

NIGHT WITCHES ONE SHOT PASHKOVSKAYA NOCTURNE

WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

This document consists of a guided one-shot that includes creating characters, building an airbase and playing out a few day and night cycles. Your goal should be to introduce the players to the world of *Night Witches* and show off the system and color. The episodic nature of missions means you can fill a two or four hour time frame easily.

WHAT YOU NEED

To use this you'll need a copy of *Night Witches*, nature playbooks, move sheets, and the third duty station handout (Pashkovskaya). Also: Pencils, dice, mission pool tokens, snacks, water and index cards.

PREP

To prepare, print out all the necessary documents. In each playbook, **CHECK OFF SEVEN MARKS**. Choose however you like, leaning toward stuff that is either more interesting long-term or doesn't present an opportunity for action and drama. Ultimately this is a minor decision; the key is to leave four marks and "Embrace Death" to apply some thematic pressure.

Invite no more than four adult players. Seriously! Six will want to play but be strong or everyone will have a bad time. Don't play with children either.

When it is time to play, welcome everyone. Discuss safety and make sure they know they are free to leave the table at any time without harming the game. Consider using an X-Card.

OVERVIEW

Once everybody is checked in and ready to play, give them the one minute overview:

We're playing Soviet women in an all-female night bomber regiment during World War Two. We'll be pilots, navigators, mechanics and political officers.

Our mission is to harass the German army, which has invaded our country. The war is brutal and horrific.

We fly obsolete biplanes and drop bombs or, when we don't have bombs, railroad ties on the Germans. Things are desperate. It is incredibly dangerous. We fly in darkness, sometimes a dozen missions each night.

The Soviet army wishes we didn't exist and nobody expects us to succeed. We are going to succeed anyway.

CHOOSING PLAYBOOKS, MAKING CHARACTERS

Ask them to choose playbooks and make characters together. You don't need to make one but you can if you want, possibly to use as an NPC to fill out the Section and also as an example. They should have a name, Role, look/background, rank and stats. Ask each player to describe their character as a raw recruit, still in civilian clothes a year ago. How could you tell their Role from the way they carried themselves? How could you tell their Nature by the way they dressed?

TAKING THE OATH

Have all the players stand, and stand yourself. Administer the following oath:

I, [NAME], promise to rise to the defense of my Motherland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as a fighting man [sic] of the Worker's and Peasant's Red Army, I promise to defend it bravely, skillfully, with dignity and honor, sparing neither my blood nor my life itself for the achievement of total victory over our enemies.

THE SITUATION IN "TROOD GUR-NEEK-AH"

Once everyone has a feel for their character, explain what's been going on during the previous year:

After accelerated training you were thrown immediately into the war. Your first duty station was a hell-hole called Trud Gornyaka that was basically on the front lines for six months. Mud alternated with ice, you flew out of open fields, and women died terrible deaths right before your helpless eyes—their planes turned into torches by anti-aircraft artillery or German night fighters. You lost a lot of friends. You flew every night.

ADVANCEMENT

Ask them to Advance their characters four times, encouraging them to take no more than two from each category and explaining the benefits of each. Ask them not to change the duty station unless you are prepared to roll with that. Feel free to ask them why they were promoted or how they got that medal.

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FINAL QUESTIONS

As a final step in character creation, ask them what has changed about their character's appearance after a year of hard fighting, and ask them a pointed question as well, such as:

- What did you lie about on your regimental intake form?
- Who do you routinely see from your brother unit, the well equipped, all-male 218th night bomber regiment, and where, and why?
- Whose funeral did you miss by volunteering for flight training?
- What does the Marxist-Leninist struggle against the forces of reaction mean to you personally?
- What happened the last time a crowd of brother airmen wolf whistled at you?
- When has your sexuality gotten you in trouble?
- Whose picture will you tape to your plane's dash?
- When we search your footlocker, what surprising thing do we find?

THE SITUATION IN "PASH-KOV-SKA"

You should have really interesting, well-differentiated characters now. Hopefully this took about half an hour. Paint a picture of Pashkovskaya for them:

Pashkovskaya was once a civilian airfield, about 10 kilometers from the major city of Krasnodar. Now it is home to the 588th and their brother unit, the 218th Night Bomber Regiment. Resources are shared uneasily, and unevenly. When they aren't mocking you they are stealing from you.

FILLING OUT THE DUTY STATION SHEET

Introduce them to the Pashkovskaya duty station sheet. Fill it out together, allowing the players to take the lead.

Based on their characters, choose two threats to push, cherry-picking the most interesting angles for your group. If you have a particular threat in mind, feel free to jump in on answering a question or two — maybe you know when Lieutenant General Miroshnichenko should arrive for his inspection, for example.

Be sure to have them draw the airbase!

Once you have an airbase, some characters and a couple of threats, you are ready to play!

OPENING QUESTION

Begin with a dawn debrief after a mission. Appoint the ranking character Section leader and ask her player what they did when they saw D-Section fly into a solid wall of flak ahead of them. If they charged ahead, damage two of the planes and give out some harm (2 for one character, 1 for two others). If they turned back, damage one of the planes and immediately drag the Section leader in for an NKVD informal interview as a reward for her timidity and weakened resolve.

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THREATS AT PASHKOVSKAYA 1

MEN ARE ASSHOLES

GENDER POLITICS

- Lieutenant General Igor Miroshnichenko, Commander of the Fourth Air Army, is coming to visit, and somebody decided the 588th would entertain him and “lift morale” among the all-male 218th Night Bomber Regiment by staging a talent show or dance mixer in an old barn on the airbase. Participation is mandatory and a bad show will reflect poorly on the regiment. (Make the Night Witches act like women, laugh at the women of the 588th)
- Lieutenant General Miroshnichenko shows up with the aggressive fighter ace Senior Lieutenant Yekaterina Budanova in tow. Budanova serves with the 9th Fighter Regiment and considers the all-female units something of a joke. The event in the General’s honor only reinforces her feelings. (Spotlight a female ace, laugh at the women of the 588th)
- After a particularly successful mission, the 218th Night Bomber Regiment takes public credit. (Send Major Popov of the all-male 218th Night Bomber Regiment over, Take credit)
- Mechanic-armorers from the 218th are caught stealing barrels of engine lubricants, which they claim to have a more urgent need for. (“Borrow” resources and equipment, Break the rules and get away with it, Make the Night Witches act like men)
- Major Popov’s son, 20-year-old Junior Lieutenant Kiril “Kiryusha” Popov, a dashing co-pilot, tries to befriend a navigator. He’s reviled in his own regiment as a nepotistic daddy’s boy. He’s lonely, obviously well-connected and handsome. (Make the Night Witches act like women, Send Major Popov of the all-male 218th Night Bomber Regiment over if anyone messes with his son)

THE NKVD IS DANGEROUS

PARANOIA AND THE SOVIET STATE

- Lt. Svetlana Sheremeteva, Deputy Regimental Politruk, is an evil toad who will pressure and manipulate the women of the Regiment to her own ends. A closeted lesbian, Sveta will corner a likely airwoman and put the moves on her, making it clear that if her advances are rebuffed there will be trouble. (Look for violations of Articles 58 and 133, Put pressure on their families)
- After an unsuccessful mission, Captain Barsukova will single someone (or multiple someones) out for a chat, triggering the Informal interview move. This may lead to further complications as moves snowball. (Demand greater zeal and productivity, Look for violations of Articles 58 and 133)
- Captain Barsukova volunteers the Section for day labor in Pashkovsky village, where she has set up a Comsol youth league that needs advisors for their agricultural projects. Anyone spending their day tending cabbages will suffer 1-harm as they go without rest. (Demand assistance in a nearby village, Demand greater zeal and productivity).
- A film crew arrives to document the novelty of an all-female Regiment, under the auspices of the NKVD (this dovetails nicely with Lieutenant General Miroshnichenko’s visit). The crew will cause all sorts of trouble — sharing their vodka in after-hours parties, making inappropriate advances, asking difficult questions, demanding to fly along on missions. Barsukova and Sheremeteva will tag along to official interviews and give them endless support and encouragement. (Send reporters from Komsomolskaya Pravda, Put pressure on their families)

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THREATS AT PASHKOVSKAYA 2

THE REGIMENT IS FULL OF DRAMA

LIFE DURING WARTIME

- 2-Squadron B-Section has a reputation as a bunch of roughnecks. They are bullies and mean girls, not prone to military discipline and not very effective. Chief of Staff Captain Lobodeva, in an effort to break up the little gang, transfers a couple into A-Section. They will not be happy to be placed among proper Soviet airwomen and look for every opportunity to get their new Section in trouble, and their old friends in B-Section are always spoiling for a brawl. (Brew up petty rivalries, introduce know-it-all veterans)
- The new replacements are green as grass and wide-eyed with apprehension and barely-concealed terror. Rumor has it that the pretty one is the daughter of a senior Party official, and that if anything happens to her very bad things will follow. (Spread rumors and gossip, introduce green recruits)
- It's someone's name day, and Sergeant Kataeva has procured a large quantity of alcohol. How many ways can this go wrong? The alcohol has been diverted from use in explosives (meaning the potential for dud bombs), it's been adulterated and is way too potent, word of the party spreads out of control, somebody has to fly drunk, the list goes on. (Celebrate a name day, spread rumors and gossip)
- An official letter arrives for someone from home, bearing bad news — the person they write home to is dead, or captured, or missing, or imprisoned as appropriate. The very best way to deliver this news is in the form of Captain Barsukova, who has opened and read the letter in advance. (Deliver very bad news from home)

THE RED ARMY IS A PAIN IN THE ASS

DYSFUNCTION AND DISARRAY

- An entire batch of magnetos are defective and spares can't be had for love or money. Well, for money, anyway — the Supply Sergeant of the 218th has a few, but the price will be high and not paid in rubles. This may trigger the Scrounge or Repair moves. (Delay vital supplies, Demand a "consideration" — or steal from them)
- An inspector from the Central Directorate of Rear Services of the Soviet Army Air Forces, 4th Air Army Logistics and Supply Commissariat arrives to look over the Regiment's books and address irregularities. Someone clearly informed after a necessary theft or other dodgy practices. (Call them to account, rat them out)
- Promotion paperwork fails to arrive — perhaps someone chose a promotion Advance and the ceremony was being delayed until the arrival of Lieutenant General Miroshnichenko. (Delay vital paperwork)
- Some truck drivers show up in the 588th's area looking for a good time, maybe with a treasure trove of rare goods to trade. Refined sugar, Irish whiskey, American lend-lease canned goods, perfume, a Turkish carpet, a German bayonet. Maybe it is a military police or NKVD sting operation. (Loiter around the airbase looking for a party, rat them out)