You want to set up chances for heroics. You want to dare the players to gamble with their character's lives; that's what Press On is all about. You say, "You'd have to be hard as nails to brave this burning hallway to rescue that kid" not because you're trying to discourage them from doing it, but because you want them to know that this is a chance to be a hard as nails.

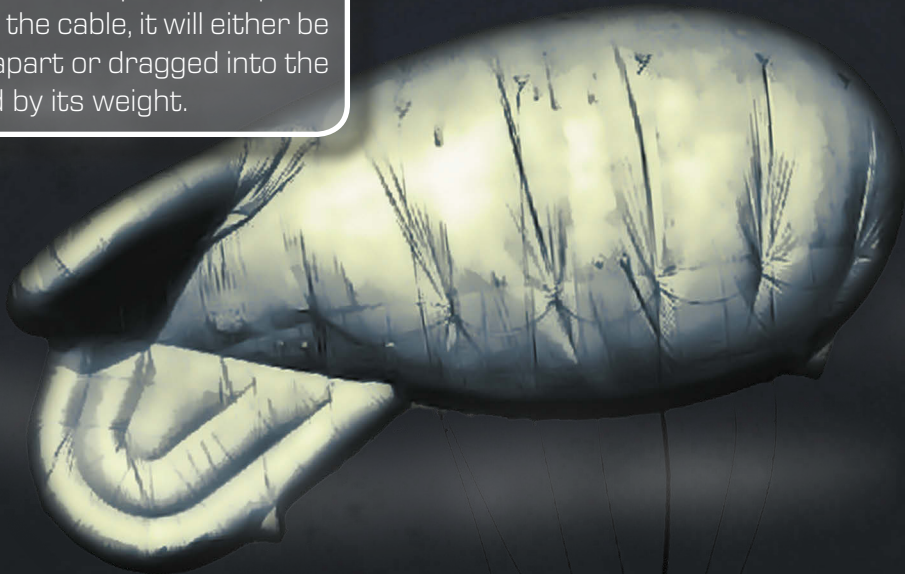
Make them Love Each Other, then Hurt Them

The player characters are a ragtag bunch drawn from all aspects of life in London, thrown together in inhuman circumstances to make the best of things. Working together to save the city they collectively call home is a hell of a thing to have in coming.

Barrage Balloons

A barrage balloon is a form of passive air defence, using a balloon attached to a long steel cable. This cable both anchors the balloon to the ground and acts as a weapon; if a plane strikes the cable, it will either be sliced apart or dragged into the ground by its weight.

Give them time to become friends with one another. Whenever they pause or Stand Down, use it as a prompt for them to talk about their issues or lives with one another. See to it they form a connection.



Make them Love the World, then Burn It

Fill the world with details. Make this place cluttered, lived in, familiar to the players, heartwrenching in places. Make it home. Talk to them in terms of landmarks. Ask them where they played as a child. Throw details at the wall and watch their faces, see what sticks.

If they form a connection to something, if they bring up a detail or remember a name, when they speak of something with any kind of reverence, you now have a target. Break that place and tell them to try to put the pieces together.

Give Them Victory where They Find It

Because there is always more to do, because you are hurting and burning everything they love, you have to let them find their wins where they can and you have to let them mean something. Don't cheapen their victories. When they do something good, let it ride. You might be tempted to let their hard work be for nothing for a cheap swerve and some drama, but refrain. Instead, target something they haven't addressed yet.

Always Make Things Worse

Don't ever just set up a site and leave it be. Don't tell them there is a crater where a house used to be and just have them passively pick through the pieces. Show destruction in the act of happening. The bomb might have blown up that building, so what about the one beside it? How is it fairing? Probably not well!

Never let a scene be static. Floors collapse, fires spread, debris rains down on roofs. People bleed and cough and stagger and fall. Crowds panic and rush, rescue teams falter and pause, soldiers throw up their arms and cry in despair. Dud bombs go off late, follow-up attacks crash down like thunderbolts. Gas leaks, water sprays, and roads give way into the tunnels below.

It can always get worse. It's always in the process of getting worse. New dangers are constantly being revealed and revealing themselves. Set up your scenes with this in mind and keep hammering at it so that players always one more thing to address, one more problem dogging them, one more disaster before they can go home.

Home Office Moves

When the players miss on a roll, yeah, you advance the Raid Clock, and that's bad enough on its own, but never pass up a chance to reach into the scene and make your hard moves to really muck things up.

Your hard moves are...

- » Offer impossible choices.
- » Take something away.
- » Show the situation deteriorate around them.
- » Set up potential harm.
- » Inflict that harm as established.
- » Turn NPCs against them.
- » Use their gender against them.
- » Deny supplies or assistance.
- » Put civilians in danger.
- » Snuff out the lives of innocents.

Set up the circumstances implied by the move, make the stakes and details clear, then look at your players and ask “what do you do?”

Remember, the players generally aren't acting against intelligent actors here, but against the world. Your moves don't necessarily have to follow directly from their miss, or even be a consequence of it, but generally those are more satisfying moves to make. Whenever you aren't sure, though, you can always fall back on showing how something at the site is about to get worse, and then following through and making that happen.

Move Principles & Examples

When you *offer an impossible choice*, show them two things they want, then show them how they can only get one. You don't have to stick to the binary of that choice like a robot, though. If they find a third option, let them take it.

“The floor gives way, and you grab on with your free hand to a jutting pipe. You're not strong enough to hang on; you let the kid climb up you to safety, or let him fall and climb yourself, but not both. What do you do?”

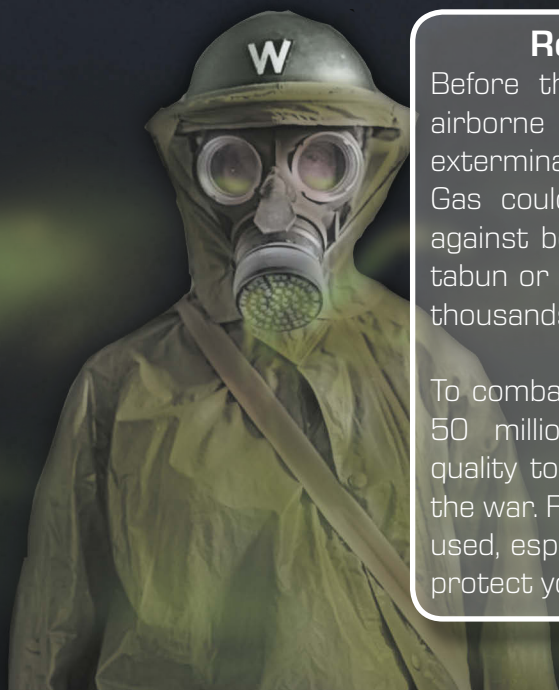
When you *take something away*, you move a person or object the player wants to save out of their grasp, either for now or for good. They know what they want, so you take it away from them and force them to reevaluate.

You don't just have to target the things they are trying to save. They have equipment; take that away. They have allies; have them scatter and disappear.

"It takes you a long time to struggle through, and the flames are creeping closer to the painting the whole time. By the time you get close, half the picture is burnt away. What do you do?"

When you *show the situation deteriorate around them*, you both set up and pay off the principle of Always Making Things Worse. Have ceilings collapse, fires cut off exits, bombs go off, or take out the floor under them. Have the panic devolve into a riot. Whatever their concerns were, magnify them by progressing the situation.

"The groaning of the timbers above grows louder, and then a whole wing of the building falls inward, spraying embers over the street. A ragged, pained cry rises from the firefighters in the street as their hard work was for nothing. Then, you hear a scream come from the pile of burning rubble. What do you do?"



Respirator Masks

Before the war, many feared that airborne chemical attacks could exterminate a city's entire population. Gas could leak into shelters proof against bombs and linger for weeks; tabun or sarin might kill hundreds of thousands in a single raid.

To combat this, Britain issued nearly 50 million gas masks of varying quality to civilians before and during the war. Fortunately, they were never used, especially as mere masks can't protect you against nerve agents.

When you *set up potential harm*, you show the players how they will be hurt if they don't do something about it. This is the wind-up before the punch, the split-second the players get to react.

"As you open the door, there's a crash as the roof gives way, and burning timbers spill forth. You're right in the path of the debris! What do you do?"

When you *inflict harm as established*, you pay off that harm, either because they didn't do anything about it or what they tried to do didn't work. You never just hurt people out of the blue; always try to give them time to react first. Do 1 harm, unless it's really, unbelievably bad, in which case do 2 harm. Couple your harm with some bad narrative consequences, and set up more harm.

"You turn to flee, but the splintered floorboards send you sprawling. The mass of wood from the floor above pins you to the ground. Mark down one harm... yeah, okay. The wood is burning, and the fire is spreading your way. What do you do?"

When you *turn people against them*, you turn their heightened importance against them by placing them at the centre of negative attention. When things go wrong, people should notice, and they shouldn't be happy about it.

"As the walls collapse, you stagger out and are confronted with a young woman, tears in her eyes. 'You left him, you bitch!' she cries, grabbing at your labels half-desperate and half-furious, pulling you down. Everyone is staring at you. What do you do?"

When you *use their gender against them*, you break the fantasy of women struggling with men as equals. You remind them of their place in British society; have the men around them dismiss, ridicule, or devalue them.

"You explain your plan, and the warden just blinks, as if confused. 'That's nice, dear, but leave this to the professionals. You could fetch some tea for the boys, that'd be lovely.' He steps away, and the other works snicker. What do you do?"

When you *deny supplies or assistance*, you find what they need to carry on with their job and you break it, interrupt it, or have it shy away. You force them to pause and sort out the situation before the continue, costing them valuable time.

“You level the fire extinguisher and press the trigger, and it just wheezes weakly. It’s empty! What do you do?”

“You rush to the collapsing wall, throwing your body against it to hold it up. The weight is unbearable. Turning your head, you see that you’re alone; none of the team has followed you. They looked shocked you would do this. What do you do?”

When you *put civilians in danger*, you very directly change the circumstances so that people are immediately imperilled in a way that forces the players to drop everything and try to help. This is your big swerve move, the one you deploy when you want to really shake up a scene and cause a stir.

“As you pull away stones to get at the shelter, rubble cascades down into the basement below... followed by an undetonated bomb. It clatters down among the survivors below. You brace for the blast, but all you hear is screaming. What do you do?”

When you *snuff out the lives of innocents*, you, well, you kill people. Not the players, but everyone else is fair game. You can kill anyone at any time; it’s a war zone. You might shy from using this power, but you shouldn’t, because this is how you make things dangerous and urgent.

Be cruel, but never callous. Always make it hurt.

“Ignoring the blasts outside, you reach back, expecting Mary to hand you the wrench, but your hand remains empty. You glance to see her lying on the floor, head bent forward. A dark stain spreads down the back of her shirt. A freak chance, shrapnel sailing down the hallway and into her neck. She didn’t make a sound. You didn’t even notice. What do you do?”

Setting & Raising Site State

Mechanically, the role of the HO focuses on setting up and regulating Sites. You aren't just their eyes and ears for the players; you ultimately decide what qualifies as a win for them. That's a lot of pressure to be under, so here's some guidelines to help you sort it out.

Site Scale

The site scale should be a measure of how important the site is, not how bad the damage is. Essentially, the worse the site, the more stuff there is for players to address before they move on.

If you roll up a -1 site, set up a small, personal scene. It could be humorous, like an old couple calling in a single incendiary landing in their garden and requesting your help saving their flowers, or tragic, like a single casualty surrounded by friends and family. These are small fry; the players might just decide not to even address it!

Sites from -2 to -3 are probably smaller buildings; houses and such. The players are likely the sole responders to this kind of site, and have to work it all out by themselves. There's still a lot to do here, and everyone is going to get involved, but once the initial survivors are accounted for and the fire is out, the players can likely move on.

-4 to -6 sites are going to be big and dramatic. A multistory building or a row of houses devastated by a cluster of bombs, for instance. Just sizing up this kind of site and figuring out the extent of the damage is going to be exhausting; this kind of site might take up the bulk of a play session. It'll be easy to keep them going; there's always one more building, one more room, one more basement, one more buried victim.

If you happen to get a site worse than -6, that's got to be something huge. Pick the biggest, most important landmark in the Community and really flatten it. A huge fire in a factory, a government building blown to pieces. There's dozens or even hundreds of casualties and the players are going to be one of a great many responding Sections. What happens here has to be heroic.

Remember that scenes get worse when not attended to. That little fire in the pensioner's garden might burn down a city block!

Raising the Site State

The part of the game that has the fewest rules constraining it is what qualifies for raising the Site State. That call is entirely on the HO and what they think the scene requires.

There's guidelines given at the front of the book, but those are guidelines for *players*. As the HO, you have total control over what counts, and what you reward will determine what players do and how they react to circumstances.

Remember your principles; let the players have victories. The easiest way to know if the Site State should be raised is if a player is proud of what they just did. If players just ask "does that count?", it means they aren't sure, and you probably shouldn't give them anything, but if everyone at the table grins at their achievement, that qualifies.

Let the players figure out what is important, and reward it. This does mean different things are important to different people, so play on that. If you see somebody consider something important, put it in their path so they can reach for it. If they express the thought that something isn't important, put it in their path so they can explain or reassess their view on the subject.

The WAAF

The Women's Auxiliary Air Force was a military branch that helped supplement the RAF by crewing barrage balloons, operating radar stations, and maintaining planes. They were given two-thirds the pay of RAF members of the same rank.



One thing that should always be rewarded is saving civilians. If they pull out one or more unwounded people from the wreckage, you should always raise the state by 1. When a group of badly wounded people get successful treatment, that should always count too.

Don't just raise the state right away, though. Remember your principle of Always Having Something To Do; when Rescue pulls some people out of the rubble, before you raise the state, tell them they hear more screams, have a survivor mention somebody missing, then ask what they do. If they think this lot is good enough, raise the state. If they go back in for more, hold off for now, and raise the state by 2 when they pull more people out.

Likewise, don't just give a point every time First Aid stabilizes somebody. Let them work through a group of people; when they've dealt with everyone available right now, one way or another, that's the time. When they really push themselves to save everyone, that's when you give out more rewards.

The nature of the roles mean that some roles are going to seem to earn the wins more than others. Rescue and First Aid are going to tend to rack it up, while Fire Guard and Air Warden tend to play more of a supporting role. This is why it's important to look for their achievements and reward them. If the Warden organizes a search party, or the Fire Guard forms a bucket brigade, you can show that group succeeding without direct input or rolls from the PCs, and thus reward them that way. This'll help keep them engaged.

Welfare is probably the trickiest role for handing out wins. The stuff that is most satisfying to the Welfare role is often things that have the least actual impact on the physical state of the site. Try to reward the Welfare player in the narrative and among the team, with heartfelt thanks from the people they assist and by encouraging the other players to appreciate their efforts. People play Welfare because they want to be the support class; those kind of players probably don't need to be given a numerical prize if they get praise and they feel good about their work.

Twists

Remember, you have more available than just bombs. For instance, you could throw in some parachuting German aircrew. They'd be unarmed, but they need to be secured and given over to the army. They probably won't like being taken prisoner by women, and there's a strong chance that the locals might try to take revenge on them.

Another strong possibility is a bad car accident at an intersection caused by panic as the bombs and the blackout conditions. This scene would have everything a bomb site would have; casualties, wreckage, fire, and bystanders, just without the bombs. It also has something that bomb sites don't, which is an element of blame to be passed around between victims.

Finally, you can just drop an aeroplane on something. They could be German planes shot down by ack-ack, or RAF night fighters. It's a lot like a bomb, but its a very evocative scene. Picture wings sheared off against the sides of buildings, engines flying loose and crashing through roofs, and fuel and fire spreading from the broken wreckage.

If the plane came down lightly enough, there might be surviving crew trapped inside. If they're RAF, you have to rescue them, but what do you do if they're Germans? Is it worth risking your lives for them? Will rescuing them raise the Site State? Will letting them die?





YOUR COURAGE

YOUR CHEERFULNESS

YOUR RESOLUTION

WILL BRING

US VICTORY

Site Details

If you're going to blow up London, you need to know about your tools for doing so, and what the city looked like before it suffered your tender mercies. So let's talk buildings and what's in them.

Buildings

London is a pretty old city. Most of it was built in the last century; the downtown core is mostly heavy stone buildings from the first half of the 19th century, while most everything else is Victorian brickwork. Most of these structures in the city proper are 3-6 stories tall, but there are a lot of 1 or 2 story houses around as well.

Those earlier buildings are really sturdy; they don't build them like they use to. A bomb going off in the middle of them is going to hollow them out, but the outside is going to keep standing like a big architectural skeleton, and many areas are going to be shielded from the blast by thick bits like support columns, chimneys, and the occasional excessively tough wall. Rescue workers are going to have to climb inside a maze of rubble and sagging hallways in the interior to get people out.

These structures aren't going to burn down, but the insides are often very, very flammable. If an incendiary bomb punches through the roof, the flames are going to eat the building from the inside, and by the time you can fight the fire from the outside it's too late.

The brick buildings are a lot less sturdy; a bomb is going to blow them right open, probably leaving just the chimney and occasional wall in a small house. Larger buildings will have large chunks collapse outright; people in the lower floors will be crushed or trapped by the remains of the upper floors. Fortunately, these buildings are made of lighter or crumblier materials, so you have a better chance of getting these people out.

These structures are pretty fire resistant if they're intact, but if they collapse all that jumbled up timber, furniture, and textiles becomes an inferno waiting to happen. Sometimes Jerry will follow up explosives with incendiaries just to turn those brick buildings into burning piles of rubble that catch neighbouring structures and make rescue attempts nearly impossible, the bastards.

Important Objects

For the most part, the main priority of rescue workers is people. When you fight fires, defuse bombs, and stabilize buildings, it's mostly to buy more time to save lives. However, there are other things that are of genuine value that civil defence workers are charged with saving too.

For the war effort, the most important object is machine tools. The factory itself is just a roof and walls; the tools are what matter. The best way to destroy machine tools is to blow apart the factory to create a slurry of debris, then burn the whole thing with incendiaries. Thermite is hot enough to melt steel, so exposure will make precision tools worthless in short order. That's why it's important to fight fires and clear debris at bombed factories.

Other important things for the war effort might be blueprints, plans, and records, valuable electronics like code-cracking machines, maps, recordings, and notes. If there's a local eccentric inventor in town, you probably want to protect his notepad; every little bit counts.

As for cultural items, these might include precious antique jewelry, paintings, sculpture, manuscripts, and so forth. Most of these valuable items were placed in storage and walled off with sandbags, but when a whole building is burning down that's not going to protect them.

This stuff might seem trivial, but that stuff is our culture. Fascists claim to value culture, but they have no real appreciation of it. They simply loot anything that appeals to them and burn everything that offends them.

Don't let it happen here.





All About Bombs

If you know what hit a building, you can set the scene more effectively. A 50 kilogram high explosive bomb hitting a brick workshop is going to be very different from a four-story residential tenement with a dozen incendiaries burning on and in it.

You can also introduce bombs into an existing Site as a way of fulfilling your mandate to Always Make Things Worse. Be it uncovering a dud *Hermann* as they clear debris or having a cluster of butterfly bombs settle on the work site, introducing more bombs to a situation is always going to make it a lot more complicated.

Bombing in the 1940s

Unsurprisingly, dropping a weight from 20,000 feet and hitting a little tiny target like a house or rail yard is *hard*.

The secret to high-altitude bombing with any kind of accuracy at all is a bombsight. Bombsights are mechanical computers; you input your altitude, airspeed, and sometimes even wind direction and barometric pressure, and the bombsight's scope moves. You centre those calibrated crosshairs onto the target... and hope for the best.

These were remarkable devices, but they could only do so much. When you're bombing at night and from high altitude, it's even worse, so German bombers aren't bothering. It's not an exaggeration to say they're lucky if they hit the city at all.

High Explosives

German high explosives came in a bunch of varieties. London got hit with 50, 250, 500, 1000, and 1800 kilogram bombs. Those last two had fun nicknames; “Hermann” for the famously corpulent Luftwaffe commander, and “Satan” for the really big one.

There were different versions of all these bombs. The common sort were “SC” general purpose bombs, which is just a thin case full of high explosive. Other sorts were semi-armoured (SD) and armoured (PC) bombs; they have thick metal cases, so they can punch straight through concrete or steel and then blow up on the other side. Finally, there were giant 1000kg “Air Mines”, parachute bombs which could level entire city blocks with an airburst.

When a little bomb goes off, it does so with a crump that reverberates in your chest, shattering windows and sending debris flying and toppling anything close to it. Outside of the immediate blast radius of about ten meters, you’ve got a hundred-meter zone where bits kicked up by the bomb will punch through walls, smash cars, and kill people.

When the really big stuff goes off, though, it’s a whole other deal. The air ripples; you can see it push out in a wave around the blast. Buildings look like a giant scooped them up whole and dropped them from a hundred feet up. Pieces can go flying for kilometers, crashing down through roofs and skipping off roads like stones on a lake. Your eardrums burst and your body feels like somebody rung your skeleton like a bell. You can be killed by the blast liquefying your organs or crushing you against walls, or by flying chunks of stone or metal, and if you survive you might suffer years later from neurological damage.

Most of these bombs were given simple impact fuses; they hit the ground, they blow up. Airburst bombs were designed to go off just before hitting the ground using a timer; reliability wasn’t great, but it could affect more buildings because the blast wouldn’t be funnelled by the streets. Long fuse bombs would go off seconds, minutes, or even hours after landing; they would bury themselves in the ground and then bring everything down with a shockwave, often while people were picking through the wreckage.

Incendiaries

Most of the incendiary bombs the Germans dropped were B1E1: foot-long sticks with a blasting cap at one end, filled with thermite and cased in Elektron, a magnesium alloy. Thermite is violently combustible and burns at high temperatures, while magnesium is flammable and reacts explosively to water. The result was a bomb which burnt hot enough to melt steel, and would flare up when hit with a firehose.

To make matters worse, the ZA and ZB variants incorporated explosive charges, detonated by heat and on a time delay respectively. This meant that the bomb would spread that incendiary material over a fairly wide radius, catching anything nearby alight.

An He-111 could carry over a thousand of these bombs at a time, dropping them in fragmenting canisters or simply spreading them over the streets. Just being in a room with a fully engaged incendiary bomb could catch fabric, wood, and flesh on fire, and they would melt ragged holes in steel and asphalt.



The Germans also attempted to use fuel bombs, which is simply an igniter and a container of oil, but they generally weren't very effective. It wasn't until the Americans invented napalm, which burns like gasoline but sticks like superglue, that these kind of weapons were effective.

The best way to deal with an incendiary bomb was to smother it in sand. You could either scoop it up with a shovel and dump it into a pit or bucket, or throw a sandbag onto it. In either case, you're going to want to stand back because there's going to be a spray of molten glass, but the weapon will quickly be starved.

When you fight a fire caused by an incendiary bomb, spraying it lightly with water could make it burn out more quickly, but a rapid jet would cause it to blow right up as the casing reacts. Don't do that.

Other Munitions

The *Luftwaffe* dropped a lot of other kinds of munitions over London. Flares were designed to light up either above the city or in the streets so pilots knew what they were hitting. Propaganda leaflets were dropped with the hope that they would demoralize the population.

The Nazis had available a variety of chemical bombs, but they never used them in the West. They manufactured tabun and sarin as nerve gases, as well as old standards like mustard gas.

Nerve gas works by paralysing your muscles, including involuntary muscle actions you need to survive. You breathe it in or absorb it through your skin, then your diaphragm stops working and you asphyxiate. If you survive due to a small dose or an antidote, you'll probably carry neurological damage your whole life, which might include brain damage, loss of motor function, blindness, and other charming effects. A gas mask alone won't save you, and even a tiny dose can be fatal.

Though the Nazis never dropped the stuff on the West, they employed chemical warfare on the Soviets, debated its use to kill off the population of occupied cities, and used it on helpless prisoners as a twisted parody of medical experimentation. Against the Western Allies, fear of reprisal kept the weapons bottled up.

Ultimately, most of the people who died from the stuff were the workers, sometimes slave workers, manufacturing it.



The Nazis also tested their brand-new cluster bomb, the Butterfly Bomb, over Ipswich and several other cities. This disgusting weapon consists of a small 2kg winged bomblet, packed with 108 of their fellows in a barrel. They flutter to the ground, some exploding, but others just sit around waiting to be disturbed.

The bomblets were usually camouflaged, so it was fairly easy to find one with your foot, like a land mine. They also had a tendency to shed their wings on impact; the remaining bomb would just look like a harmless tin can. Seventy years on, they're still finding the damn things.

After the war, the Americans built their own copy, without the deliberate boobytrap fuse. To make cleaning up duds easier, they started painting them bright orange or yellow, so finding them wouldn't be a problem. Unfortunately, a lot of little kids thought these colourful little balls were toys.

War sucks.



PLAY VARIATIONS

Though BLACKOUT has a very specific setting, there's no reason you couldn't try to shake things up by changing the scenery. Be warned; the more you diverge, the more you'll need to adapt the rules.

Vengeance Weapons

Even after the Blitz ended and Germany pulled their remaining bombers away to other fronts, the threat for Britain wasn't over. Soon after the Normandy landings, the Nazis unveiled a series of terrifying new strategic weapons.

The V-weapon program was a perfect encapsulation of the Nazi attitudes in the late war. Once it became clear to everyone sane that Germany was going to lose the war, the Nazis began pursuing ever more expensive and ridiculous weapons, desperately looking for a trump card that could bring back the easy victories of 1939-1940. They developed radar-based death rays, pneumatic anti-aircraft wind guns, monstrous tanks the size of houses, and rocket-powered fighters more likely to kill their operators than their targets.

Past a certain point, it wasn't even about winning anymore; they were just spiteful tools used to spit at a world which had rejected their violent, deranged worldview. None of these weapons were as petty, or as dangerous, as the V-weapons.

The most common was the V-1 flying bomb, an 850kg high explosive charge on a pair of stubby wings, connected to a crude pulse-jet engine. Coasting to the target, the jet would make a horrifying coughing drone as it passed overhead, before it's mechanical autopilot cut out the engine and it dove silently into the ground, detonating enormously.

The V-1s could be stopped, but it wasn't easy. They were fast; 550 kilometers an hour, faster than most planes. Ground-based defences weren't always enough, especially early on. Flying low and fast, they could outrun the traverse of most heavy guns. The British tried erecting more barrage balloons to stop them, but V-1s had wirecutters on their wings that let them slide right through.

People knew the V-1s as buzz bombs, doodlebugs, and robot bombs, and they hated them. A hundred of them were fired a day at London at the peak of these attacks. Many were stopped, but many more weren't.

The V-2, on the other hand, didn't have any nicknames, because you didn't see or hear them coming. The brainchild of rocketry genius Wernher von Braun, the V-2 was a cutting-edge rocket carrying a thousand kilogram warhead. Launched on a suborbital trajectory, the rocket was the first manmade object to reach space. It then turned around and plunged into the target at supersonic speeds.

"The rocket worked perfectly, except for landing on the wrong planet."

- Wernher von Braun, on the V-2
September, 1944

The V-2 was materially a less effective weapon, but as a psychological tool it was unmatched. It couldn't be detected or stopped. You couldn't even hear it until after it landed.

The Germans were also working on the V-3, a giant multistage artillery pieces that could shoot between countries, but fortunately never got to use it against Britain. Between these weapons, they spent more than the US spent on the Manhattan Project.

A V-weapon game would be set a little later, in 1944 or '45. Because the V-weapons are more infrequent but more dangerous, new bombs only land when the Raid Clock hits 4.



Operation Sealion

In this alternate history scenario, the British Isles are being invaded by German forces. This might be early on; perhaps the RAF got caught up in France and destroyed, so the Germans are paratropping in as early as June 1940. Maybe the Battle of Britain went poorly, so they're coming in around September of the same year. Or maybe the entire war went very differently indeed, and the Germans are landing in Britain years on, armed with wonder-weapons ranging from successful versions of real-life designs to bizarre sci-fi machinery.

In this situation, things in London are much more chaotic. German paratroopers are coming down en masse. The Home Guard is desperately trying to hold vital streets while the regular army slugs it out with incoming forces. The tempo of attacks non-stop, with air bombing being supplemented by German artillery or worse!

They still aren't letting women fight, but you're right there in the thick of it, trying to get civilians to safety and hold the city together in the middle of the fighting. Your job is the same; save lives and preserve the city as best you can, even as everything around you falls apart.

Three mechanical changes should be made. The first is that everyone gets access to the Air Warden's The Hard Way move; if you happen to get into a fair-ish fight with one of the invaders, roll that. Secondly, the Air Warden gets a firearm of some kind, and gets +1 to The Hard Way when they use it, be it against the fascist or otherwise.



Finally, there's a new basic Move.

***Under Fire**

When the invader shoots at you or your hiding place...

...roll +Nerve.

On a 10+, you hold out. On a 7-9, choose one.

- » Take 1 Harm.
- » You are forced to retreat. If everyone flees, Move On.
- » Lower the Site State by 1.

On a miss, the HO chooses, and can pick more than one. If multiple people roll this at the same time, only advance the Raid Clock a maximum of 1, no matter how many misses result.

Soviet Russia

The war on the Eastern Front was very different from that on the west. For one thing, the scale was immensely different; the war in the East was massive, involving millions of soldiers across a vast landscape.

Secondly, the motives of the war were very different. The Germans merely wished to keep the Western Powers from interfering in their conquests, but their war in the East was a war of extermination. The Nazis considered the Slavic people *unttermensch*, subhumans. They planned to displace and exterminate everything west of their borders to create a frontier that the German people could colonize.

You might be a work team in besieged Leningrad, suffering from air and artillery attacks as well as cold and starvation. Maybe you are holding Moscow together with the enemy at the gates. While Britain feared an invasion, Russia experienced it, so the invasion rules would be in order if the Germans are entering your city.

Remember, the Soviets allowed women into their armed forces. Maybe after your game is done and you've picked up the pieces as best you can, you can find a game that lets you play soldiers, like PATROL, and take revenge on the fascists for destroying your home.

Nazi Germany

Germany suffered immensely under the bombs. As a consequence of the Blitz, the RAF was merciless in its own campaigns. Bomber Command, headed by Sir Arthur Travers Harris, had no time for the careful targeting of war infrastructure practiced by the American bombers. No, they were going to bring Germany to their knees with fire, even if they had to raze every city to the ground to do it.

“You could have killed someone!”

“Young man, I kill thousands of people every night.”

- Exchange between a traffic officer and Bomber Harris
(apocryphal)

In this game, players would be members of the *Reichsluftschutzbund*, the National Air Raid Protection League. There were many differences between the ARP and the RLB, not the least of which was that participation was mandatory for the civilian population. It was also organized and policed much more strictly.

Such a game would be a lot less about the individual heroic initiative of the players and more about surviving the night under threat both by non-stop heavy bombing and the watchful eye of the Nazi Party officials overseeing RLB operations. With the regressive state of women's rights in the fascist state and the utter demographic devastation wrought by five years of war, you would find yourself facing much greater challenges with fewer options and little help.

Rather than playing through a whole night, you would trade off between a day portion and a night portion. During the day, American bombers fly low overhead, dropping high explosives on factories and train yards, and you work to try and restore operation to these facilities as best you can so the Russians can be kept at bay. Then, at night, RAF planes fly high overhead and drop incendiaries, igniting massive firestorms, and your work shifts to trying to fight fires and rescue who you can.

There is no all-clear.

Imperial Japan

Japan was a very different sort of target for strategic bombing, one which caused many problems for the US strategy of low-level precision bombing of military facilities and industry. For one, there was a great deal of cottage industry. Rather than major facilities producing weapons and ammunition, the Japanese war machine was fed through the work of individual labourers in small workshops spread throughout their communities, sometimes even in the home.

Furthermore, the United States had suffered terrible losses in their precision campaigns over Germany, and Japanese cities, made of wood and ricepaper, were enticingly flammable. On top of that, racism!

Thus, rather than continue these tactics over Japan, they opted to adopt the British high-altitude firebombing. They retained a moral objection to the practice, so eased their conscious by dropping leaflets warning citizens of the exact time and target of their campaigns, and even records that would familiarize the population with the sound of B-29 engines so they would know to evacuate. Still, hundreds of thousands died from napalm and high explosives in these raids.

Other Conflicts

North Korea suffered terribly from UN bombings during the Korean War; bombers levelled just about everything taller than two stories. To be a DPRK civil defence worker would be desperate indeed.

Likewise, the so-called Free World Forces bombed North Vietnam quite heavily. Hanoi suffered repeated attacks during Operation Linebacker I and II; laser-guided bombs made accuracy better, but carpet bombing was still used. The attacks were frequent enough that concrete foxholes were sunk into the street for civilians.

Single Player

You can play with just a single PC and the Home Office. The player forms Bonds with NPCs: add “Gain a Bond” as a result on Make Time. They can spend those Bonds to get d6s from the NPCs as Help. Bond can also be spent to learn moves from other Roles from these NPCs at any time; the HO chooses what moves are available from each NPC.

AFTERWORD

As the Second World War retreats ever further into the past and slowly out of living memory, our cultural grasp of the details slip away, replaced with an archetypal view pushed through movies, video games, and commercial documentaries.

This is inevitable, and in some ways it's a good thing. We shouldn't have to carry the scars of a conflict on our society forever, and the scars of the Second World War run deep. When we can afford to forget, or even when we can use history for play, it shows the ways that we've healed, and the ways that peace has made us better.

But there's lessons we shouldn't forget. War is terrible; it inspires us to ever greater acts of cruelty in the name of victory, ideology, nationality, or race. Yet we lionize it, glorify it, remember only the shining moments. Even when we try to show it as gritty or grim, it only acts to make the successes more romantic.

I hope this game is fun and exciting for the players, and I hope everyone has fun playing it. But I also hope it can give you pause, even for a second, and inspire you to reflect on what war means for people. War isn't just soldiers and tanks and heroes. Most of the time, war is just people, scared, brave people, picking through the ruins of their lives.



War Jobs for Women

You know what's always great? When people decry media about women in history because it devalues the contribution of men or some hogwash. So here's An Incomplete List of Things Women Actually Did during the Second World War, which is probably more than any of us reading this today ever did to defeat the fascists.

This isn't even covering the women who served in irregular militias like the French or Polish resistance, took up arms at Leningrad or Warsaw, fought as combat troops for the Soviet Union, or otherwise got stuck in more directly. The war was a team effort, and everyone in the world showed up. Don't let history be rewritten by those who would deny the labour and sacrifice of others.

- » Ambulance Driver
- » Weapon Tester
- » Aircraft Transfer Pilot
- » Anti-Aircraft Gunner
- » Combat Nurses
- » Combat Reporter
- » Searchlight Operator
- » Supply Driver
- » Truck Mechanic
- » Fighter Ground Crew
- » Computer Programmer
- » Congresswoman
- » Test Pilot
- » Flight Instructor
- » Codebreaker
- » Spy
- » Nuclear Scientist
- » Civil Defence Responder
- » Firefighter
- » Field Canteen Worker
- » Shipbuilder
- » Ordinance Worker
- » Land Army Farmer
- » Land Army Lumberjack
- » Welder
- » Train Engineer
- » Field Telephone Operator
- » Aircraft Designer
- » Field Cook
- » Military Clerk
- » Recon Photo Interpreter
- » Aircraft Mechanic
- » Merchant Marine Crew
- » Air Warden
- » Propaganda Artist
- » Radar Operator
- » Special Operations Scout
- » Parachute Riggers
- » Medical Orderly
- » Radio Operators
- » War Bond Fundraiser
- » Drill Instructor
- » Motorcycle Courier
- » Psychiatric Counsellor
- » Flight Nurse
- » French Foreign Legionnaire
(Her name was Susan Travers!)
- » Stenographer
- » Translator
- » Military Driver



BRITAIN SHALL NOT BURN!

It's 1940! The Continent has fallen, Hitler's army seems unstoppable, and London has fallen into the crosshairs of the evil *Luftwaffe*. Their bombers come in the night and leave our great city blasted and burning in their wake...

But it'll take more than that! While the boys are fighting them on the beaches, us girls have a job to do! Air wardens, fire guards, rescue workers; if fair Britannia's going to make it through this, we'll all need to do our part!

BLACKOUT is a one-shot RPG where, for one night, you take the role of heroic women who volunteered for the Civil Defence services and stood with Britain in her darkest hour!

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