

## SETUP

The players will play veterans recalling a specific mission from the war. It may be a battle but don't think too epic; it's best to be as grounded as possible.

- 1 First, setup the play mat, which is comprised of one objective and four dangers. The objective is placed on the table and the four threats form a box around it.

The objective is the purpose of this mission. It should be strategically vital or at least seems very important to the soldiers.

Pick the objective in the list below or draw a card to determine it:

- 7 - A radar station
- 8 - A hospital
- 9 - A factory
- 10 - A bridge
- J - A POW camp or an important prisoner
- Q - An informant
- K - An enemy officer
- A - A secret code or the means to break it

Don't put the card back in the deck, instead put it face up on the table. As a reminder, write on an index card what the card represents.

The threats are obstacles, traps or enemies that will prevent the characters to reach the objective. The players should describe each of them a little bit, to add some flavor to the generic list below. Each could for example explain why the threat seems specially dangerous to them.

Pick four threats in the list below or draw four cards to determine them:

- 7 - Artillery or gun emplacement
- 8 - An enemy aircraft bombing raid
- 9 - A minefield
- 10 - A fortified defensive position, like a bunker
- J - An infantry unit
- Q - A sniper
- K - An armored unit, like a tank
- A - Being low on supplies/ammunition, or lost

Don't put the cards back in the deck, instead put them face up on the table. As a reminder, write on an index card what these cards represent.

- 2 Second, give to each player a Memory token.



GHOSTS OF WAR is a pamphlet roleplaying game created by Khelren for the *Your Move Jam* hosted in September 2019 on <https://itch.io/jam/your-move-jam>.

*"Let me not then die ingloriously and without a struggle, but let me first do some great thing that shall be told among men hereafter."*

Homer, The Iliad

### WHAT IS THIS?

*Ghosts of war* is a tabletop roleplaying game using Texas hold' em mechanics in order to play veterans recalling together their participation in the war. Sadly, we have to live with the ghosts of people that have been part of our life, and sometimes our memories become fuzzy.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play the game you absolutely need:

- 3 to 5 players. One player must have read these rules beforehand in order to facilitate the game.
- A deck of 32 cards.
- A handful of tokens or chips.
- Around two hours of time.

It would be better to also have:

- A map.
- Index cards.
- Markers of different colors, with at least a red one.

### INSPIRATIONS

*Always*  
*Band of Brothers*  
*Bluebeard's Bride*  
*Polaris: Chivalric Tragedy at Utmost North*  
*Night Witches* (and more precisely the Sparrow)  
*Red Sky A.M.*  
*Royal Blood*  
*Saving Private Ryan*

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# GHOSTS *of* WAR





## SETUP (CONT.)

- ③ Third, have each player write on an index card the name of their soldier and their rank. They should also draw three boxes on their index card: it represents their Doom track.
- ④ Four, if possible, have a nice inspiring map to use as the field of operation. I'd recommend using a map with annotations where you can see the buildings (1:5000 to 1:20000).

Here are two evocative maps as example:

<http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A70861/-/collection>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g5833n.ct002437a/?sp=1&r=-0.073,0.568,0.912,0.387.0>

(I'd go with the former personally but maybe there is too much information on it already for your tastes.)

When you have chosen a map, draw on it with a red marker where the objective is located. The characters have yet to go there. You may also decide together where the characters have landed and mark this spot with a different marker. Every time something important happens in the fiction, the players should mark it on the map, if it makes sense.

## THE CONVERSATION

There are many dangers ahead and the characters are going to recall these events. Players will contribute to the fiction by taking turns. Each hand will deal with one danger. When the four threats are dealt with, the final hand will focus on the objective.

As you're the one reading these rules, you're the facilitator, and as such you should go first and narrate what your objective is, describe the location where the characters are, and tell the players which danger prevents their characters from reaching their objective for now.

Tell the players to picture each of their characters as a veteran. They have survived the war and they recall these past events but memories being fuzzy, they'll probably disagree on what happened exactly.

Now, describe what is the situation for the characters and what your character did to help to reach the objective, as per their recollection.

Deal one card to each player, then draw a card and put it face up on the table. That card is a community card.

Tell the players that you'll play clockwise. So, give the player to your left the handout to let them know what they can do on their turn. Give every player a handout on their turn.

Every round, when it's your turn, you'll add a card on the table until there are four community cards.

After the fourth card being revealed, if at least two players remain, a final round is played. Then, the remaining players show their individual card(s) and they make the best five card poker hand from any combination of the four community cards and their individual card(s).

As a reminder, the ranks of a hand, listed from the strongest to the weakest, are:

1. Straight flush
2. Four of a kind
3. Full house
4. Flush
5. Straight
6. Three of a kind
7. Two pair
8. One pair
9. High card

The winner of a hand gains a Memory token.

The losers mark one box of their Doom track. They should say **"And I paid a steep price"** and explain how they were wounded, how they lost a vital piece of equipment or which dire sacrifice they had to make.

## DOOM TRACK

A player will receive one additional individual card for each box of their Doom track marked.

When they mark their third box, they say how their character died. They play as a ghost now.

## PLAYING A GHOST

As a ghost, a player receives 3 Memory tokens. If they have tokens from before, they keep them.

They can spend Memory tokens during a hand to play during another player's turn. Their character helps the others, even if it was after them being killed, as the other characters could swear. Oh well... they must be confused, that's all: it was a bloody mess back then after all.