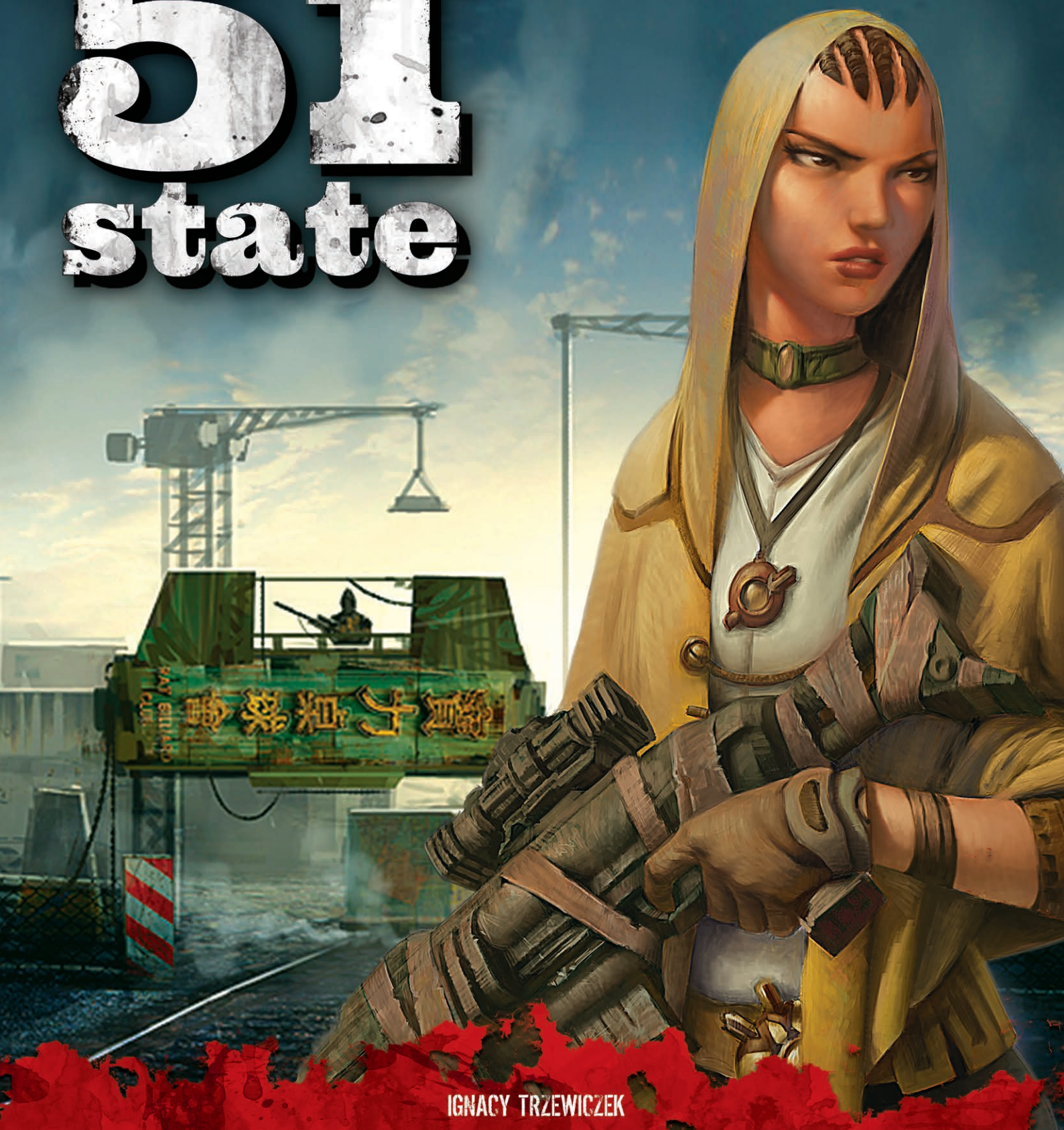


51st state



IGNACY TRZEWICZEK

MASTER SET
GAME DESIGNER JOURNAL



ENEMY NUMBER ONE



I've been there. I wrote Neuroshima RPG, put whole heart in it, made it successful game in Poland and then I became main enemy of fans of the game.

I didn't understand this. I was really shocked reading mean comments in the Internet about me ruining the game. Fans were disappointed with expansions for the game, or with lack of expansions or with price of expansions or with the artwork, or whatever. There was always, always reason to complain on Neuroshima line.

I was their main enemy. This jerk. This fucker. This asshole Trzewiczek. The guy who ruined their beloved game.

I was sitting in front of computer and I wanted to scream. Hey, guys! I am the guy who created the game. I am the guy who wrote the book you love. I am the guy because of whom you had hundreds of hours of great RPG sessions. Why you hate me?

That was tough. I learned the lesson. This year I turn 40. Wise man, this Trzewiczek is now.

We are afraid of change. Change is always unknown and we don't like unknown. We like the stuff we know. We feel safe with the stuff we know. There is this famous quote that says: 'I like the most the songs I know.' Pretty accurate, huh?

Announcing new edition of the game is announcing change. Publisher is telling you that the game you know, the game you love, the game you spent hundreds of hours with is going to change.

Let's face it. These changes can not be good. It's obvious that they will ruin the game. Why would they change it in the first place?! Leave the game alone you [redacted]

Couple of days ago we announced new edition of 51st State. The famous Master Set. BGG threads got hot.

"F**k, this is the one thing I wished they kept"

"Horrible changes, hype for me is dead."

"it just sounds like they gutted all the things I found most interesting"

And so on and on.

First of all. It's not they. It's me. There is no The Smoking Man who stays in the shadow and ruins your game. It's me. The guy who created the game in the first place in 2010.

I spent few last months polishing the game and making it better. I removed ton of rules that were not necessary. I rebalanced the cards. I made it quicker and grasping. It's either me or you now, there is no time for a 'we have five rounds' walk like in Imperial Settlers. Just this weekend Merry crushed me at the end of third round. That was something I did not see coming. You feel pressure from the very first turn. Either you make your engine going or you are out. It's gamer's game for real.

But even though I know the game is better, I know I will disappoint many fans of the game. I have no doubts about that. Because...

I've been there. I designed 51st State, put whole heart in it, made it successful game worldwide and then I became main...



MASTER SET: BORING STUFF, BORING ARTICLE



So Master Set, huh? Let's talk about building this baby!

51st State had 110 cards including Location cards, Connection cards and Leader cards.

The New Era had 110 cards including Location cards and Connection cards. No Leaders though. Some of these cards were exact reprints of cards from 51st State.

Winter expansion had 52 cards including Location cards, Connection cards and Leader cards again.

Are you following me? You don't look like you do. Anyway, that was a starting point. 272 cards. Big freaking mess. So I took a huge two handed hammer and I put it into work. Big hammer. Work. You got picture?

51st-baseFirst I rebuilt base 51st State. I removed Leaders. I removed Connection cards. I left in the deck only Locations. I looked at them very carefully, card after card, with my whole experience I gained for the past 5 years and with my hammer in hand. And I began to use it. I removed few cards. I added few other. I changed some values. I added mechanisms known from Imperial Settlers that says that each Action card can be used only once per round. I balanced the shit out of it.

After few weeks I had a clean and perfectly constructed set of exactly 88 Location cards. The basic set of 51st State. The basic engine of the game. It worked smooth and fast. Most of the cards were Production and Action cards – Production provided players with Resources. Actions let them change these Resources into Victory Points. Easy peasy, exactly like old good 51st State back then in 2010.

Now the harder part. Expansions. There is going to be lots of hammering here.

51st-nel removed from The New Era all cards that were already in the base set. We didn't need clones thrown all over the place. Then I removed Connection cards. Bum, bum, I was just destroying one card after another and it was very good feeling. This hammer thing? Better than any meditation you could have.

Then hard part – make sure that all cards in The New Era expansion build consistent and thematic game play. Make sure that when player will mix Base Set with The New Era he or she will immediately feel change in the game play.

Many Razing cards. Many Feature cards. Many cards that are somehow dedicated to attacking opponents. It's The New Era! It's Hammer Age.

And then a ton of play testing. Balancing the set,

tweaking with cards, changing values, using hammer here and there, changing Distances, playing it over and over again.

Finally I thought I am done. I was staying here covered with dust, with hammer with my hand and smile on my face.

Well, I might went too far with destroying base Locations. There was a problem with balance. When 88 cards from base set were mixed with 50 card from The New Era balance of base set staggered. Not enough cards that gave workers. Not enough cards that gave grey contact tokens. Too many Razing shit. Back to work. Where is my hammer?.

I clone some cards from base set into The New Era to keep crucial things in right proportion in a deck that has now 88 + 50 cards.

Play test shit out of it again. It works. Who's your daddy now?

51st-wSecond expansion. I am getting tired but my hammer gives me strength. I remove from Winter few things like Leaders and Connection cards. I carefully look at the set. Then I remove few more cards just because I really like my hammer. I add few new cards. I make it all about big production. Big fat Production cards and big fat Action cards that let you change everything into big fat points. Big Fat Points. Sounds awesome, right?

I play test shit out of it again. I make sure that playing with The New Era and playing with Winter is different experience. I make sure that each expansion provide enough theme and strong game play changes. You exactly know and feel what you are playing.

I throw at play testers 88 base set + 50 of The New Era.

Then I throw at them 88 base set + 50 of Winter.

'Is it different?' I ask.

It is.

So who's your daddy again?

51st State: Master set is a final relaunch of a game I designed in 2010 and was working on for next few years. It's perfectly balanced basic set that is easily combined with expansions. Whatever you pick The New Era or Winter or upcoming future expansions you will get your beloved old game with slightly different feeling and abilities of cards. You better grab your copy before it's too late..

Just short information. We have open pre-orders for the game. And I have my hammer with me. So you better go to pre-order page and give us your money or I'll put my hammer last mre time. Did I mention it is huge, two handed and is really heavy?

You can preorder new set here and get your own copy weeks before street date! And what is more, your copy will include ton of amazing shit that is produced only for our hardcore fans! Please, check our pre-order page and make decision!



LET ME PROVOKE A QUESTION



Some of the hardcore fans of the first edition of 51st State complain that Rule of 3 got removed from the new edition of 51st State. Let me today provoke brainstorming with me. Let's discuss this topic.

Rule of 3 and Deals.

Rule of 3 says you have 3 spaces for Deals and/or Spoils in your HQ. If you wanted to have at least one free space for Spoils – and we all know that

you indeed wanted it – that meant you actually had space for only two Deals. Right?

So you guys were able to use this whole mechanism of making Deals, managing blue Contact Tokens and all that shit dedicated to Deal action twice in a game. Let me repeat – you could do it twice in a whole game. That's freaking awesome, right? Design few pages of rules about the shit you can activate twice during the whole game.

Yeah, I was piece of a designer back then.

Opening space for Deals, I finally gave you actual choice. You can have as many Deals as you want. That means you can explore and test this strategy as deep and intense as you want. You can play with no Deals. You can play with 15 Deals. You finally have a choice. You finally make decision.

Rule of 3 and Victory Point tokens

Hardcore fans got really pissed of about this one. Before we start let me make it clear: I appreciate every single comment they posted. That means they care. That's the most humbling thing that can happen to the designer. I am humbled with every hate post they wrote.

But now, let me explain why I removed Rule of 3.

In the first edition each card that scored points could be activated three times during the whole game. Then it was useless and player needed to rebuilt it into something new. That was thematic and that was interesting way to push players to constant look for new strategies and new cards. Their engine needed to evolve over and over. That was a very interesting design.

In the new edition you can activate scoring cards as many times as you want and you can decide to rebuild it at any point. There is no urge to evolve and change strategy. Players will rebuild cards when they feel they found better idea and combination of cards, not when their scoring card become just useless.

Stick with me here. Do you have a choice when you can do it only 3 times and you need to rebuild it or do you have a choice when you can do it as many times as you want and you rebuild it when you want.

Removing Rule of 3 was a chance to give you choice. You rebuild locations when you want, not when they are useless. Therefore the timing of this choice finally matters.

Once again, thank you for all comments, I appreciate all of them, both critics and praise for new rules. Comments mean you care. As I said, that's the most humbling thing that can happen.

Pre-order now to receive all the upgrades including a short story set in the Neuroshima Hex universe, better components, and 2 more factions!



51ST STATE IS NOT IMPERIAL SETTLERS



It's true, there are many similarities between Imperial Settlers and 51st State. Imperial Settlers was designed as a light-hearted update to the award winning 51st. This year, 51st State is getting a new skin and boy has the reaction been interesting. For us, it's awesome that fans of the game are so passionate about changes to their beloved game.

But...

To set the record straight, the 51st State Master Set is NOT a re-theme of Imperial Settlers. It is very different and I'll explain why.

1. The Pace of the Game

In Imperial Settlers you have 5 rounds. Always. You get to build your engine and easily calculate what each card is likely to provide you over the remaining rounds. You have time to build your engine and use it.

51st State is a race. You only have as much time as your opponents give you. Instead of 5 rounds, the end game is triggered when one player reaches 25 points. You are under pressure from the very first turn and have no way of knowing how long your precious engine will last.

2. No Faction Deck

In Imperial Settlers, players have their own unique deck of cards that drive their particular strategy. The Romans enjoy building, the Barbarians like to raze, etc. When the game starts, you already know the basic strategy of your faction and have an idea of how to build that out.

There are no faction decks in 51st State. There is a single common deck of cards that all players build from. You get your first hand of cards and you have to deal with it. This is the start of your strategy. You can't rely on getting tons of gold like the Egyptians. You get what you start with, what you draft, and from this you have to figure out your engine. There is no pre-constructed strategy. You have to gather random crap from the wreckage of a post-war America and build some sort of existence. Good luck with that.

3. No Safe Haven

Remember those factions in Imperial Settlers? You can rely on them. They are safe from destruction from the other players.

This is not the case in 51st State. This is a post-war apocalypse... nothing is safe. Your opponents want everything you have and they will tear you down. That precious engine you pieced together out of scraps will be destroyed. You cannot count on it. You don't have 5 rounds of planning. This is a race and it is built on destruction.

4. Distance

In Imperial Settlers, each deal costs 1 Food. Razing costs a sword. Building costs Stone or Wood. It's simple. With one Sword, you can Raze any location in your hand.

In 51st State, locations have a Distance. Some places are close to you, and you might only spend 1 Raze or Deal token. Some are much farther away and will cost you 3 tokens. You need to plan ahead and save up your tokens in order to be able to interact with them. They are more powerful, but will cost you valuable time to reach. Is patience a viable strategy in a race? You'll have to figure that out for yourself.

5. Three Choices

In Imperial Settlers, common cards can be built or razed. You can make a deal or build a faction card. These two, different options, give you an easy way to distinguish between the two types of card.

In 51st State, each card represents locations in your area, and all of them can be either built, razed, or dealt with. You have many more choices in your hand... your options are more flexible. You have access to many more resources, but you must figure out how to achieve them: build, deal, or raze?

51 preorder

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