

# Octopus's Garden

## Issue Sixty-Two

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### Sub-editorial

HELLO, good evening and welcome to Octopus's Garden, the subzeen with its very own cod hobby philosophy article. It's a subzeen to Jim Burgess' [The Abbysinian Prince](#). Produced by Peter Sullivan, [peter@burdonvale.co.uk](mailto:peter@burdonvale.co.uk). It's also available on the web at <http://www.burdonvale.co.uk/octopus/>.

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### The Green Tennis Shoes Principle

(a.k.a. Imminent Death of The Hobby Predicted, Film at 11)

I can't remember how I found <http://sourcery.blogspot.com/2005/06/green-tennis-shoes-principle.html> in the first place – probably via a slashdot article. The basic thesis is that “Somewhere in every geographical area there is a person whose life revolves around green tennis shoes.” And that the world wide web has been the paradigm shift in terms of allowing these people to find each other and communicate.

Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. The reality is that, at least some types of fans, whose interests were at least as obscure as Green Tennis Shoes, managed to find each other and communicate even before the internet. Postal games zines, and the science fiction fanzines that they grew out of, showed ahead of time that the internet, whilst a useful tool for fans of Green Tennis Shoes, is not a necessary or essential one.

Since John Boardman put out Graustark 1 in 1963, postal games fans started building their own communications network, predominantly through the post, long before www was even a glint in Sir Tim Berners-Lee's eye. For us, the concept of a mailing list was not an extended metaphor, but a physical reality.

The issue going forward is what the internet means for The Hobby in the future. The most obvious outcome is the decline of the paper fanzine. We are now already at the stage where producing a paper postal games fanzine is an eccentricity. An admirable eccentricity, to be sure, but an eccentricity nonetheless.

But the big issue for postal games fandom is whether the fanzine – in any form – is a significant part of our future. Compare and contrast with the science fiction fandom that postal games fandom grew out of. For science fiction fans, paper postal fanzines are likewise becoming rarer (although with a longer tradition, this is proving a slower process). However, there is a newer tradition growing up, of the electronic fanzine, typically in PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format. There's even a whole website dedicated to them, at <http://www.efanzines.com>.

Postal games fandom, by contrast, seems to have fallen out of love with the fanzine, whether paper or electronic. With the obvious, noble and commendable exception of this very zine, the high profile elements of The Hobby these days seem to have different paradigms to the zine, whether paper or electronic. The Judges and the other web sites such as Tom Tweedy's [www.dip2000.com](http://www.dip2000.com) or Mike Dean's <http://www.psychozine.co.uk> have adopted different models – more as websites providing an ongoing service, rather than the old issue-based architecture that characterised games zines.

In the end, the new model of a service-based website is probably a better fit, if you reduce The Hobby down to just playing games. But the other parts of The Hobby – the sense of community, general

interaction and serendipity of articles and lettercolumns – are not as well-served. So, let's treasure our remaining zines for as long as we can, and make sure our editors realise how important they are, to us and The Hobby as a whole.

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## Waiting Lists

**Downfall XIII** (Diplomacy variant): None (eight wanted).

No movement on this so far, but it's entirely possible that you've all forgotten about this. If you want in on this, please contact me at [peter@burdonvale.co.uk](mailto:peter@burdonvale.co.uk)

However, the main recent development is that we now have a new, much better, map. A shrunk-down early draft version is below, but for the master version (which is a 4-page PDF), please see: <http://www.burdonvale.co.uk/octopus/map.pdf>

This has been produced for us by Harold Reynolds, to whom many thanks (and a public apology for taking so long to get back to him about it).

The rules for Downfall XIII are available on the web at:

<http://www.burdonvale.co.uk/octopus/down13.html>

We'll use a variation on the old houserules for CMag, available on-line at:

<http://www.burdonvale.co.uk/octopus/house.html>

Quick summary: Gamefees No. NMR Insurance Yes. Retreats prophetic. Winters separated. Standbys Yes. Grey press (black except for reserved datelines) Yes. Guest press most definitely Yes.

And if you need a copy of the rulebook for Diplomacy itself, this is now also on-line at:

[http://www.diplomacy-archive.com/diplomacy\\_rules.htm](http://www.diplomacy-archive.com/diplomacy_rules.htm)

So – any more interest, or shall we give up on Diplomacy variants, and try some Railway Rivals instead?

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*That was Octopus's Garden #62, a Startling Press production*

# Downfall 13

