

## Miscellany

### Angel

I have (re-)joined another Friday night group and have had the opportunity to run Angel again. I got this honor because I had my old scenarios that I could pull out at a moments notice. I expect the situation to be short term and not evolve into a full-fledged campaign, but we shall see.

The current group has up to 6 players assuming everyone shows up which makes it a quite different than the 2 players I had originally. In one sense, the investigations go faster because there are more chances for someone to pick up on the clues and take the correct course of action, but on the other hand, the game plays more slowly as there is more character interaction and roleplaying.

### GURPS Faerie

Much of this book references GURPS Compendium I, GURPS Magic, and GURPS Spirits and since I do not own those other volumes, I was not able to get as much out of GURPS Faerie as a dedicated GURPS player would. However, I still found it useful and interesting. For GURPS fantasy campaigns with faeries, I think this a must-have volume; for non-GURPS, it is still useful and better than the treatments I have read for d20 and Castle Falkenstein.

Because so much of faerie folklore is vague or contradictory, no GM can use this book "as in" and has to invest time into defining what faeries are and what abilities and weaknesses they have. The authors made a token attempt at mentioning the possibility of faeries as PCs, but I think the clear intention is to have them be NPCs, where the GM can keep them mysterious and keep their abilities in check (which is how I would use them). I was also pleased to see how I used faeries in my online fantasy game<sup>1</sup> paralleled some of the treatments in GURPS Faeries.

### RolePlay On-Line

I have been playing a few games over at www.rpol.net, which is a free site designed for play-by-post rpgs. The games there have the usual problems with people dropping out and campaigns stalling that you get from pbem games, but it has some nice utilities like thread creation, private messages (separate or embedded into posts), a die roller, etc. that make it quite handy to use. I have thought about running a game, but I would want to commit more time to it than I have currently.

<sup>1</sup> The Adventures of Daphne and Bertwald, for those who remember.

## Blueberry Valley, Part III

Normal B&B rules use a variety of languages and bunnies cannot easily communicate with non-bunnies unless they have the appropriate language. However, I think it is more interesting if all the PCs can speak with the NPCs rather than a selected few or none at all, and so I ignored the language restriction.

### The Stream

The stream is at the bottom of steep ravine that is home to tall grass and reeds. Tall bushes along the top of the ravine hide the stream from view. A few trees rise tall over the stream and stretch their branches across the ravine. Normally, it is a simple matter of making your way down the side, hop across the rocks of the stream, and then climb out of the ravine on the other side.

Those present must make a senses roll of Good or better to notice the following:

But as you approach the stream, you can tell something is different. You can normally hear the water trickling over the rocks, but now there is nothing.

Depending on how they approach, they will eventually see the situation:

Looking down the ravine, you cannot see the tall grass or the rocks in the stream. The ravine is not as deep as you remember, either. The water is rushing by quickly and silently.

The options are to swim across, climb one of the trees to the other side, or explore further upstream or downstream. The stream is too wide to jump, but a well-executed jump will allow the bunny to skip the first swimming roll.

Swimming across the stream requires three swimming rolls: beginning, middle, and end. On a roll of Fair or worse means the bunny makes no progress, is swept downstream, takes a scratch of fatigue, and must roll again. If the bunny starts taking Hurt or worse wound levels, the bunny is drowning. On a roll of Good or Great, the bunny swims across the section, but is swept downstream some. A Superb roll is required to fight the current. Building a makeshift raft from a good sized branch will reduce the difficulty of the swim by one level.

Trying to climb a tree requires a Superb climbing roll to get up to branch level and another one to walk across the ravine on the narrow branch. The local squirrels, a group of high-strung smart-asses, will

mock any bunnies that attempt this feat. They may even throw things at the bunnies to hamper their progress. The squirrels may be willing to help string a line across to the other side of the stream, for a price (truffles).

Downstream, the stream eventually enters a wide pool that is much calmer than the stream. Any bunnies who are swept downstream will end up here. A group of 3 ducks, two male and one female, are enjoying the pool. They are helpful twits and will help any drowning bunny to the shore. The far end of the pool has enough rocks and debris to hop across, on a Good roll.

Upstream, there is a bobcat chasing frogs. She will not notice the bunnies unless they approach or make a lot of commotion, or simply dawdle on the bank for too long. She is of comparable ability level to the coyotes but has stealth and patience on her side. She is both hungry and cunning.

### The Truffle Brothers

Two boar brothers with keen senses of smell and a love of truffles will easily notice when our truffle-laden bunnies pass by unless they took some precaution such as using fumitory to hide the smell. The brothers will block the path in front of the bunnies.

Nigel is not quite right in the head. Willam is the brains of the two (which ain't sayin' much).

"Looky at what we have here, Nigel."

"Ya? What's that Willam?"

"I wonder what rabbits are doing in our neck of the woods, ya? But we are being rude, ain't we, Nigel? This is Nigel. I am Willam. And we are *The Truffle Brothers!*"

William sniffs the bunnies for effect. "Well well Now! What's this? It seems our rabbit friends here have been holding out on us."

"Really? What's that Nigel?"

"You're Nigel, Nigel. I'm Willam."

"Ya, right." <sniff>... <sniff, sniff> Nigel goes into manic convulsions. "TRUFFLES!!" Nigel tries to attack the rabbits, but William stops him.

"Now, now, Nigel, old boy. No sense being uncivilized. I'm sure we come to some sort of agreement with these fine rabbits. Can't we?" Willam makes very wide, devious smile.

The Truffle Brothers will not allow the rabbits to pass without giving them at least one truffle. There are several options for the bunnies to get past the brothers:

- **Gambling:** Nigel does not understand the concept and Willam will not accept losing.
- **Deception and Trickery:** This will work well against Nigel, but Willam is not so easily fooled and it will take a Good lie or trick to get past him. Even if he is fooled, it might make him angry and they will be on their guard when the bunnies return.
- **Storytelling:** The brothers will accept a Superb story (a performance that should be roleplayed as much as possible before reverting to dice rolls) in exchange for letting the bunnies keep one of their truffles.
- **Hiding:** This will only work for a brief time, as the brothers have Superb Senses and can easily track the bunnies.
- **Running:** The bunnies can outrun the Brothers on a Fair or better roll. However, the brothers will track the bunnies to the rendezvous point if need be to get their truffles. The brothers will stop if a truffle is left in their path, unless the bunnies angered them sufficiently to warrant further harassment.

Depending on how the bunnies deal with the brothers in this first encounter, they may have to face the consequences on their return trip. For example, if the brothers are tricked, they will be on their guard the second time and may decide to take the truffles by force.

### The Rendezvous Point

By the time the bunnies reach the rendezvous point, it will be time to rest. There is a bolt hole here that acts as a good resting place. Unfortunately, the bolt hole has become the temporary home of a skunk, Spider, who is not want to give up his home without a fight or a bribe. He is blusterous and self-righteous and believes he has every right to the bolt hole. If push comes to shove, he will take down as many with him as he can; though he cannot win against a small force of bunnies, he can make them regret tangling with a skunk.

"Ya, there were rabbits that came by. Twas a while ago now. Two bucks and a doe. Big gal, if you know what I mean. I could hear them comin' with her griping. They seemed ok. I spoke with one of them, a skinny feller by the name of... er... Skinny. He asked me about other rabbits from somewhere. I said I ain't seen them. Hey, you wouldn't be them, would ya? Well, anyway, I noticed they had this nice burrow here so when they moved on, I moved in."

## The Valley

Blueberry valley does not consist of a single, centralized warren ruled by a king. Rather, the bucks have split the valley between them, each occupying smaller burrows. In times past, there was enough food such that their autonomous society functioned well—everyone kept out of each other's way. However, tensions in the valley have increased recently now that the blueberries are gone and the radishes are disappearing.

In addition to the rabbits mentioned below, there are countless (literally) sons, daughters, cousins, etc. The ones listed below know of the three previous rabbits but do not know where they went. Opinions offered of their whereabouts include:

- Went looking for blueberries and are probably still looking
- Captured by the ghost of the haunted oak
- The fat doe ate the other two
- They went home

The bunnies have sworn not to mention the garden or the presence of humans nearby, so as to discourage adventurous kittens from looking for blueberries. None will mention this possibility until the PCs have gained their trust.

Should the PCs go hunting for blueberry bushes, a Good Botany roll can find them in very poor condition. A Great Botany roll will reveal the cause and explanation of why there are no longer any blueberries to be had.

My friend Matt Helms, who appeared in A&E briefly, wrote up the village of Iwham for his LotR campaign. He gave me a copy and I reworked it for bunnies. This is far more depth than what is probably required for the adventure, but it gives the PCs a chance to roleplay in a manner that is not necessarily directly related to the plot.

When I ran this section, I did not go into a fraction of the depth that I have written here. I had 8 PCs at the time so there was already plenty of roleplaying going on.

### Burrow #1

The oldest and largest burrow in the valley is home to **Hawkbit**, his mate **Honey**, their youngest son **Graham**, and Hawkbit's father, **Silver**.

Still hale despite being in his later years, **Silver** is the unofficial leader of the valley. He is given to long stretches of thoughtful silence before answering even the simplest of questions. Although no longer in good health, **Silver** still revels in telling stories of the old days, when his father was the first to settle in this valley. On infrequent occasions, these stories will be vaguely relevant to the situation at hand.

**Honey** is a pleasant and garrulous doe who is

widely regarded as the best herbalist in the valley. She is well aware of **Autumn's** jealousy, but she tries to ignore the pettiness and gossip unless it becomes unbearable.

**Graham** is a surly and taciturn buck who, despite being very mature, has never taken a mate. He had been a suitor for the hand of the doe **Marjoram**, but she instead married his cousin **Rowan**, a fact that **Graham** has rued every day since.

### Burrow #2

The second largest burrow belongs to **Buckthorn** and his mate **Autumn**, son **Rowan**, daughter-in-law **Marjoram**, and grandchildren, the twins **Foxtail** and **Foxglove**.

**Buckthorn** is beginning to be slowed by age. He is an extremely quiet and content to let others do the decision-making, much to his mate's chagrin. Although he is no longer able to do the all of the physical labor that he used to, he still takes great pleasure in woodworking (yes, bunnies can work wood).

**Autumn** is **Silver's** only daughter, and still tends to think of herself as 'princess' of the valley. As such, she is of the belief that she and her children should be guiding the valley instead of her deliberate and soft-spoken older brother, **Hawkbit**. An inveterate gossip, **Autumn** has a long memory for slights (real and imagined).

Although modestly talented in any given area, **Rowan** is almost vengefully jealous of anyone bests him at any challenge. Handsome as a youth, he is not wearing the signs of aging well.

**Marjoram** originally comes from another warren to the south. She enjoys being the center of attention, and considers herself the most attractive doe in the valley (a fact that has not been true since **Coriander**, see #4, blossomed into adulthood). She is just as much of a gossip as her mother-in-law.

The couple's young male kits, **Foxtail** and **Foxglove**, alternate between being intensely competitive with each other and teaming up to bully their younger cousins.

### Burrow #3

The most dilapidated and unkempt burrow belongs to **Kale**, his mate **Velvet**, their son **Frog**, his mate **Dawn**, and the kittens **Dash** and **Moon**.

**Kale** is **Silver's** youngest son. He left the valley in search of adventure and returned with **Velvet**, a sultry black doe who appears "different" than the others. Their eldest son, **Frog**, is not the brightest and is prone to ill-advised adventures rather than attend the upkeep of the burrow. Like his father, he too left the valley and returned with a mate. **Dawn** is a slight, frail-looking doe with large eyes. At first, she was swept away by **Frog's** spirit but has grown tired of his antics and violent tendencies.

Among the youngest kittens in the valley, **Dash** is

very protective of his sister **Moon**, and they keep to themselves mostly.

#### **Burrow #4**

**Singe** is a large, muscular buck. He is friendly with a hearty laugh, always willing to help anyone who needs his aid. Although only a second-generation resident of the valley (his father, a friend of **Silver**, lived in the burrow before him), he is a well-liked and welcome part of the community.

**Strawberry** is the daughter of **Hawkbit** and **Honey**, and is very much like her mother. When she is not working with her mate or parents, she will usually be found tending to vegetables and flowers. Both she and her mate fret over her brother Graham's unhappiness.

**Coriander** is a striking young doe with a singing voice just as fair as her features. She yearns to travel and see life beyond the little valley she has known all of her life. **Coriander** will likely be very impressed by any handsome or charming stranger visiting the valley.

#### **The Haunted Oak**

Snaggletooth is an old maverick, insane and paranoid, cut off from rabbit society and feral by rabbit standards. His fur is dingy white from age and there is a crazed look in his bloodshot eyes. He has created a labyrinthine burrow in the root network of a large oak tree, but within the maze lies a treasure—a huge colony of truffles. He keeps mint leaves and other aromatics strung around the entrances to the truffle chamber—and throughout the burrow—so that it cannot be found by scent (though the presence of mint in such a place may spark the PC's interest if they go adventuring).

Locating one of the plugs—secret passages in the burrow—requires a Great Architecture roll if passing the plug or a Fair roll if looking in the correct area.

Snaggletooth is Superb at mimicking other animals and rabbits. He frightens away visitors by imitating cats, rattlesnakes, and other creatures. He can also call out to rabbits to lure them away from his truffle trove.

If cornered, he will attack with blind fury until he can be subdued. Once defeated, he will use the truffles to bargain his freedom, but will try to double-cross or escape his captors before doing so.

#### **The Radishes**

On the outskirts of the valley, there is a patch of wild radishes. Oakbud, one of the Owsla sent by King Black Paw, has been stealing from them since the failed attempt to rescue the princess. He has Good senses and Superb Stealth, so he has been able to avoid detection so far. He is shameful, lonely, and depressed. He is light brown with black on the tips of his ears.

"I tried to stop her. She wouldn't listen. It was too late. The trap fell and that was that. We stayed with her through the night. Oh how she wailed. We tried to get the trap open, but it wouldn't budge. The next morning, a human came and took her. We followed and found her—they put her in a cage. We tried to get to her, but there was a dog. Racer lured it away... he could outrun anything... and I got away... but there was no where for him to run. It was only a matter of time. After that, I knew I couldn't help Princess Holly and I could not go back to the warren and face my shame, so I have been hiding out here ever since."

#### **The Trap**

The trap's purpose is to catch an opossum that has been raiding the trash. Catching a rabbit was unintended. The trap is a two-door wire trap with an apple as bait. A Good trap roll is required to identify it. A Great trap roll is required to get someone out. It is impossible to escape from the inside without outside help.

The PCs will come across this simple humane cage trap if they try to follow the in the general direction Princess Holly went or on their their way to the garden (if they find out about it).

Dell the opossum has been stuck in the trap for over a day now. Normally, he is oily and manipulative, but he is hungry, bitter, and desperate to leave. If someone approaches the trap, he plays dead. If freed, he will show his rescuers the best times to avoid the dog (during meals and walkies).

## The Garden

The chicken wire fence around the garden is 5 feet tall with 6 inches below ground in an "L" shape (6" down and 6" out for a total fence height of 6'). Getting past the fence directly by jumping, team acrobatics, or tunneling requires a Superb roll. A tunnel will take an entire half-day to complete. The latch to the gate is 5 feet above the ground. It only requires a Fair Mechanics roll to open, but getting up there is the hard part.

Access to the gate is restricted by the dog, an Australian sheep dog named Skippy. With humans he is very friendly and gentle. But he is very territorial and sees rabbits as unwelcome intruders upon this home. Without any sheep, he herds mostly chickens (and the one duck.) He is starting to develop an understanding with Princess Holly, though he does not understand her "purpose."

## The Hutch and The Princess

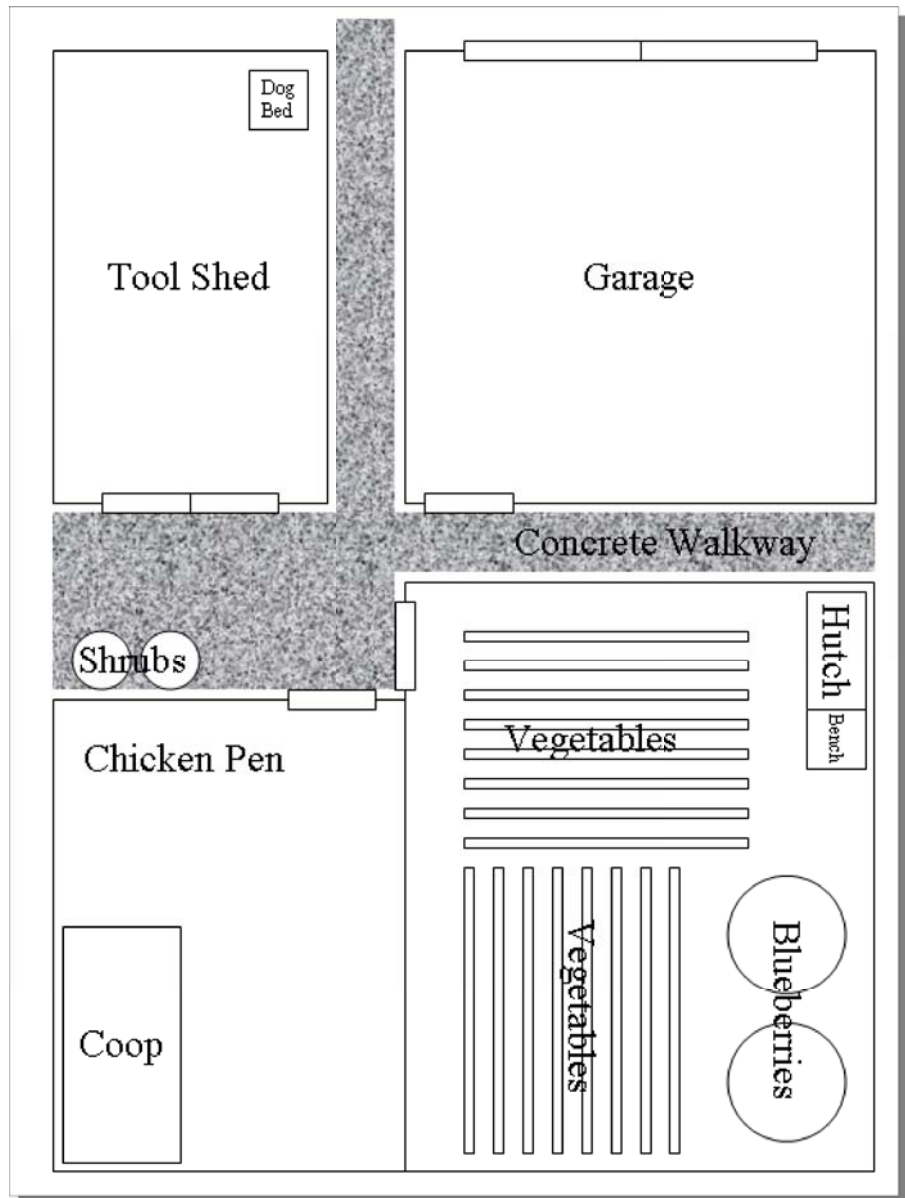
The newly constructed rabbit hutch takes up two-thirds of a long, rectangular table, 4 feet off the ground. It is built from a wooden frame. One half of the hutch is a simple wire cage while the other half is an wooden box for shade. Several spare planks are under the table, kept off the ground by the leg supports. The latch on the cage requires a Good Mechanics roll to open from the outside and a Superb roll from the inside.

Princess Holly believes that she is finally getting the royal treatment she deserves. The only thing she is missing is a buck, but he has to meet her high standards. She will refuse to leave and the PCs will have to forcibly remove her from the hutch. Her brawling skill is only Mediocre, but her bulk requires a rabbit of Great strength to carry her (Good to push her along). She is pretentious and spoiled. She is dark gray with white socks and black ears.

## The Journey Home

The journey home is uneventful, except for a second run-in with the Truffle Brothers. Spider has moved on from the rendezvous point, leaving the small burrow empty.

If the PCs have any truffles with them, the



brothers will most definitely demand some. Depending on how they were treated in the first encounter, they may demand all of them. There is no way that Princess Holly can run away from them, if all else fails, they will random her for the PCs' truffles.

The stream has subsided and it is now a simple matter to navigate the exposed rocks. Unfortunately, Princess Holly objects. "I am not crossing that! It's too dangerous. I might slip and hurt myself. Someone must carry me across."

As the bunnies approach the warren of their birth, they are left with a cliffhanger ending:

As you cross the field toward the warren, a shadow crosses your path. Looking up, you see hawk circling overhead...

### Beyond the Mountains of Madness

I will not be doing any write-ups of the BtMoM adventure simply because I do not enjoy writing them and I did not take any notes. To be honest, I have a terrible time following write-ups in A&E and often skip them.

What irritated me most about the set pieces was that instead of being problems to solve or challenges to overcome, as I have tried to do with Blueberry valley, they were mostly indignities and disasters to suffer through. In some ways, this fits the tone of an uncaring and cruel universe with people powerless against it, but it was no fun to play.

I think the allure of the game is that it is very well researched with a ton of background information; unfortunately, the module plays like a guided tour.

### Myles Corcoran

For the most part, rules can only draw attention to themselves. The use of rules to encourage people to ignore the rules seems backwards to me.

### Lee Gold

The use of Continuous Detections is one of the many ways in which players try to reach beyond the source literature. Often times in the sources, there is no logical reason, aside from the plot, why something like Continuous Detection is not used. I do not know of a good way rules can enforce the conventions of the source material without feeling artificial.

### Spike Y Jones

I think the most damage reduction a Baton of Blunting should be able to do is down to a club. A blunt greatsword should be able to do at least 1d6 damage. Also, the critical range should probably be reduced from 19-20 to 20 to match a club.

Rather than use of a Fortitude save against Staggerblow, I would use an opposed strength check as you do with the Gloves of Force or a bull rush. I would also add an Acrobatics roll not to end up on your ass after being knocked back.

I liked most of the weapon ideas, though they seemed too subtle for the typical D&D campaign and not worth the expense—cool but not practical.

### Joshua Kronengold

Babies are resilient, but given the infant mortality numbers without access to good medical care, I do not think they have a +5 to their Fortitude saves. And how many hit points should babies have?

### Rene Louviere Jr

Your two-column format looks much better. When I read A&E, I often fold it in half vertically and read one column at a time.

I actually like how D&D handles "Alchemists' Fire" (and other devices like tanglefoot bags and smoke sticks). It is expensive enough to be prohibitive for starting characters and high level characters have better firepower though spells or weapons. But for characters up to around 5<sup>th</sup> level, it is quite useful and not unbalancing.

What kind of fire you can have in a SF setting is limited to how you define SF. Your link to imagination is a tad condescending. Hell, you can have magic in your SF setting if you are imaginative enough but then it is not really SF and not everyone wants to go there. SF is tricky because whatever you add to it must still feel like SF and not just something "imaginative."

I agree with you about the depth of character design. I would add the the most important elements of character depth (history, personality, motivation, etc.) are not dependent upon the game rules but the players.

### Brian Misiaszek

For pulpish anthromorphic sources, you cannot go far wrong with Darkwing Duck (though he is "pulp" in the same way Batman can be).

### Jonathan Nichols

If you kill sometime for personal gain, such as to take their stuff, are you still not evil and just greedy? What if you use a cheaper process that you know hurts people just to increase profit margin rather than a safer, though more costly, alternative? How much of a cost difference and how much human suffering tilts you over from greedy to evil?

### Brian Rogers

Shelly's attractiveness that requires a makeover is a wonderful embodiment of a genre convention. But dammit, some of us find glasses and mussy hair very attractive! I say forget the makeover!

I have often said that V&V was ahead of its time in how it assigned powers and actively encouraged the GM and players to fudge power levels. But the overly-crunchy numbers, the attack matrix (where attack rolls were modified by the defensive power used), and the rules-heavy application of many of the powers is not what I would consider rules light.

All your campaign ideas sound good and I like the way you have identified long-term and short-term goals. I have not had the fortune of running a long-term campaign, so long-terms goals have never been required.

### Jonathan D Woolley

So ((Dwarf+Gnome)+Ogre)+Elf=Human?