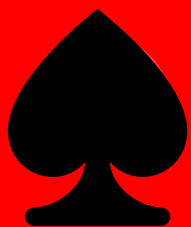
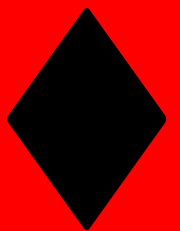


FREE

LANCERS



A Swords & Flowers Game
about killing your bosses



"We have worked hard, and we want our piece."

FREELANCERS is a tabletop role-playing game about wants and needs, relationships, our communities, and the systems we live under.

It is a game about killing your bosses and seizing power.

To play a game of FREELANCERS, you will need:

- Friends and strangers to play this game with; 3-4 is recommended.
- A standard deck of cards.
- Something to keep notes with, like pencils and paper.
- A spirit of compromise and cooperation, until it runs out.
- A safe and comfortable place to play.

BEFORE PLAYING, it is important for the players to discuss with each other their boundaries while playing; what they would like to see more, see less, or see none at all. Although Freelancers is a game of working together to take what's yours, scenes of violence, abuse, exploitation, and other explicit content may pop up depending on the setting. Keep an open table where everyone is able to speak up, take breaks, and check in with each other.

YOU ARE FREELANCERS, individuals working for the Boss. You also represent a **FACTION**, chosen to take their place in negotiations, strategy, and survival. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are heard, respected, and cared for.

YOU WORK FOR THE BOSS, whether a person, empire, or elaborate structure. They keep you in service, take your work and funds, and hold utmost power. They have exploited you thoroughly and unfairly, and they will pay.

ONE. CHOOSE OR DISCUSS WHERE YOU WORK TOGETHER:

- **THE COMPANY:** Cleaners, Mechanics, Papermen, Drivers, The Phones.
- **FREELANCERS:** Engineers, FrameWalkers, Tactical, R&D, Couriers, Trenchers.
- **HELLBREAKERS:** Divers, Artillery, Hellmancing Division, Heavy Transports.
- **GOBLINS:** Grunts, Cultivators, Mages, Seers, Diggers, Trappers, Riders.
- **THE DIVINED:** Magical Girls, Archangels, Sealed Artifacts, Divine Beasts.
- **HORROR HOTEL:** Reception, Housekeeping, Chefs, Spookrooms, Plumbing.
- **RIVERBELLY OTTER UNION:** The Lakes, Goose River, The Docks, The Ditch.
- **RUMAH BOTANI:** Red House Inn, Butcher Gang, The 43, Madame's Sons.

"We will be heard, and we will not be silenced."

TWO. NAME YOUR BOSS AND WHAT THEY DO. They do not do much. Curse their name and feel the emotions you hold for them.

THREE. DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING FOR YOURSELF:

- *Who are you as a Freelancer? (Name, Look, Pronouns, Brief History)*
- *What is it that your Faction does which your Boss cannot do without?*
- *What keeps your Faction working for your Boss and the status quo?*
- *What has sent your Faction over the edge and in need of revolution?*
- *What are the wants and needs of your Faction that must be fulfilled?*
- *Pick the Faction closest to your left, and discuss how you both conflict with each other. Why don't you want them in the picture?*

Write these details down to remember. Then, show them to each other.

THE BOSS IS A BAD GUY. No matter how you put it, the Boss has irrevocably showed themselves to be a horrible exploiter of both privilege and power - taking you and your life for granted. But bad guys aren't just madcap villains and loudmouthed apocalypses. The Boss can also be a bully, a subtle manipulator of words, a liar, and a traitor. Bosses can be bad in the worst, most invisible ways. Discuss together on this and reach for lived experiences.

Once you are done, you may begin your plans.
Kill your Boss, work together, seize power.

THE GAME STARTS by randomly shuffling your deck of cards, and placing it in everyone's reach. The game is played in rounds with each Faction taking a turn however you want. **Every round, the Freelancers draw five cards each.** Before the first draw, answer and modify your draw for the rest of the game:

- *Which Faction is the most favoured with your Boss among all of you? Why?*
Gain +2 cards per round.
- *Which Faction defended your Boss for an unspeakable offense?*
*What was it? **Draw +1 card per round.***
- *Which Faction here has spoken up against the Boss before? What was it for and which other Faction sabotaged you? **Draw -1 card per round.***

Note down the details, and move on when everyone has drawn their cards.

"Listen, we are going to f*cking assassinate God."

WHEN THE CARDS ARE DRAWN, THE CURRENT FREELANCER STARTS PLAYING THROUGH THE FIRST THREE PHASES OF THE GAME BEFORE MOVING ON.

FIRST: PLANNING

In **Planning**, the current Freelancer openly proposes what the Factions should focus on next in their pursuit to take down their Boss. Different **scenes** are made available to the Freelancer based on the cards they hold this round; different hands lead to different actions. In this phase, all Freelancers are allowed to openly negotiate, discuss, collaborate, secure their Faction's wants and needs, and make promises with each other. **The current Freelancer chooses when to move on.** Don't take too long, however!

SECOND: COMMITTING

In **Committing**, the Factions rally resources to make the scene happen - or not. The current Freelancer commits up to **4 cards** their proposed scene by placing them openly for everyone to see. If the hand is not fully formed by them, the remaining Factions may **intervene by filling or hijacking the hand with their own cards**. The current Freelancer cannot stop them, but may make comments for their Faction.



This phase ends when a hand has been fully formed on the table - or when no one else wishes to commit any more cards.

THE RULES OF COMMITTING your resources are flexible and ultimately decided by the Freelancers present. **In all games, it's recommended that players reflect their setting in this phase.** For example, a setting with scrappy Factions who have trouble communicating can best be played by committing cards based on speed, rather than taking turns. In other settings where the Freelancers are united and together, it might be best to allow long, strategic discussions, and let Factions retrieve their cards from the table. Take the time to speak with each other about what best reflects your setting!

"We are in this together. Like it or not."

THIRD: EXECUTING

In **Executing**, the current Freelancer narrates the scene; the success of their plans and what happened for their Faction. This is done by consulting the **Hands & Prompts** section, and the questions below based on what happened:

SUCCESS & FAILURE

If the **proposed hand is completed**, the current Freelancer narrates:

- *How do you find success in your plans or conversation? What happens?*
- *How does this piss off, hinder or harm your Boss?*

Then, place the cards in a pile next to the current Freelancer.

If the **proposed hand is incomplete**, the current Freelancer narrates:

- *How did the things fall through without support?*
- *Who do you blame most for this mishap?*

Then, discard the cards into a pile that belongs to no one.

INTERVENTIONS

If another Freelancer steps in and **completes the hand as intended**:

- *What crucial component was missing here, and how did you step in to help?*
- *How does this cost your Faction(s)?*

Then, place the cards in a pile next to the current Freelancer. The current Freelancer may distribute cards from the pile to the Factions which contributed however they want.

If another Freelancer **hijacks and creates a different hand instead**:

- *Why did you change things suddenly, and how did you deceive them?*
- *How does this benefit your Faction(s)?*

Then, place the cards in a pile next to the hijacking Freelancer who contributed the most cards into the hand. The hijacking Freelancer may distribute cards from the pile to the Factions which contributed however they want.

Note down the details, and move on to the next Freelancer. The round ends when no more hands can be made. Discard the remaining cards into a pile which belongs to no one.

"Desperate times. Desperate measures."

HANDS & PROMPTS TABLES

While playing, each hand you form has a different set of prompts to describe what happened in the scene or what course of action you took. Use it to inspire and direct your Freelancers and their Factions.

PAIR Two cards of the same rank.

The spark of rebellion. Rumours and messages are passed around. Concerns are shared. People find solidarity among each other. Complaints start to grow.

TWO PAIR Two different pairs put together.

Strength is found in each other. Individuals share resources. A starving member is given help. Comfort in the arms of another. Friendships are made.

THREE OF A KIND Three cards of the same rank.

A great crisis is averted. Life is almost lost. A moment of great fear. A light in the pitch dark. Factions succeed where your Boss failed. Inhuman kindness.

STRAIGHT Five cards in a sequence, but not of the same suit.

First meetings. Arguments. Same problems, different issues. Share information. Find weaknesses. Establish strategies. Give your Faction a voice in it all.

FLUSH Any five cards of the same suit, but not in a sequence.

A small plan is hatched. Meet wants and needs. Break the lightest rules. Trespass. Steal. Disrupt. Look the other way. Messy, but everyone is focused.

FULL HOUSE Three of a kind with a pair.

A pivotal gathering. Rally members. Make fiery, public speeches. Be seen. Protest. Be loud, angry. Scream demands. Resist. Keep each other safe.

FOUR OF A KIND All four cards of the same rank with one extra card.

The Freelancers get to work. Joint operation. Small team with a big impact. Sever a connection. Obtain a vital weapon. Kill an operation. Break something.

"Will you fight with us? Or will you die like a dog?"

STRAIGHT FLUSH

Five cards in a sequence, all in the same suit.

Large, simultaneous operation. Focus on a want or need. Force a demand into reality. Inspire Factions out of reach. Blow shit up. Cripple your Boss.

ROYAL FLUSH

A, K, Q, J, 10. All together in the same suit.

Make your Boss fear you. Destroy what cannot be replaced. Turn them desperate and begging. Expose their feebleness. Crumble their empire.

HIJACKING A HAND EVEN WHEN IT'S COMPLETE is a plausible - and even recommended - move to make before executing the hand. This can lead to surprising moments and plot twists at the table. Imagine having a pair that's already complete at the table suddenly escalated by the interference of another Faction and Freelancer!

ENDING THE GAME

THE GAME ENDS IMMEDIATELY when either:

- There are no cards left to possibly make a hand or;
- Two or more Royal Flushes have been played in the game.

Then, consider together, discuss and answer:

- What do the final moments before killing your Boss look like?

Your Boss is dead, and now it's time to think of the future.

THE FUTURE

AS FREELANCERS AND DIFFERENT FACTIONS, establish a new world:

- What do you all do now that your Boss is dead?
- How will you secure the remaining wants and needs of your Faction?
- How will you ensure that everyone is safe and this does not happen again?

The Freelancer with the most cards in their pile leads this discussion and decisions unless veto'd by a majority. When it feels like every want and need has been addressed. End the game until the need for another rebellion arises.

NO FASCISTS, NO LANDLORDS

If you are a fascist or landlord, you are not allowed to play this game. It's against the rules.

If you're reading this and thinking, "You just call everyone you disagree with a fascist," then you're probably a fascist, or incapable of drawing inferences from context and acknowledging a dangerous political climate that causes the oppressed to be hyperbolic. Don't play this game. Heal yourself. Grow. Learn. Think about the consequences of your actions.

Thank you to Oliva Hill for originally crafting this policy.

CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FREELANCERS was made in tribute of May Day, Labour Day and International Worker's Day 2020. What started as a simple idea became a full-blown exploration on what it means to come together against the people who exploit the vulnerable for profit.

I thank Sin, Nevyn, Sam, and Kazumi for their company and knowledge as I wrote this. I am also grateful to Mabel Harper's **Steelweaver Rebellion**, and Pammu's **One More Notch** essays for being fundamental texts which both inspired and guided Freelancers. I highly recommend you check out their works and give them support!

Freelancers is dedicated to the vulnerable and marginalised. We will be heard and we will not be silent until we are all given the right to live freely, and live safely.

Freelancers is a Swords & Flowers game.

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