



Editorial in Exile

As I stand upon this grassy island, in the middle of an unlit highway, my eyes travel onwards into the ever encroaching darkness. Rushing up behind me, the future roars by into the night, its bright lights giving me an oh-so fleeting glimpse of that which lies in the few steps ahead. At the same time, barrelling towards me, the cargo trucks of memory send their blinding after-images back into the past.

With these words, I begin my exile following the coup perpetrated by that evil mastermind who once led our bold society into the breach. He lulled you, good citizens, with promises of organizing Dragonfire ahead of schedule, a great O-week line-up and weekly... module... days...?!

Hang on! That was my plan! He stole my ideas! The Archbigot will hear of this! If I can find him, of course.

Well, to anyone bothering to read this, welcome to this ultra-secret, underground, revolutionary issue of CLAWmarks. For those of you who have no idea what you've let yourself in for, my apologies. But I'm sure you'll either run screaming or be enjoying the experience very shortly. To all of you who become involved with CLAWs in the coming year, I ask only this:

Become that which you can only dream of, see that which no mortal eye shall ever experience, feel that which you can never fully express in words, and let the only boundaries you encounter be that of your imagination.



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Where's the wiki?

<http://claws.uct.ac.za/clawtiki/>

What, no article?

It was eaten by bears.

HELLO NEW PERSON, WE SHALL CALL YOU BOB

Bronwen Ellis still thinks we don't sacrifice goats

Hello and welcome to CLAWs. I have put together this little piece to give you a personal overview of our society, and prepare you for the year ahead, which will mostly involve being told and making up stories. Older types may also be interested in the image they created for me last year, when I was new and scared. Now I pass it on to the next generation.

Let's get cracking shall we? What is "CLAWs"? It stands for the Cape Legion of Adventures and Wargamers, and is UCT's roleplaying and gaming society.

What is roleplaying?

Roleplaying describes various storytelling games. There are two main branches: tabletop and LARPing. (I'll leave wargames and cardgames for others to explain.)

Live-Action Roleplaying (LARPing) is my favourite. It's like putting on a play, where everyone is given a character, with a character sheet that describes your personality and goals—except it's all unscripted.

There's a detailed introduction by Graham later, but let me share my own important tip: lots of the characters have hidden agendas and are out to con someone, so it's important not to discuss your character too much [*at all!* – *ed*] with the other players beforehand. For example, if you're playing a Russian spy in the McCarthy era, don't tell the others about it. I know it sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised.

The second sort of thing we do is roleplaying 'round a table (rather than walking around in costume). It is a very similar sort of thing where everyone has a character they pretend to be and so the story unfolds. However in this case the Game Master acts as a narrator rather than a director. Therefore, the GM is very often a control freak who loves the sound of their own voice.

(Some people may refer to the GM as the DM or Dungeon Master. This term comes from the very first roleplaying system, Dungeons and Dragons. Ask about it and you are sure to get strong opinions. Also see Tim's article later on.)

Then, oh dear lordy, there is the matter of dice, which come in many strange shapes and are stored in elegant and stylish velvet bags. To decide whether or not a character manages to do something or not we roll dice. People get a bit mad about their luck with dice, and

develop strange ways of to encourage them to roll the right numbers.

In my opinion they wouldn't stop short of cleansing them in the sea during a full moon if they thought it would help them roll a 10. However, there are also those among us who have little respect for their plastic polyhedrals, keeping them in disgusting old margarine tubs and jam jars. What with all the talk of dice karma and bad streaks, one really does get to a point where one has to say, "In the name of ass, they are just bits of plastic!!!"

Fibs and Fabrications

Then there are the stories that others make up. There are many rumours and misunderstandings around campus as to what it is that CLAWs really does. Let me here and now shed light on the truth:

First of all, we are not a goth society. This seems to stem from the fact that some of us wear a lot of black. We certainly appreciate creative dress sense, body piercings, and make up, and there are some goths in CLAWs, but there're also geeks, artists, Commerce students and people who wear clothes that are so bright they should be illegal.

If you're into the Alternative thing, see Hila's article on the Cape Town scene. (Take note of the One Ring, which is where we have most of our parties, including our Orientation party on February 19th.)

Second of all, we do not worship the devil. We have never made an attempt, successful or otherwise, to contact the sinning one, his brother-in-law, or any other fallen angel. I assure you that the LARPs and roleplaying games are not Satanic ceremonies and involve only wholesome roleplaying fun. They have nothing to do, for example, with nude people running round a pentagram.

There are some people out there who think that roleplaying games are terrible because some of them have elves and dragons, but those people also refuse to read JRR Tolkien, Harry Potter or Noddy for the same reason, so what do they know?

Tales of Yesteryear

When I was settling in I found that there are many stories that the older members liked to tell from their



stonewashed youths. I'll tell you a few as I remember them being told. (I apologise for any inaccuracies; they'll at least give you something to talk to older members about when they want to tell it all over again.)

My favourites are about what happened when various people thought we were Satanists. In an interview on UCT Radio, a CLAWmember was asked "So do you guys really worship Satan?" This individual thought that such a stupid question deserved a dash of sarcasm. "Yes," he replied, "we do..."

It's amazing how people will believe anything they hear on the radio. It came to the point where, during a LARP, one particular religious group came charging into the room, waving crucifixes around and trying to perform an exorcism.

Lots of the stories I was told involve drunken people. Any group of people have these, roleplayers or not. Usually you have to know the person to be able to laugh at them.

Then there is what I consider an over-talked talking point, the CLAWroom, which no longer exists. It's basically people rambling on about how unfair it is that all the

societies (save the big five) lost their rooms a few years ago. Now we all meet at Café Nescafe. One can pass by there any time and be sure to find some CLAWmembers sitting there wasting time and avoiding work.

All of those stories are in the past; in the year ahead, many great things are waiting for you. Roleplaying campaigns where you can explore your own characters' stories, parties to get drunk at so everyone else can laugh at you. There'll be a game called KAOS, Killing As an Organised Sport. (Yes we really do love acronyms, don't



we?) [*too many comp sci students – ed*] We go around campus pretending to kill each other with water pistols. Speak to Ian about that. In the second half of the year we hold our very own roleplaying convention, Dragonfire. But I'm getting a bit tired now so I'll let someone else tell you about that. Bug the people at the yellow gazebo, or hang around the tables at Nescafe.

This is the world of silliness and make-believe in which we live our lives. I hope you enjoy it.

Hoarder's Report

I am the Hoarder Of Monies, known in lesser societies as a "Treasurer". Besides hoarding the money, my job is to say "NO" whenever people ask for any of it. Since the rest of the committee of course wants money on certain occasions, it is traditional to elect someone who fails to comprehend the true spirit of Hoarding.

This year, my tasks will include:

- * Using software to keep track of how much money we have
- * Drawing up a budget for how much we have available to spend in different categories
- * Keeping track of how much money is being spent in each category and keeping people within budget
- * Recording incomes and expenditures in a Little Black

Book as they happen

How the money gets in and out:

- * Handing out money to event organisers to pay for food and stuff
- * Taking in money from event organisers (LARP fees mostly)
- * Handing out money or repaying committee members buying things for CLAWs (e.g. a shiny new yellow gazebo)
- * Receiving money from committee members selling things for CLAWs (t-shirts)
- * Going to SDSD to get money
- * Going to SDSD to apply for grants (travel subsidies, visiting speakers)

Off the top of my head, income will include:

- * CLAWs sign-up fees
- * LARP fees
- * Dragonfire entrance fees

Graham Poulter is in his counting house; the Queen is getting ready to chop off his head

- * t-shirt sales
- * mug sales

Off the top of my head, expenses will include:

- * CLAWs parties
- * LARP food
- * Dragonfire running costs
- * t-shirt printing
- * CLAWMarks printing
- * poster printing
- * Orientation expenses
- * Icon (subsidised by travel grant)
- * a possible CLAWs Wendy House

Those won't be the actual names of the expense accounts. During Orientation I'll hammer out a logical way to categorise our accounts so that each committee member can have a clear budget and be responsible for the expenses in particular accounts.

Zen and the Art of Character Sketching

Michelle Wiehahn

Most people don't bother to sketch their character. That's a fact. The reasons range from "I'm lazy" to "I can't draw", and often include "There's no point." While there's nothing much I can do about the first, the second and third hold less water than an incontinent granny.

I'll tackle the major question first, i.e. what's the point of sketching your character? If you're the kind of person who rolls up a character then decides what class they are based on their highest stats, this will probably go over your head. However, if you do any kind of character preparation at all, sketching could become a vital part of formulation. It's as simple as this: once you have a basic character concept in mind, start doodling. Expression and pose can speak volumes about the character, and you'll find yourself making decisions about these things almost automatically. As you clothe your character, you're forced to make even more decisions about their style and tastes, as well as noting good places for secret stashes of weapons/drugs/etc. When you tell the DM, "I bury my steel-toed boots in his groin", you can actually point out that you didn't just make that up on the spot. There may be bonuses involved.

Then you get to doodle weaponry, equipment and other doodads. Even the smallest detail can change what you thought about a character. I once found myself drawing a cigarette in a character's hand, before I'd even realized she smoked. But it turned out to be part of her. My subconscious was already creating her quirks, and they came out as I let my mind and pencil wander.

The whole point is, as you draw, you're making decisions. You're solidifying all those nebulous maybes and perhapses into something that is both complex and complete. A single glance at a character sketch can tell you more than any character sheet.

Now this may seem ridiculous to some gamers. Many people see a character as a vehicle for stats. But when you create a character that becomes almost a person, you find that even years after the campaign is over, you still talk about that character. You don't remember what their DEX was, but you sure remember how much they hated that damn paladin. And if that's the kind of character you want, even just a scribble on the back of the character sheet can go miles towards creating it. If you prefer the stats, there's just no helping you. Go roll some dice.

Of course, there's always the excuse that you can't draw. Who cares? It's called Character Sketching, not Character Works of Art Destined for the Louvre. It's entirely possible that no one but you will ever see it. This is something you're doing for yourself, remember? If you know it's a samurai sword, why does it matter that everyone else thinks it's a boomerang?

In interesting technique that I've used – and this, like the latter chapters of the Kama Sutra, is not for beginners – is sketching in character. Think of it as your character doing a self-portrait. You'll probably be surprised by what you come up with. Exhibit A is the accompanying picture of my *Witchcraft* character, Peri: a self-hating, self-mutilating, fourteen year old blood-witch. I got into her head, and then drew her. What came out is arguably the best character sketch I've ever done. And then I kept adding to it, doodling as the campaign continued and she picked up equipment, quirks and a psychotic teddy bear. Things that were important to her, she drew, adding to her sketch of self. The sketch morphed and mutated as she did... as any realistic character should.

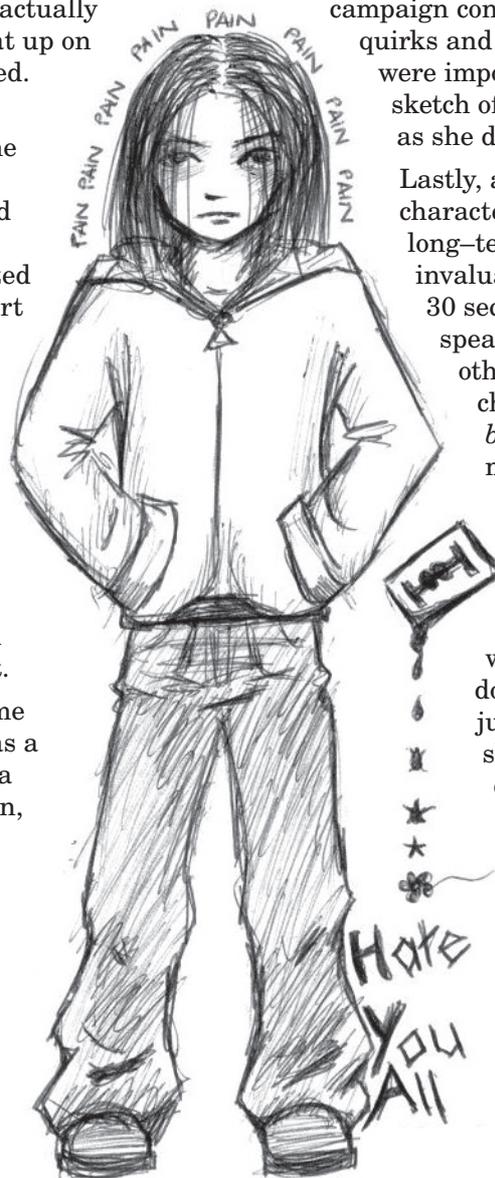
Lastly, a suggestion to module writers: while a character sketch can become a part of a long-term character, it can also be an invaluable tool for once-offs. When you have 30 seconds to absorb a character, a picture speaks a thousand words. Commission (in other words beg) someone to put your character concepts into visual form. [e.g. *beg michelle - ed*] In a con situation, most people would rather glance at a sketch than read half a page of character description. You're not forcing them to play the character your way any more than with reams of text – players will still keep what they like, throw out what they don't, and add a bad accent. But there's just something about handing a player a sketch of their character that says "I didn't write this last night".

Even if you did.

By the way, I lied about the Zen.



WHO AM I?
WHAT AM I?
WHAT ARE YOU?



introduction to live action roleplaying

Graham Poulter

Live-Action Role Playing (LARPing) is participating in a game for twelve or more people, not unlike being an actor thrown impromptu into a live theatre performance. Except, there is no audience and everyone is on stage at once, including a few narrators (called Game Masters or GMs) who know the whole story and guide things along. As in any play, there is a central plot and a number of intricately woven sub-plots to explore, but unlike in plays every member of the cast is an antagonist with their own background, personality, goals and motives and potential to be one of the stars of the show. There is also no script – you start with an introduction (to set the scene), a character background, including relations to other characters, and maybe a few props. Beyond that, you have been set free to roam the fantasy world and make the story unfold as you play your character's part. On the other hand, because it's a game and not a theatre production, don't worry about stage fright or (lack of) acting ability!

Dinner Party Murder Mystery

To clear things up, let's use one of the classics of "whodunit" novels as an example: the dinner party murder mystery. Each player is a guest at a dinner party, with their own distinctive personality and motivations and dressed up to suit the character. One of the characters is the host, of course. Maybe half an hour in, after everyone has had a chance to talk a while, a narrator nudges the host to announce that dinner will be served. As everyone sits down to enjoy what will almost certainly be delivery pizza (but imagine it is a sumptuous roast dinner), you notice that one of the chairs is empty. Joe Bloggs is not at the table, although you'd talked with him yourself just fifteen minutes before. Just then Joe Bloggs (on cue from a GM, or who may have been a GM pretending to be a player character for a while) crawls through a side door blue in the face, croaks something about the Book of Anzhar and falls to the floor dead. Poisoned. The murderer must be sitting at the table right now, the phone lines are cut, cellphones haven't been invented yet, and nobody trusts anyone else to leave the mansion. What do you do? Maybe you are Joe's parent or best friend and wish to avenge his death, or maybe you yourself are the murderer or an accomplice, looking to get your filthy mitts on the Book of Anzhar while shifting the blame for Joe's death onto someone else. Heck, maybe you wanted to kill Joe yourself but were beaten to it and have to change your own plans for acquiring the Book of Anzhar and thus become Ruler of the Universe (or something).

These intricate plots and their dependence on your choices are what really make Live-Action Role Playing. Everyone has some goals and motivations, and everyone only knows a part of the puzzle and is trying to figure out the big picture from the others. Of course, once all is said and done the GMs will explain everything in the debriefing.

LARP Rules

Rules in LARPs relating to special abilities or combat tend to be simple and common sense – complex rules slow things down and risk making the LARP feel artificial (which often means "not fun"). On the other hand, there are a few unwritten rules of etiquette which apply to all LARPs and will make it more enjoyable for all involved:

The LARP equivalent of a narrator and director is the Game Master (sometimes called a Marshal). These guys

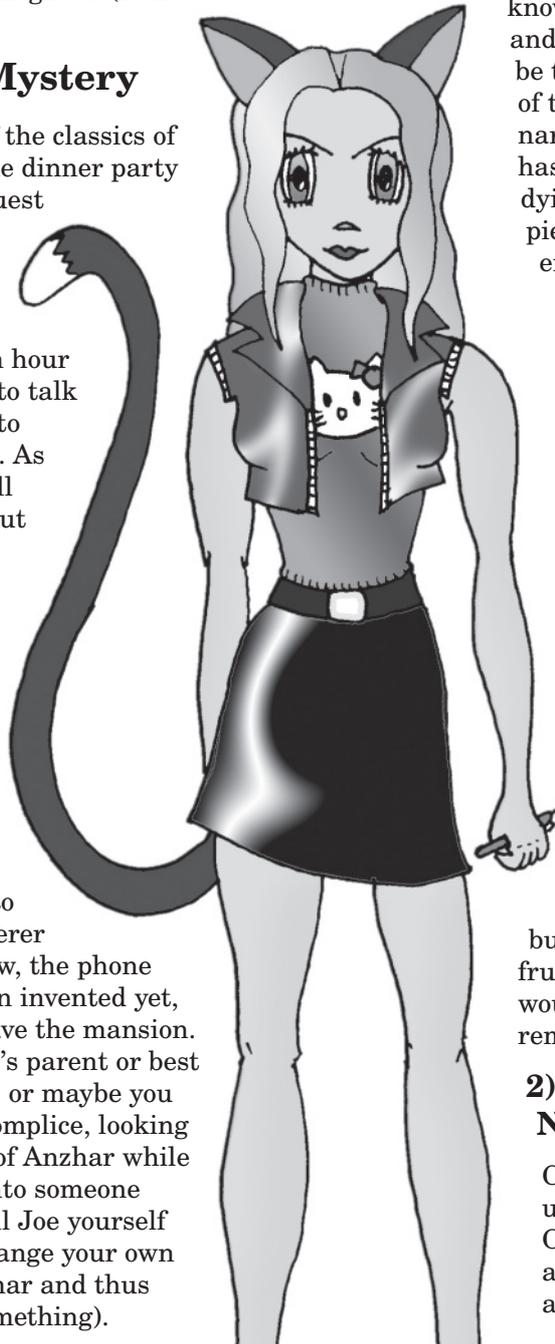
know everything about every character and every twist in the plot, and may even be the people who wrote the thing. Part of the GM's job is to add in key bits of narrative such as news that the power has suddenly been cut, or act out the dying messenger who carries some vital piece of information. The other part is to enforce the rules, and arbitrate combat by rolling the dice and describing the effect of your half-witted attempt to sucker punch a karate master. Finally, they are consulted for the use of "special ability" cards, such as eavesdropping or magic powers. They're there to help you, the player, but they're invisible to your character. (Unless they're taking the part of a non-player character for a while.) This brings us to Rule 1:

1) The GM's Word Is Final

The GMs are there to arbitrate and guide events, so pay attention. They see the big picture and have the interests of the whole LARP at heart. Sometimes this means your character doesn't get what he wants, but arguing won't help. If you're frustrated, think what your character would do if they were frustrated. But remember...

2) Killing Characters Is Not Nice

Chainsaw massacres are frowned upon. If you're a spy, bodyguard, Evil Overlord or a valiant knight defending a fair maiden, a KIA or two can advance of the plot. But remember this



means someone else is sitting out. It's considered polite not to kill anyone until at least half an hour has passed. On the other hand I've heard of LARPs, originally intended to be evening-long, which ended after 15 minutes on account of everyone deciding to open fire.

3) Dress In Character

There is nothing like the king showing up at a medieval banquet in Levis and a Diesel t-shirt to spoil the atmosphere. Granted you probably don't own a costume hire shop, but the least you can do is get creative with what you have to give an impression of your character while avoiding exposure of brand-name labels.

Quirks of LARPing

There are a few quirks associated with LARPing that might take some getting used to.

Player Knowledge vs Character Knowledge

What you know as a player might be more than your character is supposed to know. If a GM rifles through your props and says another character has pick-pocketed you of an amulet but you haven't noticed – don't notice! A reverse instance is when you meet someone in a LARP and your characters talk for ages but you as players never get introduced: you could find yourself on campus talking with someone you know only as the Wizard of Grokzar.

The other side to this is acting or speaking "In Character" (IC) or "Out Of Character" (OOC).

During the LARP, everything you say and do should be In Character, unless you're talking to a GM, who is "invisible" to your character anyway. When you're speaking OOC you should say so, as in "My character is planning to pickpocket so-and-so" or "Out of character, where is the nearest toilet?"

Freakish Characters

Get used to it: your perfectly innocent dinner party murder may turn out to feature undercover wizards, androids, time travelers, or aliens. A LARP which somehow features all of the above is likely to fall under the category of Wacky (see below).

Take Risks

A LARP is only a game. This means you can take daring but in-character risks: double-cross allies, drop vital clues, tell incriminating lies about your enemies (a favorite), steal the crown jewels and generally do all manner of interesting things without any consequences beyond the end of the LARP. Playing with your cards

close to your chest like high-stakes poker gets boring, and can even get the LARP stuck when someone holds onto an important piece of information.

Broad Categories of LARPs

I divide the LARPs that we usually play into three broad categories: Tactical, Intrigue and Wacky. *High Seas* (set on a pirate ship) and *A Falling Out* (set in a nuclear bunker in the aftermath of World War III) are highly recommended and easy to play Tactical LARPs if you're just starting.

Tactical LARPs have elements of intrigue but have less twisted plots and provide definite goals for each character, such as "launch the missiles" or "assassinate the king's adviser quietly" and make an easy introduction for new players. Since some force and tricks may be required (as well as your own cunning), characters tend to have a special ability card or two and some will have combat skills. However, although your character knows they have a revolver and ju-jitsu training, for the sake of an immersive atmosphere, the GMs worry about the odds of your character dueling Jorzan the Acrobatic Knife Thrower.

Intrigue LARPs are easily identified by the many pages of background for each character, and some experience usually helps to play them well. Since you are supposed to achieve your aims by means of cunning and social charms rather than force, combat skills and special ability cards tend to be scarce. Here social abilities count the most, for instance charisma, persuasion and (of course) deception. Nothing could be more artificial than a card which says "I have just persuaded you to accept my point of view" or "I have hypnotized you to do what I say". Most special abilities you might have won't be coming from a card.

Wacky LARPs take everything past its logical conclusions and out into

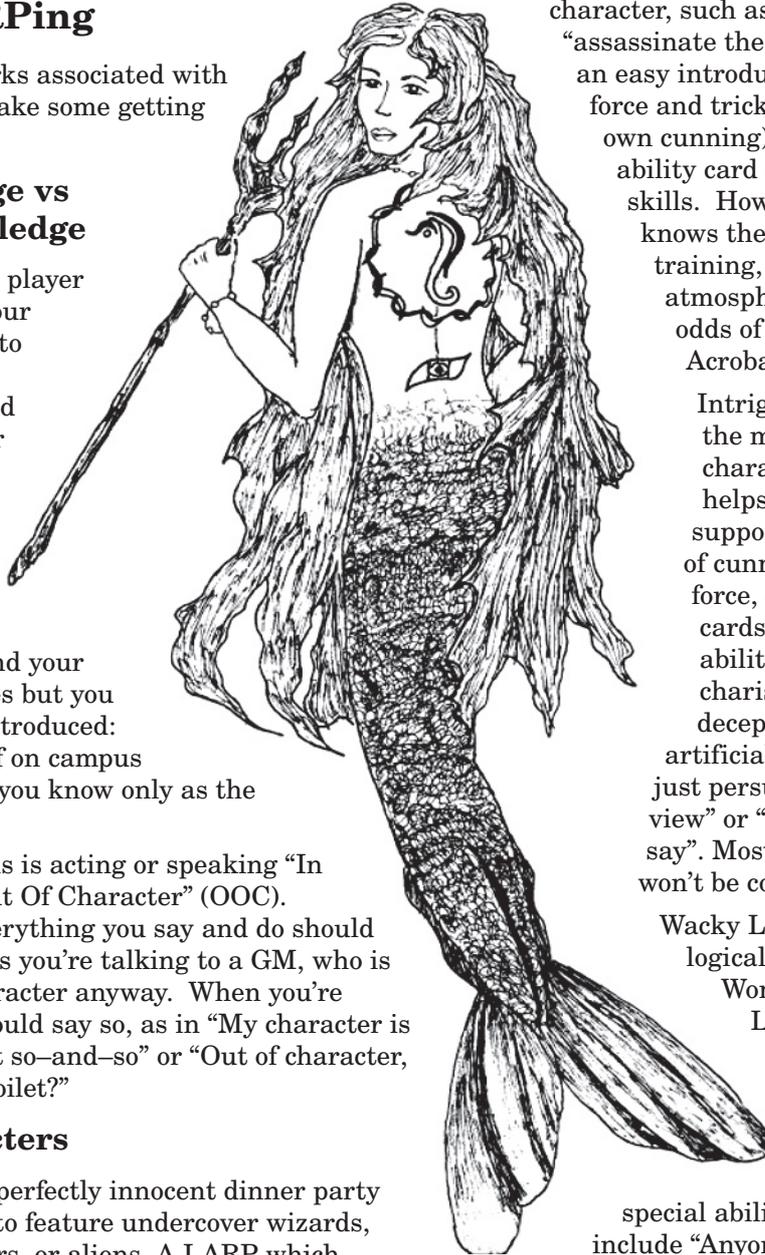
Wonderland. Whereas Intrigue LARPs often to stick close to the rules of conventional reality (but set in a fantasy world), expect a Wacky LARP to be blessed with hot potato deadly artifacts and half a dozen

special ability cards – which will likely as not include "Anyone for tennis?" as top-level ability.

These can be some of the most enjoyable LARPs, but of course, you had to be there.

So, what are you waiting for? Sign-up for *By Invitation Only* or *High Seas* during Orientation, and ask your nearest committee member about keeping up-to-date with the monthly LARPs!

Monthly LARPs on the wiki: LARPstatus (this month's LARP), MonthlyLARP (vote for LARPs you want to play in), LARPpruns (previously run)



Be Or No

Garrick van Onselen speaks in single syllables

From the sweet cheese intro to the 60s Bond music, Evil Genius has it all, with plenty of synchronised scuba-divers to spare. Indulge in your world domination fantasies and realize there's no longer any need to suppress your evil maniacal laughter. With big game companies like Blizzard, Troika and Activision dominating the market, it's always nice to see that Sierra is still in the game and can come out with a product as insanely intoxicating as *Evil Genius*.

For all those who loved *Dungeon Keeper* the game will come naturally. The basic idea is to build the swankiest mountain lair possible and to do what two lab mice have been doing every night for years: Try To Take Over The World! The game starts you off with one of the three evil geniuses, his very own evil henchman, a handful of evil minions and small vault of evil gold complete with a rack of evil aluminium brief cases. Oh yeah, and some pesky group of investigators from the forces of justice trespassing, yes *trespassing*, on your private island. Time to call on your henchman and start building a freezer to hide the body bags.

All Your Base

The primary part of the game is, of course, base design. This is done very much in the *Dungeon Keeper* style. You allocate corridors and various rooms to sections of rock and watch as a groovy blue print of the rooms appear, your minions fetch briefcases from the vault and carry them to the depot for explosives. The kinds of rooms you can build include: The Control Room for organising and increasing the efficiency of troops in the field; Barracks, for increasing

the number of minions you can have; a Vault for storing all your ill-gotten loot; and a plethora of Labs, Holding Cells, Freezers, Training rooms and Armouries. Don't forget the Staffroom and Canteen to keep the troops happy. And traps. Lots and lots of traps. These range from Poison Gas to Tesla-Coils and to Fiery Pits.

Sycophants Incorporated

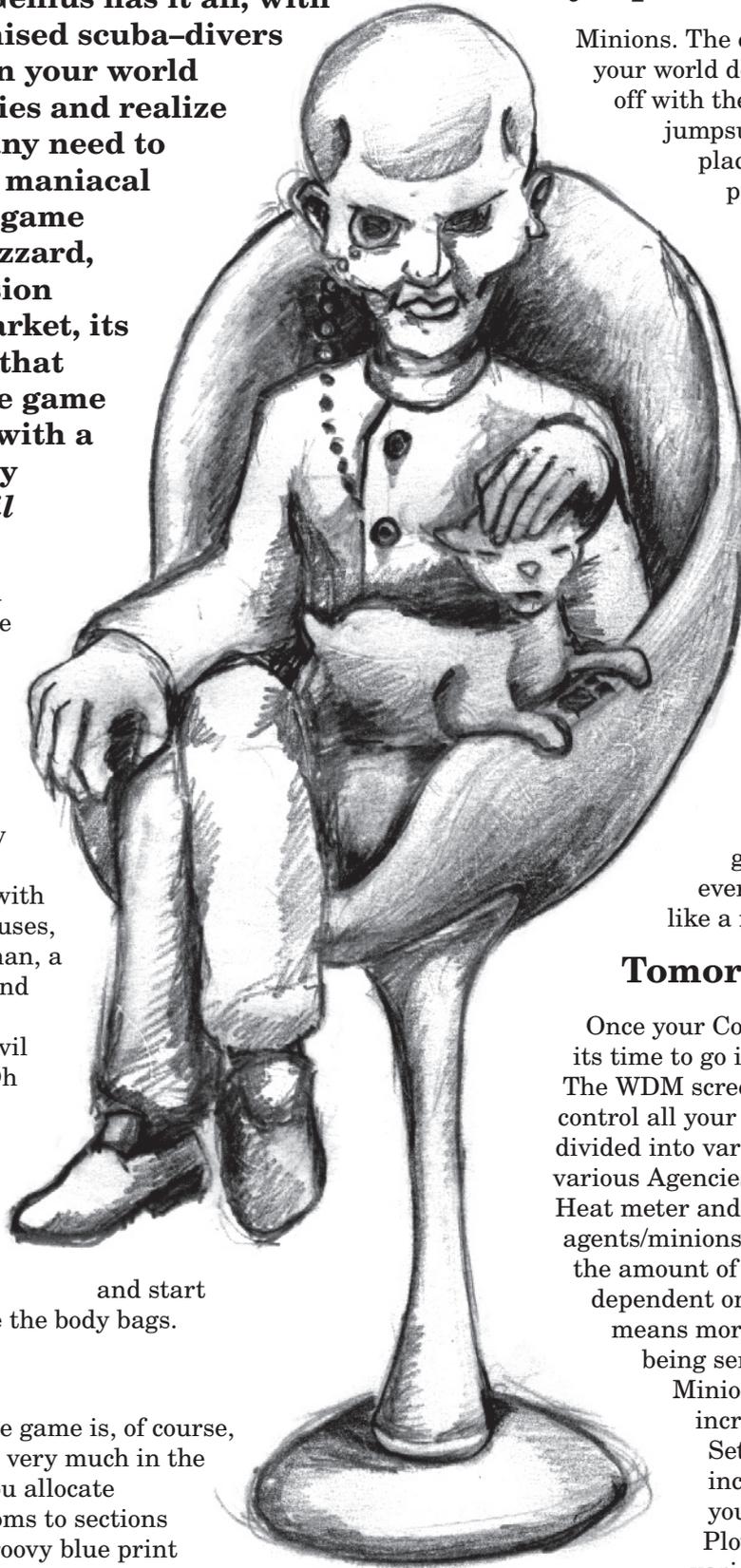
Minions. The cogs that turn the wheels of your world domination schemes. You start off with the generic hard hat + yellow jumpsuit minions. These guys can be placed on three different minion paths: Military, Scientific and Social. Additionally, keeping your minions happy is important. Unhappy minions rapidly lose points of loyalty and end up deserting. While this isn't such a problem for generic minions, it does become a pain in the ass when it's an upper tier minion. Training takes time and when the forces of justice have just landed a group of soldiers who are slowly destroying your sentry guns, time is the one thing you don't have. Best just to get your Evil Genius to execute a generic minion in front of everyone. Nothing says "Loyalty" like a random execution.

Tomorrow The World!

Once your Control Room is up and running, it's time to go into World Domination Mode. The WDM screen is where you track and control all your evil schemes. It's a world map divided into various regions, protected by various Agencies of Justice. It also features the Heat meter and Notoriety scale. Sending your agents/minions out into the world increases the amount of heat you get from each agency, dependent on location. An increase in heat means more and better skilled agents being sent to your island retreat.

Minions out in the world can increase heat in different ways... Set them to Stealing and you'll increase the amount of money you get every minute. Set them to Plotting and they will uncover various Acts of Infamy. Acts of

Infamy are important as they raise your notoriety. These range from spreading world domination propaganda at peace rallies to clubbing baby seals. Other Acts of Infamy include kidnapping useful personnel for



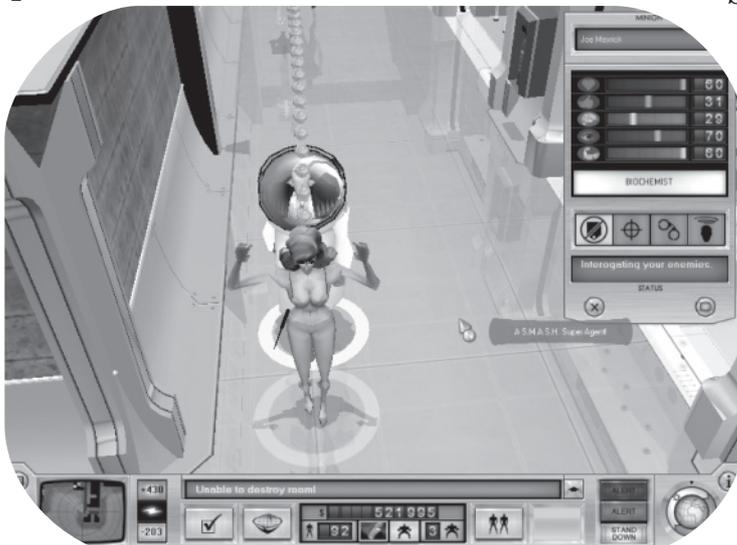


interrogation at your base (no one should have to endure Michael Jackson impressions) to upgrade your minions.

And Carry a Big Stick

The Henchman. No Evil Genius should be without one. Each Evil Genius comes with their very own Henchman. Henchmen have the advantage of being *very* tough to kill, put pesky agents down faster, their own special moves and a humorous backstory. Gaining Notoriety will allow you to get extra Henchmen later in the game. Each Henchman comes with the standard Gather Minions ability, as well as two special moves which they can gain from experience, killing enemy agents.

T



here are various Henchmen scattered around the world including Eli Barracuda (the man with an afro and a gun) to Ivan the Red (the crazy Russian who will use his bazooka even if he's standing right next to his target... and your nuclear power plant; thank God for those fire

extinguishers.) [*Speak to Sed for some handy meltdown tips - ed*]



Shaken, Not Stirred

Aside from the usual agents snooping around your base, the threat of Super Agents looms over your twisted

schemes. Super Agents are the best of the best from the Agencies of Justice. And a *real* pain in the ass. They can only be defeated in very specific ways so even if you manage to gun them down, they'll just get right back up in a few minutes. Placing them in holding cells is an option, but they will eventually break out. It's best to keep them occupied by interrogating them with the big blender... or even the giant laser beam. This is fun, especially since your Evil Genius will come to the interrogation device just to laugh manically at the poor Super Agent's fate. It's really hard not to join her, especially when these guys have been blowing up expensive equipment and spreading disloyalty amongst the troops.

All in all, Evil Genius is a very addictive game that will appeal to that part of you that just wants to make the world a better place... by ruling it with an Iron Fist and crushing all those that oppose you. Oh and if you want to kill Maria Mumba all you have to do is... Oh shit! The Agencies of Justice have just parachuted onto the island. They can't *still* be angry from that time I stole the Eiffel Tower? Better issue some extermination tags and make sure the killer bees are in place...

**Mwuhahahahaha
hahahaha!**

FIVE GEEK SOCIAL FALLACIES

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Within the constellation of allied hobbies and subcultures collectively known as geekdom, one finds many social groups bent under a crushing burden of dysfunction, social drama, and general interpersonal wack-ness. It is my opinion that many of these never-ending crises are sparked off by an assortment of pernicious social fallacies—ideas about human interaction which spur their holders to do terrible and stupid things to themselves and to each other.

Social fallacies are particularly insidious because they tend to be exaggerated versions of notions that are themselves entirely reasonable and unobjectionable. It's difficult to debunk the pathological fallacy without seeming to argue against its reasonable form; therefore, once it establishes itself, a social fallacy is extremely difficult to dislodge. It's my hope that drawing attention to some of them may be a step in the right direction.

I want to note that I'm not trying to say that every geek subscribes to every one of the fallacies I outline here; every individual subscribes to a different set of ideas, and adheres to any given idea with a different amount of zeal.

In any event, here are five geek social fallacies I've identified. There are likely more.

Geek Social Fallacy #1: Ostracizers Are Evil

GSF1 is one of the most common fallacies, and one of the most deeply held. Many geeks have had horrible, humiliating, and formative experiences with ostracism, and the notion of being on the other side of the transaction is repugnant to them.

In its non-pathological form, GSF1 is benign, and even commendable: it is long past time we all grew up and stopped with the junior high popularity games. However, in its pathological form, GSF1 prevents its carrier from participating in—or tolerating—the exclusion of anyone from anything, be it a party, a comic book store, or a web forum, and no matter how obnoxious, offensive, or aromatic the prospective excludee may be.

As a result, nearly every geek social group of significant size has at least one member that 80% of the members hate, and the remaining 20% merely tolerate. If GSF1 exists in sufficient concentration—and it usually does—it

is impossible to expel a person who actively detracts from every social event. GSF1 protocol permits you not to invite someone you don't like to a given event, but if someone spills the beans and our hypothetical Cat Piss Man invites himself, there is no recourse. You must put up with him, or you will be an Evil Ostracizer and might as well go out for the football team.

This phenomenon has a number of unpleasant consequences. For one thing, it actively hinders the wider acceptance of geek-related activities: I don't know that RPGs and comics would be more popular if there were fewer trolls who smell of cheese hassling the new blood, but I'm sure it couldn't hurt. For another, when nothing smacking of social selectiveness can be discussed in public, people inevitably begin to organize activities in secret. These conspiracies often lead to more problems down the line, and the end result is as juvenile as anything a seventh-grader ever dreamed of.

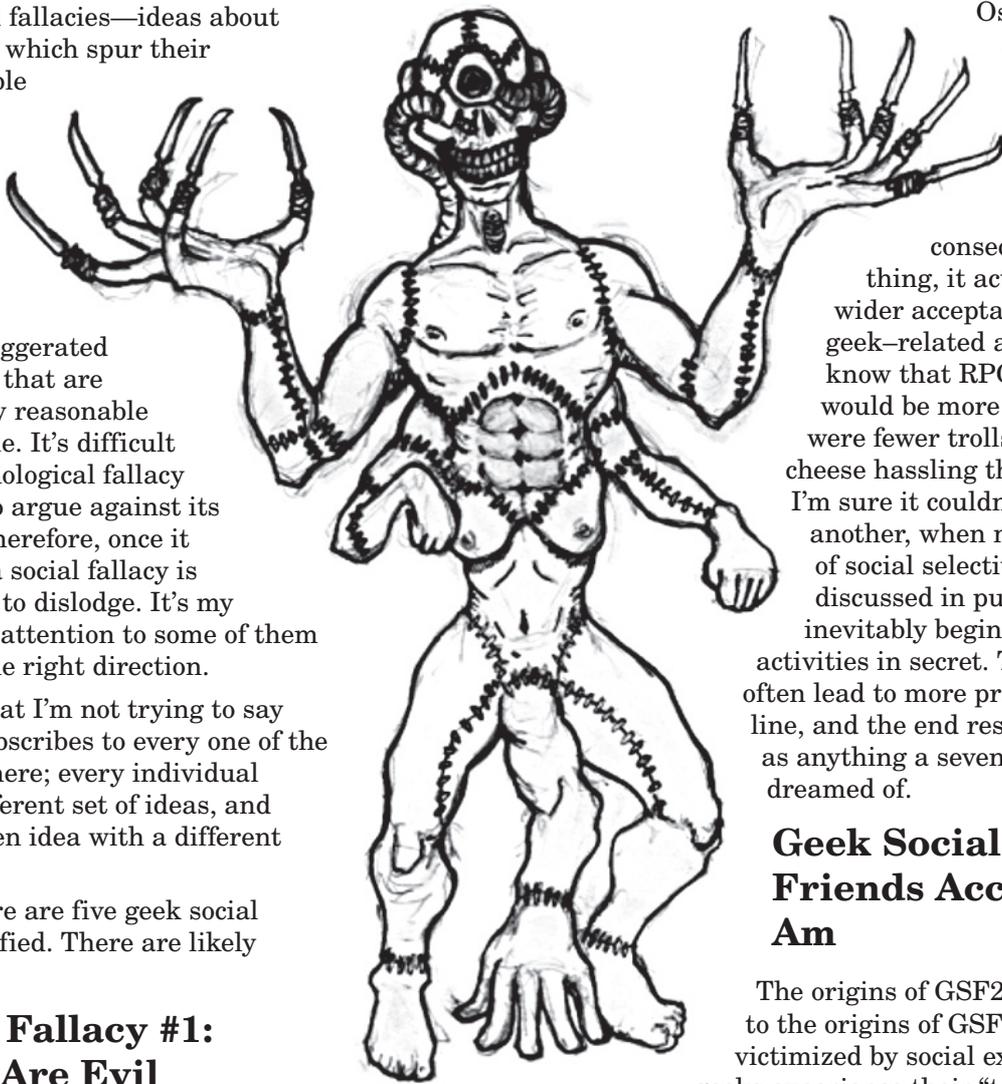
Geek Social Fallacy #2: Friends Accept Me As I Am

The origins of GSF2 are closely allied to the origins of GSF1. After being victimized by social exclusion, many geeks experience their "tribe" as a non-judgmental haven where they can take refuge from the cruel world outside.

This seems straightforward and reasonable. It's important for people to have a space where they feel safe and accepted. Ideally, everyone's social group would be a safe haven. When people who rely too heavily upon that refuge feel insecure in that haven, however, a commendable ideal mutates into its pathological form, GSF2.

Carriers of GSF2 believe that since a friend accepts them as they are, anyone who criticizes them is not their friend. Thus, they can't take criticism from friends—criticism is experienced as a treacherous betrayal of the friendship, no matter how inappropriate the criticized behavior may be.

Conversely, most carriers will never criticize a friend under any circumstances; the duty to be supportive



trumps any impulse to point out unacceptable behavior.

GSF2 has extensive consequences within a group. Its presence in substantial quantity within a social group vastly increases the group's conflict-averseness. People spend hours debating how to deal with conflicts, because they know (or sometimes merely fear) that the other person involved is a GSF2 carrier, and any attempt to confront them directly will only make things worse. As a result, people let grudges brew much longer than is healthy, and they spend absurd amounts of time deconstructing their interpersonal dramas in search of a back way out of a dilemma.

Ironically, GSF2 carriers often take criticism from coworkers, supervisors, and mentors quite well; those individuals aren't friends, and aren't expected to accept the carrier unconditionally.

Geek Social Fallacy #3: Friendship Before All

Valuing friendships is a fine and worthy thing. When taken to an unhealthy extreme, however, GSF3 can manifest itself.

Like GSF2, GSF3 is a "friendship test" fallacy: in this case, the carrier believes that any failure by a friend to put the interests of the friendship above all else means that they aren't really a friend at all. It should be obvious that there are a million ways that this can be a problem for the carrier's friends, but the most common one is a situation where friends' interests conflict—if, for example, one friend asks you to keep a secret from another friend. If both friends are GSF3 carriers, you're screwed—the first one will feel betrayed if you reveal the secret, and the other will feel betrayed if you don't. Your only hope is to keep the second friend from finding out, which is difficult if the secret in question was a party that a lot of people went to.

GSF3 can be costly for the carrier as well. They often sacrifice work, family, and romantic obligations at the altar of friendship. In the end, the carrier has a great circle of friends, but not a lot else to show for their life. This is one reason why so many geek circles include people whose sole redeeming quality is loyalty: it's hard not to honor someone who goes to such lengths to be there for a friend, however destructive they may be in other respects.

Individual carriers sometimes have exceptions to GSF3, which allow friends to place a certain protected class of people or things above friendship in

a pinch: "significant others" is a common protected class, as is "work".

Geek Social Fallacy #4: Friendship Is Transitive

Every carrier of GSF4 has, at some point, said:

"Wouldn't it be great to get all my groups of friends into one place for one big happy party?!"

If you groaned at that last paragraph, you may be a recovering GSF4 carrier.

GSF4 is the belief that any two of your friends ought to be friends with each other, and if they're not, something is Very Wrong.

The milder form of GSF4 merely prevents the carrier from perceiving evidence to contradict it; a carrier will refuse to comprehend that two of their friends (or two groups of friends) don't much care for each other, and will continue to try to bring them together at social events. They may even maintain that a full-scale vendetta is just a misunderstanding between friends that could easily be resolved if the principals would just sit down to talk it out.

A more serious form of GSF4 becomes another "friendship test" fallacy: if you have a friend A, and a friend B, but A & B are not friends, then one of them must not really be your friend at all. It is surprisingly common for a carrier, when faced with two friends who don't get along, to simply drop one of them.

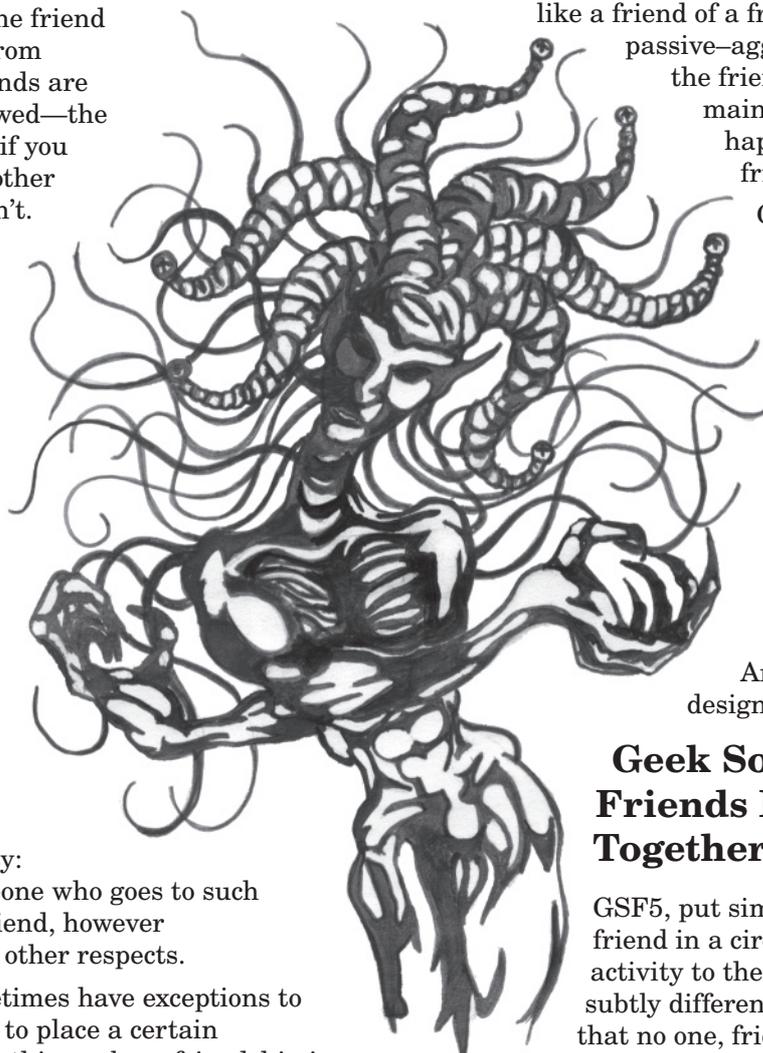
On the other side of the equation, a carrier who doesn't like a friend of a friend will often get very passive-aggressive and covertly hostile to the friend of a friend, while vigorously maintaining that we're one big happy family and everyone is friends.

GSF4 can also lead carriers to make inappropriate requests of people they barely know—asking a friend's roommate's ex if they can crash on their couch, asking a college acquaintance from eight years ago for a letter of recommendation at their workplace, and so on. If something is appropriate to ask of a friend, it's appropriate to ask of a friend of a friend.

Arguably, Friendster was designed by a GSF4 carrier.

Geek Social Fallacy #5: Friends Do Everything Together

GSF5, put simply, maintains that every friend in a circle should be included in every activity to the full extent possible. This is subtly different from GSF1; GSF1 requires that no one, friend or not, be excluded, while



GSF5 requires that every friend be invited. This means that to a GSF5 carrier, not being invited to something is intrinsically a snub, and will be responded to as such.

This is perhaps the least destructive of the five, being at worst inconvenient. In a small circle, this is incestuous but basically harmless. In larger groups, it can make certain social events very difficult: parties which are way too large for their spaces and restaurant expeditions that include twenty people and no reservation are far from unusual.

When everyone in a group is a GSF5 carrier, this isn't really a problem. If, however, there are members who aren't carriers, they may want occasionally to have smaller outings, and these can be hard to arrange without causing hurt feelings and social drama. It's hard to explain to a GSF5 carrier that just because you only wanted to have dinner with five other people tonight, it doesn't mean that your friendship is in terrible danger.

For some reason, many GSF5 carriers are willing to make an exception for gender-segregated events. I don't know why.

Interactions

Each fallacy has its own set of unfortunate consequences, but frequently they become worse in interaction. GSF4 often develops into its more extreme form when paired with GSF5; if everyone does everything together, it's much harder to maintain two friends who don't get along. One will usually fall by the wayside.

Similarly, GSF1 and GSF5 can combine regrettably: when a failure to invite someone is equivalent to excluding them, you can't even get away with not inviting Captain Halitosis along on the road trip. GSF3 can combine disastrously with the other "friendship test" fallacies; carriers may insist that their friends join them in snubbing someone who fails the test, which occasionally leads to a chain reaction which causes the carrier to eventually reject all of their friends. This is not healthy; fortunately, severe versions of GSF3 are rare.

Consequences

Dealing with the effects of social fallacies is an essential part of managing one's social life among geeks, and this is much easier when one is aware of them and can identify which of your friends carry which fallacies.

In the absence of this kind of awareness, three situations tend to arise when people come into contact with fallacies they don't hold themselves.

Most common is simple conflict and hurt feelings. It's hard for people to talk through these conflicts because they usually stem from fairly primal value clashes; a GSF3 carrier may not even be able to articulate why it was such a big deal that their non-carrier friend blew off their movie night.

Alternately, people often take on fallacies that are dominant in their social circle. If you join a group of GSF5 carriers, doing everything together is going to become a habit; if you spend enough time around GSF1 carriers, putting up with trolls is going to seem normal.

Less commonly, people form a sort of counter-fallacy which I call "Your Feelings, Your Problem". YFYP carriers deal with other people's fallacies by ignoring them entirely, in the process acquiring a reputation for being charmingly tactless. Carriers tend to receive a sort of exemption from the usual standards: "that's just Dana", and so on. YFYP has its own problems, but if you would rather be an asshole than angsty, it may be the way to go. It's also remarkably easy to pull off in a GSF1-rich environment.

What Can I Do?

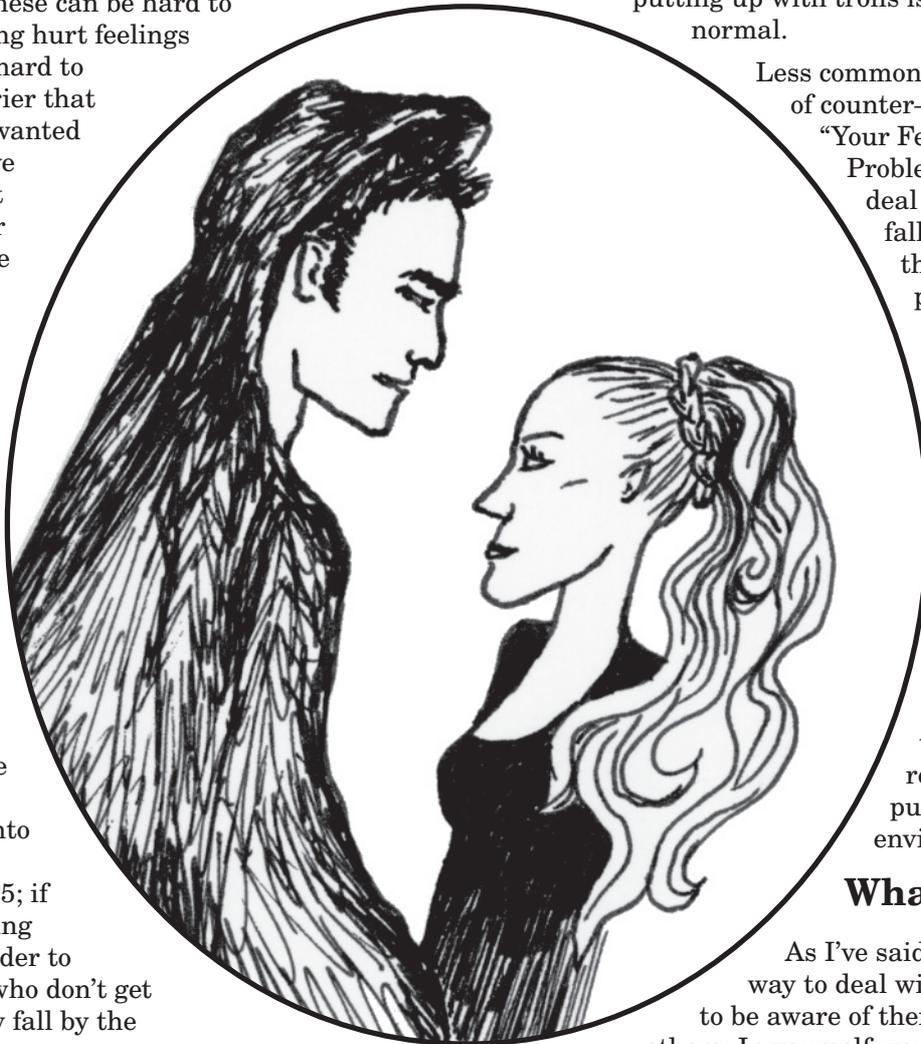
As I've said, I think that the best way to deal with social fallacies is to be aware of them, in yourself and in others. In yourself, you can try to deal with them; in others, understanding their behavior usually makes it less aggravating.

Social fallacies don't make someone a bad person; on the contrary, they usually spring from the purest motives. But I believe they are worth deconstructing; in the long run, social fallacies cost a lot of stress and drama, to no real benefit. You can be tolerant without being indiscriminate, and you can be loyal to friends without being compulsive about it.

Hey, Are You Talking About Me?

If I know you, yeah, probably I am. It doesn't mean I don't love you; most of us carry a few fallacies. Myself, I struggle with GSF 1 and 2, and I used to have a bad case of 4 until a series of disastrous parties dispelled it.

I haven't used any examples that refer to specific



INTERVIEW WITH THE ~~VAM~~ WARGAMER

(may contain secret wiki link)

For those who weren't at the SchpatCON prizegiving on time, you may have missed the announcement that our very own David "Kick gum" Sharpe won some kind of wargaming prize. What the hell is it all about? (And how about that rumour that the wiki was only going to be down for one weekend?) Your loyal Scrivener battled poxed orcs and those little cannon things that shoot spores to find out...

CLAWS: What is your name? Do you have a moniker amongst the wargaming crowd apart from "that bastard who won"?

David Sharpe: Nothing special, just me, David. I'd call myself "that lucky bastard (who won)" for this round.

CLAWS: What is this competition that you won anyway?

TLB(WW): I have just won the South African National Warhammer 40k competition. You could say that I am the SA national champion.

CLAWS: Were there any preliminary rounds?

TLB(WW): Yes. John Warncke and I played in two of the qualifying rounds. I won the Cape Town round, played at the Men and Boys Hobby Shop in Tygervalley, and John won the Johannesburg round, played at ICON.

CLAWS: Does your dad own a brewery?

TLB(WW): No. Unfortunately not.

CLAWS: Where was the final round held? What was the format?

TLB(WW): The final round was held at Waterkloof Air Force Base, Pretoria, from the 24th to 25th of September. The format was 1500 points using the UK 2004 tournament pack. This was unfortunately not made clear to us (we were using the US rules pack).

CLAWS: What army did you play? Why do you like Chaos so much?

TLB(WW): I play the reasonably powerful (at this stage) Chaos Space

Marines. They're versatile, fun to model and play. I started them ages ago when nobody played them and haven't looked back.

TLB(WW): Psst... ask what armies I faced.

CLAWS: What armies did you face?

TLB(WW): In the 5 games I played, I faced four space marine players (Blood Angels, Black Templars, World Eaters and Black Templars (again)) and one anti-tank/marine shooty Dark Eldar army of death (this win was a complete surprise and my opponent was a fantastic sport).

CLAWS:

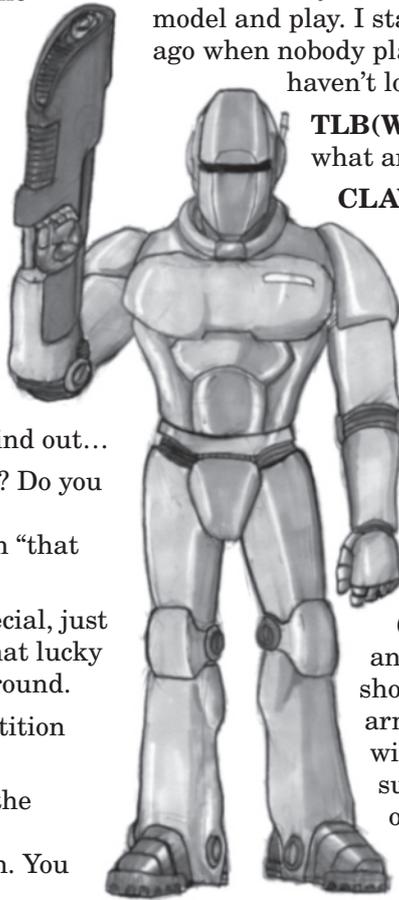
Apparently you have an anal attention to detail and the rules-mongering skills of a criminal lawyer. How much do you charge to get people to play with you?

TLB(WW): Well, nothing if they beat me, however if I win, there may be models forfeit.

CLAWS: What contributed to your win? Did it hurt? Was it more difficult without Duncan as a cheerleader?

TLB(WW): Look, I think everyone will agree that without Duncan's crushing commentary as a back up things will always be significantly harder. But without that, a couple of things did contribute:

- 1) I played a pretty cool army. Some effort went into planning and construction.
- 2) Severe lack of sleep during the tournament meant that I didn't use too many fancy tactics that may have confused my opponents into winning.
- 3) I was pretty (read very) lucky at the tournament to say the least.
- 4) Most importantly, John Warncke



was a fantastic help and vital to my win. He basically organised the whole trip (he is in regular contact with other SA wargamers), we tested armies and strategies together and he stayed up late with me doing last minute painting on my army (vital). He was the best.

CLAWS: What happens next? When and where is the next round held?

TLB(WW): I go to England next year in March for the Grand Tournament Finals. And Games Workshop is paying for my plane ticket. Yay me!

TLB(WW): Hey, is the wiki up?

CLAWS: Funnily enough, yes – but not where you'd expect. Visit

<http://claws.uct.ac.za/clawtki/>

CLAWS: There's still stuff to do, but it's usable – you'll have to register and lend a hand to update your favourite pages to the slightly-new format. But that's the wiki way.

CLAWS: Back to Warhammer. What other countries will be represented? Are international players ready for Duncan?

TLB(WW): No idea really. I guess if Duncan's around a lot of Europeans will have to get ready for the signature "What a raping?!?"

CLAWS: Do you have a message for all the aspiring Warhammer 40K players out there?

TLB(WW): Take your time. Enjoy playing. And everything being equal, it's just a game.

CLAWS: Will you buy us cheap books if we give you money?

TLB(WW): Sure! If I have any time to myself over there. Currently they fly me up on Friday for the tourney and back on Monday. Will try to extend stay.

CLAWS: Find out more about Warhammer 40K by talking to David Sharpe (aka David99) in the mysterious Control Lab, or speak to your grunted Warlord, Tai Steyn, who still owes the Scrivener the wargaming results from Dragonfire, or visit

<http://www.games-workshop.com>

places to go and things to be wearing in

THE ALTERNATIVE SCENE IN CAPE TOWN

Hila Gropper's short and unofficial guide to alternative life in the Mother City

Music:

Something Metal, Rock, Goth or Punk. Anything more alternative than that I am not going anywhere near. [wassa matter, emo not good enough for you? – ed]

Background:

Cape Town by night

Text:

"Places"

VO (Hila Gropper):

Unfortunately Cape Town is sadly lacking in a really good list of places to go if you are of the alternative persuasion.

Fade to:

Mercury Live party

VO:

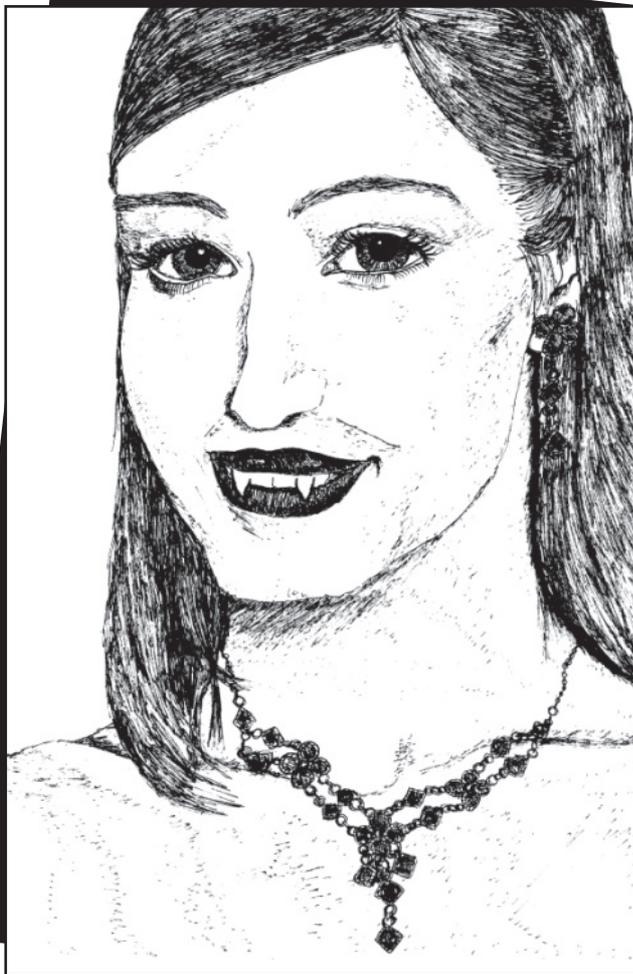
For the Rocker and the Metalheads *Mercury Live* offers parties every couple of weeks. It is situated just up the road from Cape Tech, next to *The Shack* which often has a heavier soundtrack than most pool bars in CT. If you take a drive or a walk past Mercury they have one of those classic put-the-letters-together-to-make-a-word signs above the door letting you know what their up-and-coming parties are. Their general everynight stuff varies wildly and midnight is normally mosh time, and the very drunk patrons make the best of it.

Fade to:

One Ring exterior, steadicam approaches door, but it's locked, so we wait around for the lock to be broken

VO:

There is also *The One Ring* in Lower Main Road, Obs. Owned by the same guy who owns *Gandalf's* and *Mordor* (very sad story there, but I will enlighten you shortly). It's a pool bar with a stage downstairs and very cool chill room resembling a cave upstairs. The ceiling upstairs features a painted map of Middle



Earth (but don't look too closely) and going to the bathroom is an interestingly earthy experience.

The music—if there is no band—varies, and most times the barmen have no problem with putting in one of your own CDs, as long as it's decent music. The bands that have played there when I've been around leave much to be desired, except of course for *Sophie's Ghost*, which is incredible, awesome, amazing, great, droolicious and other such complimentary words in and out of the English dictionary. I s'pose each to his own when it comes to the band, and the R10 cover you pay when there is a band isn't too steep, and—well, I guess you're supporting SA music. [*Hila obviously missed Krakatoa – ed*]

Wibbly flashback wipe to:

Gandalf's party circa 2002

VO:

Now *Gandalf's* and *Mordor* used to be the place to go. Great music, great people, great alcohol prices... and there too was their downfall. Inevitably, people of the non-alternative persuasion came for the alcohol and complained about the music, and the owner saw that if he changed the music to a more D&B, hip-hoppy, sk8er thing downstairs he would get more people in, and he did, and he saw that it was good. Slowly downstairs became a scary zone for the more peaceful types like Metalheads and Rockers. Although they could still hide in *Mordor* (upstairs), slowly but surely even that space was invaded by teenybopper new-metal kids and soon new-metal was all that was played. The moral of my story is that unless you are a sk8er boi

(and if you are, pull up your pants) or a fan of "nu-metal", or unless you know there is a good band playing, stay away from that side of Obs.

Fade to:

Gotham opening night

VO:

Now for the newest place on the list. *Gotham*. If you haven't guessed, this is the place for you Gothy types. The opening was on Sat 15th Jan, and it was awesome. Most people went all out with their outfits and there was even a cat woman there. The bar-room is very hot, so try to get in there when you can, order your drink and get out (although after they opened the window the temperature did drop slightly). The dance floor is of a good size, though not huge, and I must put a huge epilepsy warning in for the strobes that are pretty much

constant (but what's the fun in picking apples and changing light bulbs if there're no strobes?) On the balcony you can get fresh air and a good place to chat. The place was packed at the opening, so temperatures may vary according to the amount of people. The music is mainly Goth, although they did play some EBM later on. We will have to wait and see what the playlists are like in future.

VO:

Other than that, there are parties run by *Underworld* (Goth), *High Voltage Lab* (EBM), *Subterranea Music* (live bands), *Communik* (who were responsible for VNV Nation's visit) and *Alchemy Productions* (also live bands; they were responsible for the Halloween 2004 party at *Blacksheep*).

Fade to black

Text:

"End of part 1"

Interlude:

Find the Fish (but in an Alternative way)

Music:

Metal remix of Material Girl

Fade to:

Goth clothing explosion

Text:

"Clothes"

VO:

There are three main Alternative clothing designers in CT: *Alternative Design*, *Psychopath* and the most widely used and fondly known *Wolf Clothing*.

Fade to:

Alternative Design store

VO:

Alternative Design has a shop in Long Street. Take a walk and find it; since they've recently moved, I can't tell you exactly where they are. Their

stuff isn't bad, and you can often find some nice things, and he does make some stuff. I can't vouch for the prices since I have never bought anything there.

Fade to:

The Krypt Vampire Fashion Show

VO:

Wolf Clothing is where most people have their Alternative clothing made. Corsets, mesh tops, spiky accessories, dresses, pants, PVC, leather lace. You want it, they have it—and if they don't have it they will get it. They have a stall in Green Market Square. It's in the right hand rows of stalls if you are coming from the Purple Turtle side (but

They also work from home—so if you want, get their number and go over, and you can get whatever you want designed for you, measurements done on the spot and warm and friendly conversation to boot. They are very, very reasonable. I'm having a full corset, mesh top and skirt made for just R750.

VO:

As for *Psychopath* they don't currently have a store or stall so the only time to really find them is when they trade at events. Keep an eye out 'cause their stuff is also very cool.

Fade to black

Text:

"End of Part 2"

VO (fades out):

So let's review, places to go:

Mercury Live (on some nights),

The One Ring (for chilling out, playing pool and SA bands),

Gotham (for ye gothy types),

and if you really have to... *Gandalf's* and *Mordor* (but I'm not suggesting you go there; in fact *don't go there* unless a good band is playing)

People to buy clothes from:

Wolf,

Alternative Designs,
Psychopath

If you want to know more about up-and-coming parties, the general scene and the people in it, you can join *Darklight*—an alternative forum which covers the alternative scene all over the country: darklight.co.za

That's all from me. Have a wicked year.

SFX:

Screams, chainsaws, banjos, people moaning about how Marilyn Manson sold out...



if you can't find them, just ask around for the guys with the black and weird clothing). They aren't there every day, so you may have to try again the next day.

dungeons and dragons —it's a game!

Tim Lawrance

There's no right way and wrong way of playing RPGs, right? Wrong! Different RPGs are designed to support different ways of playing them, and D&D was designed with a particular way of playing in mind...

Gamist RPGs

What is the point of roleplaying games? Typically your favourite RPG hardcover will tell you "It's a collaborative story-creating game in which there is no winner." Maybe that's true of certain RPGs, but in D&D it is clear that it's the players versus the adventure. If the players slay the evil enemy, complete the quest and collect the treasure, then they have won. If some of them die, they have to abandon their quest or they come away empty-handed, then they have lost—the adventure has defeated them.

Each RPG can be pigeon-holed into one of three categories based on the goals of the game:

1. *Narrativism*—in which the story is the most important thing, e.g. *Sorcerer*, *My Life with Master*. Game mechanics generally focus on the players' interaction with the story.
2. *Simulationism*—in which the reality of the game's setting is the most important thing, e.g. *GURPS*. Game mechanics are designed to simulate reality as accurately as possible. Simulating something other than the setting, such as character, may instead be the focus of a simulationist RPG.
3. *Gamism*—in which the players must overcome challenges that their characters face, e.g. *D&D*. Game mechanics are designed to give players different options to overcome their challenges.

The elements of all three categories are present in most RPGs, but a good RPG is one that has a focus, and D&D clearly has a gamist focus. The challenges players have to overcome are called Encounters in

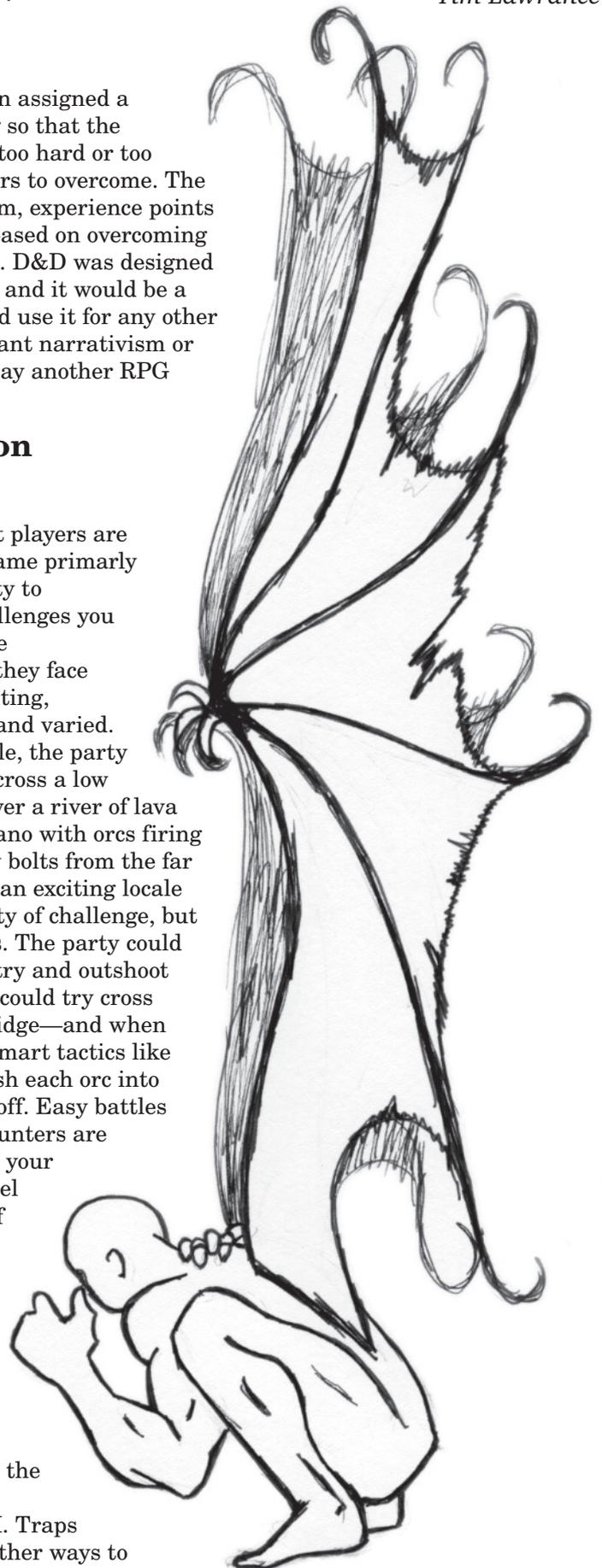
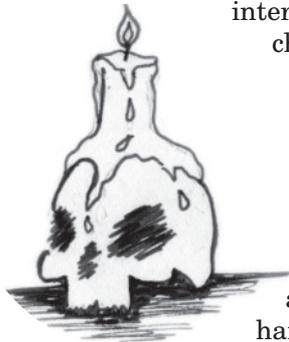
D&D and are even assigned a Challenge Rating so that the Encounter is not too hard or too easy for the players to overcome. The reward mechanism, experience points and treasure, is based on overcoming these Encounters. D&D was designed as a gamist RPG, and it would be a mistake to try and use it for any other purpose. If you want narrativism or simulationism, play another RPG instead.

For Dungeon Masters...

Remember that players are playing in your game primarily to test their ability to overcome the challenges you present. Make the Encounters that they face interesting, exciting, challenging and varied.

For example, the party needs to cross a low bridge over a river of lava in a volcano with orcs firing crossbow bolts from the far side. It's an exciting locale with plenty of challenge, but also options. The party could hang back to try and outshoot the orcs, or some could try cross the dangerous bridge—and when they are across, smart tactics like ganging up to push each orc into the lava will pay off. Easy battles and random encounters are quickly forgotten; your players need to feel the satisfaction of overcoming carefully designed encounters through their own smarts and their characters' powers.

Combats aren't the only challenges available to a DM. Traps and puzzles are other ways to



challenge the party, normally as a change of pace from D&D's combat focus. Roleplaying encounters, such as trying to talk your way out of arrest by the city guards, can be the most entertaining of all challenges as the characters' personalities come to the forefront. Also, an entire plot can become a challenge for them—such as a mystery to be solved.

Regardless of the fact that the challenges are the focus of D&D, none of the players will care about them if they don't take place within the context of an interesting story. Tie the characters meaningfully into your story and ensure that actions that they take within each adventure have real consequences for the greater story. The chosen story should inspire many challenges and the challenges should fit into the story. However, beware of fudging things because "it's good for the story"—a party that loses a challenge needs to be punished, not saved at the last minute to ensure the story doesn't derail.

For Players...

Focus first on making capable characters. The gnomish barbarian axe-wielder with 3 strength might be fun for one session, but will continually be frustrated over the course of a campaign. Don't be afraid of making obvious choices to strengthen your character, such as wizards making intelligence their highest score or fighters choosing the Weapon Specialization feat in their favourite weapon. Challenge Ratings have been set and the game balanced assuming that the players will make such obvious optimizations. Beyond the obvious, you can look for tactics and options to increase in your edge, such as preparing two spells that work well in combination or a feat that eliminates a glaring weakness (like Weapon Finesse will cover for a low strength score). An option for making good characters is to look at the available prestige classes (particularly in the various splat books) and create your character aiming for one of these classes.

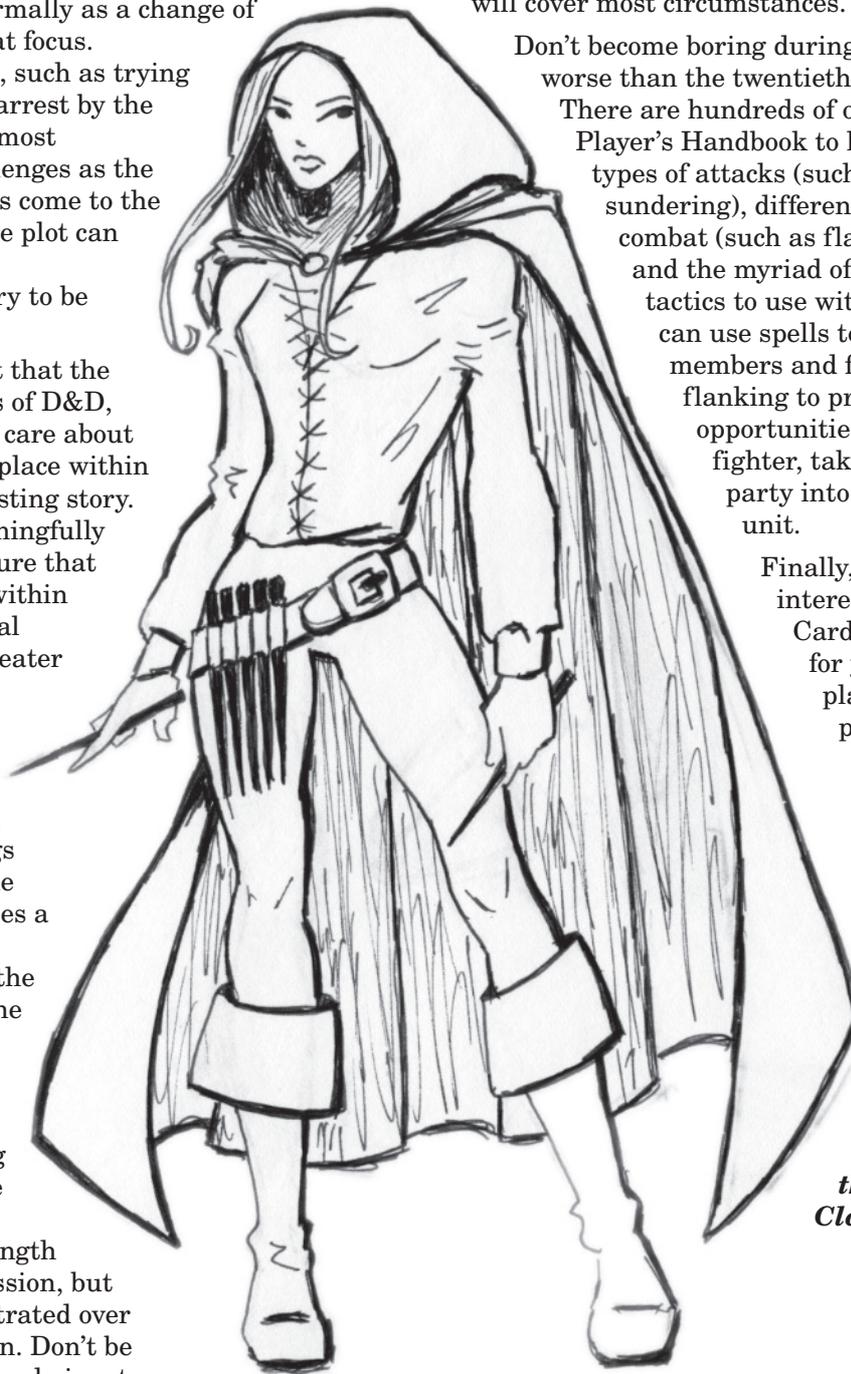
Sometimes your character will be created in isolation and it can't be helped, but if you have the chance, it makes more sense to create the party together. A good party is one that can work together to defeat the challenges that are to come. Create characters that will complement each other and don't leave any glaring weaknesses—a fighter-type, a spellcaster and a healer

will cover most circumstances.

Don't become boring during play. There's nothing worse than the twentieth "I hit it with my axe." There are hundreds of options available. Read the Player's Handbook to learn about the different types of attacks (such as bull rushing and sundering), different bonuses you can gain in combat (such as flanking or staying in cover) and the myriad of different spells. Work out tactics to use with your party—spellcasters can use spells to assist fellow party members and fighters can help rogues by flanking to provide sneak attack opportunities. If you're playing a fighter, take charge of organizing the party into a good tactical fighting unit.

Finally, don't neglect to make interesting characters. Cardboard cutouts are boring for you and your fellow players. Give your character personality to keep your fellow players caring about whether he lives or dies. Create an interesting backstory and choose character options that will help your DM to create plot hooks for your character.

Interested in playing in a D&D campaign? Check out 'The Lord Admirals' in the Campaign Classifieds.





lower war

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Roleplaying as a Social Activity

William MacDonald picks up chicks at roleplaying games

I can remember when roleplaying was all about rolling cool dice and beating the DM's evil monsters into a bloody pulp. Later roleplaying became about solving puzzles and creating memorable characters. Sometimes it was about beating the other players' characters, and sometimes it was about working together as a team to outwit the GM. The great thing about roleplaying is that it can be all of the above, or just some of them, or possibly even none of them.

Roleplaying grows and changes, and is different for each person. Each person, GM and player alike, arrives at the table with their own expectations and desires, and that is what this article is about.

The Social Contract

The gaming system *Universalis* has a great idea. *Universalis* has a system that encourages all of the participants in the game to get together before the game starts and "vote" on how they want the universe to be, for example "A heroic flavor to the game". The participants also agree on a set of terms, a social contract, like "No Monty Python jokes", or "Everyone will be on time". These could be out-of-character issues, like the jokes issue, or in-character issues, like the flavor of the game. Regardless, *Universalis* gives every participant an equal voice and brings these issues to the fore.

Why? Almost every social situation has rules, unspoken social contracts. When you're going to a wedding you know what to expect, how to dress, how to behave (this doesn't mean that everyone necessarily behaves that way). Roleplaying is different, though, because the situations are only limited by our imaginations.

If the GM is envisaging an heroic Biblical game, and one of the players is thinking in terms of angst-ridden, flawed Greek heroes, and another player is creating a

character for an epic smack-down super-heroic game, then the game is headed for an interesting time. Sometimes these differences of vision can be interesting and create truly memorable scenes, if only for the comedic mismatches of characters. Often, though, this lack of communication leads to one or more of the participants feeling disappointed and not enjoying the game because they created a character concept for a different universe. This is not insurmountable, but can cause major

headaches, and can easily be avoided.

The heart of the social contract is clear communication, and the intent that no single voice will dominate.

Social Roleplaying

Is there such a thing in roleplaying as a single voice? When a player speaks she is speaking not only as her character, but also in the player's voice, and into the GM's universe. When your character is speaking to another character you're also speaking to their player (or, in the case of NPCs, the GM). How does this relate to social contracts? Communication.

Communication in roleplaying groups is a difficult issue. Roleplaying purists tend to encourage "in-character" communication without "out-of-character" comments or knowledge. In my opinion this is an impediment to enjoyable roleplaying, and is often used as an excuse for some unacceptable behavior on the part of some players.

When creating a character people often try to find something to make their character distinctive. Sometimes this is a physical trait, such as purple eyes and white hair, and sometimes it's

emotional or philosophical. Sometimes characters acquire these distinctive traits during the game.

What *is* important about these traits is that they should not set themselves in opposition to the rest of the group. I have seen examples of this type of behavior many times; I've even been guilty of it in some cases myself.

On one memorable occasion I created a Star-gazer



werewolf who believed thoroughly that the Wyrms should be freed to put the world back into balance. This ran counter to the philosophy of the rest of the group, which was that all Wyrms things should have the stuffing beaten out of them. In the end it led to a violent conflict with another PC that ended the campaign.

At the time I defended my character's beliefs because they were part of what made him unique and fun to play, but I didn't consider how it was making the campaign less enjoyable for the rest of the party. The old "Let's discuss this in-character" line was used, which cut off open communication between players and prevented us reaching a negotiated solution. In the end, in-character "discussions" led to open conflict and the death of a good campaign.

It is important to remember that you are just one player in a group of other players, and that your enjoyment of the game is not more important than any other player's. Likewise it is not "good roleplaying" to continue to play a character in a manner that irritates or otherwise diminishes the enjoyment of the game for all of the other players—this is in fact lousy roleplaying, because you're irritating their players, not necessarily their characters.

Likewise, while loner characters are often the subjects of great fiction they're lousy for roleplaying games because they're not suitable for group activity—and if you're not involving the rest of the group, then why are you playing in one?

Of course sometimes you create a character and for a variety of reasons discover only later that you don't fit in or are creating unnecessary conflict. What can you do?

Five Ways to Fix It

- I. *Negotiation*. Sit down with the other players and figure out what aspects of the character are irritating them. Often you'll discover these aspects aren't very important, or can be removed easily. If you're playing a character that has taken a vow of "non-violence" as one of ten vows and this vow is causing problems, then remove the "non-violence" vow. Either talk to the GM about introducing a plot event that does it or just pretend it was never there in the first place.
- II. *Re-creation*. Often this is the best way to go if your

previous character has annoyed the rest of the group beyond belief. Create a new character now that you have a good feel for what the rest of the group is about. Take the time to discuss the new character with the group to prevent yourself from endlessly having to re-create.

- III. *Change*. Usually players refuse to listen to other characters' arguments in character because "it says on my character sheet that...", and so it can't be changed, but that isn't realistic. Normal people revise their opinions and philosophies, so why shouldn't your character? Listen to the other players and characters; they're trying to offer you a way out.

- IV. *Compromise*. Talk to the other players and agree to change your character a little, perhaps taking the edge off the most irritating issues in exchange for the rest of the characters tolerating occasional manifestations of the irritating issue.

- V. *Leave*. It may be, unfortunately, that your style of play differs markedly from your current group's. In this circumstance consider finding a new group that suits your style of play more closely.

Conclusion

Roleplaying is a social game that requires two or more people to be played. A great many articles have been written about playing your character properly, or "roleplaying vs roll-playing". I hope that this article stimulates debate about the social basis for roleplaying, and about making roleplaying more fun for *all* the players.



SWIT

A SIMPLE REAL-TIME LARP CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANIC

Tim Lawrance and d@vid seaward come to blows

In manyLARPs there is no benefit to 'specially creating a combat, or indeed conflict, system.

Additionally, some olderLARPs have been written without conflict resolution in mind, yet players find ways for characters to chase one another around the room brandishing improvised weapons. Finally, lengthy "freezes" for combat are nothing but an annoyance for those not involved.

With these problems in mind we've developed a straightforward, extendable resolution mechanic for LARPing. The intention is a simple, randomised mechanic allowing GMs to quickly resolve inter-character conflict based on clear player goals. Significantly, there is no "freeze" for those not involved in the conflict.

Preparation & basic mechanic

Each GM needs a single suit of 13 cards. GMs should clarify beforehand what significant advantages are likely to crop up. (Including when chance will not be a factor, such as arm-wrestling with a steam-powered automaton.)

In conflict, the presiding GM determines which side, if any, has a *significant* advantage. Both sides draw a card. (An extra card is drawn by the side with the significant advantage.) Highest card wins.

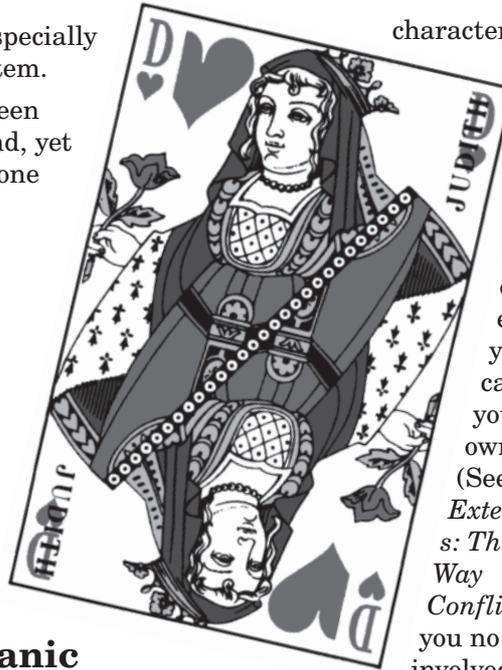
Notes: Cards are easy to carry, shuffle, draw and display. A single suit eliminates ties. Aces are low.

Depending on LARP or GMing style, card advantage may be based on one or more of: gameworld facts, predetermined ranking, story significance, tactics or cunning.

Players

To initiate conflict, *inform a GM beforehand*, then initiate the conflict in-character. ("This is for my brother, you swine!") The conflict proceeds out-of-character, with colourful descriptions and in-character interjections as appropriate. The initiator states his character's goal, followed by the opponent. Cards are drawn and the GM narrates how the winning character achieves his or her goal.

Meanwhile, other players continue with the game: watching, reacting or being in another room. To get directly involved in the conflict, explain to the presiding GM how you are contributing. This may award another



character the significant advantage, or earn you a card of your own. (See *Extension s: Three Way Conflict*.)

Once cards are drawn, though, you no longer have the option to get involved.

Notes: Be kind to the presiding GM and wait your turn if you're trying to get involved. If you're not able to, assume your character is somehow frustrated in his or her attempts, and think what interesting reactions that frustration might lead to.

Each side of the conflict states their goal for the *entire* conflict (not one blow). The GM narrates the *final outcome*, and players continue roleplaying from there. This requires the GM to bring the conflict to a certain conclusion, and for the players to wilfully play to that outcome and not "hit him again".

Statistics for conflict

Table A: Player chance of victory

	1 v 1	2 v 1
A	50%	67%
B	50%	33%

Notes: "Significant advantage" is obviously not intended to reflect any sort of gameworld odds-of-success. We leave this as an exercise to the *Simulationist* reader.

Extensions

Three-way conflict

Additional mutually-exclusive sides could be added to a conflict, but the GM will need to decide quickly whether a third-party contribution signifies such, or an advantage, or a separate conflict, or a secondary conflict that can

d@vid's rant: You know what annoys me? LARPer who brush off conflict happening *right next to them*. While most roleplaying characters aren't the sort to be shocked into inaction, blithely continuing your plotting while others are calling down the heavens is being a rude player. So, get involved, get others involved ("Officer! Help!"), or simply react, but don't ignore.



effectively be resolved by the primary.

Task resolution

Task resolution (“Can I break down the door?”) can simply be handled as a draw versus the GM. Just because another PC is not directly involved doesn’t mean you should ignore colourful dialogue, or real-time roleplaying (e.g. spending 30 seconds bashing at the door before you draw the card).

As with the regular system, treat failures as absolute rather than an opportunity to “try again”. (GMs may consider treating failures as fumbles, e.g. breaking a lock when an attempt to pick it is unsuccessful.)

Degree of success

In conflict or task resolution you may be tempted to measure degrees of success. Taking the difference in card ranks is a simple method, but the distinctions drawn are too fine for most LARPing purposes. Alternately, you might distinguish between regular and significant successes. A success where a face card (JQK) outranks a non-face card can be classified as “significant”. In combat a significant victory might signify a killing blow.

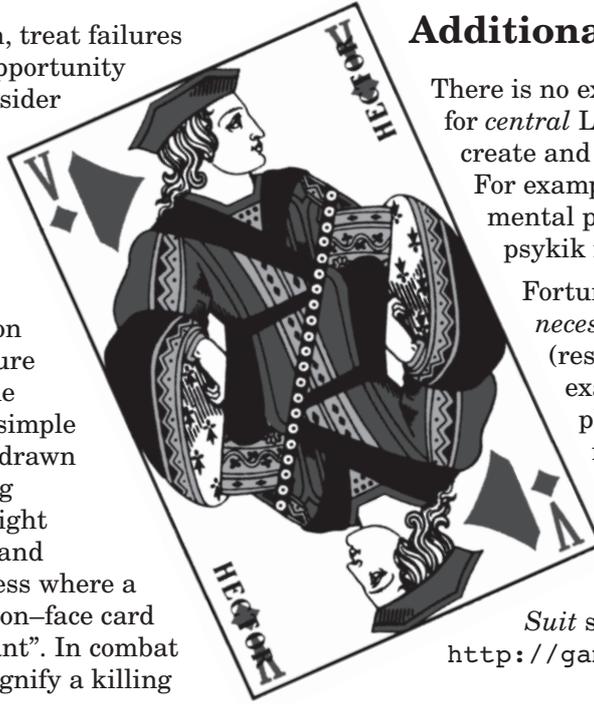


Table B: Player chance of non-significant / significant victory

	1 v 1	2 v 1	2 v 2
A non	30%	33%	20%
A sig	20%	33%	30%
B non	30%	17%	20%
B sig	20%	17%	30%

Additional notes

There is no excuse not to develop a specialised system for *central* LARP elements. Such a system should create and support the dynamics of your game/plot. For example, if you have a setting with twisted mental powerz, it makes sense to design dedicated psykik rules.

Fortune mechanics (randomisers) are *not necessary*. Consider simple Drama mechanics (resolution by word-of-mouth/authority): for example, GM fiat or agreement between players, or Karma mechanics (resolution by rank). Ability cards, a traditional LARP mechanic, can be implemented as Drama or Karma, and can easily avoid GM intervention.

Latest comments and revisions of the *Suit* system can be found at <http://gaming.inkwell.za.net/suit/>

Shorter and Sweeter

Tim Lawrance

A GM at UCT faces numerous problems when running a long-term campaign. There are lengthy breaks for varsity exams and vacs, players will drop out as their work load increases, and some simply can’t return because they’ve finished or been booted from varsity. A new GM also faces the problem that few people are likely to want to commit to a campaign with them for even a single year.

The solution—mini-campaigns. Campaigns are expected to last until the players lose interest, hopefully a number of years. A mini-campaign is a campaign with a definite end date and shouldn’t be more than about 10 sessions. A quarter’s worth, about 6 sessions (plus a character creation session), works well. Fix a day and time that players will be able to commit to every week, but don’t count on sessions during study week, exams or holidays. Also, this is varsity and last minute hand-ins will happen, and players will miss a session or two.

Campaigns are typically very open-ended, but a mini-campaign needs to be much more focused. The GM should have a definite story path in mind whilst still keeping things free enough for players’ individual choice. In addition, more needs to be done in each session. The players and the GM need to feel a sense of urgency—skip over all the mundane scenes and summarize long periods of time to get to the important events.

Running two successful mini-campaigns last year made me appreciate the value of the short-term commitments they entailed, as old players could leave as their work load changed and a new roleplayer could try it out for just the two months of the mini-campaign. I hope to see more GMs at UCT running mini-campaigns in the future.



Could you please all stop writing and pass your scripts to the front...



SLAP

The t-shirt says it all.



Now if we take out the guards here...



My eyes! These goggles do nothing!

Hadouken!

The Sprite Ho and his pimp



Okay, I need you to move a little closer together...



Only Tai is immune to the charm of our glorious leader.

Are you looking at me? I said, "Are you looking at me?!"





Stewart attempts to score the photographer.



Who would have thought a girl with a stick in her hand could be so interesting?

Happy memories.



Behind the scenes, the felines from outer space pull the strings.



Despite his multiclassing and stripping down to only a thong and a pair of clogs, our munchkin's attempt to reach the treasure is thwarted by the Circle of Protection: Orange.

Some things in life even the horrors of Unknown Armies and Cthulhu just can't prepare you for.



Erica mounts Tim.

Speak friend and enter.



MANAGING INTRAPARTY CONFLICT

Andrew McLaren eggs them on

Roleplaying is a group activity. One cannot enjoy roleplaying alone. Sometimes the GM's job is made more complicated by conflict that takes place within the group, when arguments and fighting takes place between characters and players.

Consider the following situation to get an idea of what I mean:

Having defeated the evil witch, the party searches her cave for loot. Sir Gawain the Paladin comes across the source of the witch's power – her spellbook, written in blood on dried human skin. The party crowds around. Sir Gawain says, "We shall destroy this book, for it is evil, and should not fall into the wrong hands."

Malfeus the mage says, "You'll do no such thing. It could contain a good spell for me."

Sir Gawain replies philosophically, "If we use the weapons of the enemy, we shall become corrupted by them."

Malfeus replies, "Crap! Give it to me."

Sir Gawain says, "Hold back, little mage, I keep it from you for your own good!"

Malfeus zaps Gawain with his wand, turning him into a pile of dust.

In this scenario, a conflict developed within the party. That in itself is not a bad thing. But the handling of this conflict was poor. As a result of this poor handling, one of two things will probably happen at the next session; either Gawain's player won't pitch up, or (worse), he pitches up with a character that aims to get revenge on Malfeus.

Conflict in Roleplaying is Handled Differently to Conflict in Real Life

Characters in roleplaying games are often too quick to resort to physical combat to resolve conflict. In real life, where conflict develops between people, they do one of the following things;

- * They put up with it
- * They avoid the other person or that particular issue
- * They leave altogether
- * They have a loud shouting match

These options do not appeal to roleplayers. For example, characters are not likely to leave a party because in doing that, they effectively leave the game. The player would need to create a new character. Players

subconsciously would prefer that it was the other guy's character that left the party. To many people, having a character "quit the game" is the same as admitting fault or accepting defeat. To many players, the only way to "win" the conflict is to force the other guy to be the one to start a new character (i.e. to kill him).

Why Conflict Can Be Bad:

- * It can reduce everyone's fun.
- * It can take a long time to resolve, especially if combat between party members begins. This typically leads to hours of rules lawyering.
- * It can create arguments and ill-feeling between players that lasts even when the gaming session is over.
- * It can result in players leaving your game.

Why Conflict Can Be Good:

- * It can drive stories (some game worlds even encourage conflict, see below)
- * It can be interesting (e.g. a good moral debate, between Sir Gawain and Malfeus above)

Four Root Causes of Conflict

Do you have conflict in your gaming group at the moment? Try to identify the root cause from the four listed below.

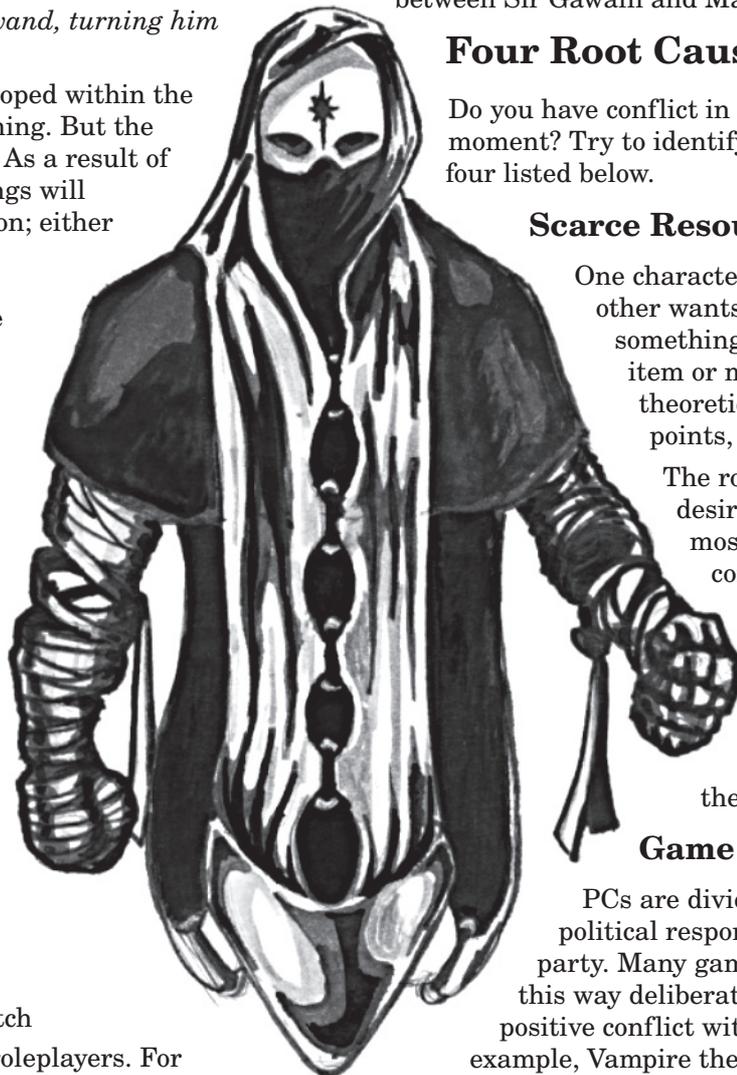
Scarce Resources

One character has something that the other wants. This could be something physical (e.g. a magical item or money), or even something theoretical (e.g. experience points, fame).

The root cause is greed or a desire to be the best. It is the most common cause of conflict in any roleplaying group. Many players are prepared to enter conflict with their fellow players just to ensure that their character is the one with the best magical equipment.

Game World Politics

PCs are divided into factions, or have political responsibilities outside of the party. Many game worlds are designed this way deliberately in order to encourage positive conflict within the party. For example, Vampire the Masquerade, Legend of the Five Rings, and many other game worlds encourage the PCs to support an organisation outside of the party – and sometimes those priorities conflict with



the priorities of the other PCs.

Personality Conflict Between Characters

- * Power hungry thief + pious paladin
- * Jedi knight + dark Jedi
- * Scheming type person + Direct type person

These personality conflicts can be fun! But they can also be lethal to your game!

Personality Conflict Between Players

Jim thinks that Mark is a dweeb. Therefore Jim's character does not get along with Mark's character.

Some Solutions for the GM

These solutions assume that you *want* to do anything! If you think that the conflict is making it harder for everyone to have fun, then the odds are that the conflict is only going to escalate. Here are some solutions:

For Scarce Resources

Try to be aware of this problem early.

- * Try introducing equipment or treasure that balances things out between characters.
- * Try to encourage each character to have their own special niche. e.g. one of the fighters is a lightly armoured, agile fellow; the other is a heavily muscled tank. Provide equipment or resources that suit each niche (e.g. a quick rapier vs. a gigantic axe).
- * Suggest the players come up with an official (written) treasure splitting policy that everyone agrees upon.

For Game World Politics

Assuming you want to prevent conflict from escalating, consider these solutions;



- * Introduce political reasons for why conflict is not a good idea right now (e.g. there is news of a war, and it would be unwise for the Blue Wizards to make waves with the Red Wizards).
- * Introduce an enemy or threat that endangers both factions, forcing them to work together for the moment. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend!"

For Personality Conflict Between Characters

Can be tricky to deal with! Characters' egos can be easily damaged, and that can make them hostile to outside influence.

- * Before starting the game, get players to discuss and brainstorm the kind of characters and personalities they want to play. That way, the power hungry thief may never have to play alongside the pious paladin. I make a specific point of doing this carefully whenever I start a

campaign. Remember that players may need to discuss more than just the race/class combinations they intend to play. Players need to announce their intention to play "an ambitious, aggressive, underhanded dwarf rogue" and not just "a dwarf rogue". That way, everybody is clear.

- * Encourage verbal confrontation between characters as an alternative to actual combat.
- * Make an avenue available for characters to settle their differences. E.g. a duel to first blood, a high court to settle disputes.
- * Make leaving the party an acceptable and honourable solution. Allow a character that voluntarily leaves to be replaced by an equally powerful individual.

For Personality Conflict Between Players

Ah, the most tricky of all. This is an out-of-game root cause, and has to be dealt with out-of-game.

- * Get rid of one of the players. Try to do it politely.
- * Point out to everyone that the reason we play is to have fun. Refocus everyone's attention on that fact.

For All Conflicts

Talk openly to the players! Let them know your concerns!



A Sense of Setting

Ian Kitley can't see dead people

A world unfolds around me within the confines of a living room. I journey to lands beyond the borders of my imagination and greet beings the like of which I shall never see. As the world of my mind fades at the final words of its builder, I try and hold onto those final few images. I would mourn their loss if I did not have only a brief period before my next journey into the world of this builder.

This is the way I feel after a session with a truly inspired GM. We've all had that one module, session or GM who have inspired that feeling within us. Each of us also has an element of storytelling that particularly draws us in and captures our imagination. For me it's the setting and how each scene can be brought completely alive for us, primarily how the scene can play on our senses. In particular, descriptions that do not rely upon the power of sight can make the most impression, lending more depth to the imagined world.

However, at times GMs may overlook the effect that sound, smell, taste and touch can have on a scene. More often than not, these senses only come into effect after a perception check that is used to dispense a valuable clue to the players. I suggest using sense descriptions as tools to expand the canvas that is the GM's world and customise the feel and experience of this world to the individual characters. Finally, the use of senses to provide clues can be done more subtly than with a check.

Sound

Take a step out your door, close your eyes and let your ears experience your surroundings. What are they telling you? This is a question your players should be asking themselves. So many hints as to the world just outside your immediate vision can be brought to you upon the whispers of the breeze. It can also provide the characters with the hint that the scene has changed while their

attention was elsewhere. Atmospheric descriptions depend on circumstance and setting: the cries of children and the clinking of chains could indicate a playground or a slave market.

Sound can be used quite effectively to increase the depth of the larger surrounds, especially when first entering a new area. The roar of an airplane taking off and landing, the clinkety-clack of carriages on a train track, and hooting of a ship's horn as it navigates the river can all be indications of

important landmarks and centres. The different sounds of the streets at different times of the day can tell you much about the sort of area you are in: the industry that takes place in it, and the people that reside there. Even the sound of a rattling heater, the crying of a bawling baby or the whisper of sand can give you insights into the land and the people that would otherwise be lost.

Small sounds, and the absence of sound, can give insight into what is happening immediately around the characters. The sudden swell and fade of the noise from a party can indicate that a door has been opened. A sudden eruption of bird calls can indicate that something has startled

them, without the need of actually seeing them. What can sometimes be more important is the complete lack of sound. When the chirping of crickets or the sighing of the wind or some other tell-tale suddenly ceases, this does not usually bode well and can precede something that may seriously affect the players.

Touch

Beneath my fingers, the smooth cover of the exam script feels slightly slick as I perspire with nervousness. My skin breaks out in goosebumps as I watch the preview



for *Batman Begins*. Cold wind burns my skin. Without the aid of sight, touch becomes our most important sense in describing the world immediately around and acting upon us. It also allows us to evaluate how our body is reacting to our feelings concerning a particular situation that we find ourselves in, and is one of the best ways of giving us a personalised view of a situation.

The feel of the undergrowth whipping against our legs, the pressure of the water pushing back against us as we wade, and the slick, slimy coating of scum that comes off in your hand as you run it along a grainy sewer wall all serve to bring a form of reality into the situation. Winds whipping across our face and sweat dripping down the small of our back also bring the feel of the climate to us better than any description of what the sky looks like. This can also serve as a great clue as to why the locals are taking a siesta when you most need to talk to them. The feel of the objects surrounding a character can also serve to embed a place within their mind, especially in dark situations.

Touch is finally a very personal experience. The same sensation can be felt differently by different people. The bedding in a peasant hut would be rough, hard and lumpy to a pampered elitist, while the luxuries of a penthouse would be uncomfortably soft and enveloping to the peasant. The texture of compost would be fine and reassuring to a gardener, while a weapon would be unwieldy in an untrained hand. A character's background and life should always be considered when one is describing the feel of an environment.

Taste and Smell

These two senses work together to describe an experience and you'll often hear people saying that they can taste a smell. These senses can be used quite well to describe an event that has or is about to happen. A wood or forested area gives off a particular mouldy, earthy smell soon after a rain fall, and some can smell rain coming hours before it happens. A rusty electrical taste seems to characterize the period just before a thunderstorm, almost like the taste of blood. In more closed quarters, the stink of a decomposing body or the smell of gas can be vital clues that are fairly easy to spot at the scenes of recent tragedies.

Smell and taste can also be effectively used to characterize a person or place. Many people attach these smells and taste and will remember an area much more vividly when reminded of them than not. The scent produced by a particular cologne or perfume can clue the characters in to the arrival of a particular person long before they are seen. The taste of their lips or skin can forever embed an image second to none that far surpasses that provided by sight. Even the way that scent is reacted to by the characters can pin the person as friend or foe.

One of the most evocative ways of describing a place is a smell that can be recognized anywhere. Sewerage

plants, ports, greenhouses and hospitals all have particular scents that are the same world round. These scents can provide many clues, especially when sight is not an option, crystallizing an image within the mind of the observer.

Of course, the most exquisite way of using these senses to describe a scene is to combine them all together. A jumble of sensory images can add a texture to a scene already taking shape within the mind's eye...

Allowing the senses to flow

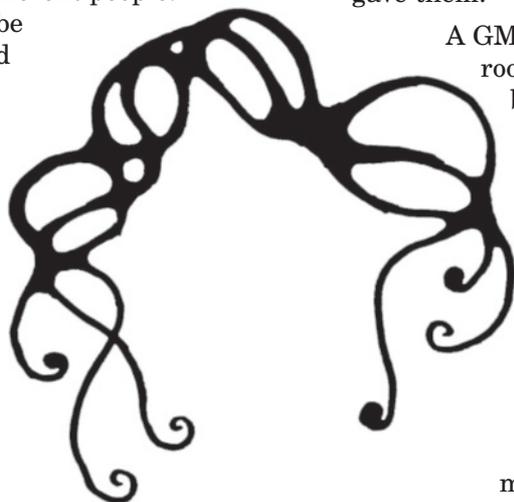
We never experience the world in stop-starts, and we shouldn't need to do that within a game. Clues can be hidden within the narration, leading the players into the world, but at the same time providing them with much needed details. In many ways the easiest and in some way the hardest way to take advantage of this is to completely remove the element of sight. A nice way of doing this, with apologies to all *Sneakers* fans, is to stage a kidnapping of one of the characters and then allow them to attempt to retrace their path using the description you gave them.

A GM can describe how they collide with the roof of the boot as the car goes over sharp bumps while the captive hears sirens at one point and laughter at another. The smell of salt mixed with diesel can seep into the cab, while waves gently lap against the side, followed a roar as if everything is being echoed. When mixed into a jumble with the cold sweat of fear, discomfort, the copper taste of blood and the raw chafe of rope, the scene provides all the clues a player needs in a form that leads to confusion and misinterpretation. Later, a couple of intelligence and perception checks can be made if deemed necessary to provide help, but are not essential.

Looking at smaller details, dropping slight smells, noises or textures can give clues to what has happened or is happening without really telling the players anything. They will still need to come to their own conclusions on the situation but it provides everyone with a more free flowing game. How many times has a GM given the players everything they need, only to realise that they barely listened to the important description?

Always remember that each character is an individual and may pick up on certain things quicker than others. A nice way to move the inevitable flow of notes back in the opposite direction is to give particular players added detail that would pop out at them. A trained cop would pick up certain things better than a small town hick and visa versa. Plus it allows for more treachery from conniving players as they fail to inform the others of trouble.

In conclusion, what do you find more horrifying? A roaring inferno, or... searing heat that blisters your eyes, while branches crack and snap as sap boils out, smoke blinding you, filling your lungs with choking, acrid fumes, leaving you gasping for breath...? I know my answer.





THE LAST RESORT OF KINGS

Mike Dewar explains why violence is not always the answer, possibly in an attempt to stop people beating him up.

The less historically-hip reader may be forgiven for thinking that the above title refers to a little island paradise just south of Mauritius, favoured by royalty from around the world, but it doesn't. We're talking about violence, or at least I'm writing about it and you're reading about it. I hope everyone's aware that we're talking about *roleplaying* violence, not the Real Thing, given the magazine in which this article appears—unless the printers went berserk, and it is currently located just after the Letters section of *Farmers' Weekly* as opposed to in *CLAWmarks*.

We're also not talking about combat. There are millions of pages in official rulebooks and outside them detailing the correct modifier for a sharpshooter standing on a wet elephant with a toy catapult, trying to hit a dragon's left nostril. The stats have been done to death, and then GURPS resurrected them and did them to death some more.

This is about violence in the context of a *story*, a few comments and tips to players and DMs about how it can be used to further the plot, or enhance themes, or other Poncey Literary Things.

Aggressive Self-Defence: Reactive Violence

An awful lot of role-playing violence falls into this category. Your PC's are mincing along

through a forest, with nothing more aggressive planned than flower-arranging or writing poetry, and they are suddenly attacked by 1d6 Orc Bandits¹, whom they brutally kill, loot and use the gained XP to level up in preparation for the 1d8 Dire Wolves waiting around the bend. They probably eat a pie or two afterwards.

Or a Crazy Evil Genius tries to blow up New York/Paris/The World/Texas, and our heroes stomp him. Or Texas (depending on your definition of "heroic"). There's nothing intrinsically wrong with the scenario, mind you. Players don't usually want to play total bastards who perform random, unprovoked acts of violence on the relatively-innocent (although there are exceptions). They want someone else to throw the first punch, snarl "draw" through gritted teeth, or kidnap Fair Marion.

Unfortunately, this can turn fighting into that formulaic, 1d6-Orcs scenario discussed above. Unless the characters are in a literal warzone, they shouldn't be used to being periodically attacked for no immediate reason. If it does happen, it should be panicked and tense and unexpected. This is not the time to lay out a hex map and advance your fighters to attack while the party mage readies a fireball. It's time to grab your sword and attack the nearest foe, probably shouting, "What the hell is going on? Die you bastard, die!" Hopefully that last line refers to the enemy you're fighting, though it might also refer to the moron

1. *Neither the Author, nor CLAWmarks, supports the use of Random Encounter Generators. You people know who you are. That's right—statistics majors.*

who was supposed to be on watch.

Unfortunately, as characters get tougher, it gets harder to shake them up. 1d6 Red Dragons launching a sneak-attack is somewhat less common, not to mention a little hard-to-miss. It is, however, still possible to shake them up without bringing in ever-tougher foes. Think about it in terms of comfort zones. If the characters are comfortable facing down a gang of Orcs or Ventrue Ghouls in combat when well-armed and expecting it, then what about when they're unarmed? Asleep? On their way to the privy? Of course, this can get overused. Players can feel taken advantage of, or even worse end up going to the bathroom armed.

Fortunately, you can always play up the opposite extreme. If a high-powered D&D group gets attacked by those 1d6 Orcs, it doesn't have to be a boring event. You can play up how effortless it is, how two of the Orcs realise what a bad mistake they've made and try to run away, how the characters switch swords to their off-hands for more of a challenge, and similar nonsense. It's a fun interlude from more serious combats with *The World At Stake*. The same might apply to a drunken cowboy who gets his gun blown out of his hands by your seasoned Deadlands quick-draw artist. The fight remains memorable, even if it wasn't tough.

Ideally, that's what you want to aim for. Most people who've been in a fight (even in a large number of them), will remember every moment for the rest of their lives. That's what you want to aim for every time blood is spilled.

The Lone Gunman: Premeditated Violence

On the other hand, sometimes the PCs land the first punch. They raid a facility, plan an assassination, or creep up on a camp of orcs.

Now is the time that the hex grid becomes a bit more helpful. I'm generally against combat maps, since they tend to turn even the most mild-mannered unaggressive PC into a rogue SWAT officer ("You lay down suppressing fire, and I'll move around behind him to A5. Everyone else, get ready for the Pincer Manoeuvre next round!"). Sometimes that is appropriate, but often it isn't.

A nice trick is to let PCs use the map to plan their attack, and then take it away as soon as the first die is rolled. As many military types have commented, no plan survives first contact with the enemy. Even if players complain that they're not sure what's going on from your descriptions, remember that real fights are *disorientating*. If some psycho is trying to carve his name on your forehead with an icepick, little details like the furniture around you fade away by comparison. If players start saying, "Hang on. So I'm at the door, and Jeff is to my left, and the gunman is behind a barrel to *his* left..." then tell them they're taking a round to survey the scene and *then* let them get a more detailed description, assuming they're still alive.

Besides the mechanics of planning and structure versus the ugly reality of battle, the other important issue with premeditated violence is that it is just that: premeditated. Carefully planning to kill someone or something is far colder and nastier than, say, hitting back because this guy's coming at you with a knife...and suddenly the knife is in your hands and there's arterial spray all down the wall...gain 10 XP. Some characters might be able to cope with murder for self-defence, but not to further their own goals. Others might happily cap their enemy with a hunting rifle from five hundred meters and then go out for a burger.

While some systems try to model this (Vampire's Humanity, Unknown Armies Violence Checks and similar exercise to measure your character's tolerance for carnage runs as follows. First off, have you ever killed someone? If it's happened in game, this is a matter of history, not

roleplaying. However, this is not necessarily the case with newer characters. Remember, even professionals seen traditionally as violent or aggressive (such as the police or military) may never have taken a life. Hundreds of soldiers retire without ever having fired a shot in anger. Obviously if your character hasn't killed before, then the first death is a major roleplaying opportunity.

This doesn't have to mean screaming

"Wwwhhhy?!" at the heavens as the violins reach crescendo—it might be shaky hands, or dry heaves, or just insisting that, "We should bury him.

You're supposed to bury people."

Secondly, there's a little role-playing exercise you can try:

Imagine your character is confronted by his worst enemy—the major antagonist of the campaign, or perhaps a less important NPC who has just pushed *all* the wrong buttons. The enemy hands him a gun and says, "Shoot me. You won't get in trouble. The cops will never find out. If you don't, things will continue exactly as they are." How your character might act can give you a good idea about their overall attitude to violence.

You Wouldn't Like Me When I'm Angry: Frenzied, Unplanned Violence

Of course, not all violence is so calculated. Sometimes you just spring a brain leak and start hitting until you can't hit any more. Some systems allow for this with frenzy checks or berserking or something similar. The problem is that a die roll then dominates what could be a seriously intense and interesting piece of role-playing. It's very easy to say, "Oh, I failed," and let the GM turn you into a NPC for a few rounds until the red mist parts, or to say, "Oh, I passed," and continue on your way, emotionally vapour-locked.

The dice shouldn't be law. If you





fail and there's a decent amount of player-DM trust, then you should play out your own panic or frenzy, so long as you play to character as opposed to achieving your party goals ("But I'm really *angry* as I do it!"). If you pass, that doesn't mean your character can't freak out to a lesser degree, or wrestle with his/her emotions for a moment. The same can also apply for fear and sanity-related checks: if you pass a SAN check in Cthulhu as a human head slithers down a corridor towards you, riding a wave of slimy tentacles, it means you don't go totally barmy. It doesn't mean that you just go, "Oh. How weird," and reach for the dynamite.

The dice should assist in roleplaying your character's emotions, not trap you into a binary situation of "freaked" or "unfreaked".

Guns, Lots of Guns: Weapons and Violence

We've all been at a point when the DM has laid out an objective and asked how you prepare to deal with it. You've got to infiltrate the spy base, burn down the elder's haven, or pillage the dungeon.

But first, you go shopping. It's roleplaying fact that if players get presented with a suitable array of weapons and tools and a clear

objective, then in-character gaming goes out the window and is replaced by the Grocery List From Hell: "I'll take a shotgun, with Dragonsbreath ammo, and an Uzi...no, two Uzis...and a beretta, and a katana...and can we get Semtex?"

Once the first thrill of "Oh! I've got so many guns!" wears off, it gets boring. After all, this is a fantasy world (as in make-believe, not necessarily sword-and-sorcery). You can have as large and distressingly phallic a selection of weapons as your DM can imagine, but in the end, it's just boys with toys (though let the record reflect, I've seen some girls go just as completely overboard. It's not just about shoes any more...)

How much cooler is it to pull off a big robbery or assault with *limited* resources, where every bullet or arrow counts, than when you're strapped like Arnie in any movie you choose to name (Except Twins, Jingle All The Away, and the awful one where he's pregnant). Even the *army* doesn't hand out guns like candy, so why should your NPCs?

Even if it makes sense to have a wide selection, or if you're playing Feng Shui (in which case about twenty guns per person is the average load), at least try to go shopping in-character. Think of the cool "lock and load" movie moments you've seen, and then filter that through your character. Maybe that means picking up weapons with cool precision, test-firing and loading and re-loading them before shoving them into your trenchcoat, or maybe it means picking up a gun and complaining that it doesn't work ("It's called a safety, sir.")

I've Got a Secret, Beat Me 'Till I Talk: Violence as Torture

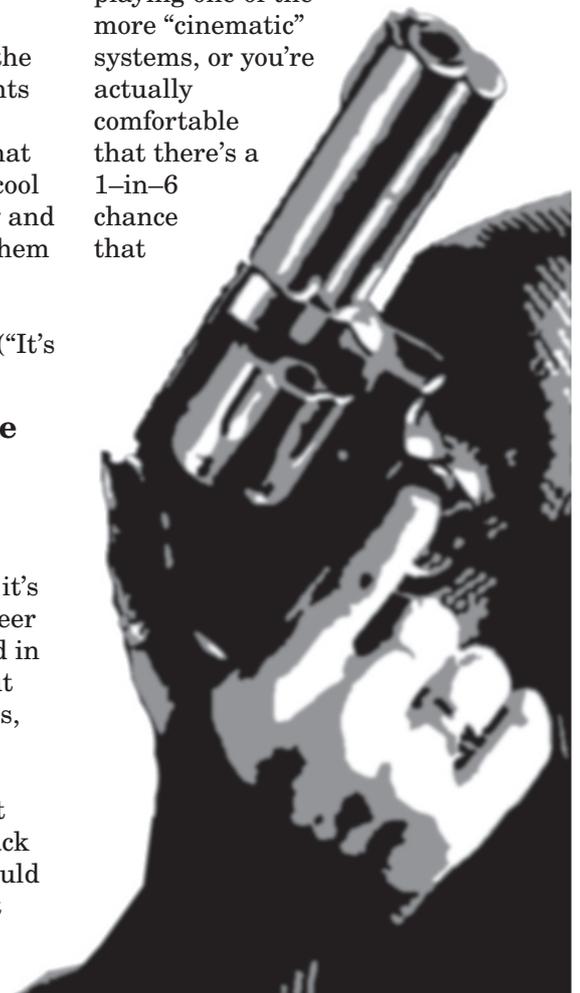
Every now and again, the characters take one alive. Maybe it's a minor NPC who survived by sheer blind luck, or maybe they charged in with tranq rifles and attitude, but now there's a prisoner. Sometimes, it's just a random NPC who you didn't even bother to name, and sometimes it's a major antagonist who is just too damn tough to crack (since he knows too much and would spoil your plot if he blabbed). But every once in a while, an interrogation can be part of the

plot and prove to be a powerful dramatic device.

In that case, it all comes down to personal taste. First off, a morality comment. Torture is every bit as nasty, if not nastier than premeditated murder—not only are you committing acts of sadism, but the victim is left alive to scream about how much it hurts afterwards. There's a reason why the Unknown Armies stress system ranks torture as only slightly less traumatizing than point-blanking a bound, helpless person in the back of the head. This is stuff for very desperate or very ruthless characters.

Which doesn't mean it's not fun. To roleplay, that is. And not "roleplay" in an S&M fashion—unless your tastes run that way. Even if they do, I'm not going to write about it.

Aaaanyway. Torture can swing between two extremes. In the first, as typified by most noir movies, the character grabs his snitch and basically slams him against the wall until he confesses. It's pretty bloodless, though it can make for good drama. Another favourite is the inevitable Russian Roulette gambit. I wouldn't advise this unless you're playing one of the more "cinematic" systems, or you're actually comfortable that there's a 1-in-6 chance that



you're going to lose all the valuable plot points in the snitch's brain as it splatters across the floor.

In the second extreme, it's time to bring on the long painful hours, the needle-nose pliers, the vat of acid and collection of sandpaper...you sick puppy. Arguably more realistic and certainly more bloody, this can still go badly wrong. The main problem is that players get carried away. I don't mean this in a bad, sweat-stained psychopathic way, but the torturing of an NPC (or PC, maybe) becomes a logical puzzle as opposed to a gutwrenching experience ("Okay, so I break his wrist. He doesn't talk. Then I break the other wrist. Still nothing. Okay, so I pick up a big knife and start peeling the skin off his neck. And then I pour chilli sauce over it.")

For some characters that kind of extremism and clinical detachment can fit well (Sabbat Vampire players, raise your hands now!), but for most, that kind of sadism just isn't fun. Unless they're...well, sadists.

Ideally, you want to strike a balance between a few scary and/or gruesome moments and over-the-top anatomy lessons. Obviously if you just turn it into an Intimidation roll, you're short-changing the chance for characters to show their darker side and menace a little, but if the game starts to get sucked into a careful list of brutal acts (possibly numbered), it's best to say, "Okay. You torture him for a few hours with the ferret, sandpaper and jelly mould. He screams an awful lot, but doesn't talk. Let's move on."

Unnecessary Evils: Inappropriate Violence

Something to watch, particularly with new roleplayers, is the tendency to escalate matters into violence far too quickly. This isn't that surprising...after all, this is a made-up game. These random NPCs exist only as fragments of description and stats on paper. Why not waste the bastards if you're irritable/tired/bored/frustrated?

At the end of the day, it comes down to considering what a reasonable person might do. Most reasonable people wouldn't respond to minor irritation, like having a drink spilled on them or being ignored in a conversation, with

violence. Neither should your characters. It's helpful to imagine a few bystanders who are outside the potential conflict. What is their reaction? Are they shocked? Do they feel you're justified? Maybe they would even join in...

Of course, that assumes that you're playing *reasonable* characters. If your character has a hair-trigger temper or is a stone-cold sociopath, then he might well respond to a casual insult by breaking someone's nose. But in that case, the DM and other players are probably expecting (because of your character's general concept and demeanour), to deal with circumstances where ripping someone's arm *is* the last word in an argument. Except for "Aaarrgh! My arm! My arm!", of course.

I Am The Law: Violence and Law

Last, not least, violence is illegal in most societies. Of course, the degree of illegality varies: sometimes you get life in prison, sometimes you can get off with, "The dirty varmint dealt five aces, sheriff!"

Generally, in a modern world, violence leads to police and jail time. Covering it up or running away after the fact may be even more challenging than winning the damn fight was. As you go further back in time, violence becomes more and more acceptable, and the margin for "justifiable homicide" gets wider and wider.

Still, even in a virtually lawless society, violence should not be without consequences. If you slaughter a rival in a fair duel in the town square, people who hear about it will react to you. They may respect your fighting mettle, or they may cross the street to avoid you, or even

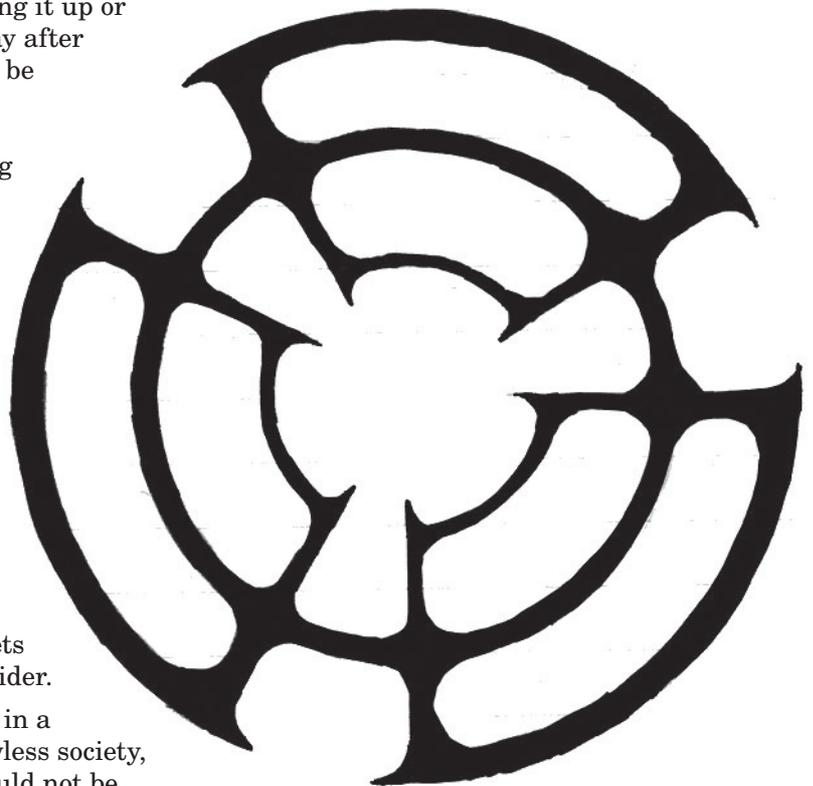
demand you recount every adrenalin-soaked moment at the local tavern.

They're not going to look at you in the same light as they did before the fight, though.

Conclusion

Earlier, I mentioned the idea of a comfort zone. Serious violence should almost never be inside your characters' comfort zones. They might be able to deal with it, to respond calmly and practically, but they're still not going to be blasé about it.

In essence, violence changes lives. Sometimes, of course, it ends them. Other times, it may change the way the characters view the world. Maybe they're less naïve or more battle-hardened, or maybe they wake up from screaming nightmares and suffer Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. What it doesn't do is get glossed over into part of everyday existence.



THINGS EVERY SYSTEM SHOULDN'T HAVE...

Adam Jorgensen
Contributors: Alastair Pearson,
d@vid seaward

In a previous issue of CLAWmarks we read about *Things Every System Should Have....* While many points raised were quite valid, there were one or two that I didn't agree with. I didn't get the number of extra contributors I'd hoped, given the discussion generated at the time, but hopefully this article will also provoke feedback...

Detailed Wound Systems

This point was raised early in *Things Every System Should Have....* There are a couple of gamers out there who feel that detailed systems for handling wounds, specific injuries and gruesome deaths should be part and parcel of every system. However, detailed wound systems have a number of points against them:

First, they're complex. After all, people who use detailed wound systems don't just want Wound Levels or Hit Points. Nope, they're generally after the whole lot: gruesome amputations of specific limbs, brutal penalties and painful decapitations and if adding these features increases the complexity of the game system, then so be it.

However, not everyone finds such complexity massively interesting, new players in particular. Thus, complex wound systems can, among other things, make a system less attractive to new players. This is not a good thing.

The other major strike against detailed wound systems is that they're not always in the spirit of the game or game world as a whole. Sure, in a gritty fantasy campaign where every rabbit must be skinned before being consumed a detailed wound system might fit right in. And it can also work well in a grim, post-apocalyptic sci-fi game, one in which the lack of medical technology can play an important role. However, detailed wound systems just don't fit into all games. A fast paced action-focused campaign using the Hong Kong Action Theatre system would not benefit from a wound system to any great extent. Neither would Feng Shui or Aberrant for that matter, all of which are game systems that feature, among other things, high-powered movie and comic-book style action.

Thus, Detailed Wound Systems can be stricken from the list of "Essential Game Features" owing to both their Complexity and Appropriateness.

Dice Pools

A choice that is likely to raise a great deal more argument is this one. Most of us have played games that make use of pools of dice for conflict resolution. The archetypal example in CLAWs would be games published by White Wolf.

Nevertheless, the question should be asked: Are dice pools a good thing? My own opinion on

this varies somewhat, but in general I'm rather anti-Dice Pool at present.

Or rather, let me specify it a little more clearly. I'm not totally opposed to pools of dice. I'm just opposed to dice pools that are larger than 3 or 4 dice at most. Why? Well, give me a moment and I'll explain...

Back when I first played a White Wolf game I was thrown headfirst in large pools of dice. Yes, you guessed it, I was playing Aberrant, a game famed for, among other things, the enormous pools of dice rolled by player and GM alike. And, overall, I had a great deal of fun, mainly owing to the great GMing skills of Mike Dewar. When I first started playing Aberrant I rather enjoyed rolling my pool of 14d10s.

It gave me a sense of power, having so many numbers come rolling up. Gradually, however, I came to hate that massive pool of d10s. Every single time we had to roll our massive pools of dice play slowed to a crawl and my enjoyment levels dropped as we spent ages counting Successes and resolving various tests and checks.

More recently I've been playing in a Vampire campaign. Vampire doesn't boast quite so many dice as Aberrant in general, although it's usually still well above my 4 dice limit. Despite the reduced dice pool sizes, however, I soon realised that rolling handfuls of dice over and over again was just not very much fun. Once again, I was having more fun between the bouts of dice rolling than during them.



Now, I realise there will be a great deal of argument on this point. Many people I've spoken to continue to argue that they enjoy the feeling of power that comes with rolling two or three handfuls of dice. Me, however, well, let's just say that I've had my fill of dice-rolling by the bucketful and that unless I'm playing a

game of Warhammer 40K, in which large-scale rolling is virtually unavoidable, I'd much prefer to role a single die, or maybe two.

In conclusion it is fairly logical to mark large Dice Pools as yet another feature that every system shouldn't have. While small Dice Pools are much less of a problem, Dice Pools in general introduce added complexity and also greatly increase the amount of time spent on book-keeping related activities. This in turn reduces the amount of time one spends actually having fun, which is never a good thing.

We can summarise this choice with the word Complexity.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Many systems feature the concept of Advantages and Disadvantages. These are also often referred to as Merits and Flaws. And, as you can guess, these are yet another thing to have drawn my ire. There is a happy ending to this story but I think I should first detail the bad stuff...

Anyone who has played Vampire or any other White Wolf system has encountered the system of Merits and Flaws. In concept they're a pretty good idea. Essentially they allow players to reflect components of their character's background story using the game system itself.

One interesting example is the Final Death Flaw found in Vampire. A player taking this flaw is, ultimately, consigning their character sheet to the dust-binder or, for some, trash can. A character with this Flaw is destined to die, often in some particularly horrible fashion. A fun idea and one that can be very interesting to play, no doubt.

However, it's time to look at the bad part. In Vampire and many other systems to boot Merits and Flaws are purchased during character creation. Merits tend to cost a certain number of points, while Flaws tend to give the player extra points to spend. In theory this isn't such a bad idea, as it gives the player who takes a number of Flaws to gain extra points during character creation that can be used to improve the character in some other respect.

In practice however, Merits and Flaws are usually an excuse for gaining additional character creation points at almost no additional cost to the player. The large majority of Flaws chosen tend to be those that prove fairly easy to deal with, while the majority of Merits chosen tend to be those that provide concrete benefits on a frequent basis.

The question I have to ask is: What's the whole point, then? If Advantages and Disadvantages are only being used as a means of min-maxing one's character, do they really have any role in many games? After all, it's quite easy to simulate the effects of any Merit

or Flaw you'd care to find in the White Wolf books, and more besides, merely by integrating them deeply into your character background and requesting that your GM make use of this. The point at which Merits and Flaws become used to gain a general advantage during character creation without necessarily affecting the roleplaying experience is the point at which one should consider dumping them altogether.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, there is a happy ending to this particular point. The newest edition of White Wolf's game system presented in the new World of Darkness books has improved various game features. Pertinent to this discussion is the fashion in which Merits and Flaws have been altered. According to what I've heard, these no longer allow players to milk them for extra points during character creation. Instead, they now provide a player with the ability to gain extra experience points in a session by roleplaying the tenets of the Merits and Flaws they have chosen. A simple idea, but one that should definitely be implemented more widely in my opinion.

Concluding the subject of Advantages and Disadvantages, we find that this particular feature should not be a part of every game system for somewhat different reason. It is also necessary to qualify this conclusion somewhat, with the advent of new forms of such features. The classic style in which Advantages and Disadvantages are handled does not have a place in every system because it does more to encourage character min-maxing than actual roleplaying. Complexity is not such an issue in this case, whereas roleplaying suitability is. So, we can put it down to Suitability and Complexity.

Multiple Types of Dice

Happily enough, this is no longer as great a problem as it once was. Nevertheless, it's one that shouldn't be forgotten in the blink of an eye.

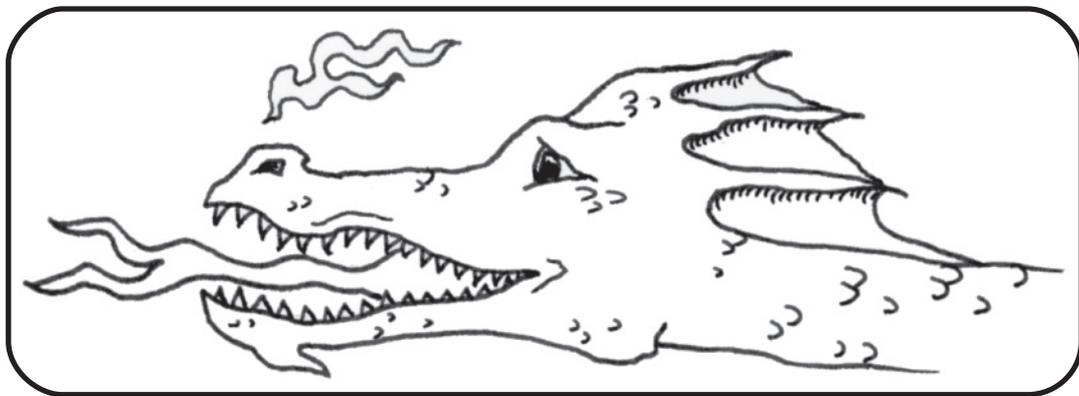
A game system that uses multiple types of dice or, in fact, multiple types of any kind of resolution system, is adding to its own complexity in a fashion that is generally rather needless. Sure, using different dice in different quantities gives you differing probability curves. And I'm sure I speak for many of you when I exclaim loudly: Who cares!?!

If I was really that worried about the differing probability curves of the six-sider as compared to the thirteen-sider I would be doing a PhD in Statistics and would probably never get around to writing this article. Furthermore, I would probably be an avid punter of that peculiar game system that some Computer Scientists in the U.S. put together that relies on each gamer owning a programmable graphing calculator.

Needless to say, I'm not doing a PhD in Statistics and I sure as hell don't punt weirdo game systems that rely on expensive calculators.

Possibly the only other point I can add on this topic is that multiple resolution systems and tools (i.e. dice) in one game serve to alienate new players, something we already discussed and being a *bad* thing...

Multiple Dice types are, in conclusion, a bad thing for a number of reasons. Primarily, they



increase the complexity of the game, in some cases to unmanageable levels. Another problem, one which is more of an issue to poorer players, is that of cost. Considering they're blocks of plastic, dice are actually kind of expensive. Buying lots of them and buying lots of different types just hits the wallet even harder. So, we chalk this one up to Complexity and Cost.

Too Many Numbers

My final point can be broadly summed up under the title you just read on the previous line. To take a page from Animal Farm:

4 Numbers Good!

400 Numbers Baaaaaad!

But what precisely do I refer to by numbers? Well, there are a couple of things, I guess. The two most pertinent examples being Skills and their good friend Stats. Many are the systems out there that contain excess amounts of character Skills. Numerous too are the systems roaming this world that feature ridiculous numbers of numbers that are used to describe such concepts as Strength, Speed, Luck and Number Of Days Since Character Last Bathed.

Alas, I find a perfect example of such a system in my own pet love, Heavy Gear. As much as I love the setting presented in the Heavy Gear RPG, I hate the intricacies of the game system itself.

In Heavy Gear the Skills section of the rulebook runs for many a page and this is not simply due to each skill having an extensive description, but rather as a result of there being something like 50 different skills. That's 40-30 too many Skills in my picky view.

A similar situation applies to Stats in Heavy Gear. Each character in the game is described by a total of fifteen different Stats! And to boot, a third of those self-same Stats are not just your plain garden-gnome variety of Stat. Nope, fully one-third of these Stats are all-singing, all-dancing "Secondary" Stats. For the uninformed, this means that these Stats are calculated using various combinations of the other ten Stats. And every single time one of the ten "Primary" Stats changes, for whatever reason it may be, any "Secondary" Stats based on it need to be recalculated.

Having used these examples the overall point of this topic should be quite clear:

Too Many Numbers = Too Much Effort = Added Irritation = etc., etc., etc....

Just remember kids, it could happen to a system near you, so keep your eyes peeled...

Oh, and before I forgot. Summarising this last section is pretty easy.

One word: Complexity.

Here's two things from d@vid, who has a

twisted obsession for one-shot systems from small publishers...

Supplements

Why can't your system stand on its own? Doesn't your setting provide enough hooks for GMs to come up with their own ideas? Supplements are money grubbers, plain and simple. I'm not saying that decent supplements and revisions don't exist, just that they're as rare as decent movie sequels.

Bad examples: Any White Wolf splatbook, ptooi! Any Dark Sun product that wasn't the original boxed set (because there're enough hooks in there to run 10 completely different campaigns).

Good examples: Unknown Armies 2nd Ed, unless you already own more than three 1st Ed products. Whichever version of Ars Magica it is that everyone actually uses. All the Sorcerer supplements, naturally.

Skills You Don't Use

I can't abide a shopping list of skills, and not just because I loathe stats-and-skills systems. What is the point in having Perform: Noseflute, if it is not going to come up in the game? Responsibility lies partially with players (if the skill isn't relevant to your character, why pick it?), but also with kitchen-sink designers. If your game has sufficient focus, everything on the character sheet will be relevant to every character.

Contrariwise, there's nothing worse than picking a skill, and have it never come up. In a game like D&D you're wasting resources if you spend XP on a rarely-used skill like *Scrying*. In a character-driven game, the GM should recognise personalised, relevant skills as plot hooks.

Bad examples: *Drive* in any system (if you're just driving, why bother? if it's a rare car chase, use your Dexterity/Speed/relevant stat; if you're playing Need For Speed D20, that's a different story, I expect you have a Change Gears skill as well). Any number of other skills in D&D. And Call of Cthulhu. And GURPS. And...

Good examples: Imagine Cthulhu with only Spot Hidden and Psychoanalysis. Any system without skills.

And one last contribution, this time from Alistair. Something Every System Shouldn't Have...

Complimentary Prophylactics

Fairly self-explanatory, unless you're an alien or just very very innocent.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WARGAMES UNION

Colin Webster

Established wargames clubs can be traced back to the early 1960's, with such a club even having a photograph of its members and activities being published on the cover of *Wargamer's Newsletter* in 1965. *Wargamer's Newsletter* was a fanzine printed and published by the highly esteemed Donald Featherstone.



take on a more structured appearance.

The club was started by ex-sportsmen who were used to club, provincial, and national structures. Such founders saw no reason why the same structures should not be applied to wargames. Of course there were detractors among the founder members, who eventually saw merit in the argument of creating a formal structure.

In 1980 the South African Wargames Union was formed. The founding clubs were the Wits University Wargames Club, the Durban Wargames Group, the Discovery Wargames Club and the Easterns Wargames Group.

Although the body at first was by no means representational of clubs in South Africa, it did not take long to start affiliating all of the existing clubs.



1995 Ancients figure-gaming team (finished third in Derby): Christo Steenkamp, Edward van Trotsenburg, Edward Mouton (Air Namibia - Sponsor), Colin Webster, and Grant Casey

Since South Africa is a land of vast distances, a number of clubs sprung up and existed totally oblivious to other wargaming clubs around the country. Each club was indeed an island and it seemed as though most of the clubs revelled in their isolation.

The isolationist tendencies of these clubs were damaging to the growth of the game, and often, newly interested players would venture to a venue to find out that a club had disbanded.



1998 Ancients figure-gaming team: Rudolph Joubert, David Webster (front), Colin Webster (back), and Rudi Joubert (who also was the technical coach for The 1995 Springbok Rugby Team)

Only with the creation of the Wargames Club at the University of the Witwatersrand did wargaming

about accrediting wargames as they would not even accredit chess. Nevertheless when began our operation of knocking on doors to get the game accredited.



2000 Junior Ancients figure-gaming team: Marc Marais, Andre Tonkin (Junior World Champion), Vincent Lane, Simon Peckham

In 1986 SAWU entered into negotiations to host a championship between the Society of Ancients (UK) and ourselves. Due to the tax breaks of the time, any sponsor would have been entitled to deduct 180% of the expenses incurred. Of course, we had sponsors knocking on our door. It was the Apartheid government's way of busting sport sanctions.

The only problem was that we needed formalised accreditation to realise the tax break.

Without accreditation, we were unable to access the finances required, and the tour never happened.

However, we were not deterred, and in fact we were heartily encouraged when Dr Evgenii Rabiner, one of our all-time-great players, went across to the USA in 1980 and apparently beat the pants off all his opposition. We all thought if Evgenii could do it in America, we could do it at the Derby World Team Wargames Championships.

As a result we redoubled our efforts and bombarded the SA Confederation of Sport with requests.



2000 Morabaraba team: David Hlophe, Petrus Mqoshekile, Amos Mavuso, Simon Skhosana

With all the political wrangling in getting the clubs to work together, and to find a common purpose, it took time to establish the rules for national championships. Eventually, concord was achieved and in 1984, the first South African Individual Championships were held.

One thing that became evident was that in order for wargames to grow and prosper in South Africa, the game had to be accredited by the authorities.

The South African Wargames Union (SAWU) thus approached the Department of Education and the Confederation of South African Sport. Both were highly sceptical

The Confederation relented, and in 1991 accepted SAWU as a full member.



Wargames became a fully-accredited sport, and SAWU was entitled to give a national team Springbok Colours as long as the team met with the criteria set by the Springbok Colours Board.



2000 Wargames team: Marc Marais, Andre Tonkin, Vincent Lane, Simon Peckham, Chris Steenkamp, Colin Webster, David Webster, Kevin Hoyle, Petrus Mqoshekile, Amos Mavuso, David Hlophe, Simon Skhosana.

In 1987 SAWU had embarked on a policy of involving the majority of South Africans. Of course it had to be low-key, and very unofficial. As any reader would immediately guess there were a number of members vehemently opposed to our policy.

The only way in which we could take wargames to the masses was through the traditional game of *morabaraba*, played by 40% of all South Africans and most popular in the mines. We ran championships in the mines which were sponsored by our local breweries. The championships proved to be very popular and grew in size year after year.



Another amusing aspect of SAWU being accepted into membership with COSAS was that players received

Springbok colours for wargames long before any chess player ever did!

SAWU also became a member of the National Olympic Sports Council as soon it was unbanned and remained loyal to it until it finally wound up as the NSC to become the South African Sports Commission.

The accreditation that we have received over the years has done us proud. Not only has it enabled SAWU

to access sponsorships, but government funding as well. In the past five years SAWU has received approximately R270,000.00 in sponsorships and R150,000.00 in government grants. The money has been essential in promoting all the games that we offer and getting teams across to compete in international events.

The most popular periods that we promote are:

Board gaming:

- Draughts
- Morabaraba
- Moruba
- SesothoMorabaraba (a variant of Morabaraba)

Figure gaming:

- Ancients
- Pike & Shot
- Horse & Musket
- World War 2

Currently, SAWU has 1 423 registered players in 33 clubs spread around the country. A breakdown of our membership is as follows:

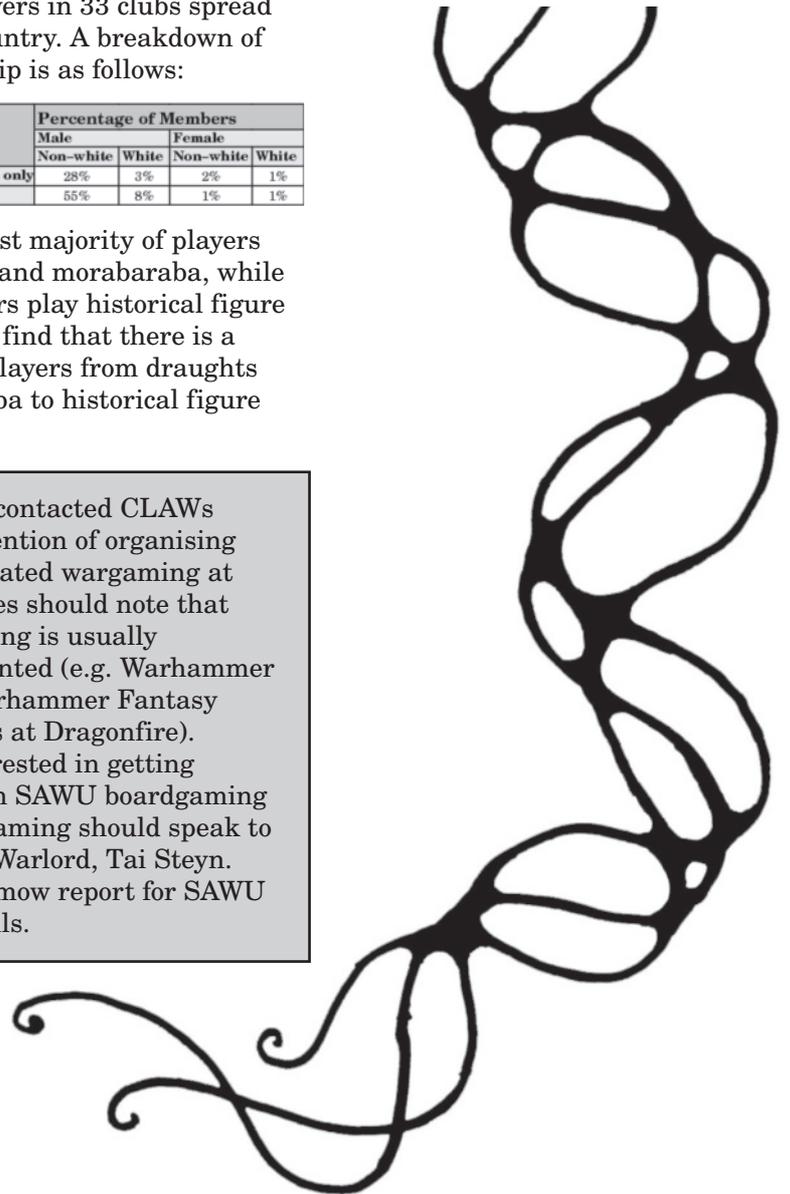
Category	Percentage of Members			
	Male		Female	
	Non-white	White	Non-white	White
School level and Under 24 only	28%	3%	2%	1%
Other	55%	8%	1%	1%

Of that, the vast majority of players play draughts and morabaraba, while only 350 players play historical figure games, but we find that there is a movement of players from draughts and morabaraba to historical figure games.

Colin has contacted CLAWs with the intention of organising SAWU-affiliated wargaming at UCT. Newbies should note that our wargaming is usually fantasy-oriented (e.g. Warhammer 40K and Warhammer Fantasy tournaments at Dragonfire). Anyone interested in getting involved with SAWU boardgaming and figure gaming should speak to the CLAWs Warlord, Tai Steyn. See the zammow report for SAWU contact details.



Demonstrating wargames at school level. Learners at the King Edward VII Preparatory School are encouraged to play historical figure games, draughts and morabaraba (top).



Demo games

(Mike Dewar) At Dragonfire, we always try to broaden your experiences. So, this Dragonfire, we did our best to introduce people to the joys of entrepreneurship and paranoia.

Entrepreneurship came in the form of the fastest-run *Inspectres* demo of all time, in which the players created characters, created an entire ghost-busting franchise branch and finished a case/mystery/extermination in under thirty minutes. For their next trick, they will attempt to finish a five minute White Wolf combat scene in under a half-an-hour.

The paranoia (not *Paranoia*, mind you), came from a demo of *Conspiracy X*, which was so secret I'm not even sure what it was about.

But the players had fun, and the DM had fun (at their expense), so that appeared to work out all right.

Clearence

(Lucas Wheeler) In a lack of sleep induced haze, the module ran reasonably smoothly. There was massive destruction, large amounts of property damage. There was ruthless killing, civilians wantonly mowed down.

Everything seemed to go according to plan.

Best GM: Alistair Pearson

Runner-up: Mike Dewar

Best Player: Hendri Cawood

Best Team: Team (a side portion of) Steamturtle

Palace of Dreams, Palace of Glass

Best GM: Hendri Cawood

Runner-up: Alistair Pearson

Best Player: Caite

Best Team: Team Steamturtle

Gone

(Mike Dewar) *Gone* was well-received, thankfully. If I'd spent hours arguing with Conrad about architectural styling (so the PCs could break into a Realistic Location) and researching great art for the last 500 years (so the PCs could steal Realistic Things), and no one liked it, I might well have gone insane (but only after careful research into Realistic Mental Disorders).

Thanks to *Gone's* freeflow form, the robbery plans were many and varied: from Thurteam's 6-hour epic (complete with soundtrack), to violent bloodbaths, to kill-free stealthathons, to one group who actually skipped the robbery entirely and ended up making a small fortune through blackmailing the gallery owner. Six teams of six (DMs included) played the module, and some of them even got away with it.

Best GM: Alistair Pearson

Runner-up: Philip Anastasiadis

Best Player (Tie): Stuart Winter and Adrianna Pinska

Best Team: Thurteam

In the City

(Philip Anastasiadis) This ran in 1/2/3 hours depending on which team you were in, so I'm guessing different players will have had radically different experiences of the module,

but as I am currently writing this in a pleasantly unlynched condition I think it's fair to say that it all worked out in the end. It was more fun than a barrel of monkeys...

Best GM: Garrick van Onselen

Runner-up: Patrick Schreiber

Best Player: Stuart Winter (as a girl!)

Best Team: Thurteam

Resonance

(Brendan Quinlivan) Well, I can say that I was a little upset initially about the attendance for my module (only 3 teams), but that soon changed, thanks to Thurteam, Stuart, and Shaun. They all had a lot of "fun" by the looks of it, especially Michelle, who was most upset at her character (supposedly) dying, only to wake up on the landing and not submerged in mercury. I could only grin upon hearing Stuart screaming across the hall, and Shaun seemed to have his group in suspense. The "Guess The Plot/WTF™" idea seemed to work fairly well, with several entries. I must congratulate Shaun/Dave for winning, and also Michelle/Schpat for ponderously sifting through the module, searching for clues in a very Sherlock Holmes fashion. Thanks to everyone for making it to the module, and giving me some glee. It's the reason I write these things...

PS: The "Send Brendan To Therapy" fund is now open, and donations would be very much appreciated. We don't want this man loose! Please help. Every donation counts! - The World At Large

Best GM: Stuart Winter

Runner-up: Philip Anastasiadis

Best Player (Tie): Jason Burke

Best Team: Thurteam

Hush

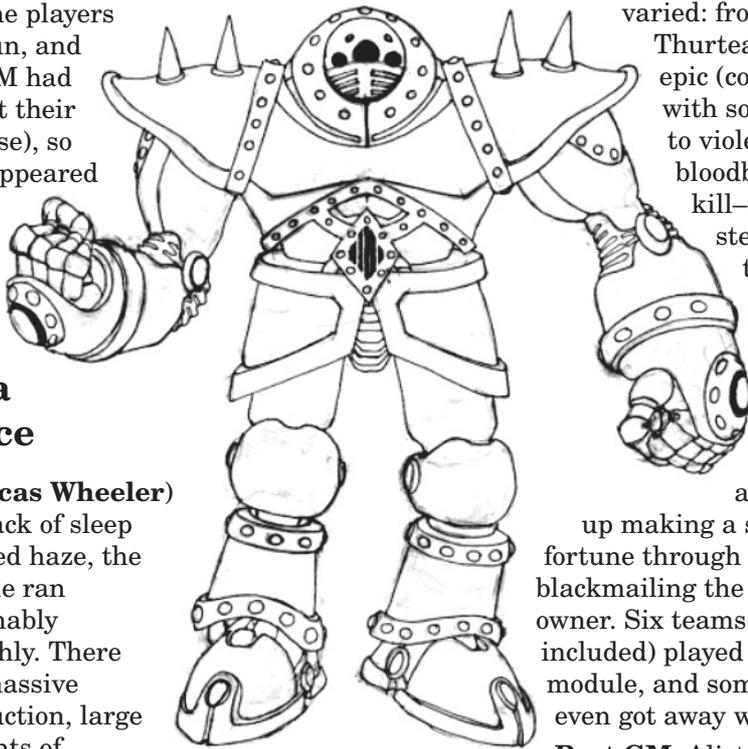
Best GM: Alistair Pearson

Best Player: Shelagh Parry

Best Team: Thurteam

Card demos

(Tim Lawrance) There were a few games of *Doomtown* and *L5R*, and apparently one of each that did not



involve only the demo organisers (Ryan, Yancke and myself). After the pizza order arrived the evening devolved into a Grand Munchkin session...

Munchkin

(Reuel Miller, local MiB) On the Sunday and Monday, I ran the *Munchkin* tournament. Since I was not given a dedicated time slot for the *Munchkin* tournament, I ran it along side the roleplaying modules... I then started the final [on Sunday], which went on for about half an hour before the comedy of errors was over...

[a full report, including tournament rules, is available at <http://dragonfire.uct.ac.za/2004/munchkin.html> - ed.]

Overall winner: Sed Martin

Magic the Gathering

(Philip Anastasiadis, DCI Judge) The Magic ran smoothly despite a disappointing turnout. Although more than 50% of the attendants were from Stellenbosch first place went to UCT student Taahir Teladia. Thanks to Michelle W & Alex for helping set up the venue, and to Michele H & Ian for technology support.

First place: Taahir Teladia (UCT)

Twelve Night

(Tim Lawrance and d@vid seaward) Twelve Night ran very successfully at Dragonfire, with the players keying in to the emotional aspects of their characters, including our first time LARPer! Certain parties insisted that the next LARP d@vid writes must have happy, fluffy bunnies.

Players: Adrianna, Claire, Faheemah, Garrick, Graham, Jessica, Jo, Neil, Nenad, Rolf, Wayne

Photo gallery:

gaming.inkwell.za.net/twel fe/innocence-gallery.html

CLAWthing's Report

Well, another Dragonfire finally winds down, like a demented clockwork threshing machine after a bloodstained four-day rampage, covered in gore and the exhausted bodies of its victims.

But fun, all the same. In attempt to get the age-old Dragonfire Timing Issue (less politely known at the Everyone's Sodding Late Again Issue) under control, I issued some exciting Draconian Measures (available at our website now: Give a CLAWthing a hand, and he takes the whole arm), which seemed to work fairly well, all things considered. I can proudly say the latest module started half-an-hour late, and most were on-time or five minutes or less behind¹.

We ran LARPs, wargaming, modules, cardgaming, module demos, cardgaming demos, wargaming demos, demo demos, demolitions demos, demolition derbies... it was a hell of a good time. More details on the reportback page, but I wouldn't want to cover

anybody else's portfolio, you know. And there may be a Secret Nazi Cell active in CLAWs (Maybe even Evil Undead Time-Traveling Nazis for Jesus?), but that's only of interest to conspiracy theorists and the Secret Nazis. Who don't exist, of course.

Despite slightly lower attendance than usual (cheapskate out-of-towners²!), Dragonfire was a blast. Possibly even a thermonuclear one, given that the Manhattan Project Afterparty was one of our LARPs.

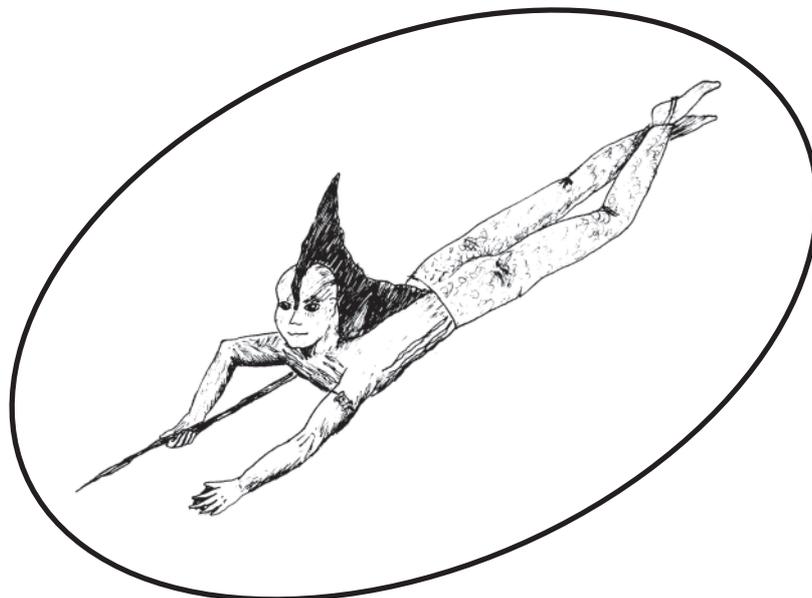
Weak joke, I know. The clash of cymbals draws near.

But Dragonfire is not measured in the witticisms of its organisers (thankfully), but rather in masses of exhausted, happy, insomniac roleplayers / LARPer / wargamers / cardgamers who stagger out of our doors (or into them, depending on how long they've been without sleep) at the convention end.

Go home and sleep, children³, and set your alarm clocks for Dragonfire next year.

Mike Dewar (*Exhausted CLAWthing El Supremo*)

1. For those of you checking your watches and about to prove me wrong "by X minutes on team Y playing module Z, let me advise you to reread the sentence. I can indeed proudly say that, and there's nothing you can do about it. I have in no way commented on my accuracy or honesty. (Though we were pretty damn timely. So there.)
2. If you come next year, we'll forgive you. We swear.
3. This isn't me being patronising. Dragonfire: **Innocence**, remember. Childishness was part of the theme⁴.
4. Okay, maybe a little patronising. Gotta get my kicks somehow.



THE ZAMMOW REPORT

d@vid seaward

Despite my best attempts to get distracted by everything but, here is the second collection of news from roleplaying and related organizations around the country. And a calendar of events (although I'd be sure to confirm dates with the organisers before booking flights).

I haven't had half a chance to update the website, as I now get paid to update others. Bookmark it and maybe by the Dragonfire issue there'll be an update, eh? As always, new contacts and updated details are welcome. (Old contacts too, some entries have been reduced to mere rumours and speculation.) Copies of CLAWmarks are delivered to all zammow contributors.

<http://gaming.inkwell.za.net/zammow/>

ancient.mariner@gmail.com

Altered States

No contributor

Email:

soundmotion@telkomsa.net

Story contact: Simon, 083 733 9591

Events contact: Shaun, 073 363 4745

Shaun K may or may not be leaving us for the green and ichorous isle this year. Hopefully not leaving Fuzzy and the other *Illusion of Free Will* Marshalls with irate players, eh, Shaun? There's even a player planning trips from Jozi just for the LARPs! (Illusion is a campaign Vampire LARP, although there's only been one session so far...)

Hopefully we can also expect more AS LARPs at Dragonfire 2005.

Cape Legion of Adventurers and Wargamers (CLAWs)

No contributor

CLAWthing: Ian Kitley,

reth@webmail.co.za, 072 348 0313

Guildmistress: Sean Finnis,

fnnsea002@mail.uct.ac.za, 083 989 5746

Web + wiki:

<http://claws.uct.ac.za/>

Well, CLAWs survived yet another year without a room. Dragonfire was a blast, especially in the case of

certain wargaming tables. 2005 promises a campus-wide running of KAOS (assassination with water pistols), GM and player feedback at Midweek Mayhem, a four-session LARP mini-campaign featuring blood and chocolate, and maybe even some of those roleplaying and LARPing workshops people bring up every 18 months or so.

KwaZulu-Natal Roleplaying Association (KZNRPA)

Contributor: William MacDonald

KZNRPA fhtagn R'lyeh. [*but look out for dates for Imbolcon – ed*]

online stuff

Check out

<http://scifi.meetup.com/123/> (Cape Town) and

<http://scifi.meetup.com/137/> (Jozi) for online organisation of group meetups. (These are Science Fiction and Fantasy groups; potential exists for Roleplaying, LARPing, etc groups to be started. Wikipedia and bookcrossings groups also exist for Cape Town.) Neither have seen significant activity, but the idea is sound and worth support. Next meeting is on Sunday February 20 (see Calendar). Hopefully this time I'll actually go.

Also keep an eye on roleplaying.co.za, which started up in April last year, blossomed, wilted, eventually switched to PHP, blossomed, wilted, got shut down for being in PHP despite being plugged, and is currently inactive. But likely to blossom again.

Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA)

Contributor: Sister Mairi Jean (Tracy Craig)

The Society for Creative Anachronism is a medieval research and re-enactment society. It was formed in Berkeley, California, in 1966 and has spread around the world. The European Middle Ages are defined very loosely as being from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Renaissance, or roughly from 600AD to 1600AD. See

<http://www.sca.org/>

Shire of Adamastor (SoA)

Web:

<http://www.adamastorshire.co.za/>

Seneschal: Garsiyya ibn Ibrahim (Patrick Vine), seneschal@adamastorshire.co.za, 072 431 4550

Chatelaine: David Eikonoklasmos (David Seaward), chatelaine@adamastorshire.co.za, 084 627 4637

The Shire of Adamastor is a group within the Kingdom of Drachenwald (<http://www.drachenwald.sca.org/>), a kingdom that spans Europe, Africa and parts of Asia. The Shire of Adamastor consists of Cape Town and environs, our closest neighbour being the Incipient Shire of Griffin's Tor in Gauteng.

The Shire of Adamastor is a very active shire. We have heavy fighting as well as rapier fighting, and practise many arts. Notable amongst these are singing, calligraphy and illumination, tablet weaving, cooking, all sorts of needlework and dancing, as well as the creation of all the armour the fighters have to wear.

Of all our events last year, *Here Be Dragons* was the biggest: a two day event in October, held out at Genadendal. We were extremely fortunate to have three visitors from overseas, one of them the Queen of Drachenwald. Three tournaments were held, two royal courts, many good meals including a feast on Saturday night, and several informative classes. In 2005 *Here Be Dragons* might be located in Franschoek.

Incipient Shire of Griffin's Tor (GT)

Web:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/griffinstor/>

The Incipient Shire of Griffin's Tor also boasts fine crafts. They recently contributed a fine Pelican's Mantle to the Drachenwald Winter Coronation: <http://moonwolf.fotopic.net/p11118479.html>

South African Science

Fiction Alliance (SASFA)

Haven't heard anything, so SASFA appear to have gone into stasis. There are lots of great sf movies for fans to look forward to, though—Batman One, Hitchhiker's Guide, Revenge of the Sith and Serenity to name a few. Jump up and down and see what you can do (see meetup.com), but keep that clip about the Star Wars nerd queue in mind.

South African Wargames Union (SAWU)

Contributor: Colin Webster

Chairperson: Colin Webster,
wargames@iafrica.com

Tel: 011 828 4994

Fax: 011 622 6113

Web: <http://www.sawu.org.za/>

See the full article for all the details! Note that SAWU focus on board games and historical gaming rather than fantasy wargaming.

Tuks Krygspel Vereniging (TKV)

Contributor: Natalie Els

Chairperson: Natalie Els,
s22186027@tuks.co.za, 082 561 6014

Vice-chair: Benni,
s22222465@tuks.co.za, 084 842 7667

Treasurer: Tiaan,
mhatting@iafrica.com, 082 922 6862

Web: <http://www.tkv.up.ac.za/>

TKV (Tuks Krygspel Vereniging or Tuks Wargaming Society) is the UP wargaming society, hosting and organising informal games for all wargamers who ask... or annoy us long enough ;). We mostly play informal *Magic The Gathering* (MTG) and *Legend of the Five Rings* (L5R) games in our off periods at the Student Sentrum on main campus.

We also bring roleplayers together for *Dungeons and Dragons* and White Wolf based games. Aaaaannnd as soon as class starts again on main campus the Wednesday evening Tabletop gaming will take off again. They are mostly *Warhammer 40K* players, and *Confrontation* is being demo-ed for those who show interest.

We recently appointed the Vampire Prince of Pretoria as our brand new *Vampire, the Eternal Struggle* (VTES)

representative. He is already hosting games every now and again. (Hopefully we will get a schedule for that soon.)

Outside members are welcome and the renowned Dungeon Master (DM) Naas is our contact for these contributors to our cause. Contributing consists of joining and/or hosting games. :)

Westville Historical and Miniatures (WHAMM)

They're wargamers in Durban, and I swear I used to have contact details... Well, if any of them play *Warhammer 40K*, David Sharpe beat them.

the zammow calendar

February

19 **Valentine's Tournament**, St Joseph's Castle (SoA): Picnic and heavy weapons tournament.

Orientation Party, The One Ring (CLAWs): It's a party. At the One Ring. Get used to it.

19 & 20 **Old Edwardians Summer Championships**, Johannesburg (OE)

20 **Cape Town Science Fiction & Fantasy meetup.com:** 12h00, Mexican Kitchen, 13 Bloem St @ Long St, Cape Town, 27 21 423 1541

March

19 **HolmGanga** (GT)
Flower War, Richard Luyt Room (CLAWs): CLAWs wiki: FlowerWar. Alternate history campaign LARP. First session.

April

2 & 3 **UPCON 2005**, University of Pretoria (TKV): Tuks roleplaying con, including MTG regionals, RPGA scoring roleplying modules, *Warhammer: Fantasy* and *40K* and *Confrontation* tournament. Possibly a mini-LAN. Pre-registration will be available online a month prior to UPCON 2005.

May

21 **Arts & Sciences Championship** (GT)
Adamastor Shire

Birthday (SoA)

June

18 **Heavy Weapons Championship** (GT)

July

9 **Bardic Event** (SoA)

15 – 17 **Icon** (Jabula, Sandringham, JHB. <http://rpg.co.za/>): South Africa's biggest gaming convention. Currently looking for module writers; contact Grant at gracrom@iafrica.com. CLAWs types should speak to the committee if you're interested in joining the annual train trip up to Jozi.

23 & 24 **SAWU SA Schools Championship:** Maritzburg Christian School

August

6 & 7 **Old Edwardian Winter Championships**, Johannesburg (OE)

9 **Birthday Event & par d'arms** (GT)

XX **Dragonfire** (UCT. <http://dragonfire.uct.ac.za/>): South Africa's oldest gaming convention, hosted by CLAWs.

September

3 & 4 **Old Edwardian Doubles Championships**, Johannesburg (OE)

23 – 25 **Here Be Dragons III** (SoA): Tentative date and venue.

October

1 **Best of Griffin's Tor** (GT)

December

10 & 11 **SAWU South African Nationals & National Convention:** Durbanville Preparatory School

17 **Yule** (GT)

Unknown

SchpatCON
(<http://www.schpatcon.co.za/>): The other Cape Town roleplaying convention.

Imbolcon

(<http://www.imbolcon.co.za/>): Durban's roleplaying con.

Illusion of Free Will (CLAWs wiki: *IllusionOfFreeWill*): Campaign Vampire LARP.

The Dao of the Character Sketch

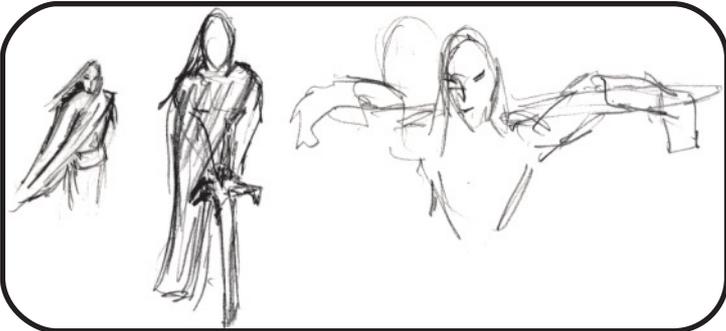
Yancke van Tonder couldn't draw curtains

This article is for all those roleplayers who are interested in bringing their character into the world of two dimensions. I will try to explain the methods behind a good sketch rather than “how to draw” as I have limited space and there are tons of stuff already written on that subject.

For the purposes of this article do not worry about perfect proportion or anatomy, at least not initially—all that will come later. Like in many things in life, forethought is key, so that's why the first step in this process, the thumbnail, is vitally *NB* to a decent sketch. The entire sketch has to be considered before you actually start the actual drawing.

Step 1: The Thumbnail.

A Thumbnail is a tiny rough sketch drawn with the sole aim of getting the creative juices flowing. Draw a lot of them before proceeding to the next stage. The more effort taken at the beginning planning stage of the drawing, the less gray hairs you'll have later... trust me. A good thumbnail should have dynamic, interesting composition. Once you have a decent selection, pick a couple you like and develop them a little further. Now is the time to pick the *one* you like best after a little refinement. Make sure the basic tonal values have been finalized at this stage.



Step 2 : Structure, Reference and Observation

Now that you have thought about your drawing a little and have a “map” to work off you can start with the actual character sketch.

Start by laying the basic form and structure of the sketch. If these terms seem foreign, just grab a book on drawing from the library or get a tut from the net. Once you are confident about your final composition go get reference material. Get a friend to pose for you. Make sure to get the tricky bits like hands, feet and the face. A digicam is a blessing but real life observation works best. If I can give one tip that you remember after reading this... look. Always look at what you are drawing. You should be looking at what you are drawing more often than at the actual drawing.

Try only to look at the page to keep your “place”. Remember, observational drawing almost always looks better than formulaic.

Many modern illustrators work for years to fuse the two

styles in their own style. Everybody has their own way of drawing; the problem is to retain that freshness while learning the discipline of critical drawing. Try to keep your pencil work light as it is easier to correct; also try to consider each line drawn before the actual execution thereof.



Step 3 : Pulling it all together

Now your basic form is in place and the time has arrived to tuck into the meat of the drawing. Start developing things like facial expression, clothes, hands and feet. Mess around with variations on another piece off-paper until you feel confident and then fill in some details. Try not to take shortcuts, draw what you see. A shoelace is more than a simple line—it is a 3-D object, so draw it like one. Once you have considered all the details and you are happy with basic “construction”, it's time to move on.

Step 4 : Finalizing the sketch

Take a step back, and I mean literally step back. Look at your sketch; now look at it in a mirror. Any problems pop up? If so, fix them.

Once that is done, draw your final lines, erasing any redundant or incorrect pencil work. Voila the rest is easy and I'll leave that up to you budding artists out there.

Useful tips

1. Think about the character being drawn. Try to incorporate some of his traits or activities into the sketch.
2. Think before you draw, and keep your pencil strokes light, as it keeps corrections to a minimum. Lots of smudges can ruin a good drawing.
3. Keep your sketches of observed drawings made of difficult bits. Having something to look at can help a lot. Collect them in a reference “scrap” book.
4. When developing a sketch, treat the background/environment of the character with equal importance. A background done as an afterthought always looks crap. Develop them as a whole.
5. Do not work on your sketch by finishing a small piece at a time. Rather develop all aspects of the sketch at the same time. Repeat after me: “Work as a whole”—that way that perfect face that took forever doesn't sit on a body that's too big or small.

Classified!

Campaigns

Fresh Meat

Genre: Horror, Humour

GM: d@vid seaward

Contact:

ancient.mariner@gmail.com /
084 627 4637

System: My Life With Master

Players: 3 to 4

Schedule: Mini-campaign, approx 5 sessions. Starting late Feb or early March, evenings or weekends once a week.

You are the minions of a twisted malcontent and sycophant. He will baste you with fury, and butter you with desperation. He will bid you do evil, turn you against your loved ones, and let you stew. And then, someone will skewer him.

See previous MLWM campaign on the wiki at MyLifeWithMonday.

Open to raw newbies, overcooked Narrativists and soups of the day. Final group entirely timetable and travel dependent. Email your contact details.

Peacekeepers

Genre: Mecha, Sci-Fi

GM: Adam Jorgensen

Contact:

oop_man_za@ananzi.co.za

System: Heavy Gear 2nd Edition (maybe 3rd edition if I get the books...)

Players: 4 to 6

Schedule: Full-scale campaign, at least 1 semester, hopefully longer. Starting late Feb, afternoons or weekends once a week.

Five years have passed since Earth's Colonial Expeditionary Force (CEF) invaded Terra Nova. The Alliance between the Confederated Northern City-States (CNCS) and the Allied Southern Territories (AST) that repelled the invaders has begun to collapse in the years since the defeat of the CEF and it seems unlikely that Alliance will last another 12 months.

It is in this environment of crumbling allegiances that Paxton

Arms, Terra Nova's most important weapons manufacturer and its largest neutral organisation, manages to persuade the states of the disintegrating Alliance to create an independent peacekeeping and investigative authority.

The Terra Nova Peacekeeping Authority (TNPA) is supplied with the best equipment Terra Nova has to offer and is given a mandate to pursue peacekeeping activities anywhere on Terra Nova and beyond, to the very farthest reaches of the Helios system.

However, whether the TNPA will meet with success can only be determined by the bold, adventurous people who are selected from all over Terra Nova to serve amidst the ranks of the TNPA's peacekeeping and investigative forces.

This campaign is open to any who care to play, although new players will be given preference if there is an excess of applications for positions. Character creation will be very flexible and almost any idea for a character may be workable, provided player and GM spend a bit of time working the precise details out. Two final notes: each player will require about 3 or so six-sided dice, but since I have an excess of D6, this is not something players will have to worry about obtaining. Also, please note that the system is somewhat heavy-going but keep in mind that I will attempt to keep things running briskly with as little rules-mongering as possible.

P.S. There *may* be a R10 printing levy for players, as I do not own the Heavy Gear books at the moment, although I am attempting to obtain them post-haste.

Pitling Testing Game

Genre: Humour, Fantasy, Steampunk

GM: Adam Jorgensen

Contact:

oop_man_za@ananzi.co.za

System: Pitling

Players: 3 to 4

Schedule: Test campaign, will run as long as there are testers and it

needs testing. Starting whenever the players are ready, afternoons and weekends once every two weeks.

Welcome to The City, a sprawling fantasy metropolis ten times the size of present day New York and probably about 100 times older as well. The City is a fusion of various ideas, most notably Terry Pratchett's Discworld city of Ankh-Morpork and the City from the Thief series of computer games. Oh, and one more thing: The City is currently under siege.

This campaign is being run for testing purposes primarily. My aim is to develop the Setting and Game System with the help of extensive play-testing. Players will take on the role of Pitlings, pathetic little demons that are best described as the lowest of the low but that nevertheless are each special in their own particular ways.

Preference will be given to experienced players, as a great deal more player content creation is going to be allowed than in the average campaign. However, if you are a new player and feel that you have the imagination required feel free to apply. It be necessary for players to create moderately detailed characters at the very least so overall players should not enter the enterprise with the expectation that minimum input = maximum pleasure.

Anyway, for more info, please contact me...

The Lord Admirals

System: D&D (3.0)

DM: Tim Lawrance

Details: 3 or 4 mini-campaigns, 1 per quarter; suitable for first-timers and those who only want to commit to a single quarter—those who want to take their character through all the mini-campaigns are encouraged to do so.

Although there are legends of land, all anyone knows is the Ocean that is dotted with the monolithic steel platforms we call home. It was the 277th year of the Church and Marcus was to be crowned the first Lord Admiral of the great Empire of Dannin and Lavis—the first of four Lord Admirals under whose rule the Known Ocean would never be the same again.

Streets of Drakesbridge

GM name: Adrianna Pinska

GM contact:

adrianna.pinska@gmail.com

System: Sigil (homemade; beta test version)

Newbie friendly: Maybe (I'm mainly looking for more experienced players, but I won't automatically disqualify newbies)

Restrictions: I'm looking for two more players to complete a group of 4—but I may be persuaded to go up to 5.

URL: look up Sigil on the wiki for the latest info.

Drakesbridge is a cosmopolitan riverside trading town, home to a mix of interesting species and cultures. Here dwarven miners mingle with goblin artisans, orcish manual labour, the ever-present human majority and the occasional visiting elf (although sometimes reluctantly).

The city keeps many secrets, some of them dangerous. There are rumours of dark creatures wandering about, and whispers that the legend of the city's founding may be less legendary than most people believe.

There are always those who will pay handsomely to have certain curiosities discreetly investigated—and word on the street is that some of them are hiring.

Flower War Campaign LARP

GMs: Tim Lawrance, 072 262 1147,
timothy.lawrance@gmail.com

d@vid.seaward, 084 627 4637,
ancient.mariner@gmail.com

Details: 4 session campaign LARP, run once per quarter. Beginner LARPers welcome, but note that characters will be player-created, not

written for you.

Players: 15–30

Cost: R10 to join the campaign, R10 per LARP (includes Aztec cocoa!)

Character Creation/Sign-up:

Friday February 25, 19h00,
Richard Luyt Room

First session: March 19

Wiki page: FlowerWar

One hundred years ago the Mexicatl (Aztec) empire pre-empted the Caxtiltecatl (European) invasion, flying across the seas on great cocoaah. Rather than wage a bloody campaign, Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin sought the favour of the gods by engaging in a flower war, conquering rather than destroying the feeble Caxtiltecatl so that they might be offered as sacrifices later.

Player characters are European advisors in the 17th century court of the conquering Aztecs, squabbling and backstabbing for the benefit of their provinces. Mystical birthmarks have granted them uncanny powers, and many belong to underground societies, each with its own agenda.

But even the strongest alliances will be tested by powerful enticements...

Further Setting details will be made available in handouts at Character Creation, and on the wiki. (Or speak to the GMs.)

Deaths

Will Eisner. Ladies and gentlemen, a moment of silence, please, for the creator of the celebrated "The Spirit" and inventor of the graphic novel. One of the last of the Golden Age that created the medium we love. Goodbye Mr Eisner, get God to pay up on that contract!

Pentex First Team. 18. Dammit! Those were my favorite fomori!

Lilush. Sex, Blood, Flesh and Bones

Victoria Bouvier Sinclair. Leader of The Blood Angels, Winner of the Thrill Kill Klub, and Respected Sabbat Artist. Killed by a traitorous foot soldier in Montreal. A Mentor to us all, she will be missed.

Two rent-a-cops at the Montreal Zoo. Never get between a little girl with fangs and the big kitty cats.

Four Vampire Hunters. Next time wear a neckbrace.

Births

Dracula is the proud mother of a brood fathered by Goldilocks. Seriously though, my guppies have had babies and the tank is too small to accommodate them once they have grown. Anyone interested in adopting some young guppies should please call or me at 072 317 9271 or email me at lecturesshouldbe@thepub.co.za. Thanks.

Wanted

Three Bladed Sword. With Red hilt and white cross. Contact Princess Aliana, New York City sewers.

DJ needed. for high risk job at Club Eat Me. Must take requests.

Bouncers. for high risk job at Club Eat Me. Grenade experience a must. Bring own shotgun.

Major NPCs for extremely high risk job in Garrick's Sabbat Game. Those who cant soak aggravated damage need not apply. Elder Gods welcome. Own life-insurance a must.

Lost

Wolfgang's past. Last seen carried off by minions of the Evil Orange. If found, please contact the Malkavian Madness Network.



Previous Archbishop of Montreal. You make a deal with the Wyrms, you accept the consequences.

Fridge Quotes

Annie: When are you going to marry a queen?

James: When they make it legal in this country.

James: I usually don't touch bums.

Boyfriend:
coughbullshitcough

Dave42: If you were showing more lip I might have a chance.

Conrad: I have all the soul I need.

Mike: You're going to grow as a roleplayer if it kills you, me and the party

Conrad: Is it a civilian eye?

d@vid: ...some kind of pederastomancer...

d@vid: I don't remember saying that, that's sick.

Dave Moore: I hate it when I get all hard and stiff.

Hila: Her balls glow in UV.

Hila: That movie only scared me because I'd read the book before.

Garrick: What? Dazzle?

How to decorate a baby room, or, how to lose your sanity in the mundane world

Hendri Cawood gyres and gimble in the wabe

Make sure you are not involved in any way. Run to the hills. Hide! You do not need this aggravation in any way.

Smile. You didn't run fast enough and will now contribute to everything.

You will paint the sacred walls and then re-paint them in a different color. Oh wait. First choose a color. (Roll % Dice. Do not fail—Isolation 7) if you fail this check, do not say anything stupid like... But I hate pink. It is bad.

Now drag everything out of said room. Cover the carpet with all your old character sheets (of course they are no longer important—you are having a baby.)

Stop sniveling. Fake a severe back strain! When this does not work, open the paint. Roll a notice roll—if you failed this check, take your foot out of the paint tin. (I have pictures!). Paint. Paint... ask over friends... Sorry... Let me rephrase. Con friends into coming over and hand them brushes and rollers with the vague

promise of booze at some point.

Laugh hysterically at the ensuing chaos. Hope that the paint spots on the carpet will come out. Attempt a hide in shadows roll. Scream at dog to leave you alone. There's a good dog! Plan B—paint did not come out of carpet. Remove carpet. Say something like, "Wood is warmer and more aesthetically pleasing for the sprog." Yes... my DNA will continue. Run now and keep your grubby paws off her. I have various large sharp devices that will come in handy. Note to self... pay CLAWs membership x 3. See if they give group discounts. Make sure the graves are deep enough.

Paint some more. Finish in the little hours of the morning. Stand back and look at your handiwork. Roll a spot check. Fail again. You did not see the drips of paint on the antique cupboard. Mother-in-law coming for a visit this afternoon, it's her antique cupboard. She never liked you anyway.

Wake up pregnant spouse.

The apple of your eye, the icing on your cake. Come out of hiding as all this is your fault. Make tea. Hunt down the last chocolates in the house. Debase yourself and present said feast for her consumption. Explain that you have finished painting. Try to forget the sardonic sneer that lights her eyes and passes over her lips. Nervously wring hands as she inspects.

Get new paint. This was not the color she had in mind. It is just a touch too light and will emotionally scar the child for life. Yes, my child. Don't go there. Am still figuring a way to accidentally put black dye in the washing. She will wear black! Yes she will! This I swear!

Sorry dear, did not say anything. Mutter. Mutter... mumble.

New paint applied. Scream at dog. Chase dog around room with wet tail covering the walls in aesthetically pleasing patterns. She was just trying to help. Paint again. Kick over paint tin. Invent new swear words.

Find a ritual in a Call of Cthulhu Manual to exorcise one of the ancient ones that you accidentally summoned. Gibber. Drool. Run.

Regain sanity.

Walls are painted. Get horribly drunk, strip naked and run down the road. Arrange for bail to be paid. Make sure the local police keep your cell open. At least you did not have to paint the damn thing.

Go home. Sleep. Dream of ways to scare off boyfriends / girlfriends / strange demonic beings / CLAWmembers / grandparents. Wake up. Make a list of all the stuff you could return to the store if they got it wrong and it is a boy. Convert this total into beer money.

Cry.

Buy more paint. Make sure that this new color can be returned if not meeting approval of Pregnant Goddess... Yes... she has powers... No... You do not want to know. Evil powers... evil... yes my precious... sss... sss... ssss.

te h archblg0t of t3h nec0rp0lis

te h archblg0t of t3h nec0rp0lis

te h archblg0t of t3h nec0rp0lis

*** archie42 (bigot@196.30.79.10) has joined

<archie42> I hate irc
<archie42> u wanna know why...
<ork_khrist> you need to type
<Synkronos> You need to read?
<ork_khrist> typing hurts my fingers
<moonflake> that guy who keeps asking me
if i want to see his pic of
him in a g-string?

<archie42> hey! stfu!!!

<ShadowsLight> HAHahaha...

archie hates irc because...

<ork_khrist> what is this ASL!
<ork_khrist> ArSseHolE!
<ork_khrist> teh
<archie42> u R all teh suxxor
<archie42> s/teh/the
<Synkronos> All the people use s/
without actually knowing
where it comes from

archie42 has left the room

<ork_khrist> flameing a troll does not
mean the same thing on irc as
it does in DnD

<ork_khrist> I hate people that
understood that

<ork_khrist> I hate me
<moonflake> stupid nicks like hotgirl16

*** hotbigot42 (bigot@196.30.79.10) has
joined

<hotbigot42> FUCK U ALL :P
<moonflake> people who type in ALL CAPS

hotbigot42 is now known as archie42

<ork_khrist> hotgirl16 aint a girl
<ork_khrist> hotgirl16 aint hot
<ork_khrist> hotgirl16 is 10
<ork_khrist> hotgirl16 is 42
<ork_khrist> hotgirl16 is 16
<ork_khrist> irc is full of geek

<ork_khrist> s
<Synkronos> Nobody on irc can spell
<Synkronos> Nobody on irc can type
<ork_khrist> irc is full of l33t sp33k
<moonflake> pepole who cnat spel to save
there lifes

*** Hodgestar (Hodge@196.38.142.109) has
joined

<ork_khrist> you can get kick in IRC
<ork_khrist> you cant punch someone on irc
<ork_khrist> s/kick/kicked
<moonflake> the ops suxx0r
<archie42> why does everyone here have
ops?

<archie42> can I get ops?
<moonflake> people who beg for ops suxx0r
<moonflake> people who say suxx0r su...ck
<ork_khrist> people with ops are bots

<ork_khrist> bots arnt people
<ork_khrist> they dont say ASL?
<moonflake> is someone logging this?
<ork_khrist> people log conversations
<moonflake> people msg you and ask if
you want to cyber
<ork_khrist> and never read them again
<archie42> \msg moonflake so u wanna
cyber? :>

<moonflake> people who cyber
*** GoldenAngel (bleh@wbs-146-132-
119.telkomads1.co.za) has quit (Ping timeout)

<ShadowsLight> people who leave in the
middle of conversations
<moonflake> that peer who keeps
resetting people's connections
<ork_khrist> #claws has no couches
<moonflake> #claws doesn't have a
balcony

<archie42> u R going 2 hell!!!
<moonflake> his people still seem to
find us here

<ork_khrist> there arnt any hot bouncy
bouncy skirts in the
summertime

<moonflake> emoticons o_0

<ork_khrist> wtf?

<archie42> roflmao

<moonflake> people who fall over a lot
<ork_khrist> loosing there asses
<archie42> huh?

<moonflake> people who say 'lol' irl
<moonflake> people who call it rl
<ork_khrist> wtf is it with TLA?

<moonflake> people who don't RTFM
<moonflake> people who tell other people
that they're just going to
the toilet...who want to know?

<moonflake> people who say brb and then
are away for hours

<ork_khrist> server splits!

<ork_khrist> the guys that play table
tennis in the server window!

*** confluence
(Confluence@camwall.camara.co.za) has joined

<archie42> O/-<

<archie42> O|-<

<archie42> O\-<

<moonflake> people who dance

<Synkronos> *stab*

<archie42> :P|-<

<moonflake> but seriously , is someone
logging this