

ConQuest

I do not know what happened. For the last few years, ConQuest has been a nice, low-key convention with just over a thousand attendees. This year, they changed hotels (rumor has it that the hold venue doubled their fees) but it was announced last year, so there should not have been any issues. The new hotel was not without its minor problems, such as the odd choice for the dealer's room, but we shall see how they adjust for next year.

The list of rpgs was somewhat anemic, but then I skipped over all the RPGA events. There did not seem to be as many games as in past years (and certainly other conventions). Even so, my friend who submitted his game proposal was rejected because he just missed the deadline. However, none of this explains why multiple GMs failed to show. I cannot blame the convention organizers for this, but it brings down the convention as a whole. I was the victim of one no-show GM and RPG Coordinator was very apologetic and helpful in finding a new game.

There were also scheduling glitches that caused people to not get into games even if the game had empty slots. When our GM did not show, we were given "get into your first choice" slips by the RPG Coordinator, but one person who used his did not get into any game he used the slip for. This I can firmly blame on the organizers.

I helped my friend who was selling at the flea market (anyone interested in Chaosium's Ringworld?) when we found out that the convention had been sold. Next year it will be back with a new name and new management, but at the same location. We shall have to see if things improve. The only thing I picked up at the flea market was a new, \$5 copy of Prince Valiant, one of the very last things on my "want list," and when I got it home, I discovered it was signed by Greg Stafford.

I commuted again this year (36 miles each way) rather than staying at the hotel. After staying in hotels all through vacation, I had no desire to stay at the convention, though it meant not getting into as many games. On the other hand, not trying to get into games every waking hour makes the convention less stressful and very relaxed. Since I was a GM, I paid no registration fee, and my only expenses were gas and food.

For me, the theme for the convention was Superheroes! Friday night I played in a variant V&V game, Sunday I played in a Good Guys Finish Last (from an old issue of Space Gamer), and I would have played in a Cartoon Action Hour game on Saturday if the GM had bothered to show up. I ended up crashing

a Pendragon game instead and it was awful. The GM was ill prepared and we made characters on the spot. The scenario was part one of two (the second was to run the next day) and consisted of two canned combat encounters with no roleplaying.

I ran Angel on Monday. With five very good players, 4 of whom had played Buffy or Angel before, the game went extremely well. A wonderfully appropriate miscommunication between two of the PCs derailed one-half of the investigation and meant I had to do some tap dancing, but it all worked out in the end.

New Campaigns

Dungeons & Dragons

I started playing in a D&D Eberron campaign; I had played Call of Cthulhu intermittently with this group and trusted that they would do a good job with it. One of the gimmicks that this group uses is to have each player assign a number of character traits to the other PCs. For example, I decided which religion the other 3 PCs followed. As I am running out of time this month, I will provide details next time.

The PCs are veterans of the last war. With our homeland wiped out, we settled in the same city and got jobs at the newspaper. Since we have a shared background, but no one has written down a detailed history for their character, we tend to fill in the blanks through intra-party banter.

I am playing Fhaeghan, a 22 year-old human cleric and younger brother to Strohm, the fighter of the party. Fhaeghan is also Strohm's editor at the paper. They were raised to worship The Sovereign Host, and Strohm still does, but Fhaeghan had a spiritual conversion during the war and now channels divine power (Healing and Death) directly.

More details will follow.

Mutants & Masterminds

For my Friday night group, I am starting a short, 4-session campaign. I might have made it longer, but the bi-weekly schedule hits a tangle in November and December. If things go well, I will be picking it up again in January.

When I ran Angel with this group, I was disappointed at the lack of character depth. Some of the PCs had well-defined personality quirks that worked really well in play, but there was practically nothing under the veneer. To work through this, I am requiring that players give me background information. I gave them a questionnaire (ala Amber) to fill out.

The other problem I ran into was since I was the

only one with the book, making characters was a chore. This was further complicated by the fact that I had a new player who needed a new character every session. To avoid the first problem, I decided to run an origins campaign. The PCs begin as normal, everyday people and through the course of the campaign, they will gain superpowers. Making normal, low-level people for M&M is easy and I provided them with the complete rules, including skills and feats.

To fix the attendance problem, our host, who coordinates the group, has placed a firm rule against people who drift in and out; unless you can firmly commit to the campaign, the GM has a right to not allow you to join the game. I have exercised this right and have four dedicated players.

I asked them if they wanted to be the first ever supers or just the latest generation; they picked the former. I asked if they wanted some guidance in the selection of their powers or wanted me to surprise them; they picked the latter. However, they did reserve the right to make their own characters if we continue on in January.

I asked them if they wanted to be based in a real life city (San Francisco, Chicago, New York, etc.) or a fictional one; they picked the latter. I have named Devon, California as their home city. Devon, the seat of Drake County, was founded in the early 17th century by English settlers who came to the site where Sir Francis Drake landed during his circumnavigation of the globe and where he subsequently claimed all of Nova Albion for Queen Elizabeth. Since this location is in dispute (despite there being a Drakes Bay just north of San Francisco), I figured that gave me plenty of geographical wiggle-room.

The first session is this Friday and I still have not received any character submissions as of today (Tuesday) we shall see how it goes.

Comments

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Myles Corcoran

My comment was in reference to immersion. I refer to immersion as that state in which you forget about the rules of the game and engage your character and the setting completely with minimal outside influences. The concept that you can create rules to enhance immersion—and thus ignore the rules—is paradoxical.

Please, describe the system wonk urges that lead you from Wild Talents to M&M and now to HQ. WT feels goofy to me. I probably will never touch HQ (if I wanted to use something like HQ, I would just just run it freeform, as I did back in 1992).

Robert A. Dushay

Iwham was a human village, but I think once you convert it to bunnies, it takes on a hobbit tone (human + bunny)/2 = hobbit. :)

Lee Gold

I like my adventures to be less lethal than you do, I guess. Plus, I wanted to portray the rabbits as clever tricksters and bold adventurers, not victims.

Considering the default swimming skill is Poor, there was only one Good swimmer among the PCs (and that was a direct reflection of her background and name—River), and swimming the stream required multiple rolls of Good or better, crossing it was hardly routine. One bunny nearly drowned when I ran it—adding pike to the stream would have been adding insult to injury.

I am not a GM who would prevent players from attempting to climb a tree, even if it was a very silly notion (and that is why the squirrels were there—to point out how silly they were being). Again, the default is Poor, there was only one Good climber, and it required two Superb rolls to succeed. In Fudge terms, this is practically impossible; for a Poor climber, it would mean twice rolling a +5 on 4dF (which only goes up to +4). But bonuses could be had for teamwork (especially if they could convince the squirrels to help) and being clever.

Joshua Kronengold

Unwillingness to let a character die, especially by a GM who breaks the rules to let a character live, can be just as bad and disappointing as a player who is glib about a PC's death.

Paul Mason

No matter where you live (on Earth), the 40s (centigrade) is hot!

I am not optimistic about solid definitions. My point was that since so few definitions (outside science or mathematics) are solid, I see little point in trying to make definitions and invent jargon when existing terminology works just as well. The only reason to make new terms is to be more precise, but unless your precise definitions are solid, you do not gain anything.

Brian Rogers

M&M is essentially level-less. Saying "your BAB cannot be higher than your level" is equivalent to saying "your BAB cannot be higher than your total power points divided by 15." (Such limits serve as M&M's version of Hero's "Rule of X.") M&M appeals to me because the the power system as a nice balance of looseness and structure. I will be running a short campaign soon, so my opinion may change.