

Superhero Stuff

The Unnamed Supers Campaign

The superhero 6-episode campaign came to a satisfactory end. Everyone said they enjoyed it and would be willing to come back to it in the future. Just as importantly, I had fun, especially once it got going and I could feel the players getting into it. It was a welcome change from the blasé reaction the one-shots received and I think the additional time to roleplay and develop their characters was an essential part of the success.

One thing I did confirm is that as a GM, I don't have this whole "hero/karma/drama point" thing down. I'm terrible at handing them out even when I'm the one who wrote the rules. This basically kills X-Ω development until I either get the drive to actually playtest it or think of another direction to take the system (such as Amber-style fiat).

For right now, I need a break to prepare for Kublacon, make a few changes to the rules, and get the non-superhero game ideas out of my head. That last one will undoubtedly prove to be the most difficult. In the meantime, we will be playing board games and whatever the other players decide to run. One was inspired by my Fudge/SotC supers rules to do a similar treatment with Exalted¹, so we'll see how that goes.

Iron Man

Iron Man was a very good superhero comic book movie. The acting and characterizations were quite good. The plot was focused in a way that too many superhero movies aren't (much to their detriment). The script mixed in humor, action, and quieter character moments without overdoing any one element. The CGI never got in the way of the story and never felt like I was watching the video game walk-through.

I did find that the comic book high tech doesn't work as well on the screen as it does in comics (or animation). I think the introduction of live actors gives it a grounding in realism that is at odds with the genre conventions. I had to keep reminding myself "it's a comic book" and on that level, it works perfectly well. [Insert my standard rant on how animation is a better fit for comic book movies than live action.]

Definitely recommended.

1 And I pointed him to a few threads on rpg.net of others trying to do the same thing.

Comments on Issue #392

Myles Corcoran

In grad school, my fellow physicists noticed our collective inability to do simple arithmetic. I got out with only a Masters, and now I'm in marketing, but making a system based on multiplication would not have been my choice. :)

I did a quick analysis of the Sufficiently Advanced system and compared it with a traditional Trait + 1d10 system. As you can see, for target numbers in the upper half of the spectrum, the two systems are equivalent. What the multiplication system does is to increase the odds of success for easier tasks. This is not a bad idea.

1. Trait x 1d10 vs. Target Number

	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0
10	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1

2. Trait + 1d10 vs. Target Number

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
8	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0
10	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1

Trait on left (y-axis); TN on top (x-axis)

But I did not consider the effect of rolling twice and taking the better result. This will have the effect of increasing the odds of success for all difficulties. I am only guessing at how target numbers work and there may be nuances to the system I'm missing. Even so, I don't really see the benefit for the multiplication system.

Robert Dushay

Regarding suspense, I think its appropriate to remind everyone that rpgs are not literature or

film. Besides, I read and watch plenty of things in which the lead characters fail. Anything by George R. R. Martin or in the genres of horror or film noir, for example. In my Changeling campaign, the suspense came from not knowing the ramifications and consequences of my PC's actions, whether she succeeded or not (which was often the case). Neither Charlie nor I ever knew if she was doing the right thing, even when things went her way.

The Antisocial Bastards game was just a one-shot thing that I ran for my group and then at Dun-DraCon. The players haven't clamored for more of the same, and I right now I'm not motivated to expand upon the concept into a campaign.

As a roleplayer, I much preferred roleplaying NPCs in the Firefly game than having to narrate the outcome of the scene. I know this technique wouldn't work with everyone, especially players more interested in gaming than roleplaying.

The players were given some very short notes on the NPC's objectives, attitudes, and/or personality along with the nugget of information I was to convey. The NPC I played was greedy and wanted his cut. The encounter was a success, so I was going to give over my information, but I held out until offered an appropriate bribe. It was fun, but as I noted last issue, there was some confusion when the PC asked questions that were outside the scope of my own knowledge. And given the time required to setup the encounter, it would certainly have gone more smoothly if the GM had just played the NPCs. But in the end, I think it was a successful experiment.

It occurs to me that it hints at a way to deal with roleplaying encounters that involve persuasion and other "social combat."² Traditionally, I have been roleplaying the scene up to a point and then ask for a roll. Instead, maybe the roll should come first, and then we roleplay the results appropriately. This assumes a single roll with no DitV-style escalation or complex "maneuvers," but it may find a happy middle ground between immersion, narration, and practicality.

Though some players may not be interested in roleplaying out a failed interaction. But then, regardless of the outcome, minor encounters could be summarized/narrated rather than roleplayed.

Lee Gold

I have a plastic cover for my laptop keyboard. It keeps out the cat hair, human hair, food particles, and the glass of diet cola I spilled on it. :)

² That term really sets my teeth on edge.

Spike Y Jones

Thank you for the compliment. I get a good idea about once every 5 years. :)

Louis La Mancusa

The simple question I posed in Issue #391 was not meant as a trap, but simply to understand how your political beliefs aligned with one of the founding documents of the United States (and an important political and historical document in its own right). Your statements on restricting voting rights and against egalitarianism seemed to be in opposition to the text I quoted. Based on your response, I fear you might have missed my point.³

My personal answer to the question I posed to you⁴ is the following: *While I would not have chosen the language or wording of Mr. Jefferson, I understand its historical context and wholeheartedly agree with its sentiment and principle.* For a more complex and nuanced answer, I refer you to my website.⁵ If you wish to continue any discussions of a non-gaming nature, I invite you to move the discussion to email rather than these pages.

Lisa Padol

The Buffy/Angel game was a convention game that I playtested on my group.

The GM of the Firefly game was Justin Evans. I'd recommend him as a GM or a fellow player.

Brian Rogers

Powers as metaphors is an interesting concept, but they can also be overdone, driven home with all the subtlety of a poorly written Star Trek morality tale. ;)

In my high school superhero T&J campaign, I had to have the NPC dean tell the PCs, in effect, "don't tell me these things, because then I become legally liable. I don't want to know and I'm not going to ask." Some of the other faculty had other sentiments, indirectly encouraging their activities, even resulting in a temporary team-up or two, but at least one player never seemed to get past the idea that yes, you kids were supposed to put yourself in dangerous situations and be (super)heroes. I don't know how much of that was from the player's motherly instincts or just the way she defined the character.

³ For the record, I'm an atheist, not an agnostic.

⁴ That is, whether or not I agreed with the statement.

⁵ <http://www.sinisterthings.com/2008/05/simple-question-complex-answer.html>