

(DON'T) FEAR THE RULEBOOK

A rulebook for *(Don't) Fear the Reaper*

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Table of Contents

Preamble.....	4
Article I: Setting Up.....	5
Article II: The World.....	7
Article III: Centuries Gone By.....	9
Article IV: The Elegy of Four Empires.....	11

Preamble

The player reading this rulebook is hereby responsible as the facilitator for their group during this session of (Don't) Fear the Reaper. **Skip the redacted parts. They're not important.***

Whereas the dawn of spacefaring and energy technology has bestowed upon the **Type II civilizations** of our Galaxy the power of interstellar expansion,

Whereas the past millennia of our Galaxy have woven a **rich tapestry of shared histories among its inhabitants**, fostering intricate and diverse inter-civilizational relationships,

Whereas there exists a **common recognition of the anticipated arrival of the Reapers**, foretold to occur within the next three thousand years, an event that shall indelibly shape the destiny of our Galaxy,

Whereas there persists a profound shared lack of understanding among the members of this Galaxy as to the purposes and ultimate goals of the aforementioned Reapers, thereby presenting an **existential enigma of unparalleled significance**,

~~Whereas the security and prosperity of empires within our Galaxy hinge upon the establishment of a common foundation, a galactic concord born out of necessity and shared destiny,~~

~~Whereas it is imperative that every species and all peoples of our Galaxy unite under a common banner of regulation and cooperation, to secure their legacy and foothold within the cosmic expanse for the next three millennia and beyond,~~

Whereas the continuous expansion of **technological prowess and economic vitality** stands as a bulwark against stagnation and decline, ensuring the progression of civilization even in the face of uncertainty,

Whereas the commitment to conflict resolution among empires, whether by diplomatic discourse or, as a last resort, through **martial engagement**, is a testament to our collective resolve ~~to safeguard the harmonious fabric of our interstellar society,~~

Now, therefore, the entities gathered, representing the **three/four founding empires** of this First Galactical Council, do hereby proclaim,

This Galactical Declaration of Regulation as a common standard for all empires of this Galaxy, to the end that every species and all peoples of this Galaxy, keeping this Regulation constantly in mind, shall strive to secure their foothold within the confines of our Galaxy in the next three millennia,

The onset of a new era, a beacon of common principles and aspirations, to guide every empire of this Galaxy in forging a shared future that honors the richness of our past and the promise of our tomorrow;

In anticipation of the arrival of the [Reapers](#).

Article I: Setting Up

§1. The Facilitator

As the facilitator, the player shall:

- Play the game alongside others whilst ensuring accurate interpretation and understanding of the contents within the rulebook,
- Coordinate and provide direction to the assembly of players within their session, helping them navigate the narrative.
- Answer any questions about specific rules or mechanics.

The main responsibility of the facilitator is to maintain the flow of the game, safeguarding its continuity and momentum.

** If you are not comfortable with being the facilitator, you are free to pass this rulebook to someone else in your group.*

§2. Materials

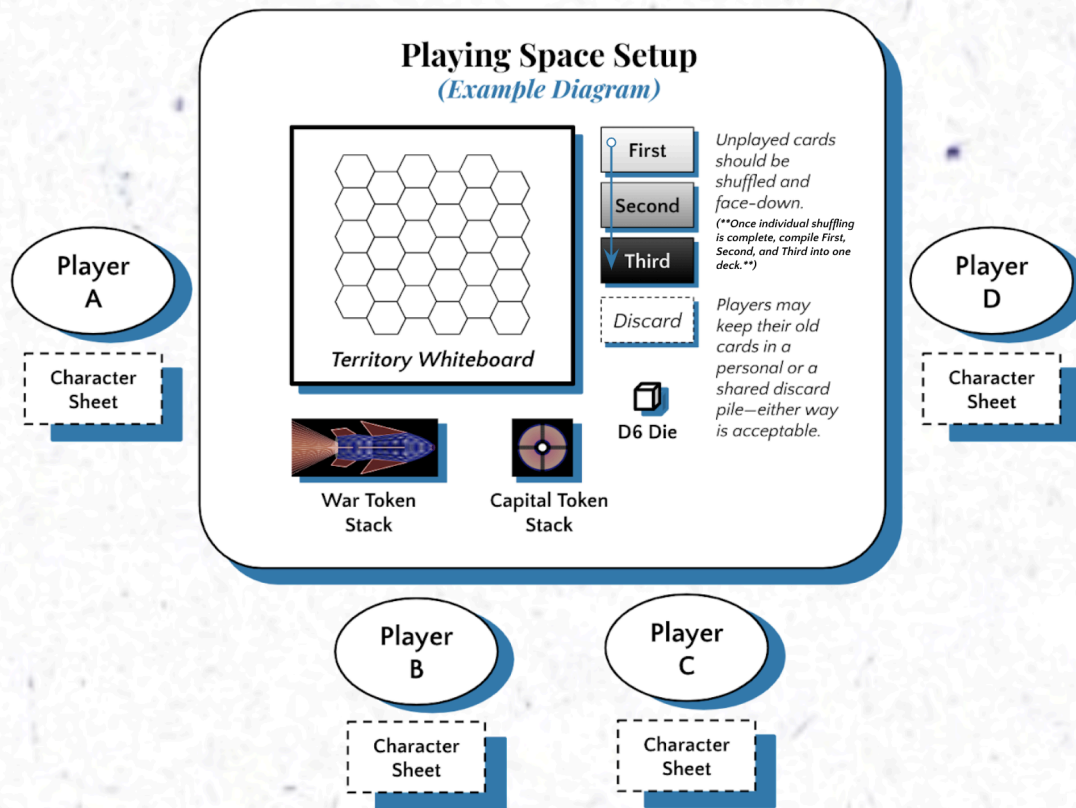
(Don't) Fear the Reaper is played on a whiteboard overlaid with **hexagonal grids** that represent **solar systems in the Galaxy**. The board and whiteboard markers shall be provided within the package.

- If possible, each player should attempt to use a different colored marker to avoid potential confusion.
- If the markers provided are dry or otherwise unavailable, the players shall locate viable substitutes, which must be erasable on a whiteboard.
- The game heavily relies on players drawing their actions on the map, symbolically representing their technologies and actions. **Creative expression is well within everyone's rights, regardless of artistic talent.**

Before beginning the session, players shall:

- Clear out a playing space, ideally a table around which players can gather in a circle.
- Take out the [whiteboard](#) and place it in the middle of the space, ensuring that each player can access and draw on the whiteboard without much difficulty.
- Take out the [playing deck](#) from the package and separate them, according to color, into three stacks: the **first millennium**, the **second millennium**, and the

Third millennium. Shuffle the three stacks individually, then compile the stacks in chronological order.



Around the playing decks, the players shall then array the rest of the materials needed:

- **30 War** and **30 Capital** tokens.
- **Character sheets**, 1 for each player.
- **1 d6 die**.
- **Some scratch paper** or other note-taking devices.
- **Different colors** of whiteboard markers, 1 for each player.

Article II: The World

~~There is just one moon
And one golden sun
And a smile means
Friendship to everyone~~

As the Facilitator of your session, please read this Article to other players. The parts in *italics* are instructions for you.

§1. Our Galaxy

Point at the whiteboard. This is our **Galaxy**. Within the confines of this Galaxy, your empires have lived out their entire histories so far. A very small stage in the vast cosmic arena, but it's our ~~cherished~~ home nonetheless.

For a long, long time, our empires have been developing within their own solar systems. However, as we approach Year 3,000, three (or four) of us have all independently acquired means to expand our borders and horizons beyond the comfort of our own systems. The time of rapid expansion, the era of **interstellar empires**, has inevitably arrived.

Yet, as we all turn our eyes towards the stars, eager to etch our presence onto the canvas of our Galaxy, a disquieting, shattering revelation shocks even the most optimistic among us.

THE REAPERS ARE ARRIVING.

The **Reapers**. A name that resonates with a chilling sense of finality and dread. What little we know stems from salvaged relics and cryptic remnants of extinct empires, folklore, and tales about a **harbinger of destiny that lies in wait**.

When, exactly? **Our archaeologists have given an approximation of three millennia**, but questions are multiple and answers scarce. As we venture forth, the sense of triumphant fanfare is being gradually tainted by this ominous uncertainty.

The stage is thus set for the foreseeable future of our Galaxy. An era of expansion, an era of unavoidable conflict, and an era that will inevitably be defined by the enigmatic prophecy of the **Reapers**.

§2. Our Empires

The “I”

Point at the “character” sheets. These are our “character” sheets, on which we shall create our own **interstellar empires**.

Fill out everything except “Relationships,” which we will determine later. In the “Technology” section, write one technology most crucial to your empire, and in the “Species Abilities” section, write one innate skill, biological or cultural, that your empire’s peoples possess. Flag designs may be created and updated at any point in the game.

Note to the Facilitator: When you and other players in your group are designing their empires, it might be useful to remind them about the technological limitations - our galaxy has just entered the age of interstellar travel and settlement, hence players should avoid too advanced technology, especially in terms of space travel.

Wait until everyone has filled out their “character” sheets. When everyone is done: Now let us share our empires. Present your “character” sheets.

After everyone finishes sharing, point at the whiteboard. Now, we will choose our starting positions by picking our home solar systems, which are represented by hexes on the map. If there are 3 starting empires in the galaxy, they shall start on the three hexes pointed by the **dotted arrows**. If there are 4 empires in the galaxy, they shall start on the four hexes pointed by the **solid arrows**. Fill your starting hex with a symbol that represents your empire.

The “We”

Point at the die. We will use it to determine the relationship among our civilizations later in Article 3. Section 3.

War and Peace

Point at the War tokens. These are War tokens. They represent our empire’s potential for militarisation - our arsenal of interstellar weaponry ready to defend our own interests, or outright enforce them. You will use these tokens to wage wars or amass them as deterrence against potential enemies.

Point at the Capital tokens. These, on the other hand, are Capital tokens. They represent the economic prosperity of our empires in the form of an intergalactic currency accepted by all empires. Think of them as symbols of wealth, tokens for bribery, vital gifts for détente or appeasement, etc., and use them at your discretion.

At the beginning of each player's turn, you must **choose and take one of the two tokens**. Think carefully about which one of these would benefit your empire more, the carrot or the fist.

Article III: Centuries Gone By

§1. The Cards

The cards describe concrete or abstract actions for a player to do. As empires progress through millennia, tension and danger simmer. When the card *The Reaper Hath Cometh* is drawn, the game immediately ends.

§2. The Relationships

The long and intertwined history between the empires produces complicated and delicate relationships among them.

Before the gameplay, the facilitator shall label the players as A, B, C, (and D, if 4 players). Permission is hereby granted to the facilitator to decide these pre-existing relationships between empires through dice roll results.

On a scale of 1 - 6, 1 represents absolute hatred between two empires, and 6 represents prolonged peace and cooperation between them. Any number between 1 and 6 represents different extent of hatred and peace based on the two extremes.

The facilitator shall roll for all relationships between each empire. To further aid the facilitator, the council provides an example when there are four empires:

- The facilitator shall roll for relationships between (A, B), (B, C), (C, D), (A, D), (A, C), and (B, D).

The council encourages each empire to carefully evaluate their relationships with each other. The empires are hereby authorized to change their relationship accordingly anytime if certain actions from other empires justify so.

§3. The Century

The Galactical Council hereby declares that the smallest time unit - a century - is represented by a single player's turn.

The order is hereby declared that the game starts with the facilitator's turn, and then the order shall go counterclockwise.

During each turn, the player should:

- **Expand** their territory by one hex. The hex should be adjacent to your existing territory. Fill in the hex with symbols of their choice to reflect their gain or technology if prompted by a card
- **Draw** a card and **read out loud** the two actions on the card
- **Choose one** action to carry out, and **announce** their choice
- Optionally, a player may
 - Obtain one **War token** OR a **Capital token**, but not both
 - Or, when conditions are met, **start a war**. For further information on these conditions, one may turn to Article III, §5

§4. The Introductions of the New

The council rules that when a card containing the keyword “**introduce**” is drawn, the player should reflect their action on the map by composing a simple sketch of that topic on their territory and announcing it to other empires in the galaxy.

To help empires better understand this mechanism, the council provides this example:

- An empire decides on the action “introduce a new technology”
- The empire announce that their new technology is “manifesting happiness out of nowhere”
- The empire then draws a representation of this technology on their territory

§5. War and Conflicts

Wars. Wars never change. The **War tokens** obtained each round are a symbol of an empire’s arsenal.

To wage a war, these conditions shall be met:

- Obtaining one **War token**
- Some amount of border between two empires is shared by having adjacent hexes
- The waging side shall have a relationship below 4

When an empire wages a war, the winner is decided by a dice roll. The **War** tokens of two belligerents serve as positive modifiers to the dice points. Both empires:

1. Commit 1 - 6 **War** tokens before the dice roll as their military power in this war
2. The attacking empire rolls the dice first, and the defending empire rolls second
3. The winner is decided by the higher point holder when modifiers are added

A tie of the points represents a futile war. No consequences for both parties, but the committed tokens are consumed.

When an empire wins a war, the Galaxy Council allows the winning empire to take over one adjacent hex of the losing empire as a peace resolution.

Conflicts are similar to wars in ways of deciding a winning belligerent. They appear as cards during the game. When drawn, the player chooses an empire to declare a conflict and uses the same mechanism to decide a winner as a war. However, conflicts are

small-scale exchanges of firepower, thus yielding to nothing, unlike wars where territory can be won.

Article IV: The Elegy of Four Empires

The short story below chronicles four centuries of identity formation and one of heated conflict, offering an example of what players of *(Don't) Fear The Reaper* can create, destroy, and rebuild through the game. It is up to you, players, to decide what **The Elegy of Four Empires**—of Glob, Blob, Natural Selection, and Pizzacracy—means, if anything it all, as you go forth designing your own galaxies, which are dazzling and damned in equal measure.

§1. Empires: The Essentials

- **“Be bad; don’t be a Chad”**: One need look no further than this motto to understand that the moral compass of Empire **A** (better known as **Glob**) owes its existence to the malicious, hypermasculine humor of the early zeroth century (2000–2999). Glob’s spiky, amorphous residents, the **Globbians**, inhabit a culture of **condescension**, useful for an empire with an **oligarchical** streak.
- **“Be nice; don’t be a Karen”**: Once the blood family of the Globbians, the **Blobbites** of Empire **B** (better known as **Blob**) emancipated themselves in the mid-zeroth century, citing their **strict policies against public displays of extreme entitlement** and **cultural need for niceness** as the reasons to chart their own pacifist path. Since their pivotal emancipation, the Blobbites have learned to make peace, perhaps contradictorily, with the Globbians’ unchecked belligerence.
- **“Get the Door. It’s Domino’s™”**: In pursuit of deliciously-scented interstellar dominance, the Domino’s™ pizza company transformed itself into the **capitalistic, authoritarian** Empire **C** (better known as **The Pizzacracy**). The Pizzacracy produces pepperoni slices that contain enough energy to single-handedly power its **battleships**, and the empire’s **humanoid pizza residents** will stop at nothing to influence a most devastating military domino effect across the Galaxy.
- **“Darwin is Dar-win!”**: As a meritocracy taken to a **totalitarian** extreme, Empire **D** (better known as **Natural Selection**, after the seminal evolutionary principle of ancient scientist Charles Darwin) privileges its **fittest residents**—the smartest, the strongest, nothing less—and arms them with **self-sustaining spaceships**.

§2. The Initial Relationships

- **A and B** (Glob and Blob): 6
- **B and C** (Blob and Pizzacracy): 1
- **C and D** (Pizzacracy and Natural Selection): 5
- **D and A** (Natural Selection and Glob): 5
- **A and C** (Glob and Pizzacracy): 6

- **B and D** (Blob and Natural Selection): 2

This galaxy is entangled in political polarization, with its member empires either completely aligned **with** or **against** each other, often in **combinations** that betray both empires' most fundamental values.

§3. Identity Formation

1. **Turn/Century One:** Glob **dismisses** complaints that its military is too powerful. How could an empire with an outlook remotely similar to Glob's—aggressive, belligerent, no-Chads-allowed—ever think surrendering to such complaints would be an optimal strategy?
2. **Turn/Century Two:** Blob **introduces** a mental health facility to its territory, nurturing the Blobbite's short-term depression, caused by winter, and long-term generational trauma, caused by the unspoken atrocities that made Blob's emancipation from Glob possible...“my ancestors stooped to their level, and we will pay the price.” ***
3. **Turn/Century Three:** Natural Selection **forges** a formal alliance with Glob—and immortalizes this bond with a beautiful mural, laden with hearts & other unusually emotive imagery by their standards.
4. **Turn/Century Four:** Finally, on its very first turn, Pizzacracy **is attacked** by a primitive civilization. Leveraging their superior capital and lack of moral reservations against attacking a civilization with far less materiality, the Pizzacracy deploys an aggressive response to this civilization in unoccupied territory.

§4. Fast Forwarding Several Centuries...to Heated Conflict

*** Once again, Blob must stoop to the level of its adversaries. Even after several centuries, even millennia, of interaction, Blob's relationship with the Pizzacracy has not wavered from its dismal 1/6 rating. Now, the Pizzacracy's territorial avarice threatens to get out of hand. To stop the Pizzacracy from taking any “juicy territory,” Blob sets aside its principles and **declares war**.

1. **Deployment Size:** Pizzacracy and Blob both deploy their entire military arsenals, sacrificing every war token that their peoples toiled for centuries to build. Pizzacracy commits **4** war tokens, as does Blob.
2. **Luck of the Roll:** Although the two warring empires are equal in terms of raw military strength, a roll of the dice threatens to upset a delicate, tense equilibrium; whichever empire rolls the higher number **annexes one solar system (hex) from the other empire**.
3. **Result:** Blob has rolled a 3, whereas Pizzacracy has rolled a 1. The war will have reverberating, negative consequences for both empires, consequences that unearth themselves from the burrows of corruption in the last and final century of the game...before the Reapers cometh.