

# New RPG Campaign – May to June 2025

The Online Pirate-themed RPG game I've been running for the past year and a bit has sadly almost come to an end. So time for new beginnings! I wanted to send out a poll to find out what my friends were interested in playing in the future. I wanted to try running a campaign on a much smaller time scale this time: an entire campaign, beginning to end within 8-10 sessions of play, like a season of television. I'm hoping this will reduce the commitment pressure, increase energy in games, and allow us to experiment with different forms of RPG games over time.

I plan to run a campaign starting in early May this year, and running until roughly the end of June. For this two month season, I wanted to focus on running a *narrative-focused* game. There's three games I had in mind: (a) *Heart: The City Beneath*, a Fantasy-Horror game in which you play flawed, obsessive, doomed adventurers investigating a horrific undercity, (b) *Blades In The Dark*, a game in which you play daring scoundrels going on heists to try and maintain a criminal enterprise within an apocalyptic industrial Dishonored-esque city, and (c) *Brindlewood Bay*, a game in which you play elderly members of a mystery book club, who find themselves investigating occult murders in a quaint sea-side town.



Below I give a short description of Narrative-Focused games. Take a gander at each of the games, let me know if any of them interest you and an evening you'd be able to reliably play in May and June, and I'll take a look and organize a series of games based on that.

## Heart: The City Beneath

Heart: The City Beneath is set in the dangerous, unpredictable, mad chasms and ruins of *The Heart*, deep beneath the mile-high Drow city of *The Spire*. In the game, a group of desperate adventurers journey into the heart looking for something important to them: secrets, truth, absolution, or sanctuary. Contained in this nightmare undercity are creatures that are dark reflections of societal beliefs, and societies that are given what The Heart *thinks* they'll need to survive. Each player character is *fundamentally doomed*. This isn't a game about long term exploration or growth. It's about flawed, obsessive people making bad decisions, investigating a horrific undercity because they're convinced the answers they need might lie within.



Think British, Dystopian Fantasy like Warhammer: Fantasy, or Gormenghast, or Jeff Vandermeer's *Ambergris*.

We play to find out to what extent the players can achieve their obsessions before they are consumed by the heart.

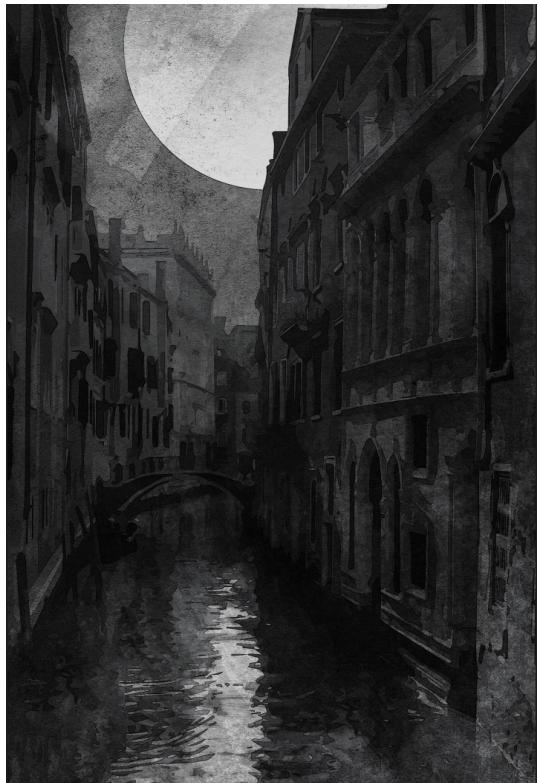
Heart allows for greater player agency with incredibly creative character classes ([avatars of the god of debt](#), a [living beehive manifesting the force of order over chaos](#), [junk mages addicted to arcane energy](#), and six more), that give characters powerful abilities heavily encouraging creative use. The most powerful abilities give players incredible agency over a given situation, but often come with a deep cost, often death.

## Blades in the Dark

Blades In The Dark is a game about a group of daring scoundrels building a criminal enterprise on the haunted streets of an industrial city. There are heists, chases, escapes, dangerous bargains, bloody skirmishes, deceptions, and betrayals.

Think Peaky Blinders, Dishonored, or Goodfellas.

We play to find out if a fledgling crew can thrive amidst the teeming threat of cut throat competitions from rival gangs, powerful noble families, vengeful ghosts, the Bluecoats of the City Watch, and the siren song of your scoundrels' own personal vices. Over the course of our two month series of sessions, we'll play to find out about the *origins* of a fledgling crew: are they able to secure a sustainable place in the city.



Blades in the Dark gives Players greater agency using various innovative mechanics. During a heist, players can spend resources / take risks to have \*flashbacks\* in which they narrate an action their character did before the heist, which aids them in the present (e.g. "The Hound hid his pistols near the card table so he could retrieve them after being patted down at the front door", "Chael bribed the Guards to leave the back gate unlocked", etc, etc). Players also don't decide what they're carrying ahead of time during the heist: they decide how \*much\* they are carrying, and determine what they're carrying when it's most narratively impactful. No more 'always carrying a rope and torch' just in case you end up descending a steep drop. The goal is to encourage players to go on exciting heists, without the need to spend hours as players planning for such heists.

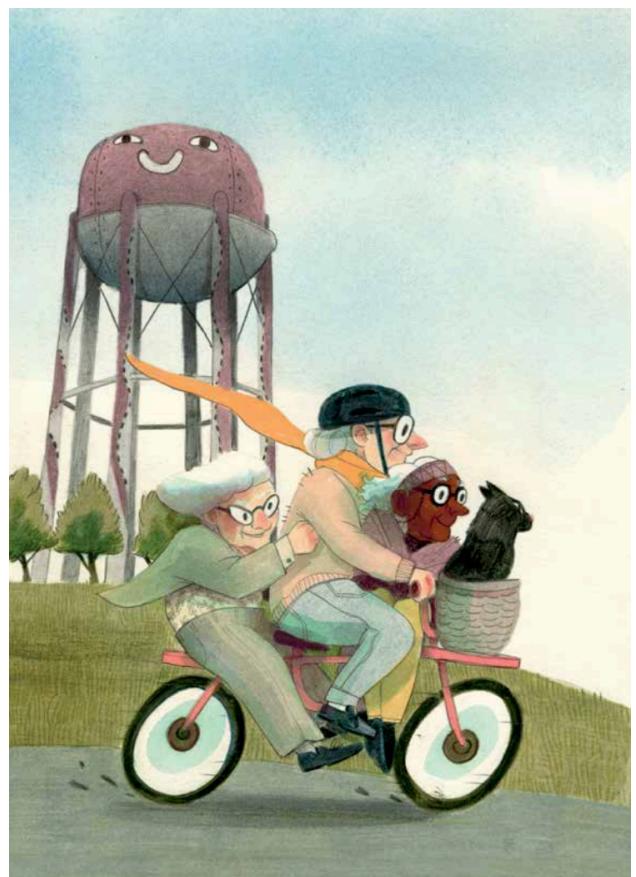
## Brindlewood Bay

Brindlewood Bay is a game about a group of elderly women – members of a local book club – who find themselves solving actual murder mysteries in their quaint seaside town. They eventually become aware of a dark occult conspiracy connecting the murders.

Think Weird Horror mixed with Murder She Wrote, and other Kitsch TV Shows from the 80s and 90s.

Over the course of the season, we will play to find out if the members of the book club are able to solve the murder mysteries in their quaint seaside town, and eventually, see whether they can defeat the dark conspiracy that threatens their community.

Brindlewood Bay is a Powered By The Apocalypse Game (PBTA). In such games, players have a given set of moves. In addition to roleplaying in the usual way, at certain points in the game players can activate one of their moves to shift narrative authority to themselves to change how the game is currently being played. In addition, Brindlewood Bay changes how 'mystery' games are usually played: In this game there is no *canonical solution* to a given mystery. The chief responsibility of the GM is dropping clues to the mystery for the players to gather, and the more clues the players are able to connect into a consistent explanation of the murder, the more likely their solution will be correct. This prevents usual situations of mystery games, in which players are stuck trying to 'guess what the GM is thinking', perhaps missing key clues that are needed to solve a mystery.



## **Call of Cthulhu**

Yes it's a classic, despite the incredible amount of prep work required to run Call of Cthulhu games. I'm interested in playing, but not if I have to run every game. So here's an option if you want to play Call of Cthulhu - during the series of games we'll each prepare a scenario to run for each other, trading off as a GM after each scenario to make the experience less prep work. Anyone who's interested in joining the round table *must* be prepared to run a scenario of Call of Cthulhu, or another system, when their turn comes up.

