

# Untitled - July 7, 2025

**Speaker** Welcome to pick Up and Deliver, the podcast, where I pick up my audio recorder as I head out for a walk and deliver an episode to you while I stroll around. I'm Brendan Riley. Well, good morning listeners. It's a lovely, hot, warm day here in suburban Chicago. I am out for a stroll and recording my second episode of the morning. If you recently listened to my episode about unused mechanisms, this episode was recorded that same day, although it'll probably appear much later because it is a board game espresso episode, and I've already got a couple of those in the can. That's right, it's time for board game. Espresso triple shot. Order up. Somebody told me recently they only just realised that noise I'm making there is supposed to be an espresso machine. I guess I'm either very bad at being a Michael Winslow or. Yeah, I guess that's actually what it is. I'm very bad at Michael Winslow-ing. Anyhow, the board game Espresso Triple Shot is a podcast segment theme episode in which I talk about three games I've tried for the first time recently, and sometimes one game that I revisited or an expansion that I've tried out. These are not full on reviews. These are not games I have played more than once or twice, and so you have to take my conversation with a grain of salt. I would prefer you did anyway. So with that, let's jump into it. The first game I want to talk about today is Xenoshyft: Dreadmire. Xenoshyft: Dreadmire is a cooperative game from Cool mini or not, published in 2017. It was designed by Michael Schnall with art from Jonathan Gomez, Brent Hollowell and Alejandro Mirabal. The game design, look and feel of it is very similar to Starship Troopers. It's got a Aliens fighting space Marines kind of look to it. In fact, the aliens all have this kind of bug like aspect to them. In the game, you represent a corporation so much like aliens rather than Starship Troopers, and you are trying to protect a facility that's there to, I don't know, probably environmentally degrade the planets the bugs live on. The game is a lane combat game. Now, I have not played the first xeno shift, so I don't know if that one works this way. Xenoshyft: Dreadmire, I believe the second it's a standalone sequel or standalone expansion, so you can play it by itself. Or if you have the first one, you can mix and match them. But in the game you have a lane of soldiers and it's a deckbuilder. So you have a deck of cards, a standard deck builder thing. You are going to play them and you're going to play them out and use them to purchase things. But the what you're doing is you're setting your soldiers up for combat. You're playing them out in a certain order. You're deploying the things that go with them, you're buying equipment for them and so on. And then you draw enemies into the lane. After both players have deployed all their soldiers for the round. Then you add enemies into the lane and you resolve the combat. The soldiers attack. The enemies attack. It goes back and forth. And if you're lucky, not all your soldiers die. Or enough of just all of them die, but none extra gets past because the game is won or lost on how much damage is done to the base. And if all of your soldiers in your line are killed, then the base takes damage. Now, in the deck of monsters, there are a variety of different kinds of enemies that engage in different ways with the defenders. So you have to kind of be ready to be nimble or be ready to tackle different kinds of attackers using different cards and different soldier types, and sort of spending your soldiers in different ways. It's sort of presumed that all or most of your soldiers will die each round. That's fine. You could always say they were wounded and taken back and patched up again, or that you have an unending meat grinder of soldiers coming through to send into battle. Either way, the idea is each round you're going to get a new hand of cards

and you have to survive nine rounds. This is a pretty standard deck builder in terms of the mechanisms of the deck building. The use of the cards to fight monsters is a little different than something like Marvel Legendary or Harry Potter Hogwarts Battle, but it's in the neighborhood, so if you've played either of those games, this game would feel familiar. It's really. Does the theme make you happy and how much do you like to cooperate? I really like the element, like a lot of cooperative games where you can play cards and affect the your, uh, co-player, your companions, line of soldiers and help them. So that mix of different ideas is really useful. I think the art is really good. Like I said, this sort of creepy bugs in the line of Starship Troopers. Uh, exactly what you kind of expect from That description. All in all, I thought Xenoshyft: Dreadmire was a pretty good game. Definitely one I'll keep for a while. We'll probably play it again a few times. I can't imagine it being a lifetime game. After a few plays or a couple of years. It'll probably rotate onto the trade shelf, but I'm sure we'll enjoy it while we have it. I probably will be tempted if I find in trade or in very cheap form, the original Xena shift, because combining the two sets and having more monsters and more soldiers available would make the game more interesting. That is. Xenoshyft: Dreadmire for the second game I want to talk about is one that's been on my shelf for a long time. I picked it up at a used at a half price books for, I think, \$14. I remember being like, wow, this is less expensive than I'd have thought, particularly because it's a Martin Wallace design. This is Aeroplanes Aviation ascendant. It's from Mayfair, published in 2012, designed by Martin Wallace with art from Patricia Rubio. Though I think the art for the planes is great. The people are not. They're not. The best people are artistically. But this isn't a game people buy for the art. Aviation ascendant is in the line of games that Martin Wallace was making in the late 2000 into the mid 20 tens, particularly. It certainly isn't brass, but it is in conversation with brass. In the game you are building a new line of airplane. You're building an airplane company ferrying passengers around Europe and across the world in the first half of the 20th century. It starts with buying airplanes. Each player has a certain amount of money, and as one of the things you can do on your turn is you can buy a plane. The planes are sold in ascending technological order, so the first plane that's available is the worst plane, and they get better as time goes along. You're allowed to skip planes, but you have to pay money to do so. So if you don't want the bottom plane, you have to pay an extra dollar to get the next plane up. And frankly, money is very limited in this game. The other thing that's very limited are spaces for airports. And this is the place where brass feels relevant. The game is incredibly tight in terms of where you can put your things and what you can do if you don't have airplanes, airports there. Essentially, when when you go to play out airports, you spread them out via a network. There is a risk mechanism where if you're playing airports in certain places, you have to roll a risk die. And if you do badly on the risk die, you can eventually lose one of your planes. But generally you are trying to spread your airports out through Europe and into the other regions. There's an African region, an Asian region, and North America, although Africa and Asia score. North America gives you instant bonuses but not scoring opportunities, and you're spending different amounts of risk to put the airports there. You also, depending on the planes you by are putting different levels of airports there. So level one planes can only put out level one airports. Level two planes can put out level two airports. Level three planes. Level three airports. Now the trick is you can't you can't overbuild someone else's airport if there's room to overbuild to build on in the space. But often there's not. And you can't overbuild someone else's airport with an airport of the same level. So you

you're constantly trying to get to the higher level so that you can overbuild airports and get into cities where you can't get in because the name of the game or the one of the huge ways you get points is by delivering passengers. Now, there are these passengers all over the place. They're in these five major cities, trying to fly out of those cities to other places. And you can only deliver a passenger if you have an airport in both the start and the destination for that passenger. And so getting locked out of very many of the start cities really hurts, he says from experience. Uh, Aeroplanes isn't the kind of game that that people go crazy for, but it is pretty interesting and it's really tight and pretty mean, which is one of the things a lot of people like about Martin Wallace designs. The meanness isn't my favorite. I do like the intensity of the economy part, and as a Martin Wallace design, this one gets a little bit more room in terms of me keeping it. I think if this were someone else's design, it might go right on the trade pile as it is. I'll probably hang on to it for Martin Wallace collection reasons, if nothing else, and I probably would enjoy playing it again at some future point. I would say the luck element is really the hardest part of this, because there's a huge bag of potential passengers, and those potential passengers come out at random. You could put a ton of effort into flying all the way to Australia, be the only one who gets an airport in Australia, and then never have an Australian passenger come up, and then you just you don't get any extra points for that, which you'd have gotten a ton of points if the Australian passenger did come up, but they might also come up in an airport where you don't have a way to take them. So this is a game with a high degree of variance in how the passengers come out, and you would need to be ready for that. It's also a high degree of player interaction because of the limited spaces of airports. So you're constantly wrestling with other people for control of airports, thinking about it and so on. All in all, it was pretty fun. I ended up getting a win, which I didn't even realize I was doing, because some of the passengers had victory points on them, and none of us were really paying attention to that. And it turned out not very many of the passengers had victory points on them. And points are relatively minor, like the I think the whole game I won in the 40s and the next player was in the low 40s, and the next player was the high 30s. So it's not a huge scoring game. And so if you have like ten points of passengers, that's a lot. And I wasn't really taking passengers with the idea of accumulating points from passengers. I was just taking ones I could fly, and often they're the less attractive ones at first because they take up less room on your planes and you score points for for filling up your planes. So taking passengers who take up 2 or 3 spots on your planes because it's a group are better usually, but those ones don't necessarily have points. So that was an interesting twist. I think we all thought I was in second or third place and it turned out I won, which was interesting. Aeroplanes is an interesting game. If you get a chance to play it, you definitely should. If this sounded interesting to you anyway, if you've never played a Martin Wallace economic game before and you someone says, hey, do you want to play a Martin Wallace economic game, you got to treat yourself to Brass or even Via Nebula. Both of those I like better or London. I mean, this is not near the top of my Martin Wallace list, but I do enjoy it. So that is aeroplanes. Next up is a game I dusted off. Uh, sort of. Or I guess it's an expansion. I tried it's both dusted off and expansion. This is Concordia. Venus. Now, Concordia is a game I have played many times, almost exclusively online. I think I played it one time in person, and we didn't understand one of the construction rules that really screwed up the play, but I have played many times online and I got an opportunity to play Concordia Venus, which is the sort of updated version of the game. It's got like a solo mode in

it and a new map, but it also comes with all the stuff you need to play the regular game. So it is kind of Concordia second edition. They also have Venus expansion if you have the original one, but that's not what I'm talking about. If you've never played Concordia, it is like the game that people are making fun of when they say trading in the Mediterranean. That's literally what you're doing. You're sailing ships around and building little trading stations in the Mediterranean. Of course, the game comes with a whole bunch of different maps, or they have made a whole bunch of different maps for it. So if you're really a Concordia head, you could buy all these different maps and have it be kind of a lifestyle game or something. The cool gimmick of Concordia is that you have these action cards you play, and whenever you take a turn, you play one of these action cards and do the thing that it says. And when you're getting toward the bottom, you can play a card that lets you pick up all your cards again, and then you get resources, or you get money based on how many cards you picked up. Of course, you can also buy more cards, and if the card has a all the cards have a scoring condition as well. So every time you buy a card, you're increasing your score in one of the like six scoring categories. So there's an element of where you try to do really well in one of the scoring categories, and then buy a bunch of cards that magnify that score. It's a really interesting economic game with an ebb and flow of different goods and money, and I think it's compelling. I like Concordia a lot. It's a game I would like to play more often. So getting to getting to visit Concordia again, after having not played it for a while was a delight. And I'm glad to have done it as Concordia. The Concordia Venus expansion, I believe, is 2020 or 2021, designed by Mac Gerts with art by Marina Fehrenbach and Dominic Mayer. All right. My third game of the episode is Valeria card kingdoms. Valeria card kingdoms is a game I've heard about many times, but never had the opportunity to play. I think I heard about it from Richard Ham, who talks about Valeria Card kingdoms as his preferred game in the Machi Koro / Space Base realm. It's a game where you build a. So, um, there's a Kristian Ostby game where you are assembling a team of burglars that has a similar mechanism, where you're building a tableau and the tableau of cards all have dice on them, and every time any player rolls the dice, you activate your cards. They have that dice in Space Base, you can either activate the two cards that represent the individual dice, or you can add the dice together and activate one card with the total Valeria Card Kingdoms. You actually activate all three, so each individual die activates and the combined value activates, so you get more stuff. In Valeria card kingdoms, you represent different noble people in a fantasy world, trying to defend the Kingdom of Valeria from various monsters that are rampaging through the town. There are a couple different resources that you're acquiring from your different cards, and you use those resources to buy more cards or to defeat monsters. The monsters are just represented in these stacks, and as you kill monsters, you're gaining benefits from them, but also gain points. And then the next monster in the stack is stronger. Similarly, buying people for your town amplifies the effect of the dice. So if you have AA5 warrior and someone rolls a five, you get you activate that five warrior. If you buy a second five warrior, now you activate two of them and so on. The game comes with enough cards that there's like 2 or 3 options for most of the different numbers. So you have a variety of different setups available. I will say Valeria card kingdoms. It did all of the things I like about Spacebase. It did not include the stuff I dislike about Masikoro, although I think there was. There are 1 or 2 Characters that steal from other players. But resources are so abundant in this game that stealing 1 or 2 resources from other players isn't too bad. I

guess if you got a big stack of those guys and started stealing everybody's resources in large number, that would be annoying. But there are enough variety available that you could just not use those cards. The art in Valeria Card kingdoms is great. It is done by Dom by Mihajlo Dimitrievski, who has an art style very similar to the Mico who does the West Kingdoms games. The scholars of the West Kingdom or the scholars of the South Tigris. Those architects of the West Kingdom. The Meho. The Mico does very similar art style to what we see in Valeria card. Kingdoms. It's designed by Isaiah Vallejo, published by Daily Magic in 2016. Now this is a game that has a whole bunch of expansions. they're relatively available to buy. In fact, they have them in a print on demand small pack features, so you can buy these packs of several different expansions to include in your copy and have them printed on demand and mailed to you, which is a nice feature, I think, if you're not familiar with this style of game. It solves a couple problems. So the original version of this, the original one of these that I played was Masikoro, which has been around since like 2014, probably, maybe even a little earlier. Uh, and what makes this game interesting is that even though it's a dice rolling game and on your turn, you are getting a lot of stuff and you are getting to buy things and do stuff. When it's not your turn, you still pay attention because you still get to reap benefits. And I think Machi Koro did this a little bit. I think space base did it better. And then I think Valeria Card Kingdoms does it better still. Now I don't remember whether Space Base or Valeria card kingdoms is older. 2016 is pretty old. It's probably. I bet Valeria and Space Base were in the design pipeline at the same time, because space. Space is certainly on the older side as well. You can check the show notes for a link to that, but both of these games have this idea that when someone else's turn happens, you get to do stuff and that you get to do stuff. Bit is really useful to keep you engaged. Now the other thing is in Valeria card kingdoms, the turns are relatively short. Like, I feel like sometimes Space Base gets a little long, in part because you have this, um, big market of cards, and so you're constantly having to reevaluate what the cards do. Whereas in Card Kingdoms, the market is Dominion style. So you pick out the different cards that are available and they go into a static market, and on your turn, you can buy any of the particular cards that fit. I have left out a crucial part. I realized there's a a third thing you can buy. You can attack monsters, you can buy more people for your tableau, or you can buy these places. And the places are really interesting because they give you end game scoring, but they also give you ongoing powers. And this go the ongoing powers are sort of, uh, large scale or, uh, high value things that you get to do that make the that make your whole engine more efficient. So they might give you cheaper benefits. They might. There's a bunch of different things they could do. And each of these results in a gain in efficiency and power. So whereas Machi Koro it's all about just getting enough money to buy the next thing. And then eventually, once you've bought certain three things, you win or whatever. And in Space Base it's often about it's about powering up until you hit that certain amount of points. Uh, in Valeria Card kingdoms, there are a couple different end conditions that you can all see coming, but you're trying to accumulate the points through these different things that you buy and lots of different things have points. But buying the locations is interesting because not only do you have to have the money to buy them, but you also have to have the right figures because the way the game works, each of the different, uh, characters you put in your tableau has one of like six different, um, icons on it. Sometimes they have two icons, maybe there's four icon, four types, but there's a combination of different icons on the cards that you acquire, and then you can only buy the places if you

have the money and the right combination of cards to take from that pile. So that extra wrinkle makes it pretty interesting. I'm looking forward to playing Valeria Card Kingdoms a couple times more. I don't think I'll get rid of space space, but honestly, I could. I don't know yet if I'm intrigued enough to buy the expansion decks, but I am kind of. So we'll see. Well, that's uh, so that is, uh, four games, three new games and one revisited to talk with you today. So I want to thank say thanks for joining me on my walk today. I hope that you have enjoyed this and that you have played some of these games. If you have played them, head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269, and let me know what you think of them. Also, what have you. What other games have you tried recently? Share those thoughts as well. You can reach out to me directly Brendan at [rattlebox games.com](http://rattleboxgames.com). Or you can send me a mail message. Wombat 929 is my username there. All that's left is for me to say thank you for joining me on my walk today. I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.