
Miscellany

Generation Zeta

My *Truth & Justice* campaign continues despite having to cancel a session to my traveling for work.¹ One of my players will be taking a two-month leave to have reassignment surgery, which puts me down to a precarious three players, but I think we'll manage. As it is, I plan to wrap up the campaign by the end of September, making a complete year of game time (minus missed sessions) and a complete school year for the characters. I will be happy to move on to something else.

I've determined that I really want more structure in character abilities than T&J provides. Like OTE or HeroQuest, it uses player-defined attributes, which is both flexible and a little too squishy for my tastes. I'm finding I am having to make decisions (regarding which qualities and powers apply to a particular situation) that I would rather not. For my GMing style, I am more comfortable with a flexible system that still has a rigid backbone.

Plus, by the time we get to September, I will have done all I really care to do with the characters. Sure, it could be turned into a longer campaign, perhaps even advancing the teenagers to full-fledged adult superheroes, but right now, I'm not feeling it.

Glorantha

The same group will be running a short shake-down run of the new *RuneQuest* game from Moongoose. The goal is to see how these RQ II/III veterans like the new rules and see if there is interest for a longer campaign.

Being the Glorantha neophyte of the group, I was given from background reading from the RQI-II Glorantha boxed set. So far, I am uninspired. The setting is such a goulash that I'm not finding anything that really grabs me. To be fair, I'm rarely taken by settings so much as situations and characters. That the mini-campaign will consist of a hodgepodge of outsiders, there is not the focus that I usually need to inspire me.

I can't say that I'm anxious to play, but I'm usually willing to try anything once. We'll see how it goes.

1 I am hoping to find a new position which will not entail so much travel. I'm rather sick of it.

Ignorable Theme for #382

Scene Hogs

How does one know if they are being scene hog? Ask. Stop and listen to what the other players want to do. Bring others into the scene and actively engage them in character interactions.

How should a GM treat a potential scene hog? Like a reasonable person. Put the breaks on a scene that is getting out of hand. Stop and listen to what the other players want to do. Bring others into the scene and actively engage them in character interactions.

In my weekly gaming group, we are generally pretty good at being conscious of scene hogging and avoid it. In fact, some players are known to be fairly passive and being content to sit back and watch someone else chew up a scene rather than being the focus of a scene themselves. To some, it may appear these players are being ignored or not having fun even if neither is the case. Such wallflower players need to reassure the GM and other players that they are enjoying the game.

At convention games, I have had issues with fellow players hogging scenes. Some are enabled by a GM who gives them more attention. Some are just rude and/or clueless. Depending on the situation, I may try to move the scene to other players. Or sometimes I just get pissy and stew in annoyed silence punctuated with snarky comments.²

So many intra-player issues, including scene hogging, can be resolved simply by people being polite. You don't need to write down social contracts or have the game rules tell or force players not to be assholes.³

More Comments on #380b

Spike Y Jones

I admire the work you put into the Lost Tribes article, even if the subject matter is lost on me. Regarding endnote (4), why are "such figures" in the Bible "likely inflated by a factor of at least 10"?

Marco Subias

My folks maximized the size of their back and side fences (none in the front). They started by building the tallest fence allowed by law. In the

2 One of my many character flaws.

3 Unless, of course, you are an asshole.

back, they planted a green wall of Italian Cypresses. On the side, the law allowed for an additional 18" (?) of trellis on top of the fence. It also helps that their lot is up to 24" higher than the neighbors' due to three decades of imported soil and a dugout pool. All this is in an unincorporated part of Santa Clara County, so I have no idea how the law applies elsewhere.

When splitting dice between attack and dodge, is the die pool based on the attack skill or the dodge skill. If my Coordination is 4, my Pistol 2 and my Dodge 6, how many dice do I roll to fire my gun as I leap to the side?

In my mind, Intangibility can always be classified as Defends, even it cannot be quickly turned on and off. Especially when combined with a (mental) Attack power, Intangibility is a classic abusive defensive power.

Comments on #381

Ty Beard

Corporations and their Boards of Directors tend to be conservative. Being publicly owned actually makes them more conservative since they are mostly owned by large financial institutions and their mutual funds. Both the New York Times and Washington Post are controlled by families who are not beholden to a board because only they hold the voting stock. This gives them some editorial freedom not enjoyed by other outlets. And even these so-called liberal papers were co-conspirators in spreading the lies of the Administration regarding Iraq and 9/11.

When both the Left and the Right claim bias, perhaps the real problem is incompetence. Spin and punditry is cheaper than truth and fact checking. The erosion of journalistic integrity and professionalism for the sake of increasing profit margins is the true danger, not the bogeyman of bias.

Myles Corcoran

Dublin housing sounds like that of California, especially the Bay Area. And that's why I'm still renting. : (Actually, it's not too bad because when something breaks, I don't worry about it. I'm afraid the responsibility of home ownership would be too stressful for me, worrying out everything that can (and does) go wrong or need fixing/improvement.

Robert A. Dushay

The Theory of Evolution is like the Theory of Relativity⁴: there are no credible, scientific alterna-

4 And here I'm using capital-T Theory to denote a uni-

tives. There are plenty of pseudo-scientific alternatives that often rely on mythology and ignoring or manipulating contrary evidence; in other words, they have no place in a science classroom.

The superhero genre lacks the broader, cross-gender appeal of fantasy. Many of the tropes (losing fights, having the villain return, dealing with secret identities, et al) are much harder for gamers to accept and have fun with (rather than try to circumvent). And then there is the issue of power scale, which can be tough to game. I have heard D&D fans say that D&D breaks down at 10th or 15th level. A superhero game might start at or beyond that level of power.

Don't blame me for Muffit II; Brian started it! An important element of "The Wesley Effect" is that (as said several times by Wil Wheaton) the writers often don't know how to write for non-adult characters.

Lee Gold

An ignorable theme on playing styles could be interesting, but I don't think I can adequately describe my playing style to those who haven't experienced it firsthand.

LOL "You're dead."

Regarding "Thou shall not have any other gods in my face," replace *gods* with *pork chops*. It does not deny that pork chops exist, just that you aren't supposed to serve them.⁵ Islam is more explicit with "There is no god but God", but even that can be interpreted poetically rather than literally: "She is the only girl for me" or "You didn't hear that" or "These aren't the droids you're looking for." But then, I enjoy dabbling in blasphemy.

I do agree about footnotes. Take, for instance, endnote (18) from Spike's zine on the Lost Tribes. The more I learn about the historical and cultural context of religious teachings, the more I'm convinced that Man created God and not the other way around. Therefore, I don't think we're really going to get anywhere on this topic. Besides, my dismissive blasphemy was not meant to be taken seriously or start a religious debate or a discussion on the origins and propagation of beliefs.

versally excepted scientific principle rather than a hypothesis; there will be no "but it's just a theory" arguments on my watch.

5 The pun is left as an exercise to the reader.

Spike Y Jones

I'm looking forward to *Faery's Tale Deluxe*. How big will the supplemental collection of enchanted places be? Could not some of this material be put into the Deluxe game? If the No-Glow Grove is indicative of what the collection will hold, I'll definitely pick that up too.

Don't underestimate the power of stereo smell. Haven't you used your nose to determine the direction of a barbecue, bad car exhaust, or department store perfume counter?

Regarding *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*, I just found out that Tim Kring created both. He was also a writer of *Misfits of Science*, one of my favorites as a teenager.⁶

GenCon So-Cal was by all accounts a good regional convention. And I'm sure they could have done good, regional numbers elsewhere. I guess Peter Adkison wasn't satisfied with that scale.

Joshua Kronengold

BESM characters should always be made with an eye toward modeling, not optimization. The system makes some powerful attributes relatively cheap not because they are balanced, but because they are common in anime. The system is not going to prevent you from having a 1-point weapon attack (actually not possible in 1st or 2nd edition (unless you've already purchased a 4-point weapon attack of equal or greater level)): you have to take responsibility for it yourself.⁷

The ability of game to handle multiple cooks depends greatly on the tastes and styles of the cooks. I am not comfortable with the concept of story ownership; story stewardship may be closer to my sentiments. In any case, stories are the responsibility of all players, collectively. No one owns it. It exists for all.

Louis La Mancusa

Given the complexity of CCGs and many CRPGs that are popular with kids, I do not see D&D's complexity as a barrier for entry. Exploiting D&D rules to get an extra +1 or +2 and taking tactical advantage of position is on par with deck optimization for a CCG. Even cost isn't so much an issue, except that parents are probably more likely to buy a \$40 video game or \$40 worth of card game boosters⁸ than a \$40 D&D book. Given the

6 A 20 year old Courtney Cox had a lot to do with it.

7 Or abdicate this responsibility to the GM, but that gets really old, really fast.

8 Everyone knows what a video or card game is; few really understand what a roleplaying game is.

inherent *weirdness* of roleplaying, I believe that the best way for Hasbro⁹ to expand D&D's popularity is to make it less like an rpg and more like a miniatures game ala Heroscape with customization, optimization, and all the things that the kids like from CCGs and CRPGs.

I have seen a few attempts to make a slimmed-down d20 system. True20 is perhaps the most commercial (and most complex).

Given the idiotic decisions made by the highly educated, wealthy, and privileged members of our current Administration, maybe we should restrict voting and holding public office to the uneducated, addicted, and chronically unemployed.¹⁰

Brian Misiaszek

I have a hypothesis that more expensive hotels charge for (often bad) internet access because they figure their guests can afford it. Budget business hotels (Hampton Inn, Marriott Fairfield, etc.) provide free internet and breakfast.¹¹

Brian Rogers

As you noted, the amount of rolling in your revised combat system seems cumbersome. Perhaps static target numbers¹² for defense would help, though it will skew your odds calculations.

Your *Star Trek* episode descriptions sound great. Do you ever have problems with players pushing against your 3-act model? Do you ever end up at a Midpoint which you did not plan?

Marco Subias

No curtains? Not even blinds?

Wild Talents' "Disguise, Only To Protect Secret Identity" sounds just like a *Champions*-ism.

The threat of death in a horror game is appropriate. The threat of death in a four-color superhero game is not. The threat of death in a *Star Trek* game should be reserved for NPCs. In your classic action-adventure flick, the characters may believe they are under threat of death, but the audience knows they aren't. Likewise, a roleplayer should be able to play a character who is worried about dying (while still risking their lives) even if the player knows otherwise.

9 As opposed to the rpg hobby industry as a whole.

10 Although these adjectives might be used to describe pre-Gubernatorial Dubya (if one were feeling especially snarky).

11 Usually not much beyond a muffin or toasted bagel and juice with cold cereal, but the thought counts.

12 Assume the 2d6 roll is 7 (or similar).