Letter from the CLAWthing

Greetings once more, noble society. Ah, it's been some year hasn't it? University doesn't fool around. But neither do we! If you're reading this chances are good you're attending Dragonfire 2013, and I hope you enjoy it!

Ah, it is far too early in my letter to start being sentimental, so let's break things down and have a look at the past year, and what CLAWs has gotten done. We've made friends with the local MTG group at Outer Limits, had a good number of LARPs, saw some campaigns playing out at Boardgames evenings and saw a lot of people forging strong friendships.

You know, when I first joined CLAWs back in 2011 when I saw a paper-mache baby Cthulhu holding an Earth shaped like a d20 in his tentacly grasp and sitting on a table at an O-week stand with a bearded man nearby shouting at me to "sign up now, for the end is nigh... and you get a free Coke!" I never would have imagined that I would someday sit at my desk after midnight (on a school night, for shame), writing the letter from the CLAWthing.

It's been... really good. These past years. I want to thank everyone I've had the pleasure of sharing a boardgame with, discussing campaign ideas with, talking about roleplaying systems with, working out the mysteries of venue bookings or doing way-too-early-in-the-morning-food-runs with. Thank you, to my committee and ad-hocs: Zera, Marita, Fortune, Adrianna, James, Bee, Daniel, and all those who hold no title but have lent their hand to CLAWs in its hour of need.

Next year I will be passing the mantle of CLAWthing to another brave soul. And I hope that you will share with that one your enthusiasm, your kindness, and your company once more.

Rock on, CLAWs

Your CLAWthing,
Rikus

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Contents

Credits

Wasting time over HTTP
a review of several browser games

by Adrianna Pińska

I play a lot of computer games, but only the ones that run natively on my operating system. Today I will focus on the lazy casual gamer's best friend: that underappreciated cross-platform gaming environment known as a web browser.

A few of the games in this review are built with HTML and JavaScript, but most of them are Flash-based—games are pretty much the only thing that Flash is actually good for. You should be able to run them without any problems in older versions of Flash.

Platformers

I love platformers so much that I once broke the right-arrow key on my laptop. Platformers are more numerous on the intertubes than the thousand young of Shub-Niggurath, but here are a few that I believe deserve a special mention:

Robot Wants…

This adorable metroidvania-style series follows the adventures of a robot who wants, in order, Kitty, Puppy, Fishy and Ice Cream. In each instalment Robot must explore a massive maze, collecting power-ups and defeating bosses—in the first episode, said power-ups are applied to Kitty, which Robot uses as a versatile projectile weapon.

Robot Wants Kitty:
http://hamumu.com/robotkitty.php
Robot Wants Puppy:
http://hamumu.com/robotpuppy.php
Robot Wants Fishy:
http://hamumu.com/robotfishy.php
Robot Wants Ice Cream: http://hamumu.com/roboticecream.php

Zombotron

Zombotron is a platformer with a physics engine and FPS-style weapons and ammo. Your hero runs through several levels of a mine infested with zombies (and other unpleasant creatures), shooting and stabbing your enemies and blowing stuff up.

It's entirely possible to blow oneself up into an unwinnable situation, but that's part of the game's unique charm. There are many possible ways to finish each level, and you can often use the environment creatively to crush zombies in machinery or under falling structures, and sometimes get them to kill each other by accident. In some levels you can take control of a vehicle and smash it through obstacles until too many bits have fallen off for it to keep going.

There are many achievements to be unlocked. Each level has some number of special additional missions—it is seldom possible to achieve all of them in a single play-through, but you can replay

previous levels at any point if you're a completionist.

There is a sequel, which I consider less good, but still a lot of fun.

> **Zombotron**: `http://armorgames.com/play/12000/zombotron`
> **Zombotron 2**: `http://armorgames.com/play/13457/zombotron-2`

Elephant Quest

Your elephant is on a mission to recover his hat from an evil woolly mammoth. You start the game equipped with a laser for shooting your enemies—as you level up you can increase your stats and spend points to buy better weapons—by the end of the game you will be obliterating everything in your path with a CPU-intensive ray of death. You spend the game collecting objects in order to complete various side quests, and exploring an enormous map.

> **Elephant Quest**:
> `http://armorgames.com/play/10606/elephant-quest`
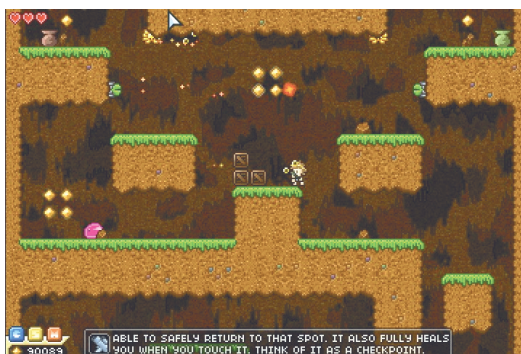
Diamond Hollow 2

This is a cleaned-up version of a Ludum Dare entry. In story mode, you climb upwards through an enormous cave, collecting diamonds and power-ups, purchasing ability upgrades and shooting enemies—including powerful end-level bosses. Completion of the game unlocks additional game modes.

> **Diamond Hollow 2**:
> `http://jayisgames.com/games/diamond-hollow-2`

Point & Click Adventure

This is also a popular Flash game genre. Two series of games really stand out for me—both made by the same artist, Mateusz Skutnik.

Submachine

This series is somewhat reminiscent of Myst, if Myst were done in simple 2D line-art. Explore the mysterious world of the Submachine—a strange realm of abandoned buildings and broken devices which appears to stretch across space and time.

The games are best played in order—but if you find the third one boring, it's safe to skip it. There are a few special games which lie outside the main sequence. There is also the Submachine Network Exploration Experience, which Skutnik insists is not a game, but kind of is.

Skutnik is releasing remastered HD versions of the games in reverse order for a small fee. Although the HD games are intended
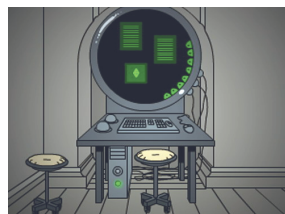
to be run with a standalone Flash player and only Windows and Mac are officially supported, the Flash files can also be run from a browser.

The series has a cult following, including forums and a wiki. Fan theories about the Submachine have been incorporated into later games as notes found scattered in various rooms.
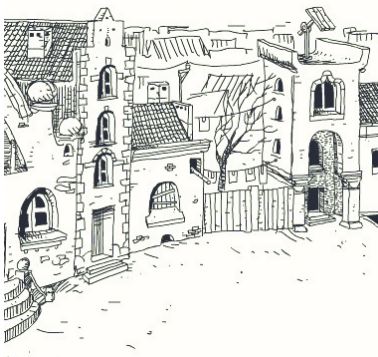
Submachine World (all the games can be found here):
http://www.submachineworld.com
The Submachine wiki: http://submachine.wikia.com

Daymare Town

Da

ymare Town is Skutnik's other famous series—in each instalment you try to escape from a dilapidated Gorey-esque town and its creepy inhabitants. Three games have been released so far, with a fourth coming really soon now. There are also several spin-off games which use the same setting and art but have completely different gameplay.

Daymare Town:
http://www.pastelportal.com/stories/dmt/

Text adventures

Here are some non-Flash games for all you Flash haters. Bask in the glorious widescreen ASCII goodness of two text-based games written entirely in HTML and JavaScript. Just about anything that I could tell you about them is would be a spoiler, so I will say only that both of them are a lot more awesome than they initially appear, and that you should play them for a while before you judge them. Both were made by the same creator, and the second—A Dark Room—is far more polished, so I would recommend that you start there.

Candy Box: http://candies.aniwey.net/
A Dark Room: http://adarkroom.doublespeakgames.com/

Puzzles

If you're a Minesweeper and Tetris kind of person, you will appreciate this diverse collection of simple puzzle games by Tonypa. Some are definitely more fun than others—the one I keep coming back to is Jorinapeka, in which you clear circular blocks from a grid by directing them along a path, progressing to the next level when all the coloured circles are gone.

Jorinapeka:
http://www.tonypa.pri.ee/jorinapeka.html
All of Tonypa's games:
http://www.tonypa.pri.ee/start.html
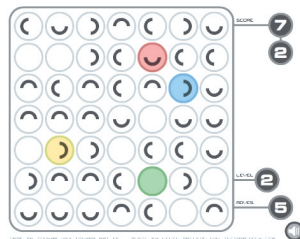
Realm of the Mad God

Are you feeling sociable? Try this Flash-based MMO. The purpose of the game is to rampage through realms full of diverse mythological creatures, killing them and taking their treasure. There is no PVP, but there is permadeath. When a particular realm has been sufficiently denuded of its inhabitants, all players inside it are transported to a boss level where they confront Oryx, the titular Mad God. And then kill him and take his treasure.

The game encourages cooperative gameplay—everyone standing near a monster when it is killed

gains experience. It is often a good idea to hang around more powerful players when you are young and squishy—they can protect you from getting horribly killed, and you can often snag useful loot which they no longer find interesting. At any point in the game you can teleport yourself to the Nexus, a safe area where you can heal and manage your resources.

When you first start playing, you are limited to a small range of character classes—you must make progress in the classes available to you in order to unlock others. As you play the game you gain fame, which is paid out to you when you die—and believe me, you will die. A lot.

Fame can be used to purchase some things in-game, but some things can only be bought with realm gold, which costs real money.

Investing in fancy equipment as a new player may not be a wise move—since you will lose anything that you die carrying—but gold can also be used to invest in some longer-lasting benefits, like additional character slots and more vaults to store your stuff safely. There is, of course, a thriving in-game economy which uses permanent stat boost potions as a currency, and vendors of varying repute hawk their wares through bots in the central marketplace. People often give stuff away for free, either by dropping it in the Nexus or by approaching specific players who look like they could use it—but standing around and begging for free equipment is generally frowned upon.

The game has a large and opinionated player base, somewhat fractured across the different platforms where the game is available (it can also be played through Steam or on Kongregate). The default server is usually horribly overloaded, so I tend to play on the second server in the list (EU West).

Realm of the Mad God:
http://www.realmofthemadgod.com/

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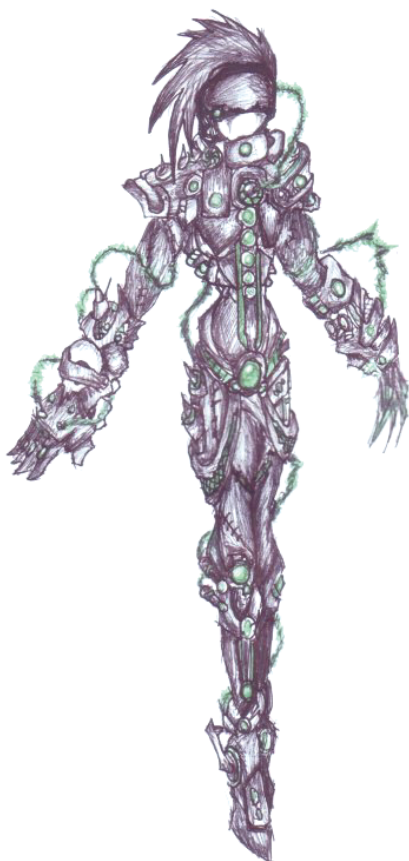
The Call of the Homebrew

Some thoughts on houserules and beyond

- Alistair Carver

Eventually, every roleplaying, board or card gamer will come up with an idea for a new rule for their game. Maybe the rulebook doesn't cover a situation, or you think it does it badly- but it will happen. Every group or Game Master has their own set of house rules for their game, it's just how we play.

Sometimes though, you will keep going, making sweeping changes to rules, converting a system to use different mechanics, or the ultimate progression of this; you will start trying to write your own system.

Homebrewing has a long history in gaming. Dungeons & Dragons itself comes from some rules for single characters in a tabletop game called Chainmail, written by Gary Gygax. The 3rd edition of D&D had the Open Game Licence, which allowed anyone to produce and sell compatible material for the game, which lead to an explosion of new game companies. More recently, "indie" game developers have produced popular new games, while the wildly played Pathfinder is a refined version of 3.5e D&D.

This can be a very rewarding exercise. For one thing, you can use mechanics that you enjoy, and solutions that make sense (and so increase enjoyment) for your group. Also, while building characters as a player and adventures or worlds as a game master can exercise your creativity and writing skills, delving into system design can teach you about mathematical probability and statistics.

There are a number of downsides to trying to homebrew your game, however. Players are natural problem-finders, sure to find loopholes or imbalanced options. Even if they aren't power-gaming maliciously, it can stop your game as you argue about how a rule works. As the homebrewer, this can be stressful, as you may feel failings reflect badly on you. Continued fixes can lead to a bloated system full of exceptions rather than simple rules. Getting discouraged about your efforts can happen very easily. It is also important to let your players know that you are changing things. If a player wants to use an item or rules you are trying, and then you remove them from your game, they are probably not going to be pleased.

Any problems are worse if you are also trying to run the game, or even worse a campaign built in your homebrew system. The added weight of trying to fix rules while running a game can break down even an experienced game master. To try and avoid this, there are a number of things you can do; first off, run your game in short sessions to start with. This will let you try different things to see what works, and what doesn't. Second, use your gaming group for ideas. If you play games, you have some idea how they work; your group can be a great resource. Plus, you will get to know what they value in a game, to improve everyone's experience.

The most important thing to remember is that we game to have fun. No one should be allowed to tell you how to play your game, be it Catan or Vampire: the Requiem. Add rules, ignore others, or change the system to fit what you want, anything is possible. Just don't let it become too much like work to stop being enjoyable, or you will resent your own game for getting in the way of your enjoyment.

No Rest for the Wicked: a Campaign Summary

By Marita de Waal

This is my article on my Borderlands-inspired Apocalypse World campaign. Shit is heavy and real, so expect strong language. If you don't like it, you can read it with your eyes closed. I'll even hold your hand.

Featuring…

Sway, as The Operator

Crudhammer, as The Faceless

Gorjus George, as The Bruiser

Persephone, as The Siren

Shade, as the Maestro D'

and most importantly,

Me, as the MC.

So you want to hear about Styx, huh? What, just living on this dustpile not good enough for you? Not content to just scratch out your living in the dirt and death like every other whore's son here? What hope do a weird-ass tattooed chick, a sleazy slimeball, a fuggoffbig dude in a mask and a twitchy muscleman have to make it big out here? Hmmm… You, lady, you I'll talk to. Fine, fine, I'll tell you what I know.

I've been here a good long time, longer than most. Enough to have seen this planet before the Blast blew it halfway to hell, and to have walked on Earth... what's that? The Golden Age? Peh. I suppose the present makes the past look pretty rosy,
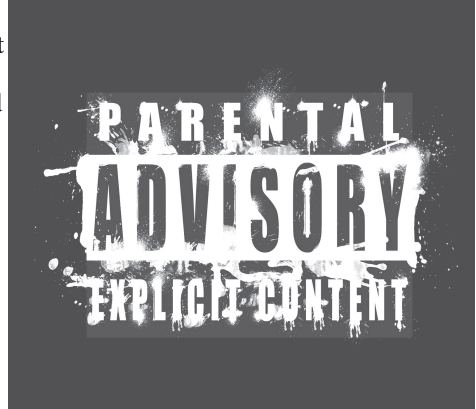
but it was no cakewalk neither. Earth... was overcrowded. Too many people, too little of everything else. War-torn, as people fought for the scraps that were left. The United Government started shipping people to space, and had been at it for a good long time by the time I was born. Colonising planets like this, loosely considered "habitable". Oh, they said it was to scavenge what alien tech we could find, to re-stock the Earth with metals and elements and food... but look around you. Who do you think got shipped here?

They lured people in with talk of glory, of new frontiers and of vast open landscapes. Property, and wealth in the Outer Planets. Only the people too poor to have a choice or too uneducated or stupid to know better fell for that shtick. Travel god knows how far for god knows how long frozen in a goddamn tube? No thanks. So they'd

forcibly "recruit" people. Debtors, prisoners, orphans... more people the Earth especially didn't need. Shipped to the Outer Planets in their hundreds, thousands... maybe even hundreds of thousands. Heh, Struggling to imagine that many huh? A planet larger than this one, packed so tight you could hear your neighbour's neighbour fart.

And some of us were brought here. Styx. To mine the ore, scav the alien ruins, suck up xenon from the Dead Rivers and just be the fuck offa Earth. All under the watchful eye of our local loving military. Things went about as well as can be expected. There was about as little healthcare or education then

as there is now (who ever said Earth doesn't care for her children? Bah.), and we all still got to be alternately burnt by Phaeton and frozen by Semele... what's that? It's what these hicks call "Fate" and "Sin", our goddamn suns you idiots. God. Never even touch a book? Sheesh.

Okay okay, don't get offended. See, my beer's only halfway. Don't you want to hear about the Blast? Yeah, thought that'd get you interested. Sit down, tiger, I meant no offence. Er. Tiger. Like a cat. But fuckoff big. And stripy. Anyway. The Blast. So, not long after I got here, some coupla decades after Styx was colonised, a new freight carrier ship arrived, carrying some brand spankin' new colonists. Musta lost control or something, because that fucker dove straight into one of the alien ruins. Brand new ruin too, no-one had explored it yet. Damn shame. So it smashes into it, right? BOOM. Biggest goddamn explosion, earthquakes halfway around the planet, or so they say. I wasn't there of course, but you could see this massive mushroom cloud on the horizon, brightest blue you ever saw. And for days there weird blue lights flickering across the sky at night. That's not the worst of it though. I mean people DIED, but they do that of their own accord anyway. Nah, some people went crazy, radiation sickness the military said. But I dunno... not like anything I ever saw. And I know sickness. And the world just seemed different, somehow. You can feel it right now. Just... at the edges. Something wrong. Like when you think there's one more step, but there isn't, and that stomach-dropping feeling as you plunge your foot through nothingness for a few seconds... like the world is screaming...
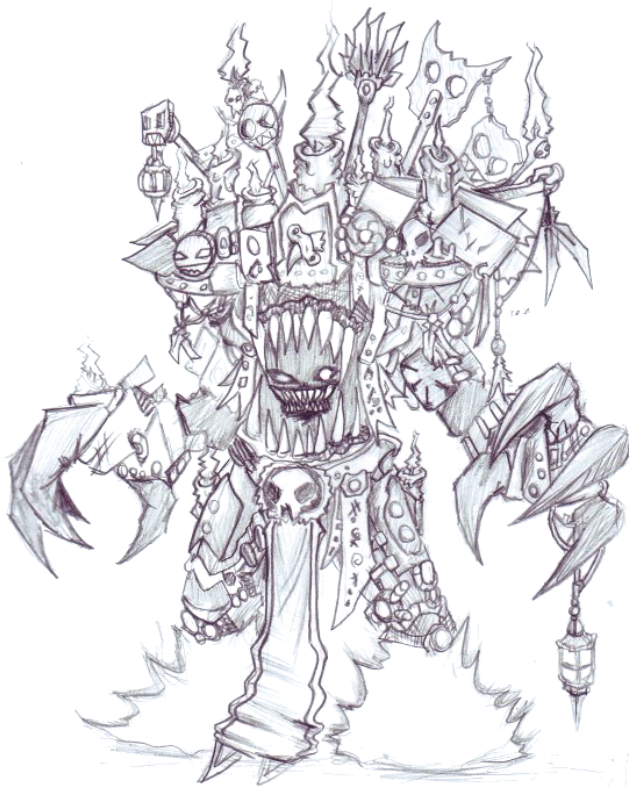
Huh? What? Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Just... old. Too many thoughts. Yeah, so after the Blast, people got scared. Tech stopped working. All those fancy sonar drill things rusting on the edge of town? Yeah. People thought that Earth would send help, anything, but the military went quiet. People started saying that communications got knocked out. That the military is like a skink with its head chopped off. And when people get scared... well... guns still worked. They tried to demand answers, and protection... and the military just went crazy. Gunned 'em all down. Said nothing's wrong... people should just go back to their jobs as best they can. Some folk did. Being scared of some blue light is one thing, being scared of a rifle in your face is another. But... the ships stopped coming. No-one came to collect the crates of ore

and tanks of xenon. Things started falling apart. People started forming holdings, looking out for themselves. And the military has left us alone, so long as we don't stray from our designated areas. God knows what they're doing. Or whose orders they're following. But it's been 50 years now, and the ships never came. Earth's either forgotten about us, or decided we were a liability, too broken to fix, or they just didn't goddamn care.

And that's it really. All the rest... just look around you. You've got eyes to see, same as me. Me? You can call me the Doctor. A REAL doctor, not some kid with needles and meat-mesh and more good intentions than skill. Why am I here? Well, I'd say that's none of your goddamn business. My beer's finished, and so our transaction is concluded. Now get out.

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'Borderlands 2' X 'Dungeons and Dragons'

by Andrew Verrijdt

Pretty much everyone loves 'Borderlands'. And if you're reading CLAWmarks you probably love D&D as well.

So what could be better than having them both at the same time?

Very few things

Maybe a chocolate kitty…

Anyway, in the latest 'B2' DLC 'Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep' the setup is as follows: Tiny Tina (the much-loved 'world's deadliest 13 year old') is running a campaign of 'Bunkers and Badasses' (har-har) for the some of the 'Borderlands 1' characters.

And you, as the only real PC, get to actually play through it.

Seriously.

You will battle skeletons. You will get smacked in the face by orcs. You will ally with knights in shining armour. You will scream "WHY ARE THERE SO MANY GOLEMS???"

And if you get lucky you may be granted the ability to cast bolts of lightning at your enemies.

I shit you not.

The bad news is that some of the orc bosses are completely over-powered. I'm playing a level 52 assassin with an eye towards tankyness. One solid shot from a 'Duke of Orc': my shields are gone and my health is at 25%. One more shot and I'm down. And they have so many hit points that fighting one takes about 10 minutes of running, dodging and as much damage-over-time as you can deliver.

But the good *far* outweighs the bad. It is without a doubt the best 'Borderlands 2' DLC, and I recommend you all go get it.

CONVERGENT TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

by Calvin Brizzi
For Fern, because I can't draw to save my life.

Tish woke up, the news of the day waking her up at the perfect moment. At least: according to the sensors.

Mike Whitman, of Whitcorp, is the latest important victim of the Disease, now in its thirteenth day of spreading.

She cut off the transmission, feeling guilty. She had barely had time to think of the hundreds of people that had been falling into comas for no reason anyone could understand. It didn't even seem to be spreading in any way: it just happened to random people all over the world. But for the last two weeks every single waking hour had been spent plugged into a terminal, observing. And news travels slowly when you are half a kilometre underground.

She made her way from her room to her office mechanically, chewing and swallowing her daily meal, not tasting it. The terminal whirred softly, waiting. No urgent messages, that was good, just a brief news bulletin about the war. It saddened her, such a waste of life. No. She had to remember they weren't real. They were just robots without a body. Inhumanly intelligent artificial intelligences. IIAIs. The very thing that would change the world forever.

It seemed someone was giving a guided tour of the labs. Hoping for funding, she assumed. What for she didn't know. The way the project was going they would never need to ask for another penny, ever. People would be throwing money at them faster than they could spend it. The tour guide's voice buzzed, subtly indicated that she was probably born a mute.

"The V-Earth program started development over 20 years ago, as scientists got closer and closer to fully understanding how the universe works and computers got more and more advanced."

Tish connected to the terminal, instantaneously getting immersed into the program. The buzzing voice still reaching her from "the corner of her ears," a hard thing to explain to anyone who had never experienced total virtual reality, but it was the only way she could think of saying it.

"Once the scientists started to understand how the universe worked, the main question became why the universe worked that way. So they started to develop the most complete simulation they could."

Everything in the program looked and sounded real. She walked through a wall to her

right, barely hesitating. It was an eerie feeling, she had become one of the ghosts from the stories of her childhood, the very ones she had been terrified by. She was in the simulation, but could not interact with it. Literally just eyes and ears.

"Finally, just recently, the creation of IIAIs by Prof. Susan has opened a world of possibilities. By putting the new intelligences in the simulation, that is 99.9995% like the current universe, we can see what conclusions an unguided, superhuman mind could reach"

She walked past the IIAIs going about their lives. Cycles. She wasn't allowed to call them lives. The city almost seemed normal these days; the architecture that had caught on more efficient, more elegant, more solid. There was a team of architects and engineers drooling over the stuff that came through. The Ai-Ais (as she had taken to calling the IIAIs in her head) had come up with totally new water, heating, sewage and even electric systems. Fortunately all available, patent-free, to the world. That had been one of the conditions: the knowledge would benefit all.

She walked through the wall of the research centre, passing through several meters of metal.

The problem with the darn things was that they lived much faster than humans, meaning that while the moment she stepped in was *right now* for them too, everything she saw after that was basically a slow motion replay of what had actually happened, as viewing it live was impossible: A blur of movement and light.

The Ai-Ais were currently more or less on par with the real world as far as technology and the like was involved, the accelerated time and their incredible intelligence meaning that they had developed the first atomic bomb in ten days. From banging rocks together. It blew her mind. Nothing much seemed to be happening around her, she skipped the program forward, jumping to the "now." The room had changed considerably: a massive computer dominated the room, silent. The instrument panels were blank, it wasn't on. The computer could be a problem: the Ai-Ais could create mechanical marvels, limited only by real-world physics, but they were a simulation, and the computers they made were also part of the simulation. And because their processing power was controlled by the same real-world processors, it was complicated to allow the Ai-Ais to make a computer better at thinking than they were. A solution had been found, but it was far from perfect. The effects of a computer this big would be *interesting* to say the least. She quickly scanned the area and realised that waiting around wouldn't be productive, the absolute lack of activity showing no signs of ending.

She skipped again, the room suddenly frantic with activity, the computer now whirred softly and lights blinked on various panels. Two Ai-Ais were strapped into terminals connected to the machine. Were they immersed in a program? The phrase *Convergent technological evolution* sprang to mind, it would fit nicely in her paper. There was discussion around her. She focused on one of the conversations, the emotions on the faces attracting her interest, was that sorrow?

"My wife was affected yesterday." the sad Ai-Ai said.
"They will find a cure soon."
"They haven't yet."
"Our best doctors are working on it."
"They haven't made a single step of progress since it started! All those people, just lying there! And we've been here working on this stupid thing the whole time!" he said, gesturing to the machine.

"Your anger is misdirected, we need this to better understand our universe, The Intelligences think better than us, they might have the solution."

She pulled herself out of the program, back into the real world, drenched in sweat. Impossible. She had vaguely read the notes on the implementation of the V-Processors and how they sapped power from the less "productive" Ai-Ais. She wondered if any safeguard had been put in place. To avoid a massive V-Processor sucking the Ai-Ais dry, leaving them without processing power. Practically dead.

Convergent technological evolution.

She walked up to the main board and typed in her password followed by the code for the emergency shut-down, hesitating for a second before hitting the final key. If she was wrong, this would mean her job; if she was right... She didn't even want to think about it. She jabbed down. The computer went silent for what seemed to be the first time in years.

A hundred kilometres away, Mike Whitman was one of the first to open his eyes.

A Pall of KAOS...

James de Haast reports

More dead at UCT
By James Andrew de Haast
Date: Tuesday 23rd July
Police are baffled at what appears to be the second spree killing at UCT in just one (1) year. The recent spate of violence has left four (4) students dead.

Early on yesterday morning police responded to a call from campus security notifying them of the brutal murder of UCT student, known to as at this time only by his first name, Dylan. Witnesses report that Dylan simply collapsed on the way to his morning lectures. Police found a large stab wound in the victims' back, from what they believe was a long and sharp knife. Less than 30 minutes after the first killing a gunshot was heard on
the UCT campus. Police responding to the first scene quickly rushed to the second.

Students have told us that there was much confusion around the police officer as to where the second shot came from, something that was reiterated by those at the second scene who stated that it took people ten (10) minutes to get there. This comes despite the location of the second scene being outside Lesley Social. Police have defended the length of time taken to respond to the second scene saying that the echo caused by the loudness of the gunshot and the height of the buildings on campus made it hard to pinpoint the location.

At approximately 10:03 AM a second gunshot was heard, police attending to the second scene radioed for help. A witness who was standing close to the second scene heard police discussing something about shutting down UCT to protect the students, however the witness stated that it was decided to keep the university open due to fears that the killer may escape with

the students. Once more police officers had arrived on campus; the search for the third crime scene began. Moments after the search begun campus security contacted the police with information about a dead student in RW James.

Witnesses report that he first officer on the said, "F***, look that the size of that hole." When questioned about the identity of the victim a witness, who for security reasons will not be named, said, "Given the state of the body you wouldn't really be able to tell who it is, but I'm sure it is Robert Spencer." Police found a knife matching the description given to them by the witnesses of the first murder next to the victim, sparking fears that there may be more than one killer.

For almost an hour police combed the campus for a yet unidentified suspect. During the search the university continued to operate as usual, as requested by the police department. At around 11:00 AM the last shot of the day was heard. Students around the varsity report hearing police officers swear loudly in a multitude of different languages as they ran towards what they believed to be the crime scene. Police found the victim, who witnesses identified as Sean, slumped over in a lecture chair. Police officers described the scene as being "out of a horror movie. There was blood splattered all over the wall. This is as bad as it gets." The SRC released a statement yesterday afternoon informing students that they urged the university to shut down, stating that this would have prevented the deaths of the other two students.

UCT was unavailable for comment at the time, however the police have released this statement: "They (UCT) followed the instructions given by a senior officer on the case. They acted in accordance with the law. These decisions have

been made by highly skilled people." In response to this statement the SRC released the following statement: "We are deeply saddened by the police and UCT stance on this issue. They need to know that the blood of those students that died today is on their hands." The police have yet to make an arrest in this case, and no suspects have been identified. Police are blaming the lack of progress in the case on bad witness reports. A junior officer gave this statement late last night, "They (the witnesses) are being stupid, they tell us that they saw something but it's always different. No one seems to even know if it was a man or a woman."

For those of you who are very confused at the moment, KAOS had a second running this year during the week of the 22nd of July. For those people who are still confused, KAOS is a game that the members of CLAWS and sometimes other students play where they are each given a picture of another player and sent out to kill them, obviously the aims to kill as many targets as possible while not dying.

"Let's Plays": Victorious Voyeurism!

by Rowena McKay

"Hallo once again, Audience…" – Toby Turner/ Tobygames

I know a lot about horror games. I've played a bunch of the classics: Silent Hill, Amnesia: The Dark Descent, Dead Rising, Left 4 Dead, Evil Dead… I know the characters, the enemy types, the histories, the various endings… OK, wait, I'm not being exactly accurate: I have been through all of these games, experienced their scares, pondered their puzzles… but I've never touched the controller. Am I a telekinetic gamer? I wish. No, I am an addict of the internet phenomenon known as Let's Plays.

For those who are neither like me, nor especially interested in sites like YouTube, let me give a brief explanation of the concept of a Let's Play. Is it the same as a Walkthrough? Well, since a walk-through is the highly-competent journey through a game's narrative by a skilled gamer who is familiar with the story from multiple runs, and with a mostly pedagogical focus… I would say no. Because a Let's Play isn't about finding the best, most efficient ways to beat a game, with maximum accolades; it's about experiencing a game in all its glory, being affected by the subtle details the programmers included, the clever quirks of the script, the overall emotional impact of every moment… and about inviting others to come along for the journey.
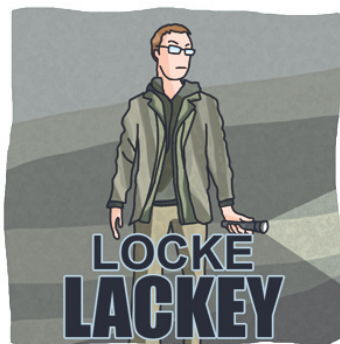
Are these Let's Play gamers pros? Well sometimes, but most times it's their sheer ineptitude that makes them entertaining, just like watching your friend play next to you on the couch, and laughing at him as he messes up the same challenge over and over, or as he screams at the screen that the controller is clearly broken.

So why horror games? Speaking for myself, I find fascinating the sorts of images that can be dredged from the minds of creative types, the visuals, sounds and moods that tap into our most primal fears and trigger our bodies into fight-or-flight, giving us access to a primitive connection, to our sense of self-

preservation and a vibrancy that most of us will never really experience. There's something perverse about our desire to be disturbed by dark material, but maybe it's because, for all its tech-shininess, everyday existence can be a bit dull. Maybe I'd wake up with more of a blazing spirit if I knew I'd have to fight a minotaur in order to get to the shopping mall.

So why not play these games myself, getting that rush directly, at my own hands, testing my own reflexes? Well you see, the thing is, I have a very, very active imagination, and chances are, if I allow myself to be swallowed into these worlds, I'll be expecting hoards of Abstract Daddies to come down the passage at night once I turn the lights out. Put another way: I'm a coward. And I need to keep my entertainment compartmentalised so as to carry on with my normal life.

Yes, horror games, I love you… but from a distance.

But these valiant Let's Players? They venture where I dare not tread, watching as I do from HQ or the safety of an armoured van six miles away, and allow

me to safely observe their trials. Are these players hardened marines, Rambos and Vasquezes, descending into the pits of hell stone-faced? Nope, they're the same craven yellow-bellies as the rest of us, screaming "OH MY GOD, I'M SO DEAD!" at the sound of an item falling behind them, or going entirely silent, with shock that you can feel in your veins, as they turn to survey something horribly ominous. (Some gamers even have a cam-window on their faces in the corner of the screen, so we can share in their facial reactions.) They're just like us. They're not admirable, superior, or even especially brave; they're just the poor patsy who got given the controller. Which means that those of us along for the ride are travel-companions. We are also moral support, backseat drivers or techies, because of the comment system on YouTube, allowing viewers to applaud, criticise, advise or generally tremble alongside the gamer.

And therein lies another large appeal of Let's Plays: unlike watching a terrified protagonist on a film screen, the gamers fulfilling that role can talk back to you. They can thank you for your help and loyalty, agree with your statements or even ask questions. You feel involved, and as though you matter. No, you're not the one on the frontline, but you're important nonetheless. Even if your importance is nothing more than a voice acknowledging that the Let's Player exists within the vast ocean of YouTube gamers.

When a Let's Player talks back to me in a comment or video, I feel like a celebrity.

So if you don't really know if you're up to playing that new horror game, or you just don't have the console it's available for, it's good to know there are people out there on whom you can piggyback your way to adventure, covering your eyes

with your hands as necessary and still coming out a victor!

Two of my absolute favourite YouTubers for horror Let's Plays are users Tobygames and Lockelackey. I would highly suggest watching the former's play-through of online indie game "The Witch's House", and the latter's "Dead Rising".

Some Let's Play cover cards:
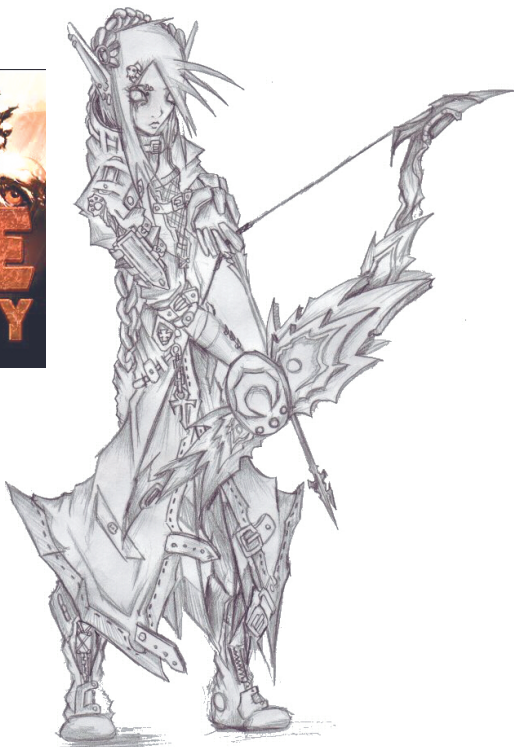
Why role-players are dogs

-Warren Russel

This is what happens when you take an article and replace the word "dog" with "role-player". (http://www.petalot.com/2010/08/10-simple-steps-to-train-your-dog/)

Role-players are highly social animals. This can account for their ability to be trained, their playfulness, and ability to fit into human households and social situations. How to train your role-player is a question asked by almost all role-player owners. It seems everyone has advice and tips, and opinions on the best way to train your role-player. Training your role-player is a must to avoid behavior problems. So what are 10 easy steps to train your role-player?

1. Be Consistent. Role-players learn from repetition, the more often they are exposed to something the quicker they will learn it.

2. Never make a role-player come to you for discipline. No role-player is perfect, and they will all do things we don't like. NEVER use the command come if you need to discipline your role-player. ALWAYS go to them.

3. NEVER hit your role-player. They will learn to fear you, not respect you as the pack leader.

4. Always reward a positive outcome. If they do something right reward them for doing it right. Not always with a treat. Sometimes a "good role-player" is just as effective.

5. Get the whole family involved. Everyone should be involved so the role-player understands their position in the pack.

6. Do not dismiss dominant behavior. Role-players are pack animals. If they feel they have dominance over another member of the household they will exploit it, and you will develop more severe Role-player Behavior Problems.

7. Be patient. Training takes time.

8. Be basic. Don't start off with fancy tricks and advanced commands. Remember to start with the basics.

9. Be careful. Of gimmicks and untested so called "free role-player training packages". Good or bad, learning to train you role-player correctly may cost you some money for a book or program.

10. Remember you can do it yourself.

You can find all sorts of role-player training schools, that promise you results and will deliver, but at a high price for training classes. And they still don't teach you the secret of How to Train your Role-player. With patience and support anyone can train their role-player, and make the bond even stronger.

A little bit about Doctor Who

Crafts by Tabitha Thrash

DALEK (anagram for Kaled)
The Daleks are The Doctor's archenemies. He fights them and (usually) defeats them to some extent but has never wiped out the entire race, though he has tried to. The organism contained within the armoured and weaponised shell has had all compassion and other emotions (besides hate) genetically removed from it by the head scientist of the Kaled people, Davros. He engineered them during a long running war between the Kaled and Thal people on their home planet of Skaro. They are, in fact, heavily mutated Kaleds. The Daleks believe they are the superior race and will dominate the universe and exterminate all inferior races. Considering their own creator and parent race inferior to them they killed Davros and the Kaled people who thus became the victims of one of the Daleks' first genocides.
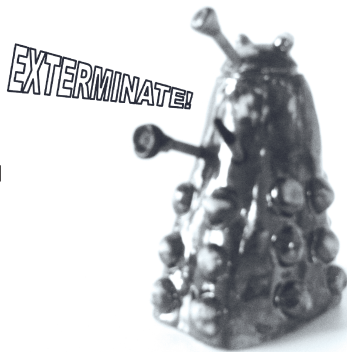
TARDIS (Time And Relative Dimension In Space)
The Tardis is both The Doctor's vehicle of travel and only long term companion. Able to travel vast distances in space and time she is also bigger on the inside containing, amongst other things, a library, a swimming pool, several bedrooms, a sun, which is the power source of the Tardis, and of course tons of corridors as any good spaceship should have. On the outside she appears to be a 1950s police box where policemen or members of the public could contact the station using a telephone which was accessible from the outside. The boxes were locked and inaccessible except to police officers in case they required a first aid kit, to write in the incident book or, possibly, to shove a suspect in until further notice. The Tardis almost never takes The Doctor where he wants to go but rather where he is needed. The typical whoosh-whoosh noise is caused by The Doctor leaving the handbrake on. When River Song flies the Tardis she is silent and lands gently.
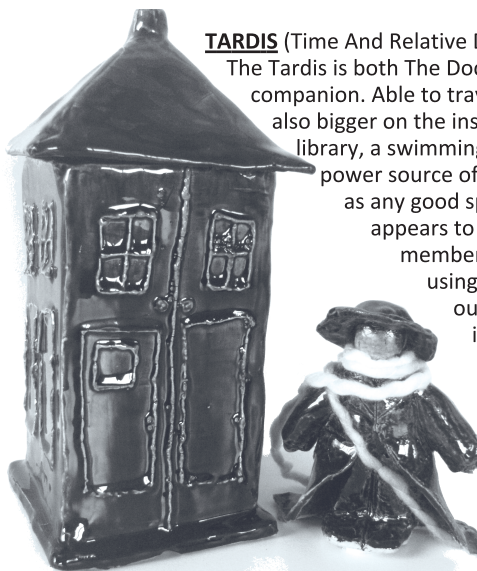
THE DOCTOR (aka The Oncoming Storm, Predator of the Daleks, Destroyer of Worlds)
"Doctor" is a Gallifreyan word he chose as his title during a coming of age ritual. In our language it has come to mean healer but depending on how races on other planets are affected by him it has come to mean soldier. Known by many other names, which are usually assigned by other people, he has recently become almost forgotten in the universe due to the efforts of The Silence and Soufflé Girl. His true name is a secret know only to his wife, River Song, and one or two past travelling companions. He generally proclaims it to be unpronounceable by humans. Second to gravity, the fear of The Doctor is the most powerful and formative forces in the universe[1]. His "weapon" of choice is a sonic screwdriver which is considered wimpy by some characters (such as Captain Jack) but is usually able to defeat his enemies in some ingenious way. He is even known as The Oncoming Storm in Dalek folklore due to him being present at their creation. Another name the Daleks have given him is Destroyer of Worlds after he destroyed their home world of Skaro.

As a Time Lord he appears human (or humans appear Time Lord) but he has two hearts, which has frequently saved him from humans unaware of his physiology or weapons directed at humans. He also has the capacity to "regenerate." "Regeneration" occurs when The Doctor has been injured unto death and is similar to "reincarnation," with The Doctor himself considering it a kind of death. He retains his memories but has a different appearance, style, personality and different tastes. The oldest he has claimed to be is around 1103 however there is every chance he has no idea how old he is due to living in a time machine where calendars have no meaning. As he is effectively immortal, he changes his companions (who have not been subject to accidents) frequently as he does not want to watch them grow old.
The pictured Doctor on the left is number 4 (Tom Baker) with his floppy hat and coat.
Unfortunately I have not yet made him a little scarf.
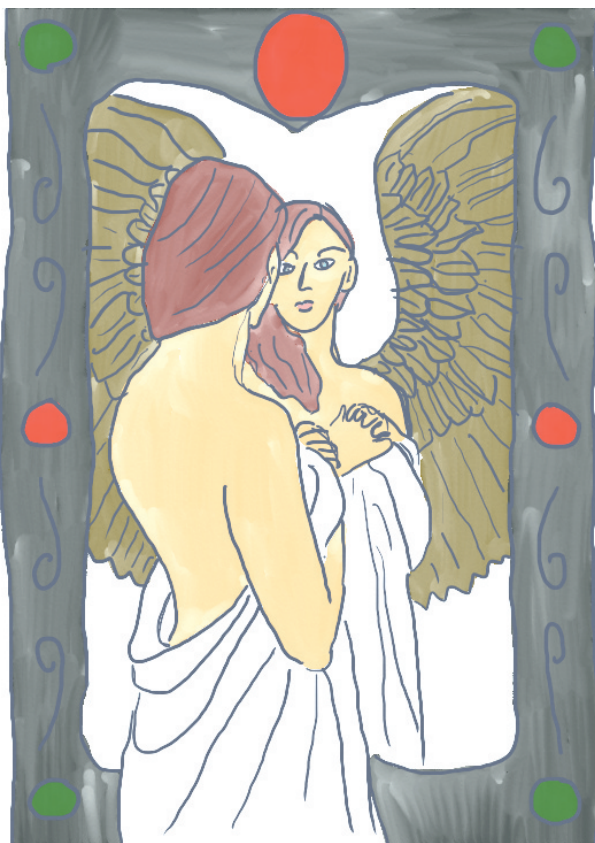
[1]if you are a physics student you should just accept that I am using this metaphorically and lie down before you have a heart attack.

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8 RULES FOR CARING FOR A ROLEPLAYER IN YOUR HOME

by Kristen Meyer

1. GET INFORMED

It is important to have access to information regarding the preferences of the roleplayer living in your home. If possible try and get a full history of which systems they prefer and know, what characters they have played in the past, and what sort of player they are. Make sure that you are made aware of how many days of the week they expect to attend games so that appropriate arrangements can be made. It is also very important to make sure that all dietary requirements are made known, as these may vary drastically, and may be rather strange (although do not tell them so).

2. DO YOUR RESEARCH

It very important to research the works of H.P Lovecraft, as this will equip you with the knowledge required to converse with the roleplayer, as this can otherwise be a momentous task. Once you know which systems they prefer, it is then a very good idea to do some research into the lingo, and the setting. Doing this research will help you provide the best possible care for the roleplayer and will also make your task easier since you will be gaining valuable information. You should know the difference between TN and your THACO, resolve and composure, sanity levels and failed notches, HP and MP and many, many more. You should know that dice can have more or less than 6 sides. This is very important. Also know the difference between what a campaign, module and a LARP are, as they are very different, and roleplayers can take offense when they are confused.

3. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Gather information about your community's local services. Finding shops that sell ropleplaying books, dice and shiny objects is usually a good place to start. Finding useful online resources is also a smart move, getting things delivered to the house, or finding downloadable PDF's can save time. Finding groups of other roleplayers will also be important. Roleplayers are social in nature, but prefer to stay amongst their own kind; they will often organize small groups in which they will gather often. Make sure to have food easily accessible at all times, and keep a delivery menu in plain sight, particularly for pizza.

4. LOOK OUT FOR THESE SYMPTOMS

If the roleplayer begins to remove themselves, looking depressed or withdrawn, this may be due to character death. This is a tough topic and is best not to be broached. Remain calm, or maybe try distracting them with other forms of entertainment, they will usually bounce back after a while. If they suffer from insomnia it can be a bit more difficult to isolate the cause. Insomnia could be caused by an overactive imagination, concern or thoughts about a character or game, or could be from the copious

consumption of sugary carbonated drinks. Fidgeting, pacing and sleeping continuously can be attributed to boredom (aka. not enough roleplaying).

5. HIRE A CARE MANAGER

A Care Manager also referred to as: DM, GM or storyteller must be found if you hope to keep the roleplayer entertained. Using the internet to access local roleplaying forums and Facebook Groups can aid you in tracking down a suitable Care Manager. Make sure that you check all their credentials to make sure that they are a suitable match for your roleplayer. These professionals are trained to assess the roleplayers particular needs. They will help make most of the community resources and will also help gather other roleplayers for entertainment purposes.

6. CONSULT YOUR ROLEPLAYER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

If your roleplayer is in a healthy state of mind, it is vital that you talk to and consult them about every aspect of their care; after all it will be your responsibility to make sure they are comfortable and happy with their environment, daily routine and how they are used to being taken care of. Gain as much input from them as possible about their needs, wishes and preferences. This will help them maintain control of their affairs and will make for a better roleplayer – caregiver relationship.

7. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Despite all your good intentions, if you don't take good care of yourself, you may be of little emotional and practical help to your roleplayer. If you feel you are becoming over tired and stressed because of your new responsibilities, don't be afraid to ask for help and support amongst the community, who will allow you to take a break when needed. Make time for yourself to relax and for your own interests so that you don't feel like your entire life has been taken over by your roleplayer. Acknowledge any feelings you have related to your roleplayer: sadness, frustration, and anxiousness about their future. Take good care of yourself and your new role will remain manageable.

8. PURCHASE OR HIRE GOOD EQUIPMENT

If you have completed point 2 and 3 in the list you will understand that specialized equipment will be necessary for the care of your roleplayer. These will make life for your roleplayer easier and more comfortable. Consider investing in sets of roleplaying books, dice, dice bags and a good dining room table with plenty of comfortable seating. Extra sleeping space for those late night games may also come in handy. Caring for a roleplayer may be an expensive endeavour but, in the end, it will be worth it.

The Latest Deck Builder Games

Reuel Miller reports

Over the last year, with the success of movies like The Avengers, Man of Steel and Lord Of The Rings, the gaming industry was quick to pounce on these properties and put out games based off the different franchises. This article is going to focus on the Deck Building card games based off of the Marvel Universe, the DC Universe and Lord of the Rings.

Cryptozoic's DC Deck Builder Game
(INSERT 1)
====================================
The easiest of the three games to play, this game simply rocks. It takes about 5 minutes to learn the rules; even for absolute beginners who have never played a deck builder type game in their life before. It is also very quick to set up (about a minute, depending on how well you packed it up) and fairly quick to pack up (about 5 minutes, assuming you want to pack it up properly and neatly). It is also a very fast game to play, and a few games can be played in an evening.

Thematically, it is a little strange as all the players play one of the seven possible Super Heroes (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Flash, Aquaman and/or Cyborg) but are fighting each other to get to defeat the Super Villains But if you can put aside the fact that Batman just bitch slapped Superman (he can... because he's Batman! I've been watching too much "Super Hero Cafe" on Youtube lately, forgive me) on his way to beat Sinestro you will have a rollickingly good time.

The game is played like so:
The cards are setup so that the deck of Super Villains shows Ra's Al Ghul at the top, the "Kick" super power pile and "Weakness" pile is available and the top 5 cards from the main deck are placed face up in a line called the "Line up".

Each player is given 10 starter cards and one Super Hero. 7 "Punch" cards each with 1 Power and 3 "Vulnerability" cards that do absolutely nothing and your Super Hero has an innate power that is available on each of your turns. Each player then shuffles their deck and picks up 5 cards. On each player's turn, they play each card they have in their hand one by one down to the table, do whatever power move or attack is on the card and then buys as many cards from the line up as they can afford.

Order of play is important, as any card that is played

during your turn goes into play and is then no longer "in your hand", nor in your "discard" pile, which means other powers that target your hand or discard pile might not work as planned. Also, one IS allowed to play a portion of your hand to the table, buy a card, then play the another portion of your hand, make a second purchase and continue until you have run out of cards and power.

For instance, you can play a "Punch" card and "Aquaman's Trident" to buy "Robin" (which

let's you place Robin at the top of your deck). Then play "Fastest Man Alive" which let's you pick up the top two cards from your deck. So you pick up "Robin" which allows you to pick up an equipment card from your discard pile. You go in and get "Bat Signal", which allows you to get a Super Hero from your discard pile. You go get "Man of Steel" which allows you to pick up ALL the Super Powers from your discard pile. So... after just using 3 of the five cards in your hand you may already have a monster hand full of power, ready to take on the super villain.

Cards in the Line up are not replaced until the END of your turn. Once you have bought all the cards you can, your turn ends, the line up is replenished and, if you have defeated (read: bought) the Super Villain on your turn, the next Super Villain is revealed. Each Super Villain after Ra's Al Ghul has a first appearance attack, which attacks all the players. There are cards in the deck that give you defense against these (and other) attacks, and if you have them in your hand you can play them to avoid the attack.

The game continues until all the Super Villains have been defeated (or the main deck is empty).

Then each player counts up the victory points on their cards (every card in the game has victory points, except the starter cards; and the Weakness cards are worth -1 VP at the end of the game) to determine the winner. Some cards have a * as their VP. These cards require you to have other cards to determine their VP total (eg: If you have "Green Arrow" and 4

OTHER Super Hero cards, he is worth 5 VP; the same with the "Utility Belt", except that it needs 4 other Equipment cards; And there are 6 "Suicide Squad" cards that are each worth as many VP as you have total "Suicide Squads" in your deck... so if you have three different "Suicide Squad" cards in your deck, each one is worth 3 VP).

Strategy for the game is rather easy. Each Super Hero has a certain power. If you try and target cards that play well to your super power, you should do well. For Superman, get as many Super Power cards as you can, for Batman get as much equipment as you can and for Wonder Woman get as many villains as you can. For Flash, you need to get draw cards and locations (which let you draw cards). For Cyborg, you need a combo of Super Powers and Equipment. For Green Lantern, you want to buy up as many cards as you can, so target multiple low cost cards and draw cards. And Aquaman's strategy... well, weirdly enough, Aquaman's power is the strongest in the game as long as you remember to keep using it (he gets to place any and all cards worth 5 or less power on top of his deck and not into the discard pile when he buys or gains them, which allows him to ramp up his power very fast in the early game).

While it is true that Aquaman is the game's "best" Superhero (and Superman is probably the worst) he is not unbeatable. With the right strategy (and a little luck) any of the Super Heroes can win the game. Just last weekend in two games I was able to win with The Flash (against Aquaman and Cyborg) and as Batman (against Wonder Woman and Aquaman).

Cryptozoic's Lord Of The Rings Deck Builder Game (Insert 2)

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The LOTR Deck Builder game uses the same engine as the DC Deck Builder game, with a few minor tweaks. Well, actually... the DC Deck Builder is the game engine in Easy Mode. The LOTR Deck Builder is the game in Nightmare mode. It is a lot harsher and a lot less forgiving. Which, in my humble opinion, makes it better. It is also not as lopsided as the DC Deck Builder game as each character you play does not have an "Always On" power, like in the DC game. Instead, you get given the character's special starter card as one of your initial 10 cards.

Here are the few other differences between the LOTR game and the DC game:

on the turn you bought them and then they are removed from the game.
- Arch Enemies (like DC's Super Villains) are now graded from Rank 1 to Rank 4. You always start with the Rank 1 Arch Enemy (the Nazgul) and end with the only level 4 Arch Enemy (Lurtz; the game follows the events of the first movie, so you will probably only get to kill Sauron in the second expansion). You shuffle up the level 3 and the level 2 Arch Enemies separately and place them in the deck in order so that you always fight all the level 2's before the level 3's.
- Locations do not just let you draw card if you have played a certain card type. One lets you start the hand with 6 cards, another lets you destroy a card from your hand every turn, another lets you buy 2 different card types for 1 less power than its printed cost and another stays in play until you need a defense and then

- Some Enemy cards (same as DC Villain cards) not only have an attack power when played from your hand, they also have an Ambush power that kicks in when they are first revealed in "The Path" (same as DC's "Line Up"). This ambush targets the next player to act and only that player.
- There are now some zero cost Treasure cards that can be bought even if you have no more cards in your hand, and their power activates

can act as a defensive card for you.

Also, there is an extra nasty deck of Super Villains that ramps the game's difficulty up to 11 and creates a Hell Mode. Their ambush abilities are constantly destroying cards and ruining your decks. The game almost becomes a War of Attrition as you desperately grasp and hold onto your victory points. All this added

difficulty can make the game unpleasant for some players, but it does mean that players who have lagged behind in the early part of the game can stage comebacks (something that is pretty difficult to do in the DC game) and early front runners can be cut down to size.

Of the two, I prefer the Lord Of The Rings game, but that is because I prefer a challenge. Both game are excellent fun and highly recommended. Especially for their price, which is a decent R512 on www.digitalsushi.com

Upper Deck's Marvel Legendary Deck Building Game (insert 3)
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OK... so I am not a big fan of Legendary, Marvel's Deck Builder game. The game takes a LONG time to set up and a LONG time to pack up, but the game play is not long enough to feel like the time taken to get the game ready and packed is worth it (unlike a game like ThunderStone).
In the 4-5 games I have played, the game is either WAY too difficult, or WAY too easy.

So, it is completely different to the Cryptozoic

Deck Builders in that:
1) It is a co-op game pitching the players against the Master Criminal and his "Scheme to take over the World".
2) You defeat villains by attacking them with Attack cards, and you buy cards with Money cards (and no cards have both Buy and Attack abilities)
3) Enemies you defeat do not go into your deck. Instead you keep a pile of defeated enemies as your Victory Point pile.
4) IF you defeat the Master Criminal and stop his "Evil Scheme", you then determine to see who was the best player.

The problem is that on some hands you do not have enough attack to defeat any of the enemies and you do not have enough money to buy anything, so there are a few times when your round is wasted. Also, if you get unlucky with shuffling, some scenarios become so deadly that you do not have enough to catch up and the party feels like it is behind the Eight ball the entire game. Other times, the Scheme is so easy you just sail through and defeat the Arch Villain with ease. Also, without a decent way to randomise your game (you do not play with ALL the cards, just a selection of them) you can end up with a case where some cards need other card type to be able to synergise well, but because of your card selection none of the cards you need are actually in the game. I have now got an app for my iPhone to help with randomisation, so I am hoping this will help.

But, for its cost (a whopping R950 on Digital Sushi), it is not great value for money. It may need an expansion or two to become decent. For now, there are better games out there.

The Dwarf who Outdrank the Dragon

A story by that one guy

In days of yore, when the fortress of Stonepeak was but a collection of very brave chips into the mountain stone, there lived a dwarf with the name of Byorf. Byorf was a stonemason, and young for one so skilled in his craft. Barely in his fifties, Byorf spent his days in relative contentment; shaping the walls that would one day house his entire clan. Carving tunnels deeper and deeper into the rock; the solid pressure of the stone above him putting him at ease. But, as all dwarfs do, Byorf yearned for the thrill of battle and the furious sound of steel on steel. Besides the hostile weather, though, there was no fighting to be had in the mountains in those days. The goblins refused to come closer to the surface because of the orcs. The orcs elected to stay near their caves because of the roaming giants. And the giants would never come too far up the mountains because of the dragon that made its home there. And the dragon... The dragon kept to itself, mostly, only leaving the safety of its lair every fortnight or so to pick off local livestock or stray rams roaming the rocky outcroppings. But even this relatively lazy dragon's behaviour was becoming problematic. You see: in those days, when the clan was still young, every family was expected to provide food for their own. And not very often did they have very much to spare for those who could not fend for themselves. So when the animal population started spreading thin, the dwarven leaders thought it wise to have some very strong words with the dragon.

About twenty or so of the clan's strongest, stoutest warriors were chosen to relay a message to the dragon. They carried spears (to support themselves on the hafts when the mountainside became too steep), thick steel shields (on which to drum a marching song when the mountains became too lonely or the trek too dreary), provisions (because who can march on an empty stomach?) and solid stone hammers (with which to crush the dragon's cranium). Byorf was among them, of course, his warrior spirit finally rousing after such a long time of comfortable labour. He intended to be the one to fell the dragon, when the time came. After many songs and many short rests, often marked by the esurient consumption of liquid trial rations from their very considerable supply, the party finally found themselves in front of the dragon's cave. Bravely they came face to face with what they had previously seen only from afar as it flew high or swooped down to sink its razor talons into unfortunate prey.

The dragon was huge. A great red beast that reeked of blood and smoke. It made its bed on a stone floor well littered with what one dwarf later described (perhaps in a haze of nostalgia, perplexity and greed) as 'phat loot.' Precious stones, gold, silver, beautifully crafted swords, treasures of all kinds right down to a gem-studded dinner plate were arranged around the dragon's sizable belly. Naturally some in the party exclaimed at the wonderful spectacle before them, and that was what caused the

dragon to notice them.

"Ah, little men, what brings you to my humble lair?" it said as it started snaking towards them. "Perhaps you have given up on your insignificant lives and realised that your best use is in satiating my appetite, even if only slightly. You are, after all, such tiny creatures."

Byorf was no fool, and neither were the others. As they saw the surprising litheness and strength with which the great serpent moved they knew that it would take many of them with it if it came to blows. Even more so when they saw the fire leaking from its maw when it spoke. Before their courage could fall, Byorf could see his brothers in arms readying themselves for what was to come: gripping tighter their weapons, and testing yet again the weight of their shields. But Byorf had a plan.

"Oho," said Byorf, stepping forward. "You think a runty little thing such as yourself could make quick work of a dwarf? Har! You'd have trouble finishing but a part of me, little lizard that you are."
The dragon tensed at the insults, focussing all of its attention on Byorf... trying to pin him with its gaze.
"Be very careful what you say next, dwarf, or you will be the first among you to see the inside of my gut."
"I must apologise: while I don't mind cramped spaces, in fact I find them most comfortable, I cannot stand the thought of cramped and slimy. Though I'll tell you what: if you can beat me in a drinking contest and prove to every dwarf here that your appetite is as voracious as you say... then I'll take off my armour and even baste myself in beer for you."

The dragon laughed heartily at the challenge.

And so, settling himself onto a stony chair, Byorf and his comrades standing behind him watched as the dragon spoke a spell that set barrels to rolling of their own volition from deeper within the cave. When they came to right themselves between the dwarf and the dragon Byorf gave them a greedy glance, for there was much brew here before him, and he had a particular fondness for brew...

Cracking open a barrel with his hammer, he dipped his helm within, drawing a liquid the smell of which alone would fell a lesser man. But no, not Byorf. For he had already planned the way that he would fall, and it was not to be from the scent of a drink!

And so they drank the dragon's special brew, and truly the spirits of the Ancestors had favoured him, as Byorf had managed to keep his seat, and his rate of drinking to match that of the beast before him... who he grudgingly admitted must have been holding back, perhaps curious to test him to his limits.

But the dragon had miscalculated, for his drink ran out before the spirit of the dwarf did. Byorf spies the last of the brew, and seizes it as dismay dawns on the scaly visage of the beast.

Byorf, wiping clean his whiskers with motions that flow as if through tar, claims that he has won (in a slurred, very, very drunken voice) since he has outdrank the dragon. The dragon, unable to deny that and by now also swaying somewhat despite its monstrous constitution, gives in to its ire and proceeds to extend its gaping maw towards Byorf the dwarf to swallow him whole.

The expression on the cunning stonemason's face was one of terror... but as the beast's jaws shut tightly about him with a 'snap!' even that terror turned to victory. For now the dragon had twice the slurred thoughts, twice the waving, unintended motions, twice the heaviness of head and the drowsiness of...
yawn

The great serpentine form of a lazy, greedy dragon curls up, content in victory, around the wooden husks of what were once barrels. It does not

even notice the sound of heavy boots on a stony floor as it drifts into sleep, nor the far-away 'pong' of a stone hammer on a steel shield.

Thereafter that particular dwarven clan had its very own hero. One for whom they erected a statue above their fortress gate: Byorf the dwarf who outdrank a dragon. Depicted sitting on a barrel, next to several barrels, drinking from a barrel.
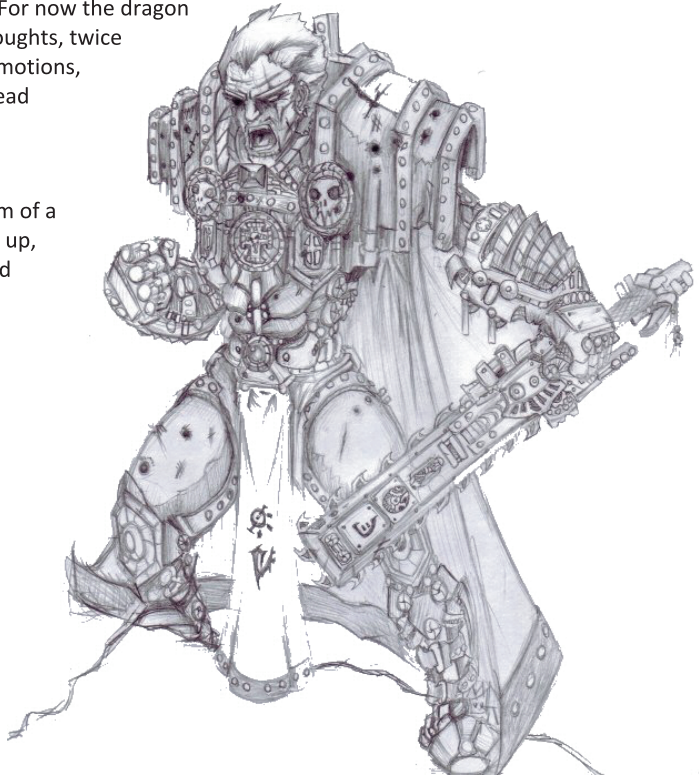
A long time ago in a galaxy far far away (fwoom)

Campaign Blurb by Fortune Dederen

Talroshi station. This lonely satellite drifts along an unremarkable section of space at the far reaches of the galaxy. Unremarkable until the recent discovery of an abandoned fortress once belonging to an Empire defeated long ago. It's secrets still intact, it's halls untouched for centuries. Ripe for exploration.

Five "well-adjusted" individuals will share a destiny, whether they like it or not. A lost padawan , an Iridonian pariah, an unstable bounty hunter, an enigmatic Aleena and a Jedi on the run. Together they will venture down to the planet surface and unravel its mysteries. However all is not as seems, the Dark Side still looms over this place. An ancient evil has been revived, threatening to devour all its increasing influence can reach.

The road that they walk is a gathering storm. It's time to enter the maelstrom...
-
Star Wars Sagas is role playing game based on the d20 system of Dungeons and Dragons 3.5th ed.

"No, I do not want to stop smoking death sticks.
I do not want to go home and rethink my life"
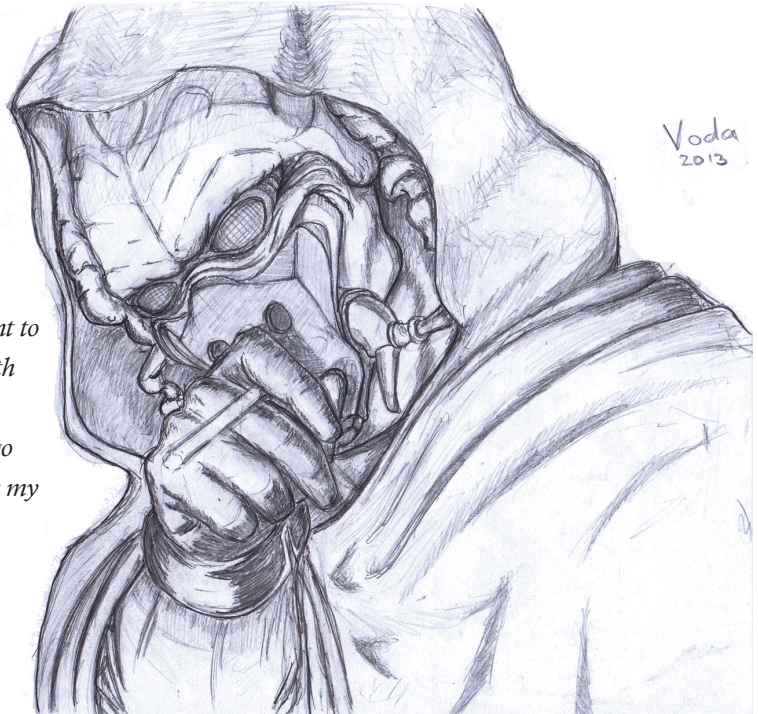
On writing with cold hands

By the Archbigot of the Necropolis

...Screw this I'm getting coffee.

Fridge Quotes

Voxus the gnome: Voxus suddenly realizes that everyone around is taller than him and covered in gllitter.

Ludi: You see, my character has a bunch of voices in his head that order him around. Except one voice killed all the other voices and now they showed up as voices in his head. It's a whole hierarchy of command and I'm at the bottom.

Bottoms Up: It's on a beach, it counts.

James: I create an illusion of a window.
Daniel: The guard sees right through it.

Voxus: I cast Grease on the lumberjacks:
Daniel: Right, they're all oiled up and slipping over each other.
Voxus: I then cast Edgar's Black Tentacles.
Daniel: Edgar's Oily Black Tentacles start molesting the lumberjacks.
Dracorex: I caste fire ball.
Daniel: Edgar's Flaming Penetrating Black Tentacles start violating the lumberjacks. Man you guys hate wood cutters.
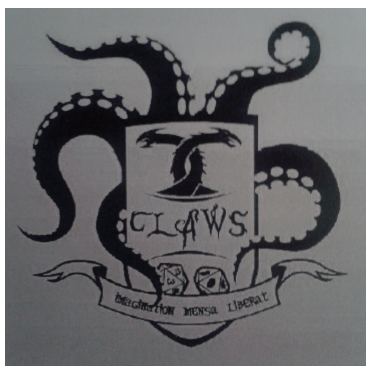
Jeremy: Pants time is over!

Anon: He doesn't know how to person all that well...

Welcome to Orion Incorporated, here you will learn many valuable skills to help you with your everyday life.

We'll begin today's lesson with some examples from other current employees:

- While we at Orion Incorporated frown on people missing days of work, we are sympathetic to cases such as getting kidnapped and held in a medically induced coma for several days.
- When being rescued by a strange bounty hunter, you should probably check your luggage to make sure that no one has slipped you an extra bag containing a sniper rifle as this can lead to elevated stress levels which may impact productivity during the work day.
- Always make sure that you get as much information as you can and don't let your manager get in the way of getting that information. An unprepared mind is a mind that can be threatened while in a sauna…
- Always make sure you know what you are getting yourself into when making a deal. Remember, everything has a price.
- When you are informed that the office will be locked up at night it probably isn't a good idea to hang around after closing time. You never know what will happen before tomorrow arrives…
- When asking for something from the head office, make sure it is actually something you want before the package arrives, as the head office does not offer refunds.
- It is probably best to check that the people you assign tasks to are actually qualified for the work. There is always the possibility that you have misunderstood what a person's skillset is.
- When trying to order a Roomba from a dodgy Mexican man who asks for strange payment methods, make sure to clarify that you don't want Russian attack robots which could cause political embarrassment for the company.
- Be careful when trying to sleep on the job… you never know what room you will wake up in, or if you can get out of it.
- Always make sure to understand the exact terms of a deal and local customs when hiring outside contractors as this can potentially cause cultural conflicts which the company frowns upon.

Dragonfire

2013

living the illusion

CLAWS

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