

CLAWMARKS

41



DRAGONFIRE 2009 EDITION

Letter from the CLAWthing



Welcome to the DragonFire edition of CLAWmarks. I've been on the committee on and off for almost my entire university career and I must say this year has seen the most change. Some of it good some of it not so good but overall the society has improved.

This bumper volume of CLAWmarks contains all the latest and greatest and oldest and greatest and well it has lots of awesome stuff ranging from System Reviews to random rants to the great Archbigot (resurrected by arcane means and the possible involvement of a teaspoon and old DragonFire mug).

ICON was a great success this year. We were placed in the top 3 teams, behind only Tits and Ass (they were great...roleplayers) and some other team that were pretty good. See page X for more details (X is a variable existing in a constant state of inconsistency...for more on inconsistency check the toilet in Gandies, Page 24).

The introduction of a Games Evening to the roster of events this year has been well received and everyone enjoys them lots and lots like jelly tots. Henceforth we will be buying more games for everyone's amusement. So spend lots of money at DragonFire so we can buy lots of games!!

Ok go away now.

CLAWthing Chris

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Ed's Note:

Wow, can't believe how much stuff is in this edition! A big thanks to contributors, and an extra-big thanks with marshmallows on top to Marita de Waal and Chris Cecchini for running after folks and generally just getting stuff done.

Pat pat. Have a cookie.

Anna.



MONDAY NIGHT MADNESS

Kaitlyn Crawford

	FREE SPACE		FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE		FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE		FREE SPACE	
NEW YORK AVENUE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	PACIFIC AVENUE
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	NORTH CAROLINA AVENUE
COMMUNITY CHEST	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	COMMUNITY CHEST
ST. JAMES PLACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	SHORT LINE
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	CHANGE
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	PARK PLACE
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FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	BOARDWALK
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	COLLECT 10000 SALARY AS YOU PASS
FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	FREE SPACE	GO

I have always loved boardgames, be it Cluedo or Pictionary or even the horrifically long Monopoly. Ever since my early days I've enjoyed sitting at a table with friends moving tiny symbolic pieces of wood/metal/plastic around a board. My only problem was that I seemed to be the only member of my family who felt this way, therefore boardgames were sadly never as large a part of my childhood as I would have liked. So, needless to say, when I discovered that CLAWs held regular evenings filled with this wonderful pastime I was overjoyed and without hesitation agreed to be there. Little did I know what I'd signed up for.

Despite the first few weeks of mayhem and confusion over venues, I can honestly say I have never had that much fun playing boardgames. Though they were most definitely not the games I had expected. As I'm sure you can all imagine, games such as Boggle and Scrabble are much too mundane for the members of CLAWs. When I arrived in the chosen venue on that first night I was faced with games that I had never even seen before, let alone played. Munchkin, Settlers of Catan, Infernal Contraption and all the rest were entirely new to me. Thankfully you guys are a friendly bunch and I was very quickly instructed on the dynamics of each of the games and made to feel right at home (of course the coffee and tea that was available probably helped with that too).

Since that first night quite a few new games have been added to the line-up such as Lunch Money (seriously creepy!), Blood Bowl and Flux and at ICON yet another game was added to the horde, Power Grid. I can now say that I was right to be so excited about the boardgame evenings and every second Monday I climb all the way up to Menzies 7 to play. I doubt even a maths or physics test the next day could keep me from attending, in fact, it may actually encourage me to be there.



THE OLD WORLD IS DEAD - GET OVER IT

Ranting Fanboy

Back before spam took over the internet and doomed us all to a life of never ending Facebook friend requests and Twitter follow-bots, there was a period of about six months in the mid-nineties when the internet was a fairly pleasant place to explore and even the porn seemed to be somewhat wholesome. A time when Google didn't exist and Netscape Navigator was the best browser to be had, assuming you could stand the four day wait for it to download. It was during this innocent age of exploration that I discovered Vampire: The Masquerade tucked away in the My Links section of site belonging to some panda-eyed Rob Smith wannabe whose name I forget but was probably something along the lines of Lord Batwood Gothington, and who I will eternally thank as the man who introduced me to both role-playing and the line: "Friends don't let friends go out dressed as The Crow on Halloween."

If Dungeons and Dragons is the gateway drug of role-playing, then White Wolf's World of Darkness was its Crystal Meth, its Heroin, its PCP. It was a splatterpunk world born of 80's disenfranchisement and fed a steady flow of 90's ultra-violence. It was blood and bullets and the smell of cordite as the hooker you were using for cover took two in the brainpan. It was walking into a corporate headquarters with eight drums of gasoline, a jackhammer and a crate of beer. It was razing the orphanage to the ground because they really did attack first. It was graffiti covered walls spreading a sacred gospel in the hidden language of the streets. The world was fucked, the players were

doomed and your only solace was making sure your enemies got it harder than you did.

And it was all so last millennium.

What made splatterpunk great stayed behind in the 80's and 90's. It didn't survive the millennium change over. The end is no longer fucking nigh. And pretending it is makes less and less sense as you realize that humanity as a species has another thousand years to slog through before our calendar obsessed natures get a chance to wet themselves over another millennial doomsday prophecy. Eventually the Old World of Darkness it ended the way it always would: An orgy of blood and violence with no survivors, all in the name of profit. Whose profit? Well White Wolf of course.

And you have to admire White Wolf's foresight in closing the Old World down in a few short years and building a replacement for their most successful product from the ground up.

It's the equivalent of DC putting a kryptonite bullet into their own ageing alien old fart and saying: "Ok, let's build a better big blue boy scout." And my god if they didn't pull it off. To put it bluntly, aside from Adeeb's Farewell Aria to the Old World of Darkness, if you are still playing the old system, then you are a fucking moron. Or older than Eastwood. Or both. There is no excuse for not upgrading to the New World of Darkness.



Beware All Ye Who Bear the Keys

A quest must begin somewhere, and this one began within a concert hall, surrounded by snow capped mountains and with but a simple prophecy. But since then, the gods have desperately been seeking that which one of their younger members has hid so well, namely Dante's Keys.

Beginning in San Francisco Bay, upon the isle of Alcatraz, a small band of adventures dove through Limbo, circumventing traps, minotaurs and beasts that wished to keep them below, in order to retrieve the Water Key for the bespectacled members of the house of Renaissance. Their numbers dwindling, they set off for Las Vegas in search of their next goal, only to find giant dogs interested in their cars and roving bands wishing to discourage them from their path. But strive they did to find their way.

But, no sooner had they arrived in the city of sin, when they found it teeming with the souls of the departed, returning from their place of rest to once more be entertained. Caught between the old and the new, the band tracked down dead beats, confused security chiefs, and were possessed by the spirits they wished to help. But with the help of the top hat, and a few nifty tricks, they were able to subdue the Spirit Key and deliver him to the retinue of the Loa, to be stored in their safe keeping.

However, these were all only training for the bigger story yet unfolding, for other players were moving into positions. With the help of some new found acquaintances, the band found

themselves on board an extra-ordinary cruise, surrounded by beings both friend and foe. There seemed to be much amiss, but all was side lined by the games, and not least the game to capture the Earth Key within great Scylla's bowels. But in gaining the prize, more questions were raised and a third party entered the fray, speaking for those that seem to be forgotten in all these dealings, namely us. Leaving the band finally asking 'Are we on the right path?'

While this was all occurring, the gods were hearing unsettling rumours of Titan's acquiring a key or two of their own, and sent a new band of heroes to find out the truth. A manor, a slain lord, and a leap of faith later, our heroes found themselves asking whether all Titans were evil and if not sometimes misunderstood. And after blood had been spilt from hill to dale in the land of health and life, they finally acquired the Life Key through speaking of peace and application of wisdom. The Pesedjet now hold that precious key in exchange for the means to convert a sworn enemy into a worthwhile ally.

Now however the gods all turn their heads to London, and those miles and miles of tunnels beneath the great city. For many speak of wanderers that have been arriving from all over, bringing with them retainers and friends, presents and bribes. Secrets are about to be revealed, but who knows which will benefit most, and why these bands suddenly find all eyes turned in their direction.



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

System: Dungeons and Dragons 4th Edition (DnD 4e)

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast

Settings available:

Default - Points of Light:

The default setting is a rather generic Tolkienesque high fantasy setting, called Points of Light, working that each settlement is isolated with little knowledge and communication beyond its own immediate area. There is little formal structure and it is up to Dungeons Masters (DMs) to shape and mold the details at their convenience for their campaign. All extra material released is optional but can be included in this setting including details from the other two settings, allowing for a rich tapestry of varying adventures, populations and campaigns.

Forgotten Realms (Faerun):

The Realms encompasses both one fantasy world and all fantasy worlds. Whatever you look for in fantasy can be found on Faerun, the setting of the Forgotten Realms game. Dragons fly the night skies, valiant heroes seek fame and fortune, the gods themselves speak through their pious servants, and mysterious wizards hunt the secrets of magics lost in time. Legends and faerie tales come alive here, whether in the noble kingdom of Cormyr, the desolate wastes of Anauroch, or the mysterious forested glades of Cormanthor. Discover all the wonder, awe, magic, and majesty that D&D promises for fantasy games and so much more!

Eberron

Eberron was created by Keith Baker and developed by Bill Slavicsek and James Wyatt in a new way to address a new breed of roleplayer. The world of Eberron is ravaged by centuries of war that have only recently ended. While nations scheme and merchants bicker, priceless secrets from the past lie buried and lost in the devastation, waiting to be tracked down by intrepid scholars and rediscovered by audacious adventurers. In a magic-punk world where halflings ride dinosaurs and elementals power cross-country transport (flying-ships and the lightening rail), the Draconic Prophecy continues to play out - who will be chosen by the dragons?

What rocks about the system

- Simple, pick-up-and-play. Barring extensive character back stories, it is quick to throw a character together and even quicker to level up when the time comes.
- Wizards of the Coast, makers of Dungeons and Dragons, do periodically release extra material (both free and subscription) that allow DM's to build around as either focal points or points of interest, this extra material simply serves as "optional extras" for the DM and nothing is required in the default setting. There is also resources available for players to fine tune their characters.
- The additional settings are supplemented by a large range of novels, for those who need their fix away from the table.
- The system is based around adventuring with a focus on tactical combat.
- Access to the global community via free RPGA membership which has rewards from DMs and helps players find games in their areas.

What sucks about the system

- Not everyone enjoys dungeon crawls and many games tend to up as one.
- There is also a rather rigid structure to the game which many people do find limiting, although with 34 playable races and 37 classes the choices at start could also be too wide for some new players.
- Rule books are very expensive and not always so easy to find at the local gaming shops.

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- a set of gaming dice (i.e. 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, 1d20 and 1d100) - players often have multiples of the ones for weapon damage (d4, d6, d8) to make rolling quicker at higher levels
- Access to the Character Builder is useful for managing character sheets - but you can play with manual sheets (and most of the DM's have access anyway)
- Imagination
- Time - games tend to run upwards of 4hrs (particularly if played on a Friday or Saturday night.)
- The books are handy but not required by players as most DM's have a set and will loan. They are expensive.



Vampire: The Requiem

A dark look at how Man can be subverted by the Beast. Vampires were human once, but are preternatural hunters of the night that feed off the blood of the living. The Beast is what drives them to be the killers they are, but it is the Man that allows them to reason, to hold onto what they were. The Beast is a solitary creature, but the Man still has the needs of a social creature. This struggle between the two dominates a vampire's unlife, its Requiem.

The vampire supernatural template changes a character into something entirely other than a mortal. They gain the power stat, Blood Potency. This is the control the vampire has over the power inherent in Vitae. It determines the maximum Vitae that can be stored and how much can be spent per turn. A vampire has a Vitae Pool, which can power Disciplines and Devotions. Disciplines are expressions of the power of Vitae that can be learned from other vampires, and a starting character has three dots to spend on Disciplines. Devotions are powerful combinations of two Disciplines. Vampires are grouped into one of five clans, determined by which clan its sire was from. Clans can be further divided into Bloodlines, which have extra benefits and weaknesses. Each vampire can also join one of the five factions, or remain unaligned. Lastly Morality is replaced with Humanity which represents which side is dominant in the struggle between Man and Beast.

Vampire can be played as a Gothic Horror, with deep soul searching and deliberations on what it means to be human. Possibly finding some understanding of the horrors that we can perpetrate on ourselves, or finding that there is always something worse that could be happening.



It can also be played as a dark super hero game, where the protagonists' powers are fueled by the weak. A successful game, for most, would probably be somewhere in the middle.

Lucas Wheeler



Werewolf: the Forsaken

Applying the supernatural template gives the character a few advantages over a standard mortal character. There is the usual power stat, in this case it is Primal Urge. This determines how much essence a werewolf can have, as well as how many points per turn can be spent. There is the Essence Pool which powers Gifts and allows for the healing of one lethal point of damage per point. Essence can also be used to re-grow limbs. Gifts are powers that can be learnt from spirits in game, and a starting character gets three dots worth of

Gifts. In a departure from standard New World of Darkness mechanics, Gifts do not need to be learned in order. That is, a one dot Gift is not a prerequisite for a two dot Gift. Werewolves are also natural shape shifters and have five forms to choose from; Hishu (human), Dalu (near human), Gauru (wolf man or war form), Urshul (near wolf or dire wolf) and Urhan (wolf). Each form has certain benefits and drawbacks, including extra size and stamina, which gives extra health levels. Lastly Mortality is replaced with Harmony which represents the balance between the spirit world and the world of flesh.

Like Vampire: the Requiem, this game is about playing a killer in a world of sheep. The primary difference is that werewolves are not cold blooded killers, they only kill when necessary. They are hunters. They patrol the Gauntlet, the barrier between

this world and the Shadow. The Core Rules presents the most commonly accepted version of their creation myth, but there are others. In general they are seen as unwanted police of a world that despises them for many reasons. This can lead to many tense situations that can be resolved through diplomacy or combat.

White Wolf markets Werewolf as an investigative horror game. The setting lends itself to terrifying encounters with spirits, as well as other supernatural creatures. While New World of Darkness does seem to be fairly balanced when it comes to interaction with the other settings, werewolves are mainly designed for dealing with spirits. So it makes sense for most games to focus on this. Since werewolves don't deal well with mortals, it is better to have a decent amount of spirit interaction. However, the spirits generally resent or despise the werewolves, so having some human interaction can be used to balance this. It is also difficult to completely avoid human interaction in city settings, where most players would feel most comfortable.

Werewolf: the Forsaken is an enjoyable system and setting, which can be used for a module or a campaign. It allows an exploration of how rage can either completely overcome one or be focused to overcome significant odds. The supernatural horror should not be overplayed, but should always be kept in mind. The primary concepts of unwanted police should be countered with finding a place in the world.

Lucas Wheeler



Mage: the Awakening

Mage: The Awakening ("New Mage") is the reboot of White Wolf's Mage: The Ascension. If this means something, great; if not, don't worry, because they're entirely different games. I'll discuss the difference shortly. So as the title suggests, you are a Mage, a mortal whose soul has crossed from the Material World, across the Abyss and to the Supernal Realm.

Here, you inscribed your name on one of the 5 Supernal Watchtowers, and Awakened. And by Awakened, I mean that you can shape reality as your will sees fit. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, magick with a capital "M", and a "k". Humanity was once Awakened, long ago when men had strokey-beards and were wise. We prospered most in the city of Atlantis, and it was here that Man's hubris came to the fore, when we attempted to build a bridge to the Supernal Realms. Man succeeded, and those first few across took it upon themselves to then destroy the bridge, ensuring they alone would rule over reality. In so doing, they also enslaved the minds of the remaining Men into believing that magick did not exist, and named this "The Lie" (note the capitals). But your soul broke through the barriers of the Material World and became Awakened, and The Lie no longer holds you. You are now part of a world-wide society of mages, complete with their own laws, factions and politics. However, as the adage goes, absolute power corrupts absolutely, and with the power to shape reality, mages are a textbook example of this. Not only do Mages face internal politics and enemies, but also Mages bent on destroying all other Mages and ridding the world of this curse, as well as agents of the Abyss, seeking to unweave reality. The core of Mage is its magick system, which is frankly the more fun and variable than clowns on nitrous - yes, *that* good. To explain briefly, reality is divided into 10 facets, or Arcana: Death, Fate, Forces, Life, Matter, Mind, Prime, Spirit, Space, and Time. As you advance in each Arcanum, so you are more able to shape that facet of reality like putty. Each Arcanum has a large set of static spells available, so that you can get used to the Arcanum's effects and possibilities, but the real joy lies in the on-the-fly spellcasting. Each Arcanum is versatile enough

to accomplish most effects, if you are creative enough. For example, let's say a mage is faced with a locked door. Death has a problem, since the door is not living. Fate means you could pick the lock by luck. With Forces, you could simply blow the door off its hinges. Life would allow you to make yourself strong enough to batter it down. Matter would allow you to create a hole in the door. Mind would allow you to become intelligent enough to pick the lock. At a high level of Prime, you could tear the door's essence apart (and hence the door itself). Spirit could open the door if the spirit of the door was present. Space could allow you to simply step to the area beyond the door. Time would allow you to accelerate the door's aging. The Arcanum essentially allow you to use magick creatively, and your only limit is your imagination. Oh, and Paradox. Paradox is reality's attempt to reassert itself and save its sense of masculinity. When mages attempt to do something beyond the bounds of the possible (e.g. flying, throwing a fireball down the street, etc.), reality attempt to correct the infringement. The more outrageous the magick, the more likely Paradox is to kick back. Mages also get to counter each other's magick, which is another headache. The setting is flavourful enough to allow for almost any kind of story, and Mage is the one World of Darkness game where you can literally do anything, from Constantine-esque grit-fest, to a Sandman-dreamathon, to a Matrix-style battle for reality. It's great, and much like it's magick system, a box of paints on which you can paint your campaign however you want.

THE GOOD: The almost endless scope of the game itself, and the setting. The magick system makes me so happy, I could... well... Ahem.

THE BAD: The wide-open scope can sometimes leave you without direction as a Storyteller; group consensus on what exactly is possible with Arcana needs to be established; not a game for power-gamers; arguments about the spelling of "magick", and the use of the "k".

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY: d10s (about 10-15); imagination/creativity

Brendan Quinlivan



Promethean: the Created

Golems, artificial life, the Promethean are White Wolf's 4th instalment into the New World of Darkness (NWOD). Given life without purpose these creatures roam the world being shunned by life itself while searching for a way to become real.

As with all other White Wolf NWOD systems there are 5 initial groups to choose from when creating

a character; the Frankenstein, Galatea, Osiris, Tammuz and Ulgan, each type encompassing a certain style of creating life and consequently embodying those ideals.

You play a creature given the Spark of Life, imbued with The Divine Fire. You are loosed on the world not know who or what you are, only that you can become human, somehow. There are only 2 things that stand in your way; your own ignorance

and the Disquiet. Dead bodies should not be given life. The very fabric of the world, material and spiritual, rejects the Created. The Disquiet follows them wherever they tread, the land blighting and the animals fleeing if the Created lingers too long.

Don't forget the bad guys though. Not all Created have awareness and the need to be human. Some are born monsters and heartily throw themselves into that role. The Created battle their foes using Transmutations, alchemical changes wrought in their bodies allowing them great power.

Promethean is a very 'emo' system for lack of a better term. The system lends itself more towards being used for NPCs or a module setting. Players having the constant threat of the Disquiet and not being able to interact with the populous at large is quite a deterrent to most campaigns although more specialised concepts can work and work well.

The World of Darkness requires d10's to play.

Chris "CLAWthing" Cecchini



Changeling: the Lost

Changeling, for the New World of Darkness. You tore your way back through the Hedge and it tore away your soul. You have escaped from the Fae, where you were kept for an unknowable time in an unfathomable world. Your time in Arcadia will haunt you for the rest of your days, but it is not without benefits. This is a game of trying to find a place to fit into the world, when all that you know has been ripped away and replaced by the fantastical. The other Lost that have returned are often able to help with the initial adjustment. They have set up free holds and rule in seasonal courts, something they must have picked up from their time in Faerie But, there is very little that can help with the knowledge that a Fetch has been living your life for you while you were away. Killing the Fetch is an option, but that also has repercussions. Most of the Lost will settle into their new existence as apart from humanity or try to regain

their old lives.

Adding the Changeling supernatural template will give a character a distinct advantage over a mortal, but they still have most of the frailties. There is the usual power stat, which is Wyrd. This represents the Changelings connection to the very interconnectedness that binds all of reality, and determines the maximum amount of Glamour and how much can be spent per turn. A Changeling also has a Glamour pool which can empower Contracts and other Fae abilities. Contracts are agreements with reality that allows the Changeling to operate outside the natural laws. These can be learned during play, and a starting character has five dots to spend. Changelings are divided into Seemings that are representative of their time in Arcadia; each Seeming has optional Kiths. Once free of the grip of the True Fae, a Changeling generally joins one of the four Seasonal Courts. Lastly Morality is replaced with Clarity which represents how in touch with reality a Changeling is.

Changeling is a modern day fairy tale, in the vein of the original traditions. The Gentry are not malicious, unless crossed, but are so completely removed from the human understanding of reality that they are simply unable to understand that the things they do might be wrong. This leads to a twisting of the Lost's view on reality, which isn't necessarily accurate to start with. To run a game, a good starting point for how to get the right mindset for understanding the setting would be to get into the head of Neil Gaiman. Works like *Neverwhere* and *Stardust* appear to be highly successful Changeling story arcs in a changeling game.

Lucas Wheeler

Hunter: the Vigil

I'm sure you have all seen *Supernatural* but if you haven't you really should. Hunter, the 6th instalment from White Wolf, builds on the idea of humans taking up arms and fighting back.

Hunters are men and women who have stripped themselves of all desire save their need to Hunt supernaturals. They are humanities freedom fighters, fighting a bloody war in the shadows, keeping mankind safe from all that goes bump in the night.

Hunters are so single-mindedly devoted to their cause that they have the ability to push themselves far beyond what any normal person could do or even any supernatural could.

They also have group tactics. Hunters work in a group. One human no matter how hardcore will not take down a werewolf in Garou form. Five humans with silver knives and swarm tactics however will take it apart in short order.

There are organisations which have developed ways and means of combating the threats of the supernatural world. They have delved into that

which they hate to garner power and knowledge that would help them in the war. For example Task Force: VALKERIE provides its members with state-of-the-art weaponry, anything from etheric ammunition for combating ghosts to the mighty Mjolnir Cannon, an electric ray-gun mounted on a jeep. Some Hunters draw power from celestial powers or demonic ancestry and these skills are represented by the Benediction and Castigation endowments.

Hunter is a great system for running around hunting supernatural threats. Duh. But at the end of the day Hunters are just humans and in the World of Darkness humans are at the bottom of the food chain.

The World of Darkness requires d10's to play.

Chris "CLAWthing" Cecchini



Coming soon...





What would you say if a sea serpent and a raven appeared at your window and informed you that you were actually the child of Odin and that you had a grand destiny? Personally I think I would ask who slipped me the LSD. But that's the gist of Scion, where you played children of the old gods (Norse, Greek, Egyptian, etc.) fighting against the Titans who are racing to subjugate the human race after being locked up for centuries, in the Underworld, Overworld and everything inbetween. Kind of American Gods meets anything by David Eddings meets crazy adventures.

Pros – Grand adventures that dip into lore from all realms, beautifully brought together, researched and presented. Makes use of a great Knack system, cuts down on dice (normally), and allows a lot of customisation of your character to suit you.

Cons – Uses the atrociously long winded Exalted 2nd Ed combat system, offers a sometimes too extensive list of choices and initial creation can be a little difficult.

Ian Kitley

CALL of CTHULHU

I feel it would be accurate to say that you haven't really experienced roleplaying until you've played Chaosium's Call Of Cthulhu. Strong words, but it's true. It's a fantastic ride to certain insanity and/or death for your character, and it's liberating. It's grim, it's dark, you're insignificant. Your character is rolled up in a variety of ways (depending on how generous or mean your Keeper is feeling), and it's entirely possible to roll up a horrible character. That's where the fun and the challenge comes in though, because the game encourages you to roll with the character, so to speak. Not everyone is perfect, everyone is flawed – you're not playing heroes or dramatic protagonists after all, you're playing average people caught up in extraordinarily bad situations. And this works, because you really don't stand a chance. Nihilistic? Yes, most certainly, but that's the point. Read the short stories of H.P. Lovecraft (upon which this game is built), that very much the feel you get: the main characters are average (usually academic) people uncovering secrets they weren't meant to know and investigate, and finally confronting things that they have no hope of defeating (if they even get that far), and that would probably eat them, for breakfast (literally). Refreshingly, combat characters die just as easily as social characters, guns kill people, and monsters are genuinely terrifying. In fact, blind paraplegic characters in a motorized wheelchair have a higher survival rate (but not by much). No, really, ask a Cthulhu veteran. It's different, it's fun, it's intriguing and really, really fun. Go play it, now.

THE GOOD: A simple, relatively rules-light system; true horror roleplaying; it's very reminiscent of Lovecraft's original stories.

THE BAD: It suffers from the old "the more you know, the less fun it is" syndrome that plagues so many roleplaying games. Horror comes from the unknown, not the known. If you must read Mythos-related fiction, try to stick to Lovecraft's work only (the other Mythos writers tend to explain or expand on ideas a bit more than they should).

THE TENTACLED: Dwell on that for a moment... Call Of Cthulhu can get fairly grim and gory, so if you fear seafood or have genteel sensibilities, it might not be for you, depending on your Keeper, of course.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY: Primarily percentile dice (d100). Having several d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20 would also help.

Brendan Quinlivan



Official Homepage: <http://l5r.alderac.com/>

Unofficial wiki: <http://l5r.wikia.com/>

In the empire of Rokugan, it is said that the fate of the world rests on the edge of a katana — if only one has the will and skill to wield it. Founded by the descendants of the gods Lord Sun and Lady Moon, it is a place where honour — or at least the appearance of it — is a matter of life and death, where ritual suicide is preferable to failure and where a misspoken word can kill as swiftly as a steel blade. In the south, far from the emperor's court, lies the festering pit of the Shadowlands and the great wall where samurai give their lives to hold back its corruption.

If samurai, kimonos, katanas, tattooed monks, paper fans, ninja, dragons or fox spirits are on the list of things you want from your roleplaying experience then Legend of the Five Rings (L5R) might be the setting for you.

The basic character stats are split by the five elements (earth, air, fire, water and the mysterious void) rather than along the more usual lines (mental, physical and social). This encourages a somewhat different set of stereotypical characters. For example, water covers both strength and perception so in L5R strong characters are often also observant. Similarly, dexterous characters are often intelligent (fire), quick characters are often empathic (air) and hardy characters are often strong of will (earth).

Player characters are usually samurai and choose a clan, family and school of training at character creation. Schools play a role roughly similar to classes in DnD and confer special feats as a character's training progresses. Unlike in DnD level (rank) is determined from a character's stats and skills and stats and skills are increased directly by XP expenditure.

Almost every L5R player will have their own favourite aspect of the setting and system, but if I had to pick one it would be this: it's the only *system* I know where courtier classes have awesome game mechanics. The Crane courtier school will always have a special place in my roleplaying heart.

Simon Cross

ABERRANT

Aberrant is a game about people with superpowers and their impact on the world. It's set in a near-future Earth where, after the destruction of a scientific space station, people begin spontaneously developing super-powers. These people are known as novas, and the game focuses on them.

In many ways it's similar to the TV show 'Heroes' and the comic books of X-men, but it takes a much more realistic view of the impact of superpowers (most novas are pop icons and celebrities), and deals with more gritty issues (when does some one stop being human? Should super powered people be expected to follow normal human society, power and corruption, etc.). That being said though, there's lots of room for doing your own thing with the system, and it makes a great system for any role-playing requiring medium to high power level super powers or similar.

The canon setting has a deep, well explained setting full of clashing factions and varied people, which should be more than enough to spark your creativity and provide plenty of entertainment. It also has a number of interesting mechanics, such as taint, which is the resulting mutations and inhumanity that results in overusing super-powers.

Aberrant is a successor to Adventure (1920s pulp heroes) and a predecessor to Trinity (science fiction), although the game is quite capable of standing on its own, and those two games are not required. Like those two games, it also uses a variation of

the storyteller system that white wolf is well-known for.

What rocks about the game?

- The system is very broad and can be easily adapted to any game where super-powers are required.
- There are a huge range of powers and abilities, allowing you to create virtually any type of super powers you can think of.
- It has ultra-high-level powers such as 'universe creation', 'quantum inferno', and 'planck scaling'.

What sucks about the system?

- It's ludicrously easy to create completely overpowered characters using the rules as they stand, which can cause serious game balance problems. This means you'll probably want to tweak them before playing.
- Players are an unscrupulous bunch who just want to do lots of 'Hulk smash!' and will happily exploit the above point if you don't keep a close eye on the sly bastards.

What do you need to play it?

Unfortunately the books are out of print, which means that getting them is a pain, but not impossible, additionally, the game uses d10's, which are easily available (you should never need more than 15). Aside from that you don't need much else (besides players), although reading/watching super hero literature like Watchmen, X-men, etc. is recommended to give you ideas.

Zac Crumley



The tagline for the game says it all, really: "A spaghetti western, with meat!" To continue the culinary theme, Deadlands may best be described as a traditional spaghetti western pasta, topped with a tomato sauce of every horror genre, with some delicious Cthulhu-favoured meatballs, topped off with some Wild Wild West steampunk cheese (minus Will Smith and his ego - a bit too much to stomach, I agree). The setting is made of solid gold, providing so very many options for both the Marshall and the Posse. In brief, three pivotal events shape this alternate Wild West: 1) the American Civil War hasn't ended yet, and the West has become more equal-opportunity now that so many men have died; 2) California was largely swiss-cheesed by the Great Quake, in the process revealing the now-more-valuable-than-gold Ghost Rock; 3) "Something Happened (TM)" to make all manner of horrors and the dead walk the earth once more. Ghost Rock is a super-coal, burning longer and hotter, and thereby making steampunk gizmos and mad science a very real possibility. Both the North and the South siezed upon it's potential, and so their forces now shoot each other with high-powered rifles, gatling pistols, and Death-o-matics, while wearing armor and dodging steam-rockets and automaton soldiers. The oppressed American Indians have all united under one banner of the Indian Nation, and received a mystical sht in the arm, holding off the palefaces with both rifles and shaman rituals. Several mega-corporate Railroads have sprung up, each trying to build a east-to-west trans-American railroad to bring back Ghost Rock, while the Chinese railroad goes in the opposite direction taking Ghost Rock to the East Coast. So you have a massive jambalaya of violence, mayhem and magick, where monsters are a constant threat, Hucksters play mystic poker with demons for magickal spells, mad scientists push the borders of normality, and anyone who can shoot will be hired for any and all sorts of nefarious deeds by any number of large corporate or governmental groups. It's mad, it's crazy, it's awesome, it's Deadlands!

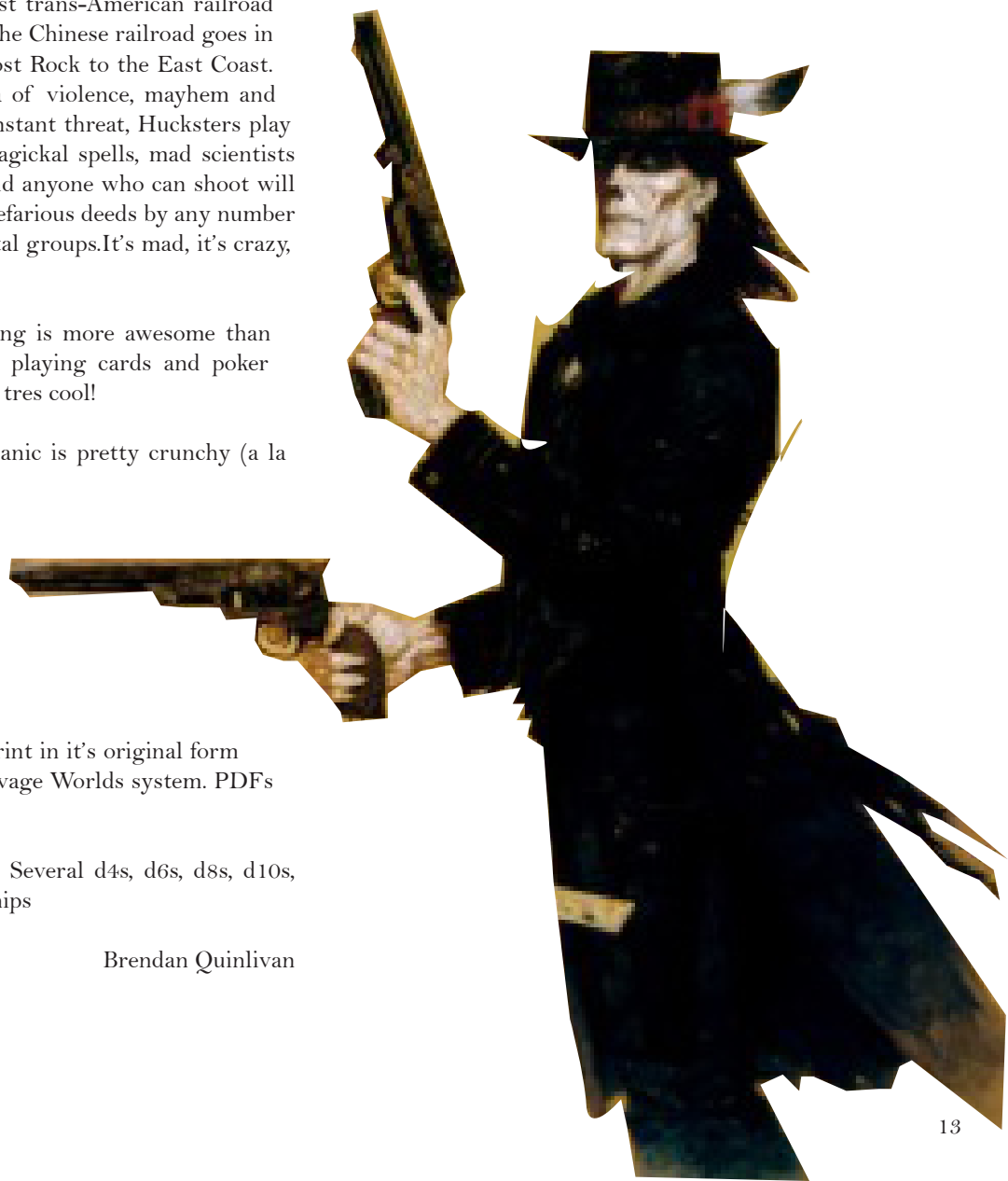
THE GOOD: The versatile setting is more awesome than Bruce Campbell's nutsack; using playing cards and poker chips as part of the system is also tres cool!

THE BAD: The resolution mechanic is pretty crunchy (a la DnD 3rd Ed), and there's a fair amount of shuffling, dealing and checking results to be had, especially if you play one of the special characters (Huckster, Mad Scientist, Shaman, Blessed, etc.).

THE UGLY: It's largely out-of-print in it's original form - but is available as part of the Savage Worlds system. PDFs should also still be available.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY: Several d4s, d6s, d8s, d10s, d12s, d20s, playing cards, poker chips

Brendan Quinlivan





Ah, to summarize Unknown Armies. Let's see.

You're a self-mutilating monk, trying to bring an ascetic viewpoint to a materialistic world. You're a self-righteous con artist, tricking people into being a better than they really are.

You're a gun-toting mob enforcer, exploiting weird strega tricks for personal gain.

You're a cancer-ridden gym teacher, trying to cure your condition by any means necessary.

You're dead. And not loving it.

Where else can you unite all of those character concepts? Unknown Armies is magick in the real world, where magick is wonderful, pathetic, awe-inspiring, disgusting, efficient, impractical, weird, logical, crazy and quite frequently criminal. Just like real people.

More technically, Unknown Armies is a game of post-modern magick, which makes it terribly hard to define (the above deluge of descriptions notwithstanding). The way I like to think about it is to say that Unknown Armies takes the real world and rotates it very slightly to make it magick. It doesn't add anything like aliens, vampires or Cthulhu – it just takes what's already there and changes the way you look at it. The best Unknown Armies concepts resonate with its players for that very reason – not because they're weird, but because they're familiar. They're reality with the contrast turned way up and Spanish subtitles, but they're still reality.

There's a reason why people (including people who don't play UA, haven't played UA, and possibly will never play UA) still randomly accost me to tell me about something they saw/read/did which was "so Unknown Armies". Back when I ran World of Darkness, no one ever stopped to tell me about something that was "so Vampire". I'm quite relieved about that, actually.

But the sentence above strays dangerously close to "my system can beat up your system" (I do still have a soft spot for Vampire, I really do), I think I'd better move along into a few things that make UA awesome.

1) Everyone's a philosopher (or at least has got a philosophy)

The heart of the UA system isn't the dice, it's the stimuli. Every character has an Obsession, a Rage Stimulus, a Fear Stimulus and a Noble Stimulus – four sentences which describe what make your character tick. Sure, they have an effect on the dice (you can "use" a stimuli/obsession once a session in an appropriate situation for a concrete bonus), but more importantly, they help you make a character with more depth quickly and easily – call it "personality scaffolding". They also help avoiding one-dimensional characterisations – even if my campaign villain is a genuinely monstrous scumbag who literally eats babies and wears their skin ("I find their young flesh...silky"), he's still going to have some kind of a Noble Stimulus. Probably not kindness to small children, though.

2) No one has hit points

Okay. They do. Obviously, otherwise the party is either a) already dead or b) immortal. But the DM keeps track of them for you. When you get hurt, you don't get told that "You take 17, +3 because it's a large weapon...20 points of damage". You get told that "the lead pipe slams down onto your skull, making your teeth click together and sending a sharp wave of pain through your head".

Now, I don't know about you, but if I get told I "take 20 points of damage" and I know I still have 40 remaining, then I'm not too worried. If I get told the little concussive story above, I get a little skittish to say the least. Imagine someone really cracks you on the head with a lead pipe – which is the more realistic response? Feel free to experiment among yourselves, just don't send me the doctor's bills.

3) Symbolic magick

Magick in UA makes sense. Not logical sense, but symbolic and narrative sense. If my character worships and gains power from cities, then it makes sense that if he curses his enemy, they get hit by a taxi cab.

That isn't particularly logical, even by role-playing terms – what does he cast Dominate to mind-control a taxi driver and use him to run the poor sap over? What is the Will save of the standard New York cabbie? But it works in the game. Forget the little details – it's freakin' magick! And because magick plays by rules of symbolism and narrative, you can sum up an entire school of magick in a few lines and maybe a page of example spells, and yet never run out of new and cool ways to interpret and apply it.

This also makes UA magick surprisingly easy to pick up for new players and DMs – it's not like you're memorizing pages of spell lists and effects. All that's required is that you read a little bit of the book, enough that you "get" it, and you're A for Away. And the space that would be used for a laundry list of spell levels in the rulebooks can be devoted to what the game is really about – the gritty weirdness that is Unknown Armies.

4) Making your own skills

UA has no "skills list". None.

It just has four basic stats (Body, Speed, Mind and Soul) and apart from that, you can just make up and name skills to fit your needs, which lets you focus on the things that you really need to make your character.

Want to be a professor of history? Write down a skill called "Eternal Academic". Want to be a professional interrogator? Write down a skill called "Leave No Marks". Nothing is added to the roleplaying experience by trying to decide if being a professor is a specialisation of the "Scholarship" skill group or trying to decide if interrogation is a "Torture" or "Intimidation" skill, so why bother? All you really want from a character sheet is some way to put numbers down to represent the idea in your head.

Frankly, I never made a character with thirty listed skills and agonised over whether to put the last few points in "Poetry" or "Flower-arranging". (Actually, that's a lie. I've played L5R, where that kind of decision can have critical implications for your standing in court.)

I find that when I have to make a character from scratch for a system, I usually spend about fifteen minutes coming up with concept and forty-five minutes juggling

the numbers. In UA, I can spend forty-five minutes fleshing out the concept and coming up with Cool Stuff (like the exact way I want to phrase my Noble Stimulus or the weird magical ritual I use to harness the spirit of Michael Jackson), and then jot down the numbers in fifteen.

5) Rumour has it

Last, but not least, I couldn't leave out one of my favourite mechanics of Unknown Armies – the rumour sheet. The book is littered with little one-liner "things you've heard" and every campaign I've run has used them liberally. Every now and again, just give the PCs another list of rumours. They don't have to be true (though they often having inklings of the truth), they just have to be cool. They help create the feeling that there is a living, breathing world out there – even more so, when the players' own actions make it into the rumour mill.

For my money, the measure of a good rumour sheet is when one A4 page can make someone laugh, shiver and frantically start packing a bag in case they have to leave town.

I'll leave you with a few from my current, mob-flavoured game as samples. If you're interested in what you hear, you can always ask to hear more...but ask carefully, or you might end up a rumour yourself.

There's a woman extorting protection money around the neighbourhoods. No one seems to know exactly how, though – she's got no affiliation, no guns and no muscle, but she still seems to be getting paid.

The last story is the first story, only backwards.

Did you hear what the families did to that British guy, Bruno Lomax? Word is that he was running unlicensed gambling without tithing to the Three Wise Men, so the mobsters sent a bunch of hitmen after him and started betting on how long he would last. I made fifty bucks, by the way.

Money is the root of all evil. Only by consuming your own consumption can you ever be truly free. Reverse the ways of evil and live.

The Burnham Block is the Auriga Society's new big project. It's going to be the most luxurious apartment block in the city, and the rent is going to be murder – literally.

TABLETOP W

Introduction

Wargaming (or Desktop Wargaming as some long winded people like to say) is generally a bunch of little boys/ girls (ages 10-60) getting together and using small figurines on a scenic surface and battling it out to see who has bragging rights till the next game.

They range from full scale battles between large armies to small skirmishes between small units or even single characters. The settings also vary so there usually is a look and game style to appeal to most people.

Below are short summaries about some of the systems I have personally played.

Warhammer Fantasy

- A brief overview of the setting
 - o Warhammer Fantasy is set in a world of constant strife. From people protecting their land to maniacal hordes bent on destruction. There are a wide variety of factions to play, each with their own place in the world. Since it is a fantasy setting there is magic aplenty along with all manner of various creatures.



- o Empire – Humans with big guns and swords
- o Bretonia – Feudal knights
- o High Elves – The stuck up haughty Elves
- o Dark Elves – The ones that got fed up with the haughty Elves
- o Wood Elves – The tree hugging elves
- o Skaven – Sewer rats with knives o.O
- o Tomb Kings – King Tut and his skeleton horde
- o Chaos Beastmen – If the Ewoks went psychotic
- o Hordes of Chaos – The Evil Humans
- o Chaos Daemons – Daemons... of Chaos
- o Orcs & Goblins – The comedy relief
- o Ogre Kingdoms – Big hungry ogres, out for a picnic
- o Dwarfs – Short men with big guns
- o Lizardmen – Scaly bastards
- o Vampire Counts – I want to suck yur blood

What rocks about the system

- o Regiments of infantry, backed by cavalry, artillery, magic and dragons and other mythological creatures. Good tactics and generalship usually see you as the winner.

What sucks about the system

- o You are still subject to the Dice Gods, which while sometimes runs to humorous can also be frustrating. Also with the changes in rules editions the armies are updated slowly to each ruleset. While good, the newer army codex books usually are more powerful.

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- o D6's (10 – 20)
- o A fair wad of cash (to buy the models +/- R2000)
- o Ruler
- o Core Rulebook
- o Relevant Army Codex

WARHAMMER

Warhammer 40,000

- A brief overview of the setting
 - o “In the grim darkness of the future there is only war”. The tag line for the setting spells it out. It’s the year 40,000. Humanity is spread over a galaxy, but is beset on all sides by enemies.
 - o Interstellar war for survival and expansion rage for most races, with the few ever present and never ending threats of annihilation.
 - o The main focus of this setting seems to be on the empire and its super soldiers the Space Marines.

Space Marines

- ☐ Ultramarines – Poster boys for the Empire
- ☐ Black Templar – Holy Crusaders
- ☐ Dark Angels – Sssssssh. We have a secret.
- ☐ Blood Angels –
- ☐ Space Wolves – Eager fighters and drinkers

Imperial

- ☐ Sisters of Battle – Nuns with guns
- ☐ Imperial Guard – Tanks and Red Shirts
- ☐ Daemonhunters – Anti-Chaos special forces
- o Tau – Socialists of the universe
- o Eldar – Elves in space
- o Dark Eldar – Kinky Elves in space
- o Chaos Space Marines – Rebels with a cause
- o Chaos Daemons – Daemons... of Chaos
- o Orks – WAAAGH!. Me wantz to smash zum umies!
- o Tyranids – The insect swarm
- o Necrons – The Terminator wishes he was this cool



What rocks about the system

- o Fairly simple base mechanic. Lots of guns. Tanks. Big bad guys.

What sucks about the system

- o With ruleset changes, rules inconsistencies crop up a bit which GW either never really addresses, takes 1 year to make up its mind or says they will address it when they release the updated army book (ie 4 years). Yet again the dice gods can spoil the best laid plans

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- o D6's. (10 – 20)
- o Tape measure
- o Core Rulebook
- o Relevant Army Codex
- o Yet more cash to buy models (around R2000 for something workable)

Blood Bowl

- A brief overview of the setting
 - o Fantasy football. Games where our favourite Games Workshop races can square off against each other and have a nice relaxing game of (American) footie. Where team tactics vary from being good runners with the ball, to holding the ball and beating your way to a touchdown.

What rocks about the system

- o Rules are free to download, and updated fairly well.
- o Rules for full leagues and progressing your teams, for ongoing grudge matches
- o Fast paced

What sucks about the system

- o Trying to think of something..... and elves don't count.....

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- o Bloodbowl board and dice
- o A team of miniatures (usually 12 – 18)
- o A quick mind since you are on the clock when you play.



Anima Tactics

- A brief overview of the setting
 - o Anima is set in an Anime setting, where the fantastical and futuristic styles hit head on. High magic meets Hi-Tech. Characters you control each have an alignment (Light, Neutral and Dark) and a faction (Church, Empire, Sammael, etc) which determine who can work with who. You can build your group with either Light characters or Dark Characters, and Neutrals can join either alignment. Or you can mix the Lights and the Darks by using models only from one faction.

What rocks about the system

- o Simple rules and small number of models required to have a good game. The characters are all different and certain combinations between characters are fun.
- o Games run quickly, so whole afternoons don't need to be set aside for a game.

What sucks about the system

- o Decent model release at this point, that there is enough variety that most people will be using different characters. Though new characters are released in waves fairly regularly.

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- o 1 Character model (3 – 5 recommended. +/- R110 per model)
- o Counters
- o 1 D10
- o Rules

BLOOD BOWL

Warmachine

- A brief overview of the setting
- o A world where magic and machines work in concert. Where warcasters control magic and steam-powered combat machines called warjacks.

Factions:

- ☐ Cygnar – The peaceful Empire
- ☐ Khador – Heavy armoured Ruskies
- ☐ Cryx – The pirates and undead of the world
- ☐ Protectorate of Menoth – Holy crusaders against the unbelievers
- ☐ Mercenaries – Men and machines for hire.
- ☐ Retribution of Scyrah - *sigh* more elves

What rocks about the system

- o Can play small skirmish games of a warcaster and some jacks, to larger games including infantry and cavalry into the mix
- o Each rulebook and expansion contains all the unit stats for all the armies that are released with that expansion, meaning you don't have multiple books for each army with each release. This also seems to balance the new units between the factions maintaining game balance between them.

What sucks about the system

- o Some of the models seem bulky or unstable, but this is mainly the older models and quality has improved since then.

What you need to play it, e.g which dice, money, brains, beauty, whatever.

- o Models (+/- R600 for a starter box)
- o Measuring implement
- o Some dice (+/- 6)





As expected, Cthulhu was swamped by fans at the worldwide launch of *Cryptonomicon: The Untold Story*.



Beware of sharp edges.



...but still pretty damn funny.

CLAWthing Stamp of Approval (tm)



"Forgive me, father, for I have sinned... and painkillers aren't free, you know."



Zac's-Hair Itself made a rare appearance at the O-Week LARP... and it brought a date!





Special Agent Cecchini hosts the Asian secret service delegation under the cover of an O-week LARP.



Having discovered the 90s, Austin Powers refused to go back to his own time.

ned... embezzled money from the CLAWs fund... coffee
ow?



"I swear, it was at least *this* big!"

"And then the rabbit turns to the bear and says, 'Mazel tov!'"



CLAWs goes to Icon

It's become something of a tradition of CLAWs to send a delegation to Icon and this year was no different, with a group of us making the journey to Johannesburg for Icon 2009.

For those (few?) of you who don't know what Icon is, let me offer a quick explanation. Icon is South Africa's largest role-playing and alternative gaming convention. It features role-playing, LARPing, Magic: The Gathering, Warhammer fantasy and 40K, and more. It happens annually in Johannesburg and is the place to be for all things mentioned above.

Of course there is the small problem of Icon happening in that dark, heathen realm known as Gauteng, which means that us civilized, enlightened Cape Tonians need to arrange some method of getting there.

To help with this, CLAWs organizes an annual trip to Icon, which is partially sponsored by UCT. Normally we take the train. However, due to the disaster that was our train trip through hell last year, we decided that this year we'd take the more sensible and predictable option, and drive to Johannesburg.

In a moment of unwarranted optimism regarding

our ability to withstand sleep deprivation, it was decided that we'd set forth at the unholy hour of 03h30 on Thursday morning and do the entire drive in one day, arriving the evening before Icon began. Waking up at this sanity-forsaken hour felt like the mental equivalent of double MAM1000W lectures starting at 07h00, but somehow we managed it and began the long drive.

Eventually, after some consulting of maps we arrived in Johannesburg, went to our respective accommodation venues and had the chance to get a good night's sleep (in theory anyway, in practice we stayed up late catching up with friends and talking rubbish). One note worth mentioning here, is that I found it interesting that after traveling to and/or from the Icon venue seven times, I still have no idea how the geography of Johannesburg works. It's like quantum string theory, where dimensions fold in on themselves, and space curves so that no place has to have any logical relationship to the locations next to it. I can only imagine that after staying there long enough you develop a special sixth sense that allows you to navigate those endless, identical streets and confusing 'shortcuts'.

Anyway, the next day, bright and early (a bit too bright and early for my tastes, if I'm honest), we arrived at Icon, ready to take on the weekend, laughing in the face of tiredness, choking in the face of cigarette smoke, and generally having a good time.

And with that the weekend began in full swing. On the role-playing end of things (which was mostly what I participated in) there were the regular selection of modules, ranging from science fiction horror to epic fantasy to surreal spiritual journeys, which provided the main course. As is traditional, they all ran late, but were, nonetheless enjoyable.

There were also LARPs on both Friday and Saturday night, and after participating on both nights, I can report that they were enjoyable (if somewhat frantic for some of the characters).



On the topics of Warhammer, card gaming, and the other various things that occur at Icon, I can't say quite as much, since I mostly didn't have much to do with them. Still, from what I could tell, everything went smoothly and it seemed that a good time was had by all.

Sunday evening, brought the prize-giving for the weekend. As per normal it was filled with rambunctiousness, alcoholic beverages and inappropriate comments from the audience. Cape Town put in a respectable showing, with the official CLAWs role-playing team getting a top 5 finish, and Karl coming in third place in a Settlers of Catan tournament.

After the prize-giving came the after-party. This was a merry occasion of socialization, food and drink, merriment and reflection on the past weekend. It went on well into the night and provided a pleasant conclusion to the Icon 2009 experience.

I would love to say that we all had a good night's sleep and were ready to return to Cape Town refreshed and feeling alive, but that would be a lie, in my case at least.

It was decided (thanks Chris!) that we would start the journey home at 03h30 Monday morning. This meant that only a few short hours after leaving the after-party (about three and a half in my case), I had to wake up. In the end I got about forty five minutes of sleep and, as I'm sure Chris will happily

confirm, I was about as awake and responsive as a particularly slow-witted zombie. Nonetheless, I crawled into the car, was asleep instantly, and awoke sometime later to find that we were well on the way back to Cape Town.

After a long day's driving through the repetitive countryside of central South Africa, we eventually arrived back in familiar lands, glad to be away from the manic drivers and indecipherable geography of Johannesburg. Tired, but glad to have been on the trip, we departed in search of rest and relaxation.

And that was our Icon trip.

Finally, thanks where they are due. A huge thank you to Chris and the rest of the Claws committee for organizing the trip to Icon and getting the travel grant money from UCT. Without you, this trip probably wouldn't have happened.

Also our gratitude to those kind people who gave us a place to stay in Johannesburg. Your generosity and hospitality was deeply appreciated.

Additionally, let's not forget the Icon committee who planned, and ran the actual event itself. It's a difficult task, but you rose to the challenge admirably. Thank you very much!

And last, but not least, thank you to those who attended Icon and made it the memorable and enjoyable experience that it was.



THE ICONIC ADVENTURES OF GEORGE THE JINJA-NINJA

Our quest for a bright future began in the dark hours of Thursday morning, well before the sun had risen. We were off to spend a long weekend in the clutches of hideous monsters, fighting for survival, meeting and greeting fellow adventurers, and even coughing our way through clouds of noxious vapours, taking an all-too-brief respite from our ordinary lives.

Our ragtag group of five mystery seekers met in the wee hours of the morning and headed for the N1 to begin the long journey, adventure in our hearts. However, the monotony of the road quickly dimmed this adventurous spirit, and filled us instead with... well to be honest, not a whole hell of a lot. The tedium was occasionally relieved by a quick roadside meal, sporadic talk of far-off universes, or attempts to watch the inside of our eyelids (by someone other than the drivers, fortunately). By the end of it however, we were all seeking respite from the sheer boredom of the rolling hills and many shrubberies – cries of “Bring for me a Shrubbery!” having long since lost their appeal.

Eventually, our subdued mood was lifted as the end of our journey – the outskirts of Johannesburg – came into sight, and caused all in the car (well our car, at least) to breathe a sigh of relief and sit up straighter in expectation.

My Friday began when I woke at 8:30, deemed late by some but still early by my standards, as I got a call from an online friend – an interesting fellow I know mostly as “Die Boer”. He was already at the convention for the Dawn of War 2 tourney held by Mayhem (which he won, by the way) and looking forward to finally meeting me in person.

After meeting him and checking out the small space Mayhem had carved for themselves, I turned my attention to the stalls lining the main hall of the convention space. I was fascinated by the MEAD group, the dice that were on display at Wizards, and the impressive quantity of Warhammer and 40k stuff on display at The Outer-Limits and other shops. Soon after I was helped to understand the sign-up system in place (I guess it worked, although it seemed rather error-prone to me). I duly submitted my form and waited for the second module of the day to start – I had missed the first one whilst looking around.

Amongst the kaleidoscope of impressions, I seem to remember my first participation was in a Cthulhu module which was DM'd by Chris Visser. What I do recall with clarity was that it was a truly memorable and enjoyable module (I got eaten by spiders, I'm an arachnophobe, you figure it out!). Somehow being tortured and horribly killed in interesting and unusual ways is enormously entertaining.

In the evening, Dom, Chris and I went out for supper and a discussion of the day's events and what was in store for Saturday. After a pleasant meal and an interesting pooling of our combined impressions, we proceeded to add to the day's adventures by getting lost on the way back. This happened, ironically, despite being in the correct road and only about 100 meters from our destination! We landed up spending about half an hour driving around, looking at the map, and trying to find our way back...

My Saturday started with a rather pleasant but very long module based in the 40k universe. It was an interesting murder mystery and I

suspect that without the timely assistance (well threaded into the story) of the DM, we would never have been able complete it. In the respite after that module I watched the final 2 matches of the Dawn of War 2 Tournament that was taking place in the Mayhem tent. Shortly after that I set off for my second module of the day. This was my second Cthulhu module, which I believe was called Croatoa. The module began in a somewhat disorganised way, as nobody knew who anybody else was or what their personal aims really were. However, we soon got over this, and then the module became rather a lot of fun, although I wasn't quite so convinced about the ending (but I think we were running out of time). That module was the last in the day for me, and when it ended I went back to where I was staying. I landed up talking about MEAD with the guy who was putting us up, which I found really fascinating, and I hope we'll get to have mini-MEAD back in CT.

My first module on Sunday was interesting. I started it off (only 5 minutes into the damn thing) by hitting my head on a bar on the "clicketty-clack" (I was the half-orc) and falling 300ft. I then spent approximately the next hour (IRL) sitting on my hands, until I was resurrected with mechanical gnome-built legs. With my new found legs, however, I proceeded to get into an interesting situation involving fire, in which my legs promptly fused together! Having all of this happen to me was, however, rather amusing, and makes for a fun tale to recount. Well, I think so, at least, although some glazed eyes and drool on the chin from other people may say otherwise!

After this I ended up back in the Mayhem area discovering a probably originally-unintended use for the Havok physics engine in the Soul Calibur game on the xbox – animating tits! My friend and I packed up laughing when we first saw it, and we still chuckle every time we think of it. I spent the rest of the afternoon getting my ass kicked by Dom until about 5

(though, for pride's sake, I have to note that I did win a game or two), and then got into a game of Power-grid (a board game Chris had just bought), in which I got shafted rather a lot (I'm not hurt or anything! No, not me! No, I'm not crying, I deny it!). We continued to play until it was time for the dinner, where we used the opportunity to discuss travel arrangements back. After that it was time for a short sleep before leaving at 3 in the morning.

The drive back on Monday was long but not too bad. We were all tired so we didn't talk much until we could clearly see Cape Town in the distance. We did, however, still add a few interesting moments on the trip back: I made the rather Futurama'esque mistake of purchasing some gas-station-sandwiches when we stopped at some anonymous petrol station. And, at the very same station, we were surprised to notice a group of sheep quietly gazing on the grass by our cars. This provoked thoughts of sheep-riding armies in our sleep-depraved minds, so we began to herd the poor things. Thanks to the uncooperative sheep, our efforts were fruitless, and none of them wandered into the restaurant, despite our enthusiastic attempts to persuade them. After our herding failure, we consoled ourselves with some biltong (and for those in Chris' car, some koeksisters) and continued our journey home.

After some tricky manoeuvring around a stopped truck in the tunnel – the last of the excitement on the trip, we finally saw the lights of Cape Town hove into view. I, for one, was glad to be home, and my everyday life now held renewed appeal. It had been fun, but we all needed our beds and some decent sleep that didn't involve twisting into a pretzel. And so our band of now-very-weary adventurers parted, heading for familiar comforts and looking forward to telling the tales of our adventures to those who couldn't be there.



PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION
COMMISSIONED ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (NIA) FOR THE SOUTH
AFRICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

PATIENT: GROUP SOCIETY, ALIAS "CLAWS"

CASE NO.: 19374

EVALUATION PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2008- JULY
2009

Abstract


The findings of this psychological evaluation clearly show a profoundly disturbed group of people, all to be immediately taken in, as soon as possible, by the nearest and most secure mental health facility. It can be said with certainty that this group of people, (vastly) ranging in age and calling themselves "role-players" are nothing short of a severe hazard to an already violent society.

I began this investigation in early 2008, after receiving a number of rather worrying testimonies concerning the group in question. I was forced to evaluate the group without them being aware of me doing so, and so I took the rather plausible disguise of an innocent and vulnerable first-year student who had never before come into contact with this so-called "role-playing." I have since used this disguise, including fake breasts, to great success at many a CLAWs event, immediately integrating myself into the group. Owing to this brilliant disguise, the group soon accepted me, not only as a possible role-player but as a friend too. A

rather ingenious parable known as the "lampchop incident" further enabled the group to relate to me and thus trust me on the bizarre yet profoundly simple level on which they appear to operate.

My first contact with the group came after I slyly accepted an invitation to my first CLAWs event. It is vital to note here that from this very first meeting, I found myself in a cesspool of illicit and disturbing behaviour, conducted by intensely troubled people. Instead of holding a simple birthday party, the group was in fact holding a "wake", despite the birthday boy's obvious vitality. He may suffer from a life-threatening inability to smile like any other person in a photograph, but the boy was most definitely breathing. I joined in on what appeared to be the practiced initiation process, and soon found myself with a bright blue tongue, wearing a blow-up cheese hat and sitting on the lap of another individual who is now known for his rather worrying preoccupation with showers and 21sts. This masquerade of pretending to be horribly drunk allowed me to immediately locate myself within the inner intricacies of interpersonal behaviour displayed by the "CLAWs" group, and I continued to use the imitation drunken disguise at many more CLAWs event during the subsequent period of evaluation.

The following year and a half involved nothing more than further encounters with individuals more disturbed than the next. This year alone, using a rather imaginative yet devious draw card of a free coke upon sign-up, the



group managed to get their 'claws' on many more a unsuspecting first-year, some of these first-years now trusting the CLAWs members to the extent that some of them are allegedly dating some older members. I myself managed to snag one of these poor suckers, correction first-years, making further vital connections within the group.

The group's population appears to consist of a number of students, ranging in age and faculty, although a number of them are (disturbingly, strangely and bizarrely) studying Computer Science. However, a large part of the group seems to be made up of much older members, almost in their 30's. (!!!!) Why these older members (also known as grown-ups) are still reveling in the company of (and in one very perturbing case, dating) these much younger students can be seen as nothing short of suspicious in the eyes of the mental professional. Their motives are clearly untoward and these students are in definite danger of being clinically Scarred For Life (SFL) if nothing else. One can only imagine the possible repercussions of a situation in which these younger students begin to aspire to and imitate the elders' behaviour, and end up in hopeless job situations, or worse still, barefoot, long-haired and fatherly.

My reports formed after the mental evaluations of the other group members include persistent and recurrent disturbed personalities, ranging from a mysterious preoccupation with feline sounds to an individual whose behaviour

and daily activities are controlled entirely by his hair. One individual cross-dresses at every available occasion and another is almost entirely occupied with sparkly things, unicorns and Disney music.

Very noteworthy, however, is how the group behaviour plummets in terms of strangeness when the group is together and even worse when the group is together and under the influence of alcohol. I can report skinny dipping, declarations of adoration for some "King Trog" (whom I suspect to be their extra-terrestrial leader), a devotion to sparkly vampires in the case of some of the girls and even an incident of "boyfriend-testing." The most distressing behaviour of all is the group's tendency to meet every few months and engage in a practice referred to as "LARPing." I cannot begin to explain the sheer peculiarity and oddity that is LARPing, and shall not do it justice if I begin to try.

In fact, I cannot ever begin to explain any of the peculiarity and oddity that is "CLAWs", and will never successfully manage to do so. I quote (badly), "Trying to explain CLAWs is like coming in on season 2 of a sitcom that relies entirely on in-jokes." Every member requires immediate incarceration to a mental health facility ... preferably Valkenburg, where they can join me for a drink. ;)

P.S. WTF is role-playing anyways?!?!?

KAOS!

This just in,

Authorities have reported several cases of murder on and around UCT campus this morning. The first to be discovered was the most horrific of the casualties, one Karl Silbernagl was found hacked to pieces in a stairwell. Sources inside the coroners office say that it appears that the wounds were most likely inflicted by a medieval styled battle axe of some fashion. Police are currently investigating the roleplaying society on campus in fear that one of the students has taken his gaming "a bit to far". (For more on roleplaying influences on violence see page 12. For more information about how Dungeons and Dragons will steal your child's soul please see article 6 on page 66)

The second body found was that of one Inez McGregor. Eye witnesses report that a man beat her to death with a baton just before a lecture was about to begin. Evidently the lecturer had been in on the hit as after the assassination, the murderer proceeded to "assist with setting up for this was some elaborate ruse to cover up payment for the hit and the lecturer has been arrested for the third body found was that of one Dominic Nunes, a computer science honours student. He was found beaten to death outside of his field to keep informed of any new developments.

There were no signs of a struggle and there is not a lot of cover nearby, police believe the act was performed by someone close to the victim. There is evidence that this was simply a crime of convenience as Mr. Nunes apartment was found unlocked and a note was left by his computer saying "thanks for the hashdrive". Sources inside the police department have said that investigation is being performed into whether Mr. Nunes death was related to that of Miss McGregor due to similarities in brutality and style of the attacks.

The final body found today was that of one Mr. Zacharia Crumley. Forensic sources tell us that he was in fact the first victim of the day as found slumped over his computer in the computer science honours lab on UCT campus. As this is a common state for most students in this particular lab no one thought to attempt to wake him. After the distinct odors of death became apparent the rest of the students in the lab decided to check on Mr. Crumley at which point the fact of his passing became evident. Whether these events are unrelated outbursts of psychotic violence or if there is pattern to emerge, only time and good police work will tell. We will continue bringing you updates over the next couple of days as our reporters stay in the field to keep informed of any new developments.

DAY 2:

This just in,

Tensions abound around campus as people skitter from lecture to lecture waiting to see if any more bodies are found. And it would appear that their fears are well founded as the body of Justin Mopp was found sprawled on the road near the physics building. The injuries inflicted on him prior to his death are consistent with those found on two of yesterday's victims. The lecturer, whose name is yet to be disclosed, has been handed over to a new task force which has been formed

to deal with this situation. They will be questioning him further regarding the nature of his involvement in these horrific acts of mob violence.

Thankfully there was only one body found today. Have the killings stopped? Is this carnival of blood at an end? Only time will tell. We are hopeful that the police will be able to determine whether the various killings are connected by the end of the week. Once again we will be staying on the scene for the latest news regarding these mob killings by what some readers are referring to as "The Campus Crusher".

DAY 3:

This just in...

The horrific acts of violence that have been plaguing UCT seem to have once again escalated to multiple killings in one day. The most interesting of these killings is that of one Kieran Duggan. He was found in possession of a small medieval battleaxe. Whether this was the weapon used in the brutal killing on Karl Silbernagl on Monday remains to be seen. Mr. Duggan was beaten to death by what appears to be a very methodical mob hit man. Mr. Duggan was found near the glass house with his skull beaten in. Owing to the suspicious nature of Mr. Duggan, and his possible connection to the murder of Mr. Silbernagl, we do not expect much of an outcry over his death.

This does not appear to be the end of our mobsters killing spree as the body of Kristen Meyer was found beaten to death outside of the Beatie building on upper campus. Once again, there were suspicions revolving around Miss Meyer and her possible connection to terrorist extremist groups. Is our mobster taking out those individuals that he feels are too dangerous to be left alive in a manner reminiscent of the Saints of South Boston or his he simply staking out his territory? These are questions that we may never know the answers to. The question of Miss Meyer's involvement with terrorist groups, however, can almost certainly be confirmed. Shortly before her demise at the hands of the Campus Crusher, another victim was found on upper campus. This one not killed in the manner of the notorious mobster. Mustard gas was evidently used to take out a target in a tutorial group by a suicide bomber. Typically these

bombers use high explosives for a quick and certain death but it appears that that whoever sent this bomber wanted to inflict pain and suffering as well as death. Our ever eager sources at the coroners office have informed us that Miss Meyer's hands were covered in the chemicals used in the manufacture of mustard gas. A raid on her house by police found a lab set up where vast quantities of the substance were being produced. Perhaps this time, the Campus Crusher has performed a public service by cleansing Miss Meyer from the gene pool.

Moving slightly further abroad we find ourselves at Hiddingh campus where the body of one Roxy Anne Kawitzky was found stabbed to death outside the library. Owing to the lack of defensive wounds it appears that Miss Kawitzky was either unaware of the killers presence or she knew her murderer. The most frightening aspect of the killing is the fact that after death, Miss Kawitzky's facial expression was one of confusion, as if saying "Why me? Why would you do this thing?". Police have quarantined the body as a precaution for possible chemical weapons being used in the area. After the release of the latest Batman movie, various unhinged members of society have attempted to create their own versions of a toxin called Smilex which causes the victim to die with a strange expression on their face.

Is this the beginning of a new age of chemical terror? If so, then why was Miss Kawitzky stabbed instead of simply letting the chemical perform its job.

These answers and more later. We will be on scene until further notice, bringing you the latest updates on, "UCT: Chemical Testing Grounds".

Day 4:

This just in...

More death and destruction on UCT campus as the Crusher further demonstrates his ability to evade capture by all. This time his calling card has been left on two second year students.

The first body found was that of Mareli Strydom. Her body bore the marks of the Crushers trademark blunt instrument. Police have released information that this weapon may in fact be a regular night stick and are advising all students to avoid any suspicious looking characters.

The second victim was one Cheneal Puljevic. This second year BA student was barely able to be identified due to the brutal nature of the attack. While she was clearly beaten with the same weapon as the rest of the Crushers victims, hers was far more severe. The attack must have been sudden and carrying a great deal of force as her jaw was locked in

place, shattered, with the food she was eating at the time still on her tongue. After her death it appears that the Crusher continued to work over her body suggesting that there was a personal reason for the kill.

Further investigation has shown trace amounts of anthrax on her hands. In light of this information, police have released details regarding a previously unmentioned attack. Evidently an envelope with anthrax in it was delivered to the engineering building on campus earlier this week. The police decided not to release this information initially in order to prevent panic from ensuing on campus. With the revelation that the chemical makeup of the anthrax in the attack and that found on Miss Puljevic being exact matches police feel that the anthrax threat is over.

Has The Crusher once again saved us all from a more deadly threat? Is he simply looking to expand his territory? For answers to these questions, keep reading as we bring you more up-to-date news as the days progress.

Day 5:

This just in...

The rampage of carnage that has gripped UCT campus this week continues today with two more deaths. The first was that of Thomas Morris, a new student at UCT. He was found mauled outside the computer science building. Apparently Mr. Morris had been speaking with a friend of his when someone snuck up behind Mr. Morris and knocked his legs out from under him. After he hit the floor the assailant proceeded to maul Mr. Morris with a mace.

After comparing a sketch made of the attacker, based on input from the traumatized friend, to that of descriptions of The Campus Crusher it has been determined that this was in fact the same person. Why has he changed weapons? Is this a new escalation in his aggressiveness? The Crusher was not done yet as a second body was found at the residence of one Kieran Duggan.

Readers may recognize the name of Mr. Duggan as one of the victims of The Crusher from earlier this week. The body found in Mr. Duggan's residence was one Victor Kirov. Our ever reliable forensic sources inform us that Mr. Kirov was detained in place with the use of chloroform and then tied down using rope. Electrical burns to the chest show evidence to the fact that Mr. Kirov was tortured before he was violently killed with The Crusher's new weapon of choice.

What information was The Crusher trying to obtain? We may never know, however, sources in the police force inform us that Mr. Kirov was involved in various mob affairs. Was this a turf war between various mobs or an internal power struggle? Again, we may never get answers to these questions until The Crusher is caught. An anonymous tipoff has informed us that The Crusher has in fact left the country, heading back to Italy where he apparently hails from. Know this, should The Crusher return, you'll know as soon as we do...

THE HOLLOW ONES

TWO VAMPIRE GAMES AT THE SAME TIME

System: Vampire the Requiem

Players: Lucas, Greg, Toby, Niki, Brendan, Marita, Mareli, Alex and briefly Yanke.

Characters: Collin, Victor, Sam, Sadie, James, Opal, William, Kia and briefly Gabriel.

Body Count: Two player character kills.

The idea was simple: Run a Vampire the Requiem game because it's been ages since I've turned a group of usually sensible roleplayers into soulless bloodsucking monsters who like to roll dice and play vampires. I'm not sure what it is about playing vamps that turn regular human beings into assholes with superpowers, but there you go. I'm sure Nietzsche would say something pithy about staring into the abyss. Then again Nietzsche never had to discuss the merits of dropping bombs on an insane asylum from a helicopter as opposed to just flying a plane into it. But that's player ingenuity for you. They'll bring a packed lunch to a fire fight. And by packed lunch I mean bound and gagged human victim. Yeah, I know, it's practical. But is it right? Moral quandaries and the vampiric condition aside, the second issue when it comes down to players is getting them all to agree on a day to play. I could not solve this issue to everyone's satisfaction and finally decided the easiest would be to recruit more players and run two games...I'm really efficient that way...*sobs* So there are two groups. Group A and Group B or, as they ended up being labeled, Team Sparkle and Team Psycho.

The Hollow Ones is set in the fictional city of San Locuro. I'd place it somewhere between San Francisco and Seattle, but more north than south. An Invictus controlled city with strong ties to the Lancea Sanctum and a strong Cathian movement. The only two groups with a small presence are the ever mysterious Ordo Dracul who aren't allowed to leave their territories, and the completely screwed Circle of the Crone who are treated as second class citizens. The two sets of players have just spent the last six months being trained by the Sheriff, John Farrow, to become faithful Hounds of the Invictus. They are each given their first assignment involving making an example of some uppity Circle of the Crone members masquerading as members of other covenants. Team Sparkle is to raid a graveyard while Team Psycho hits a farm house. Both teams are successful in their bloody missions and are invited to The Vallier Building to receive praise from their ruling elders.

This is where the twist is thrown in. Both teams seemingly black out on their way the elevator and the next thing they know they wake up in Bishopsgate Asylum. Now usually something as simple as a medical institution run by mortals would be happy fun time for eight badass vampires, but waking up mortal and missing three months of their lives does tend to cramp their styles. Enter a cast of doctors, nurses, orderlies and the mentally ill. Of the two teams, Team Psycho spent all of half a day in Bishopsgate before escaping through the time old tradition of RUSH 'EM, causing death and mayhem on the way out. Team Sparkle on the other hand endures group therapy, art therapy and eventually shock therapy at the hands on one Dr Victor Hallstead. Mysterious events have both groups thrust into the city as vampires once more to find the

political landscape much changed. Now you may have noticed how vague I'm being. You see, both groups are in fact in the same city at the same time. It's the same game and the same game world and both groups have an impact on each other as their various plot lines intersect. And both teams are reading this article. The two games work because while the two teams are running around each other the whole time, they are never running into each other. And one of the main reasons for this is that they are in two different stories. Different stories? Well...yeah. One of the initial problems with this game was that I had two different ideas for it. Both equally awesome. So I ran both. The concept for the campaigns was Jacobs Ladder meets Manchurian Candidate meets an old horror computer game from way back when which I totally cannot mention for fear of ruining the surprise.

So back into the vampiric world they go and things have really changed. The Lancea Sanctum seemed to have taken over and the Invictus are now the city's regular whipping boy. Apparently the Invictus were very naughty a few months ago when they orchestrated simultaneous attacks on both the Carthians (farmhouse) and the Ordo Dracul (graveyard) and the Lancea Sanctum have used this as an excuse to unite the two angry parties and force out the old guard. This they mostly discover before having to attend the new Archbishop's midnight mass to introduce themselves. Where they discover that sheriff John Farrow, their mentor and the man who gave the order on both attacks, was in fact working for the Lancea Sanctum all along. Not only that but the dear doctor responsible for much of the Team Sparkle's misery, has been embraced and is protected by the Archbishop himself. So Team Sparkle joins back up with the Invictus and Team Psycho jumps ship for the Carthians...some what. So let's see what they have been up to.

Team Psycho: Activities of Team Psycho have included, cow theft, car theft, drug dealing, murder investigation, bar brawls, werewolf aggravation, dodgy deals with drug lords, arms acquisition, inciting of gang violence, discovering new drugs and being personally responsible for the deaths of cops, drug dealers, Russian mafia, gang bangers, indestructible zombies and one really annoying Revenant.

Team Sparkle: Activities of Team Sparkle have included, kidnapping, assassination, arson, politics, information gathering, decapitation, toilet stall decoration, spousal abuse, breaking and entering, jewelry theft, vent running, judicious use of mind control and were personally responsible for the deaths of gang bangers, drug dealers, millionaire playboys and one really whiny drug lord.

Going into detail would take up way too many pages and reveal a level of wanton disregard for life; limb and human dignity that would make Tarantino utter the words: "Dude, that's pretty fucked up." Suffice it say both groups seem to be enjoying themselves immensely and have betrayal, blood hunts, riots, madness, quarantines, open warfare, curfews, intrigue, the loss of self and the potential end of the world to look forward to. That's if I don't execute the lot of them for being soulless bloodsucking monsters who like to roll dice and play vampires.

Zac's Aberrant Game

Earlier this year, I decided to run a role-playing campaign. I had ideas for various settings, but in the end (and possibly due to the influence of *Watchmen*) I settled on the high-powered universe of *Aberrant*.

For those of you who aren't aware, *Aberrant* is a role-playing game set in a near-future Earth where a small percentage of the population have mysteriously begun developing super-powers. The game is all about these super-powered people (called *novas*) and their impact on the world. Essentially it's very similar to the *X-men* universe, except that it stays away from all that comic book, spandex-wearing silliness, and the philosophical themes are (somewhat) more prominent.

I decided that my campaign would use the canon setting, but for various reasons, I'd make some adjustments to it. Firstly, I made a large number of changes (both large and small) so that players who knew the canon universe wouldn't be able to draw on their knowledge and fall into complacency. Secondly, I brought the setting a bit closer to the real world we live in, to make it feel more relevant and closer to what the players knew.

Next I read over the rules to remind myself of how it worked, and ran into one of the problems with *Aberrant*. The thing is that, as the rules stand, it's extremely easy to make ridiculously overpowered characters, sometimes this can even happen unintentionally (Bounce Boy anyone?). In order to counter this, and give the game some sense of balance, I banned some powers, toned down the starting power level of the characters, and made the rules for taint (the negative effects of super-powers) much harsher. I hoped that this would keep things on a reasonable power level, but still give the players room to create interesting characters.

Next, I cast 'Summon Player V' and told the summoned denizens of the CLAWs dimension to make some characters. A little while later the following mismatched miscreants were started out:

Cammeron Whitakker (played by Ian): An ex-conman with a super-power set similar to Gambit (of *X-men* fame). He's fantastically good at tricking and manipulating people, and can charge objects with kinetic energy.

Milov Donnovich (played by Karl): A bisexual, world-famous rock star, with an inhumanly wide range of talents. He also occasionally transforms into an angry wolf-creature and smashes things loudly.

Sun-Kun Kei (played by Dom): A super-powered martial artist capable of flight and projecting energy blasts. He used to be a Chinese street kid, before being taken in by a strict martial arts master who helped him to develop and use his powers.

Michael "The Weaver" Anderson (played by Warren): An stunningly handsome, but not-very-bright jock who seems to suffer from an odd case of split-personality. His powers revolve around manipulating *eufiber*, a strange substance that reacts to the quantum energies of *novas*.

Liliya Hkasanova (played by Claire): A quiet Russian woman with the ability to sense and control the emotions and feelings of others. She can also grow wolverine-style claws to use in combat.

The game began with all the characters working for Project Utopia, an international organization, affiliated with the UN, dedicated to making the world a better place. Essentially, the 'good guys' of the game's setting.

In the first session of the game, they were en route to Project Utopia's headquarters in Addis Ababa, where they met several

NPCs and were slowly eased into the campaign setting.

The first real action occurred when the players were asked to be part of a scientific project to send a new type of manned spacecraft into space. Some unconfirmed intelligence indicated that there might be some sort of attack, and the players were asked to go along for security reasons.

As expected, after a short time in orbit, nova assailants attacked the spacecraft, and used its advanced communications systems as part of a world-wide broadcast in which a new group of *novas*, named the Teragen announced their formation and presence to Earth. The players managed to subdue and capture one of the attackers, but the rest escaped.

After returning to Earth (via partially-controlled crash landing), the full impact of the attack and its message was made clear to the characters. In the ensuing chaos, the characters were sent to question a Spanish nova who was publicly making his support for the Teragen known. This became a complicated exercise in PR and interrogation, which the players had to wade through. While on this trip, some of the other characters also learned of Milov's uncontrolled werewolf powers.

Following this, the characters were allowed some downtime, which ended when they all attended a rock concert in California, organized by Milov as a way of countering the sudden impact and influence of the Teragen's attack and message.

Unfortunately during the concert, a contingent of *novas* arrived as guests, claiming to be part of the Teragen, followed by a group of nova mercenaries. As the alcohol flowed, these two groups threatened to come to blows, and the players were forced to step in and keep the situation in control, which they managed by convincing the troublemakers to 'take it outside'. Despite this graceful handling of the problem, a panicky Uncle Sam still sent his finest in with the intention of hauling everyone off in handcuffs, and it took some smooth talking by the party to defuse the situation without causing further violence.

A few days later, the characters' rest and relaxation was cut short by an urgent message for them to get to Addis Ababa right away. On arrival they were sent to investigate the disappearance of a super-intelligent nova who specialized in making ultra-powerful weapons for nova mercenaries. Project Utopia was concerned that she had been kidnapped by some one who intended to use her creations for dubious purposes and told the player characters to quietly investigate what had happened.

After arriving in Cape Town (where the missing nova had last been seen) and going over the scene of the kidnapping, the characters were attacked by heavily armed gunmen. After successfully defending themselves, they interrogated the surviving attackers and extracted a lead to investigate a small house on the coast, near Jeffrey's Bay.

And that was how things stood at the time of writing.

The party cohesion has been surprisingly good so far (by which I mean that no one is actively trying to screw over/kill anyone else), and the characters' powers work reasonably well together.

My only real concern is that the players are merrily wandering down the path to utter broken, munchkin-ism, gleefully chaining together powers to turn them into unstoppable juggernauts of destruction. I might let that bug me, but then I remember that I'm the GM, and my NPC's don't have to follow the rules the players do, so instead I cackle evilly and look up the rules for the truly horrendous powers, like universe creation.

Breaking Taboos

A story of mobsters, money and magick

It all started with a dame.

The tearful eyes of the Crying Doll gave two hardened killers an insight into the Occult Underground, and they saw potential. Potential for profit, potential for power, and the potential to turn their crumbling crime family around. And all it would take is a little careful recruiting...

Conventional wisdom says that organised crime and magick don't mix. The Mafiosi get freaked out by the freakjobs, and adepts aren't very good at organising anything, much less crime. But no one ever made a killing (financial or otherwise) by being conventional. And being a wiseguy doesn't mean that you're wise.

It's a bad time to be a bad guy in Chicago. One of the largest and most influential families is being dissected on Court TV, profits are down, guards are up and respect just isn't what it used to be. For the members of the Gianetti family, their very existence hangs in the balance. They've lost their strongest allies, their business rivals are closing in and even their "friendly" fellow families won't hesitate to hamstring them if they look like they're going down.

Oh, and that's just the normal criminal underworld. There's a whole pack of predators waiting in the scary playground of the occult underground to take a piece out of them if they screw up. Now is not a good time to appear vulnerable. Or weak, compassionate, scared, sensitive, superstitious, easily-confused or prone to nervous breakdowns.

But to be the first criminal group to really capitalise on magick could pay huge dividends for our motley band of mobsters and mystics. Their alliance with a cabal of Chicago urbanomancers called the Auriga Society has provided them with impressive connections and powers (along with a nasty turf war against TNI), though the jury's still out as to whether they can balance their mystic and mundane loyalties without having the whole house of cards come tumbling abruptly (and fatally) down.

Though as any wiseguy knows, there are a lotta ways to fix a jury...

The Crew:

Nick "the Nose" de Noso, hitman, made man and Hunter: Nick recently joined the ranks of the made men, which has given him a new perspective on mob politics. While no one screws with Nick, it's one thing to inspire fear and another thing entirely to inspire loyalty, so he's still trying to adapt to a more responsible role in the family. His mystic experiences have also left him seeing an unconventional psychiatrist, whose preferred treatments include psychotropics and restraints, which seem to have brushed up against something nasty in Nick's subconscious.

Nora de Noso, hitwoman, enforcer and Executioner: Nora's role as the Executioner has allowed her to adapt quickly to

serving Cain and the Auriga Society as their Chosen Killer. However, while her mystic loyalties are comparatively clear, her family loyalties have recently become murkier. After the apparent sidelining of her uncle, "Lucky" Jack Rosselini by Don Gianetti, she has been one of the principal movers in calling out a magick "hit" against the Don to ensure that Lucky Jack becomes the new boss of the family

Daniel "Danny" Rossi, stuntman, Epideromancer and Magick Pimp: Danny has expanded his focus from the pains of the flesh to include the pleasures as well, having prepared the first of a planned stable of mystically-enhanced "escorts". He still nurses a grudge against the Naked Goddess cult (goddamn sex vampires!) as a result of distrust, misunderstanding and their role in the break-up of his relationship with his girlfriend. The resurrection of Cain has also recently put Danny in a difficult position, given his odd friendship with the Connoisseur, possibly the most powerful of Chicago's adepts and an outspoken adversary of Cain's.

Benjamin Savin aka "Benny the Jew", crooked accountant and Plutomancer: Business is good for Benny. He's still running his own practice, along with cooking the books for various mob lines, and now running the newly-established Midas Trust for the benefit of Chicago. His budding romance with Jessica Patterson, another Auriga Society member, has caused some confusion, particularly after Jessica demonstrated that she was prepared to put Benny's safety ahead of the Society's. Benny, ever the loyal executive, reported this to Cain, and is now in the unpalatable position of keeping an eye on his maybe-girlfriend for further signs of treachery. His Facebook status is "It's Complicated".

Nico "the Magic" Puccini, paroled drug dealer, mystical alchemist and recent coma patient.

Nico's recent experiences have been a fair number of ups and downs, much like the soaring highs and crushing lows of his own products. He got fired. He got his own drug business. He was blackmailed. He framed the blackmailer and got him killed. His girlfriend was gang-raped in retaliation. He found the person responsible and castrated them. His "business" was placed under another mobster's supervision. He completed his long-term magickal project, to build the perfect angelic form for the spirit of Cain. He was found comatose by the rest of the party, the victim of an unknown force.

"Springheel" Jack Grosvenor, cat burglar, parkour enthusiast and general ne'er-do-well: Jack has come a long way from his free-roaming beginnings. Despite Nick and Nora's attempts to "toughen him up", he's still got most of the same happy-go-lucky spirit, even if his hands and soul aren't nearly as clean as they used to be. Unlike the other more hierarchy-conscious crew members, he has struggled with his new role as a member of the Auriga Society, and still has the bruises to prove it. On the plus side, he's found his own more egalitarian set of allies in the Sect of the Naked Goddess (as well as a girlfriend who's nearly as crazy as he is).

Saiban Blue Part II

Starring:

Garrick As Kakita Hirotada, Kolat Trained Ikoma Spymaster
 Warren-kun as Bayushi Kisuke, Shosuro Shinobi, trained in the Bayushi Violator Technique
 Chris as Mirumoto Kenji, Mirumoto Bushi
 Kelvin as Moto Kuraodo, Moto Bushi
 Brendan as Doji Inada, Daidoji "Ranger" <cough> Harrier <cough>(SSHH! The Crane have no Ninja!)

Player who joined up

Lucas as Agasha Saizo, brilliant Shugenja, here both to join the Saiban and pursue Clan Interests

An L5R Campaign GM'ed by Adeeb Balla, during the years 2007-2008

The Story Begins

The City of Setchu to Fukuro, season 2

Having faced and narrowly defeated the forces of the Dark God (summarized in the last CLAWMARKS), the Saiban and the city as a whole begin rebuilding after the devastation of the the Night Of Blood and Thunder.

Opening his principality's coffers, the Prince, Hantei Ieyasu spared no-expense to make the city as good or better than ever, but the time and effort strained the city's resources.

At the same time, various other agencies begin their own schemes to undermine or control the city and the Blood of Hantei

With the wealth flooding the city, various criminal cartels made a concerted effort to bring their influence over the city's underworld.

The feared Black Lotus Cartel, The Scorpion Opium Smugglers, the local (And Kolat Controlled) Yakuza, The Koga Ninja Clan and the city's own Fire Fighters Guild(actually an Extortion racket reporting to Bayushi Atsuki the Prince's Vizier), came to the city hoping to stake a claim to the city's incredible wealth.

One by one the various threats were neutralised, with the ninja contingent of the Saiban often using somewhat...disreputable tactics to maintain law and order.

Also other matters occupied the Saiban and its illustrious membership. Things like; Marriage, Family, Romance and the First Setchu To Fukuro Iajutsu Tournament.

Hirotada began a...shall we say unusual...courtship with the princess Sakura, as Hirotada and the Princess began jujitsu lessons, and offering prayers to the shrine for the deceased Isawa Hoshi (Wait Hirotada, didn't you two loathe each other? Hirotada! You Lying Bastard!)

Secondly he found himself trying and failing to extricate himself from his Kolat past, with little effect. And of course he and Atsuki continued their political one-upmanship as the Prince watched on amused. Especially in the light of Atsuki's new play, the Fall of A Phoenix, a highly romanticized account of the Battle of the Night of Blood and Thunder, wherein Hoshi's sacrifice brought victory to the heroes of the Saiban. The comic relief of the play was of course a young inexperienced and somewhat naïve Crane Courtier, who achieves victory through his enemies misfortune and comic turns of fate. Truly a little Crane Who Could (Doesn't sound like anyone we know huh Hirotada?)

Mirumoto Kenji in the meanwhile, was rapidly and enthusiastically seduced by the extraordinarily beautiful[Editor's Note: YES I spelt it correctly!] Mantis courtier Yoritomo Yoyonagi as part of a Mantis plot to humiliate and kill him, due to his

execution of the Mantis ambassador's father on grounds of smuggling.

Secondly he started studying kenjutsu under the famed Mirumoto Musashi, the man called by the Dragon; "The Second Hojatsu". It involved a great deal of getting beat up by his invincible sensei, a lot and everyday, as he prepared for the first Setchu to Fukuro Iajutsu tournament.

Lastly, impressed with the skill of Kenji, the Shogun Kaneka requested that his son Ginawa be trained jointly by Musashi and Kenji. They were the most competent Kenjutsu-ka in Rokugan, and Ginawa shared their talent with the blade.

Moto Kuraodo slowly began to acclimate to the city and struck up a friendship with a mysterious courtesan named Tania, who like him possessed a gaijin ancestor.

The son of the Khan, Moto Temujin had been sent to the city and Kuraodo soon struck up a friendship with the young and heroic heir of the Khan, as they tried to adjust to life in the Big City.

Bayushi Kisuke found himself both working to stop opium smuggling as a member of the Saiban, and assisting the feared "Left Hand of the Scorpion Champion" Shosuro Jimen in smuggling Opium.

oo the incredibly lethal Scorpion assassin found himself betrothed to a Scorpion Kunoichi(Female ninja) almost as deadly as he was, and determined to keep her honor until their wedding. Great was his frustration.

Doji Inada, home for the first time in 5 years, settled in at home with his well-meaning courtier father Kai, terrifying mother Sora(Ex-Crane Special Forces) and his sister Maya, a developmentally challenged 20 year old, who happened to be the most beautiful woman in the world.

In the meantime the female magistrates on the Saiban formed a secret fanclub dedicated to him, with the Monkey Clan magistrate Toku Akiko as his number one "FanGirl"(he's really pretty, it's a problem when you're a ninja and VERY recognisable)

And to top it off his best friend Hiruma Ukyo arrived from Hiruma Castle to investigate the death of Crab VIPs while being arrested by the Saiban on charges of Drug Smuggling, keeping Inada busy.

Isawa Saizo arrived in the city to take Hoshi's place as chief shugenja to the Saiban, and do a few errands for the Elemental Council on the sly. Like dealing with the Council Members flirtation with the Gozoku, and the Dragon Clan's attempts to regain their lost Agasha Techniques, through the Prince's largesse.(Confound it!! The Agash defected

to the Phoenix Fair and Square. Blasted Returned Spirits from the Before the Defection!)

Also his rather attractive samurai-ko yojimbo was in love with him.(A serious shugenja has no time for romantic twaddle!)

A few issues would occupy the Saiban in-between bouts of slaughtering crooks, dealing with personal issues and tweaking Atsuki's goatee:

Firstly the arrival of the "suitors", young politically connected personages from the Clans, all of them hoping to win the hand of the princess Sakura. As she and her brother were "True Hantei", despite being sired by a psychotic madman(Their father Hantei XVI), they still possessed enormous clout and face, especially considering their ties to the current Emperor Toturi III, who had been raised by Hantei XVI as part of the truce at the end of the War of the Spirits (1138-1150 AF).

These young and wealthy men, accompanied by retinues added a tension to the city, complicating the political environment. Especially considering the fact that the Princess and Hirotada were engaging in ...shall we say a gymnastic courtship. All above board of course, but Hirotada could see his plans for her being put astray.

In order to accommodate these rivals and put lustre in the name of the city, the Prince held a Suibin iajutsu tournament, the winner of whom would gain one boon from the prince, even including the hand of his sister.

The various VIP's and their duelist retainers entered as well as members of the Saiban. Kenji, Kuraodo, Hirotada, Doji Akihito and other Saiban members all participated. Here Hirotada's skills were at full play. Secretly trained as a duelist by his Kolat sensei, he nevertheless traduced the judges of the tournament and effectively determined the draw of the Tournament, pitting the most skilled duelists against each other.

The Semis saw Kurado face off against Kenji, and lose, as Hirotada faced Kakita Byakuya, Kenji's most bitter rival and also fail.

The Final saw Kenji face off against Byakuya, as the two most skilled duelists of their generation engaged in the most epic duel of the century. Kenji narrowly defeated his long time enemy and secured the boon.

Here again note must be made of Hirotada. Knowing few could face Kenji and win, he placed the idea in the

minds of his cohorts to have the boon be the declaration that Inada's sister, the beautiful Doji Maya, be placed under the protection of the prince in order that she not be married off to an ardent suitor. This suitor, a love-struck wastrel named Doji Yumichika, had been using his vast political connections to secure the poor addled girl as his bride.

By naming the boon thusly, this demonstrated the purely just and noble character of the Saiban in general and Hirotada in particular, especially in the eyes of a certain smitten and sheltered princess.

Also in a more serious light, the Night of Blood and Thunder had encouraged the various supernatural enemies of Rokugan to maintain a closer eye on the goings on in the city. The Spider-Clan, the Kolat, the Goju and lastly the Yobanjin Sorcerer Kyoki, each sent potent servants to keep an eye on the Saiban and the Prince'

The Undead Kolat kill team in particular desired the prince and princess' death, and demanded Hirotada, as an ostensibly loyal Kolat agent of rank in the city provide them with access to the prince. (Little did they know that Hirotada and the ninja element of the city had formed the mysterious "Order of the White Tanto" a black ops team dedicated to furthering the Saiban's goals, and the agenda of Hirotada, Inada and Kisuke in particular)

The Shadowlands team was composed a number of lethal and talented individuals, but none more so than Daigotsu (formerly Hiruma) Ruri, the thought-to-be deceased love of Inada's life. The arrival of his one true love at the side of the Spider-Clan ninja put his life under a great deal of strain.

However the agent sent by Kyoki proved to be the Saiban's greatest Foe. A ronin ninja, from Setchu to Fukuro, the daughter of Hirotada's Yakuza oyabun subordinate. Benkai no Mariko had returned to the city to exact revenge on her father, and been given powers that made her almost invincible in battle.

Using these abilities she cut a swath through the city, killing friends and enemies both, and defeating the Saiban time and again.

The Saiban then encountered the Oracles of Jade and Obsidian who informed the Saiban that the Prince and his sister were pivotal to the defence of Rokugan against the prophesied enemy of Rokugan, the Uniter of the dispossessed Yobanjin, the man who would be called Ulric. A Champion of Hantei and Toturi blood would be the only one capable of taking a stand against the Uniter, so once again the Saiban went into the breach

protecting the Prince and His Sister (And Hirotada's investment)

The final battle saw Mariko attempt to kill the prince on the same night Hirotada lured the Kolat ninja into a trap at the prince's castle. The conflict was fearsome, but the Saiban prevailed, using their wits, intelligence and cunning and utilising both the honourable ways of Saizo, Kenji and Kuraodo, as well as the ruthless skills of the Ninja contingent of the Saiban. Kuraodo in particular discovered, through the aid of mystical dreams, the strange and foreign magical properties of the massive zweihander blade GreySkull handed down to him from his father. He discovered his blood relationship to the Romanov Tsars of far way Ussura, and that his grandfather, the mighty Moto Boris, the Western Moto, had in fact encountered agents of the yobanjin Demigod Kyoki before, and had thwarted that mighty being's plans long ago. Too his mighty blade's enchantments made it particularly potent against the spawn of Kyoki, as Mariko found to her cost.

With the battle over, the Saiban's Jade and Obsidian teams hoped to catch their breath, but this was not to be.

The beginning of Autumn in Setchu brought with it new revelations. The identity of the Hantei's mother was found to be Inada's aunt, his mother's sister in fact, making him family to the Prince. Also the purpose of the Spider emissaries was revealed to be negotiations on the return of the Sword of the Hantei to the Prince's possession from Daigotsu. When the delivery went awry, Inada was forced to slay his former love, and the weapon was delivered to the prince.

Soon after the Princess, Inada's sister Sora and his mother were kidnapped by the feared Pirate Sanada who had come to avenge his defeat that spring. Using the Saiban and the Sword of the Hantei, the Prince was able to slay both Sanada and his allies the feared Forest Killer bandits.

Having defeated the notorious Sanada and the Forest Killer leader Goten, in single combat added a great deal of honour and glory to the prince's name. Just in time, as the Emperor of Rokugan announced that the Winter court of the year 1175 would be held (with the Prince's permission) in Setchu to Fukuro.

The Saiban found themselves once more in the thick of things, living in Very Interesting Times.

This narrative will be concluded in the Next Breathless Installment of CLAWmarks, reserve your copy today!

Board-game review:

The Settlers of Catan



I was first introduced to Settlers of Catan at O-Week, when I was manning the stall and telling prospective CLAWmembers wonderful stories about this game which I hadn't even played. I would later play Settlers at that very stall – braving heavy winds and rival settlements to build up my army of sheep... And despite losing that first game (and never winning one since) I fell in love with it in the way only a New Zealand farmer can with his livestock.

Settlers of Catan is a fairly simple board-game. The objective is to collect resources (wood, iron, grain, clay, and sheep), trade, and build settlements & cities with the purpose of scoring ten victory points. The board is randomly laid out, with each resource tile being assigned a number. Each of the four players take turns rolling dice. The number on the dice determines who gets resources: You get one resource for every settlement you have bordering a resource tile with that number. Unless the dice lands on 7 – in which case the thief can move onto any tile, blocking it from producing resources and allowing the roller to steal a resource from one player on that tile.

Each player starts off with two settlements and two roads. The player can build more settlements, linking them with roads and accruing one victory point for each settlement. The player can also

upgrade the settlements to cities, which give an extra victory point as well as an additional resource. In order to get the resources you need, you can trade with other players (got wood for sheep?) or trade four of a single resource for one of any other resources. If you have a settlement on any of the ports, you can trade at a discount.

In addition to roads, settlements, and cities, you can also buy development cards. These have powers ranging from a free victory point to the ability to call a monopoly on a certain resource – giving you every player's stocks of that resource. Other cards include Road Building – which gives you two free roads, and the Knight, which allows you to move the thief and steal a resource from a player. Development cards are a useful way to turn the game in your favour, and the player with the longest road or most knights played (Largest Army) gets two free victory points.

Settlers of Catan is wonderful in that it is not your everyday board-game. The random nature of every game, as well as the ever-so-delicate combination of skill and chance needed to win, make each game an interesting affair. Alliances get broken, people screw each other over, and the wise man laughs at the quarrelling idiots and cruises his way to victory. This is the sort of game you can introduce to your friends, with many hours of fun to be expected.

CLASSIFIEDS

Fridge quotes

Mareli: Gabi's arse is a well of great ideas

Alex: Oh my God! Oh! Oh my God!

Warren: Alex, don't worry. It's full of protein.

Gabi: Cheneal, could you open your legs for a bit so that i can get out of here?

Mareli: Have you seen Robin Hood?

Zac: The anthropomorphic one with the weird furry overtones?

Cheneal: Thom's only terms and conditions are that i deal with his shit

Marita: Oh no, not coprophillia!

Karl: And then i'll come out of the closet with my big one!

Brendan: I'm so hard right now.

Verolin: Dammit, why won't it stay rigid, it keeps bending.

Inez: Why can't I get Verolin off?

Sean: I can deal with being fucked around, as long as there's money involved.

Adeeb: I've killed dead animals.

Kaitlyn: Stop trying to put it in my orifices.

Yvette: If you put your hand there and keep rubbing him,

he'll keep rubbing you and that will make him happy.

Chris: Yeah you can get more of that. Use your teeth!

Thomas: Let me just find the hole again...

Obituaries

L.T. Gangrel Gulf War Vet: Executed for crimes against the masquerade. Mad dogs are put to sleep.

Simon Gall Jr.: Decapitated, then robbed. If basic instinct taught us anything, its check the bed for knives.

Simon Gall Sr.: Act of mercy. No one should have to suffer seizures strong enough to snap their spines.

Nurse Kathy: Severe cranial trauma. That white liquid leaking from your eye socket is not vitreous humor.

Papa Ghost Child: Run down like a dog and shot to destruction. This time you will not be coming back from the dead.

Jennifer Tate: A c c i d e n t a l l y Exsanguinated. Your embrace came down to a dice roll, pity it came up snake eyes.

Raymond Kleb, Drug Lord: Arrow to the ass and bullet to the brainstem. No one undercuts the Invictus.

RIP - The many pirates conscripted for entertainment on board the North Star. You provided shields, entertainment, and a way to relax while on board. Too bad you couldn't fight your way out of a paper bag

RIP - Cyrus, you old bastard. You never wanted our help, beat the crap out of us when we did, framed us for murder, and in the end attempted to single handily take on Scylla, but we still loved you. You help kill a dinosaur for gods sake. Oh yeah, and you made a great fire, sorry, were great when you were on fire.

RIP - The Formorians that invaded Mag Mal. You were despicable bastards who slowly consumed living beings and deserved everything you got, especially the ice capades, the many arrows and swords, and even the dicing. But you still never made decent seasoning

RIP - Patrick and Liam. You fought bravely, even if a wolf disembowelled you and you got your ass kicked by a girl (okay, a giant girl, but still a girl), and so we mourned you passing. For all of about five minutes. Thankfully it was Mag Mal and you were brought back to us after much begging and pleading with said monstrous girl. You owe us

Classifieds

For Sale - A brain that looks like swiss cheese. Near useless but still has storage space. Warning: When used, the bearer is likely to irrational, forgetful and able to alienate at a moment's notice

For Sale - Manor estate, excellent seaside views, previous owner and all retainers mysteriously vanished. Built out of an old church, the house contains many strange weapons and equipment, as well as several dungeons and vaults for play and storage.

Wanted - New eyes and the ability to not fall over things for world class thief. Please contact the principal agent, Kristin Meyer for further details

Wanted - A bag of marbles, containing the sanity of one DM sitting cowering in corner

For Sale - Numerous wolf pelts and about 12 litres of giant blood. Because if you need to stay warm at night and are thirsty, it pays to look, sound and smell like a burgy

Wanted - Nanny, must be good with psychopathic girls who look 16, have the mental age of a ten year old, and are actually 268 odd. Please apply at the Unicorn Tavern in Liscannor. She'll be the one in the middle of all the screams looking for her dollys

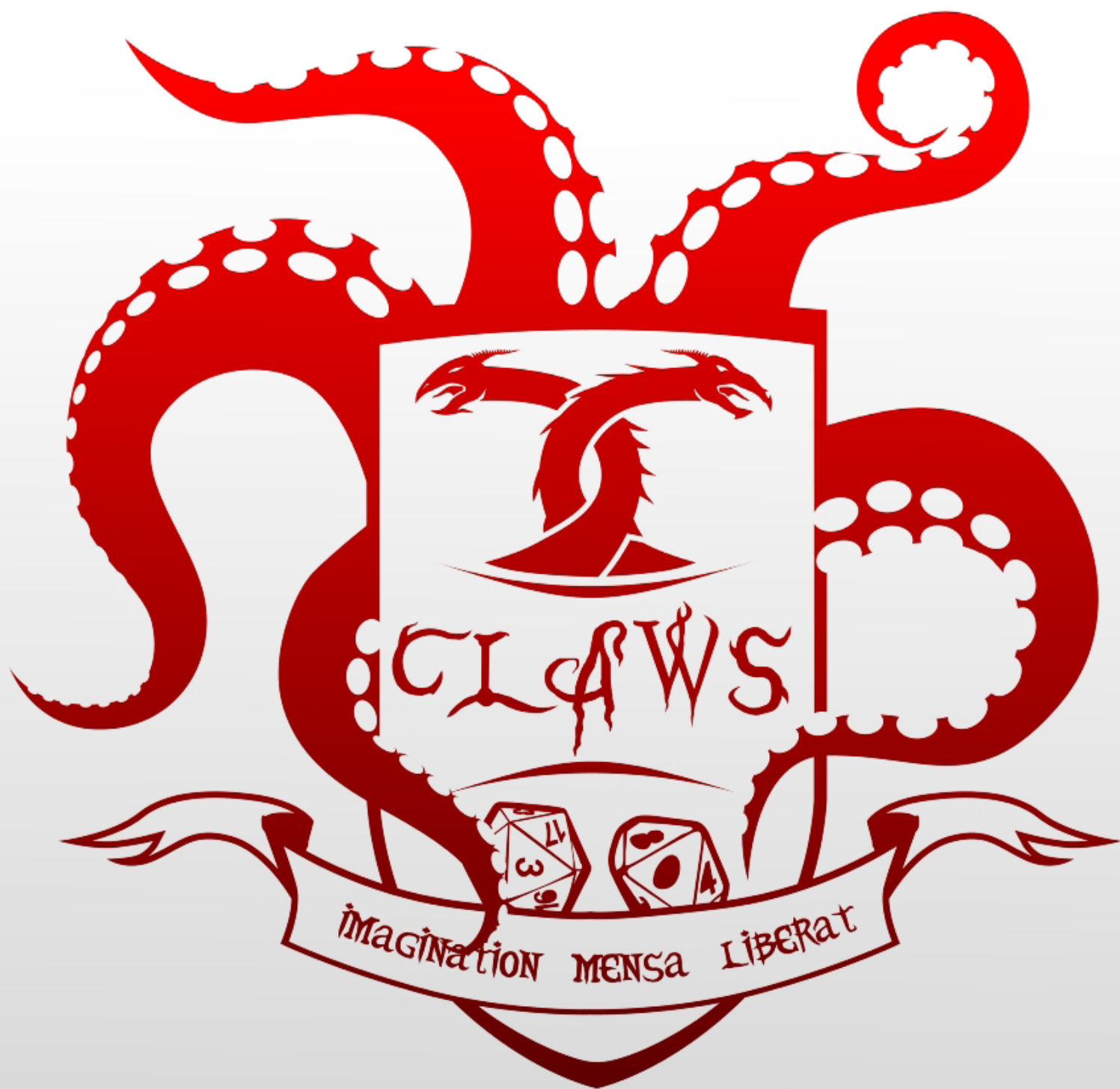
73 reasons why I hate... Nerds

The Archbigot of the Necropolis

They invented Microsoft.
They invented Linux.
They let the wrong one win.
They deride people who can't code.
They speak in code.
Code speaks in nerd.
So no-one else can understand.
They invented many codes.
They smell funny.
They argue about whether they're geeks or nerds.
To everyone else they're dorks.
They dress up and pretend to be other people.
But no-one else pretends to be them.
They own Star Wars on special edition DVD.
And say it's better than Star Trek.
And get offended when real people get confused.
Since Trekkies beat Star Wars zealots.
And Kirk beats Han Solo.
Han Solo's a bitch.
Han Solo's my bitch.
I'm a bitch.
They're out of breath from making too many sound effects.
Zwinnngg!!!
Like Darth Vader.
And Vader blows goats.
Goats blow Vader.
And then they DIE!
'Cos he's their father.
And that's just weird.
They dress like him.
And own literary classics in Klingon.
And speak Wookie.
They invented Wikipedia.
They invented Wookiepedia.
They collect cards.
They play collectable cards.

They collect playable cards.
They card collectable plays.
And argue about that too.
And put it on the internet.
THEY INVENTED THE INTERNET!!!
Everyone else is a n00b.
And they'll pwn your ass.
Mostly by confusing you with h@x0r linguistics.
They use words like "linguistics".
They play WOW.
And Dota.
And make Swedish music videos about it.
They have dice.
Lots of dice.
They roll vs resistance when trying to pick up a girl.
They always fail.
Or botch.
Or BOHICA.
They train their dice.
Their dice train them.
They'd do more damage throwing the dice at the DM.
I hate dice.
Dice hate me.
They make you lose sanity.
Cthulhu LOVES you.
From behind.
Nerds watch hentai.
They MAKE hentai.
Japanese people make hentai.
Japanese people make dice.
Japanese people are nerds.
Japanese rule the world.
Nerds rule the world.
Your boss is a nerd.
Your mom's a nerd.
Your banana's a nerd.
That's what she said.





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