Setting and GM Forum 2 Minutes

06/06/2015 at the Ram

Led By
Judith O.
Warren J.

Attending
Ruth S., Dave S., James G., Louisa B., Lucy P., Will E., Steve E., Claire F., Hannah M.

Lessons Learnt

The meeting began with a discussion of lessons learnt from GMing (both campaign and general).

Dealing with IC (not OOC) darkness and light

The general consensus was that a more consistent way of marking out the 'edge' of darkness and light when IC it's a sunny day are needed, primarily to cover combat and Rec calls. Use of the ranges of the existing Light spells (Light/Lantern) is generally less than the accepted range of just setting something on fire (20' for the spells, anything up to 40' for natural light).

It was agreed that we cannot just rely on what works for individuals as a range because everyone is different (even in the people present the ability to see in the dark was markedly different). In order to streamline the game in a way that made sense, and rather than having a hard limit, the following suggestions were put forward:

- It is the responsibility of the player with the IC light to tell people if the light suddenly stops (due to Extinguish or running away or similar)
- It is the responsibility of all players/monsters to know where they are relative to the light source
- If not sure (i.e. mid-combat), the 'visible range' is roughly 6 feet, or 'nearest person' - equivalent to attacking the person you can just about see in the moonlight
- Blindness only applies if the Light source is actually extinguished or removed
- GM to give guidance on what distance from the light source it's appropriate to use 'shadowy figure', 'blurry shadow' or similar in response to a Rec call.

Dealing with OOC darkness

There have been issues with people complaining about OOC lights that have then turned out to be IC spells, or OOC lights being treated as being IC.

The agreed solution to trial was:

- OOC lights are always white lights
- IC lights are always another colour

For OOC safety, the use of glow-sticks (as per one of the early Seeds of Change games) was agreed to be a sensible option.

The Problem of Walls/Doors

When using walls/buildings on games there's inevitably the issue of communication - players and monsters not knowing where the walls/door are (or even that they exist), not being able to easily tell who is inside and who is outside and so on.

Natural boundaries (edge of the Bowl etc) are good but limiting. The use of barrier tape around trees was agreed to be one of the best ways to make it clear but needs trees and a lot of time; rope works but tends to get hidden by long grass. Cones or similar can be used to mark out corners and doorways but it makes it hard to parse what's what. All methods that use low-level or ground height tend not to be easy to see.

One suggestion was to combine cones and barrier tape as relatively portable and easy to see. This was tentatively approved of.

Newbie Support

Various areas of the system are, because they're largely in people's heads or in the GM Rules, rather unfriendly to newbies.

The buddying system used on the Seeds of Change campaign was agreed to be a good start but only if the newbies make active use of it; more trials of it are needed.

The general feeling was that there needs to be more written out information for newbies to investigate and use
- Expanded Rec Creature information for Pathfinders including details like "Skeletons - sharp weapons bounce off them" and the like.
- Descriptive (not proscriptive) expanded information on the Guilds, how magic/miracles work and similar - effectively fluff text to give people ideas without locking them down to how things work.
- IC newspaper on a quarterly basis to keep a summary of 'plot' going, with IC reporters at meals and after games.

Volunteers for areas so far:
- Claire - initial intro leaflet piece
- Ruth - fluff for Defenders
- Dave - fluff for Druids

There was also mention of the Guild videos done previously, and a suggestion of adding them to the website if people agreed.

Miscellaneous

Eyeless creatures - there was a suggestion of using a call of Sightless on damage to make it clear that Displacement does not count.

Armour markers - generally agreed useful, but visibility is still an issue. One to try more and see how it goes.

Rec Creature - general agreement to explain to people with Rec Creature what any Wibbly Things actually are before the game or at the earliest sensible opportunity

Monster Manual

There was a discussion of what GMs would like to see added or changed in the Monster Manual. The initial point was that the monster manual needs to be kept flexible where possible (i.e. only defining what's necessary and letting GMs build the rest) in order to keep it maintainable.

- More clarity on what the base rank of a creature is for the purpose of Rec Creature etc. and how much of that base rank is spent on base abilities.
- Example stats for different types of creatures (like the DnD manuals) to give GMs ideas.
- Templates for things like Dire, Demonic etc. that come up a lot

- All the missing 'standard' creatures - in the case of animals, rough guidelines on frequently used animals to give ideas for what's apt rather than trying to pin down every single possible creature
  - The suggestion was to try and point animals and other missing standards at particular existing skills tables rather than trying to create new ones, just to keep things to a manageable size.
- Guidelines on when Superior/Masterwork kit is apt for types of monsters and how frequently it should appear
  - In order to reduce the Epic Looting issues, there was a suggestion of making Superior/Masterwork kit be race specific, and for PCs to need to pay to have what they've looted refitted if it comes from a different race.
  - This was generally agreed to be a good idea, especially if half- species could use kit belonging to either of their parent races.
- Removal of innate ability-by-rank abilities from existing monster types was suggested due to the issue of games and thus monsters being that much higher ranked. General agreement was that having to buy the innates was better. Suggestions for alternatives included:
  - Changing the progressions to be equivalent to that of player Guilds
  - Changing the progressions to match that of the 'rank to buy' guidelines for castings
  - Setting to an equivalent stat buying chain (similar to the Weakness ability for Shadows)
- More fluff description text for monsters to give a better idea of what they look like and how they might live and so on.

Things GMs Don't Do

Due to lack of time there was a very quick discussion of Things GMs Don't Do and, where possible, why.

Guardian spirits - currently they are just too complicated and don't work

High level Laces can easily become not fun for/unfairon players (takes characters out of a game)

Wards get impractical to ref far too quickly and start getting a bit silly with the 'taking damage' rule

Interrupting Prayer/Meditation - same issue as high level Laces, they take characters out of a game unless they have back-up stats and skills

Fracture - no one can remember what it does!

Dispelling/Anti-Magic Shell etc. - undo what casters can do, effectively wasted points

High level Disease/Poison
- Neutralise/Cure have no other uses so no one buys them
- Because no one buys them, it's hard to use high level Disease/Poison
- Possible fixes: make the cures be downcast versions of existing miracles (Heal Life/Wounds), allow stacking of Cure/Neutralise (either multiple people casting together or each casting reduces the Disease/Poison by that level).

Next Time

The following things were requested for the next GM Forum:
- Hold it as a standalone meeting; 1.5 hours was just not enough time.
- Revisit all actions from this meeting
- Traps (mechanical and magical/miraculous) - how to be consistent
- Tracking, Rec Creature, Rec Tracks, Rec Smell and Evaluate - how to be consistent
- How does IC money actual work in the 'real' world outside of patrolling?

Actions

Based on the discussions above, these are the actions that should be pursued for the next GM Forum.

- Test IC area of light rules during OOC hours of light
- Newbie support material
  - Write up a descriptive piece on the history of the KoE so far and general setting feel
    - Claire
  - Write up a descriptive piece for how magic and miracles 'work'
    - Claire
  - Write up a descriptive piece for each Guild, including specific Guild knowledge
    - Defenders: Ruth
    - Druids: Dave
  - Write up a newbie Pathfinder guide covering basic monsters
- Dig out, update and revamp the Guild videos, and possibly add more to cover same areas as descriptive pieces
  - Judith
- Come up with a definitive list of basic monsters and templates
  - Include what GMs think are base and approximate maximum rank
  - Include what things the GMs think are 'base stats' for monsters
  - Include basic descriptions of what people think things look like
- Test IC/OOC light colours
- Test 'Sightless' as a damage call vs. Displacement (Note: test has been done and generally approved of, although a shorter word would be preferred if one can be found)
- Test armour marker sashes