
Whispering Runes

Presidents Column - (Game Writing 101)

Caravan 2003 was a success and Help Wanted V (April 26) is coming soon. But we need new games. You too can strive that illustrious position of super-cosmic power: Game Writer! The steps aren't too difficult, once you have the main idea and a couple of subplot ideas. So for this month's column, I'm going to write about Game Design 101:

First, get a copy of a major game that has run recently. That will give you a format/pattern/template to use for putting down the details. If you don't have one already, contact any Dallas board member and they can probably email you a complete script.

You typically start with an plot idea and goal for the team to achieve and maybe a couple of interesting encounter concepts. Then fill in the rough outline with a list of encounters.

Think about what levels of players you will be aiming the game for. If the game concept is to save the world, then low levels are not very believable candidates for the job. On the other hand, if the concept is to track down a missing item or guard a caravan, then low to mid level teams can make perfect sense. At this point, you are ready to write the story line. The story line is what most of the game staff will read on game day to get an idea of what the game is all about. It is a description of an introductory background followed by the series of encounters you plan for the team to have to deal with. For the story line, you just need to include the essence of each encounter without specifics about the NPCs, magic, etc. It usually ranges from one to four pages in length.

Once the story line has been written, you've got your outline for writing the full game script. For each encounter, elaborate with details on the concept laid out in the storyline. Here is where you include the exact number and level of NPCs and

what their general responses should be to likely team actions. Try to balance the total fights so they are interesting and neither too easy nor too difficult for the level of teams you are aiming at, but don't worry about getting it exactly right at this stage. If the game is more than 8 encounters, you may want to include a healing or recharge encounter somewhere in the middle so players can finish the game without being totally out of points. Give enough details in the encounter descriptions so the NPCs and GM know your intent, but leave enough flexibility so the NPCs are able to improvise in interesting ways that add individual flavor to the game. Include game lore and magic item savvies in each encounter. Don't be afraid to repeat what is in the storyline. In many cases, the NPC will only have the encounter description 20 minutes before the first team arrives and have to work with that limited information. At the end of each encounter, include a list of what props will be required to run the encounter. It might be a good idea to visit our props shed to see what we already have. There are costumes and decorations in there that have not been used in years, but are still in fine condition. Using existing stuff can really reduce the labor of game production while adding a lot of flavor to the game.

After the encounters have all been written, it is time to get a sanctioning team. The sanctioning team helps you by reviewing the game for plot completeness and playability. Contact the chapter Sanctioning Chair to request a team. Amy Coley currently is the Dallas Sanctioning Chair. It usually helps to have someone who you know on the team so you are comfortable in asking them to hurry up and get comments back to you. Don't be bashful about asking for sanctioning response. I've seen too many games still idle for months because the sanctioning team was not prodded to do its job. I've also seen quick teams that work closely with the designer to fix problems and get the game ready on time. Involvement makes the difference.

The sanctioning stage is where the difficulty of combat encounters and value of magic given out is reviewed. Many times I've heard a sanctioning person say, "no point in reading beyond this encounter, no one will be left alive". Better to fix that during sanctioning than having to explain to your friends why you put them in a no win situation. Once the sanctioning team is satisfied with the basics, it is time for a final review and creation of the various treasure, magic, and props appendices. If you develop those appendices too early, sometimes fixes in one place don't get made in the other. If you don't do the appendices, then when it comes time to do the game, it is a lot more work to check everything. Once you and the SC team agree it is all done, you have a sanctioned game and can schedule a date to produce the game. Producing a game is a topic for a later time, but never fear, the chapter has a number of experienced people who would love to either produce your game or help you learn how to produce your own game. But first you have to write it! I'm looking forward to having some new game writers this year. You could be one too!

Pat McGehearty
Dallas President IFGS

"Caravan" Thank You

Well, Caravan '03 has come and gone.

I wish to thank the following people for all the help they gave to make running this game possible.

Olan Knight - who helped at the shed, with set up and tear down, played one of the Bog Monsters and one of the BAD guys in the final encounter - awesome dude.

Andrew Jones - who was Game Safety Officer, bank, treasurer, check in and check out. A lonely job but so very well done - Thanks

John Jones and Allan Pickering - who helped at the shed and then spent 2 hours building the final encounter temple and then played 2 of the BIG, BAD guys - they then finished up by going back to the shed and helping put props away - Thank You Cheryl Metz for being the caravan master and one of the 'ambushed' ambushers and then the GHP to reward the team - Bravo

Andy Moon. Erci Schnurr and Bill Flag for being in not one, not two, but three fighting encounter. - excellent

Andy Moon for also playing the mentally challenged troll - gratsi

Chris Wright and his son for their wonderful portrayal as the wise 'man?' and his translating servant - well done

Greg Spense and Tina Cox for driving all the way from west Ft Worth to NPC - thank you very much

Danny Barry - ambusher, Knight errant (for the 4th time) and bad guy in the final fights - as always I appreciate your willing help - a LOT

Special thanks to Lloyd McN for going to the shed and helping put props away.

Thanks to Pat McG and Mark Venalbe for agreeing to be LMs and for organizing the teams - Well done

Thanks to everyone who helped and I hope to see everyone at the next game,

Yours in Christ,

R. Gordon Griffith

Rules Discussions

The IFGS Fantasy Rules committee has been reviewing the rules over the last 18 months and has posted some summaries of possible changes for several classes on their web site (<http://www.ifgs.com/committees/FRC>).

None of these changes are set in stone and are still subject to review, comment, and change.

Members throughout IFGS who like to debate such changes usually sign up to the IFGS chat list "shoptalk@ifgs.org". You can sign up by going to the Society Web page (<http://www.ifgs.com>), clicking on the "Mail" icon and marking which mailing lists you would like to be on. You can sign up for either the Digest form (one mail per day that includes all the messages) or the Traditional form (each message is forwarded separately as it comes in). Shoptalk can vary from zero messages to one hundred messages a week, depending on what topics are discussed. Lots of people lurk, and major Society wide events are often announced first there.

I'm sending this note out in hopes that Dallas IFGS people are aware of this forum of discussion.

- Patrick McGehearty
Dallas President IFGS

CARAVAN 2003 Bank Report

Gordon Griffith produced one of our perennial low-level favorites on Saturday, 22-MAR-2003 at Lookout Park in Richardson, Texas. What a gorgeous day! The weather was perfect, and it only started to sprinkle AFTER – yes, you heard it right: AFTER – the tear-down was complete and almost everything had been returned to the shed! (Allan Pickering is *still* mumbling about that. ☺)The PCs had perfect gaming weather: cool and sunny and slightly overcast. Perfect.

The other good news is that we had a BUNCH of new faces at this game. We had many of the people who had participated in the ConDFW mini-game “Midnight Shuffle”, and it was great to see them again. I got to see everyone at least once, as I was one of the Bog monsters. Team 2 had the best of our efforts, as by then David Spence (the other Boggie) and I were tossing “mud” at everyone who even thought about coming close to our beloved and beautiful bog!

Of special significance was the introduction of four novices to the wonderful world of IFGS. It was also great to see Lloyd back in action after an absence of five years. Please be sure to introduce yourself to these shining faces the next time you see them, and consider them when you are filling our a team for your next game:

James Arnold	Lothar	FTR
Drew Oliver	Fraco	THF
Tom Parr	Heinrich von Totengrabber	MU
Michael Young	Father Vargas	CLR
Lloyd Macmann	Herman of Munster	CLR

(Welcome back, Lloyd!)

To all of you, we welcome you to IFGS!!!!

Game Ratings

Overall:	8.5		
Design:	8.4	Logistics:	7.5

Mental:	6.1	Physical:	6.3
Fighting:	7.1	Risk:	6.6

This game was full of Kodak moments too numerous for one newsletter to mention. Well, one I've **got** to mention was when team #1 ambushed the bad guys in encounter 9. Or at least ONE member of team #1 was there....the rest of his buddies were nowhere to be found when the phlox hit the phan! Gosh! What a brave guy! And a Mage, no less....Wow!

PCs Voting: Best of Awards

Roleplaying:

1. Chris and Mickey Wright as the Hermit and his Son
2. Andy Moon as the Supremely Intelligent Troll
3. Danny Barry as the Knight Errant

Costume:

1. Bog Monsters (David Spence and Olan Knight)
2. The Cleric of Isis and the Evil Priestess (Tina Cox)
3. Tie: Danny Berry as the Knight Errant
Andy Moon as The Brainy Troll

Monster:

1. Andy Moon as the Mondo Mental Troll
2. David Spence and Olan Knight as the Bog Boys
3. Chris and Mickey Wright as Hermit and Son

Humor:

1. Chris and Mickey Wright as Hermit and Son (Hands down! Nine out of ten votes went to them!)
2. Olan Knight as the Bog monster spitting mud (I only did it to team 2, darn it!)

Fighting:

1. Danny Berry as the Knight Errant
2. Tie: Tina Cox as the Evil Priestess at the Temple; The Guards at the Temple; Eric Schnurr (one of the temple guards)

Special Effect:

1. The Temple (well, yeah....)
2. The Bog (beautiful, was it not?)

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NPCs Voting: Best of Awards

Roleplaying:

1. Tom Parr as Heinrich the Mage
2. Pat McGehearty as Brandt the Cleric
3. Tie: Drew Oliver as Draco the Thief
Mark Venable as Kail the Mage

Costume:

1. Taryn Cox as Crystal Glory the Mage
2. Tie: Drew Oliver as Draco the Thief
Tom Parr as Heinrich the Mage

Monster:

1. Grey Cox as Azeron the Flying, Leaping, Sailing Fighter

Humor:

1. Pat McGehearty (6'3" protecting Taryn Cox (3'10") with his shield by standing over her. *Completely* over her!
2. Tom Parr ambushing five bad guys. Alone.
3. Greyson Cox the Flying Fighter. Sailing over the guards into the Altar room of the temple, then flying back out when he lost both of his arms. It was awesome!!!!

Fighting:

1. Greyson Cox. Not only did he fly, he fought bloody well, too!
2. Pat McGehearty

Special Effect:

1. The bog
2. Greyson's Amazing Aerial Agility
3. The Temple

Everyone seemed to have a good time. I know the NPCs certainly enjoyed seeing the new faces and introducing them to IFGS. We look forward to seeing everyone out again soon!

Olan Knight

IFGS - Dallas Chapter Board February Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Patrick McGehearty(Gordon Griffith's poxy), John Jones, Tracy Skopinski, Joe Dimatteo, Mark Venable

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM by Pat McGehearty.

A motion to accept the January meeting minutes as published in the newsletter was made by Joe Dimatteo, seconded by Mark Venable, it passed 5-0-0.

Committee Reports

Safety: A motion to nominate Andy Moon as the Safety Representative was made by Joe Dimatteo, seconded by John Jones, it passed 5-0-0.

QM: John Jones noted that he received delivery of shelves graciously donated by Andrew. John Jones further stated a possible need to reorganize the shed and that nothing official will be done until after the convention.

Bank: No report.

Sanctioning: Amy Coley stated that she would be making a general call for Sanctioning Representative in an email. There were no games currently in sanctioning.

Newsletter: No report. January issue has been sent out.

PR: No report. Currently no PR representative.

FRC: Pat McGehearty stated intent to sell rulebooks at the convention. Also, the idea to produce and sell flag kits were noted.

Society Liaison: Pat McGehearty stated that there was no new information from Society.

Treasury: Tracy Skopinski informed the board that only 7 signatures would be allowed on the chapter account. Joe Dimatteo volunteered to be removed. Allen Pickering was also removed.

Old Business –

Pat McGehearty informed the board that the chapter had been given a complimentary table and passes in the dealer's room from the 21st to the 23rd as well as a room in which to run a mini-game on Saturday. Pat McGehearty stated that he would send out an email requesting approximately 10 volunteers to staff the table in shifts presumably from 6PM-10PM Friday, 10AM-10PM Saturday, and 10AM-2PM Sunday. Details pending as the convention has yet to furnish the board with a schedule.

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John Jones stated that his game was nearing completion, the game required 10 people to staff, and he had 8 volunteers already.

Discussion of post convention games to retain newly interested people. Paul Coley offered to run Help Wanted. Gordon Griffin will be running Caravan with March 15 as the tentative date.

New Business

The board greatly appreciated people responding to Amy Coley's request for Sanctioning Representatives.

A motion was made by Joe Dimatteo to make the next board meeting at 7:30PM on March 4th at John Jones's apartment. Motion was seconded by John Jones and passed by acclaim.

Pat McGehearty pronounced the meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.

IFGS - Dallas Chapter Board March Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Patrick McGehearty, Gordon Griffith, John Jones, Olan Knight, Joe Dimatteo, Mark Venable

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM by Pat McGehearty.

Committee Reports

Safety: No report.

QM: John Jones expressed that the shed is in need of organization.

Bank: Records are up to date.

Sanctioning: Michael Magnus has submitted a game for sanctioning.

Newsletter: Not posted for February.

PR: No report. Position open.

FRC: Book sales only current source. Pat McGehearty expressed a plan to build and sell flag kits.

Society Liaison: No report.

Treasury: No report.

Elections: No report.

Old Business –

The chapter's presence at ConDFW was nothing short of a success. One new member was acquired along with seven new contacts. Thanks go out to Pat McGehearty, Mark Venable, John Jones and everyone else who put in long hours at the table and helping to run Midnight Shuffle.

Caravan, produced by Gordon Griffith, is to run Saturday, March 22. Pat McGehearty and Mark Venable are the current Loremasters, a third maybe needed depending on PC response.

Paul Coley will be running Help Wanted tentatively on April 26th.

New Business

Olan Knight suggested that the Dallas chapter contact Jeremy Storm and invite him to run his game sanctioned for last season that didn't get the chance to run due to weather.

A motion was made by Pat McGehearty to make the next board meeting at 7:30PM on April 1st at John Jones's apartment. The motion was seconded by Mark Venable and passed by acclaim.

A motion to replace the come-alongs and glove for the ropes kit was made by Olan Knight and was seconded by Joe Dimatteo. Motion passed 6-0-0.

Pat McGehearty pronounced the meeting adjourned at 9:11PM.

IFGS - Dallas Chapter Board March Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Pat McGehearty (Gordon Griffith's proxy), John Jones, Joe Dimatteo, Mark Venable, Paul Coley

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The meeting was called to order at 7:37PM by Pat McGehearty.

Committee Reports

Safety: Radio rechargers missing. If you have them let someone on the board know.

QM: The shed is in good condition.

Bank: No report.

Sanctioning: Efforts have been made to update and organize the sanctioning representatives list.

Newsletter: Paul Coley rectified a communication problem with Mark Venable. There was an error on the flyer for Help Wanted. The flyer said the game was to run on March 26th instead of April 26th.

PR: Position open. Two new members have joined the Dallas chapter. The board welcomes Drew Oliver and Michael Young to our ranks.

FRC: Another rulebook was sold.

Society Liaison: New rules continuing in "shoptalk." Pat McGehearty will send out an email detailing how to get information for those who are interested.

Treasury: No report.

Elections: No report.

Old Business - none

New Business

A constructive discussion of Help Wanted, produced by Paul Coley, scheduled to run on April the 26th, was held. The game is nearly staffed, general volunteer call to go out soon, PC recruiting to following not soon after.

Paul Coley announced the completion of his game Punishable By Death. Pat McGehearty suggested the game be run in late July or August as it is an indoor game.

A motion was made by Pat McGehearty to make the next board meeting at 7:30PM on May 6th at John Jones's apartment. Motion was seconded by John Jones and was passed by acclaim.

Pat McGehearty pronounced the meeting adjourned at 8:52PM.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: HELP

WANTED!

Or Help Wanted 5 if you prefer!

Location: Duck Creek

Date: April 26th

Start Time: 12:00 NOON

PC Fee: \$10

NPC fee: \$5

This is a bar game for PC's 1-10. PC Fairness is in effect. Participants may bring in multiple characters with one hour of experience awarded each. There will be a magic shop available.

Cullen made a very tough decision and has left the service of Conrad Von Tempest, Earl of Wayland. The strange dark ore found on the Earl's land has been identified by the Chief Librarian in Tarraline as "mithicarum". It is a rare ore with unique properties and has been used in history to forge weapons and armor of great strength. Unfortunately, the vein on the Earl's land was mined out decades ago. Follow suggestions by the Chief Librarian and rumors of another vein, Cullen has traveled north to the city of Fairhaven in the colony of New Cadrys.

Cullen has been warmly welcomed by the merchants of Fairhaven. A skilled armorer and weapon-smith will be a huge asset to the fledgling colony. Most importantly, a large vein of the dark ore Mithicarum is being actively mined. With the local Magistrate as a partner, Cullen has been given a large building on the edge of town. Cullen now faces the unenviable task of staffing the newly created Two Hammers Forge, expanding the mining operation, starting a smelting operation for the dark ore. The cry goes out for a few skilled people

Once again members new and old will be given the opportunity to learn the techniques and hints on how to make safe shields and weapons. Some materials will be provided. For those who already have weapons and want to have some fun instead, there will be a mini-game rewritten by Paul Coley. It is a one hour game for teams of 4 characters.

Levels 1-3: 8 Total levels

Levels 4-5 18 Total levels

Levels 6-7: 26 Total levels

Fighting 7 Mental 8 Physical 7 Risk 7

After They Hatch!

The long awaited sequel to “Before They Hatch”

Location: King Arthur Faire Stroud, OK

Date: May 17 -18th

This is a major line game for a team of 6 characters of levels
4 through 6.

Contact Debbie Chambers 405-524-3183 for details. I’m
sure she is looking for Pc’s and NPC’s.

International Fantasy Gaming Society

Dallas Chapter March/April 2003

Sanctioning Committee Game status

Sanctioned:

Game	Writer/Producer	Level	Run Date	Committee	Status
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Sanctioning at Work.

Game	Writer/Producer	Level	Run Date	Committee	Status
Punishable by Death	P.Coley	2-4	TBD		Submitted
Untitled	M/B. Magness	TBD	TBD		Submitted

Calendar Of Events

Game	Chapter	Author/Producer	Levels	Type	Date
SPRING FLING	Norman			Bar	Apr. 26
HELP WANTED V	Dallas	Paul Coley	1-10	Bar/Mini	Apr. 26
AFTER THEY HATCH	Norman	Debra Chambers	4-6?	Major	May 17-18
ZORG-BLACK REIGN	Norman	David Spence		Major	June 7-8
COSTUMING PARTY	Norman	M. and S. Whaley	All	Event	Aug. 2
KING ARTHUR FAIRE	Norman				Oct. 4-5