



**Hypertext Slag!™ version 1.1**  
**A game of combat on the high frontier**  
©1995,1996 by Greg Porter

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Intro



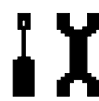
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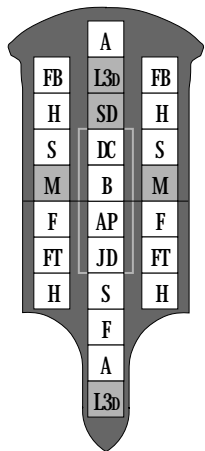
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**NSS Artemis** emerged from hyperspace expecting a fight, and wasn't disappointed. Her residual drive flare, nuclear emissions and jump signature made *Artemis* and every other ship in the fleet visible to enemy spotters within a fraction of a second. The first signs of the attack came in the form of localized increases in the background radiation count, as particle beams interacted with flecks of interplanetary dust or hydrogen molecules, and in the visible flashes detectable only by sensors when laser beams did the same. It was a statistical certainty that some of those invisible packets of energy would intersect *Artemis*, but smart tactics could delay that inevitability for a while. With all hope of subtlety lost, fusion engines roared into life, new stars visible to the naked eye, even at maximum combat range. Decoys with the same thermal and radar signature deployed in a dozen different directions, forcing enemy targeting computers to waste valuable fractions of a second figuring out which target was the real one, and dividing fire between the most likely candidates.

In the meantime, multiple sensors plot the most likely regions of space the attacks are coming from, tracing pinpoint flashes of ionized particles back along a line and pouring all weapons fire into the likely point of origin. This changes second to second, as one enemy ship, then another turns on their drives, not only to maneuver, but to prevent *Artemis* and her sister ships from getting through to the inner system. With this, the second phase of the attack begins. *Artemis* is a missile carrier, armed with long-range unpiloted drones, and medium range cluster munitions.



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Enemy sensors pick up several smaller fusion flares as these self-contained war machines are dumped from bays on *Artemis*, each with a particular mission to accomplish.

Meanwhile, all is not well in the attacking fleet. *Artemis* is still unscathed, but not due to luck. Several hits have been scored on her, registered as flashes of radiation and light to enemy sensors, but *Artemis*' armor has largely prevented penetration. Those shots that did get through the metal, ceramic and composite layers of her hull had too little energy left to do more than superficial damage. Crew casualties have been light, and performance unaffected. Enemy sensors have already figured this out, and their lesser weapons redirected to softer targets. The next hits will be from larger weapons. Already, some of *Artemis* sister ships have taken serious hits. Heavy lasers blast meter-wide gouges in a hull, sending molten debris flying at supersonic speed into delicate electronics and equipment. Neutral particle beams do much the same, but shed their energy more slowly, irradiating everything they touch, secondary X-rays cascading through compartments, eventually dissipating their wrath as heat, but not before reaching deep into the hull, probing to find and kill the central computers and the command crew that runs them. Two of the frigates have already suffered antimatter cascade explosions in their main engines, and now drift helplessly. Still able to fight, they relay sensor data to the rest of the fleet, but within minutes they are silenced by the first of the enemy missiles. If you can't maneuver, you don't stand a chance.



Intro



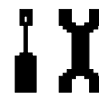
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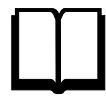
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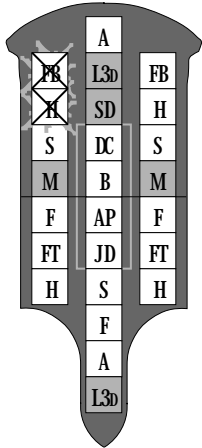
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*Artemis* takes her first major hit, a particle beam of some kind judging by the temporary sensor overload. It strikes the dorsal hangar and cascades through into the hull, leaving radiation and molten debris in its wake. Fortunately, these hangars were empty of their lethal cargo, and combat effectiveness is unimpaired. *Artemis* responds with a barrage of medium range nuclear missiles. In previous centuries these might have been mistaken for ICBM's, up to two meters wide and ten meters long, massing up to 20 metric tons, powered by a fusion torch and armed with multiple independent nuclear warheads. *Artemis* is a big ship. She launches over a dozen at the enemy flagship, timed to match the arrival of the long-range drones that have survived this long. *Artemis* crew notes a similar launch and tactic by the enemy flagship, and reconfigures all weapons to point defense status. *Artemis'* long range drones arrive first. Each takes several hits to take them out of action, since they were designed for survivability. One gets through. It has no warhead, but it doesn't need one. Fifty tons of *anything* travelling at 100 kilometers a second has as much energy as a large nuclear warhead. Normally this would vaporize the enemy ship, but the debris is travelling so fast it just tears a ragged molten hole in one side and out the other, punctuated only by an additional flash from the drone's exploding antimatter engine.

It did its job, though. The temporary loss of sensor data and assessment of damage allowed one of *Artemis'* missiles to reach their target. Deploying at 100 kilometers out, several independent warheads jet erratically in, and two survive the point-blank barrage of laser fire to detonate at a range of 2 kilometers.



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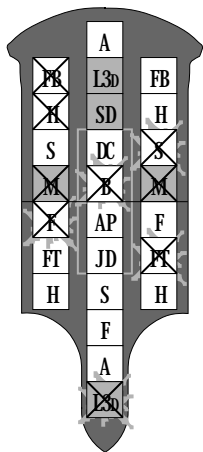


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Two small suns flare for an instant, then are gone, registering through the fleets as a burst of heat and gammas. The enemy flagship remains, but glowing and caved-in sections of hull and armor testify to the forces unleashed. Sensor activity is down, at least one engine has been damaged, and the small echos of point defense radars are silent. *Artemis* may be out of missiles, but someone else will finish the task.

Meanwhile, *Artemis* deploys expendable sensor arrays in a cloud around her. These thrust away for several seconds until their engines are depleted, and then scan the heavens, relaying information back to *Artemis* and any nearby friendly ships. The extra data helps *Artemis* lock onto enemy fighters and drones, and all weapons are brought to bear to shoot them down. The missiles and independent warheads are shot down, and most of the long-range drones, but several make it to deployment range. First they scatter smaller missiles, whose warheads detonate, using the thermonuclear pulse to power a one use gamma-ray laser. *Artemis* soaks up most of the energy on its armor and structure, but several key systems suffer the effects. Then, the now empty drones home in and tear massive holes in *Artemis*, leaving white-hot metal and empty space where the bridge used to be. At least it was fast enough that they never felt a thing.

It's a hell of a way to fight a war...





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**What do we have here?**  
This is the hypertext version of **Slag!**, BTRC's simple space combat system. It is formatted for easy legibility on 13" to 17" monitors, and if you want to print it off, it prints well at 2 sheets per page (landscape orientation) with an adequate left-hand margin for stapling it together. If you print only even pages and then print only odd pages on the other side of the paper, you get a compact 5.5" by 7.5" booklet to use. There are full-size **map** and **ship template sheets** available for you to print out, as well as a **counter sheet** to print on self-adhesive labels. There are also **optional rules** you won't find in the printed version, and a **link to the BTRC web site** should you care to check it out.

**Organization**  
**Slag!** is organized in a fairly simple fashion. Clicking on the red bar at the top of each page will take you to the start of the section you clicked on. Hypertext links are in red, and will take you to something blue. Spaced throughout the rules are little "sticky notes". Clicking on one of these will give you additional tidbits of information on the subject they are next to. You don't need these to understand or play the game, but you may find them educational or informative.



**Acrobat settings**  
**Hypertext Slag!** works best in bookmark mode, with the bookmarks at minimum width, and the text at 100% or "fit to window" magnification. This gives you full-page text area and easy indexing capability.

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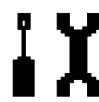
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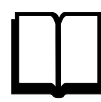
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## Intro

**Slag!** is a fast and simple space combat game that you can play anywhere, anytime. You don't need fancy maps, hordes of dice, decks of cards or reams of rules. All you really need is a sheet of paper for your fleet, a handful of spare change, and a space the size of a checkerboard, or a plain old sheet of hex paper if you are tight on space.

## Designer's note

**Slag!** has gone through a number of incarnations before reaching the simple game you've just picked up. It is supposed to take the complex nature of ship construction and space combat, and make it as simple as possible while still keeping whatever realism we can manage without actual experience to draw on.

Many assumptions about the nature of things are abstracted into the rules without being explicitly stated, such as the role of fuel consumption, vector movement, three-dimensional combat, ship structure, and so on. It's supposed to be fun, fast and affordable, and I hope you like it.