

Appendix: Gamemastering Practice Document

To accompany Ché Wilbraham's PhD Thesis

Special thanks to my players and occasional GMs:

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The original drop-in RPG group:

Max Amaden, Simon Day, Christopher Jones, Niall MacDonald, Jake Whittaker

And those who played less frequently.

Contents

Introduction	5
The GASRPGCU and the Gaming Groups	6
<i>World Anvil</i> Experiment	8
Presenting <i>World Anvil</i> Content Here	8
Original <i>World Anvil</i> Data Structure	9
RPG Adventures and Campaigns.....	10
<i>Apocalypse World</i>	10
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>	11
<i>Apocalypse World</i> Setting	11
Adventure Using <i>Apocalypse World</i>	14
Adventure: Rust Bucket.....	14
Adventure: A Horse and The Source	15
Campaign: The Door in Reality.....	16
<i>Blade and Lockpick</i>	104
Adventure: Iron and Coal	104
<i>Blades in the Dark</i>	118
Adventures Using <i>Blades in the Dark</i>	118
<i>Call of Cthulhu</i>	119
Adventure: <i>In Media Res</i>	119
Character Building.....	120
Adventure: Normal Person Dungeon Crawl	121
Conspicuous Events Setting.....	122
Adventure: The 80 Skeletons	126
Adventure: Standing By.....	126
Awakening Setting.....	126
Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon	127
Adventure: The Terrible Flaming Sword.....	128
<i>Cypher System</i>	129
Campaign: Convergence	129
<i>Dark Heresy</i>	254
Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit.....	255
<i>Dungeon World</i>	270
Campaign: Schrödinger Fantasy	271
<i>Dungeons & Dragons</i>	271
Campaign: Pelvuria	271

<i>Fiasco</i>	272
Adventures Using <i>Fiasco</i>	272
<i>The Darkest House</i>	272
<i>Electric Bastionland</i>	273
Adventure Using <i>Electric Bastionland</i>	273
<i>InSpectres</i>	273
Adventures Using <i>InSpectres</i>	274
JankenSquad	274
Adventures: Ultra JankenSquad Forever and JankenSquad Origins	275
Adventure: Re:Don't	279
<i>Monster of the Week</i>	279
Campaign: The Madness of Ages	279
<i>Monsterhearts</i>	281
Adventure Using <i>Monsterhearts</i>	281
Nil Escape	281
Adventure: Nil Escape	282
<i>Paranoia</i>	284
<i>Paranoia</i> Setting	284
Adventures Using <i>Paranoia</i>	285
<i>Pathfinder</i>	287
Campaign: Demons Below	287
<i>Rhapsody of Blood</i>	292
Adventure Using <i>Rhapsody of Blood</i>	292
<i>The Skeletons</i>	292
Adventure Using <i>The Skeletons</i>	292
<i>Unknown Armies</i>	293
<i>Unknown Armies</i> Setting	293
Adventure: <i>Jailbreak</i>	294
Campaign Using <i>Unknown Armies</i>	296
Adventure: <i>The Green Glass Grail</i>	298
Adventure: The Short, Stout Grail	299
<i>Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay</i>	300
Campaign: <i>Paths of the Damned</i>	300
Campaign: The Enemy Within	302
Miscellany, Reflections & Other PhD Practice	303
Virtual Gamemaster <i>Twine</i> Experiment	303

Virtual Gamemaster Playable Presentation	304
RPG-Supportive Software Experiments.....	304
Virtual Tabletops	304
Mapmaking Software	305
Random Generators	305
Character Creators, Token Creators, and Similar	305
Handout Creators	305
Organisation, Planning and Note Keeping	306
Reflections on Writing Up The Door in Reality.....	306
Reflections on The Door	306
Game Narrative Structure Diagram.....	307
Narrative Structure Diagram of an Excerpt of <i>Dragon's Dogma</i>	309
Narrative Structure Diagram of the 'Basic Moves' of <i>Apocalypse World</i>	309
Diagrammatic Report of a short <i>Apocalypse World</i> Session	311
Narrative Structure Diagram Experiment for Some Elements of Nil Escape	312
Diagram of the "Flow" of <i>Blades in the Dark</i>	312
References.....	314

Introduction

This document acts as a record and reflective journal relating to gamemastering¹ practice performed as part of Ché Wilbraham's PhD research. It relates to over 1,200 hours² of practice performed between September 2017 and roughly July 2023. It forms part of the thesis for this project and should be considered an appendix.

It is not necessary for anyone reading the thesis to read the entirety of this document. The main body of the thesis refers to sections of this document as necessary and where relevant.

Many of the terms throughout this document are presented as clickable hyperlinks. It should generally be possible to click, for example, the name of an important character within a plot summary, to be taken to that character's own summary section. This is intended to aid navigation and exploration.

Most of this document describes sessions and processes, including detail relating to the design and running of the games.

However, sections like this highlight my (Ché's) reflections on various aspects, generally in a less formal tone, highlighting lessons or talking points extracted from the practice for discussion or analysis. These are written in the first person as they are akin to entries in a reflective journal.

Most of this document is organised in sections relating to specific roleplaying gaming sessions, labelled as "adventures" or "campaigns". Adventures are generally intended to be shorter than campaigns, dealing in simpler stories with fewer plot points and dramatic arcs, and less character growth. Adventures tend to be concluded within fewer gaming sessions – perhaps one-to-three sessions that last two-to-four hours each. As an analogy, adventures could be likened to screen media's movies in terms of plot complexity and character growth, where campaigns could be likened to series. These adventures and campaigns are organised within sections by the roleplaying game (RPG) systems used to run them.

I've found that the same players, and myself as GM, will want to play either adventures or campaigns at different times, for different reasons. Despite them both essentially providing the same experience, I think they cater to desires for different types of stories. Like the movie/series analogy above, sometimes players will want a longform experience where they get to experience character growth, complex plots, foreshadowing, etc., and sometimes we want to just see how an interesting scenario plays out with less of a focus on these aspects. Characters in an adventure tend to be less deep and complex, acting more like stereotypes

¹ For more detail and discussion on terms and concepts relating to roleplaying games and gamemastering, please see the main body of the thesis.

² This estimate of practice hours is calculated as follows: roughly five hours of GMing practice per week (one-to-two instances of three-to-four-hour sessions almost every week plus preparation), over 298 weeks (each week from roughly October 2017 to July 2023 – five years and nine months, so roughly $(5 \times 52) + (9 \times 4.2) = 297.8$), which equals 1,490 hours. The actual figure is probably over 1,500, but the value of 1,200 hours is given to account for potential errors in estimation.

playing functions in their situation, while campaign characters can be expected to change significantly over time, in response to their experiences and so on.

While Ché Wilbraham acted as gamemaster (GM) for almost all these sessions, the players varied by session, though the most regular players are noted with “special thanks” at the beginning of this document. Given that the stories of RPGs are co-created by their GMs and players in ways that can be difficult to precisely attribute, it is worth noting that the players could be considered co-authors of parts of this document. Sections where players made especially large contributions to content are noted accordingly – this mostly concerns details relating to player characters (PCs).

It is especially worth noting the contributions of Phoebe Herring, who produced numerous illustrations relating to various RPG sessions. These pieces are included with permission and in their relevant sections. Phoebe’s work can be found here: https://www.artstation.com/phoebe_herring

The GASRPGCU and the Gaming Groups

The terms GASRPG ([Games Academy](#) Staff RPG Group) and GASRPGCU (GASRPG “Cinematic Universe”) are occasionally used in sections of this document. These were coined by members of the GASRPG (noted in the “special thanks” at the beginning of this document) to refer to the group itself and the various stories we told together through our RPG sessions. The term “Cinematic Universe” was inspired by the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* (MCU), a franchise and shared fictional universe connecting multiple separate but related stories told across films, television series and other media. As the GASRPG realised that there were thematic and fictional links to the stories and characters of the games being played, they felt it necessary to acknowledge that.

The GASRPG evolved from a drop-in group that was initially also open to Games Academy students (the regular members of which are noted in the “special thanks” at the beginning of this document), which was founded by Ché Wilbraham with the dual purpose of performing practice research for his PhD and creating a space for people to bond over shared interests. Over the years, more staff began attending the group and it gradually shifted into a staff-only event. The group grew and developed over many games, sprouting running themes and a sense of interconnectedness between stories and characters. Ché is almost always the gamemaster, while other members fluctuate a little - though there are often up to eight or nine playing in any game.

When I first began my PhD and was looking to establish an RPG group to keep up regular practice, I had just moved to a new town and didn’t really know anyone. It was a source of anxiety to have to be the person to establish a group, find time and space for games, invite others, etc. But this is often the job of a GM, I suppose – I’ve had to do it before, though not under such extreme circumstances of knowing nobody in the area.

Initially, I thought that the students of the Games Academy would be keen to play RPGs – I could offer them taster sessions in many systems, various adventures, etc. I picked a time that many students would be available and found a suitable room we could play games in. I made some posters and posted information on relevant social media to advertise the sessions. I gathered all the materials we’d need to play – rulebooks, pre-generated character sheets, handouts, dice, tokens, notepaper, pencils, etc. It’s quite a lot of work to cater to players coming in fresh.

The early sessions were a bit rough – it took some time for a regular group to settle. There was no reliable way for me to know how many would turn up to any session, despite people saying they would or wouldn't come. This made it difficult to prepare consistently good games, as an adventure tends to work best when it's tailored to a defined number of players.

However, before the end of the first year, my group had established itself quite well. There were the regular players, with the occasional absences or extra few. We got to know each other well, so it was more comfortable playing together and I could cater content to the group more effectively. From there, as described above, I stopped advertising for new players and the reputation of the group saw more staff members join, replacing students as they graduated (etc.), until it became the current, final version.

The average number of players in my groups has tended to be quite high, which has caused problems over the years. I rarely run games for fewer than eight players, which is more than many RPG systems would recommend for play (usually the recommended number of players is three-to-four, though some systems may state that they'll work for up to six players). One drop-in session even saw twelve players turn up to play an adventure that was intended to be a mystery for a small team – it was a disaster. The biggest issues with too many players are twofold, as I've experienced them: balancing challenges, and having adequate focus time.

With regards to balancing challenges, having many players means having many PCs in the party, who would generally be working cooperatively to overcome challenges and achieve objectives, thus building a story. A larger PC party causes two main issues with balancing challenges:

1. Firstly, there are more PCs working together to overcome each obstacle, and it can be difficult to tune balance to PC numbers. I have found that increasing the PC number from four to five, for example, tends to increase the party's effectiveness by more than 25%. In my experience, challenges need to be increased exponentially for increasing player numbers in ways that are difficult to estimate.
2. Secondly, the PC party tends to be able to effectively remove weaknesses with large numbers of players, as they have more PCs to represent abilities and strengths that may be present in the RPG system. For example, a four-PC party may have to make choices between including character types proficient in melee combat, ranged combat, offensive magic, defensive magic, charisma, stealth, engineering, exploration, etc. (as well as sub-proficiencies within those), whereas an eight-PC party could get closer to ensuring that all those proficiencies are covered. This makes it difficult for a GM to plan challenges that strike at the party's weak points, for dramatic effect or otherwise.

With regards to having adequate focus time, each extra player requires further splitting of a session's playtime to give their PC equal focus to the others. This can become very noticeable, and it effectively reduces the amount of PC-focused storytelling that any individual player is "getting out of" a session. It also becomes particularly onerous during game sections like combat, where generally each involved character will take a turn before a round resets and then each takes a turn again. With four PCs and four enemies, estimating two-minute turns for PCs and one-minute turns for enemies, a player would have to wait about ten minutes between turns (where they may be entertained by what is occurring, but generally wouldn't be directly engaged with the game). With eight PCs and eight enemies (for balance), and the same turn time estimations, a player would have to wait about twenty-two minutes between turns – a significant increase. These values are illustrative, as good RPG play generally aims to minimise combat turn times to account for these issues, but I have found that the increased wait with larger groups leads to players disengaging to the point where they take time to reengage and ask catch-up questions when their turn begins, which only slows things down further.

World Anvil Experiment

Much of the content of this document was originally produced and hosted via *World Anvil* (World Anvil 2017), a web-based worldbuilding system for creating, organising and storing fictional worlds, as well as managing RPG campaigns and writing novels. It defaults to storing information in discrete articles with pre-defined styles and data fields; example article types include Character, Species, Building, Country, Spell, Technology and Timeline. These articles are then stored within a folder structure relating to the world that they belong to, with relevant connections to other articles noted – for example, a given Character may be of a certain Species, from a certain Country and featured in a Timeline that relates to the creation of a Technology.

The interface and data structure of *World Anvil* influenced what information was created and stored there, and how that information was stored and sorted.

I initially experimented with *World Anvil* to see how it might aid or interface with the role of the GM, but as I used it to try to document past games and plan/run live ones, I realised that it was influencing how I thought about these games and their worlds, as I was having to think in terms of its interface. As such, the elements of this document that were hosted there are not in a format I would usually consider, and many contain unnecessary details or format their information in a style that is not of my creation.

Presenting *World Anvil* Content Here

Considering the above, the *World Anvil* content has been altered and rearranged for presentation within this document. Rather than organising by fictional world, it seemed more appropriate to organise information by the RPG adventure or campaign that it relates to, as these are the "units" of RPG play – discrete stories and sets of characters, played (hopefully to completion) across one or more sessions.

Some of the original articles have been merged or removed, where the structure and/or information seemed unnecessary for this document. For example, no article with links is needed for the Species, Human, for our purposes here.

Original *World Anvil* Data Structure

At the time that the data was ported from *World Anvil*, its structure was as below. Note that almost all articles are stored in folders representing “worlds” (or similar), with any other article type subservient to that. This is included only for reference.

1. Convergence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Places in Convergence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Convergence Universe 1.1.2. Perpetual Bernville 1.1.3. The World's Warped Maelstrom 1.1.4. The Hole in the World 1.1.5. Convergent Woods 1.1.6. Convergent Blasted Lands 1.1.7. Underwater Desert 1.1.8. Convergent Source Tower <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.9. The Unburied City 1.1.10. Falmouths 1.1.11. The Castle 1.1.12. The Broken Door 1.1.13. Dvorak-46's Workshop 1.1.14. Battlegrounds 1.1.15. Trace's Safehouse 1.2. Life in Convergence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1. Convergence Player Characters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1.1. Convergence Player Characters 1.2.1.2. Atreyu 1.2.1.3. Cyprian Kernow 1.2.1.4. Dvorak-46 1.2.1.5. Iolo 1.2.1.6. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka 1.2.1.7. Trace 1.2.2. The Short, Stout, Green Glass Grail 1.2.3. Extreme Teen Bible 1.2.4. The Unholy Grail 1.2.5. Lagann 1.2.6. Mothgdanon 1.2.7. Buntline 1.2.8. The Regent 1.2.9. Umbra Staff 1.2.10. Railsplitter 1.2.11. Kaiju 1.2.12. A Piece of The Door 1.2.13. Doppelgänger Taxi 1.3. Campaign: Convergence 	2.2.11. Rhys Jenkins 2.2.12. The Short, Stout Grail 2.3. Campaign: The Madness of Ages 2.4. Adventure: The Short, Stout Grail 2.5. Adventure: Pinfeathers 2.6. Adventure: Jailbreak 2.7. Adventure: Normal Person Dungeon Crawl 2.8. Adventure: In Media Res 2.9. Adventure: The Green Glass Grail 2.10. Adventure: Bill in Three Persons 3. Apocalypse Worlds 3.1. The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.1. Places in The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.1.1. The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.1.2. The Skyway 3.1.1.3. The Door 3.1.1.4. Matthew Lutey's Vault 3.1.1.5. The Cut 3.1.1.6. STYG-O's Workshop 3.1.1.7. Angel's Town 3.1.1.8. House Gardenia 3.1.1.9. The Pillars 3.1.1.10. The Grove 3.1.1.11. Shelter 3.1.1.12. Harbortown 3.1.1.13. The Buried City 3.1.2. Life in The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.2.1. Species in The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.2.1.1. Wolf of the Maelstrom 3.1.2.1.2. Giant Moth 3.1.2.1.3. The Orchids 3.1.2.2. Groups in The Overgrown Wilds 3.1.2.2.1. Storm's Children 3.1.2.2.2. Moth Nomads 3.1.2.2.3. The Cult of The Door 3.1.2.2.4. Gardenia Overseers 3.1.2.3. Those Who Will Open The Door 3.1.2.3.1. Errol Mustang 3.1.2.3.2. Matthew Lutey 3.1.2.3.3. Sequoia 3.1.2.3.4. Those Who Will Open The Door 3.1.2.3.5. Storm Gardenia 3.1.2.3.6. Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri 3.1.2.3.7. Reginald Fulton 3.1.2.4. Foster 3.1.2.5. Prune 3.1.2.6. Walker 3.1.2.7. Dog head 3.1.2.8. Jeanette 3.1.2.9. Peppering 3.1.2.10. Barry Manilow 3.1.2.11. Stevedore 3.1.2.12. Pierre 3.1.2.13. Millions 3.1.2.14. Visage 3.1.3. Adventure: The Door in Reality 3.2. The Source 3.2.1. Places in The Source 3.2.1.1. The Lands Around The Source 3.2.1.2. Source Tower 3.2.1.3. Blasted Lands 3.2.2. Life in The Source 3.2.2.1. The Source	3.2.2.2. Molepeople 3.2.2.3. Dogpeople 3.2.2.4. AT Boxer 3.2.3. Adventure: A Horse and The Source 3.3. Rust Bucket 3.3.1. Places in Rust Bucket 3.3.1.1. The Lands Around Rust Bucket 3.3.2. Life in Rust Bucket 3.4. The World's Psychic Maelstrom 4. 40k Branch 4.1. Places in 40k Branch 4.1.1. 40k Branch Universe 4.1.2. The Warp 4.1.3. The Cudgel of Drusus 4.2. Life in 40k Branch 4.2.1. Species in 40k Branch 4.2.1.1. Chaos Daemon 4.2.1.2. Lord of Change 4.2.2. Groups in 40k Branch 4.2.2.1. Inquisition 4.2.2.2. Ordo Malleus 4.2.2.3. Adeptus Mechanicus 4.2.2.4. Imperium of Man 4.2.2.5. Ordo Hereticus 4.2.3. An Apostasy Gambit Player Characters 4.2.3.1. Euphrati's Acolytes 4.2.3.2. Alwaz 4.2.3.3. Eiko 4.2.3.4. Stig 4.2.4. Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati 4.2.5. The Dei-Phage 4.2.6. Inquisitor Rhia Jezail 4.2.7. Blasphemy Zero 4.3. Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit 5. Other Worlds & Stories 5.1. Conspicuous Events 5.1.1. Places in Conspicuous Events 5.1.1.1. Conspicuous Events Universe 5.1.2. Life in Conspicuous Events 5.1.2.1. Rainy Day 5.1.2.2. Bootleg 5.1.2.3. Britannia 5.1.2.4. Sheepish 5.1.3. Adventure: Standing By 5.2. Re:Don't 5.2.1. Places in Re:Don't 5.2.1.1. Re:Don't Universe 5.2.2. Life in Re:Don't 5.3. Demons Below 5.3.1. Places in Demons Below 5.3.1.1. The Lands with the Demons Below 5.3.2. Life in Demons Below 5.3.2.1. Petunia / Taxi Varlik 5.3.3. Campaign: Demons Below 5.4. Nil Escape 5.4.1. Places in Nil Escape 5.4.1.1. Nil Escape Bunker 5.4.2. Life in Nil Escape 5.4.3. Adventure: Nil Escape 5.5. Ultra JankenSquad Forever	5.5.1. Places in Ultra JankenSquad Forever 5.5.1.1. PAA City 5.5.1.2. JankenSquad Universe 5.5.2. Life in Ultra JankenSquad Forever 5.5.2.1. PAA Corporation 5.5.2.2. PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters 5.6. The Skeletons 5.7. InSpectres 5.8. Rhapsody of Blood 5.9. Tempering Heroes 5.9.1. Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon 5.9.2. The Terrible Flaming Sword 5.10. Iron and Coal 5.10.1. Adventure: Iron and Coal 5.10.2. John Williams 5.10.3. Eleri Jones 5.10.4. Ceridwen 5.10.5. Seren Jones 5.10.6. Iron and Coal, Session 1 5.10.7. Iron and Coal, Session 2 5.11. The Darkest House 6. RPG Systems 6.1. The Skeletons 6.2. Blade and Lockpick 6.3. Monster of the Week 6.4. Unknown Armies 6.5. Apocalypse World 6.6. Cypher System 6.7. Rhapsody of Blood 6.8. Monsterhearts 6.9. Dark Heresy 6.10. Character Building 6.11. Conspicuous Events 6.12. JankenSquad 6.13. Call of Cthulhu 6.14. Paranoia 6.15. InSpectres 7. Miscellany, Reflections & Other PhD Practice 7.1. Game Narrative Structure Diagram 7.2. Reflections on Writing Up The Door in Reality 7.3. Reflections on The Door 7.4. Diagrammatic Report of a short Apocalypse World Session 8. GASRPGCU 9. Human
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RPG Adventures and Campaigns

This section includes reports, information and reflections relating to each RPG adventure and campaign, organised by the RPG system that was used to run them. Some details relate to the individual adventures/campaigns, while some relate to the systems and their settings – some systems include fictional settings that the games take place in. For example, *Dark Heresy* (Barnes et al. 2017) games are set in Games Workshop's *Warhammer 40,000* setting. Some systems don't include specified settings but are designed to work with certain fictional constraints or will influence the creation of a certain type of setting. For example, *Apocalypse World* (Baker and Baker 2016) sees the group specify their own post-apocalyptic setting via prompts, while *Cypher System* (Cook et al. 2019) includes various optional game elements and mechanics relating to certain types of settings that the group might like to play in.

Some of these adventures and campaigns have names and some don't. The names are generally derived either when the group is playing through a pre-authored adventure/campaign (such as Adventure: *Jailbreak*), or when the GM or group titled it themselves, during creation, during play or after-the-fact (such as Campaign: *The Door in Reality*).

These sessions are presented roughly chronologically within each system, but not chronologically overall. The order that they occurred in matters little except in certain circumstances, such as where characters from previous sessions make further appearances. The circumstances are noted near the beginnings of the descriptions of the relevant adventures and campaigns.

Apocalypse World

Baker and Baker's *Apocalypse World: the Master of Ceremonies Playbook* (2nd edition) (2016) presents the *Apocalypse World* system, including built-in setting specifications and requirements, as well as processes for defining a particular group's post-apocalypse.

The system presents a somewhat nontraditional approach to RPG storytelling and challenge resolution, in that the GM is required to not plan any plot or narrative, but to generally present their post-apocalyptic aesthetic in their narration, to only further the ongoing action in response to the outcomes of PC actions, and to play out any established threats in accordance with their rules (again, with no particular plot in mind).

Apocalypse World is an influential title, spawning the "Powered by the Apocalypse" label and range. "Powered by the Apocalypse" is described by Baker as "an approach to system design" (2019) as well as the authors' "policy concerning others' use of [their] intellectual property and creative work" (n.d.). Effectively, games that were inspired by *Apocalypse World* could describe themselves as "Powered by the Apocalypse" upon release, and these have become a popular genre of RPGs. At the time of writing, DriveThruRPG.com, "The Largest RPG Download Store", offers over 1,700 "Apocalypse World Engine" (another term for "Powered by the Apocalypse", like the similar "Apocalypse Engine") titles. The popular RPGs *Dungeon World* (LaTorra and Koebel 2012) and *Monster of the Week* (Sands 2015) are both "Powered by the Apocalypse".

I initially found *Apocalypse World* conceptually difficult to process, approaching it as someone very familiar with RPGs. It seems to take some real dedication to learning how to play it properly, from both the GM and the players.

As a GM who likes to fudge rolls and overlook mechanics in favour of drama and engaging storytelling, I found it difficult to completely surrender to the system for

much of the story content. Many of my players also remarked that they found *Apocalypse World* sessions narratively unrewarding at times because they lacked clear authorial control and a good sense of plot. However, the system really doesn't work if you try to play it that way, and is much more satisfying if you let it "do its thing", which leads to gritty, reactive, emergent stories that hang almost entirely on player choice, based on adlibbing and some establishing details from the GM. That adlibbing and reactive detail creation is quite a lot of work, though – I found it hard not to be able to fall back on prepared content and planned story beats, etc.

The GASRPG discussed the workings and ethos of *Apocalypse World* more than we had any other systems – it really drove conversation and garnered engagement.

One thing that my players seem to consistently enjoy in *Apocalypse World* games is being directly involved in the worldbuilding, at least to some degree. When generating their PCs, they get to make some decisions about what is and isn't included in the setting, including sometimes deciding on some of the metaphysical workings of the world. This tends to pull players into the game, such that they often start more engaged with the setting than in games where they haven't been involved with the worldbuilding.

Apocalypse World: Burned Over

Baker and Baker's *Apocalypse World: Burned Over Hackbook v2021* (2021) presents *Apocalypse World: Burned Over*, a redesign of *Apocalypse World* "for play across wider age groups and more general audiences" (lumpley games 2021). This redesign doesn't change most of the core mechanics of the game – the way the dice rolls work or the fact that PCs are represented by "playbooks", for example – but it does change more than just some of the adult content in the original. Much of the game is streamlined and some new mechanics help provide a clearer starting situation for the PCs, as well as more direction towards optional endgame scenarios.

Burned Over felt like a refined and better *Apocalypse World*. The authors acknowledge that *Burned Over* is the *Apocalypse World* that they would have made in 2021. The choices about setting and NPC details that are rolled into PC creation helped better engage the players with the setting from the outset, and the endgame mechanics helped the play feel like it had more direction. The removal of the micromanagement of barter also really helped, as that often got in the way of our games. There were still some rules that felt like they mostly complicated matters or needlessly slowed the game down, though – usually those moves that were required every session, or similar, without fictional action driving them.

Apocalypse World Setting

While the setting of any *Apocalypse World* game is flexible and up to the GM and players, there are some requirements built into the system. The setting must be post-apocalyptic, with the apocalypse having happened around 80 years ago, and the "The World's Psychic Maelstrom" must be a feature.

Other requirements of the setting may come about depending on the playbooks chosen by the players for their PCs – some will require that, for example, some humans survived the apocalypse by retreating to a space station, or that mysterious beings known as “Wolves of the Maelstrom” exist within the world.

Burned Over somewhat clarifies and streamlines the setting creation process by having the group choose from specified “Hard Zones” (mostly representing various biomes or kinds of post-apocalypse, such as a submerged city or a frozen wilderness) that contain known locations with brief descriptions. Many of the players will specify relationships to some of these locations during the creations of their PCs, as required by their playbooks.

The World's Psychic Maelstrom

A key concept of the Apocalypse World setting and system, the Maelstrom is a roiling, psychic phenomenon, just at the edge of everyone's perception. It either caused, or was caused by, the apocalypse. Beings in the post-apocalypse may *Open Their Brains* to the Maelstrom (via a game mechanic), to learn new information or interact with the world on a psychic level.

It is possible to directly interact with (and perhaps alter) the Maelstrom, via augury, through some character abilities and technology.

The Wolves of the Maelstrom are linked to the Maelstrom itself - perhaps they are its agents, or perhaps something else.

For more information, see the *Apocalypse World* books.

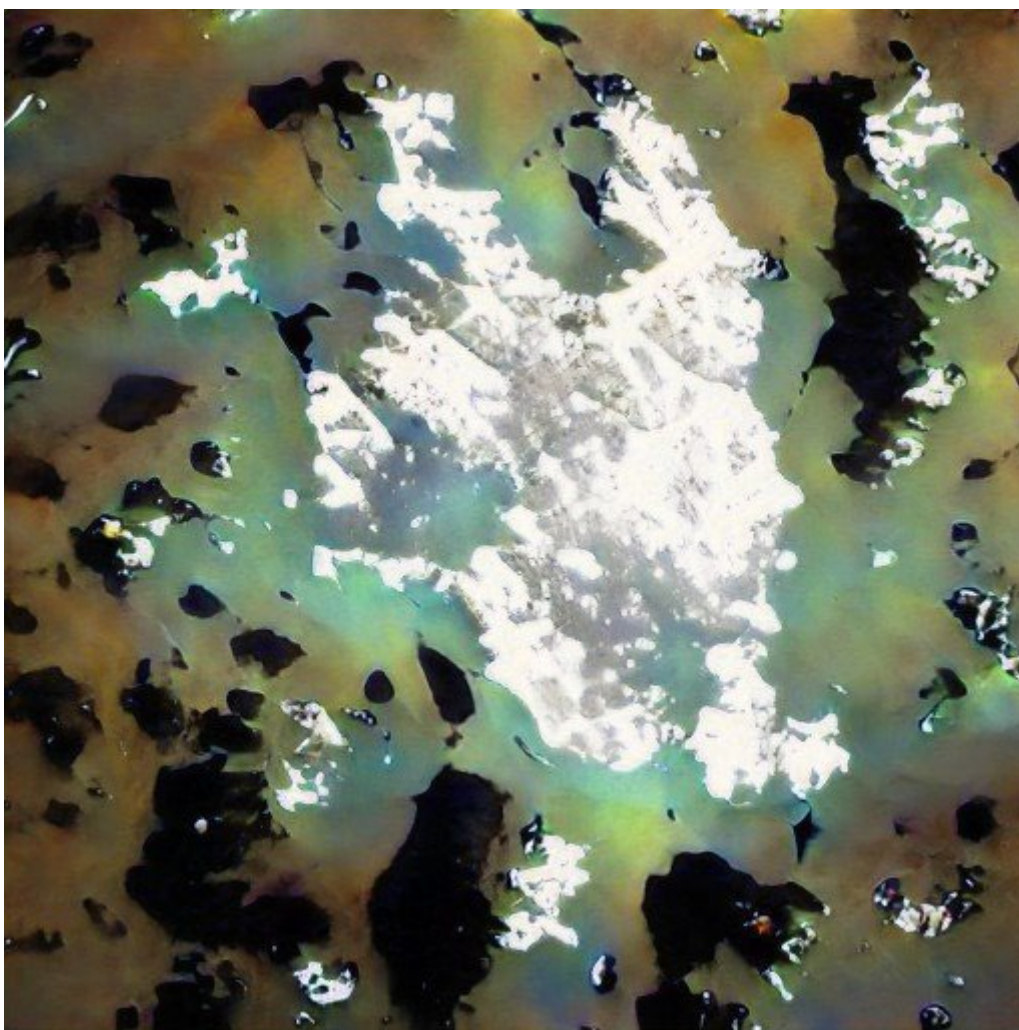


Figure 1 An AI-generated image representing [The World's Psychic Maelstrom](#) by Ché Wilbraham

I created this image partly to play around with AI image generation as a tool for GMs to rapidly generate visual elements for their games, but also partly to reflect on what The World's Psychic Maelstrom means to me. I generated it during Campaign: The Door in Reality – once I'd had quite a bit of experience with the system and setting.

I think that rapid AI-assisted image generation has potential as a tool to assist GMs by enabling visual communication for setting mood/tone or presenting important visual elements of a setting or story. Though I don't know if it would be better to spend that time focusing on better narration (to lean into players building vivid imagery in their minds), and I'm aware that there are ethical considerations around these AI tools.

Apocalypse World prompts the GM to ask a player how their character experiences The World's Psychic Maelstrom on the instance of their first use. It's another way that I think the system does a good job of engaging players through

cocreation – by giving them some narrative power over the metaphysics of the setting, and by making it clear that this supernatural phenomenon can be very personal and an aspect of a character, it seems to make many players feel more invested in the world. Some players struggle to adlib interesting details about their characters' experiences in this way, or perhaps some are just less interested in this aspect of play, but I feel that it has generally been more engaging than not.

Manifestation

The Maelstrom is experienced differently by each person.

From Setting
<i>Apocalypse World</i>
Type
Metaphysical, Psychic

Adventure Using *Apocalypse World*

In this adventure, which was GMed by another member of the group, a party of PCs defended a post-apocalyptic settlement from a bandit group, by defeating their leader.

My first experience with *Apocalypse World* was when I played in a game where the GM ran it like a traditional RPG and the mechanics didn't quite work. It was brief and a bit clunky but did demonstrate some of the potential of the system.

Adventure: Rust Bucket

Ché GMed this adventure, in which a group of PCs dealt with various troubles in a post-apocalyptic settlement (the titular Rust Bucket). As is required of *Apocalypse World* sessions, there was no central plot planned by the GM. As such, various minor stories emerged but there was no central challenge for the PCs to address, or similar.

This was my first time GMing *Apocalypse World*, or any RPG system using its mechanics or approach to play. I GMed for a group that was slightly too big and some of the micro-management was tedious, and the pacing was off.

The adventure had its moments and memorable characters – it helped prime me for running it again and caused me to look at GMing differently. To run the system properly, a GM must be ready to truly let the system decide the direction of the story and the outcomes of any situations.

I think most of the failings here were down to my inexperience with similar systems and misunderstanding of how play should proceed through them.

System
<i>Apocalypse World</i>

Adventure: A Horse and The Source

In this adventure, GMed by Ché, a group of PCs dealt with challenges in and around a post-apocalyptic settlement that had access to water (a precious resource) via The Source. Some of the PCs were at odds with each other, even hunting each other down, throughout much of the duration, while others were on personal quests (including one PC desiring a horse, explaining the other part of the title). Some unifying challenges and story threads for the PCs involved maintaining the safety and security of the water source, while also investigating its mysteries (as it had supernatural elements, due to one of the PC's game mechanics).

My second time GMing *Apocalypse World*. I GMed for a group that was far too big, and the pacing was even more of a problem (compared to the previous adventure).

Some elements of the system had to be completely overlooked (such as micromanaging elements that only apply to one PC, that would divert too much from progressing the story for everyone at the table). The PCs became far too powerful, too quickly, which led to frustrating problems with having to rapidly generate challenges for them that they would usually immediately overcome. This was an area where I was particularly frustrated that the system doesn't allow for the GM to sometimes take control and overrule it for the sake of satisfying storytelling.

The experience was promising and had some great moments, however. Some of the characters and situations were the subject of fond reminiscence in the group for months.

There were some issues with the makeup of the group – the conflicting playstyles, motivations and attitudes created some friction that I think lent an uneasiness to the game. The inter-PC conflict took a lot of focus and often felt like it was preventing comprehensible or meaningful story threads from emerging.

Again, I think I could have helped more, but I felt that more of the problems came from the group during this game than the previous one.

System
Apocalypse World

Characters

Molepeople

A desperate and / or violent civilisation that dwells deep underground in the lands around The Source.

Dogpeople

A species that looks to be a cross between human and canine. Anthropomorphised dogs - bipedal with hands and opposable thumbs, muzzles, and fur. They live in packs in the Blasted Lands.

Places

Source Tower

The Source Tower is a ruined skyscraper that houses The Source at its peak. A small settlement has built up around the tower, with some survivors living around its base and some living atop it.

Type
Skyscraper

Blasted Lands

The Blasted Lands are a set of overlapping canyons and crags that make up area that is very treacherous to navigate and traverse. Packs of Dogpeople make their homes here, roaming the dangerous terrain scavenging resources and attacking unwary travellers.

Type
Canyon

The Source

The Source is a mystical source of clean water atop the Source Tower. In the post-apocalypse of *Adventure: A Horse and The Source*, water is very difficult to come by as it doesn't tend to collect on the ground. The Source gathers clean water via some unknown metaphysical means, and it seems to psychically resonate with a few individuals, perhaps having a will of its own.

Type
Metaphysical, Supernatural

Campaign: The Door in Reality

This campaign, GMed by Ché, saw the standard *Apocalypse World* setup of following a group of PCs around a post-apocalyptic world and finding out what happens. This campaign is one of two that were recorded in particular detail as part of the *World Anvil* Experiment. As such, this section is among the longest in this document, providing great detail on many aspects of the setting, including characters, and logs of each play session.

The content of this campaign references both Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit and Campaign: Demons Below. Two of the characters in this campaign originated in those settings so therefore their full details are held in their origin games, rather than this one.

Despite some roughness in *Apocalypse World: Burned Over* (there are some gaps/inconsistencies in the system), we were much more prepared as a group to play it after trying *Apocalypse World* a couple of times. I think that involving the group more directly in the world building helped invest and prime them for the game. They also seemed broadly excited to return to the system and went into it with more knowledge of the types of stories it is good at telling.

Adventure Details

Using *Apocalypse World*, with the *Burned Over* redesign (Baker and Baker 2016, 2021), this adventure began as the system requires - some player characters simply exist within a world of threats. As they attempt to deal with difficult situations and pursue their interests, they must deal with the consequences of their actions and the outcomes of their rolls. To read through the specifics of what happened, start here: The Door in Reality, Session 1.

The world was seeded with content from the *Apocalypse World* book, some collaboratively chosen by the gamemaster and players together and some chosen by the gamemaster alone. Some elements and characters were also created (or further detailed) by the gamemaster for the sake of establishing compelling situations and building an engaging world.

As the sessions went on, some of these elements were overlooked while some received greater focus, as the players made choices about what threads and opportunities their characters would follow. The later parts of the adventure revolved heavily around The Door, with Sub-Plot: The Door essentially becoming the main, focal plot of the story by the end.

Brief Story Summary

Those Who Will Open The Door are a loosely affiliated group of survivors in the post-apocalyptic The Overgrown Wilds. They each pursue their own interests for some time:

- Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri and STYG-0 become embroiled in Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut.
- Matthew Lutey encounters The Door and learns of its potential.
- Storm Gardenia and Errol Mustang deal with the influence of The Orchids in House Gardenia.

Sequoia dies from injuries sustained in a fight relating to the conflict between Harbortown and The Cut, leading to Styg and Reginald trying to find a home for her daughters, Petunia and Prune. They head for House Gardenia, knowing that Storm will take them in.

Pell focuses on trying to protect people from the Wolves of the Maelstrom, who seem to be becoming more aggressive. During a night-time ambush, he is rendered unconscious and rescued by some survivors. His group end up looking for refuge at House Gardenia.

Once all the player characters assemble at House Gardenia (both by choice and coincidence), they make plans to investigate The Door. They head off to claim it, destroying The Cult of The Door in the process and triggering branches in reality and multiple contradictory endings.

Plot points/Scenes

Sessions

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • The Door in Reality, Session 1 | • The Door in Reality, Session 6 |
| • The Door in Reality, Session 2 | • The Door in Reality, Session 7 |
| • The Door in Reality, Session 3 | • The Door in Reality, Session 8 |
| • The Door in Reality, Session 4 | • The Door in Reality, Session 9 |
| • The Door in Reality, Session 5 | |

Sub-Plots

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut | • Sub-Plot: Angel's Town |
| • Sub-Plot: The Door | • Sub-Plot: The Orchids |

Themes

Harsh survival, tough choices, compromise.

The Starting Situation

In The Overgrown Wilds, Those Who Will Open The Door are based around The Buried City. It's an inhospitable and dangerous place, but provides shelter, opportunities, and a form of protection. It separates the shaky coalition of The Cut/Harbortown from Shelter, which would probably have been overrun if not for this. House Gardenia is fairly intertwined with Shelter, though separate and somewhat distant.

Pierre leads Shelter with a naive positivity, and he's very keen to expand the relatively free and comfortable society for the benefit of others. The residents are relatively happy, though not especially secure or well-protected - the defenders are few and poorly equipped.

Jeanette leads The Cut harshly - life there is uncomfortable, but no resident goes without their very basic needs, at least. She will not allow her people to die unnecessarily, but their lives can certainly be very hard. The defenders and scavenging/raiding parties are very well equipped.

Millions leads Harbortown ruthlessly, always out for gains in wealth and power (mostly at a personal level, though they're clever with how they spread their wealth). Residents have a vast gap between the poorest and the most comfortable. The defenders are few but well equipped, with heavy weapon emplacements around the walls.

Harbortown and The Cut have a shaky alliance - they work together as far as it is mutually beneficial and are aware that an open war would be very costly to both sides. Their ideologies and ways of life are incompatible, though, which causes much friction. Both forces are certainly ruthless, but many of the fighters from Harbortown can be cruel, while the forces of The Cut seem more stoic.

Beyond Shelter, the residents of The Pillars have all but closed themselves off from other settlements in recent times. The caravans slowed and then stopped, with rumours that the people there are forgetting how to speak.

From further down the coast, The Grove trade with Harbortown, but they have little interest in coming to land themselves.

Further South than The Grove, there are rumours of a place called Angel's Town. The people there may have some mastery over life and death, or perhaps other mystical powers, but it's known to be hard to find and access.

Far to the North, The Skyway is reportedly home to The Cult of The Door, and The Door itself. They are rumoured to be deluded and their settlement is well protected, but they supposedly keep great secrets about the world.

Components

Goals

Survive, pursue interests and deal with the consequences, investigate potentially advantageous situations

Hooks

- The Cult of The Door worship a strange obelisk and claim that the rebirth of humanity is at stake.
- Harbortown and The Cut are under a shaky truce, but both still try to gain the upper hand.
- Rumours from Angel's Town speak of mastery over life and death.
- People at The Pillars who deal with The Orchids are losing their higher functions.

Relations

Protagonists

Those Who Will Open The Door: Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, Errol Mustang, Matthew Lutey, Petunia, Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Storm Gardenia, STYG-0

Allies

Barry Manilow, Prune, Visage

Neutrals/Bystanders

Jeanette, Millions, Pierre, The Cult of The Door, Stevedore, Wolves of the Maelstrom, Foster, Peppering

Adversaries

Walker

Backdrops

Locations

The Overgrown Wilds: The Buried City, Harbortown, The Cut, Shelter, The Pillars, The Grove, Angel's Town, The Skyway

Threats

Using the terminology and styling of Apocalypse World, the threats appear in a table across the following pages. The table was updated during play as threats emerged and changed, meaning that this version represents the state of play around the finale of the campaign.

Threat #	Name	Kind	Sub-Kind	Impulse	Description & Cast	Stakes	Custom Move / Countdown	Connected Threats
1	Angel's Town	Landscape	A Prison	Seeks to contain people, to deny them egress.	A place of healing and death, hard to find, hard to reach, hard to leave.			
2	The Buried City	Landscape	A Maze	Seeks to trap people, to frustrate their passage.	Vines pulling down the walls, trees shouldering aside the foundations, strange creatures' dens in the understories, wild hunting ranges where were highways and parking lots. The more dangerous creatures are 2-harm & 1-armour .		When scavenging or wandering , roll+Sharp: 10+, you find something cool. 7-9, a dangerous opportunity or delay. Miss, creatures find you.	
3	The Cut	Landscape	A Fortress	Seeks to deny people access.	A militant, hard-driven compound, trying to hold out. They send out aggressive scavenger/raider teams. Fighting force is a medium gang - about 40 well-equipped fighters. 3-harm & 2-armour . Mostly decent firearms. Due to evacuation, the defenders are currently less effective. Just Jeanette and some older/less-able fighters. Small gang .	Will the evacuation pay off?		5 - Harbortown - tentative allies direct enemies 18 - Jeanette - leader
4	The Grove	Landscape	A Prison	Seeks to contain people, to deny them egress.	Where the wilds meet the ocean, giant trees rising up even from the sea floor, whose people use bridges and boats and rarely come to land at all.			5 - Harbortown - trades
5	Harbortown	Landscape	A Breeding pit	Generates and spews badness.	Mercenary and calculating. They'll pay for scavenge and don't care where it came from. A small gang , well-equipped fighting force of about 15 defenders. 3-harm & 2-armour . Mostly decent firearms. They have a couple of emplacements with higher harm/enviro.			3 - The Cut - tentative allies direct enemies 4 - The Grove - trades 19 - Millions - leader
6	The Pillars	Landscape	A Mirage	Seeks to entice and betray people.	Trees like a city, bigger than city blocks, taller than skyscrapers, towering over the world. Its inhabitants harvest orchids and rainwater and are losing their language. Brain is out for Errol's blood.	What is affecting the people? Will its influence spread?		22 - The Orchids

Threat #	Name	Kind	Sub-Kind	Impulse	Description & Cast	Stakes	Custom Move / Countdown	Connected Threats
7	Shelter	Landscape	A Furnace	Consumes things.	A holding cut vigilantly from the wilds, connected by tenuous roads to anywhere else. Defenders are a medium gang - about 30 poorly-equipped fighters. 2-harm & 1-armour . Mostly melee, some bows/spears.	Can they increase their defences with better gear or structures?		17 - House Gardenia - main source of work 20 - Pierre - leader
8	The Skyway	Landscape	A Fortress	Seeks to deny people access.	Where an enormous roadwork still resists the pulling, burying wilds, home to a cult of humanity's rebirth.			10 - The Cult of the Door 11 - The Door
9	STYG-0 AI	Warlord	A Dictator	Seeks to control.	The old Stig's xenobiological augments, mixed with machine spirits and Warp.	Is the AI really separate from STYG-0, or just his subconscious? Can they reconcile?		12 - Stevedore 13 - Walker
10	The Cult of The Door	Clan	A Family	Seeks to close ranks, protect their own.	A cult of humanity's rebirth, studying the secrets of the door and protecting it from outsiders. Large gang - about 100 fighters. Scavenged arms & armour, 2-harm & 1-armour . A few firearms, mostly melee, some bows. Flat organisation - heirarchy is reverence to the door.			8 - The Skyway 11 - The Door
11	The Door	Pinpoint	A Doorway	Offers a way into another world or another way of thinking.	A black obelisk, immovable, within the trunk of a tree, only reachable from The Skyway. It shimmers and vibrates, its form unclear.	Who will want to control it, when word spreads?	Staring at The Door triggers Open Your Brain, but the knowledge learned may not be about the current situation.	8 - The Skyway 10 - The Cult of The Door
12	Stevedore (Weaponised)	Infiltrator	A Quarry	Seeks sanctuary and protection from the hunt.	Non-combat. Some kind of [servitor] designed for carrying cargo. 0-harm & 2-armour .	Will it come to STYG-0 for help?		9 - STYG-0 AI
13	Walker (Weaponised)	Infiltrator	A Saboteur	Seeks failure, disaster, and ruin for the population.	Ex-soldier with cybernetic components - biology now vegetative. Gone haywire. 3-harm & 2-armour . Brain destroyed and biology very damaged.	What would happen in a clash with STYG-0?		9 - STYG-0 AI
14	Prune	Reliable	A Right hand	Will follow through on your intentions.	Sequoia's Child - Beautiful and still, watchful and kind.			

Threat #	Name	Kind	Sub-Kind	Impulse	Description & Cast	Stakes	Custom Move / Countdown	Connected Threats
15	Petunia	Infiltrator	A Parasite	Seeks easy prey and access to resources.	Sequoia's Child - Still a young child. She became a PC after Sequoia's death.	What trouble will she get Sequoia into?		
16	The Wolves of the Maelstrom	Clan	A Hunting pack	Seeks to victimize anyone vulnerable.	People, but they have no expression and they come and go impossibly. They abduct vulnerable people and vanish them. 2-harm & 2-armour (unnatural). Also a Psi+2 ranged attack. They are bound to protect Prune and Petunia. Three of them fell in love with Storm, one of which spoke with the group.	Which important characters will they take?		
17	House Gardenia	Clan	A Family	Seeks to close ranks, protect their own.	Children (devotion: hope, play; demands: protection) To them you are a parent figure. AND Laborers (devotion: jingle; demands: R&R, solidarity) manual labor, scavenging, trade labor. To them you are a leader and organizer. There are about 30 - medium gang at most. Mostly 1-harm & 0-armour , but a few with +1 on each/either.			7 - Shelter - main source of work 25 - Peppering 26 - Gardenia Overseers
18	Jeanette	Warlord	A Collector	Seeks to own.	Leader of The Cut . Struggles to keep it running and her people safe. Wants to expand influence but prioritises the lives of the people (though not their comfort). Keeps a beautiful garden.			3 - The Cut - leader
19	Millions	Warlord	A Hive queen	Seeks to consume and swarm.	Leader of Harbortown . Cares little for the residents beyond grabbing more power and wealth. Pays the right people for safety. Cares very much for children, though.			5 - Harbortown - leader
20	Pierre	Warlord	A Prophet	Seeks to denounce and overthrow.	Leader of Shelter . Dangerously naive. Wants to expand beyond capabilities and isn't realistic about danger. Residents try to reign them in. Generous to a fault.			7- Shelter - leader

Threat #	Name	Kind	Sub-Kind	Impulse	Description & Cast	Stakes	Custom Move / Countdown	Connected Threats
21	Barry Manilow	Vehicle	A Bold devil	Tries to dominate the road.	Frame: muscle car (or equivalent for this Hard Zone), massive=2, speed+1, handling+1, 0-armor. Strengths: fast, aggressive. Looks: powerful, flashy. Weaknesses: guzzler, unreliable. A giant moth that Errol pilots.			
22	The Orchids	Disease	Delusion	Tries to dominate people's choices and actions.	Something about them causes obsession and the desire to help them breed and propagate. Eventually, this overrides other drives. Proper communication is lost, then things like self-care.	How will House Gardenia and Shelter react to The Orchids being in their midst?	Appreciating The Orchids prompts +Weird. 10+, they're a bit unsettling. 7-9, you want to plant them. Miss, you lose hours to planting/tending them.	6 - The Pillars
23	Dog head	Infiltrator	A Disease vector	Seeks sympathy and contact with others.	"Medicine man" of Shelter (low-key drug dealer). Elderly and strung out. Fascinated by The Orchids - actively experimenting with them.			
24	Foster	Warlord	A Prophet	Seeks to denounce and overthrow.	The medic in Harbortown. Grizzled, no-nonsense. Greedy but clever. Thinks she could take Millions' place by playing a more honourable angle. She is out for Errol's blood.			
25	Peppering	Infiltrator	A Quarry	Seeks sanctuary and protection from the hunt.	The leader of a small crew looking to buy their way into The Cut with Errol's head. They have some decent guns and are hunting him in The Buried City. Peppering herself is decent but desperate. Individual/small gang. 3-harm & 1-armor. Peppering and two of her crew joined House Gardenia. The other two were killed. She joined the Gardenia Overseers, so is within that threat now.	Could Peppering actually allow Errol to be killed?		17 - House Gardenia

Threat #	Name	Kind	Sub-Kind	Impulse	Description & Cast	Stakes	Custom Move / Countdown	Connected Threats
26	Gardenia Overseers	Clan	Enforcers	Seek to victimize anyone who stands out.	During the troubles with The Orchids, some unenthralled members of House Gardenia assumed some authority and led the witchhunt. They have retained this position and are throwing their weight around. Visage is sort of the leader. Peppering is also a member. Small gang. 2-harm & 1-armour . They are Storm's gang.			17 - House Gardenia
27	The Cut's Evacuees	Clan	Sybarites	Seek to consume someone's resources.	Mostly non-combatants, but with good resources and some great fighters. The defenders will savagely protect the others. They are looking for a new place to settle, before returning to rescue the others. Dremmer leads. Medium gang with 2-harm & 1-armour and small gang with 3-harm & 2-armour . They were scattered in an attack by the Wolves.	Will they make it across the Buried City, perhaps to House Gardenia or Shelter?		3 - The Cut

Past Events

Roughly eighty years ago, the apocalypse happened. According to Reginald Fulton and Sequoia, there was a great war happening at the time that continued beyond the apocalypse. Psychic strangeness may have been involved, but The World's Psychic Maelstrom was certainly first encountered around this time.

In The Overgrown Wilds, nature overtook the remains of human civilisation, growing over and into most of the ruins there. A great city was swallowed by greenery and became inhabited by strange creatures. Pockets of human civilisation survived where they could, forming settlements and so on.

Notes

Because this story / adventure was told using *Apocalypse World*, which is very anti-plot and focused on emergent storytelling, it's strange to post-rationalise the activities as a traditional adventure or plot. A story was told, with a journey, a beginning and an end, but it wasn't guided or authored in the way a traditional narrative - or even a different RPG system - would be.

None of us playing had any idea what the ultimate focus of the story would be, or which of the regularly emerging threads of plots would be followed up on. For example, when establishing details of the world, I thought that the Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut situation would end up being the focus for more characters. It ended up driving some action, but the players ultimately abandoned the conflict.

As a side-effect of not pursuing some of the sub-plots, we never discovered what the mystery / nature of some of them were. For example, we didn't find out what was in charge of, or had caused, The Orchids, or whether there was any basis for the rumours about Angel's Town (or what was even there, in a basic sense).

System
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>
Plot type
Adventure

Sub-Plots

Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut

The truce between Harbortown and The Cut is breaking down. Jeanette and Millions are seeking support to defend themselves from the other settlement, or to try to gain the upper hand.

The intention was that this conflict would be the main driving force of the Adventure: The Door in Reality. In some sessions, players did get their characters involved in the rivalry (Reginald Fulton in particular was keen to encourage a war), but this fizzled out as a focus for the ongoing stories. Ultimately, we didn't discover what happened with the two settlements.

Themes

Subterfuge and betrayal, choosing sides.

The Starting Situation

Jeanette leads The Cut harshly - life there is uncomfortable, but no resident goes without their very basic needs, at least. She will not allow her people to die unnecessarily, but their lives can certainly be very hard. The defenders and scavenging/raiding parties are very well equipped.

Millions leads Harbortown ruthlessly, always out for gains in wealth and power (mostly at a personal level, though they're clever with how they spread their wealth). Residents have a vast gap between the poorest and the most comfortable. The defenders are few but well equipped, with heavy weapon emplacements around the walls.

Harbortown and The Cut have a shaky alliance - they work together as far as it is mutually beneficial and are aware that an open war would be very costly to both sides. Their ideologies and ways of life are incompatible, though, which causes much friction. Both forces are certainly ruthless, but many of the fighters from Harbortown can be cruel, while the forces of The Cut seem more stoic.

Components

Goals

- To support either Harbortown or The Cut in their rivalry. (Or to play both sides.)
- To help one of the settlements permanently resolve the threat of the other, or to broker some lasting peace between the two.

Hooks

- Millions offers good rewards for interfering with The Cut's operations, and perhaps taking more aggressive actions.
- The relative honour of the way of life at The Cut may inspire some to help them become more secure / comfortable.
- Either settlement may offer shelter or other services for somebody who joins their side of the rivalry.

Stakes

The lives of the residents of The Cut, in particular, are at stake if the conflict were to turn physical.

Open conflict could have ramifications beyond the two settlements - others caught in the crossfire, displaced creatures, roving gangs of violent fighters, etc.

Moral Quandaries

Are any of Those Who Will Open The Door's ethics challenged by the rival ways of life of The Cut and Harbortown? Could anyone stand by while they act against each other, endangering their civilians?

Relations

Protagonists

Those Who Will Open The Door: Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, Errol Mustang, Matthew Lutey, Petunia, Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Storm Gardenia, STYG-0

Neutrals/Bystanders

Jeanette, Millions, Foster

Backdrops

Locations

Harbortown, The Cut, The Buried City

Past Events

Harbortown and The Cut were in open conflict for land and resources up until about two years before the start of Adventure: The Door in Reality. Jeanette and Millions themselves negotiated a truce, and it has held.

Unfortunately, the competing ideologies of the settlements and the scarcity of resources have tested the peace. Residents of both have expressed "grass is greener" views and little good salvage remains in the nearer areas of The Buried City. Millions has been quietly paying people to undermine The Cut's operations and Jeanette has altered scavenging missions to deliberately hinder Harbortown's own efforts.

System
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>
Plot type
Sub-Plot
Parent Plot
Adventure: The Door in Reality

Sub-Plot: The Door

At The Skyway, it is rumoured that The Cult of The Door guard The Door itself. The Door is said to be a powerful black obelisk of indeterminate shape and substance. The Cult speak of humanity's rebirth, which may or may not be a function of The Door.

Initially, The Door was designed to represent a *Gamechanger* (in *Apocalypse World: Burned Over* terms) - either a *Lost Sword* or a sort of portal to other worlds. As the game went on, with the themes the group were discussing, the focus landed on the latter. The concept of portals to other (branching) realities became crucial for the ending(s) and heavily influenced / was influenced by our next campaign: Campaign: Convergence.

In early sessions, rumours about The Door were largely overlooked, perhaps because it was so distant from the characters' starting locations. By the end, it had become the central focus of the sessions, though this switch felt quite sudden.

Themes

Multiple realities, collapsing waveforms, escaping / entering, choosing outcomes.

The Starting Situation

Far to the North, The Skyway is reportedly home to The Cult of The Door, and The Door itself. They are rumoured to be deluded and their settlement is well protected, but they supposedly keep great secrets about the world.

Components

Goals

- Investigate The Skyway and The Cult of The Door to discover if there's any truth to their claims.

- Gain access to, and investigate, The Door.
- Figure out how to activate The Door and harness its potential.

Hooks

The mystery and promise of power(?) that The Door represents.

Moral Quandaries

Would characters act against or harm a relatively primitive / weak group (The Cult of The Door) in order to investigate The Door?

Relations

Protagonists

Those Who Will Open The Door: Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, Errol Mustang, Matthew Lutey, Petunia, Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Storm Gardenia, STYG-0

Neutrals/Bystanders

The Cult of The Door

Backdrops

Locations

The Skyway, The Door

Past Events

The Door was discovered by residents of a budding settlement on The Skyway, within an adjoining tree, years ago. Its strange properties encouraged investigation and, ultimately, worship. Those who found it disturbing, or who found life on The Skyway too difficult, tended to leave, meaning that those who remained were the more zealous.

System
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>
Plot type
Sub-Plot
Parent Plot
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cult of The Door
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door • The Skyway

Sub-Plot: Angel's Town

Rumours abound of mastery over life and death in Angel's Town, though very few in The Overgrown Wilds admit to having been there. Perhaps this warrants an investigation.

This plot thread was inserted at the beginning of Adventure: The Door in Reality, but never really pursued by the player characters. Matthew Lutey did once depart for Angel's Town, but was injured en route so had to turn back.

We never discovered more about the nature of the rumours, the inhabitants of Angel's Town or anything related. The gamemaster hadn't prepared or planned anything further, as required by Apocalypse World.

Themes

Life, death, undeath, mystery, mysticism.

The Starting Situation

Further South than The Grove, there are rumours of a place called Angel's Town. The people there may have some mastery over life and death, or perhaps other mystical powers, but it's known to be hard to find and access.

Components

Goals

- To find and gain access to Angel's Town
- To learn the secrets of life and death held there (if any).

Hooks

- The rumours about mastery over life and death in Angel's Town
- Angelic imagery relating to the place - effigies and the like.
- If a character becomes grievously injured or otherwise ailed, they might be drawn to this place.

Relations

Protagonists

Those Who Will Open The Door: Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, Errol Mustang, Matthew Lutey, Petunia, Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Storm Gardenia, STYG-0

Backdrops

Locations

Angel's Town

Threats

Angel's Town is hard to find and hard to access.

Past Events

Rumours of the mastery over life and death at Angel's Town have persisted for years, though very few people claim to have been there. Angelic imagery can be found in other settlements, for superstitious or religious purposes.

System
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>
Plot type
Sub-Plot
Parent Plot
Adventure: The Door in Reality

Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angel's Town

Sub-Plot: The Orchids

At The Pillars, the residents are losing their ability to speak, instead spending most of their energy on tending to The Orchids that grow high in the trees. They seem keen to distribute these orchids into the wider The Overgrown Wilds.

This sub-plot was intended to serve as another mysterious thread for the player characters to follow, as well as to act as an active threat on the west side of The Buried City - to provide tension for Shelter and House Gardenia.

Because of a lack of focus on this element, we never discovered what was really going on with The Orchids - if someone or something was in control, if they were malicious, psychic, alien, etc. As required by Apocalypse World, the gamemaster hasn't prepared plot for them or planned any particular mystery or outcome. There was no resolution for this sub-plot.

Themes

Agency, mind-control, happiness, escape.

The Starting Situation

The residents of The Pillars have all but closed themselves off from other settlements in recent times. The caravans slowed and then stopped, with rumours that the people there are forgetting how to speak.

Relations

Protagonists

Those Who Will Open The Door: Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, Errol Mustang, Matthew Lutey, Petunia, Reginald Fulton, Sequoia, Storm Gardenia, STYG-0

Adversaries

The Orchids

Backdrops

Locations

The Pillars

Threats

The Orchids

System
<i>Apocalypse World: Burned Over</i>
Plot type
Sub-Plot
Parent Plot
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Related Locations

- The Pillars

Session Reports

The Door in Reality, Session 1



Figure 2 [Offerings](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

General Summary

Sequoia Goes Fishing

While Sequoia leads her daughters through The Buried City looking for a place to fish, Petunia falls down a rocky slope and a mutated bobcat attacks the group. While defending Petunia, Sequoia is badly injured and Prune is moderately injured.

*(buried city miss, do battle miss)*³

Matthew Opens a Big Door

Stevedore stumbles into Matthew Lutey's Vault beneath The Buried City - Matthew Lutey performs augury and opens a broad door into The World's Psychic Maelstrom that is sustained for a while. He gets insight into Stevedore's past but the whole of The Buried City is rocked and changed by the door.

(augury complete success)

Pell Investigates

In response to the psychic event triggered by Matthew, Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri notices that many Wolves of the Maelstrom have arrived in The Buried City. He finds a safe, high spot to keep lookout and spots Sequoia and family looking for safety. The attacking bobcat was scared off by the event, so they are seeking shelter and recovery.

(read a situation partial success, buried city complete success)

Reginald Plots for War

In Harbortown, Millions tries to persuade Reginald Fulton to secretly sabotage The Cut. Reginald tries to promote open war but that isn't what Millions wants. He takes the proposition to Jeanette at The Cut, who also isn't convinced, even after him trying to charm her. He plots to sabotage The Cut in a more obvious way that will trigger war.

(charm miss)

Styg Chases a Cyborg

Back in The Buried City, Styg tries to reach where he previously saw Stevedore through their network connection, but he falls en route. His AI activates and takes him to Matthew Lutey's Vault anyway, perhaps with more malicious intent. Matthew opens his brain to see Styg's conflicted selves (human Stig, the machine spirit of his cybernetics and Blasphemy Zero) and their otherlife connection via Aiwaz (as one of Matthew's fragmented selves), which somehow resolves Styg's current identity conflict and reawakens him.

(buried city miss, open brain complete success)

House Gardenia Prepares for a Party

Storm's Children are up in arms at House Gardenia, demanding to let off some steam but also to be better protected. Storm Gardenia promises them a good night out in Shelter, and that they won't be at any risk because they are too fabulous. They accept this and spend the day getting ready.

(devotion miss, charm complete success)

Errol has a Nap

³ These terms in parentheses at the end of each section of the General Summaries of the Session Reports for Campaign: The Door in Reality record the "moves" that were made by the players/PCs alongside their outcomes, using the terminology of *Apocalypse World: Burned Over*. In this example, Sequoia rolled a "miss" on the *Buried City* move, followed by another on the *Do Battle* move. These moves and their outcomes generally decide the direction of the emerging story, fuelled somewhat by player and GM narration of establishing detail.

Errol Mustang is resting at The Pillars while Barry Manilow sleeps. He heard that people have increasingly been going mysteriously missing in The Buried City. Residents of The Pillars give him Orchids (which he doesn't really want) for food. They are mostly very strange, uncommunicative and obsessed with cultivating and spreading orchids.

(ear to the ground partial success)

Pell and Sequoia Hang Out

Pell calls Sequoia up to the safety of his lookout. She gets winded trying to carry Petunia up. He opens his brain to find a route that is safe from the Wolves and sees that Matthew Lutey's Vault seems secure and also may be the epicentre of the event.

(under fire partial success, open brain complete success)

Matthew and Styg Talk

Matthew and Styg talk a bit about their otherlife connection and the cyborg, Stevedore. Styg opens his brain to find it (via Maelstrom-tainted data connection), tracking it accurately. The two leave to find it.

(open brain complete success)

A Meetup in the Street

Matthew and Styg cross paths with Pell, Sequoia and her children on the way out. Matthew invites them to rest in his Vault while they look for the cyborg.

Reginald does a Sabotage (Badly)

Reginald wants to wipe out both settlements, so he goes to plant a bomb in The Cut's weapons store. He is spotted doing so and fails to convincingly lie about his actions. The defenders of The Cut start to rally as he escapes. He is pursued, but ultimately maims / kills his hunters after being very badly wounded. He drags himself in the direction of Harbortown, bleeding very badly.



Figure 3 Bomb by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(under fire partial success, deceive miss, bug out partial success, do battle miss, do battle complete success)

Storm, Errol and Pierre Have a Party

House Gardenia have a great night out at Shelter. Errol trades some of them some orchids for various bits of barter. Pierre tries to convince Storm and Errol to help expand Shelter, but with clearly unrealistic expectations and no real plans. They both read him and detect no deception (just naivety). Storm thinks she could get him to move Shelter to House Gardenia if they could provide some of the infrastructure that he wants.

(read someone partial success, read someone complete success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date

15 Dec 2020
Primary Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Secondary Location
The Buried City

The Door in Reality, Session 2

General Summary

Beginning Stuff

At House Gardenia, Storm's Children demand R&R. They are hungover / partied out after last night in Shelter. They are taking the day off.

Errol Mustang hears that something bad is coming his way - people from The Cut have been told to shoot down the man who rides [the moth](#).

(devotion partial success, ear to the ground partial success)

Encountering Stevedore

In The Buried City, Sequoia takes her daughters to rest at Matthew Lutey's Vault. The rest chase down the [cyborg](#). Styg finds out that it wants protection but scares it off. Matthew Lutey and Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri corner it (with Styg catching up), though Pell is injured by falling down a slope.

(read someone miss, help complete success, under fire partial success)

Reginald is Bleeding Out

Reginald Fulton approaches Harbortown and is waved in. Foster, the medic, stabilises him (removes bullets, cauterizes wounds) while Millions is fetched. Millions is terrified of backlash from The Cut, and that Reginald's actions will be traced back to them. Reginald discovers that Millions could be manipulated into war by showing that The Cut are onto their schemes. Reginald spends the rest of the day getting mended by Foster.

(read someone partial success)

Back to Stevedore

Styg tells the cyborg that the group will protect it. It is not overly convinced but agrees to tag along.



Figure 4 [STYG-0 and a Cyborg](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(help miss, help partial success, charm partial success)

The Morning After at House Gardenia

Errol hears news from Harbortown that they're preparing for war because one of their own got caught planting a bomb in The Cut and was heavily wounded on the way back.

Storm Gardenia sees two of her children squabbling over [orchids](#) - she tells them off and takes the plants. She notices that the flowers are strange and demands that Errol doesn't trade any more of them to her children. They both head to Shelter to find out more about them.

(ear to the ground partial success, confront partial success, orchid complete success)

From Matthew's Vault to Harbortown, then a Fight

Styg scouts ahead while Pell expertly navigates The Buried City on the way to Harbortown. The guards are very defensive, but Pell charms them into allowing the group entry if all weapons are left behind.



Figure 5 [Approaching Harbortown](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Styg threatens the guards with his inbuilt weapons - the guards open fire, injuring him a little, and his AI takes over. The cyborg flees. Pell gets a read on the situation, realising he needs to neutralise the threat of Styg.

Matthew unleashes The World's Psychic Maelstrom on the wall of the town, where the guards are posted, heavily damaging it and messily killing three guards. Sequoia sends her daughters to safety then tries to confront the Maelstrom, but is pulled into Matthew's attack, making it appear as if it was her doing and dropping her in the middle of the fight.



Figure 6 [Matthew's Psychic Attack](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Pell tries to stop Styg from fighting - Styg flees in the direction of the cyborg. Reginald orders Harbortown's guards to stop fighting - they briefly pause and insist that the others all leave. Sequoia leaps from the wall and joins her daughters. Pell charms the guards into letting him (alone) in. Matthew opens his brain to try to find Styg but is overwhelmed and awakens in front of an obelisk. Pell, Reginald and Millions talk about the historical, apocalyptic war and the strange psychic phenomena that have occurred since.

(help partial success, buried city complete success, help miss, charm partial success, confront miss, sniff the wind complete success, standing across the threshold miss, interrupt partial success, confront partial success, confront partial success, against the odds partial success, charm complete success, open brain miss)

Orchid Stuff

Storm opens her brain for guidance on The Orchids but is overwhelmed and falls into a trance - she starts planting and tending to them as Errol watches. He goes to find help - Dog head, the "medicine man" trades for some drugs that he uses to snap her out of it. They ask Dog head to investigate The Orchids and head back to House Gardenia, destroying any they find as they go. Storm keeps one in a vase, locked in her room.

(open brain miss, orchid partial success)

Errol Goes "Home"

Errol goes to his nice place in The Buried City and asks around about the people from The Cut who are hunting him. They believe that he represents a threat - they are incredibly concerned for their safety and assume that he must work for Harbortown, so have instructed anyone who see him flying near The Cut to shoot him down, to be safe.

(ear to the ground partial success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
05 Jan 2021
Primary Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Secondary Location
House Gardenia

[The Door in Reality, Session 3](#)

General Summary

Beginning Stuff

At House Gardenia, Storm's Children are still in turmoil - they demand protection, R&R and solidarity. The effects of The Orchids have caused a rift - some are obsessed with them and some don't understand. They are angry that this was allowed to happen and they need time off working and some protection from each other while this is resolved, so they can become one unified people again.

Peppering (with a small group) is hunting Errol Mustang, he learns. They are hoping that taking Errol down will earn them goodwill with The Cut and buy their citizenship.

(devotion miss, ear to the ground miss)

Styg Finds a Workshop

Styg regains consciousness in a well-equipped Workshop that his AI had built and used without his knowledge. Stevedore's forearm is there (but the rest of it isn't). He wants to connect to the tech of this planet, using this component. He needs an antenna and a couple of days work - Matthew Lutey's augury device would work as parts, but he'd need Matthew to be involved to understand the workings quicker.

(tinkering)

Matthew Looks at The Door

Matthew understands where he is and gets an overview of The World's Psychic Maelstrom, briefly. He understands that The Door isn't a thing yet, but is likely to be a mechsuit or a portal. It connects many realities / dimensions. He gets a sense that the player characters are *player characters*, maybe. He exits into The Skyway and convinces The Cult of The Door that he is a messenger of The Door - they share their knowledge and give him a steed so that he can return to his Vault.

(the door complete success, deceive complete success)

Sequoia Approaches Harbortown

Sequoia is stopped at a distance from Harbortown on her approach, but she offers mercenary services for healing and barter. Via Prune, a deal is struck - she delivers five heads of The Cut's defenders for access and those things.

Foster and Reginald Fulton overhear the discussion. Foster wants to meet Sequoia in secret.

(charm complete success)

Foster's Conspiracy - Pell and Reginald

Foster speaks to Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri and Reginald about overthrowing Millions as leader of Harbortown. They are both relatively on board, in different ways for different reasons. She wants Sequoia to be the assassin, then the help of Reginald and Pell to establish her own leadership afterwards.

House Gardenia has Problems

Storm Gardenia's children are squabbling - she needs to either destroy The Orchids or overrule their influence. She commands her children to find and destroy all orchids (uncharacteristically) - it's messy. Some of the non-orchid members turn it into a witch-hunt and assume too much authority. There are scuffles, people are upset. The Orchids are all found and burned. Storm comforts the enthralled (partly) but lets slip that Dog head still has some orchids.



Figure 7 Storm Gardenia sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(read a situation complete success, [leadership] miss, charm partial success)

Errol's Day

Errol goes scavenging in a hidden warehouse district of The Buried City. He finds some good resources, guarded by mutated creatures. He sneaks in and out cleanly, grabbing some batteries and small electronics - a good haul.

(buried city partial success, read a situation partial success, under fire complete success)

Styg's Sneaking Mission

Styg intends to sneak into Harbortown by water but can't find a good route. He secretly cuts through the wall and sneaks around town, observing workshops, repair places, etc. He bumps into Pell, who helps him meet Millions.

(read situation miss, act under fire complete success)

Styg Meets Millions

Pell takes Styg to Millions safely. They discuss the source of Harbortown's weapons and the worship of angel figures that Styg has witnessed. Millions will give Styg more information if he brings five heads of The Cut's defenders. Millions seems aware that Styg was involved in the attack on the wall, but will overlook it if the task is performed.

(lay out a plan partial success, read someone partial success)

Reginald and Foster meet Sequoia

Foster's conspiracy is discussed. Foster will provide for Sequoia if she assassinates Millions (on returning from her task - though Foster would prefer her not to kill any from The Cut). Foster will do her best to keep Sequoia and her children safe.

(read someone partial success)

Matthew Comes Home

It takes longer than expected, but Matthew arrives back at his Vault.

(buried city partial success)

Errol Heads Out

Errol is fired upon when leaving his hideout - Barry Manilow is injured and needs to land. It takes some time, but Errol guides him down safely at House Gardenia, though Storm has already left.

(act under fire miss, deal with bad terrain partial success)

Storm Confronts Dog head

Storm discusses The Orchids with Dog head - he's finding ways to make drugs out of them. She demands that he doesn't sell them to her children, but he believes people should make their own choices. He agrees to tell her who from House Gardenia buys any orchid products.

(confront partial success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
12 Jan 2021
Primary Location

The Overgrown Wilds
Secondary Location
Harbortown

The Door in Reality, Session 4

General Summary

Beginning Stuff

At House Gardenia, Storm's Children demand protection, but offer hope, play and jingle - they are in higher spirits.

Errol Mustang hears that someone from Harbortown is out for his blood. It's Foster (reason forthcoming).

(devotion partial success, ear to the ground miss)

Matthew Sees The Cut's Evacuees, Performs Augury

While travelling back from The Skyway to his Vault, Matthew Lutey spots a large number of people travelling from The Cut into the north of The Buried City.

Once home, via augury, he sees that Angel's Town is far to the south on a strange rocky column, with a natural rock formation resembling an angel (perhaps) marking the entry. Wolves of the Maelstrom see him in his chamber, attracted by the instability bleed. They take some of his notebooks. He prepares to head south on pilgrimage.

(augury partial success, read someone miss)

Styg and Sequoia Meet

Near Harbortown, Styg and Sequoia meet and talk vaguely about having a job to do at The Cut - Sequoia half-admires Styg's defence mechanism. Petunia runs off during their conversation, into the treeline.

(read someone miss, read someone partial success, open brain partial success)

Errol and Storm Make Plans

Errol and Storm Gardenia intend to work together to purge The Orchids from everywhere nearby - they'll go to The Pillars with Visage and try to destroy them at the source. Storm pays some attention to the rift in House Gardenia and learns to watch out for the Gardenia Overseers trying to take over.

(read situation complete success)

Pell Meets Jeanette

Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri heads to The Cut to try to set up peace talks with Harbortown. It is poorly defended by aging and infirm fighters. The leader, Jeanette, is there, but she looks awful. She says they have essentially abandoned the settlement - she sent all of the non-combatants away to look for a safer place to settle, along with the best fighters. She is not willing to risk the lives of her people and Harbortown have made it clear that this location can't be safe with their sabotage and undermining. Those remaining on-site intend to die defending the essentially empty town - they want Harbortown to pay with lives to gain something that is basically now worthless. Jeanette may

consider trying to re-establish a relationship with Harbortown under a leadership change, but she is incredibly wary and won't risk her people.

The evacuees have headed into the north of The Buried City, Pell sees, and he senses that they are being tracked by Wolves of the Maelstrom. He heads off to meet up with them, to help keep them safe.

(read person complete success, open brain complete success)

Reginald Talks to Millions, Recruits Amy

In Harbortown, Reginald Fulton tries to talk his way into some command over scouting, attack or defence in the conflict with The Cut, but Harbortown's force is very small so they can basically only play defence. Millions says that they've recruited Sequoia and Styg to assault The Cut. Reginald heads out, recruiting a mercenary called Amy, to try to get involved with Sequoia and Styg or otherwise gather info on The Cut.

Petunia is Cornered

In the outskirts of The Buried City, Petunia is trapped under a car by a mutated creature. Sequoia and Styg leap to her aid. During the fight with the creature, all three are injured. They all head for The Cut afterwards.

(do battle partial success, help miss)

Reginald, Styg and Sequoia - Dream Team

Sequoia and Styg bump into Reginald en route to The Cut - Reginald offends Styg and Styg threatens him. They talk about the war and technology. Styg wants to know more about the history of technology and power structures. Reginald has some theories on strange events that happened during the war.



Figure 8 Reginald, Sequoia and STYG-0 Talking sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(read someone complete success, intimidate someone complete success)

Approaching The Cut

As the group approach, the defenders of The Cut won't let Reginald close, despite a prior relationship. They fire a warning shot after being threatened. The group find the poor defence and elderly people strange, so they leave to figure out another approach.

(read situation partial success, help full success, threaten complete success)

Matthew Sets Out

Matthew leaves on his pilgrimage to Angel's Town, but is stalked by mutated creatures. He kills three of them, but they wound him and his steed. He tries to find a place nearby that might offer healing.

(buried city miss, do battle miss, open brain complete success)

Matthew Heads to House Gardenia

Matthew arrives at House Gardenia, wounded. Storm's Children help him and his steed, while Dog head arrives with treatments. They are patched up.

The group (Errol, Storm and Matthew) discuss heading out to deal with The Orchids, but are interrupted by trouble outside - Peppering has arrived with a small force. She is begrudgingly threatening, and demands to just take Errol with her. She's not comfortable acting this way and wants no violence. Storm realises the situation, so breaks into a musical number which causes Peppering to fall in love with her.

(read person partial success, artful & gracious partial success)

Notes

This was a reflection noted immediately after the session:

Unlucky, Hated Errol

Errol Mustang's *ear to the ground* move keeps generating bad news and people who want him dead. It's starting to get weird. There's already enough chaos and unresolved conflicts in the game without having to repeatedly add new enemies and come up with justifications.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
19 Jan 2021
Primary Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Secondary Location
The Cut

[The Door in Reality, Session 5](#)

General Summary

Pell Talks to the Escapees

Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri catches up to the escapees of The Cut in The Buried City and warns them of the threats of the Wolves of the Maelstrom, as he senses that they are ~500m away. The defenders get scared. Pell stays to help them keep safe.

(sniff the wind partial success)

Sequoia, Styg and Reginald at The Cut

Sequoia, Styg and Reginald Fulton discuss attacking The Cut, the idiocy of Millions and the war (and trying to end it). Reginald implies that inhumans may have been involved in the apocalypse.



Figure 9 [Feathers](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Sequoia spots five heavily armed and armoured mercenaries marching from Harbortown, towards The Cut, looking for trouble.

(read someone partial success, read a situation miss, read someone partial success)

Incoming Mercs

Reginald has an ally in one of the approaching mercenaries. Sequoia notices a vulnerable flamethrower-fuel tank on the one in the middle of the formation. Awful combat ensues, Sequoia is devastatingly wounded. Amy is killed. The group collect four heads from the dead mercenaries and travel to STYG-0's Workshop to treat Sequoia.

(open brain miss, dangerous presence partial success, against the odds partial success, help Styg complete success, do battle complete success)

Back at House Gardenia

At House Gardenia, Peppering and two of her group drop arms and apologetically join Storm's Children in the aftermath of Storm Gardenia's dazzling musical performance. The other two become aggressive and demand Errol Mustang's head.

Matthew Lutey tries to read the angrier of the two assailants but accidentally inflicts psi-harm. The aggressor opens fire, injuring a couple of Storm's Children. Errol distracts him enough to injure him with a crossbow bolt. Storm demands that the aggressors join her family or leave, but the other fires and wounds her. Storm, Errol and Matthew fight and kill the two aggressors. Matthew is badly wounded.

(deep brain scan miss, interrupt someone complete success, act under fire complete success, confront someone miss, help complete success, do battle complete success, do battle complete success)

Styg's Workshop

At his Workshop, Styg wants to repair Sequoia with cybernetics, but needs her "help", some parts (the cyborg arm will contribute, but he needs more biological interfaces) and a day's work, and it will put Sequoia at risk. Sequoia confronts The World's Psychic Maelstrom and it agrees to look after her daughters, via its "children".

(tinkering, standing across the threshold)

Matthew Needs Healing

Dog head has run out of supplies to heal Matthew with, and needs ingredients or barter. Storm encourages her children to contribute, which they do, generously. Dog head patches Matthew up a bit more and leaves.

(charm someone complete success)

Pell Keeps a Lookout

In The Buried City, with the escapees from The Cut, Pell tries to get a read on the nearby Wolves. He senses (unclearly) that they are gathering en masse and getting closer. He reflects on their inhuman nature - maybe they were once human, but aren't really any more. He helps the defenders dig in very effectively.

(open brain partial success, lay out a plan complete success)

Errol's Ear to the Ground

Brain, from The Pillars, wants Errol's blood. Reason unknown.

(ear to the ground miss)

Related Adventure

Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
26 Jan 2021
Primary Location
The Cut
Secondary Location
House Gardenia

The Door in Reality, Session 6



Figure 10 Reginald and Sequoia sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

General Summary

Beginning Stuff

The Skyway are facing a serious problem that Errol Mustang hears about - since Matthew Lutey appeared from The Door, it has been behaving strangely.

Storm's Children demand discipline.

(ear to the ground partial success, devotion partial success)

At Styg's Workshop

Styg and Reginald Fulton discuss treating Sequoia. Styg describes the Imperium of Man, trying to sell Reginald on the constant war. Styg wants to use Blasphemy Zero on Sequoia to aid her recovery, but she doesn't want it. She asks Styg to look after her children and he agrees. Styg glitches while interfacing with the network and Sequoia dies while he has lost consciousness. Reginald shoots her in the head as she dies.



Figure 11 [Death of Sequoia](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

A couple of Wolves of the Maelstrom watch as the group (including Prune and Petunia) lay Sequoia's body to rest.

(open brain miss, life becomes untenable, confront someone partial success)

The death of Sequoia was quite a powerful moment, as PC deaths are often said to be. It's quite rare for PCs to die in any of my games, so we don't experience it very often. Usually in my experience (as with this death), the player has made a choice not to pursue available ways of keeping their character alive. These are interesting cases where the player allows their character's story to end in a way that satisfies them, or perhaps they are bored of (or otherwise done with) playing the character.

Pell and the Evacuees

Wolves cautiously attack from the east of the camp of evacuees from The Cut (in the The Buried City). It seems like a distraction - Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri is attacked by infiltrators on the roof. After being pushed back, he tries to defend from the middle of the camp but is knocked unconscious. He passes in and out of consciousness throughout the chaos of a fight and comes to with a small group of fleeing evacuees - four defenders and about ten civilians. They are dragging him away from the camp.

(read situation miss, confront someone miss)

Back at House Gardenia

The Gardenia Overseers approach Storm Gardenia about officially becoming the defenders of House Gardenia. She agrees, as long as they pull their weight and don't focus the aggression inwards. They need training, so they ask for something to be arranged.

Styg, Reginald, Petunia and Prune arrive at House Gardenia. Lots of discussion and information sharing ensues. Petunia reads Matthew Lutey about The Door. Storm reads Petunia because she's offended that the children don't want to stay at the house. Petunia heals Reginald and there are some rumours about her having special abilities. She wants to go to The Door.

(read someone partial success, read someone complete success, field medic complete success)

Late Night Interruption

Evacuees from The Cut, with Pell, are spotted at House Gardenia's perimeter late at night. Storm welcomes them. Reginald tries to get to Styg but he's barricaded in his room and responding strangely (his AI is in control). Reginald asks Matthew to help, who whispers for Styg to come back. Styg's AI responds that he will in an hour. Petunia convinces Matthew to take her to The Door.

(open brain complete success, mesmerising whisper partial success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
02 Feb 2021
Primary Location
House Gardenia
Secondary Location
STYG-0's Workshop

General Summary

Styg Wakes to Matthew

At House Gardenia, Matthew Lutey is concerned about Styg's soul being split (or similar) and tries to have him address the problem - Styg takes exception to this. They discuss Matthew's link to Aiwaz and so on - Styg becomes more scared and fanatical, confronting Matthew. He demands that Matthew tell nobody about his nature - Matthew agrees, but asks Styg to try to deal with his split consciousness.

(deep brain scan partial success, read someone partial success, confront someone partial success)

The Next Morning

Styg asks one of Storm's Children about healing - they recommend Dog head, but mention that he might not have the materials (Styg doesn't want to approach Petunia).

Styg and Errol Mustang talk about Styg getting access to some generic parts, as well as mind-machine interfaces.

Petunia asks Prune for advice about her next steps - Prune is torn because she has committed to living like Sequoia, but she thinks that Prune should follow her instincts to The Door. Styg reads Petunia and finds out about her intention of heading to The Door.

Reginald Fulton complains about breakfast - he wants a good breakfast before starting training. He and Matthew talk about Styg's nature.

(insight, read someone partial success)

Strangers at the Treeline

Wolves of the Maelstrom are watching House Gardenia from the treeline. Styg tries to learn more but Walker appears, rampaging from the forest. Styg and Reginald battle Walker - Styg is horrifically injured and nearly dies (coming back weirder). Petunia tries to heal Styg but is largely ineffective. She then tries to heal Reginald but seems to attract Wolves - they walk towards her from nearby. Storm Gardenia confronts them but is blasted by psychic force.

The others scramble to protect Petunia. Reginald sees that one of the Wolves will die with a premonition. Storm understands that they are here on a duty from another who is absent, and that they are very dangerous. Errol understands that they don't feel much other than duty. Prune kills one but the others don't react. Storm performs a musical number and the Wolves fall in love with her, but continue on their path. Matthew helps Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri knock one of them out. Styg reads Pell.

Pell opens his brain and understands that the Wolves are bidden by a mysterious figure to protect Prune and Petunia - they are here to remove them from a situation that they see as a threat to the children. Petunia knocks one out with a stun gun. Storm tricks the last remaining one into helping her then attacks it from behind, leading to a fight with it, including a gang of Gardenia Overseers. It runs back to Petunia as Errol is trying to get the girls onto Barry Manilow to extract them - it tries to guide them away, but Petunia knocks it out. The group restrain the Wolves.

(open brain miss, do battle complete success, do battle partial success, healing touch miss, field medic complete success, healing touch miss, sniff the wind complete success, confront someone miss,

interrupt someone partial success, visions of death partial success, read a situation miss, read someone miss, artful and gracious complete success, help someone complete success, do battle partial success, read someone partial success, open brain partial success, act under fire complete success, deceive someone complete success, do battle miss, act under fire miss)

Matthew Talks to the Wolves

Matthew charms a Wolf into answering some questions - it isn't able to speak, so it uses curtly-written notes to respond. They need to protect the girls, bidden by the mother of the girls and the father of the Wolves. There are more Wolves on the way.

(mesmerizing whisper partial success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
09 Feb 2021
Primary Location
House Gardenia

[The Door in Reality, Session 8](#)

General Summary

Discussing the Wolves

At House Gardenia, the group (Those Who Will Open The Door) discusses killing the captured Wolves of the Maelstrom. There are disagreements - primarily Matthew Lutey doesn't believe that killing them would be right when they tried to protect children, but Styg thinks they are tainted by The Warp.

Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri asks Petunia about her prior contact with the Wolves - there wasn't any. Petunia takes to healing people, with Matthew's help. They succeed incredibly well with Styg - some of his machinery is repaired and his jaw starts to regrow (he takes this as a miracle). Reginald Fulton's healing goes a bit awry, but is fine. Two of the Wolves disappear from their bonds while the group are focused elsewhere.

Reginald mentions historical teleportation - Styg reads him to discover it's the truth.

Storm Gardenia helps Petunia heal Matthew via emotional support.

(read someone complete success, help someone complete success, healing touch complete success, help someone miss, read someone complete success, help someone partial success, healing touch complete success)

Talking to the Wolves Again

Storm asks where the other Wolves went. It responds with "gone home", but it struggles to describe where home is.

Errol Mustang is scouting in the air and sees two groups of five figures heading towards House Gardenia. One of them teleports on top of Barry Manilow. Errol tries to shake the person off, but they hold fast. He lands Barry, bringing this person with him. It is a Wolf that then begins walking towards the house.

Styg runs to attack. The Wolf is very slightly injured and Styg absorbs the Wolf's blast. Storm and the Gardenia Overseers attack the Wolf but it's basically another stalemate - except Visage is quite badly injured. Styg attacks again (poorly) - which leads to another stalemate as the Wolf teleports to Petunia and Pell. Pell stands against the Wolf, claiming he's protecting the children.

(read a situation miss, act under fire partial success, do battle partial success, do battle miss, do battle miss, help someone partial success, confront someone partial success, confront someone miss)

A New Watcher

The Wolf agrees to let Pell protect the children, but on the condition that it watches from nearby. Pell understands that this one wasn't involved in the attack on the evacuees.

Storm drags the injured Visage indoors. A few of the group help Petunia heal him, though it's messy.

Styg tries to get involved with the Wolf, but it insists that he can't be allowed near the children.

Matthew does a deep brain scan on the Wolf - it is telling the truth about calling the others off, it will take the children away if a threat appears and it would stop pursuing the children if it was no longer its duty.

Storm tries to understand what the father of the Wolves is - she has visions of a giant, chaotic dress, that seems like home to the Wolves.

(read someone partial success, field medic miss (boosted), help someone miss, help someone partial success, help someone miss, read someone miss, deep brain scan complete success, open brain partial success)

Showing Off the Orchid / More Wolf Stuff

Storm shows her Orchid to Matthew, Styg, Reginald and Errol. Styg scans it and really wants to plant it.

The group realises that the Father of the Wolves is The World's Psychic Maelstrom. The allied Wolves turn the other incoming Wolves away from the house.

(orchid partial success)

Planning a Trip

The group get ready to leave for The Door. Errol and Styg take Barry to scout ahead while the others (plus a large-ish group of Storm's Children under the command of Reginald and Storm) head for The Door via Matthew Lutey's Vault.

At the Vault

Styg and Errol arrive at the Vault first and poke around. The large group arrives and Matthew prepares to perform augury. There is a long exposure to the Maelstrom with many questions and much discussion.

The window into the Maelstrom is deep and sustained for a while but bleeds instability, pulling the whole group into the experience. Many of them are granted information about the nature of the Maelstrom and they share in each other's experiences.

The Wolves would back off Petunia and Prune if they were allowed to take Prune away from the group. Otherwise, they will continue to stand by and observe until they no longer feel the group can defend the children. Matthew couldn't agree to this deal.

Styg wondered about Petunia being an Imperial Saint, in very specific Imperium of Man terms - the Maelstrom couldn't directly respond to this because it was too focused on unfamiliar concepts, but it gave the impression that Styg's assessment was "close enough".

Pell received insight into how the Wolves operate. They exist consistently in both the Maelstrom and the real world, which is incredibly unusual. They harbour no malice for people in the real world - they simply come to take those who have the potential to be a Wolf, so that they can bring them "home". Their home is perhaps like perfect existence and they don't really like being in the real world.

(help someone partial partial success, interrupt someone partial success, interrupt someone partial success, augury partial success, augury complete success)

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
16 Feb 2021
Primary Location
House Gardenia
Secondary Location
Matthew Lutey's Vault

[The Door in Reality, Session 9](#)

General Summary

Resuming

Those Who Will Open The Door are still in contact with The World's Psychic Maelstrom, via Matthew Lutey's augury. Styg asks the Maelstrom where the STC is - it responds that it might be (at?) The Door. He also asks about [his friends](#) and receives glimpses of them in the day-to-day lives. The group decide to leave for The Door. They spend a day or so resting and preparing.

Styg heads back to his Workshop to build a device to locate Stevedore, then heads out to find it. He falls into a beast den along the way but pulls himself back out quickly. He locates Stevedore, sitting in a den that it made. It seems relaxed since the destruction of Walker, but reacts with fear at Styg because he removed its arm. He tries to convince it that he can fix it, but it runs in fear.

(buried city miss, read a situation partial success, under fire complete success, read someone complete success, charm someone miss)

Preparing to Leave for The Door

Matthew explains that The Cult of The Door's power structure is quite flat, except for reverence of The Door. Storm hears through the grapevine some information about Abondo, who is one of the guards of The Door itself.

(grapevine complete success)

To The Door

The group form a caravan and head out, but with Errol Mustang, Styg and Reginald Fulton scouting ahead on Barry Manilow. The scouts spot a pack of beasts in the group's path, so they rest for a day while the beasts pass.

On arrival at The Skyway, Matthew is welcomed warmly while Petunia and Prune feign worship of The Door (the rest of the group refuse). These three are accepted onto a lift up to the settlement. The Wolves of the Maelstrom try to join them but are turned away, so they teleport to the top. This causes a disturbance as the cult tries to remove the Wolves, but the cult are no match for them. The rest of the group sneak up above the settlement during the disturbance. Petunia splits the Wolves by going the opposite direction to Prune, but this doesn't prevent a fight breaking out.

Chaos

Styg and Reginald open fire on the cult from above. Between this and the Wolves, the cult are severely outmatched and are slaughtered in droves.



Figure 12 [STYG-0 and Reginald Fighting Cultists](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Storm Gardenia heads down from their overlook to The Skyway proper, intending to put on a show of turning the Wolves away and getting on side with the cult, but has to reconsider once the shooting starts.

Matthew guides Petunia and Prune through the carnage, towards The Door. Errol leaves with Barry to avoid danger. Everyone except Errol meets near The Door, with the Wolves easily rebuffing any cultist pursuers.



Figure 13 [This place was sacred...](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(help someone partial success, act under fire complete success)

The Door

Reginald almost immediately intends to destroy The Door with his RPG, but Styg interrupts and prevents this. Petunia seeks counsel with the spirit of Sequoia about what she should do.



Figure 14 [The Door](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

As reality fractures and branches, each member of the group has their own encounter with The Door:

One version of Styg discovers that The Door is indeed an STC - he secures it properly and works on contacting the wider Imperium of Man. Later, he is picked up by a Rogue Trader vessel and eventually returned to Mars, STC in tow. He is greeted as a hero.

Another version of Styg, upon touching The Door, is transported back through his life and given a second chance. Before the mess with Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati and Inquisitor Rhia Jezail and The Dei-Phage. This version of Styg has the opportunity to make choices that he'll better be able to live with.



Figure 15 Styg Looking Into The Door by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Many of the PCs from Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit feature in this illustration – it was quite exciting for the players to see them again, some rendered in high quality for the first time in a very long time.

Reginald Fulton tries to destroy The Door but expends all his ammunition with no effect. He blames it for the psychic weirdness that began in the middle of the war that ended the world. He charges it with his knife and disappears into it. He finds himself at a roadside in a modern-day(ish) US town. The Mystery Machine drives by. He tries to leave along the road, but finds himself mystically turned around.

Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri realises that The Door is where The Warp is bleeding into the Maelstrom - it's the giant flame that he sees in his visions. When The Door opens, the chaotic energies of The Warp flood into the world, immediately transforming all of the Wolves into daemonic creatures. A second apocalypse comes.

Storm Gardenia believes that The Door relates to the dresses of her Maelstrom - she views it as a sort of wardrobe. She isn't especially interested in what it might reveal, so eventually heads back to House Gardenia. With her Overseers trained, she convinces the people of Shelter to join her family, and they all live together in relative peace and bliss, in their post-apocalyptic treehouse.

Matthew Lutey approaches The Door and begins to feel his identities resolve. His robes transform as he moves, as his body also changes. He sees threads of white light form between the members of the group as they all take on new appearances. The sound of a car crash is heard as the group come to stand in a circle, looking in. They are all in the car park of an abandoned warehouse at the moment a rolling flashlight casts a perfect circle on the wall.

Sequoia's spirit advises Petunia to "complete the cycle" in order to "survive for the entire universe". She steps into The Door and is wracked with the pain of electrocution for what feels like a day. Her appearance changes during this experience - she ages and her hair becomes darker. She loses her sight, but gains a connection to some higher power - perhaps fate. She emerges into a world that she cannot see - a world of magic, dragons and fantasy.

As Errol Mustang circles the tree containing The Door aboard Barry Manilow, the sky darkens and the air becomes thicker. A large group of moths similar to Barry fly in over the horizon, dancing in the sky in some deliberate but incomprehensible patterns. They seem to herald great change.



Figure 16 Storm, Pell, Matthew and Errol at The Door by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(interrupt someone partial success, charm someone complete success, open brain complete success)

Having these multiple endings allowed for individual PCs to have satisfying resolutions involving aspects they were most invested in. It did also feel like a bit of a cop-out to say that “all these things are true”, as a way of avoiding some of the conflict that would have had to be resolved if the PCs were set against each other at the end.

I think there were two reasons that this seemed a fitting way to end this campaign: firstly, we had openly discussed our next campaign (Campaign: Convergence), including that it was going to feature themes of multiversal connections, so experiencing branching timelines seemed appropriate; secondly, the fact that *Apocalypse World* as a system doesn’t really work with plots and only allows the ongoing action (and any stories it might tell) to stem from player choices and rolls means that it can be very difficult to end a story in a traditional

way, as any PC's move has the potential to completely overturn and redirect what is happening.

Ultimately, I think it was the most successful of our attempts to end an *Apocalypse World* game, though it did still feel a little off.

Bonus Post-Game Content

See After The Door in Reality: Styg Misremembers.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Report Date
23 Feb 2021
Primary Location
The Door
Secondary Location
The Skyway

[After The Door in Reality: Styg Misremembers](#)

Years after the events of Adventure: The Door in Reality, Styg misremembers the conflict at The Door via the following sequence of images (featuring Reginald Fulton, Petunia and Prune):



Figure 17 [Door Conflict 1](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 18 [Door Conflict 2](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 19 [Door Conflict 3](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 20 [Door Conflict 4](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 21 [Door Conflict 5](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 22 [Door Conflict 5.5](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 23 [Door Conflict 7](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

This is an interesting phenomenon – a retelling of the events of a game session through another medium. I’m aware that this happens with actual play shows quite a bit (they are adapted into graphic novels/animations), but I’ve felt privileged to see it happen with my games through Phoebe’s work. This sequence in particular was fascinating to see – I think that Phoebe misremembered the events of the session, so retold it in a way that would be visually striking when told as a series of images, as well as accounting for her aesthetic preferences, etc. It was nice to see a remix/transmediation happen.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality

Player Characters

Much of the detail of each of the PCs was contributed either by voice or in writing by their players.

Those Who Will Open The Door

The loosely-affiliated group of wanderers of The Overgrown Wilds who are destined to open The Door. Their story is told via Campaign: The Door in Reality.

Type
Adventuring Party
Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barry Manilow
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Errol Mustang
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matthew Lutey
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prune
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reginald Fulton
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sequoia
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure: The Door in Reality
Members
STYG-0

Errol Mustang

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Operator

First Impression

Handsome, Twitchy, Windburnt

Bio

Giant Moth pilot. The rider and companion of Barry Manilow.

Lifestyle

You hold your reputation as precious, and you're willing to take a loss when it means making good and doing right. (Baker and Baker 2021: 40)

Current Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure: The Door in Reality

Matthew Lutey

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Brain-picker

First Impression

A hooded, schizoid multiversal wraith

Bio

This is written from the point of view of the player, with justification for some character choices, and with reference to previous games and characters:

As a Brain Picker, Matthew Lutey can draw upon The World's Psychic Maelstrom as one of his abilities in the playbook, but I want to role play the narrative consequences of this as mentally anguished because it tears open or exposes a kind of multiversal wound in his psyche (i.e. he is temporarily aware of fragments of other RPG existences: not just Dark Heresy or Unknown Armies but also Rhapsody of Blood, The Skeletons, and even InSpectres, wherein all my characters had the same name). The Brain-Picker Matthew Lutey will be sure to keep secret his peculiar maelstrom of memories, which hint at his former existence as a Chaos cultist named Aiwaz in the 41st millennium and that cultist's reincarnated raven familiar who was for some reason obsessed with the spiritual significance of board games

Lifestyle

Has a workspace in a Vault, bottom floor of a buried building. Meditates and puzzles over the fragments. Stacks of notebooks. Scavenges to sustain self. Too crazy to have much contact with settlements.

You're known, and feared by some, but you won't use your psychic abilities just to exploit or extort people. (Baker and Baker 2021: 12)

The World's Psychic Maelstrom

Matthew's Maelstrom is a torrent of fragments of sensory and identity information. Swirling, swarming and overwhelming.

Matthew's Notes:

This is a small amount of notes that the player had recorded in a shared document, only kept here for completeness:

Encountered a strange cyborg. This being maybe come from before the apocalypse. This was a person from before the apocalypse who voluntarily had modifications made to load and unload things. Mind is recessed behind operating protocol. Turns and starts to flee. There are three Stygs, revealed in a vision (one with tentacles, one with feathery wings, one the Styg that I know). In conflict to some degree. Overridden

Current Location
The Door
Species
Human
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Incredibly pale
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew Lutey's Vault

Sequoia

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Undaunted

First Impression

Ferocious, plainspoken, warm, ferocious

Bio

This was written by the player:

Elderly maternal brick shithouse (80+ years old) who has taken in several young charges in order to protect them from the world and to learn its brutality firsthand. She is Sequoia - sheltering many and crushing those who threaten her sprouts. Sequoia and her children are expert scavengers of herbs, plants, wood and insects to provide sustenance and other tools. They are nomadic by nature but can easily build shelters and camp out in them for months at a time.

- Prune (14 years old) is quiet and has learned to treat basic injuries with herbs and other natural remedies. She is withdrawn and fearful of strangers as Sequoia has taught.
- Petunia (5 years old) is carefree, eager to please, and prone to wandering.

Sequoia has sheltered countless children over the course of her life and taught them to survive in a harsh and unforgiving world. Most of them are dead and Sequoia has buried all of them personally. She teaches her daughters the skills necessary to stay fed, sheltered, safe and be the only one standing in dangerous situations. They are especially taught to be wary of strangers and to do as she commands.

Sequoia is a warm and jovial mother but will do *anything* to protect her children.

Lifestyle

Sequoia builds temporary (perhaps long-lived) shelters and stays with her family. All day is spent teaching her daughters. They are holed up in a tree nearby.

In addition to good luck and a green thumb, you have a calculating streak and you know how to wring the most out of what you have. (Baker and Baker 2021: 48)

The World's Psychic Maelstrom

When confronting it, it appears as her long-dead first daughter. It doesn't speak with her voice.

Species
Human
Circumstances of Death
Sequoia died from her wounds while STYG-0 was trying to install life-saving cybernetics. She appealed to The World's Psychic Maelstrom to look after her children.
Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune Petunia
Aligned Organization

Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

[Storm Gardenia](#)

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Monarch

First Impression

Fierce, hospitable, confident,

Bio

This was written by the player:

Fierce big woman respected by her children

Lifestyle

Storm is fabulous - doesn't do a huge amount day-to-day. Mostly focuses on caring for her children. Organizes her own ballroom scene in her house. Her treehouse is between Shelter and The Buried City.

You are devoted to your people and share their good times and bad, you don't hold yourself above or apart from them. (Baker and Baker 2021: 32)

Psychic Maelstrom

A wonderful, giant dress, that she flies into.

Mental characteristics

Gender Identity

Woman

Current Location
House Gardenia
Species
Human
Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peppering Visage
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Gardenia

[Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri](#)

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Vigilant



Figure 24 [Pell](#) by Michael "Adrir" Scott (Generative AI)

First Impression

Looks distracted by something, often gesturing as if pulling threads out of thin air, studying and scrutinising the most random things

Bio

This was written by the player:

An old and over-the-hill adventurer, who in his youth probably explored “much of the world” and certainly developed a reputation in the local area. Pell is now something of a circuit preacher who offers fables, guidance, and appraisal to the local populace. He commands much respect for this, with the established parts of the community having benefited from his insights to a great extent over the years. In recent days, he has become concerned with the threat presented by the Wolves of the Maelstrom. He sensed...something...that might indicate their presence. He may be the only one here who knows them.

Local Area

This was written by the player:

Pell seems to know a lot about the local area. It's unusual to find cyborgs here, and having caught up to the rogue cyborg, was able to direct STYG-0 towards the workshops in the coastal settlements.

Lifestyle

Pell is the go-to for community advice (elder figure), day-to-day. Can deal with threats (mostly as a tactician), also. He moves around a lot, settlement to settlement.

You provide valuable services — warnings and insights — to the people around you, and live a commensurate lifestyle. (Baker and Baker 2021: 52)

Psychic Maelstrom

This was written by the player:

When Pell opens his brain to The World's Psychic Maelstrom, he embodies his spirit animal and finds his consciousness thrust into the ethereal plane. This domain presents itself to his senses as a great savannah edging over the horizon. It is distinguished by a gigantic pyre far off in the distance, burning high into the sky. It forms a great column of light that illuminates the area in a deep blue tint. In this place, he usually finds himself surrounded by ethereal creatures, almost like fireflies, which he seems able to commune with --- sometimes with notions entering his mind as he reaches out to them --- and sometimes with his senses transformed in a great overlay. They are a vast swarm of spiritual entities that flock towards him in an overwhelming display of force; though, more typically, they are gentler and fewer in number, allowing him to find tranquility in their presence. When Pell exercised his psi to avoid the Wolves on his way to the when approaching The Cut's evacuees, the once distant flames of the ethereal plane drew closer, much closer. Blazing azure bellowing an alchemic haze. It temporarily clouded his ability to track the Wolves, leaving him to suspect the flocking of the packs may have been acting as a countermeasure. However, it could be that something else is at play...

Trust

This was written by the player:

The only members of the party who Pell doesn't suspect are Wolves or are associated with them are Matthew Lutey and Storm Gardenia.

Current Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

Reginald Fulton

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Playbook: The Volatile

First Impression

Old military, brash and direct. Missing eye, many old war injuries.

Bio

This was written by the player, including the “flavour” quote:

Old military commander, covered in old war wounds. loves war, loves commanding, eager to be responsible for victory and offset loss onto others. An old military commander from before the complete collapse of society. Eager to throw away human lives for the sensation of victory and self value. Haunted by the ghosts of his own men who died under his command.

"Get over the wall or I'll bloody well shoot you myself, you damned coward!"

Lifestyle

Reginald is sort of retired but misses war. Spends most of the time hunting but he hates it (because it's not war). He thinks wolves are cowards. Maintains relationships with community leaders (to keep an ear out for war).

You're never willing to suffer an empty belly or an unsatisfied want, not when you can rob and extort. (Baker and Baker 2021: 56)

Current Location
The Door
Species
Human
Eyes
One, brown
Hair
Greying brown, receding
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

This section shows that different players bring different levels of commitment/energy/investment/detail (engagement?) to deciding, generating, detailing and/or recording elements of their characters. Some of my players have loved to spend a long time conceptualizing and detailing their characters before play, including doing quite a lot of research (into the system, setting and/or character aesthetics), such as by experimenting with mechanical “builds” and constructing mood boards. Some are happy to just decide on an aesthetic and run with it, with little consideration character personality, psychology, or backstory. Some enjoy deciding on some basic details before play, perhaps with random character generation, and then figuring out the rest during game sessions, but still ultimately ending up with a lot of character detail.

I have found that players mostly seem to enjoy engaging with their character creation roughly the same way each time, though with some occasional variation. Generally, I can rely on one of my players to roll their character as randomly as possible, but I will usually ultimately see them become one of the most invested players, for example.

Other Characters

Foster



Figure 25 [Foster](#) by Ché Wilbraham (Generative AI)

The elder medic in Harbortown. Foster is grizzled and no-nonsense, with a history of combat and survival. She is self-centred and clever. She thinks she could take Millions' place as leader of Harbortown by playing a more honourable angle, so is looking to enlist supporters for a coup.

She is out for Errol Mustang's blood for a reason that was never determined.

Sequoia, Styg, Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri and Reginald Fulton agreed to help her overthrow Millions, after some had been recruited by Millions into the conflict with The Cut. The plan was never followed through, so we don't know what ultimately happened between Foster and Millions.

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Fit and sturdy, though dealing with the pains and weaknesses of old age and a history of injuries.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

When young, Foster was a warrior who picked up some medical knowledge in the field, mostly by necessity. She developed this over decades, performing more healing than combat as time went on. She settled in Harbortown years ago and quickly cemented her place as the go-to for medical treatment.

Gender Identity

Woman.

Morality & Philosophy

Self-serving and focused on her own survival and comfort, but clever enough to look beyond her immediate circumstances.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Current Location
Harbortown
Species
Human
Age
62
Current Residence
Harbortown
Pronouns
she/her
Eyes
Brown
Hair
Greying black, afro, loose twists
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Dark
Height
5'7"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut

Prune

Beautiful and still, watchful and kind.

Prune in The Overgrown Wilds

One of Sequoia's adopted daughters, Prune (14 years old) is quiet and has learned to treat basic injuries with herbs and other natural remedies. She is withdrawn and fearful of strangers as Sequoia has taught. She is skilled with a rifle and follows the spirit of Sequoia's instructions.

Throughout Adventure: The Door in Reality, Prune and her adopted sister Petunia follow Sequoia until her death. After this, they join Those Who Will Open The Door for their journey to The Door itself. Petunia shows interest in how The Door might relate to her strange powers, while Prune follows to keep her safe.

The sisters attract the attention of the Wolves of the Maelstrom after Sequoia asks The World's Psychic Maelstrom to protect her daughters as she is dying. The Wolves try to take the sisters away from the group, seeing them as a threat to their safety, but agree to accompany the group and keep watch, instead.

During the encounter with The Door, as the timelines split, Petunia is pulled to another reality while Prune remains in The Overgrown Wilds.

Prune in The Darkest House

While the Convergence Player Characters explore The Darkest House, Prune is found sitting in a tea room. She remembers becoming tired not long after the encounter with The Door in The Overgrown Wilds, falling asleep and then waking up here. Taxi (an aged, altered Petunia) is shocked to see Prune, but doesn't initially reveal her identity.

Prune is escorted safely from The Darkest House and eventually to Perpetual Bernville, where she and Taxi have a heart-to-heart about their relationship. Taxi ultimately decides to return to her masters, bringing Prune along.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality, Campaign: Convergence (The Darkest House)
Species
Human
Age
14
Parents (Adopting)
Sequoia
Pronouns
she/her
Hair
Long, straight, white
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Fair but tanned
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Walker

Sergeant J. Walker

Walker, STYG-0 and Stevedore are somehow linked via the wireless connections of their cybernetics in The Overgrown Wilds. They each occasionally catch glimpses of the others, from their own points of view.

Walker pursues and destroys anything it perceives as a threat, especially using the snippets of information from Stevedore to continually hunt it.

It runs into Those Who Will Open The Door at House Gardenia, attacking them, and is ultimately destroyed in the conflict.

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

The withered, braindead body of a human at the centre of a deadly combat exoskeleton, bristling with weaponry.

Specialized Equipment

Advanced and incredibly dangerous combat cybernetics - weaponry and armour.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

Walker was serving as a soldier during the great war that continued after the apocalypse. He joined a unit that operated using mechanical combat exoskeletons, integrated with some personal cybernetics. During a battle, he was injured in such a way that his biological mind slipped into a coma, but the companion AI that controls some aspects of the exoskeleton and weaponry assumed near-total control. Walker's brain ceased function shortly after, but Walker's body, cybernetics and exoskeleton continued to function under control of the AI for over a decade, with what is essentially a corpse at its centre.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Current Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Species
Human
Circumstances of Death
Brain-death over a decade ago. Destroyed during combat with Those Who Will Open The Door at House Gardenia.
Gender
Male
Eyes
Blue, dead
Hair
Blonde, matted
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Pale but tanned and sunburned
Height
7'00"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

Dog head

"Medicine man" of Shelter (low-key drug dealer). Elderly and strung out. Fascinated by The Orchids - actively experimenting with them.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Current Location
Shelter
Species
Human
Current Residence
Shelter
Gender
Male
Eyes
Brown, bloodshot
Hair
Grey, long dreadlocks with coloured material threaded throughout
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Dark
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure: The Door in Reality

Jeanette



Figure 26 [Jeanette](#) by Ché Wilbraham (Generative AI)

Leader of The Cut. Struggles to keep it running and her people safe. Wants to expand influence but prioritises the lives of the people (though not their comfort). Keeps a beautiful garden.

Current Location
The Cut
Species
Human
Gender
Female
Eyes
Brown
Hair
Long, brown, curly
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light brown
Height
5'8"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cut

Peppering

The leader of a small crew looking to buy their way into The Cut with Errol's head. They have some decent guns and are hunting him in The Buried City. Peppering herself is decent but desperate.

Individual/small gang. 3-harm & 1-armour.

Peppering and two of her crew joined House Gardenia. The other two were killed. She joined the Gardenia Overseers, so is within that threat now.

Current Location
House Gardenia
Species
Human
Parents (Adopting)
Storm Gardenia
Gender
Female
Eyes
Brown
Hair
Black, afro, in twists
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Dark brown
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Barry Manilow

Errol Mustang's Giant Moth mount and companion. Loved by all.

Current Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Species
Giant Moth
Aligned Organization
Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Stevedore

Stevedore, STYG-0 and Walker are somehow linked via the wireless connections of their cybernetics in The Overgrown Wilds. They each occasionally catch glimpses of the others, from their own points of view.

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Large cyborg designed for loading and carrying huge objects. Cybernetically and genetically modified to excel at this task. The remaining biological parts are nearly ruined from degradation and damage.

Specialized Equipment

Heavy cybernetic and genetic modification - strengthened exoskeleton and replacement limbs.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

"Stevedore" was a dock worker who opted into genetic and cybernetic modification in order to excel at their work. This was decades ago - probably before the apocalypse. Now, Stevedore is barely human - the biological elements are so ruined by time, degradation and damage that the machinery and very base instincts have taken over. At a basic level, Stevedore is aware of the connection between Styg and Walker, so also tries to keep away from them.

Current Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Species
Human
Eyes
One destroyed, one cybernetic replacement
Hair
None
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Almost leathery - results of age and condition
Height
7'3"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality

Pierre

Leader of Shelter. Dangerously naive. Wants to expand beyond capabilities and isn't realistic about danger. Residents try to reign them in. Generous to a fault.

Mental characteristics

Gender Identity

Man

Sexuality

Asexual

Current Location
Shelter
Species
Human
Eyes
Brown, warm
Hair

Black, straight, slicked back
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Pale brown
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter

Millions

Leader of Harbortown. Cares little for the residents beyond grabbing more power and wealth. Pays the right people for safety. Cares very much for children, though.

Mental characteristics

Gender Identity

Non-binary

Current Location
Harbortown
Species
Human
Eyes
Golden
Hair
Long, blonde
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Painted gold
Height
6'8"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harbortown

Visage

The leader of the Gardenia Overseers.

Mental characteristics

Gender Identity

Man

Current Location
House Gardenia
Species
Human
Parents (Adopting)
Storm Gardenia

Eyes
Brown
Hair
Black, afro, kept very neat
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light brown
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Storm's Children

In Apocalypse World terms, they are:

- Children (devotion: hope, play; demands: protection) To them, Storm Gardenia is a parent figure.
- Laborers (devotion: jingle; demands: R&R, solidarity) manual labor, scavenging, trade labor. To them Storm is a leader and organizer.

There are about 30 - medium gang at most. Mostly 1-harm & 0-armour, but a few with +1 on each/either.

Type
Family
Alternative Names
House Gardenia
Leader
Storm Gardenia
Subsidiary Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gardenia Overseers
Location
House Gardenia
Controlled Territories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Gardenia
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Moth Nomads

No clear details were decided in-game about the Moth Nomads, so there was ultimately nothing to record here.

The Cult of The Door

A cult of humanity's rebirth based at The Skyway, studying the secrets of The Door and protecting it from outsiders. They paint black rectangles on their faces.

In Apocalypse World terms, they are a large gang - about 100 fighters. Scavenged arms & armour, 2-harm & 1-armour. A few firearms, mostly melee, some bows.

Flat organisation - hierarchy is reverence to The Door.

Type
Religious, Cult

Location
The Skyway
Controlled Territories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door • The Skyway
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality • Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door • Sub-Plot: The Door

Gardenia Overseers

During the troubles with The Orchids, some unenthralled members of Storm's Children assumed some authority and led the witch-hunt. They have retained this position and are throwing their weight around. Visage is sort of the leader. Peppering is also a member. Small gang. 2-harm & 1-armour. They are Storm Gardenia's gang.

Type
Civilian, Crew
Leader
Visage
Parent Organization
Storm's Children
Location
House Gardenia
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality
Members
Visage, Peppering

Wolf of the Maelstrom

Wolves of the Maelstrom are an element of some Apocalypse World settings / games, depending on which character types are chosen by the players. Their function, appearance and details are dictated by the relevant player and GM when they are included in a game.

The Wolves of the Maelstrom in The Overgrown Wilds

This was mostly written by the player of Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri, due to stipulations on their character sheet:

Expressionless people who seem to come and go impossibly - the Wolves are less a coherent group and more a label that Pell's adventuring buddies gave to those individuals who mastered an ability to manipulate The World's Psychic Maelstrom to an inhumane extent. They have a mythical status, as they have not been seen in The Overgrown Wilds in many years (if at all) and so many do not believe they exist; that they're merely a tale to scare children. Pell however, knows the Wolves are real. Many years ago, he witnessed one conjure an apparition to their aide and, as their moniker would suggest, how their eyes glowed with the yellow of the wolf as they did so. They are known to spirit away the lost and vulnerable.

Although they're not an institution, Pell believes that Wolves 'know' of each other. The nature of their abilities seems to allow them to sense each other's presence and they communicate with each

other through the Maelstrom. This means there are loose affiliations among them, and those he's encountered seem to travel alone or with a partner they seem to mentor. Such groups also coordinate in tracking their victims, though his adventuring buddies told of friction between them that they once exploited to escape.

Whilst bunkering down with the evacuees from The Cut, Pell mused about the nature of the Wolves. He conjectured that their origin is likely to be a branch of humanity that diverged away from their own. Pell isn't a scientist, and doesn't understand genetics, but is rational and observant---he'd know about inherited traits. Some people have an affinity with the Maelstrom, to lesser and greater degrees, but the Wolves master abilities that go far beyond mere affinity. They seem unnaturally able to subjugate the Maelstrom, weaving it into threads and textures which they can use to conjure illusions, control nature forces, or worse. They also seem to impossibly appear and disappear, leaving nothing but faint delicate weave at the end of their tracks. This is beyond Pell's ability to comprehend, but he's heard distant tales of the psychic Maelstrom being used this way. Though Wolf packs are usually small in number, sometimes just two or three, they are almost always intergenerational and there is typically one that exhibits the presence of a mentor. Though this isn't necessarily a familial connection, it does suggest they are training their young --- their gifts, at least, are identified early. It strikes Pell, however, that they are not entirely human. They lack natural expressions. Though they try, they find it difficult to maintain facades when they fake them. He recalls that his adventuring buddies would question whether this was the cost of their abilities. That they paid for their abilities with their humanity. This makes them extremely dangerous and unpredictable.

In laying out a plan to defend the building The Cut evacuees sought shelter in, Pell explained that Wolves operate in packs. They communicate with and loosely coordinate their actions with other nearby packs. However, they weren't an army. Packs act independently of each other and usually do not get close to each other, rarely assembling. So, a coordinated siege and/or grand strategy was unlikely. Furthermore, though they do use stealth and guile as it befits them in achieving their objectives, he has never seen a pack use infiltration tactics. It is therefore unlikely that they would launch a surprise attack from the North unless there was an overt vulnerability for them to exploit. It is more likely that packs would approach from the South, pushing the already closeby packs into a pincer movement or encirclement. Anyone not perceived as being in a position of strength would be targeted---patrols would certainly be picked off and defences would be tested by hit and run skirmishes. It would therefore be important to convey strength and vigilance; lines of defense which had appropriate heft and overlapping redundancies. They'll systematically probe for and exploit weaknesses. However, given their unprecedented numbers, should the line be broken, they could disregard their usual reticence and assault the building. The strategies Pell had used in the past were, firstly, to evade them, secondly, to force their caution, and thirdly, to overwhelm them. They are difficult to overcome in a fight, so it would be wiser to flee. Pell suggested getting away from The Buried City at first dawn, and to travel North as swiftly as possible.

While resting after having been carried to House Gardenia during The Night, Pell overhears Matthew Lutey mention that the Wolves feed on the mystical energy that some people possess. He wanders through his memories to see if he can recall such a tale from his journeys and recalls the identity of a scholar he once befriended who he might be able to shed some light on the recent behaviour of the Wolves, his mate "Dr Heigeia", if only he had access to a psychic antenna to make contact...

Pell's history with the Wolves has been difficult. Having encountered them during his travels, he is of course fearful of their talents. However, he isn't acting out of fear. They represent a considerable threat to the people of The Overgrown Wilds. He has seen them in combat and they are formidable

foes---ones who are deserving of the utmost caution. Decisive action is requisite for survival. However, they also represent something more personal---something from his past he wouldn't like to admit could cloud his vision or influence his judgement. His friends from his younger years adventuring fared poorly in their encounters, regrettably with some meeting their fates. On one occasion, a pack hunted them as they travelled through coastal forests. An ambush gravely injured one of his companions whilst another was abducted. Ultimately, he lost both. The rest of the party were continually hounded for days until they secured refuge in the settlement they fled to. Memories of this makes him extremely anxious of their presence.

When Pell was strangling one of the Wolves, his first thought was that channelling the Maelstrom would distract them. He was to be a beacon that would attract their attention. However, on opening his brain whilst physically connected to one of them, he gleaned some insight into their motivation. He was surprised. They are determined to protect the two young girls...? What is their connection to the Wolves? Are the young girls to be abducted to be turned into Wolves? Was the psychic attack at Harbortown their doing? Did he aid the mother of the Wolves? She didn't smell like a Wolf...was she not their biological mother? They don't smell like Wolves either. Pell has much confusion to work through, and he is still pretty shaken by the two recent close encounters.

Pell gleaned much insight into the Wolves as they overwhelmed House Gardenia. Their ability to teleport confirms the stories Pell had heard of them disappearing without trace. Yet, this wasn't the most perturbed discovery. Their father is the Maelstrom itself! Furthermore, their "father" ordered the Wolves to protect the two young girls, Prune and Petunia, at Sequoia's bequest. In a moment of clarity following the revelation at this motivation, Pell stopped the fighting by assuming guardianship of the girls. It was a miracle that the Wolves agreed to such terms. However, more were coming and it dawned on Pell that the different packs might not follow the same will, but the three packs encountered here all seemed to behave similarly, if odd compared to those Wolves he had encountered in the past. Clearly, they were outmatched, but they hadn't been attacked directly.

During the psychic accident at Matthew Lutey's Vault, instigated by the window that bled instability across the Vault, Pell discovered more of the nature of the Wolves and their compulsion to spirit people away---a compulsion which evidently can only otherwise be sated by the directives of the Maelstrom. . Pell's first thought was his companions were murdered. However, what he discovered was far more horrifying. They turn their victims into Wolves, moulding them into their own inhuman form bereft of emotion and moral grievance. Wolves seem to exist in both the Maelstrom and the physical plain in a more "consistent" manner, travelling in packs to more easily breach the veil between them. Though the packs don't often congregate in numbers, certain psychic phenomena allow them to pour through in greater numbers and when this occurs they can fulfill their orders/compulsions together.

Basic Information

Anatomy

They look like humans.

Genetics and Reproduction

They seem not to reproduce. Instead, they abduct humans "with potential", who later return as Wolves of the Maelstrom.

Additional Information

Perception and Sensory Capabilities

They have human senses, as well as keen psychic senses.

From Setting
Apocalypse World
Genetic Ancestor(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Human
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Buried CityThe Overgrown Wilds
Discovered by
Astiniltlish "Pell" Pelligri

Giant Moth

Like real-world moths, but giant and rideable.

Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Overgrown Wilds
Discovered by
Errol Mustang

The Orchids

Orchids that somehow influence the thoughts and actions of nearby humans.

Something about them causes obsession and the desire to help them breed and propagate. Eventually, this overrides other drives. Proper communication is lost, then things like self-care.

Basic Information

Anatomy

They look like beautiful orchids.

Genetics and Reproduction

They seem to be able to psychically influence nearby humans into caring for them, including planting and helping with reproduction.

Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Overgrown Wilds

Places

The Overgrown Wilds

Apocalypse World: Burned Over Hard Zone type: The Overgrown Wilds

Maps

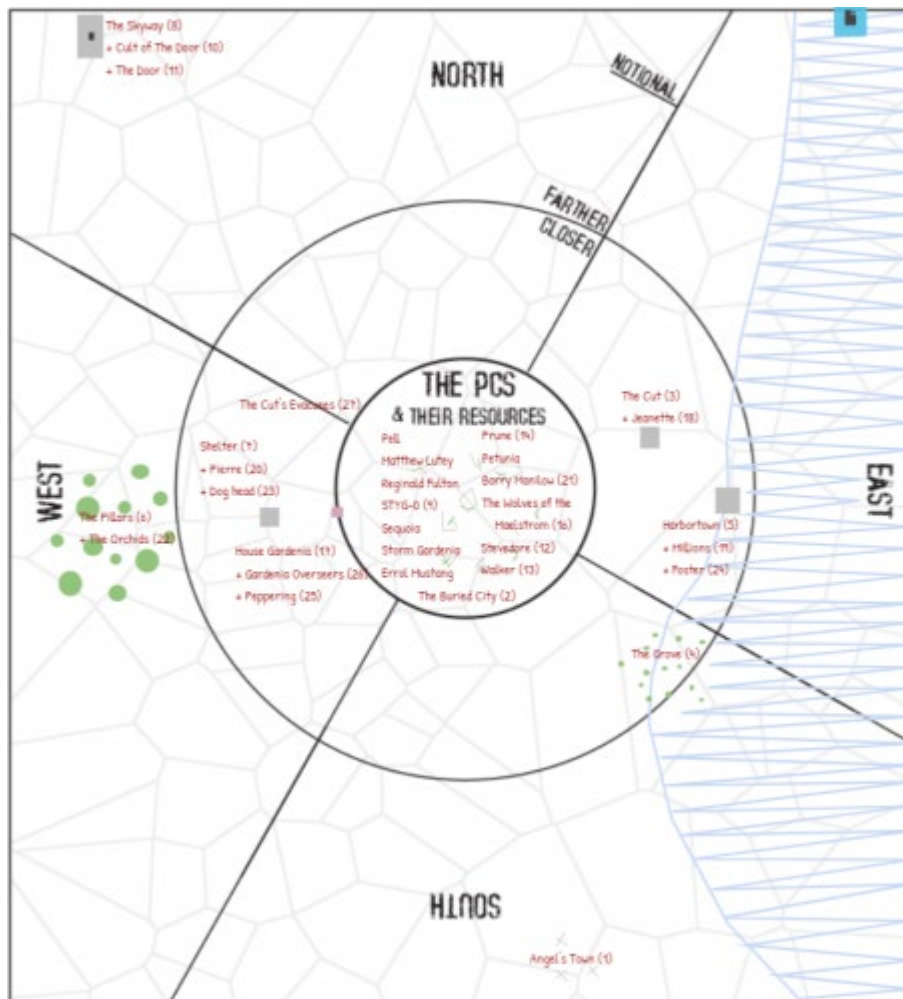


Figure 27 The abstract map of *The Overgrown Wilds*, generated by Ché Wilbraham. The background of the image is a template from *Apocalypse World: Burned Over* (Baker and Baker 2021: 80–1).

The Overgrown Wilds

Life boomed. The wilds overtook humanity, tore down its edifices and swallowed its landscape whole. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

A massive, mostly coniferous forest that has grown over and through the ruins of pre-apocalypse civilisation. The non-human life has grown and mutated: Many of the trees and other plants are gigantic; many of the animals have developed strange physiologies.

The remaining humans survive and make settlements where they can, always competing with nature.

Adventure: *The Door in Reality* takes place in this region.

Geography

A massive coniferous forest of strange trees and plants that grows through the ruins of civilisation and into the sea to the east. Rivers and streams run through it. The ruins of a large city make up the bulk of the central area - *The Buried City*.

Ecosystem

The animals of the area have mutated and developed since the apocalypse, now appearing as monstrous or strange reflections of "normal" wildlife. The predators among these creatures lurk among the trees or in the ruins of the old world.

Humans survive wherever they can find safety or establish settlements. The Cut and Harbortown are the most secure and have lasted years. Elsewhere, people roam from shelter to shelter while scavenging what they can from the ruins of civilisation and hunting the less-dangerous creatures.

The Wolves of the Maelstrom stalk humans in the area.

Localized Phenomena

The World's Psychic Maelstrom is always present, at the edge of perception.

History

There was a great war involving psychic strangeness and the world ended, though these two events may not be related. After the apocalypse, the war continued as nature took over, growing through human civilisation.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Forest, Boreal (Coniferous)
Location under
GASRPGCU
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angel's Town
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbortown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Gardenia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Buried City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cut
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Grove
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pillars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Skyway
Included Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those Who Will Open The Door
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Astiniltish "Pell" Pelligri
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Manilow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errol Mustang
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stevedore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walker
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 4
Inhabiting Species

• Giant Moth
• Human
• The Orchids
• Wolf of the Maelstrom
Related Plots
• Adventure: The Door in Reality

The Skyway

Where an enormous roadwork still resists the pulling, burying wilds, home to a cult of humanity's rebirth. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

A settlement atop a suspended chunk of pre-apocalypse roadway, difficult to access from the ground. The home of The Cult of The Door and The Door itself.

This settlement is a key focus of Sub-Plot: The Door and the later parts of Adventure: The Door in Reality.

Demographics

About half able-bodied fighters - hunters, defenders and physical workers. About half children, elderly and otherwise physically less able.

Government

The power structure is flat, with only reverence to The Door differentiating members of The Cult of The Door.

Defences

Incredibly difficult to access except for hand-powered basket lifts controlled by the settlement. About 100 poorly-equipped fighters from The Cult of The Door.

Industry & Trade

Very little trade occurs - contact with outsiders is undesirable.

Infrastructure

The Skyway is inaccessible from the ground without flight or the use of hand-pulley basket lifts constructed by the residents.

Assets

Primitive weaponry, steed creatures, pelts and meat from hunting, small amounts of scavenge (mostly from pre-apocalypse vehicles).

Guilds and Factions

Only The Cult of The Door.

History

The Door was discovered by early settlers, within an adjoining tree, years ago. Its strange properties encouraged investigation and, ultimately, worship. Those who found it disturbing, or who found life here too difficult, tended to leave, meaning that those who remained were the more zealous.

Architecture

Makeshift shacks and shanties using scavenged parts (mostly from pre-apocalypse motor vehicles), wood, plant fibres and animal pelts. Space is limited on the chunk of roadway, so these constructions are stacked high and hang from the edges of the concrete.

Geography

The elevated chunk of roadway is the only remaining piece still standing - the ruins of the road stretch off in both directions, containing ruined vehicles but mostly overtaken by plant life. The trees in this area are gigantic and the forest is dense.

Natural Resources

Wood and plant fibres, creatures to hunt - pelts and meat.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Village
Population
Roughly 200
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Door
Owning Organization
The Cult of The Door
Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Door in Reality, Session 9
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure: The Door in Reality• Sub-Plot: The Door

The Door

A focus of Adventure: The Door in Reality and Sub-Plot: The Door. See Reflections on The Door for some meta-context.

A strange black monolith inside the trunk of a large tree at The Skyway. It doesn't seem to have a real shape - when looking on it, it flickers between infinite similar forms and materials, making it appear to vibrate. When someone focuses on it, they may experience distant places and times, via The World's Psychic Maelstrom.

It may be some kind of mecha, or a door in reality, or something else entirely.

At the end of the aforementioned adventure, most of Those Who Will Open The Door come into contact with The Door, causing reality to branch as it resolves into various forms and generates various effects. To many, it is a portal to other realities.

Custom Move

In the Apocalypse World system, The Door has a custom move:

Staring at The Door triggers *Open Your Brain*, but the knowledge learned may not be about the current situation.

Purpose / Function

It is unclear if The Door was constructed at all, let alone with any purpose in mind. Perhaps some of its potential forms have clearer purposes than others.

Sensory & Appearance

The cavity within a great tree that contains The Door has an air of reverence and importance. The Door itself seems to vibrate in the centre of this space - a viewer cannot seem to focus on it, leaving its true form and material unclear.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Portal
Parent Location
The Skyway
Owning Organization
The Cult of The Door
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Matthew Lutey
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reginald Fulton
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stig
Related Report (Primary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Door in Reality, Session 9
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: The Door in Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sub-Plot: The Door

[Matthew Lutey's Vault](#)

Matthew Lutey's underground living / meditation space within the basement of a ruined building in The Buried City. It contains his psychic overload chamber and stacks of notebooks written by the hands of his multiple identities. The psychic overload chamber is a small room with intricate carvings on its surfaces - it acts as a psychic antenna, allowing Matthew to perform augury.

During Adventure: The Door in Reality, various members of Those Who Will Open The Door visit here at different times. In particular, the whole group directly encounter The World's Psychic Maelstrom here during The Door in Reality, Session 8 and The Door in Reality, Session 9.

Purpose / Function

The space was originally a functional utility sub-basement of a building in The Buried City before the apocalypse. A route to access it happened to survive. Matthew stumbled upon it and claimed the space as his own.

Entries

One route through tunnels from the surface of The Buried City - some through access corridors of the original building and some through spaces formed during later collapses and shifts.

Sensory & Appearance

Dark, with heavy air. Stacks of notebooks and etchings on the walls. Chaos.

Denizens

Matthew Lutey and little else.

Contents & Furnishings

Little in the way of comforts. A psychic overload chamber - a small room with intricate carvings.

Architecture

Near-ruined pre-apocalypse concrete.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Room, Security, Vault
Parent Location
The Buried City
Owner
Matthew Lutey
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Door in Reality, Session 8
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure: The Door in Reality

The Cut

A militant, hard-driven compound, trying to hold out. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

During Normal Times

Jeanette leads The Cut harshly - life here is uncomfortable, but no resident goes without their very basic needs, at least. Residents here are not put at unnecessary risk of death, but their lives can certainly be very hard. The defenders and scavenging/raiding parties are very well equipped.

Aggressive scavenger / raider teams are sent out, mostly into The Buried City. The total fighting force is a medium gang - about 40 well-equipped fighters. 3-harm & 2-armour in Apocalypse World terms. Mostly with decent firearms.

After the Evacuation

Reginald Fulton bombed The Cut's armoury during The Door in Reality, Session 1, revealing the fact that Harbortown had escalated their rivalry into direct attacks. This made Jeanette realise that this location could no longer keep her people safe. She sent all non-combatants away to find a new home, along with the best fighters and almost all vital resources.

Jeanette stayed behind with a small force of volunteer, older and less able defenders, with the intention of eliminating as many attackers from Harbortown as possible before dying in the defence of a now-empty settlement.

The Cut's Evacuees

Formed mostly of non-combatants, but with good resources and some great fighters (lead by Dremmer). The fighters will savagely protect the others. They are looking for a new place to settle, perhaps in The Buried City, before some of the fighters return to rescue those remaining at The Cut's old location.

In Apocalypse World terms, they are a medium gang with 2-harm & 1-armour and small gang with 3-harm & 2-armour.

The evacuees were scattered in an attack by the Wolves of the Maelstrom during The Door in Reality, Session 6, while they tried to camp during their first night in The Buried City.

Demographics

Before the evacuation: Around 40 fighters with good training and equipment. The remainder of the roughly 300 are mostly labourers and manual workers.

Government

Jeanette leads, unchallenged. The fighters enforce her rule (mostly via intimidation rather than violence).

Defences

Decent walls and a well-equipped fighting force of about 40, before the evacuation. Now, less than 10 of the weaker fighters remain at the original site, while the remaining 30+ are with the evacuees (with the best equipment).

Industry & Trade

Before the evacuation, they scavenged from The Buried City and either repurposed or traded with Harbortown.

Infrastructure

Some relatively small-scale farms of flora and fauna. Workshops for repurposing and repairing scavenge, maintaining equipment and constructing essentials. Very little in the way of entertainment and leisure.

Since the evacuation, anything of any real use or value has been taken away from the original settlement by the evacuees.

Assets

Before Reginald Fulton's bombing, there was a very impressive armoury. Many, but not all of its contents were saved.

Just about enough food and essentials for all residents to survive (but not be comfortable).

Anything of real use or value was taken by the evacuees.

Architecture

Spartan accommodations for all (shacks and shanties with little but essential furniture) - even Jeanette and the best fighters do not have impressive lodgings. Buildings are built simply but sturdily from mostly-scavenged materials.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Town
Population
Roughly 300
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Owner/Ruler
Jeanette
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeanette
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Door in Reality, Session 5
Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Door in Reality, Session 4
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut

STYG-0's Workshop

A workshop, hidden within The Buried City, that was constructed by STYG-0's AI, using Styg's body, during his blackout periods. It's well-equipped and laid out mostly how Styg would like it.

Styg regains consciousness in this workshop during The Door in Reality, Session 3, after his AI takes over during a fight. During The Door in Reality, Session 6, the workshop serves as the backdrop for Sequoia's death - an important moment in the story.

Purpose / Function

Pre-apocalypse, this space was part of a mechanic's workshop. As the wilds took over and The Buried City shifted, this space was concealed but remained near the surface with much of its interior intact. Styg's AI brought and constructed extra tools and equipment after finding the place.

Alterations

Styg's AI modified, upgraded, downgraded and repaired the tools, machinery and equipment here (and brought from elsewhere) to better fit its (and Styg's) capabilities. It now resembles an Adeptus Mechanicus workshop, complete with appropriate décor (candles, symbology, etc.).

Architecture

Pre-apocalypse modern concrete workshop.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality

Type
Workshop
Parent Location
The Buried City
Owner
Styg
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Door in Reality, Session 6
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Angel's Town

A place of healing and death, hard to find, hard to reach, hard to leave. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

Far south of The Buried City, there are rumours of a place called Angel's Town. The people there may have some mastery over life and death, or perhaps other mystical powers, but it's known to be hard to find and access.

While Those Who Will Open The Door heard rumours of Angel's Town, none of them ever travelled there. Matthew Lutey had a vision of the cliff that the town sits on top of, as well as the angel-shaped rock that marks the climb. He set out to find it but was injured en route and had to turn back.

No more information was determined about the place. The gamemaster didn't prepare details or plan anything, as is required by Apocalypse World.

It was to be the focus of Sub-Plot: Angel's Town, but this received little attention and went unresolved.

History

Rumours of the mastery over life and death at Angel's Town have persisted for years, though very few people claim to have been there. Angelic imagery can be found in other settlements, for superstitious or religious purposes.

Geography

A large, strange rock in the rough shape of an angelic figure marks out the starting point for the treacherous climb to Angel's Town, which supposedly sits atop a great cliff.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Town
Population
Unknown
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Related Plots

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-Plot: Angel's Town

House Gardenia

The home of Storm Gardenia and her Children. A giant, fabulous treehouse between Shelter and The Buried City.

Here, Storm looks after her Children and welcomes any who wish to join the family. The residents work and play hard, and live in relative bliss, for the post-apocalypse. Resources can be scarce, but unity can help overcome such difficulties.

Some of the family became obsessed with / brainwashed by The Orchids, after Errol Mustang brought them here. This led to some friction and the formation of Gardenia Overseers, led by Visage. The Orchids were eventually removed, but at the cost of causing a rift and generating some bad blood between the Overseers and some pro-Orchid residents.

During Adventure: The Door in Reality, Storm and Errol spent much time here, dealing with The Orchids. From The Door in Reality, Session 6, House Gardenia became almost a home base for Those Who Will Open The Door, with all members assembling here to share information, discuss and plan.

Purpose / Function

The treehouse was constructed (and is continually worked on) by Storm's Children to serve as their home.

Architecture

Wood and scavenged materials formed into interconnected shacks suspended in a giant tree.

Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Tree house
Parent Location
The Overgrown Wilds
Owner
Storm Gardenia
Owning Organization
Storm's Children
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peppering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storm Gardenia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visage
Related Report (Primary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 8
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 5
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality

The Pillars

Trees like a city, bigger than city blocks, taller than skyscrapers, towering over the world. Its inhabitants harvest orchids and rainwater and are losing their language. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

A strange settlement exists here, among high branches. The residents do very little but tend to The Orchids, seemingly under their influence somehow.

Somebody here called Brain is out for Errol Mustang's blood, as a result of Errol's *Ear to the Ground* move. No further details are known about this grudge, including who Brain is.

This location was to be a focal point for Sub-Plot: The Orchids, but this went unresolved by the end of the game. No solid details were determined or given for the workings of The Orchids or the details of the people at The Pillars.

Errol spent a little time here during *Adventure: The Door in Reality*, trading some food to the residents in exchange for some Orchids that they were very keen to send to other places.

Demographics

Very few of the residents seem able to speak or do very much under their own agency, simply spending all waking hours tending to The Orchids.

Defences

Almost completely inaccessible except by air.

Industry & Trade

Almost none.

Infrastructure

Almost none - there are a few covered places where people might sleep (only when needed), while rainwater and edible vegetation can be found (but does not seem to be deliberately farmed).

Assets

The Orchids.

Geography

The high branches of utterly gigantic trees, interconnected by growth and other plants.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Village
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Related Plots

• Adventure: The Door in Reality
• Sub-Plot: The Orchids

The Grove

Where the wilds meet the ocean, giant trees rising up even from the sea floor, whose people use bridges and boats and rarely come to land at all. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

While Those Who Will Open The Door heard rumours of The Grove, none of them ever travelled there.

Aside from the evocative description from the Apocalypse World: Burned Over book (above), very little further information was revealed about The Grove and the players didn't take much interest in it. There was a brief mention that they trade with Harbortown, but that's it. As such, there's no detail to provide about its people, infrastructure or resources. Apocalypse World prevents the gamemaster from generating more detail than necessary about game elements, so if they don't gain attention during play, we don't know much about them.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Village
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Related Plots
• Adventure: The Door in Reality

Shelter

A holding cut vigilantly from the wilds, connected by tenuous roads to anywhere else. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

A settlement of free spirits, gathered around Pierre. He's a charismatic, optimistic and dangerously naïve leader. The settlement doesn't have much in terms of material resources, but the residents are creative, many can perform entertaining acts and they generally love to party. Dog head runs a reasonably successful trade as a medicine man.

Shelter maintains a good relationship with House Gardenia as Storm's Children often come by to party or perform labour. Dog head keeps them supplied with recreational drugs and medicine.

During Adventure: The Door in Reality, Shelter was a focal location for Sub-Plot: The Orchids, with Dog head being directly involved in investigating their mystery and spreading them to some members of Storm Gardenia's children.

Pierre had asked Storm and Errol Mustang to help develop the infrastructure of Shelter, building it into a genuine settlement, rather than a shanty town. It became clear to them that he was largely clueless about what would be involved, but they were fairly eager to help.

In Storm's ending to the adventure, after her contact with The Door, she convinced the residents of Shelter to move to House Gardenia and join her family, developing the treehouse into a formidable settlement in the process.

Demographics

Mostly free-spirited young adults who are capable of surviving with little help from others and value freedom and a (relatively) laid-back community. Residents don't have much, but enjoy partying together and other simple pleasures.

Government

Pierre takes a leadership role, though Shelter embraces freedom and personal choice. He really only acts as a figurehead in rare negotiations with other groups and his charisma means he tends to be central to any discussion or diplomacy within the settlement. Residents are largely free to do what they like unhindered, as long as nobody else is harmed.

Defences

About 30 poorly-equipped fighters, mostly with improvised melee weapons, but some with bows and spears.

Industry & Trade

Dog head's medicines and drugs are the only real reason others would come to acquire things from Shelter. He distributes much of his products and any earnings in return for entertainment and scavenged resources from the other residents.

Infrastructure

Housing in relatively poor-quality shacks. A couple of covered spaces to socialise and party. Some small-scale farming and other trades, generally run by an individual or family unit. Dog head's medicine man operation is the most notable establishment, with a better quality building and casual arrangements with other residents for work.

Assets

Not much in terms of material resources, but creative and generally optimistic people are plentiful. Many can perform various acts of entertainment, like singing, music, dance, etc.

History

Various free spirits from other settlements (or wanderers) gathered around Pierre. They wandered until they found a camp that they didn't end up leaving, in a relatively good location for scavenging and security. They have slowly worked on it since.

Architecture

Mostly shanties and tents made of scavenged materials and easily-gathered natural resources. A few buildings are slightly better quality and more sturdy.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality

Type
Slum
Population
Roughly 120
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Owner/Ruler
Pierre
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog head • Pierre
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality

Harbortown

Mercenary and calculating. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

A well-defended, coastal trading town. Harbortown has access to wealth and supplies beyond most other places in The Overgrown Wilds. Inequality of wealth and opportunity is vast, here. The rich use their power to maintain their position while the poor struggle to survive.

During Adventure: The Door in Reality, various members of Those Who Will Open The Door visited Harbortown and became involved in its conflict with The Cut, as well as Foster's attempted coup against Millions. The attempted coup was never resolved - those involved didn't return to Harbortown after agreeing to take part, so we don't know what the outcome was.

Demographics

Wealthy traders and their hangers-on and "employees" make up the very wealthy minority. The majority of residents are incredibly poor, scraping by on what they can earn from the traders via hard labour or similar.

Government

The wealthiest, most powerful traders formed an interest group that make decisions concerning all of Harbortown. Millions calls the shots as the wealthiest, as they are able to buy the agreement of others.

Defences

Walls made of scavenged concrete and metal, with heavy weapon emplacements. A small but well-equipped defence force of about 15 (3-harm and 2-armour in Apocalypse World terms), with decent-quality firearms. Mercenaries on-hand for further requirements.

Infrastructure

Mostly dedicated to trade and shipping. Various docks and warehouses, along with repair shops and other maintenance services. Plenty of entertainment venues and lodgings for travelling merchants and mercenaries.

Assets

Great relative wealth due to trade routes via sea and land, mostly stored via the wealthy merchants' possessions, businesses and homes.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Town
Population
Roughly 300
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Owner/Ruler
Millions
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster • Millions
Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Door in Reality, Session 3
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality • Sub-Plot: Harbortown Versus The Cut

The Buried City

Vines pulling down the walls, trees shouldering aside the foundations, strange creatures' dens in the understories, wild hunting ranges where were highways and parking lots. (Baker and Baker 2021: 60)

The ruins of a very large, pre-apocalypse city make up a large portion of The Overgrown Wilds. Since the apocalypse, nature has overtaken the remains of this population centre - greenery grows over and through buildings, pulling them down and moving them aside. Mutated creatures stalk the underground spaces and plentiful cover.

Most of Those Who Will Open The Door had some form of base in The Buried City. While traversing it was dangerous, they passed through and searched various parts of it during Adventure: The Door in Reality.

The more dangerous of the mutated creatures are 2-harm & 1-armour, in Apocalypse World terms.

Geography

The ruins of a large city, overcome by the encroaching forest. Streams pass through.

Ecosystem

Creatures stalk below. Scavengers and wanderers live in the few safe spaces above.

Natural Resources

Vast quantities of untapped scavenge.

From Setting
Apocalypse World: Burned Over
Related Adventure
Adventure: The Door in Reality
Type
Forest, Boreal (Coniferous)
Location under
The Overgrown Wilds
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew Lutey's Vault STYG-0's Workshop
Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Door in Reality, Session 1
Inhabiting Species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Wolf of the Maelstrom
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality

Blade and Lockpick

Sorensen's *Blade and Lockpick* (2017) is a roleplaying game engine for solo and two player games. It is focused on quick group-resolution of challenges, using opposing dice pools (or flat challenge ratings). It includes tools and tables for generating content and answering questions relating to solo play.

I played *Blade and Lockpick* alone, and not for very long, but I wanted to try out a solo RPG as a way of engaging with systems that emulate some functions of a GM to allow for solo play. It seemed that the system mostly relied on replacing GM decision-making with much more dice-rolling on random tables, which I wasn't particularly into.

Adventure: Iron and Coal

A story generated using the Blade and Lockpick system, with one player. The system dictated the play of a high adventure, epic quest in a pulpy, historical, Industrial Age horror setting. The details in this section were generated and decided through play, beginning with Iron and Coal, Session 1, but are stored here to provide an overview.

Story Threads

- Eleri Jones and Ceridwen's families are working together, but they don't fully cooperate or trust each other.
 - Eleri's estranged husband (Seren Jones' father) is trying to find Eleri and Seren. His family and friends are in pursuit and had a violent run-in with the group not too long ago.
 - Ceridwen's family are looking for her, via their trading connections.
 - Ceridwen's family have offered money to any Cardiff Dockworkers who help capture John Williams.

- Seren has been stealing from wealthy people in Cardiff and has established a relationship with the underworld there.
- Some terrible crystal (the source of the horror, that may relate to monsters somehow) is in the possession of the Cardiff underworld.

Relations

Protagonists

John Williams, Eleri Jones, Ceridwen, Seren Jones

Allies

Ceridwen's Admirers, Rhys (dockworker and John's friend)

Neutrals/Bystanders

Merchants, Cardiff Child Labourers, Cardiff Underworld, Cardiff Dockworkers

Adversaries

Eleri Jones' Estranged Husband and his family, Ceridwen's family, The Law

Backdrops

Locations

Cardiff

Plot type
Adventure
Related Characters
• Ceridwen
• Eleri Jones
• John Williams
• Seren Jones

Session Reports

Iron and Coal, Session 1

This session report was written as part of the play, by the player, in the first-person:

General Summary

Building a Game

Using the 'Game Builder' rules in *Blade and Lockpick*, I generate a new campaign using rolls against tables:

- My **Genre** is **Horror** (97).
 - My horror base genre is **Historical** (59).
 - My historical era is the **Industrial Age** (66).
 - With a 25% chance, my historical campaign is also **Pulpy** (9).
- My **Theme** is **Epic Quest** (86).
- My **Mood** is **High Adventure** (11).

Therefore, my campaign will be a High Adventure Epic Quest in a Pulpy Historical Industrial Age Horror setting.

Knowing little about the Industrial Age, I take to [Wikipedia](#) for a bit of inspiration. The image on the right, [Iron and Coal](#), serves to set a visual tone and gives me a name for the campaign.

I idly think about potential adventures: the evils of coal and smoke, horrific injuries in brutal working conditions with untested machinery, the fear and alienisation of the unknown. I struggle to see how high adventure, epic quests fit into this...

Building Some Characters

Blade and Lockpick is a system that revolves around having a group of characters in play, all controlled by me. I try to think of some character concepts for the setting. My initial thought is that the group should be close-knit - perhaps a family, so I consult *Blade and Lockpick's* 'Oracle' (a mechanic that emulates GM decision making via a random roll that provides a nuanced yes-no answer to a question):

Should the group of characters be a family?

Yes (78).

So, there we have it. Some googling highlights that [there were some independent black people living in Britain in the late eighteenth century](#), so I decide that one of the parental figures of the family is black. Perhaps a former sailor, now settled. I start the *character path* method of generating a character:

The Father Figure

- *I grew up in captivity, a victim of the Atlantic slave trade. (Gained the **Connection** "Former Owner".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to make a break for freedom. (Gained the **Ability** "Cunning".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me being pressganged into service on a Navy vessel. (Gained the **Skill** "Sailor".)*
- *Everything was going great until I prevented a superior from beating a crewmate to death, getting me beaten and discharged. (Gained the **Flaw** "Brooks No Injustice".)*
- *And now I am working at the docks in Cardiff, providing for my family. (Gained the **Skill** "Hauler" and the **Connection** "Cardiff Dockworkers".)*

This completes the first character's mechanical considerations. I decide a name like John Williams works, so I create the linked character page, fill it out a little (including four items of Flair, which the rules mention outside of the character path method) and then move on.

The Mother Figure

- *I grew up in a settlement near Pontypridd, where most of the men worked the mines. At a young age, I married a miner who I thought I loved. (Gained the **Connection** "Estranged Husband".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to leave my settlement behind, fleeing with my child and Ceridwen, the woman I truly loved. (Gained the **Ability** "Strong".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me and my family being pursued as we moved around, looking to make a home. (Gained the **Skill** "Going Unnoticed".)*

- *Everything was going great until my husband's brothers caught up to us near Cardiff. I fought too hard and would have been captured if John hadn't helped us escape. (Gained the **Flaw** "Confrontational".)*
- *And now I am living in Cardiff with my partners, John and Ceridwen, trying to maintain a low profile and keep us all safe. (Gained the **Skill** "Perception" and the **Connection** "The Law".)*

Similarly to the previous, Eleri Jones is created.

The Other Mother Figure

- *I grew up in a relatively wealthy trading family in Pontypridd. (Gained the **Connection** "Merchants".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to live as my true self. Having fallen in love with Eleri, I planned and prepared for us to flee together to find ourselves a home. (Gained the **Ability** "Intelligent".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me running into a merchant who half-recognised me from childhood. I had to work hard to convince them they were wrong. (Gained the **Skill** "Charismatic".)*
- *Everything was going great until I drew too much attention - socialising energises me. (Gained the **Flaw** "Noticeable".)*
- *And now I am living in Cardiff with my family, working the taverns. (Gained the **Skill** "Fortune-Telling" and the **Connection** "Admirers".)*

Thus, Ceridwen appears.

The Child

- *I grew up in various places, but mostly Cardiff where I started working young. (Gained the **Connection** "Cardiff Child Labourers".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to use my second mum's teaching to get an apprenticeship with a shipping company. (Gained the **Ability** "Adaptable".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me losing my place at the shipping company, as rumours spread about my family. I took some valuables with me when I left. (Gained the **Skill** "Sneaky".)*
- *Everything was going great until some of the merchants cornered me for a beating. I am no fighter, but luckily mum saved me. (Gained the **Flaw** "Cannot Fight".)*
- *And now I am unable to find more decent-paying work in Cardiff. I've taken to frequenting areas where folk have more than they need, and reclaiming supplies to help my family. (Gained the **Skill** "Theft" and the **Connection** "Cardiff Underworld".)*

Finally, Seren Jones joins the group.

The Group and a Story

Going through the process of generating each character started to grind a bit, but I'm quite fond of the family I've created. Reflecting on the genre, it looks like there's potential for themes relating to persecuted outsiders and exploitation of the underprivileged, but these concepts feel a bit cliché (and maybe a bit exploitative). I made the characters I wanted to, so we will see what the system produces through play - I'll try to steer it out of areas that needlessly re-tread trauma that I haven't had to deal with in real life (though to ignore these ideas could also be doing a disservice). I'm getting tied up, so we'll just see what happens.

I'm just going to summarise the story of the family here, in a more digestible format:

- John escaped his captors while quite young, but was then pressganged into Naval service. He rebelled against an unjust superior and was discharged.
- Ceridwen had a relatively privileged upbringing, but was pressured into living as a false identity. She wanted to escape.
- In her home mining settlement, Eleri married young and gave birth to Seren. She later met Ceridwen and the two fell in love. They plotted to leave their homes behind, taking young Seren and starting a new life together somewhere else. They were pursued by their families and had to move around a lot.
- Eleri, Ceridwen and Seren ran into trouble near Cardiff. John came to their rescue and helped them escape. The four spent time together as John helped them find somewhere safe to stay in Cardiff. John, Eleri and Ceridwen eventually formed a polygamous relationship and raised Seren together.
- The current circumstances are:
 - John is hauling at the docks. He has a decent reputation, though the pay isn't great and his old injuries bother him.
 - Eleri has no real employment because she is trying to keep a low profile. She maintains the home, though she doesn't enjoy it very much, and does odd jobs.
 - Ceridwen mostly frequents taverns and other social spaces, making some money from fortune-telling and other sources. She tries to be inconspicuous, but isn't very good at it.
 - Seren mostly pursues a life of crime and deception, taking from the wealthy and ignorant.
- Various people and groups are looking for the family, with ill intent.

Related Adventure
Adventure: Iron and Coal
Report Date
21 May 2021

These sections contain more of my reflections than usual anyway, as I was trying a first-person, journalistic method of reporting sessions, but I should add that I was struggling to get into the game from the first session. The setting that I randomly generated was not to my taste, harming my engagement. I suppose I could have rerolled or just chosen another, but I was trying to play properly.

Iron and Coal, Session 2

General Summary

Starting the Story

I have a stated direction / theme for the adventure, as well as some characters and organisations with some established relationships, but there needs to be some activity for the game's story to start. One of the elements referenced in the Blade and Lockpick rulebook is maintaining a list of

'Story Threads', identifying potentially important rumours, plot hooks, risks, areas of interest, etc. This seems like a good place to start, so I compile a list:

- Eleri Jones' estranged husband (Seren Jones' father) is trying to find Eleri and Seren. His family and friends are in pursuit and had a violent run-in with the group not too long ago.
- Ceridwen's family are looking for her, via their trading connections.
- Seren has been stealing from wealthy people in Cardiff and has established a relationship with the underworld there.

While writing the list, it occurred to me that Eleri and Ceridwen's families could have pooled their efforts to search for the group, so I asked The Oracle:

Have Eleri and Ceridwen's families joined together in their searches for the group?

Yes But (66).

I interpret the "but" to mean that their alliance is shaky for one reason or another. I'll add a Story Thread:

- Eleri and Ceridwen's families are working together, but they don't fully cooperate or trust each other.

I'm aware that the genre of the adventure is supposed to be "horror", but I'm not sure where the horror / dread / etc. will come from in the established characters and threads, so I ask The Oracle some questions:

Has Seren already stolen something that is the source of the horror within the story?

No (10).

Is the source of the horror some kind of monster?

No But (35).

I interpret the "but" to mean that (a) monster(s) aren't the source of the horror, but they may be involved somehow. Perhaps generated by the true source or otherwise present.

Is the source of the horror some item or artefact?

Yes (79).

Is this item or artefact in Cardiff?

Likely No (42).

I'm going to overrule the "likely", because I think it's likely for the story that the item that is central to the horror is in proximity to the main characters.

Is this item a book?

No (15).

Is this item a gem / crystal?

Yes (76).

Is this crystal at the docks?

Definite No (4).

Is this crystal in the possession of a merchant?

No (8).

Is this crystal in the possession of the underworld?

Yes (75).

So there we have it. I'll add another Story Thread:

- Some terrible crystal (the source of the horror, that may relate to monsters somehow) is in the possession of the Cardiff underworld.

That seems like a reasonable setup for starting to establish and play out scenes in this world, with elements that have potential for spinning out into events that push the story forward. Ideas for early scenes include having Seren mixed up in some situation involving the crystal, or the group otherwise seeing its effects on some people or a location.

The Opening Scene

I know that the horror of the story relates to the underworld and the crystal, but I'm also interested in the tension that comes from the pursuit by Eleri and Ceridwen's families. Blade and Lockpick includes tables that can be used to generate events relating to characters (etc.), so I'm going to consult the 'Enemy Actions' table to see what this group is up to:

Actions taken by Eleri and Ceridwen's families:

Subversion of allies (80).

It's established that John Williams is in good standing with the Cardiff Dockworkers, but I'm going to take this result to mean that Ceridwen's wealthy family have used their influence to track him to the area / profession and are offering a reward for information about him or his capture (which switches Cardiff Dockworkers from Allies to Neutral, at best). This sets up a scene with John going to work one day:

John Receives a Warning

John arrives at work one morning, like usual, but is quickly taken aside by a friend who seemed to be waiting for him: "John, watch yourself today. Some merchants came around offering coin for any information about someone fitting your description, with more promised if anyone could bring you in. Plenty of the lads were keen to help them out, so I don't know if it's wise for you to show your face."

"Thanks, Rhys. I'd best get back home and check they haven't found the others yet. Appreciate the warning." John hands Rhys a little money by way of thanks.

Was John spotted by any of the dockworkers who want to turn him in?

Likely No (45).

It's unlikely that John would evade the notice of all the other dockworkers milling around the entrance to the site, with rumours flying about his bounty. Two others approach, in a thinly veiled attempt to corner him. John and Rhys prepare to fight so that John can escape.

Challenge - John and Rhys defend themselves against two approaching dockworkers who wish to subdue John.

Round 1:

John and Rhys' roll: 6, 4 = 6+1 = 7

Dockworkers' roll: 3, 3 = 3

"Come here, John - I need to ta-" John decks the first dockworker with a powerful punch just as the two of them try to grab him. Rhys holds the other at bay.

Round 2:

John and Rhys' roll: 2, 6 = 6+1 = 7

Dockworkers' roll: 5

Rhys grabs the second dockworker, swings, and slams him into the ground, pinning him. "Now's your chance - go check on your family."

"Thanks again. I owe you." John quickly nods to Rhys before fleeing the scene. He heads home as quickly as he can, to check on his family.

Notes

This reflection was recorded immediately after the session:

Who's Doing the Work?

The system is giving me prompts and narrowing some ideas down, but I'm really generating all the content. Beyond the broad flavour of the adventure and some vague event descriptions, it doesn't offer up any "meaty" story content. We're generating the story together, but it's mostly acting as some slight inspiration and constraints on my imagination and desires for what I want to see playing out. This isn't a criticism, of course.

It contrasts with something like a gamebook (also a solo, paper-based RPG-of-sorts), which brings all the story content but just allows me to navigate through it. Or even The Darkest House (which the GASRPGCU group recently started playing), which also brings (almost) all the story content but requires a mediator to present that to the players appropriately and manage some aspects of the experience.

Related Adventure
Adventure: Iron and Coal
Report Date
07 Jun 2021

I didn't return to this game after the second session – I wasn't enjoying it very much and I felt I had got what I needed in terms of experiencing the system and mechanics. It was quite tiring to play, having to continually adlib a story and remember to run a system properly alone. The only "GM work" that the system really emulates is in some decision-making around inclusion of elements, character choices, story direction, etc. I still had to interpret all the results of the rolls that were generated, though. It felt like imagining/writing a story with extra steps.

I understand that there are some game elements underneath it that I didn't engage with very much – skill checks, combat, etc. But none of them felt compelling enough to keep me engaged, especially when the setting wasn't to my taste.

Player Characters

John Williams

Using the Blade and Lockpick system, John's characteristics are:

- **Abilities**
 - Cunning
- **Skills**
 - Sailor
 - Hauler
- **Talents**
 - (none)
- **Flair**
 - Will not wear clothes that fasten at the collar or wrists
 - Stance is a bit crooked from old injuries
 - Won't drink alcohol but really enjoys lemon juice
 - Always carries a length of chain
- **Flaws**
 - Brooks No Injustice
- **Connections**
 - Former Owner
 - Cardiff Dockworkers

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Fit and strong, though bothered by old injuries.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

- *I grew up in captivity, a victim of the Atlantic slave trade. (Gained the **Connection** "Former Owner".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to make a break for freedom. (Gained the **Ability** "Cunning".)*

- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me being pressganged into service on a Navy vessel. (Gained the **Skill** "Sailor".)*
- *Everything was going great until I prevented a superior from beating a crewmate to death, getting me beaten and discharged. (Gained the **Flaw** "Brooks No Injustice".)*
- *And now I am working at the docks in Cardiff, providing for my family. (Gained the **Skill** "Hauler" and the **Connection** "Cardiff Dockworkers".)*

Gender Identity

Man

Education

Whatever could be gleaned while in captivity and then working on Naval vessels.

Species
Human
Age
34
Spouses
Eleri Jones (Partner)
Ceridwen (Partner)
Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seren Jones
Current Residence
Cardiff
Pronouns
he / him
Eyes
Brown
Hair
Short, afro
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Dark brown
Height
5'10"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: Iron and Coal
Known Languages
English, some French

Eleri Jones

Using the Blade and Lockpick system, Eleri's characteristics are:

- **Abilities**
 - Strong
- **Skills**
 - Going Unnoticed
 - Perception
- **Talents**
 - (none)

- **Flair**
 - Tends to have a rugged appearance, but takes great care maintaining her hair
 - Very good at cooking but doesn't really like to do it
 - Will only fight without a weapon
 - Works on drawing skills whenever she has the chance
- **Flaws**
 - Confrontational
- **Connections**
 - Estranged Husband
 - The Law

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Sturdy and strong.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

- *I grew up in a settlement near Pontypridd, where most of the men worked the mines. At a young age, I married a miner who I thought I loved. (Gained the **Connection** "Estranged Husband".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to leave my settlement behind, fleeing with [my child](#) and Ceridwen, the woman I truly loved. (Gained the **Ability** "Strong".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me and my family being pursued as we moved around, looking to make a home. (Gained the **Skill** "Going Unnoticed".)*
- *Everything was going great until my husband's brothers caught up to us near Cardiff. I fought too hard and would have been captured if John hadn't helped us escape. (Gained the **Flaw** "Confrontational".)*
- *And now I am living in Cardiff with my partners, John and Ceridwen, trying to maintain a low profile and keep us all safe. (Gained the **Skill** "Perception" and the **Connection** "The Law".)*

Gender Identity

Woman

Education

None to speak of.

Species
Human
Age
36
Spouses
John Williams (Partner)
Ceridwen (Partner)
Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seren Jones
Pronouns
she / her

Eyes
Green
Hair
Curly, thick, dark brown
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Tanned and leathery
Height
5'8"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: Iron and Coal
Known Languages
English, Welsh

Ceridwen

a.k.a. Ceri

Using the Blade and Lockpick system, Ceridwen's characteristics are:

- **Abilities**
 - Intelligent
- **Skills**
 - Charismatic
 - Fortune-Telling
- **Talents**
 - (none)
- **Flair**
 - Stays barefoot whenever possible
 - Likes to socialise and revel in attention, but doesn't like to look people in the eye
 - Has a knack for quickly understanding aspects of people, which she uses for fortune-telling
 - Gets tense and exhausted after being around people for a few hours
- **Flaws**
 - Noticeable
- **Connections**
 - Merchants
 - Admirers

Mental characteristics

Personal history

- *I grew up in* a relatively wealthy trading family in Pontypridd. (Gained the **Connection** "Merchants".)
- *When I got older, I decided to* live as my true self. Having fallen in love with Eleri , I planned and prepared for us to flee together to find ourselves a home. (Gained the **Ability** "Intelligent".)
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me* running into a merchant who half-recognised me from childhood. I had to work hard to convince them they were wrong. (Gained the **Skill** "Enchanting".)

- *Everything was going great until I drew too much attention - socialising energises me.* (Gained the **Flaw** "Noticeable".)
- *And now I am living in Cardiff with my family, working the taverns.* (Gained the **Skill** "Fortune-Telling" and the **Connection** "Admirers".)

Gender Identity

Woman

Education

Good, compared to the average. Some reading, writing, arithmetic and history.

Species
Human
Age
31
Spouses
John Williams (Partner)
Eleri Jones (Partner)
Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seren Jones
Pronouns
she / her
Eyes
Green
Hair
Long, straight, dark ginger
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Pale white
Height
5'4"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: Iron and Coal
Known Languages
English, Welsh, some Latin

Seren Jones

Using the Blade and Lockpick system, Seren's characteristics are:

- **Abilities**
 - Adaptable
- **Skills**
 - Sneaky
 - Theft
- **Talents**
 - (none)
- **Flair**
 - Maintains an androgynous appearance - which is how she is comfortable but also aids with disguise (etc.)

- Struggles to hide disdain when dealing with wealthy people
- Very charitable towards suffering children
- Though she has no real feelings towards him, she keeps a drawing that her mum made of her first dad on her all the time
- **Flaws**
 - Cannot Fight
- **Connections**
 - Cardiff Child Labourers
 - Cardiff Underworld

Mental characteristics

Personal history

- *I grew up in various places, but mostly Cardiff where I started working young. (Gained the **Connection** "Cardiff Child Labourers".)*
- *When I got older, I decided to use my second mum's teaching to get an apprenticeship with a shipping company. (Gained the **Ability** "Adaptable".)*
- *However, events beyond my control resulted in me losing my place at the shipping company, as rumours spread about my family. I took some valuables with me when I left. (Gained the **Skill** "Sneaky".)*
- *Everything was going great until some of the merchants cornered me for a beating. I am no fighter, but luckily mum saved me. (Gained the **Flaw** "Cannot Fight".)*
- *And now I am unable to find more decent-paying work in Cardiff. I've taken to frequenting areas where folk have more than they need, and reclaiming supplies to help my family. (Gained the **Skill** "Theft" and the **Connection** "Cardiff Underworld".)*

Gender Identity

Woman

Education

Some reading, writing and arithmetic from Ceridwen.

Species
Human
Age
19
Parents
Eleri Jones
Parents (Adopting)
Ceridwen
John Williams
Pronouns
she / her
Eyes
Brown
Hair
Short, light brown, slightly curly
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
White, slightly tanned

Height
5'8"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: Iron and Coal

Blades in the Dark

Harper's *Blades in the Dark* (2017) is another influential title, in a similar vein to *Apocalypse World*. The book presents the system and setting, which are designed to provide players with a game about "daring scoundrels building a criminal enterprise on the haunted streets of an industrial-fantasy city" (Harper 2017: 1). Also like *Apocalypse World*, the action in a game will generally be led by player choice, and the GM is encouraged not to plan out plots, and to play reactively, in response to player decisions. There are similar elements in the system for the GM to generate and track details of the world and NPCs, such that they can provide content for the players to react to.

Adventures Using *Blades in the Dark*

The group's first *Blades in the Dark* adventure, in around March of 2020, was GMed by another player. It only ran for a few sessions, which were mostly focused on a group of criminals attempting to establish themselves in the setting's underworld.

In my first contact with *Blades in the Dark*, I chose to play as a character with little free will – an automaton under the command of another. I felt that I didn't do enough to establish my character's drives or look for opportunities to contribute to the party's efforts. While this may have been appropriate for the character I was playing, it made the game a bit less engaging for me because I experienced less agency, and I feel like it made the GM's job of engaging me harder.

While this was something of an accident, due to an ill-considered character choice, it did prompt me to reflect on the effects of individual player engagement on the ongoing game, and the group dynamics. When one player and/or PC is less active or engaged, they "fade from view" and shift the group's balance. It could be that the group needs the fictional skills of that character to succeed at some challenge, or that another voice in some discussion about the game could reveal new insights, but when a character (perhaps via their player) becomes disengaged, the rest of the group is deprived of that input. This can make challenges harder, or make the game feel less rich, and can lead to some slight social awkwardness if the participants start to feel like one of the group isn't very interested in the activity.

The group's second *Blades in the Dark* adventure, in 2023, was GMed by Ché. Partly due to the nature of the system, this was a similar affair, focusing on a group of criminals attempting to establish themselves in the setting's underworld (though the characters and criminal enterprises were very different between the two games). This also only ran for a few sessions.

As with *Apocalypse World*, I felt like I got to grips with *Blades in the Dark* better by running it, especially after having already played it once. Reading the rulebooks only does so much – there's an aspect of GMing that requires understanding the "flow", "vibe", or similar, of a system.

Blades in the Dark certainly felt a bit like *Apocalypse World* in that I had to be reactive and focus on making the world seem “real” while mostly just responding to what the players chose to do. It did feel like I had a bit more control over direction, though. With the structure revolving around heists, or similar missions, there’s an opportunity to guide player action by what fictional leads I present them with. I might have an idea for an interesting building I’d like the game to take place in, so I can make sure that the fictional rumours and job offers nudge the players in that direction for their next score (or similar). It still did feel like the players had a lot of agency and power, so I think it’s a nice middle ground where the GM can still do a little plotting.

Call of Cthulhu

Petersen and Willis’ *Call of Cthulhu* (6th edition) (2005) is a system designed to give players experiences of horror and mystery in the Cthulhu Mythos setting, which is usually attributed to H. P. Lovecraft. It is a standard RPG, with the traditional relationships between GM, players, plot, etc. It features mechanics to represent character sanity, including methods of resolving characters going insane.

I’ve generally been quite unimpressed with the system of *Call of Cthulhu*, the few times I’ve tried it. The adventures that I’ve run, played, and read have generally been quite good – heavy with mystery and horror, but I’ve felt that the system doesn’t do a lot for leaning into these themes, as it’s tended to feel quite clunky and my impression is that some of the number-crunching involved takes the focus away from the storytelling too much.

Adventure: In Media Res

In Media Res is a one-session adventure for *Call of Cthulhu*, from the adventure collection titled *The Resurrected III: Out of the Vault* (Crowe III et al. 2002: 146–61). Four players take the roles of four escaped convicts who come to their senses after seemingly having committed a ritual murder in an isolated farmhouse (The Olcott Farmhouse). The players are left to their own devices, with various endings possible – being recaptured or killed by police, escaping the scene, or understanding the ritual enough to complete it and pass into another realm.

System
Call of Cthulhu
Plot type
Adventure
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Olcott Farmhouse

The couple of times I’ve run *In Media Res* have tended to go very well. It’s a short, tightly focused adventure set in a small space (in and around one building) with a compelling (if cliché) hook. Movie-style amnesia is very tropey, but I think that’s because it works as a conceit to get a story moving – this is the case in this

adventure. The players start in the middle of a compelling situation, having just committed a murder they don't remember, and are driven to figure out what happened to them and try to make themselves safe.

When done properly, it's meant to be played in a space that the GM has some control over, so that a large printout of a Rorschach-test-style inkblot can be placed on the wall in a prominent location, to emulate the room that the PCs begin in. The players are all also supposed to begin standing around a table, with one of them reading a mysterious line – again emulating the starting situation of the PCs. When run like this, I've found that it really helps the players get into character – by embodying some aspects of their characters, they can get into the game quicker and easier.

The Olcott Farmhouse

This farmhouse, and its surrounds, is the setting for *In Media Res*.

From Setting
Call of Cthulhu, Adventure: In Media Res
Type
House
Parent Location
Fantastical Reality Universe
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: In Media Res

Character Building

'Character Building' is the work-in-progress name for Ché's own unreleased RPG system. It's a flexible, modular system to be applied to almost any genre, with an aim to be easy to quickly pick up and play while still providing compelling mechanics. The resolution mechanic involves rolling dice pools of d6s and d4s, then looking for matches and numbers above 3.

This system has been used numerous times over the years with the groups, usually to quickly test out simple adventure concepts, or to run sessions in one of the defined sub-settings.

Being my own long-term passion project, I'm quite attached to Character Building. It has come in very handy for running quick, one-session adventures with almost no warning. At its most basic setting, character generation takes a few minutes, and the mechanics are simple enough to explain in another couple, meaning that I can have a novice group begin playing a game incredibly rapidly.

That being said, I almost exclusively only get to use it for very short adventures, meaning that the mechanics are largely untested for longer-form play – I'd like to spend more time playtesting it for campaigns, but maybe it's ultimately not for those. Given that I generally don't get on as well with general-purpose systems, it's unusual that I've been trying to make one myself, all these years.

This is a short adventure that uses Character Building. The players play versions of themselves, as they are when they sit down to play the game. In fiction, they are then magically transported to a dungeon in a generic fantasy setting, which they must try to survive and escape.

[illegible]

System
Character Building

I originally designed there to be two main branches to the story: If the characters try to escape out of the dungeon, there's more combat with its denizens and they ultimately get outdoors and find a wizard's tower or something (I've never had to decide); whereas, if they explore deeper into the dungeon, they find the ancient

temple, solve puzzles, and escape via its magic. In the many times I've run the adventure, no group has ever taken the first option. Maybe the idea of combat is less attractive when playing as your real-life self? Maybe the way I narrate each makes the second option more interesting?

There have been some interesting moments arising from people playing as fictionalised versions of themselves. I try to press them to behave as close to their own personality as possible, but parties often become violent very quickly, in ways that I struggle to imagine would happen in real life. I imagine that this is due to the fact that they can't get out of the game-playing headspace, where consequences are less severe and non-permanent, encouraging exploration and play.

Conspicuous Events Setting

'Conspicuous Events' is an unreleased sub-setting for Character Building, also developed by Ché Wilbraham. The setting is very similar to modern Earth, except superheroes have existed since at least the early 1900s and the 'Conspicuous' (in-fiction term for the supernatural) industry has become significant worldwide. Conflict between heroes and villains is staged and played out very publicly, as a major media market that somewhat resembles reality television and professional wrestling.

A new set of mechanics is added to the base version of Character Building, to grant characters access to powers and otherwise supernatural abilities.

Type
Universe
Location under
GASRPGCU
Inhabiting Species
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Human

Conspicuous Events adventures tend to go down quite well with players, and I think it's my favourite of my own settings. I think this is because the premise of superheroes crossed with wrestling and reality TV is relatively easy to pick up and quite interesting to explore the implications of.

Rainy Day



Figure 29 Young Rainy Day by Ché Wilbraham

Lorraine Elizabeth Day a.k.a. Rainy Day

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Very fit, though not showy about it.

Facial Features

Happy, smiling features.

Identifying Characteristics

Big, curly hair, tied back when she's working. A tendency to wear wet-weather gear and always carry umbrellas.

Special abilities

Supernatural proficiency with umbrellas. She also seems to attract higher-than-normal levels of rainfall.

Apparel & Accessories

Wet-weather gear - typically an anorak and wellies. Multiple umbrellas.

Specialized Equipment

When in her hero gear: many umbrellas of various sizes and uses. One large outdoor table umbrella across her back, a few telescopic brollies, a couple of sturdy full-size umbrellas, packets of cocktail umbrellas, etc.

Even when she isn't geared up, she carries a few umbrellas.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

Rainy Day discovered her power fairly young - a supernatural proficiency with umbrellas. She leveraged this into a career in the hero / villain industry. She worked many gigs on both sides and managed her finances carefully. Now, she only does occasional, low-impact hero work so she can spend more time with her wife and children.

Gender Identity

Woman

Sexuality

Lesbian

Employment

Professional superhero, part-time. She was much more active in her younger years but never really made it especially famous.

Personality Characteristics

Motivation

She enjoys seeing people happy, so tries to help and support others.

Virtues & Personality perks

Cheery, optimistic.

Alignment
Good
Current Location
Perpetual Bernville

Species
Human
Age
42
Eyes
Green
Hair
Dark brown, tightly curled
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light brown
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign: Convergence • Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville? • Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
A Home in Perpetual Bernville?

Bootleg

Wellington Hobnail a.k.a. Bootleg

A professional supervillain who wears one full-leg boot. He has the dual powers of being able to create poor-quality clones of other people and kick really hard with his one booted leg.

Current Location
Perpetual Bernville
Species
Human

Britannia

Britannia is one of the most powerful British superheroes in the setting. Her appearance and powers are based on the fictional figure of Britannia. She never significantly appeared in one of the group's games so no complete description was generated.

Current Location
Falmouths
Species
Human

Sheepish

Shawn Fleece a.k.a. Sheepish

A wannabe professional superhero with somewhat sheep-like powers. He has various strengths roughly equal to a sheep's (proportionally).

Current Location
Perpetual Bernville
Species
Human

Adventure: The 80 Skeletons

This adventure, created and run by Ché, predates the PhD research but has been run twice with these groups from 2020.

The story sees the players take on the roles of a group of professional henchmen who are framed for a murder. They then must acquire powers of their own and register as a group of superheroes, eventually having a chance to uncover the mystery around their framing and confront the guilty parties.

This adventure tends to go down well with players, even though I think it railroads the party quite a lot. I think the strength of the Conspicuous Events setting is that it's fun to play around in, even in quite heavily authored set piece scenes, because it's an interesting concept that players tend to like to explore. The pregenerated PCs have enough variety, detail and interrelationships that they allow players to identify with them and start playing with the characters.

Adventure: Standing By

This adventure, created and run by Ché, has been run with these groups at least once. It has the players take on the roles of 'professional bystanders' (akin to extras in the setting), who are taken hostage during a staged conflict, but become embroiled in some intrigue.

System
Conspicuous Events

Similar to The 80 Skeletons, above, this adventure tends to go down well with players. My reflections are essentially the same – I think that the concept of the setting is strong and interesting, which encourages play and exploration from the players, which can help them engage with an adventure that is somewhat restrictive.

Awakening Setting

'Awakening' is an unreleased sub-setting of Character Building, also developed by Ché Wilbraham. The setting is somewhat like high fantasy, but as if that high fantasy world had reached a point in development that was like our modern age. Classic fantasy species, races and cultures have intermixed in metropolitan life for so long that discrete sentient species such as orcs and elves effectively no longer exist, with wildly variable individual physical and cultural characteristics being common. Also, magic and magical artefacts are prevalent, but they tend not to be compatible with each other, so there are modern conveniences represented wildly differently and inconsistently in many regions.

New mechanics are added to the base version of Character Building to allow for magic and magical equipment.

I like the Awakening setting and system a lot, but it never engages players as well as Conspicuous Events. I think this is in part because the premise of the setting is harder to communicate and less relatable. As such, games in the Awakening setting get run less, and therefore feel less developed.

Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon

This adventure, designed and run by Ché, has been run for these groups at least twice. It sees the players take on the roles of heroes given a quest by their guild. They are to investigate some disappearances, tracking these to a cult that worship a dragon in a dungeon. The party then decides how to resolve the situation.

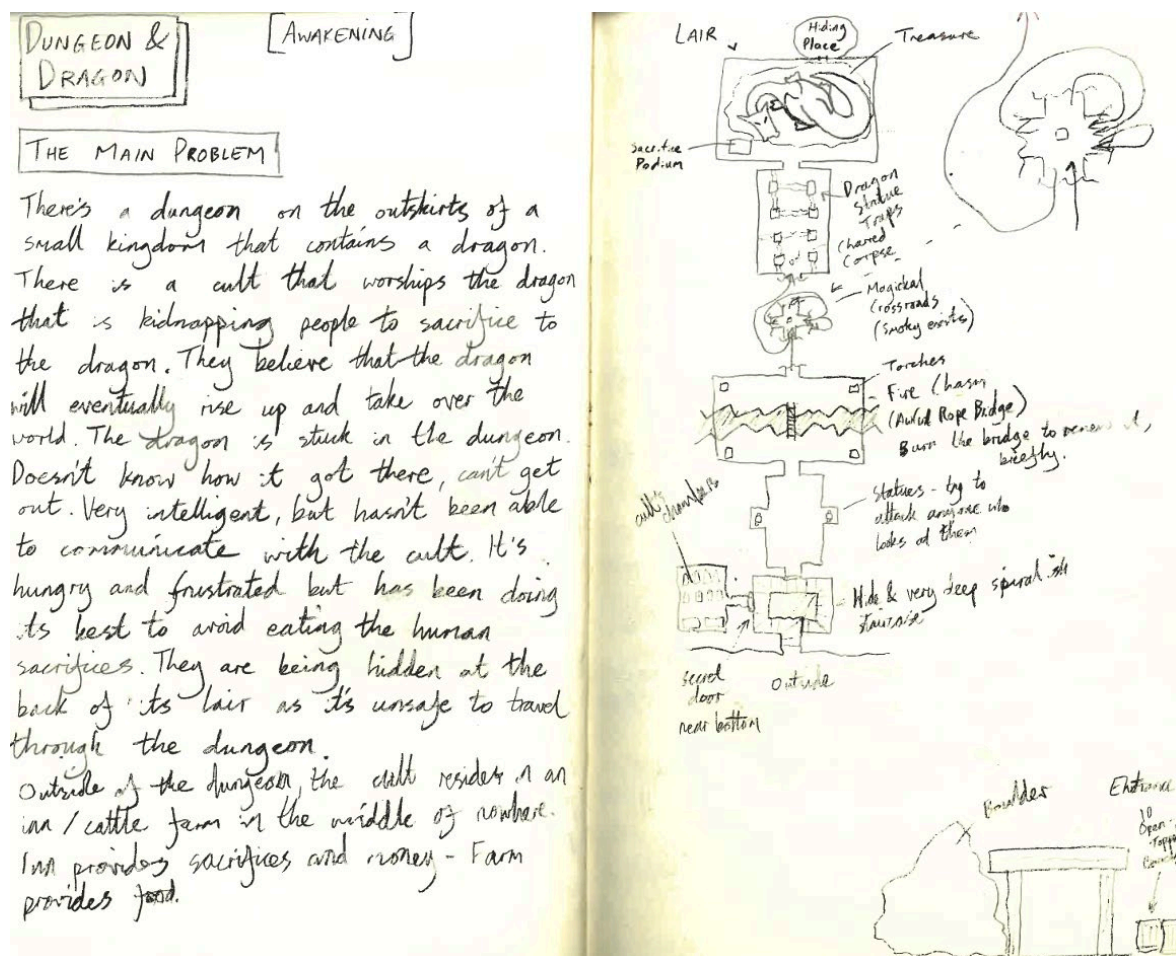


Figure 30 Scan of the plan for A Dragon in a Dungeon by Ché Wilbraham

Plot type

Adventure

A Dragon in a Dungeon tends not to go as well as I want it to. I think this is partly because I feel like I've never quite fully developed it – the central concept is there, but some important details are always left to be adlibbed. I tend to work best at this level of detail, but I think the somewhat investigative nature of the early parts of the adventure necessitate more concrete detail for that section.

I still think it works as a good introduction to some of the metaphysics of the setting – that magic is powerful and based on sentient belief/perception. But that doesn't mean it's a strong adventure in itself.

Adventure: The Terrible Flaming Sword

This adventure, designed and run by Ché, has been run for these groups at least twice. It sees the players take on the roles of heroes given a quest by their guild. They are to find and claim a legendary, flaming sword. It soon becomes apparent that a sword that is literally always burning is a terrible thing to have to deal with, as they try to transport it without burning themselves or their surroundings.

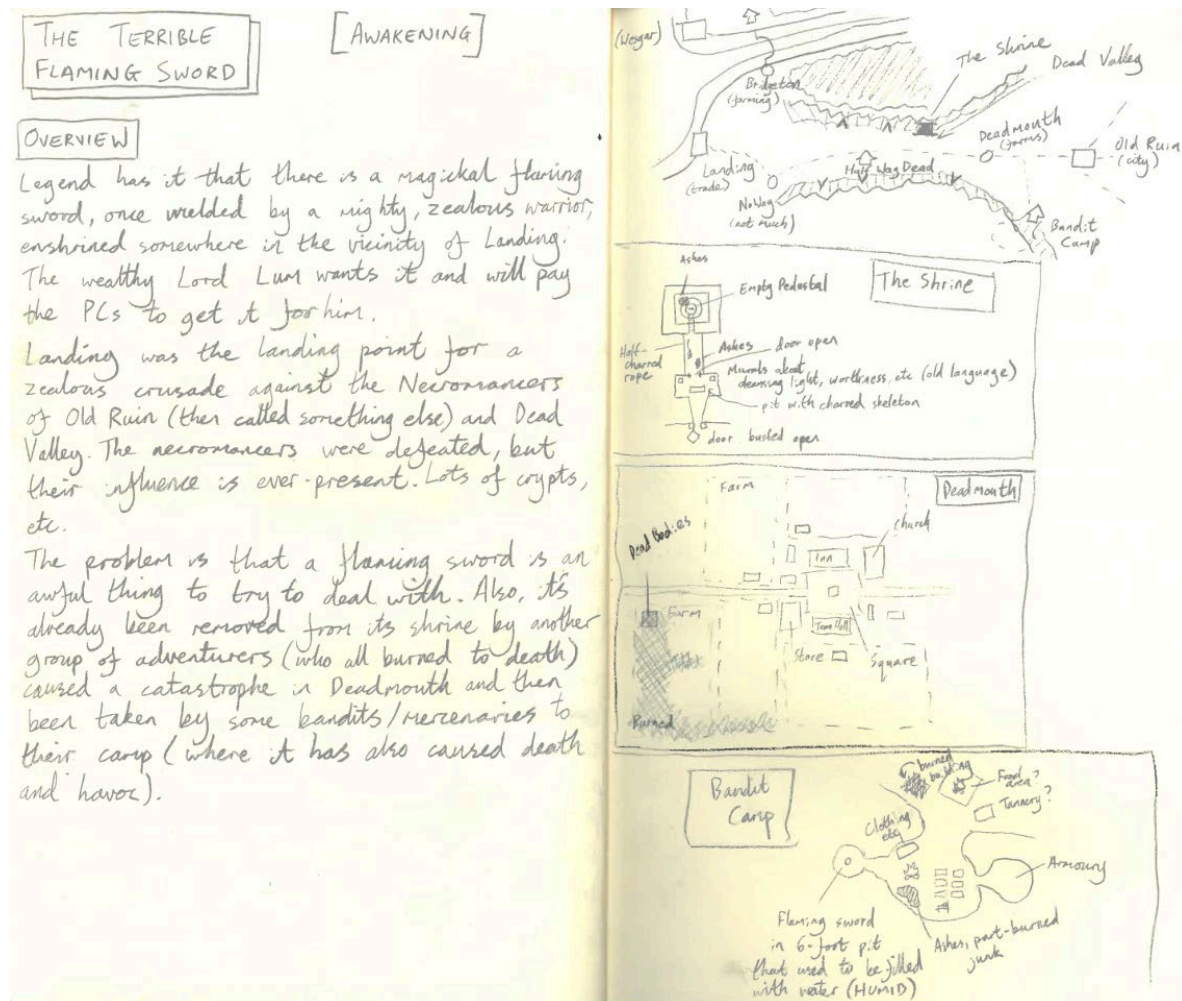


Figure 31 Scan of the plan for The Terrible Flaming Sword by Ché Wilbraham

I think The Terrible Flaming Sword works better than other Awakening adventures, probably because its premise is easier to grasp and more immediately delivered (certainly when compared to Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon). Once it becomes clear that the central concept is exploring just how awful it would be to have to deal with an object that's always on fire, the players can play around with that idea and have fun.

The Terrible Flaming Sword

The Terrible Flaming Sword is the titular object featuring in the related adventure. It is a magical sword whose blade is literally always burning with incredible heat. It's an awful thing to have to deal with – it tends to eventually set fire to anything flammable that is nearby, including people. It cannot ever be extinguished.

Item type
Unique Artifact

Cypher System

Cook et al.'s *Cypher System Rulebook* (second edition) (2019) presents a system that is flexible, narrative focused and quite easy to use. It is designed to be able to run games in any genre, though PCs will generally be quite powerful, meaning that it's not always appropriate for mundane or underdog stories.

In terms of style when running the game, somewhat like *Apocalypse World* and others, it favours player choice and freedom. The GM is generally required to be somewhat reactive to run it properly.

We didn't play Cypher for many different games, so I never fully got to grips with it, but I liked what we experienced. Perhaps somewhat like *Blades in the Dark*, it felt like a good balance of player freedom and allowing the GM to plot and intervene. The 'GM Intrusions' are a nice mechanic for codifying GM interference or "cheating" – I offer the players XP to break the rules a little bit (letting a nemesis escape, for example), meaning that both "sides" gain something.

Campaign: Convergence

This campaign, created and run by Ché, took place over 19 sessions. The full text of the original *World Anvil* entries is included from this point on. This campaign was partly an experiment in using *World Anvil* to plot and record the games in detail, somewhat like Campaign: The Door in Reality.

Various realities, timelines, characters and other elements of the GASRPGCU are converging into one place and time. Elements are clashing, bleeding together, forming new connections. The Convergence Player Characters are brought to the Convergence Universe under mysterious circumstances. They become embroiled in the unfolding situation.

As they explore the landscape and uncover details of the situation, they will have the chance to resolve issues between clashing realities and perhaps master some of the workings of the convergence. Ultimately, they may have the opportunity to make changes to realities and timelines - maybe returning to their own or establishing new ones.

Plot points/Scenes

- Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
 - Convergence, Session 1
 - Convergence, Session 2
- Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
 - Convergence, Session 3
- Chapter: The Castle and The Regent
 - Convergence, Session 4

- Convergence, Session 5
- Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
 - Convergence, Session 6
 - Convergence, Session 7
 - Convergence, Session 8
- Chapter: The Desert Under The Water
 - Convergence, Session 9
 - Convergence, Session 10
 - Convergence, Session 11
 - Convergence, Session 12
- The Darkest House
 - Convergence, Session 13

Optional Content and Side-Missions:

- The Terrible Flaming Sword is burning up part of the Convergent Woods - if the Convergence Player Characters don't retrieve it, it could become a problem. It also has potential to be used as an energy source or similar.
- The Darkest House may offer a route to the The Hole in the World, which would be otherwise very difficult to get to.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Components

Goals

The protagonists may want to return to their own realities. Some may want to solve the mystery of why this strange convergence is happening. Some may want to fix it.

Hooks

Sheriff Ragoczy is strange - he seems to know more than he lets on, and he seems to somehow be central to the Bill Toge situation.

There is evidence of the fragments of other realities, especially as the group begin to explore. They will see familiar and alien elements juxtaposed.

Relations

Protagonists

Convergence Player Characters: Trace, Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka, Cyprian Kernow, Iolo, Leofe, Dvorak-46, Taxi Varlik, Atreyu

Allies

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Rainy Day

Neutrals/Bystanders

The Comte de Saint-Germain, Bill Toge

Adversaries

The Dei-Phage, Mothgdanon

Notes

One of the routes to an ending could be establishing Perpetual Bernville as a sort of wandering "final resting place" or safe haven for characters of the GASRPGCU. If the Convergence Player Characters are able to uncover / dictate some of its reality-hopping functionality, then establish some way of steering this (perhaps via magical and technological means - A Piece of The Door and other artefacts could come into play), then this could be a safe and controlled way out of the Convergence Universe. Another option might be to resolve all the other converging realities, such that Perpetual Bernville is the sole occupant. I'm not sure how this would work.

Another couple of potential endgame foci could be The World's Warped Maelstrom and The Hole in the World.

System
Cypher System
Plot type
Campaign
Subplots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter: The Castle and The Regent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter: The Desert Under The Water
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mothgdanon
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rainy Day
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Comte de Saint-Germain
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Dei-Phage
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Player Characters
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Universe
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergent Woods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perpetual Bernville
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Broken Door
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Castle
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Unburied City

Chapters

[Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux](#)

A reworking of Adventure: Bill in Three Persons, designed to work in complementary / entertaining elements and themes from various other GASRPGCU games.

Plot points/Scenes

Cold Open

Three identical cars collide at a crossroads near an abandoned warehouse. As a sheriff with a sling surveys the mess, we see the car park of the building. A torch rolls along the ground, casting light against the wall. For the briefest moment, the light forms a perfect circle. In a flash, you are there, together. You stand in a circle, looking inwards. As your eyes adjust to the environment, you make out faint traces of the remnants of lines of pure light connecting you. You are absolutely certain that you are friends, despite being strangers. The sheriff approaches: "We need some help here. There's been an accident."

The Convergence Player Characters are mysteriously brought to the starting location in Perpetual Bernville. They know they are linked as allies. Sheriff Ragoczy sets up the weird situation by asking the player characters to help the injured from the crash.

After the player characters realise that the drivers are identical (all Bill Toge), the Sheriff mentions Bill Toge and the wreck explodes, overwhelming the senses of the player characters.

The First Bill

The group find themselves in a bunker. The location is a mashup of the Nil Escape Bunker and Alpha Complex. Some players will recognise the starting room but when they begin to progress, Friend Computer contacts them over the speaker system.

Friend Computer asks the group (which it refers to as Infrared-Clearance citizens) to escort "the traitor Bill Toge" to the nearest Termination Chamber. They progress through a sequence of rooms containing obstacles, some similar to those in Adventure: Nil Escape and some similar to Paranoia adventures that I have designed. On arrival at the Termination Chamber, the group can take one of two routes:

1. Hand over Bill Toge for termination. This will mean that this version of Bill Toge will disappear from the crash site. The group will then just need to leave the bunker with a little (but not much) help from Friend Computer.
2. Refuse to hand over Bill Toge. If they can escort him out of the bunker, he will still make it to the crash site, but will drive away with an "evil clone" of a player character when they return - a cost of them not patching up reality. Friend Computer will try to prevent them progressing beyond the Termination Chamber, so they will have to overcome some challenges.

When the group resolve the situation, they are mysteriously transported back to the crash site. One car is either completely gone, or is now safely driving away with a Bill Toge and a clone of a player character inside. The Sheriff seems confused, but eventually repeats the line as the wreck explodes again.

The Second Bill

The group find themselves on the porch of a Farmhouse, in an intense hailstorm. The house is The Krazmersky Farmhouse from Adventure: Jailbreak, that some players will be familiar with. Tristan is visible in the house, and Bors Slavandrov is locked in the trunk upstairs. This version of Bill Toge is stood over a person with a flesh-fused face (similar to Adventure: Bill in Three Persons), near a large inkblot shape painted in blood. This aspect is taken from Adventure: In Media Res, which some players will also be familiar with. The group has some options for resolution:

1. To prevent this Bill Toge from reaching the crash site, they make sure that he dies or help him cross over into the inkblot. The inkblot interaction will be heavily roleplay-focused and might rely on player characters analysing it. They could also otherwise ensure that he's indisposed and unable to travel - arrested, unconscious, etc.
2. If the group survive and escape with Bill Toge, he will drive away with a clone, like the previous.

Some complications and mysteries interfere with the situation. Bors Slavandrov and Tristan are Clockworks, which may alarm some, and Bors Slavandrov is incredibly dangerous and will try to escape, with nobody immediately able to control him. There are other strange devices around the house, such as The Rack in the cellar. Police will show up at the door at some point, asking about escaped convicts - this could lead to a challenging social situation or fight. The inkblot attracts characters and prompts traumatic memories. Those who symbolically interact with it will cross over.

Once the situation is resolved, the same thing happens as with the first Bill Toge. This time, the Sheriff is even more confused and tries to talk to the group while the third explosion happens.

The Third Bill

The group find themselves in the Anti-Mass Spectrometer (from [Half-Life](#)) with the third Bill Toge nearby. This Bill Toge seems very confused - he might ramble about aliens coming to save him. At the centre of the equipment is an unlit Bonfire (from [Dark Souls](#)), with a Keyblade (from [Kingdom Hearts](#)) stuck into it. The Bonfire will light when the delivery cart is moved to the centre of the equipment. Once someone tries to start doing this, the Guard Scorpion (from [Final Fantasy VII](#)) will drop from above and attack, prompting a fight. Once the Bonfire is lit, the Anti-Mass Spectrometer will start to blast streams of energy and Horrors that look like sample balls of body part textures (from [Artstation](#)) will start to appear, attacking the group.

Once the fight is over, Bill Toge's status is handled like the previous two and the group return to the crash site. This is the final time, so the wreckage is gone. The Sheriff is still there, though, looking confused and angry. He will discuss the strange convergence and his displacement from his home reality for a while. He will probably reveal his true identity as The Comte de Saint-Germain. He will then leave to figure things out after dropping some hints for the group:

- He'll say that he can detect a hole in the world that probably needs to be patched
- He can sense other nearby realities to the northeast and northwest - these ones are the biggest current threat to the town they are in. Something to the northwest will help the group to access other realities.
- He thinks they need to "Find The Wizard".
- He senses a lot of life to the south - another town?
- The group will meet a friend soon.

To represent moving on from this chapter, the group will meet with an exhausted, injured Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati. She will require some care and shelter - this leads the group into investigating the situation in Perpetual Bernville and leads into Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Relations

Protagonists

Convergence Player Characters

Allies

Sheriff Ragoczy

Neutrals/Bystanders

Bill Toge, Tristan

Adversaries

Friend Computer, Bors Slavandrov, Guard Scorpion

Plot type
Chapter
Parent Plot
Campaign: Convergence
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bill Toge• Sheriff Ragoczy
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perpetual Bernville

[Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?](#)

The Convergence Player Characters have some time to explore Perpetual Bernville and find out a bit about what is happening in the Convergence Universe.

Played through in Convergence, Session 3.

Plot points/Scenes

Meeting Euphrati

Not long after The Comte de Saint-Germain foreshadows it and leaves, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati arrives at the Convergence Player Characters' location. She is wounded and exhausted - missing most of her cybernetic arm, covered in other injuries, dirty and worn out. She appeals to them for help, especially Dvorak-46, who may be able to identify some Inquisition insignia with particular attention.

How the players deal with Euphrati is up to them. It would be good if she sticks around as a supportive figure, but there are other options. They might heal her, but she and they will still need somewhere to rest - this should lead them into exploring Perpetual Bernville.

What happened to Euphrati: Part of her ship, The Cudgel of Drusus, was brought here, somewhere. In the chaos of the crash, she was injured and separated from her allies. She had a run in with Inquisitor Rhia Jezail and her retinue. She fled through a settlement, where she encountered what seemed like Imperium forces, but they were strange, with different insignia and behaviours. She had to flee again, into a forest. Here, she had to fight and hide from people with strange powers as she travelled. Eventually, she spotted this town and headed towards what she hoped would be respite.

Discovering Perpetual Bernville

The borders of the town have been mostly evacuated and somewhat fortified - the place has been under attack from various forces relating to the other shards of realities:

- The **northeast** parts of town tend to feature scorch marks, rotten flesh, ichor and shattered pieces of bone. Analysis of the situation could reveal that signs point to invading undead (skeletons and zombies) and perhaps other monsters.
- The **northwest** parts of town show strange combinations of primitive weaponry (spears and sharpened rocks) as well as damage from unclear sources. Analysis could reveal that the weapons were propelled with great force and the other damage perhaps came from telekinesis or force blasts. There are also signs of green blood amongst the human.
- The **southwest** shows some similar signs to those in the northwest, though it is generally less harassed. Occasionally, travellers from other realities arrive via this route (including Rainy Day, who the group will meet in this session). Euphrati would have come this way if she hadn't been waylaid in the forest.
- The **south and southeast** mostly border the water, so not as much happens along this boundary. A few Molepeople have drifted or otherwise landed ashore, though they tend not to speak much. A few people have probably also boated over from Falmouths, though they are also dealing with their own problems.

Elements of Perpetual Bernville to uncover or explore:

- The town has to deal with regular attacks from other realities, as well as monsters (and friendly / neutral beings) that seem to appear out of circles. Rainy Day has been coordinating defence efforts since she arrived. She can be found in the police station, which serves as the central hub for the defenders.
 - The defences are mostly holding, with volunteers roaming the borders and Rainy Day (and others - Rhys Jenkins' Homunculus, Bootleg and Sheepish among them) travelling to where they are needed most. Monsters appearing inside town can be an issue. Rainy Day would like to organise a party to head out and deal with the sources of some of the invaders, but Perpetual Bernville doesn't have enough able fighters.
 - The Tarasque is going to invade shortly, stressing the defences to an extreme level.
 - Some of the defenders speak of a mighty man who helped to make the town safe before Rainy Day and others arrived to help. He has since left to continue his journey.
- The town is trying to function with some normality, and succeeding to a degree. Nobody is quite sure for how long, but Perpetual Bernville has been adrift from any home reality for a long time. The citizens have grown accustomed to welcoming refugees and running the town as best as possible. Many of the "inessential" facilities have been repurposed for defence, temporary housing, distribution of goods / food and so on. Residents seem to come and go, so many homes are left open for people to move in as needed - a group has taken it upon themselves to manage residences.
- The relatively small numbers of Molepeople might give a little information about the desert that they came from. There is great knowledge there but it was too hard to learn it. Giant robots clash in the distance.
- People who travelled from Falmouths might talk about the situation there. Factions are fighting over "[The Grail](#)". Britannia is trying to keep the peace, along with others. There's a near-permanent fire in the forest between Falmouths and Perpetual Bernville.
- There are small numbers of other races - elves, dwarves, Tau, sentient skeletons, etc. These residents mostly predate the Convergence, so can't offer up much info about current circumstances but might give some history or context.

- Other rumours or bits of information might come up in conversation.
 - People speak of Mothgdanon in hushed tones, with dread.
 - A demon war is coming.
 - Some people have been taken by a mysterious order - to be made into Future People?
 - There is a hole in the world.
 - A green-skinned man with red eyes has been seen in several people's dreams.
 - We need to find The Wizard.
 - There's a boy who turns into a car when he gets hot.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Components

Goals

The Convergence Player Characters probably want to find out why and how they were brought to this reality. They may also want to find out how to return to their own - they may assume that someone in Perpetual Bernville can help them with that.

Once they discover a bit about the situation and threats in the Convergence Universe, they may want to intervene or help with defences.

Hooks

Fragments of realities, magic circles, immigrants to Perpetual Bernville, threats to the town's safety, rumours of power in other places.

Stakes

Perpetual Bernville is struggling to defend itself properly - the town could be overrun with no intervention.

Moral Quandaries

Are investigating the mysteries of the Convergence Universe, looking for a way home and acquiring power worth endangering the residents of Perpetual Bernville, either directly or by not helping them when they need it?

Relations

Protagonists

The Convergence Player Characters

Allies

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Rainy Day

Neutrals/Bystanders

The Comte de Saint-Germain

Adversaries

The Tarasque

Backdrops

Locations

Perpetual Bernville

Threats

Monsters invading through circles (The Tarasque), forces invading from other realities (the northeast and northwest)

Encounters

- Discussion with Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati
- Exploring the town of Perpetual Bernville
- Meeting the residents of the town and picking up rumours and other info
- Discussion with Rainy Day
- Fighting the Tarasque
- Planning the next steps

Plot type
Chapter
Parent Plot
Campaign: Convergence
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati• Rainy Day
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Player Characters
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perpetual Bernville

Chapter: The Castle and The Regent

The Convergence Player Characters head out from Perpetual Bernville to find the source of the undead and other monster attacks. Following the trail through the woods leads them to The Castle. There, they encounter its denizens and, ultimately, The Regent. Defeating The Regent and destroying The Castle will resolve this problem for Perpetual Bernville.

This Chapter is based upon the GASRPGCU's discussions of [Castlevania](#) and metroidvanias in general, as well as our previous game of Rhapsody of Blood.

Plot points/Scenes

Outfitting

Rainy Day will give the Convergence Player Characters a couple of items to help them on their way, once they agree to look into the threats to Perpetual Bernville. These items will be one Manifest Cypher and one Fantastic Cypher. The group will also be able to grab some supplies - provisions and a reasonable amount of gear that they might need.

The Journey to The Castle

A mysterious carriage offers to take the group to The Castle. If they decline, it's a trek through the woods with some fighting. If they accept, a high-speed journey through the woods atop the carriage, including a brief boss fight with Death before he disappears.

Getting Inside the Circle

The carriage can take them straight through. Otherwise, they need to find a way to disrupt the magic or come up with something else.

Exploring the Castle

The group will work their way through the map, pending any clever shortcuts or other ideas. Areas feature some traps, some navigation challenges and some fighting. This will be mostly ad-libbed to predetermined themes and ideas, pacing around the energy of the session. The areas:

1. **Drawbridge and Entrance Hall.** Inspired by the [Castlevania](#) games. Crossing the drawbridge as it closes is a Level 3 Speed Task. The Entrance Hall features many zombies walking straight at the group. If more content is needed, I could add a flooded area below, including fishmen.
2. **Bathhouse.** Inspired by our Rhapsody of Blood game. Visibility is difficult through the steam and vapours - navigating could be a Level 3 Intellect Task. Some of the vapours are toxic - a Level 4 Might Task. Water-bloated undead enemies can be found.
3. **Church.** Inspired by [Blasphemous](#). A crumbling, gothic Catholic church. Traversing the platforms, jumps and climbs is a Level 4 Speed Task. Grisly, twisted people attack the group.
4. **Catacombs and Caves.** Inspired by [Metroid](#). After a plummet from the Church, Catacombs give way to Caves with a sci-fi feel. Claustrophobic navigation and fighting through alien creatures.
5. **Library and Laboratory.** Inspired by Castlevania. The monsters in these areas are more magical in nature. There's potential for investigating the books and experiments - this can be ad-libbed, as appropriate. The Librarian could be here - a neutral or even friendly character.
6. **Bridge and Clock Tower.** Inspired by Castlevania. A crumbling bridge and an incomprehensible giant clock. The bridge features many flying enemies as well as tricky jumps and other traversal - consider a Level 4 Speed Task, though this Chapter has been pretty heavy on Speed Tasks. (The group might come up with clever workarounds anyway.) Traversing the Clock Tower is definitely a Level 5 Speed Task to avoid injury from the moving platforms and gears. The top leads straight to the Throne Room, the small, final area.

Fighting Bosses

At the end of each area (and atop the carriage, if the group take it) are bosses. Beating these should give a reward - at least Subtle Cyphers. The bosses:

1. **Slogra & Gaibon.** From Castlevania. A pair of monsters. One attacks on the ground with a spear while the other flies, attacking with swoops and fireballs. Gaibon can pick up Slogra for a dropping attack.
2. **Legion.** From Castlevania. A massive, floating ball of bodies. The bodies drop off to attack. As it is damaged, chunks of the ball fall away revealing tentacles that emit laser blasts.
3. **Esdras & Perpetva.** From Blasphemous. A pair of religious warriors. Initially, Esdras fights alone on the ground, with his mace and lightning attacks. When he is injured, Perpetva flies in to help.

4. **Ridley.** From Metroid. A large, alien, dragon-like monster. He flies, climbs and performs ranged attacks.
5. **Death.** From Castlevania. Like the grim reaper, he fights with scythes and sickles.
6. **The Regent.** An amalgamation of Dracula from Castlevania and the regent from Rhapsody of Blood. He has Castlevania Dracula's traditional moveset, along with some other powerful capabilities.

Defeating The Regent

Once The Regent is defeated, The Unholy Grail materialises to be claimed by the group. The Castle also begins to collapse. We could play out an escape sequence, abstract it or just gloss over it. With this, the threat of the encroaching reality of The Castle is dealt with and its circle fades.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Components

Goals

The Convergence Player Characters probably want to investigate the encroachment of The Castle's reality. They also probably want to prevent any further forces from The Castle from invading Perpetual Bernville.

The second goal means they need to defeat The Regent, so as to destroy The Castle. Unless they can find another solution.

Hooks

Undead and other monsters are invading Perpetual Bernville from The Castle. The red circle around The Castle can be glimpsed from afar, indicating an encroaching reality. Once the Convergence Player Characters see The Castle, the description should indicate to the players that it is based on [Castlevania](#) and our Rhapsody of Blood game, which will hopefully engage them.

Stakes

If the threat of The Castle isn't dealt with, its invading forces threaten to overrun Perpetual Bernville.

Relations

Protagonists

The Convergence Player Characters

Adversaries

The Regent and The Castle Bosses and Denizens

Backdrops

Locations

The Castle

Threats

Combat with the Denizens and Bosses of The Castle. Traversal and navigation challenges, as well as traps, as the Convergence Player Characters make their way through.

Encounters

- Getting to and into The Castle, possibly via the mysterious carriage
- Exploring The Castle's different areas
- Fighting The Castle's inhabitants
- Overcoming traversal and navigation challenges within The Castle
- Meeting The Regent and likely fighting him

Plot type
Chapter
Parent Plot
Campaign: Convergence
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Regent
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Player Characters
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Castle

Chapter: [On The Way To The Broken Door](#)

In order to deal with some of the forces invading Perpetual Bernville, the Convergence Player Characters head northwest, into the woods.

En route to The Unburied City and The Broken Door, where the humans with black rock in their skin are based (the altered The Cult of The Door), the group will pass the dungeon from Adventure: Normal Person Dungeon Crawl, which is where the orcs and goblins are coming from, as well as the dungeon from Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon.

This route covers the most contact with traditional fantasy elements in the Convergence Universe, so there's potential to include any other relevant fantasy influences that come to mind, such as maybe [The Adventure Zone](#).

Plot points/Scenes

Outfitting and Setting Off

At Perpetual Bernville, the Convergence Player Characters can prepare for another expedition. The current state of the town will dictate any opportunities and available resources. Internal threats may need to be dealt with first (eg. the Tarasque).

If the group have already dealt with an external threat, such as the fire from the The Terrible Flaming Sword or the invaders from The Castle, then Rainy Day and others will probably offer them some extra help in the form of gear, insight and other support.

Travelling the Forest

The Convergent Woods are treacherous, so the travel itself could be a source of drama and challenge. Navigation will be tricky, other things will lurk in the darkness and ambushes are possible. Possible encounters / events:

- The group come across an orc and goblin raiding party - either the group are ambushed or they manage to get the drop on them. There's potential for a GM Intrusion here, via a trap or ambush.
- A small number of the altered [Cultists of The Door](#) track or otherwise encounter the group.
- A party from the Chancery of Man could be found in the woods, dead or alive. Perhaps in combat.
- The group may come across an out-of-place red sports car in the woods, which is really [Turbo Teen](#). If they cool it down, it transforms back into a teenaged boy named Brett.
- The group may find Railsplitter, the Umbra Staff and the Extreme Teen Bible placed together, somewhere in the woods.
- Some other fantasy creatures may be encountered in the woods, or some fantasy items, locations, or other elements.

Orcs, Goblins and a Cave

The source of the orcs and goblins is the cave from Adventure: Normal Person Dungeon Crawl, which the group may come across during their journey. They could enter and clear it out to resolve this threat against Perpetual Bernville. Inside, the cave is not especially large. The front section is a mine, the middle section a barracks / living quarters and the back section a set of cells for captives. It would make sense for the convergence version of this cave to leave out the strange, ancient dungeon that was breached near the cells in the original, to prevent the encounter dragging on too long, but there's the potential to include it if the players seem to want it.

There should be a handful of Cyphers available in the cave, including some Fantastic Cyphers.

A Dungeon and a Dragon

If needed, the cave from Adventure: A Dragon in a Dungeon can be stumbled upon in the woods. This could also unnecessarily slow down play, and I'm not sure what the group would get out of it, but the potential is there. Inside, a dragon is trapped in a hoard room behind several trap / puzzle rooms. The dragon is peaceful and just wants out of the cave.

Cyphers can be found in this dungeon, if it's used.

The Unburied City and The Broken Door

The The Unburied City is different from the rest of the woods, with large chunks of the overgrown city from its home reality (The Buried City in the The Overgrown Wilds), including strange mutated creatures. The altered Cultists of The Door also lurk here, and will defend The Broken Door viciously.

A Piece of The Door can be claimed from The Broken Door - this is the goal of this chapter of the campaign, and it will resolve this threat to Perpetual Bernville.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Components

Goals

- To resolve the threat to Perpetual Bernville from the orcs and goblins.
- To resolve the threat to Perpetual Bernville from the altered The Cult of The Door.
- Probably / ideally to claim A Piece of The Door, to aid with resolving future convergences.

Hooks

- The invasions of Perpetual Bernville by orcs, goblins and the altered The Cult of The Door.
- The Comte de Saint-Germain told the Convergence Player Characters that something to the northwest would help them.

Stakes

- The security of Perpetual Bernville is at risk if the invaders aren't dealt with.
- Without A Piece of The Door, it will be difficult to enter some of the converging realities.

Relations

Protagonists

The Convergence Player Characters

Allies

Rainy Day

Adversaries

Orcs and goblins, the altered The Cult of The Door

Backdrops

Locations

Convergent Woods, Normal Person Dungeon Crawl dungeon ([link](#)), dragon dungeon ([link](#)), The Unburied City, The Broken Door

Plot type
Chapter
Parent Plot
Campaign: Convergence
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rainy Day
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Player Characters• The Cult of The Door
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergent Woods• The Broken Door• The Unburied City

Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

The attention of the Convergence Player Characters is caught by the building jutting out of the sea to the south of Perpetual Bernville. The Molepeople who claim to have come from there speak of a source of great power and large robots fighting in the distance. The group set out to investigate.

Plot points/Scenes

Outfitting and Setting Off

At Perpetual Bernville, the Convergence Player Characters can prepare for another expedition. The current state of the town will dictate any opportunities and available resources. Internal threats may need to be dealt with first (eg. the Tarasque).

If the group have already dealt with an external threat, such as the fire from the The Terrible Flaming Sword or the invaders from The Castle or The Broken Door, then Rainy Day and others will probably offer them some extra help in the form of gear, insight and other support.

The Source, the Molepeople and a Little Mech

Once the group reach the top of the Convergent Source Tower, presumably by boat, it might take a leap of faith to get them to dive down through metres of water to discover that the Underwater Desert lies beneath. The only real safe place to transition into that area is the top of the tower.

When they arrive, they'll meet the least studious of the Molepeople, who found the prospect of learning the secret of The Source too difficult. The one remaining mech, Lagann, could be claimed by the group.

The Source itself is centralised in a water tower that connects the water in the sky to the building, making it easily harvestable and providing a potential psychic connection to water and life throughout these lands. The water in The Source is pure, despite being connected to the saltwater above.

Mech battles can be seen in the far distance, off to the east / southeast. The Convergent Blasted Lands are closer, to the south, also showing signs of combat. Beyond those, the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters can be seen, preparing for launch.

The Blasted Lands - Furrries versus Cyborgs

The Dogpeople are fighting PAA Corporation forces among the cliffs and valleys of the Convergent Blasted Lands. They are running a guerrilla defensive campaign, but they are running out of resources while PAA get stronger.

Many of the Dogpeople have weird aesthetics - neon-coloured fur and strange body proportions. Some of them are dogtaurs. There's a weird, uncomfortable sexual energy sometimes.

The Mech Battlegrounds

Mechs are fighting PAA Corporation forces and suppressing Mothgdanon. There's an essentially perpetual battle happening here, with temporary rest camps and refuelling stations scattered around, among ruined towns and so on.

Other, lesser Kaiju roam this area, as well as miscellaneous bandits that just seem completely flat as characters (unrealistically evil, nothing going on except raiding, no clear origin or believable life...) -

both are somehow generated by the land. It's a sort of grindy-combat area - there would be literally no end to the fighting here.

The group can find one large tonfa here, as a nod to Adventure: Re:Don't. Other anime / anime-style-JRPG influences, objects and beings may also be found here, if anything seems appropriate. Maybe the Buster Sword or the Hardy Daytona, perhaps something from Suikoden, Yakuza, One Piece...

The PAA Incursion

The Cube acts as PAA's (currently non-) mobile HQ. It arrived in the Convergence Universe before it was fully completed, so part of the PAA forces are working hard to prepare it for take-off, while others defend the site and head out on raiding / scavenging expeditions. They need fuel, having been cut off from their source in their home reality, so they have been extracting strange energies from captured Dogpeople and Molepeople, as well as anything else they are able to recover (mechs, loot from long-ruined towns, etc.). If they could reach The Source, that would be enough for them to easily complete The Cube.

If PAA are able to complete The Cube unhindered, they will leave the Underwater Desert and take whatever they want from anywhere in their reach, becoming a major threat for the rest of the Convergence Universe.

Themes

Convergence: Collisions of worlds / realities, bleeding over from the real world. Chaos and Order: Worlds in turmoil, resolution of this through player action, fixing things. Support and Kinship: Care, coming together, filling voids.

Components

Goals

- Get some mechs (including Lagann)
- Resolve any potential threats to Perpetual Bernville
 - The PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters could become a serious threat if completed
 - Mothgdanon will emerge as a threat, though the Convergence Player Characters will be unlikely to do anything about it yet

Hooks

- Rumours of battling robots and a source of power in the building in the middle of the water (Convergent Source Tower)
- Once Convergence Player Characters reach the Underwater Desert, they will be able to see the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters and the mech Battlegrounds in the distance

Stakes

- The Molepeople and Dogpeople threaten to be overwhelmed and destroyed by PAA Corporation forces
- If PAA are left unchecked, they will become a major threat to the rest of the Convergence Universe
- Mothgdanon is being suppressed by the mech combat, but could escape and threaten Perpetual Bernville and Falmouths

Moral Quandaries

Will the Convergence Player Characters side with the gross, furry-esque Dogpeople, in order to deal with a more dangerous (though less uncomfortable) threat?

Relations

Protagonists

Convergence Player Characters

Allies

Molepeople, Dogpeople

Competitors

PAA Corporation

Adversaries

PAA Corporation, Mothgdanon, the foes of the Battlegrounds

Backdrops

Locations

Underwater Desert, Convergent Source Tower, Convergent Blasted Lands, Battlegrounds, PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters

Threats

The foes of the Battlegrounds, PAA Corporation, Mothgdanon

Encounters

- Interaction with the Molepeople at the Convergent Source Tower.
- Investigating The Source.
- Exploring the Underwater Desert.
- Interaction with the Dogpeople of the Convergent Blasted Lands.
- Combat with the forces of the PAA Corporation.
- Combat with foes in the Battlegrounds.
- Preventing the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters from being completed and becoming a major threat.
- Introducing Mothgdanon and establishing it as a threat.

Notes

I can see how the rumours of fighting robots will tempt the players to bring the Convergence Player Characters to the Underwater Desert, but it's unclear what the real purpose of this area is to the overall story of the Convergence Universe. I think it's more about foreshadowing or preventing future threats, and just exploring some new side-content while acquiring mechs. Left unchecked, PAA Corporation could go on to threaten Perpetual Bernville once the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters is complete. Similarly, Mothgdanon is being suppressed but will eventually defeat the mechs and escape, threatening the Convergence Universe at large.

Plot type
Chapter

Parent Plot
Campaign: Convergence
Related Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothgdanon
Related Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAA Corporation
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battlegrounds • Convergent Blasted Lands • Convergent Source Tower • Underwater Desert

With Convergence, in a departure from the methods I used for Campaign: The Door in Reality, I used *World Anvil* to plan out “chapters” of the story and other elements (where I mostly used it to record elements after-the-fact for The Door in the Reality, while adding more details). The structure of the site was quite useful for this planning – it prompts questions and gives space for details for any item that you add, and these are generally shown in the bolded headings in these entries. For example, being prompted to explicitly plan out Goals, Hooks, and Stakes for each chapter encouraged me to design them more thoroughly, and maybe more cohesively.

Again, it did lead to unnecessary additional work in some places, where I spent time detailing plans that didn’t come up during play, but I think it helped me to understand that overall flow of the story and state of the setting better. I could always repurpose elements that weren’t used, where possible.

Session Reports

Convergence, Session 1

General Summary

Colliding Realities

Three identical cars collide at a crossroads near an abandoned warehouse. As a sheriff with a sling surveys the mess, we see the car park of the building. A torch rolls along the ground, casting light against the wall. For the briefest moment, the light forms a perfect circle. In a flash, you are there, together. You stand in a circle, looking inwards. As your eyes adjust to the environment, you make out faint traces of the remnants of lines of pure light connecting you. You are absolutely certain that you are friends, despite being strangers. The sheriff approaches: “We need some help here. There’s been an accident.”

The Convergence Player Characters are transported from their own realities to meet at night, in the car park of an abandoned warehouse. Their surroundings seem like a modern day US town. Three identical cars crash at the neighbouring crossroads, and a Sheriff with his left arm in a sling asks for the group's help in retrieving the drivers.

The three drivers are identical, the group realise as they are pulling them from the wreckage. Sheriff Ragoczy mentions Bill Toge just before the wrecked cars explode.

"I just knew it. It's that damn Bill Toge again."

The light and sound of the explosion overwhelm the group's senses for a moment.

Nil Escaping Alpha Complex

The group find themselves in a bunker of some sort, with one Bill Toge (with a bag of cash). Friend Computer, an AI that seems to be in control of the bunker, asks them to escort Bill Toge to a Termination Chamber. Cyprian Kernow asks his compact mirror (a Cypher) the true identity of Bill Toge. It states that Bill Toge has three identities - one is a criminal, one is a flesh mage and one is a cult leader.

The group work through some challenges, ultimately defeating Friend Computer's programming (Dvorak-46 becomes recognised as a High Programmer) and destroying it. They take some Cyphers from a room labelled R&D and talk their way past some guards and out of the area.

They suddenly end up back at the car park. One car is fine, with Bill Toge driving away (with a clone(?) of Taxi Varlik in the passenger seat). Sheriff Ragoczy seems confused for a while, but then repeats the line about Bill Toge as the wreck explodes again.

In Media Jailbreak

The group end up on the porch of a farmhouse in a terrible hailstorm. Inside is a dog that seems alive but is discovered to be some kind of magic / robot. Also, another Bill Toge is there. He is standing over a man laying on the dining table, whose face is fused shut. A big inkblot is on the wall, painted in blood.

Rewards Granted

- 8 Manifest Cyphers
- 4 XP

Missions/Quests Completed

- Dealing with the first Bill Toge.
- Destroying Friend Computer.

Character(s) interacted with

Sheriff Ragoczy, Bill Toge, Friend Computer

Created Content

The a clone(?) of Taxi Varlik is new content - it fits nicely with her timeline-hopping abilities. I can find a way to work this in later.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Space for Discussion

The players / PCs might need a little more time to discuss their unusual circumstances. They noticed their strange new items (Cyphers) and started asking some questions, but had to continue to deal with their current situation.

Unexpected Action

I hadn't planned for the way the players overcame the challenges in the bunker - hacking the systems and effectively negating many of the barriers. But this led to some nice emergent play. It also allowed for skipping over some stuff that would have slowed play down (the Danger Room) to allow for what the players seemed more interested in (destroying servers and uncovering information). It was nice to just let the players solve the problems however they wanted, with the abilities they have, and I think this is the intended experience of the system. They also worked around both the fights I'd planned in quite fun ways (webbing then forcing a surrender, then using "logic" to persuade).

Reflections on the System

Cypher System seems to have some great potential. The first session is always rough as we learn the ropes and I realise which parts of the game I've been falsely assuming that the players know. Despite this, I think play was relatively smooth - rolls are nice. If a player wants their character to do a cool thing, it's as easy as me selecting a difficulty and then asking for a roll - the small number of bonuses from Skills and Assets are relatively quick / easy to determine from context and the Effort spent is up to the player. Then the roll happens and the action continues.

The initiative order took some getting used to - PCs go either before or after NPCs, depending on their rolls, but precise order is up to the players. I think we'll get used to it fairly quickly though.

Player Spirits

Spirits were high - the players seemed to genuinely enjoy the session and they seem excited for the future of the campaign. They appreciated the remixing of previous elements and the surprise inclusion of Friend Computer seemed to go down well - especially because I let them destroy it.

Giving Out Information

I botched a lot of the giving out of information - both gameplay- / rules-related and flavour / description. I think that this was because of not feeling quite prepared - this Campaign: Convergence is a bit ambitious / experimental, and we're using an entirely new system. It was a lot to try to get my head around before the session, along with designing the stories and so on. Combined with my personal circumstances leading to less energy and free time, this resulted in me having less focus and energy (and preparedness) in the session than I would usually expect.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
Report Date
16 Mar 2021
Primary Location
Convergence Universe
Secondary Location

Perpetual Bernville
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
Bill in Three Persons: Redux
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
The Group Arrive

Convergence, Session 2

General Summary

Recap / Rewind

We recap the end of the previous session: The Convergence Player Characters find themselves at a farmhouse in a hailstorm. A strange magickal / robotic dog rests in the living room. Bill Toge is in the dining room, stood over a man whose nose and mouth are fused shut, near a large inkblot painted on the wall in blood. Dvorak-46 and Iolo are investigating the dog. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka is trying to wrestle Bill Toge's knife away after failing to tackle him. Just before the clash, Bill Toge spoke:

"To know me is to join me. I am the opener of the way."

Confronting Bill

Taxi Varlik and Cyprian Kernow help Toho restrain Bill Toge, while Cyprian questions him about "the way". They realise that Don, the man on the table, is suffocating because his nose and mouth are fused. Taxi slices his mouth open so that he can breath - he lives, but is choking on blood and incredibly fearful.

Bill Toge says that Don kidnapped his daughter - he intends to kill him after he finds out where she is (he was torturing him for info). They both suddenly appeared in this place at the same time as the group and don't know what the inkblot is. Bill Toge only half-remembers saying the line about "the way" - he didn't choose to say it. The inkblot is clearly magical - Taxi can see it through her blindness and it hums with some strange power. It attracts the eye.

Leofe plays with the Clockwork toys in the living room and has a flash of insight, earning a subtle Cypher.

Investigating a Magickal Robot Dog

After some thorough external examination, Iolo decides to drill into the dog. It reacts lightning-fast and bites Iolo. Dvorak smashes it into the ground with their axe, pinning it - this reveals incredibly complex clockwork throughout its insides, and no blood. Iolo shoots it a few times with his pistol but it seems unaffected. Leofe reacts to the gunshots, exploding one of the cogs on the floor. Most of the others are caught in the explosion, though it does no damage. The group work together to destroy the dog, then Dvorak and Iolo examine the workings. It is an incredibly complex, fully-functioning clockwork automaton, but even the complexity doesn't seem to account for its apparent lifelikeness - there are signs of magick. Dvorak forbids it (due to Warp corruption), but Iolo takes some of the dog's internal components.

Police Approach

Trace steps outside and notices Bill Toge's car in the garage and headlights coming up the driveway. A police car arrives and the police talk to Trace. They are investigating and warning about some

escaped convicts in the area. Trace fobs them off - they seem a little suspicious, but not enough to push the matter. As they are about to leave, they notice Dvorak through the doorway and Atreyu's horse through the window and demand to know what is happening. Trace puts his hands up, forgetting he is holding a gun while Dvorak steps towards them. They react with aggression, drawing their guns. Chaos ensues.

The Inkblot

Meanwhile, Leofe and Cyprian are investigating the inkblot. Leofe relives a childhood memory of outing someone who had stolen - a fact that she only knew due to her magic. This led to her being manhandled out of the situation and ostracised. Cyprian relives the memory of his grandma giving him a magical charm, then him later clutching that charm at her graveside. This was the first time he heard the voice of the dead, as her spirit sent him back to the cottage to find a book on necromancy. Cyprian symbolically relives this memory in the present using his charm and book. As he does so, he vanishes, crossing over via the inkblot. Leofe has a flash of insight, realising that Cyprian's symbolic linking of the memory allowed him to use the inkblot to travel.

Bill Toge obsesses over the inkblot, claiming it's linked to his daughter. Taxi allows him to approach - he touches it and mutters something, then vanishes. Shortly afterwards, the group's senses are overwhelmed again and they reappear at the crash site. Another car has vanished, but this time it isn't nearby - the second Bill Toge has disappeared from the scene.

Back to the Crossroads

Cyprian has a different experience between disappearing at the inkblot and reappearing with the others at the crossroads: He finds himself in a void of complete blackness. There is an absence of sensation, but the experience is not unpleasant - it's closer to peace. He senses other beings there, though not many. He senses one very distant and one close - he chooses to focus on the closest. He recognises the Sheriff, who seems to try to speak to him, though no sound is received. As the group reappear at the crossroads, the Sheriff is staring at Cyprian.

The Sheriff seems much more confused and frustrated this time. He talks about not knowing what's happening, that he's realising that they're not where he thought they were and that he thought he was in control, but is beginning to realise that he isn't. He says that something seems to be "more broken" than he thought. It's clear that his injured arm is a ruse, because gesticulates with it. He asks the group if this situation was their doing. As they discuss, he says that they're going to have to loop once more - the wreck explodes and the group's sense are overwhelmed.

A Videogame Convergence?

The group find themselves in the Anti-Mass Spectrometer, with a third Bill Toge. They look around and notice that the centre of the machine seems to have been replaced with an unlit campfire with a sword shaped like a key embedded in it. Iolo tries to light the fire but it doesn't take. Bill Toge tries to push a delivery cart holding a crystal along a track to the centre of the contraption, saying it will activate the equipment and let the group move on. Taxi won't allow him to. As the group discuss, dramatic music plays from seemingly nowhere and the Guard Scorpion (a scorpion-themed battle robot) descends from above, attacking.

The group fight the Guard Scorpion, realising that it is very dangerous - Dvorak is injured by a counter attack from its tail laser after various attackers realise that it shrugs off most of their damage. Trace chases and shoots at Bill Toge while the combat progresses. Toho transforms into Ultrathem and claims the Keyblade from the unlit Bonfire. Atreyu uses his Straw Hat Cypher to freeze the Guard

Scorpion in place, turning the tide of battle. Around the same time, Trace kills Bill Toge with a devastating headshot. Time slows, the group's senses are overwhelmed and they find themselves back at the crossroads.

The cars and Bill Toges are all gone, but the Sheriff is still there.

Rewards Granted

- 2 in-session XP to all.
- 3 post-session XP to all.
- A Subtle Cypher for Leofe from playing with the magickal Clockwork toys.
- A Subtle Cypher for Cyprian Kernow from crossing over via the inkblot.

Missions/Quests Completed

- Dealing with the second Bill Toge.
- Dealing with the third Bill Toge.
- Cyprian Kernow crossed over through the inkblot.
- Resolving the reality-tearing car crash and discovering that Sheriff Ragoczy is more than he seems.

Character(s) interacted with

Bill Toge, Tristan, Don, Sheriff Ragoczy, Guard Scorpion

Created Content

I had to adlib the experience of crossing over via the inkblot. In Adventure: In Media Res, the experience is deliberately undescribed, but Cyprian Kernow activated the process by making a symbolic gesture. I created this void space - complete blackness, without sensation, but not unpleasant (somewhat calm). I set precedent that other beings are there, sometimes - Sheriff Ragoczy and another, distant. I must remember to use this in future sessions (and maybe figure out who the distant being was - I have a couple of ideas).

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Reception

This session received another positive reception from the group - they seem to be enjoying the Cypher System and the design of the setting / campaign. The Anti-Mass Spectrometer encounter received a number of excited responses - jokingly negative as well as positive. I think the outcome was mostly enjoyment. Each new videogame element seemed to be met with approval and the concept of combining them led to some invested discussion.

Missed Content

We missed out on some content in the farmhouse, such as Bors Slavandrov and The Rack. The story was progressing nicely without them, though, and I didn't want to slow things down too much with distractions. The group were engaged with trying to figure out Tristan and dealing with Bill Toge and the inkblot. I had

the police turn up because Trace went to look around outside - nobody really took any interest in exploring the house further and I knew the Anti-Mass Spectrometer encounter would be combat-heavy, so Bors Slavandrov seemed unnecessary. Similarly, we also missed some content in the Anti-Mass Spectrometer because the group didn't try to activate it like I expected them to - I can repurpose what I had planned there for elsewhere though.

Multi-Channel Play

Towards the end of the second Bill Toge encounter and throughout the Anti-Mass Spectrometer, some players were quite heavily engaged with the text chat in [Roll20](#). They were using it to continue roleplay and discuss events via a separate channel from the ongoing voice conversation (which was largely dedicated to the required admin for running the encounter at that point - calling out rolls to make and running through the combat turn order, etc.). This was very nice to see - the implication that the session was keeping them so engaged that they established another channel to allow for more play. It's also conceptually interesting - multi-channel play, where the systems that are required for the mechanics of the game to function are slowing other aspects of the play. Would there be space in a videogame for these conversations / explorations to happen parallel to the mechanic-heavy play?

Leaving Gaps in Content

The creation of the void makes me reflect on the process of adlibbing content and leaving gaps. I feel that something I do quite frequently in reactive storytelling GMing is to start creating some new story element without deciding on all the details. I then let the players' questions and choices guide further creation. In Cyprian's experience with the inkblot, I had decided that it made sense for the closer figure to be Sheriff Ragoczy, given his supernatural nature and proximity to the event. I hadn't decided on the distant figure, but figured it would be mysterious and entertaining to tease the concept and leave a gap there. If Cyprian had examined the distant figure instead, I could have come up with something (there are other characters that would work, and he wouldn't have been able to see clearly enough to know for sure who it was) and he wouldn't have known who the nearer figure was - leaving a gap and some mystery there instead (and I could have changed my mind about it being the Sheriff). This causes me to reflect on attention guiding the story, and actually designing the story - the description the GM gives, as well as what the players choose to focus on, describes, defines and changes the world. Ideally, a GM should be prepared for this - allow for some of the world to resolve into its form via observation.

Roughness and Missed Mechanics

There's still quite a bit of roughness in play as we all get used to the system. The principles of the rolls are nice and simple in a way that eases some of the pressure, but there are still a lot of other mechanics and edge-cases to become familiar with. I feel the pressure of having to keep the game running, with the group looking to me for direction and rules explanations, whilst also trying not to miss rules and cover important / entertaining story direction. In particular, I've

been forgetting about the GM Intrusions mechanic, which is frustrating because it's something that I really want to test out and get the feel of. I'll have to focus on remembering to come up with entertaining intrusions in future sessions. This kind of issue should lessen slightly as we all get more used to the system.

Railroading versus Open-World

This opening adventure, Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux, is rather railroaded, which perhaps isn't taking full advantage of the system (and more broadly has its own set of pros and cons as an approach). To defend this design choice, though, my intention was to use this introduction to clearly and rapidly establish themes and elements of the campaign, which I think it did successfully. From next session onwards, the world will open out much more for the players and the storytelling will be much more reactive (and more similar to Apocalypse World, which we just finished playing before picking up Cypher). While this approach obviously also has its pros and cons, it seems closer to Cypher's intended experience. I just need to make sure to prep properly for each session - it's much less about coming up with particular scenes and much more about clearly designing characters (with their abilities, drives and intentions) and locations, with some ideas for what they'll do if undisturbed. Much more of a virtual world or simulation than a plot.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
Report Date
23 Mar 2021
Primary Location
Convergence Universe
Secondary Location
Perpetual Bernville

Convergence, Session 3

General Summary

Picking Up Where We Left Off

The Convergence Player Characters have some time to speak to Sheriff Ragoczy. He reveals his identity as The Comte de Saint-Germain and talks a bit about how reality is more broken than he understood. He thinks that they are all displaced from their own realities and that the group may be able to help fix things.

The Comte and the group discuss the situation and the Comte's history / role for a while - many of them seem distrusting of him. He claims to be the literal First and Last Man, a member of some clergy of 333 archetypes, but that is in his home reality and he is removed from there. He says that he can sense a hole in the world, somewhere to the west. He says that he can sense other realities encroaching on this one - at least one to the northwest, one to the northeast and a population centre to the south. Before he leaves to investigate, he tells the group that they will soon meet a friend, here.

Group Discussion - Getting Bearings

The group spend a while discussing their strange circumstances. Foci include:

- Whether or not to trust / believe the Comte
- Where each member of the group is from - both time and place.
- Culture clashes between ideologies and behaviours.
- Any figures or concepts of worship for each member.

A Friend Arrives, Injured

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati limps towards the group from the north - the direction of the forest. None of the members know who she is, though Dvorak-46 recognises her status as an Inquisitor. She is injured and exhausted and she needs help. Under the guise of helping her, Iolo fails to pick her pocket and is rebuffed. Leofe scans her to discover that she is incredibly capable / dangerous.

While the group break into the nearby warehouse and set up a place to bed down, Euphrati tells the story of how she arrived here. Part of her ship crashed somewhere in this reality - in the chaos she was separated from her allies. She had to flee as she had various clashes - with a rival, with some people who initially seemed to be Imperium forces but had different insignia and customs, with some greenskins and with some strange people with pieces of black rock in their flesh. She fled through a primitive settlement, then a forest (in part of which a large fire was burning), then spotted Perpetual Bernville and headed here hoping for respite.

Getting Connected (To The Internet)

Trace, Dvorak and Leofe establish a connection to the local mobile network, including internet, using their gear and skills. The connection is incredibly slow and unreliable, but leads to them discovering that the date seems to be sometime in the early 2010s and their location is Bernville, in the northwest USA. This leads to revelation and discussion. They also browse the internet for other information, discovering data about the world and that the Warhammer 40k Universe exists as fiction (impacting Dvorak in particular).

Getting Connected (With The Dead)

Cyprian Kernow, Taxi Varlik and Iolo leave to find a graveyard so that Cyprian can get some information from the dead. They find a small one nearby and search for a recent grave of a learned person. None of the dates of death are later than 2010, so they find the grave of a doctor who died that year. Taxi keeps lookout while Cyprian and Iolo dig up the coffin and break it open.

Cyprian performs a ritual to cause the corpse to answer some questions. The following information is gleaned:

- This doctor felt that the biggest threat to Bernville when they were alive was the decline of the logging industry.
- When asked about strange occurrences in town, they said that there were rumours that people suddenly vanish or appear, usually linked with mysterious circles. Less frequent rumours also mentioned monsters appearing from circles, but this doctor didn't believe them.
- This doctor knew Bill Toge as an unfortunate kid (late teens) who ran away from an unhappy home a while ago.

Sleep

The group back at the warehouse prepare to bed down. Leofe is very familiar with the place - in her home reality, she and her group used this building as a sort of base of operations (though this version isn't quite the same and isn't kitted out with their gear). Trace asks a tech spirit for information about the building: It was a textile production factory that was inherited by a local teen quite some time after it ceased operations. It isn't worth very much either.

After the graveyard group clear up and return, everyone retires for the night to rest and recuperate.

The Morning - Clearer Views and a Meeting

In the morning, with the daylight, the group make out some more details of their surroundings:

- A circle of blue light seems to ring the town, casting a faint, shimmering field upwards.
- The outskirts of the town near their location seem to be abandoned.
- There are signs of fighting - some damage to buildings and streets. Also, some of the routes into town are barricaded or otherwise have defences set up.

They notice a small group of people approaching from the direction of the town's centre: four humans (one wearing parts of a police uniform) and one who appears to be a fantasy dwarf. They are wearing mostly modern clothing, though some of their garments seem unusual or anachronistic. They are all armed (mostly with quite primitive gear), though their weapons are all stowed. They look like a scouting party or patrol. They notice the police cruiser that the Comte abandoned here and approach the building. The one in police garb calls out: "Hello? Have you just arrived here under strange circumstances? Don't worry, that happened to many of us. We can help you."

All but Trace go to meet them. A long discussion follows as the Perpetual Bernville residents lead the group to the centre of town to get aid and support. Much information about the town is revealed:

- Bernville was cast adrift from its own reality some time in the early 2010s - before that it was a fairly normal US town. It's unclear exactly what caused this - the residents have different recollections about what was happening at the time. Some remember a cataclysmic event involving invading monsters, a group of brave defenders and a negotiation with a god. Some remember that this was proven to be an elaborate hoax. Some don't remember anything like this.
- Whatever the cause, Perpetual Bernville has been drifting between realities for an indeterminate amount of time. Time and reality function strangely here - some people feel like this reality-hopping began a few months ago, while others feel like it's been going on for years. Nobody has actually witnessed it happening, but sometimes the space outside the circle changes completely as the town jumps from one reality to another. Anyone and anything inside the circle is taken along, while anything outside is left behind. In each reality, people and things can enter and leave the circle as they please - this is how some of the residents of Perpetual Bernville leave or arrive (deliberately or accidentally).
- The other notable method of entry / exit from Perpetual Bernville is the mysterious perfect circles that either deposit or remove beings and objects within the town's borders. They appear without warning and stay briefly or permanently. Often, sentient, neutral or friendly beings from other realities are brought here (not unlike the group, though people have never simultaneously arrived together from multiple realities before). Sometimes, aggressive, wild or monstrous creatures are deposited - these can wreak havoc, so the town has grown accustomed to having regular patrols and keeping its defenders well-prepared.
- The residents of Perpetual Bernville are estimated to be made up of roughly 50% people from the original town before it was cast adrift and 50% immigrants who have arrived from

other realities and settled here. The functions of the town have had to adjust to account for its strange circumstances. Almost all essentials (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) are managed by cooperatives and resources are shared as needed. A defence force operates out of the police station, managing patrols with a very loose structure of command.

- The current reality the Perpetual Bernville finds itself in has been more trouble than any they've experienced before. They've been under repeated attack from various other forces - notably some green-skinned creatures and humans with black stone in their flesh from the northwest and various monsters and undead from the northeast. This reality has also brought new allies, though. Rainy Day arrived fairly recently and has applied her expertise to managing the defence efforts, keeping the town relatively safe by setting up effective physical defences, patrols and combat tactics.

As they all walk to town, the residents point out a few buildings where the group could be granted lodgings, places they can collect food and other essentials, the defence headquarters and the hospital. Iolo runs off to grab the weirdest clothes he can find. It becomes apparent that Perpetual Bernville is home to a great many different species, cultures and races, from a large number of realities. The group see various typical fantasy races, alien races from the Warhammer 40k universe, multiple clearly-different types of humans, etc. Dvorak asks if there are many Adeptus Mechanicus in town - the residents say there have been some before, but they think they left.

In Town - A Gambling Den

Iolo heads off to find a seedy gambling den. There, he plays some games and picks up some rumours:

- People speak of Mothgdanon in hushed tones, with dread.
- There is a hole in the world.
- A green-skinned man with red eyes has been seen in several people's dreams.

In Town - Rainy Day

Taxi heads to the police station to talk to Rainy Day, who gives more info about the current situation and threats:

- The current reality that Perpetual Bernville sits in is particularly unusual because it seems to be a convergence of several realities. This has never happened before - the town will jump from one distinct reality to another, only ever being in one at a time. This convergence seems to be a source of many of the current problems. Evidence includes the invasions by very different forces as well as the immigrants arriving reporting that they are also from different realities.
- Some of the different realities reported are:
 - Perhaps two to the northwest - the green-skinned creatures and the humans with black stone in their flesh don't appear to be from the same reality.
 - One to the northeast, where the undead and other monsters seem to be coming from.
 - Perhaps multiple in the town to the south - Rainy Day says that she arrived there, but it isn't where she was from and there seemed to be various clashes happening there.
 - Multiple near the town to the south - several people reported seeing impenetrable circles, presumably containing pieces of other realities.
 - At least one wherever the Molepeople have been arriving from. They have all been very whiny, so most of the other residents don't like to deal with them, but they say they are from a building in the middle of the sea, that there is a source of power

there (that it was too hard to learn from) and that large robots can sometimes be seen fighting in the distance from their home.

- The defenders have their hands full repelling invaders from the north and dealing with the monsters that still occasionally show up in circles in town. Rainy Day would love to organise a party to head out and deal with the sources of some of the problems, but she can't safely spare the resources. If the group were able to take the pressure off, it would free up some potential support in town.

Meanwhile, Trace asks around town to find a space and gather some tech he can use to establish a hacker den.

What Comes Next?

The group reconvene to share info and notice various details of the surrounding landscape, indicating potential courses of action:

- To the northeast, where the undead and monsters are coming from, a faint, red circle can be seen. This probably indicates a converging reality.
- To the northwest, where the greenskins and black-stone-humans are coming from, the Comte suggested that there is something in that direction that could help the group.
- To the west, a perpetual fire consumes a section of the forest. If left unchecked, it could become a big problem.
- In the ocean, the top of a building can be seen - this is where the Molepeople claim to be from. There might be a source of power there, and maybe giant robots?
- To the south, across the water, another town can be seen. Rainy Day says there are conflicting realities there, and that nearby there are other circles that seem impenetrable.

The group consider their next steps.

Rewards Granted

- 4 post-session XP to all.
- Subtle Cypher for Iolo from gambling.

Missions/Quests Completed

- Finished Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux.
- Escorted Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati to get some medical assistance and learned about her experiences in the Convergence Universe.
- Learned about the history and current situation of Perpetual Bernville.

Character(s) interacted with

The Comte de Saint-Germain, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Rainy Day

Created Content

I had to adlib information about the internet connection and what is available, including that 40k is fictional. I just went with what "made sense" given the time that the town was last connected.

I hadn't really decided that Perpetual Bernville was cast adrift around in relation to the (non-)incident involving Ages and the monster invasions. It sort of made sense as people were asking questions, and I guess the reality-bending nature of that campaign (and its ending) kind of fit the theme. The cop-

out solution was to say that it isn't quite the same place as that Bernville, and that different residents remember the events very differently, but that also fits with the themes, I think.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

(Still No) GM Intrusions

I had GM Intrusions on my mind this week, after last week's reflections. It didn't feel like any opportunities presented themselves to use them, though. They are meant to be for adding interesting complications and twists to the action, but this session was very much about exposition and finding out about the place the group finds themselves in. It didn't seem like slowing that down or adding barriers would have been appropriate - I feel like it only would have contributed to missed / misunderstood information or frustrated progress. From next week, the sessions should have much more action / momentum, which will mean more suitable opportunities for GM Intrusions. Does this mean that this session was not "playing Cypher System correctly", though?

Following on from that, it does feel like GM Intrusions generally will only slow down or frustrate progress (especially with eight players). I get that this aspect is offset by the XP gain, but the nature of the mechanic is quite strange. I'm looking forward to testing them out because I don't currently feel very positive about the idea of them.

Heavy Exposition and Discussion

This session almost entirely featured the group being told things about the place they are in and them talking about the information. There were very few rolls and basically no action. I don't know if this is a problem - I quite enjoy sessions like this, but I'm unsure how the group react. It felt a little like some were disengaged at times, but the nature of playing online and having so many players (meaning any one player's space for engagement is reduced) makes this hard to read.

For me, I enjoy exploring the implications of a narrative or fictional world, via the personae of the player characters and NPCs - it feels like a very fulfilling kind of abstract play. I mean, that's just roleplay, I guess. But I get that the action sequences and crunchier mechanics really help to keep interest up, keep the story moving and increase the value of these kinds of sequences by contrast. I suppose it's just a matter of pacing. In this instance, I think it was fine - the intro sessions were pretty fast-moving and railroaded, with little opportunity to take stock, ask questions and discuss. As long as things get moving again next session, I think we're doing good.

In-Jokes

The nature of the Convergence Universe setting means that much of the meaning of many of the elements is derived from the players' prior contact with the content. I think this has led to some good, meaningful, emotive moments so far - familiar characters and elements being recognised and provoking a reaction. I

also feel bad because the nature of this kind of content is inherently exclusionary for those who aren't part of the in-group who have that prior context. One of the players and I laughed a little about mention of Bootleg and Sheepish, which we enjoyed, but it felt like it was at the expense of the others. I need to find a balance of including this stuff to leverage its value for those in-the-know, without dwelling on it in a way that makes others feel excluded.

Handing Out Cyphers

I've come to quite enjoy dishing out Cyphers as rewards. They're nice, useful things for the players to have that don't completely take over because of their single-use nature. I must remember to keep up the rate of rewarding the players with them. I might ask them to tell me when they think they should be rewarded with a Cypher.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux, Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
Report Date
30 Mar 2021
Primary Location
Perpetual Bernville
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2017 CE
A Home in Perpetual Bernville?

Convergence, Session 4

General Summary

Preparing for an Expedition

The Convergence Player Characters have decided to investigate to the northeast of Perpetual Bernville, to find and confront the source of the invading undead and other monsters. The group prepare to venture out:

- Taxi Varlik asks Rainy Day for any intelligence on the undead and monstrous forces. Rainy Day says that the defenders of Perpetual Bernville haven't had the luxury of time and resources to really investigate, though gunfire doesn't work especially well against skeletons and undead need to be destroyed rather than wounded. They don't know if any particular effects such as holy magic or silver are more effective, even though the style of the invaders from the northeast is "Halloween Monster".
- Rainy Day is appreciative that the group is going to try to resolve one of Perpetual Bernville's problems - she outfits them with some general supplies (provisions and sleeping gear), as well as the offer of some mundane armaments and a couple of unusual items that they may find useful (one Manifest Cypher and one Fantastic Cypher).
- Dvorak-46 visits Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, who is still being treated for her injuries. Dvorak asks if Euphrati would join the group on their mission to cleanse the undead - Euphrati declines due to her still-healing injuries, despite clearly wanting to be involved. Dvorak also asks if Euphrati can spare anything that might help in the fight - Euphrati says she lost almost

all of her gear, but finds a purity seal that survived and hands it over. It has no real power but Dvorak finds some inspiration in it, gaining a Subtle Cypher.

- Trace spends his time trying to establish a Safehouse for the group - he gathers supplies and electronic / technological gear to set up a surveillance network. He asks around about the Molepeople, to try to find out whether they can dig through concrete - he discovers that they can, though they generally don't because they really avoid doing anything they see as difficult. He finds a first-floor space on the south side of Perpetual Bernville and spends the rest of the session setting up a safe headquarters for the group.
- Cyprian Kernow uses his ornate mirror to scry for information about their destination. His vision flies from Perpetual Bernville, to the Northeast. It travels along a long, straight dirt path, through the Convergent Woods. It passes small groups of zombies, skeletons and imps, all of which are heading straight for Perpetual Bernville. It passes a large carriage, driven by a hooded figure and pulled by four skeletal horses, also heading in the direction of Perpetual Bernville. It reached the giant red circle, seeing that the surface of it is almost entirely opaque. Just before colliding with the red surface and ending the vision, a giant, sinister castle is sensed within - turrets and spires bristling.

Heading into the Woods

The group (except for Trace) set off along the trail. It isn't long before they see the large carriage in the distance, speeding towards them, smashing through groups of monsters (destroying them). They make plans for what to do while Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka uses a Cypher to teleport onto the vehicle, just behind the driver. They intend to disable him, but a GM Intrusion prevents this (they give the other XP to Iolo, who was trying to build a trap). The driver spins and greets Toho, claiming he is here to collect the group and transport them to The Castle, under orders from his master. Toho sits and waits to the carriage to arrive at the rest of the group.

Meanwhile, the others see this happen with no real context and some assume that Toho has been brainwashed. They prepare to fight the driver on arrival. Dvorak and Taxi open fire on the skeletal horses, destroying one, though this makes little difference to the carriage's progress. It arrives, dramatically drifting to a halt right in front of the group while turning to face back towards The Castle. The driver greets the others, explaining again that he's here to collect them and bring them to The Castle. The group investigate the carriage and question the driver:

- The carriage is very large - open-topped with six rows of comfortable bench seats that give more than enough space to carry the whole group. Four massive wheels.
- The (now three) skeletal horses seem to be held together by some magic - there are gaps between the bones. Iolo tries to manipulate the bones, but the horse flinches, threatening to kick.
- The driver claims to have been sent from The Castle under orders from his master, to collect visitors. His features are mostly obscured by the shadows and folds of his cloak, but the lower part of his face reveals incredibly pale skin. He says that he doesn't know if he's alive or dead, or how long he's worked at The Castle. He doesn't know who his master really is, or another name for them. He's aware that groups have been sent out from The Castle, to make contact with nearby settlements, but doesn't know any details. He says that he'll be able to get them into The Castle - that they might struggle without his help.
- Cyprian excitedly jumps into the carriage with Toho, ready to depart. He states that he has been waiting his whole life for an opportunity like this.

Dvorak attacks the driver while he speaks, destroying him. His physical form dissolves, leaving only his cloak behind. The skeletal horses all collapse into inert piles of bones. The group discuss how to continue the journey - the carriage is too large to just Artax to pull. They set off on foot. Along the way, Toho obliterates a new group of skeletons and zombies with their Kaiju Diversion Measure.

Getting into The Castle

The group approach the nearly-opaque red wall, realising that it seems somewhat impenetrable. Leofe's scan reveals that it isn't a substance, as such, but a boundary between realities. It feels resistant to touch, like tough rubber. Taxi and Dvorak work together to cut through it, giving a strange sensation of cutting through a non-physical barrier between realities. No visible hole is made, but they realise that they've established a threshold through which the group can push themselves. They step through.

Inside the circle, it is deep, dark night, with the full moon gigantic in the sky. The Castle is enormous and foreboding. Directly ahead, a drawbridge leads to a great entrance. Behind the closest building, a larger one towers in front of the moon - a great clocktower as its highest point.

Leofe sets off across the drawbridge and it immediately starts to rise. The group race to the other side. Toho and Dvorak cross quickly and gracefully. Iolo fumbles and doesn't get far enough before the bridge is nearly vertical - he ends up clumsily sliding down the last section and some of his mechanical components go tumbling out of his pack into the abyss of the moat.

The Entrance Hall

Inside the great doors, the group see a long, dilapidated hall, with a storm raging outside the windows (which isn't present outside the front of The Castle). Zombies are rising from the floor and heading straight for the entrance. Each member of the group either dodges or forces their way through to the other side, with varying degrees of success. Leofe fumbles her dodging and three zombies pile on top of her - she is injured and loses some of the charms in her possession, but she scrambles free.

The group pass through a room with a collapsed floor, showing a flooded basement, and a small antechamber before arriving at a door with more elaborate decoration. Leofe uses an ability to receive a premonition about what is on the other side - she senses two stronger enemies, one with a spear and one flying.

Gaibon and Slogra

The group fight Gaibon and Slogra, the first sub-boss of The Castle. Gaibon is a purple, flying, gargoy-like creature. Slogra is a green, reptilian, spear-wielding creature.

Gaibon flies Slogra over the group, setting up a descending spear attack. The melee breaks out. Taxi suspends Slogra in stasis while the group focus on taking down Gaibon. The group make several unsuccessful attacks, most notably Dvorak and Atreyu. Ultrathem spends some time chasing the enemies around but botches a jump and falls on their face. Eventually, Gaibon is brought down and cleaved in two by Dvorak. Working together, the group also slay Slogra as it comes out of stasis. Through the battle, Leofe explodes debris a couple of times, but very close to the front line, endangering the melee fighters. Atreyu's inspiring (often failed) attacks are useful boons to other combatants.

After the fight, Dvorak studies the remains of one creature while Cyprian contacts the spirit of the other. Cyprian learns the layout of The Castle, that it's designed to have one circuitous route for

visitors, ending at its master. He learns that The Regent is the master of The Castle. He also learns that it could be possible to escape the intended route of The Castle and skip some sections, if the group was perhaps able to fly or otherwise travel across distances that would otherwise be impassable.

The Bathhouse

The area beyond is a disturbing bathhouse, with noxious scents, cloying steam and strange vapours. Arcane pipework patterns line the walls and ceilings. The group work their way through several chambers and maze-like corridors before arriving at another large room. Inside is a giant, floating ball, seeming made of bodies. They prepare to fight it.

Rewards Granted

- 1 Manifest Cypher and 1 Fantastic Cypher for the group, given by Rainy Day for investigating an invading force.
- 1 Subtle Cypher for Dvorak-46, as inspiration for Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati's purity seal.
- 4 post-session XP for all.
- 1 GM Intrusion XP for Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka, with the other granted to Iolo

Missions/Quests Completed

- Gaining entry to The Castle.
- Traversing the drawbridge and Entrance Hall.
- Defeating Gaibon and Slogra.

Character(s) interacted with

Rainy Day, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, The Coachman, Gaibon & Slogra

Created Content

I had to adlib what The Coachman would know and be able to tell the group - I'm not sure why I hadn't thought that they'd try to interrogate him.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

GM Intrusions Again Again Again

I managed to use one GM Intrusion this session, and I think it was a useful / worthwhile inclusion. I was very aware that they interrupt the flow of what the players are trying to do, though - I wonder if they unnecessarily slow down play. Again, I suspect this only feels like a particular issue because of the size of the group and trying to make sure that everyone is able to contribute. I spend so much time describing action and answering questions that any further intrusion seems too much, when there needs to be space for eight others to meaningfully play. I would still like to use more, because I think there's potential in the mechanic, but the balance is tricky.

A Whole Lotta Clunk?

Especially compared to last session (Convergence, Session 3), which was very focused on exposition, discussion and free exploration of a town, this session felt very linear and clunky. I suppose the balance can be good - I think some players prefer a bit more direction and it can be nice for any to have a bit of contrast. It just felt sort of stop-start and focused on a lot of rolls that felt a little like they didn't reveal very much or have much of an impact. I suppose that there were real costs to some of the rolls - injuries and lost items. I did bring this up at the end of the session and players said that they enjoyed it, so perhaps I'm being overly critical.

Cyprian Kernow's scrying was a good chance for emotive narration and some mystery - the player said it was "metal", as a compliment, which was nice. Trying to describe areas of The Castle was also an unusual challenge - I had in mind very particular areas of Castlevania games, and they didn't necessarily translate very well into effective spoken description. Also, translating the dice rolls into interesting, narrated action is a space to convert clunk into engaging story, I suppose. One of the core jobs of a GM - we just need to remember to think of it that way and get the balance right.

Unlucky Players

Particularly during the boss fight, we had a lot of bad rolls from the players. It got to the point where some were getting very frustrated - I think it was actively harming their enjoyment. There is the option to spend 1 XP to reroll, but given the other things that XP can be spent on, it feels like a bit of a waste. I'm not sure what the solution to this problem is - if I was in charge of the rolls, or "rolling" secretly, I could just make sure that players who had experienced some failure caught a break when their frustration was rising. But we're using a system to handle all that, so I suppose we have to process the rolls as they come. This is the nature of probability, I suppose. I'm still not convinced of its real value for interactive storytelling.

Missed Content

The carriage ride, including the brief boss fight atop a moving vehicle, was missed because the group killed the driver. I knew this was an option, though it's a shame to miss out on a cool sequence. I suppose I could have let them drive the carriage, having kept the horses functioning or something? Or I could have made The Coachman invulnerable? These are railroad-style actions, though - I'd rather let the players choose their approach and live with the consequences. Though I feel particularly bad that Cyprian missed out.

The progress through the areas of The Castle was also relatively slow, so I mostly glossed over traversal of the bathhouse section. I think it will be better to just highlight some particularly interesting encounters (or not) in each area to keep the pacing up - I don't really want The Castle to last much longer than two sessions. It's not that big a piece of the story and there's lots more to see.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Castle and The Regent

Report Date
06 Apr 2021
Primary Location
The Castle
Secondary Location
Perpetual Bernville

Convergence, Session 5

General Summary

Trace at Home

Back in Perpetual Bernville, Trace is working on a surveillance network. He manages to establish good camera coverage of the town, without any of the residents noticing, over the course of several hours.

When he returns to Trace's Safehouse, he sees a large monster appear in town. It has a giant, spiked turtle shell, six bear legs, a serpentine tail and a face resembling a lion's. He sees Perpetual Bernville's defenders struggle in fights with it - a couple are killed and several are injured. They eventually drive it into the water, but they didn't appear to really injure it. Trace calls the rest of the Convergence Player Characters to let them know about the monster, but their scenes are playing out of sync, so this happens several hours into their exploration of The Castle.

Beating Legion

The group square off against Legion in the Bathhouse area of The Castle. They beat it pretty easily, within a couple of rounds, with a few hard-hitting attacks.

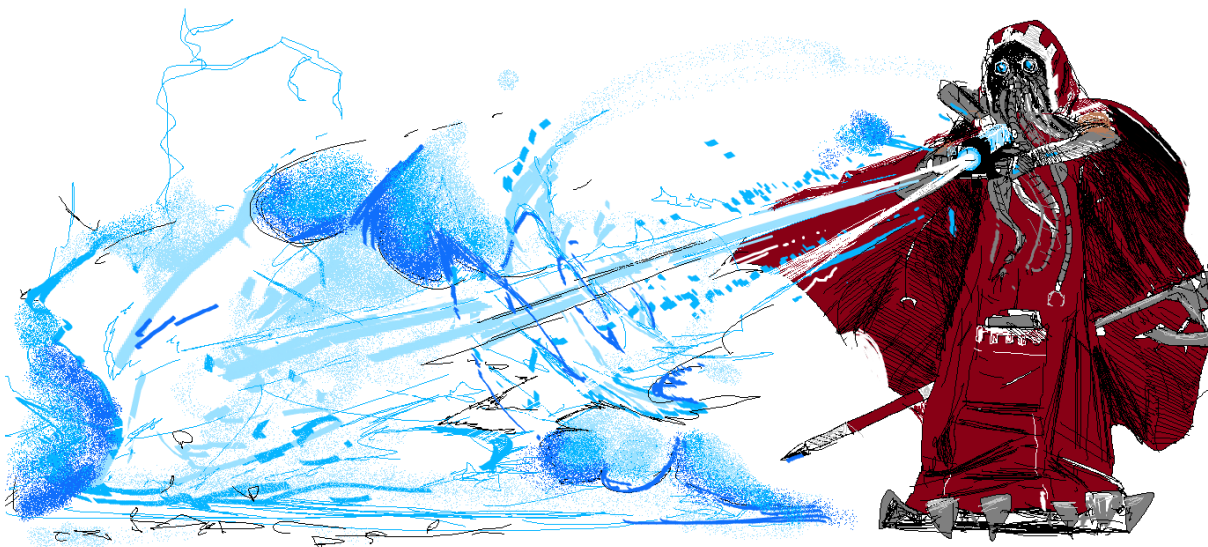


Figure 32 Dvorak-46 with Volkite Blaster Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Navigating the Church

The next area is a run-down, gothic church. The group fight a strange (undead?) being - a woman tied to an angelic statue. They navigate the church and reach the final area - a crumbling bridge corridor where many sections of the floor have fallen away. Using the various sections of floor and clambering along handholds on the walls, they must cross to the other side. Toho "Ultrathem"

Tanaka relatively easily scouts ahead and spots a safe route that a couple of others could use. Iolo magically leaps across, trailing a rope to help the others. Toho returns to carry Leofe to the far side. Taxi Varlik magically buffs Atreyu and Dvorak-46 as they try to cross together - Atreyu and Taxi cross, but Dvorak falls during an early jump and clambers back to the beginning. Cyprian Kernow flies across atop the reanimated corpse of Gaibon as Dvorak succeeds at a second crossing attempt, using Toho's path and Iolo's rope.

The group rest for an hour at the other side of the treacherous corridor, recovering some stamina. Iolo upgrades Toho's PDA, but unstably.

Esdras and Perpetva

The group confront Esdras and Perpetva and take them down with relative ease. Atreyu lands the killing shot on Esdras.

Taking a Shortcut

The group propose a shortcut, skipping the second half of The Castle's gauntlet. They climb atop the Church's tower, which lines up with the underside of The Regent's Throne Room. Dvorak and Iolo modify a gravity detonation Cypher that Atreyu is carrying - they alter it such that it creates a sort of gravity lift that will carry the group up to The Regent.

Confronting The Regent

The group talk to The Regent for a while - some try to negotiate or learn more, but he seems fairly confident that they are in the most danger and he will continue to strike out at Perpetual Bernville. Trace contacts the group to tell them about the invading monster. Dvorak attacks The Regent with a Cypher, beginning the fight. The group take some damage, with a few members getting close to injury, but ultimately they overcome The Regent using their abilities, Cyphers and some clever tactics involving the curtains of the Throne Room. Atreyu again lands the killing shot.

On The Regent's death, The Castle begins to shake and crumble - it seems to be collapsing. A silver goblet, containing blood, materialises in the middle of the room. The group discuss what they might do with it and how they might escape the collapsing castle...

Rewards Granted

- 8 XP total from 4 GM Intrusions
- 3 post-session XP for all
- The Unholy Grail

Missions/Quests Completed

- Defeating Legion
- Navigating the Church and defeating Esdras and Perpetva
- Reaching and defeating The Regent, and claiming The Unholy Grail

Character(s) interacted with

The Regent

Created Content

The creation and use of the gravity lift was mostly adlibbed - I think I even suggested it. The group were keen to get straight to the end of The Castle, so something needed to happen to get them there.

Questions were asked about the creature in the Church area, which was taken straight out of Blasphemous. I didn't know enough about the lore of the game, so we had to just chat about it and look at wikis.

I hadn't decided much about The Regent's personality or motivations, so had to adlib and sort of sidestep some concepts when the group tried to talk to him.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Slowing Down?

It felt like this session moved much more slowly than the last couple. Part of that is probably because much of it was spent in combat, in boss fights. In terms of separate encounters and explorations of spaces or ideas, it felt as though we only really covered a handful. I think there's a lesson in pacing here - I need to be more careful with balancing out different types of encounters / actions for the party. Combat-navigation-combat-navigation started to drag and negatively affected the play, I think.

Remembering GM Intrusions

I remembered to use GM Intrusions this time! Well, one near the beginning and a few during The Regent boss fight to up the drama a bit. I think they paid off - they mixed up the situation a bit, which I think increased interest, and the players enjoy getting XP.

Bad Castle Design

I mention this in the first point, but I think the design of The Castle was poorly thought-out. The rigid structure of exploration and bosses, with little specificity and detail in the individual areas (ironically, to try to avoid bogging the game down) led to it feeling like a repetitive grind. I think the restrictive, railroad nature of it exacerbated the problem. I should try to remember to make any necessary similar sequences shorter, and to generally plan for more open chapters with clearer specificity in their design.

It felt a bit shallow - the adlibbed parts lacked oomph because I didn't really have a clear picture in my mind of the rationale of the place or the motivations of the characters. I'm wondering if this is going to be a bit of a problem throughout Campaign: Convergence, due to the throwaway, mash-up nature of many of the elements. I can try to steer upcoming chapters in more interesting directions.

Too Crunchy?

I felt like the rules got away from me a few times during the session. Partly, this was due to tiredness, but also there are an increasing number of unusual abilities in play and some of the basics of the system still haven't embedded in my or the

players' minds yet - complex interactions between assets, effort and other roll modifiers, for example. I think I could knock up a better reference document for the players to help a little here, but much of this will probably be addressed with practice and good energy for the sessions.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Castle and The Regent
Report Date
13 Apr 2021
Primary Location
The Castle

Convergence, Session 6

General Summary

Escaping the Castle

The Castle is collapsing. The Convergence Player Characters (except for Trace) are in the Throne Room of The Regent, having just defeated him and claimed The Unholy Grail (which Dvorak-46 is carefully carrying in their third arm). The group try to hatch an escape plan as the room crumbles around them.

While the others discuss a plan for escaping out of the window, lolo builds a personal glider using the curtains and rails in the room. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka uses their remaining time enlarged, as well as a Cypher that allows for perfect climbing, to carry the rest of the group down to the roof of the lower building. It takes two trips - the first with Leofe, Cyprian Kernow and Dvorak, the second with Atreyu and Artax (the horse). While the others are climbing down, lolo glides out of the Throne Room and leaves the circle that contains The Castle's reality. As the group are all escaping, they notice that the boundary of The Castle's reality incursion is flickering and also collapsing - they can occasionally see through to the Convergent Woods.

Once safely out of the Throne Room, the group (minus lolo) race across the rooves of the lower building, reaching the point above the main entrance. Dvorak tries to climb down, but falls, hurting themselves and momentarily dropping The Unholy Grail (realising that it cannot be spilled). Now regular sized, Toho safely carries Leofe and Cyprian down to ground level with the last of the power in their climbing Cypher. Artax has no clear way down, so Atreyu and Taxi race through the interior of The Castle to descend and escape. As the group exit the circle, The Castle collapses behind them and, shortly after, the circle around it flickers out of existence, leaving no trace of The Castle's reality.



Figure 33 [Dvorak and Artax](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

While waiting for the others, Iolo used the last of his gathered components to (unstablely) upgrade his drone.

Trace and the Tarasque

Via a GM Intrusion (Trace and Toho receive XP), the Tarasque emerges from the sea and crashes through the ground floor of the building that Trace's Safehouse is in. Trace manages to stealthily escape while the Tarasque engages with some defenders of Perpetual Bernville. He contacts the rest of the group, and they agree to meet on the outskirts of town. The group take a little time to gather themselves and recuperate before going to deal with the Tarasque.

All together, the group find a squad of Perpetual Bernville defenders struggling against the Tarasque. They discover that the creature is a very formidable foe via Trace's scanner Cypher. Dvorak lays out a Cypher that renders beings unconscious while Toho very effectively lures the Tarasque into the trap. With the monster unconscious, the group have some breathing room. Rainy Day and Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati arrive to help. Leofe reads the Tarasque's mind, discovering that it was mostly acting out of

confusion and self-preservation. After discussing plans, the group request explosives from Perpetual Bernville's stores. Trace disguises them as food, then Dvorak carefully plants them in the sleeping Tarasque's mouth. They retreat and detonate the explosives, killing the creature. The Tarasque's massive corpse is left for the residents of Perpetual Bernville to deal with.

A Night in Perpetual Bernville

The group take some time to rest and replenish, while following up on some leads and having discussions with some residents.

- Cyprian had been obsessing over The Unholy Grail, and had realised that it was potentially a very powerful artefact. He takes some time to study it, using his magical expertise. He discovers that it would empower someone who drank its contents, but that they would become less naturally vital in the process.
- Taxi tries to learn more about the circumstances that caused Perpetual Bernville to be cast adrift from its home reality. An older resident brings her a mug that he knows was in the town before it was adrift. She tries to gain insight by seeing the history of the item, but the information is unavailable from this object's point of view. The resident talks to her for a while, though, and tries to answer her questions.
 - He can't say for certain how long ago the town was cast adrift, or exactly what caused it / what was happening at the time. He thinks that they've been reality-hopping for about three years, but some of his fellow residents estimate that it has only been a few months. Similarly, he remembers some rumours around the time of the original event that related to monsters being summoned in the town, as well as some heroes opposing a god that was trying to end the world, but others remember that this turned out to be an elaborate hoax. It seems that many people in the town have conflicting memories of related events.
 - He says that the wandering-town life rather suits him, as well as many others who are still in Perpetual Bernville. He gets to see things that he never would have in his previous reality, and he enjoys being directly involved with defending the town and helping its people, rather than grinding away as some unimportant employee. The people who were desperate to get back to the home reality have mostly left town, it seems. Perhaps they are now stranded in other realities that Perpetual Bernville passed through, or perhaps they found their way home.
 - He thinks that the internal invasions of monsters (from magic circles appearing in town), as well as the similar arrivals of friendly or neutral people, started around the time the town was cast adrift, though he did mention rumours of this happening before, if not for long.
- Euphrati talks to Dvorak about the strangeness of the reality they've found themselves in. Dvorak shares theories about parallel realities, which seem to be relevant. Euphrati says that The Warp doesn't seem to exist in this reality, even though she can still access some of her psyker powers. Taxi joins the discussion, mentioning that her master(s) oversee multiple realities and deploy her in and out of them. Seeing as she now seems to be removed from their influence, it could be that there are multiple complete sets of multiple realities. Euphrati will continue to investigate.
- The group talk to Rainy Day about the security of the town and the work that needs to be done. They aren't sure how they would be able to tackle the fire to the west - Rainy Day says she might be able to send some Perpetual Bernville residents out to deal with it, if the

invading forces are dealt with. She also gives the group three Manifest Cyphers (one Fantastic) for their next expedition.

- As they head out, the group run into a woman named Cassandra, who is The Comte de Saint-Germain. She's a bit of a jerk, but checks in on the group - she baits Dvorak into talking about themselves for a while, feigning interest. She reminds them that she expects them to find something to the northwest that will help them - some kind of key, perhaps, though maybe just a rock. She catches glimpses of the future occasionally, seeing herself meeting with the group in town. Sometimes they have a red mech with them. Leofe magically scans her, revealing that she is level 10 (the highest level that a being can be). They ask for her direct help, but she doesn't seem interested. She says she'll "hold down the fort" in town, and will provide support and information when possible. She doesn't think she's able to leave, anyway.

Going Down to the Woods

The group head off to the northwest, into the woods, aiming to deal with the orcs, goblins and people with black stone in their flesh. Atreyu reads the tracks at the outskirts of town. He realises that the orcs and goblins move somewhat chaotically, but all seem to be coming from one location. The human tracks have strange gaps as if they regularly leap or climb, but they can be traced back to their origin, which is different from where the orcs and goblins are coming from.

Rewards Granted

- 1 GM Intrusion XP for Trace, with the other going to Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka
- 4 post-session XP for all

Missions/Quests Completed

- Escaping The Castle

Character(s) interacted with

Tarasque, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Rainy Day, The Comte de Saint-Germain

Created Content

Many of the conversations with NPCs were at least partially adlibbed - largely where details of the realities and strange events are concerned.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Positive Player Feedback

I had been wondering about the general reception of the game, probably just related to paranoia and neurosis. I felt that the last few sessions have been a bit of a struggle due to personal tiredness and other stresses. It was nice to receive vocal positivity and support from the group. It causes me to reflect on the interpersonal aspects of RPG sessions - that we're a sort of support group as well as people who are gathering around a form of entertainment.

Yet More About GM Intrusions

The one GM Intrusion that I used seemed pretty useful, but there didn't seem to be much space for more in the session. They're much easier to use when the content is action-focused or moving forward a lot. Because the session was largely focused around discussion and gathering info, I wasn't sure how a GM Intrusion would work for this, in a satisfying way. Mostly, I still worry about the effect they have on slowing down or derailing the action. I'm always keen for the action to keep moving along, because that tends to be satisfying, but using a GM Intrusion seems like it would throw a spanner in the works.

POV on Pacing

I had felt like the session had been slow - when planning it, I was expecting to get well into the expedition, but in the session we just about started it. But the group had been satisfied with the pacing, when I asked about it. They had said they enjoyed the set pieces and unveiling of information, which is good. I wonder why I misread it.

Campaign Length

After play, we discussed the optimal length of RPG campaigns, via how long we would want to spend playing this campaign. Some players, at least, are keen to continue with this game for a fair while longer - I didn't sense much of a desire to wrap it up soon (which I was starting to get concerned about). Players mentioned a desire to spend longer with their characters - to have chance to settle into them and build that identification. I sensed a little fatigue with bouncing between systems and games too rapidly, also.

We talked a little about previous campaigns also, of varying lengths. The topic of the impact of personal circumstances on the ability to invest in (and therefore fully enjoy) the sessions came up. We played a campaign of Unknown Armies during a particularly busy and stressful period at work (and in a personal sense - it was in the early stages of the pandemic), which meant that some players didn't have much energy left over to spend on thinking about their characters and roleplaying in the way that they intended. The same game played at a different time could have been much more successful / enjoyable and may have played out pretty differently.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Castle and The Regent, Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
Report Date
20 Apr 2021
Primary Location
Perpetual Bernville
Secondary Location
The Castle

Convergence, Session 7

General Summary

Following the Tracks

For a while, the Convergence Player Characters discuss which of the tracks to follow. They agree to track down the source of the orcs and goblins first. While following the tracks, Atreyu spots something glimmering off to the side. Iolo heads straight for it, but is caught in a snare. With that, some goblins leap out of nearby hiding spaces, on the attack. The group quickly and easily eliminate the attacking goblins, before they can even really act. Atreyu intimidates the last two surviving goblins - one flees and one surrenders.

The group investigate the trap's bait. It's a small pile of three items - an axe, an umbrella and a book. Trace takes the Umbra Staff, Dvorak-46 takes the Extreme Teen Bible and Atreyu takes Railsplitter.

Iolo captures the surrendering goblin, ties it up and carries it on his back. Cyprian Kernow resurrects a goblin corpse as a temporary companion and communicates with the spirit of another. He asks who they are working for - they claim that they act on behalf of their community or home.

At the Cave of the Orcs and Goblins

After following the tracks a while longer, the group arrive near a cave entrance that seems to be the source of the orcs and goblins. Two orcs guard the opening. The group discuss plans for a while. Dvorak hooks their camera up to their servo-skull and stealthily uses it to scout a small area just inside the cave. They see signs of (abandoned?) mine shafts and a living area / barracks.

While the group discuss further, Cyprian sends his undead goblin to sound a warning to the cave - this causes chaos and confusion. One of the guard orcs runs inside to clear other residents. The group mostly find hiding places of varying quality, expecting a horde of orcs and goblins to come charging out shortly. Roughly ten-twenty flee the cave. Atreyu taunts them, to act as a decoy while the group clear the cave. Ten-fifteen orcs and goblins chase Atreyu as he leads them away atop Artax.

Five orcs and goblins remain outside the cave, with an unknown number still inside. Iolo happens to be carrying the components to make a deadly gas bomb (via spending one XP), so he builds one. Dvorak convinces Cyprian to have his undead goblin carry the bomb into the cave - he does so. As the bomb goes off, the group hear orcs and goblins inside dying from the poisonous fumes. Some of those remaining outside run in and are also poisoned, the others flee the scene.

Using their rebreather mask to protect themselves, Dvorak explores the cave in the aftermath of the bomb. They find about ten bodies of orcs and goblins. The living area implies that about fifty lived here, at most. There is a kitchen, with evidence that the residents were eating human parts, as well as a mushroom farm. At the back of the cave is a set of cells, containing the bodies of roughly twenty human prisoners of various ages, who were also killed by the gas bomb. Their clothing implies that they were from low tech-level, possibly fantasy, villages. Dvorak finds three Cyphers (two Manifest, one Fantastic) among the loot.

Cyprian resurrects a poisoned orc corpse as another companion. He also summons the spirit of a one-armed old man who had been kept in a separate cell from the other human prisoners. The spirit reveals that the humans in the cells were captured by raiding orcs and goblins - they lived in nearby villages. He asks that the other humans be rescued (not know that they are also dead).

Atreyu returns from leading the orcs and goblins on a chase, having lost them. The group agree that they have effectively eliminated the threat to Perpetual Bernville from the orcs and goblins, so they resume their expedition.

Resuming the Expedition

While following the tracks of the black-stone-people, Atreyu spots a strange track off to the side. Humanoid footprints seem to transform into tire tracks. Following this strange trail leads to a red sports car, in good condition, alone in the woods. Cyprian has his orc try to enter the car, but it reacts of its own accord and drives a little further away. The group wonder about what to do with it - some are worried it's AI-driven.

Rewards Granted

- 1 GM Intrusion XP for Iolo (I'm not sure who got the other, if anyone)
- 4 post-session XP for all

Missions/Quests Completed

- Dealing with the orc and goblin threat to Perpetual Bernville

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Tired

I've had a problem with tiredness and low energy for the last few sessions in particular - I feel like it's really affecting concentration and essentially all the other aspects of the "job" of GMing. Playing these games is entertainment / a hobby, etc., but they also require work. When my capacity is diminished, the experience of the game suffers. I am less consistent with putting effort into the storytelling and creativity, I miss player input that I would otherwise react to, I get sidetracked or confused more easily, etc.

Tangents

I feel like we went off on more tangents and unrelated jokes / discussions than normal. These can be fun - they're often the result of people just freely talking about stuff they find entertaining, but they can distract from the game. I suppose it's about balance, like most other elements of the game. Whatever leads to the greatest enjoyment for the most players is the right outcome. They can be fine, sometimes.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
Report Date
27 Apr 2021
Primary Location
Convergent Woods

Convergence, Session 8

General Summary

Dealing with the Boy Car

The Convergence Player Characters deliberate over what to do with the red sports car that they found in the Convergent Woods - it seems sentient, so they investigate. Trace disables its engine so

that it can't escape. The group realise that it can speak - a discussion ensues. It asks to be cooled down, so they help it reach a stream. As it cools in the water, it transforms (hideously) into a teenage boy.

Dvorak-46 is impressed that the boy has achieved a more perfect form - they and others try to convince him to remain as a car. He refuses for practicality - the woods are difficult to navigate as a car and he doesn't have direct control over his transformation. He becomes a car when hot and a boy when cold. He wants to return to Perpetual Bernville - the group agree to escort him after they have finished their business in the woods. He hangs at the back of the group as he is not a fighter.

When questioned, he reflects that he is a sort of overlap of two "beings" - him and his car - except the car is not sentient. His personality alone rules the dual, converged forms. Dvorak asks about the machine spirit of the car, but the boy doesn't understand - the car has no spirit, soul, mind, desires, etc.

Finding the Ruins with the Black Stone

Heading west, the group enter The Unburied City - an area of the woods that seems to be from a different reality. Massive chunks of a long-ruined modern-day earth city are here, much of it overgrown by the coniferous forest (with slightly different flora from the rest of the woods). They investigate the ruined buildings. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka deduces that the city as a whole has been ruined for decades, long-since scavenged, etc., but that there are also more recent tracks - some people are still around. They find lots of small pieces of black stone, scattered in such a pattern that they seem to have been cast from the west - some are embedded in west-facing walls. Taxi tries to learn the history of the rock but can't summon her power.

As the group move on, Dvorak is hit with a primitive spear flung from a nearby ruin. Leofe notices that it was telekinetically projected by a human with all-black eyes and shards of black stone in their flesh. They quickly escaped shortly after the attack, before Dvorak destroyed the ruin with plasma fire.

The magically-attuned in the group (initiated by Cyprian Kernow) notice that the black rock that is scattered around is magically inert, but at one point held some significant power. The black rock in the body of the attacker still held some magic, with a flavour of reality / spacetime alteration - this magic had fused with the person's being, connecting them with the source of the power. A strong source of this magical power can be sensed at the centre of these ruins, likely fuelling the abilities of the people with the stone in their flesh.

Encountering the Broken Door

The group arrive at the edge of the slight crater that forms the middle of the ruins. At the very centre, they see a black shape (The Broken Door), surrounded by many of the black-stone-people. Most of the buildings here have been levelled, as if by an explosion with the black shape at the centre. The distribution of the shards of black stone implies that they were forcefully scattered by the same explosion. A party of the black-stone-people stands between the group and the centre, as if expecting them. They don't initially react to the group's presence, despite clearly seeing them.



Figure 34 Altered Cultist of The Door by Ché Wilbraham

Leofe reads the mind of one of the black-stone-people and is bombarded by thousands of voices, speaking simultaneously. The form of the mind is overwhelming and alien, but she understands that they seek to protect "The Door", and that all of these people seem to be networked, somehow - at some level, they share a mind with each other, as well as The Door itself. It is revealed that they are what remains of The Cult of The Door, but altered, though few in the group understand this. The group perceive that the centre of the area contains the remains of some black stone obelisk - mostly a shattered base and a pile of rubble, but with one fist-sized chunk of black stone floating at about chest height above the centre of the base. This chunk seems to vibrate - its form is impossible to truly determine as it flickers between countless similar shapes and substances.

Cyprian approaches the cultists, claiming that he is here to join them in their worship of The Door. They are convinced by his words - one of them leads him by hand through the crowd, to the remains of The Door. Dvorak, Taxi and Leofe try to follow but aren't as convincing - Dvorak is allowed a little closer but Taxi and Leofe are kept under watch at the edge of the area around The Door.

In front of The Broken Door, Cyprian is offered shards of black rock by the cultists - they suggest that he should put them in his flesh, like them. He understands that doing so won't confer any powers or magic on him - the rock outside of the cultists' bodies and the one remaining Piece of The Door is inert. He takes some anyway and uses magic to feign implanting it. They seem to try to telekinetically talk to him, but are unable to do so because he hasn't actually joined their magical connection. He uses his obsidian mirror to scry into the nature of The Door:

Cyprian receives visions that show that The Door was a shifting black obelisk, in another reality. When it was brought here, along with some of its worshippers and parts of its home reality, it exploded, casting shards of itself across these ruins. Those that landed in the cultists conferred some of the essence of The Door into them (its relationship with reality and spacetime), while connecting them together due to the shards all being part of one source. They became a sort of fusion of the two - the human and The Door. They are no longer quite either thing, but are also both. Their human sides died and merged with the power of The Door in that moment. He understands that the one floating piece of The Door is the final part of its original form, in its original place - if it is removed, The Door will properly resolve into this reality and disconnect from the cultists, bringing all of the distributed essence back into its centre.

Cyprian leaps to snatch the floating piece of The Door. The cultists try to stop him but aren't fast enough. As he pulls it from its place in the air, the cultists all drop to the ground, inert. Cyprian holds the piece of The Door as it still shifts and vibrates. Taxi sees the history of this piece and understands that it is the same rock that she touched as a child (during Adventure: The Door in Reality), before being sent to another reality. She is saddened by the implication that its home reality has been devastated.

Back to Perpetual Bernville

The group head back to Perpetual Bernville. The Comte de Saint-Germain meets them on the outskirts, this time in the form of a slender fantasy elf. This is a very strange occurrence - The Comte is the archetypal human and has never taken the form of a non-human before. He thinks that his role / powers / purpose are changing to reflect this reality - perhaps "personhood" is more appropriate than strictly "humanity" here. He congratulates the group on recovering the piece of The Door - he thinks it will act as a key of sorts.

Taxi retires to reflect on the fate of The Overgrown Wilds. Dvorak establishes a well-equipped Workshop in an abandoned church. Rainy Day reports that the fire to the west of town has been mostly dealt with, but there's a strange item at the centre that the group might like to recover. Trace heads back to his Safehouse to look into the group that look like the Adeptus Mechanicus - he finds CCTV footage of a resident of Perpetual Bernville wearing one of their robes as outerwear, so he forwards the details on to Dvorak.

Dvorak tracks down the person that Trace highlighted, confronting her in the street. She states that she was an ITech-Priest intern, but she fled her reality when she realised escape was a possibility. She's from an institution that is related to, but separate from, the Chancery of Man - the ITech-Priests of her group would perform technical support for the Chancery at large. She implies that her reality was ruled over by a totalitarian regime that sounds very similar to Dvorak's home, but also very different in many ways. Dvorak takes her to Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati for interrogation, but Euphrati has already had a run-in with this group and understands that they are from a different reality, outside of her jurisdiction. Ultimately, she agrees to question the woman as Dvorak leaves. While Dvorak is doing this, Trace sets up well-hidden surveillance in their new workshop.

Recovering the Terrible Flaming Sword

The group go to investigate the source of the fire to the west, finding The Terrible Flaming Sword at its centre. It is a long sword with a blade that is literally always magically burning. It's dangerous to approach it due to the relentless heat, so the group deliberate for a while over what to do with it. Ultimately, they carefully drag it back to town so that Dvorak can use it as a perpetual power source for their Workshop.

Heading to the Building in the Sea

The group depart on another expedition to investigate the home of the Molepeople, where fighting robots are rumoured. They head to the building in the middle of the sea, discovering that it's the hollow ruins of the top of a skyscraper. Toho dives into it to find out more, discovering that there is a whole Underwater Desert, in a sort of gigantic bubble of breathable air. The group establish a safe method of descending, using their boat's winch, and drop carefully into the intact top floors of the Convergent Source Tower.

At the top of this tower, they see Lagann disused, off to the side, while groups of Molepeople are lazily hanging about. To the east, in the distance, they see the signs of a great battle. To the south, they see a rugged landscape, also with signs of fighting, and a great, white cube beyond that.

Rewards Granted

- A Piece of The Door
- Dvorak-46's Workshop (Dvorak-46 spent 3 XP on this)
- The Terrible Flaming Sword
- 1 GM Intrusion XP for Dvorak, with the other given to Taxi Varlik
- 4 post-session XP for all

Missions/Quests Completed

- Resolving the threat to Perpetual Bernville from the altered The Cult of The Door
- Recovering A Piece of The Door
- Dealing with the fire caused by The Terrible Flaming Sword

Character(s) interacted with

Turbo Teen, The Cult of The Door, Rainy Day, an unnamed ex-ITech-Priest intern, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Created Content

I had to adlib most of the detail about the The Cult of The Door and The Broken Door, in response to player action and questions. The sort of similarities between Turbo Teen and converging realities in general were nice coincidences.

I wasn't expecting to go into much detail about the Chancery of Man yet, so wasn't prepared to flesh that out, but I wanted to allow a player to pull at the threads they wanted to. The adlibbing was a bit rough, but I think it helped a bit and was appreciated for the most part.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Hard Work

I'm still struggling with tiredness and easy distraction during the sessions. I'm hoping that this will subside, but I have to accept that GMing is pretty hard work to do properly. I love doing it, though I do get a bit stressed when I feel it hasn't gone as well as I would like. I'm not sure what actions I can take to mitigate this problem when the causes of it are either "just life" or beyond my control.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door
Report Date
04 May 2021
Primary Location
The Unburied City
Secondary Location

Convergence, Session 9

General Summary

A Brief Rewind

We briefly flash back to before the Convergence Player Characters discover the Underwater Desert to remember that Rainy Day handed them some Cyphers for their expedition.

Arriving at the Source Tower

The group descend through the sea to land safely on the top floor of the Convergent Source Tower, where Lagann sits disused in a corner and several groups of Molepeople are lounging about. There is a water tower that reaches up into the sea above, as well as an unstaffed bar and several groups of chairs, tables, sofas and the like.

Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka, Dvorak-46 and Iolo investigate Lagann and slowly figure out how to get it working. Dvorak interfaces with it to download an understanding of how to pilot it.

Meanwhile, Cyprian Kernow talks to the Molepeople to try to discover their beliefs / religion. He struggles to get through to them, because they all put on an edgy façade and mostly imply that they don't really care about anything. They indicate that The Source (they point to the water tower) is some sort of phenomenon that some worship, but they're not really from here and they don't really care about it. He retreats to meditate with his skull. A couple of Molepeople clearly think it's cool and want to talk to him about it, but won't openly admit to that. He lets them know that they can get involved in the group's investigations.

Also meanwhile, Taxi Varlik takes a drink from the water tower - from The Source. The water is delicious - the best she's ever had. It is also freshwater, despite the tower being fed by the saltwater sea above. Those in the group with magic ability realise that the water in the tower is indeed magical - it has some power and connection beyond being magically pure. Leofe scans the tower to reveal that there's nothing inside but the magic water (no filters or similar).

The group ask the Molepeople about The Source and Lagann. They say that Lagann was here when they got here, along with other mechs. They have come here as part of a coming-of-age, in order to learn how to pilot mechs and then go out into the world and join the fight. Many of their fellows have done so already, but most of the ones that are still at the tower found it too difficult to learn mech piloting and the other knowledge needed to head out. The thought that they'd be shown how to do the things they wanted when they got here, but The Source only gives them the information they need to master their own skills - they need to put in the work by practicing and investigating on their own. Many of them don't want that.

The group look out to the giant battle raging in the east - the Molepeople say that this is where they go when they learn how to pilot a mech. Leofe notices mech-like shadows in the dust, as well as some other shapes that she can't make out. She also spots another stationary mech not far from the tower - Buntline.

Leaving the Tower

The group head out to retrieve Buntline and head to the battle in the east. As they exit the tower, they are approached by a wounded figure, limping towards them from the south. He is a Dogperson

with a strange aesthetic - ridiculously defined musculature and strange fur colouration (neon blue, black and green, with heterochromia). He says that he has come looking for aid - his people are trying to repel invaders from the Convergent Blasted Lands in the south, but they are being overwhelmed. Taxi heals his wounds as he explains more. After the giant white cube appeared south of the Convergent Blasted Lands, forces started emerging from it. They are people, but enhanced with cuboid metal and machinery. They use weapons formed of small metal cubes that they seem able to direct at will. They capture defeated opponents and take them back to The Cube - some of them end up returning, augmented with cuboid metal and brainwashed into fighting former allies. The Dogpeople are skilled guerrilla warriors and have turned away countless invaders in the past, but this new force has them outclassed. They are worried that the invaders will move onto the Molepeople and The Source before long.

The group agree to investigate the situation between the Dogpeople and the invaders, though they seem undecided on whose side they're on. They first retrieve Buntline and spend some time figuring out how it works. Atreyu relatively quickly settles into piloting it, with Dvorak's help.

To the Broken Lands

The group arrive at the Broken Lands and meet more of the Dogpeople. They universally have strange fur colouration, no two alike. They are also all strangely muscular and weirdly proportioned in ways that seem to deliberately accentuate stereotypically sexually attractive physical characteristics. Some of them are akin to centaurs, in that they have four legs and two arms, except the lower portion of the body is like a dog while the upper portion is humanoid. They all have names like *DarkMasterXO*, *66-Fox-Friend-99* and so on. *ShadowLord_96* is introduced as their strongest warrior. He leads the group to the front lines, where the invaders are currently fighting a small group of defenders.

On arrival at the fight, Dvorak leaps forward in Lagann (with Leofe as a passenger) and attempts to greet the invading forces. They interpret this as a threat and attack. The group is pulled into combat. Leofe reads the minds of the standard enemy troops, understanding that they are under some sort of incomplete mind control - they are intensely focused on their commands (attack, defend, etc.) and have no other real thought processes occurring. Taxi summons her future self in a time loop. Dvorak and Leofe are knocked out of Lagann by an attack. Cyprian uses a Cypher that destroys the metal armour and weaponry of the leader of the group of invaders, leaving him vulnerable and scared.

Rewards Granted

- 3 Cyphers (2 Fantastic, 1 Manifest)
- 1 GM Intrusion XP for Dvorak-46, with the other going to Atreyu
- 4 Post-Session XP for all

Character(s) interacted with

Molepeople, Dogpeople

Created Content

I had to adlib quite a lot of detail around the lifestyle and culture of the Molepeople, including specifics about how their studies work (which I hadn't really thought of in advance).

Similarly, there was some adlibbing around the lives of the Dogpeople, though some of this was done collaboratively as we riffed off each other's ideas.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Too Tired Again

Due to work and other personal commitments, etc., I knew that I was going into this session with less prep than I would like - Chapter: The Desert Under The Water is quite freeform. This would probably have been fine if I had more energy available to wing things and go with the flow on the night. As it was, I kept getting distracted and wasn't able to effectively react to the group and throw in cool content when needed. We ended up finishing early because I felt like I'd reached my limit. Maybe I should have called the game off, but it's important to me and I didn't want to give it up. I think the session was still enjoyable, but I really want to get out of this recent funk of low-energy sessions and feeling like I'm not putting enough in.

This campaign has been quite challenging, I think because it's a weird structure, mostly built of disparate concepts and not-quite-stories. It's been hard to hold it all together and try to make it into something that feels like a cohesive experience with a direction, because it was never really built that way. I'm used to building my stories around central, cohesive themes or circumstances, etc. It's some good practice, I suppose.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Desert Under The Water
Report Date
11 May 2021
Primary Location
Convergent Source Tower
Secondary Location
Underwater Desert

Convergence, Session 10

General Summary

Cyborgs versus Furies

The Convergence Player Characters continue the fight against invaders from PAA Corporation, in protection of the Dogpeople. Some of the invading troopers are killed as they reel from the destruction of their sergeant's equipment. Dvorak-46 intimidates the remaining few into surrendering.



Figure 35 Cyprian and Spider Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

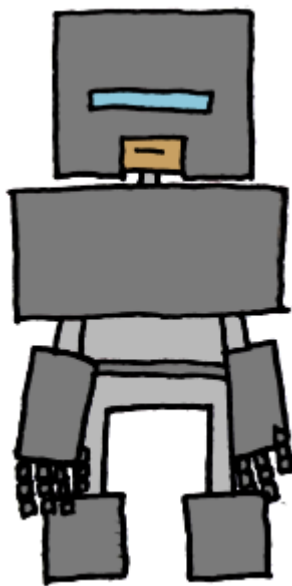


Figure 36 PAA Trooper by Ché Wilbraham

The surrendered troopers are eager to remove their weapons and armour. Through interrogation, they reveal that they are akin to conscripts, mind-controlled into fighting for PAA. When in their armour and accompanied by a sergeant (or higher rank), their own thoughts are almost completely overwritten by battle directives and conditioning. As such, they aren't able to give much information about current circumstances (seeing as they hardly experience what is happening around them), but they give general information about PAA:

- PAA is an incredibly exploitative (stereotypically evil) corporation that owns a city and oversees all trade and manufacturing. Everyone "legitimate" in PAA City works for PAA in

some manner. People who don't work for PAA are effectively second-class and criminalised. Those who work for PAA are exploited for the corporation's maximum gain with little compassion.

- In the last few years, PAA uncovered a mysterious element with supernatural properties within the ground under the city. They began extensive mining operations, shifting almost all of their focus into gathering this element. They began researching ways to harness it, developing technology that seemed to bend the laws of physics when crafted with this element. The mind control and incredible weaponry started to appear.
- It was discovered that the element had somehow been absorbed into some of the citizens of the city, granting them unusual powers. PAA started to round them up, both to quell any potential resistance to their supremacy and to harvest the residual amounts of the element from their bodies (killing them in the process).
- Having established a great network of mind-controlled workers and armed forces, PAA began work on the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters, above the city. It is a gigantic white cube - a new headquarters and fortress for PAA that will be mobile when complete. Its construction requires vast amounts of the special element, so PAA step up their harvest and exploitation, consuming any worthwhile resources from the city to further completion.
- The troopers are hazy on the details of the converging realities, but are vaguely aware that something must have happened to have put the unfinished Cube in the Underwater Desert, without access to PAA's mines. Since arrival, PAA have had to adapt and try to find new ways to finish The Cube. They have been squashing the nearby resistance of the Dogpeople, while also capturing some of them to see if they contain any harvestable energies akin to their special element.
- It is unclear if they know about The Source, but its power is likely to allow them to complete The Cube, which could spell disaster for almost everyone else in the Convergence Universe.



Figure 37 PAA Sergeant by Ché Wilbraham

Iolo, Trace and Dvorak spend some time deconstructing and analysing a set of the troopers' armour. They discover many complex systems relating to mind control, combat effectiveness and ability enhancement. They get a good understanding of how many of the systems work. With Leofe's help, they understand a little more about the mind-control network:

- Individuals are generally connected to a nearby person of higher rank, feeding them information as well as receiving commands. With their sergeant dead, the trooper's armour is still open to connection, but not currently receiving anything.
- Higher-ranked members of PAA generally have more autonomy and are in more control of their actions. They can assume control of nearby lower-ranking people, or simply issue standing orders, etc.
- It seems that the armour of these troopers was particularly disrupted because of the outright destruction of the sergeant's equipment - an incredibly unusual occurrence that caused glitches in the control systems. It might not always be so simple as killing the sergeant to release troopers.

Trace is able to modify a set of armour to only receive information without transmitting any data, which he may be able to use to spy on the PAA network. He suggests the group take the armour sets and disguise themselves. The group discuss plans for a while.

Looking Out

From the Convergent Blasted Lands, the group look out towards The Cube. They see a sort of encampment around the one partly-open side of The Cube. It seems to be a staging ground for the armed forces - they see massed troopers and sergeants, as well as heavy combat suits and executives or leaders of some sort. There is a lot of activity, with groups coming and going with captives and scavenge.

Heading to the Battlegrounds

The group decide to head to the Battlegrounds, to see if they can find anything that might help them deal with PAA's forces. On the approach, they come across old ruins, implying that this area may have been a city a long time ago. Temporary encampments and resupply stations litter the area, implying that combatants frequently stop to rest and refuel wherever they are able, before re-joining the fight. As they travel, they claim a [Walker Gear](#), though nobody is particularly interested in using it. Through the dust clouds, they see lesser Kaiju in combat with mechs. These Kaiju have the aesthetic of live action TV show Kaiju - people in low budget outfits - though it is clear that they are actual monsters once an observer gets close enough. The group also see packs of roving bandits involved in fights. These bandits seem cartoonishly evil, with strange, brightly-coloured clothes and hair and ridiculous behaviours.

Cyprian Kernow uses magic to understand more about this place. With some incredible insight, he learns that this area perpetuates combat - it will always be a place for battle. When foes are defeated, more will mysteriously emerge somewhere else in the area. The fights are provided by this place for whoever comes here seeking them, to get stronger, find loot, or whatever. The foes here will not leave the area (or even chase combatants very far, if they flee), meaning that it poses no real threat to other parts of the Convergence Universe. It's equivalent to an area of random battles in a JRPG.

As the group discuss this place, a great roar is heard from further north. Mothgdanon emerges from the dust cloud, chased by laser fire and rockets. It flies upwards, through the ceiling of water and out

into the rest of the Convergence Universe. Taxi uses a Cypher to hit it but the attack is completely ineffectual - Mothgdanon is utterly gigantic and would be nearly impossible to defeat with standard weaponry. The group are worried about Perpetual Bernville.

Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka uses a Cypher to gain a single-use jetpack and flies out of the Underwater Desert in pursuit of Mothgdanon. They see it repelled from the town to the south, though it isn't clear what force managed to turn it away. It flies off to the west, towards some of the other circles bounding other realities. Perpetual Bernville seems fine.

As Toho swims back to the Convergent Source Tower to re-join the others, they notice that some residents of Perpetual Bernville are constructing a sort of transport tube to aid travel between the two sides of the water. The group meet at the tower to discuss their next steps.

Rewards Granted

- 4 Post-Session XP for all
- A Walker Gear (a level 2 mech)

Created Content

Many of the details of life under the PAA Corporation were part-adlibbed and part-half-remembered from when I've used them in previous games. It seemed to go OK and present a reasonable picture of the villainous force.

I had the idea that the Battlegrounds was inspired by JRPG random battles, but wasn't expecting to have to give much detail or even necessarily reveal that. With Cyprian Kernow's spell and great roll, I had to adlib the history a bit and explain more than I intended.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Unexpected Occurrences

This happens basically all the time in GMing, but Cyprian Kernow's great spell unveiling all the details of the Battlegrounds, not long after his dissolving the armour of the PAA Corporation sergeant necessitating the release of some troopers, is a good example of a one-two punch of unexpected player actions leading to completely unplanned in-game events. I know that I'd been running this chapter very loose anyway, but much of this information wasn't really intended to be uncovered (and I hadn't really written much of it).

What Next

I wonder what the group will do next. I have no particular forward path in mind for them, and I wonder that I've established a number of threats that seem insurmountable, or like they might have a solution elsewhere. Notably, The Cube. I'm interested to see what they come up with, but I'm a little worried that it could get a bit unfocussed here. It might be a good idea to come up with some ideas for things I can use to gently nudge them into action if they start to stall. There are still a lot of threads, but I don't want to just continually drag them around the map.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Desert Under The Water
Report Date
18 May 2021
Primary Location
Convergent Blasted Lands
Secondary Location
Battlegrounds

Convergence, Session 11

General Summary

Planning the Next Steps

The Convergence Player Characters spend quite some time discussing what to do next, now that Mothgdanon has escaped and the nearly-completed PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters seems to be a pressing threat.

Leofe uses magic to see much of the Convergence Universe above the Underwater Desert, to attempt to track Mothgdanon. She sees it run up against a magic circle containing a reality to the west, unable to enter. It then heads south and breaks through a different circle, containing another reality.

The group develop plans to deal with Mothgdanon and The Cube, including finding The Cube's power source and using it to lure Mothgdanon into a trap. They decide that claiming / deactivating The Cube would be a good next step. They discuss plans for doing so, including parlaying (deceptively), bombarding, infiltrating and using the Dogpeople as a distraction or fighting force.

Scavenging the Battlegrounds

The group head to the Battlegrounds to scavenge equipment (etc.) for their actions against PAA Corporation. Leofe leads the way with some excellent scouting and perception, finding several caches of supplies (explosives and mechanical parts), as well as a [Zaku](#) and a [VF-1S](#), both of which are in working order. Dvorak-46 takes a liking to the Zaku, learning how to pilot it and naming it *Viridi Spicea*. Atreyu feels drawn to the VF-1S and begins learning its controls, though it is stuck in its middle configuration.

Rewards Granted

- 4 Post-Session XP for all
- Two new mechs and various resources

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

What a Mess

We were all so tired from work that the sessions derailed very quickly into rambling about ideas from the game and unrelated discussion. I didn't have the energy to keep it on-track and it seemed like people were enjoying the more

casual chatting. I think this was a situation where the timeslot was better used by not forcing the RPG.

Losing Passion?

I'm starting to feel that sinking feeling I sometimes get when I start to lose interest in a campaign. I think some of it is because I felt like I've had a run of bad sessions, but I also think that the nature of Campaign: Convergence was always sort of difficult to grasp and loosely held together. I've got some ideas about how to point towards a climax / resolution and try to get things back on track. The newly-released *The Darkest House* very well might help - combining that with some ideas I had relating to Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati should help get things moving in the right direction again and reignite some passion. I think Chapter: The Desert Under The Water has been a bit weak and directionless, which is probably a big part of the problem. It feels like poorly-thought-out side-content.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Desert Under The Water
Report Date
25 May 2021
Primary Location
Convergent Source Tower
Secondary Location
Battlegrounds

Convergence, Session 12

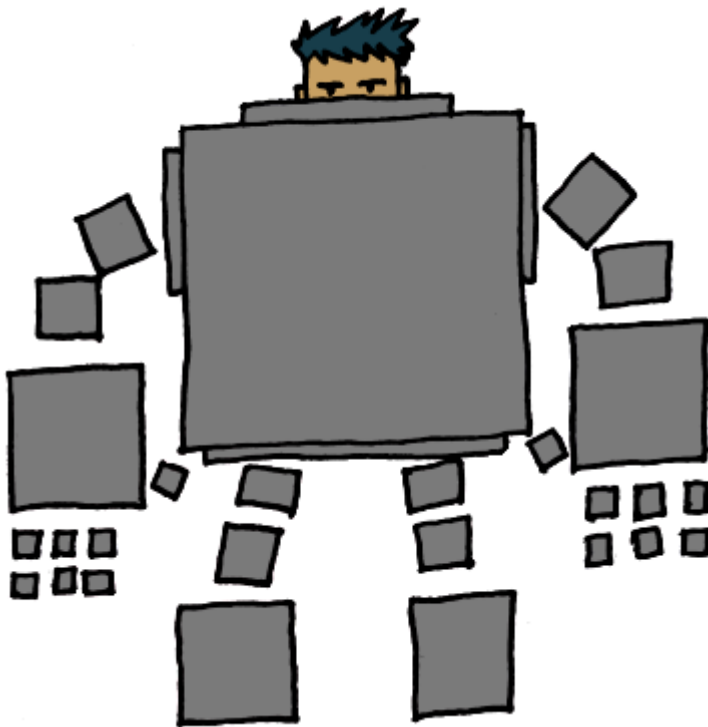


Figure 38 PAA Heavy by Ché Wilbraham

General Summary

SPOILER WARNING: This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.

Bonus Scene

There was a bonus, between-sessions scene:

"We see Euphrati speaking to a young woman in the streets of Perpetual Bernville. We can't hear what they're saying, but the young woman clearly has Euphrati's attention and the Inquisitor seems more and more invested as the discussion goes on. They squat on the ground to sketch diagrams as they talk - overlapping circles, connecting lines, other abstract shapes. They go to the old police station to reference one of the work-in-progress maps of the area, gathering a small group of Perpetual Bernville's more senior defenders, including Rainy Day.

The group discuss the map, adding annotations and editing parts of it. They seem to have constructed a relatively complete map of the Convergent Universe, excluding the parts within the circles to the west and southwest. The young woman is pointing to a small circle in the west that is drawn in yellow - she seems to be stressing its importance to the group. The body language implies that this reality fragment is crucial but inaccessible. The young woman writes "Hole in the World" underneath the circle.

Later, the young woman, Euphrati and Rainy Day stand outside a dilapidated house on the outskirts of Perpetual Bernville. It looks like it has been abandoned for a long time. The doors and windows are taped and labelled with warnings. The young woman is frantically pointing at the house while passionately stating something. Euphrati looks scared. Rainy Day looks unconvinced. The house looks
....."

Dealing with the Cube

The Convergence Player Characters finalise their plans for dealing with the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters. Cyprian Kernow recruits six Molepeople mech pilots to the cause (cashing in on impressing some of them several sessions ago).



Figure 39 PAA Executive by Ché Wilbraham

Dvorak-46 uses the information that Trace and Iolo gathered from the PAA Corporation troopers' armour to send a message over their network, claiming to be interested in trading information and technology if PAA become subservient. The shock of receiving the message is enough to lure out a PAA exec, along with a strong defence team. Dvorak tells them to meet at the Convergent Source Tower.

Meanwhile, the group are waiting near the edge of the Convergent Blasted Lands, in order to launch an attack on The Cube when the defence forces are reduced. Dvorak fakes a distress call from the exec over the PAA network, sending more defenders away from The Cube.

Iolo sneaks into The Cube during the confusion, ahead of the rest of the group. The rest launch an attack, led by Dvorak in their Zaku and Atreyu in their VF-1S (supported by six other mechs, directed by Cyprian). Atreyu performs alarmingly well, obliterating enemy forces with expert piloting. The group charge devastatingly through the defenders outside The Cube and gain entry.

The interior of The Cube is a contrast to the sleek, white panelling of the outside - a lot of exposed machinery and inner workings, with blocks for habitation and other amenities. The internal sections move around as needed, though the lower sectors seem reserved for functional systems and lower-class lodging, while the upper sections tend to contain command systems and exec amenities. At the centre is a giant, building sized power core, pulsing with blue energy (though it looks about two-thirds full). Iolo has some time to figure out the structure and identifies how it could be quickly removed.

Dvorak's Zaku is the only thing big enough to carry the core, so Iolo instructs Dvorak in how to remove it while Atreyu runs (devastating) interference. As soon as the core is removed from the centre of The Cube, all of PAA's weaponry and machinery slowly stops working. Workers and troopers are freed from their mind control and the approaching forces all grind to a halt (many of them now terrified for their lives).

The group debate about what to do with all the remaining people from PAA - many of them unwilling participants in the conflict. Dvorak kills as many as they can while they leave, branding them heretics.

Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka tries to reach out to the now-free citizens but they are too scared / angry to listen.

Back in Perpetual Bernville

The Molepeople mech pilots help carry the power core back to Perpetual Bernville. They spend some time thanking Cyprian and giving him some trinkets before returning to their fight in the Battlegrounds. Iolo investigates the core and understands its potential to transfer supernatural uses / abilities as well as near-limitless energy. If the group could scavenge more of the strange blue element from the PAA tech, they may be able to build things that bend reality.

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati and Rainy Day track down the group not long after their return. They relay and clarify some of the information described in the bonus scene above - the young woman who approached them was The Comte de Saint-Germain, who had been looking into the cause of the converging realities that created the Convergence Universe. By combining the insights of the Comte's inherent connection to the nature of reality, Euphrati's divination and psychic investigations and Rainy Day's pooling of information from residents of all sorts, they have made some discoveries about the situation:

- They have compiled a relatively complete map of the Convergence Universe, except for the areas inside large magic circles to the west and south, though Euphrati thinks that the The Cudgel of Drusus might be within the south circle.
 - The Piece of The Door would probably be required to gain entry to either of those large circles.
 - Euphrati can sense The Warp from the south circle, but it feels wrong and is growing in power. She thinks it could be very dangerous to go in there unprepared. The ongoing convergence could be fuelling this corruption.
 - There is a smaller, golden circle intersecting the west circle, which the Comte believes is The Hole in the World - the cause of the converging realities.
- The circle around The Hole in the World is impenetrable, even with the Piece of The Door, but getting inside there and resolving whatever is within could be the key to allowing these realities to diverge again begin repairing the multiverse (if that's an appropriate term). This is the Comte's proposal, and Euphrati agrees.
- The Darkest House may be the only way to access The Hole in the World, as it's connected to every reality, but it's an incredibly dangerous place that takes from those who enter. It is understood that someone who manages to leave the house can choose where they exit into, from all places and all realities. At the least, it could offer the group a way home, but it may also allow them to exit into The Hole in the World, if they survive.
- Euphrati tells Dvorak that she's fairly certain that she's not from the same reality as them, despite them both being from a version of the Imperium of Man. At least, they seem to be from different time periods within that reality, but Euphrati also reckons that they are from different branches or versions.

To The Darkest House

The group go to investigate the house with Euphrati and Rainy Day. It appears to just be a run-down, relatively normal suburban house, though it has a sinister vibe. The front door has a warning sign and is locked, but Iolo is easily able to pick it. The group notice that a back garden is surrounded by a tall fence with no gate. Trace uses a drone to see that the back garden is overgrown. Taxi Varlik sends a future version of herself in the front door, but the door closes behind her and she is not heard from

again. The experience makes Taxi feel very unpleasant. Dvorak sends their Serv-0 in to investigate, but the door closes again and contact is lost. Through the front door and windows, the group can see a living room. They try breaking windows and damaging the house but it is completely impervious to any harm.

Eventually, they enter together and find themselves in a dusty, abandoned living room. The front door disappears and outside the windows they just see a black void. They explore through some of the house's rooms, encountering strange phenomena and hauntings while being fed unusual / contradictory information by their abilities. They discuss the nature of the house and how to deal with it. Iolo is intrigued and keen to tinker with things, Dvorak is excited that it seems connected to their home, Cyprian is terrified of the evil potential of the place.

A seemingly endless room beyond the living room reveals a haunted clock that, when tinkered with by Iolo, instantly transports the group to a new area. From there, they find their way to a library.



Figure 40 Iolo and Goblin Fixing a Clock Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Through the house, they find strange items and pages from a journal belonging to Philip Harlock, who was a previous owner of the property.

Missions/Quests Completed

- Dealing with the threat of the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters

Character(s) interacted with

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Rainy Day

Created Content

Details about the interior of the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters were adlibbed, as well as some information around The Darkest House's presentation in Perpetual Bernville.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Rushing through the Cube

I felt like the campaign had been getting bogged down in the Underwater Desert, so I told the players in advance that I was going to try to get through how they deal with the PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters quickly and in a more abstract / zoomed out manner. I'd also been teasing content about The Darkest House and sharing my excitement for it, so they were on board. We glossed over a lot of detail but I think we hit the right notes for the combat and sabotage, etc. The group seemed fine with it, even though some of them didn't have much input.

Starting the Darkest House

My opinion of it so far is quite mixed. The system itself, while being relatively simple for straightforward checks, gets quite fiddly where avoiding / calculating damage is concerned (especially when an effect targets everyone). And the House Actions escalate much more quickly than I was expecting. I get that it's meant to model rising tension and a feeling of being pursued, but I'm worried that we'll be cycling through them so quickly that they'll lose their impact after a few sessions and just become an irritant that gets in the way of the exploration.

The setting is great, though. And the app itself (they go hand-in-hand, really). The mystery and atmosphere of the place are communicated nicely and slowly, in a way that seems to permeate all the actions involved in the tentative progress. The illustrations and virtual handouts are a lovely touch that really pull the experience together. I'm unsure how well it works in terms of there being clear goals and / or some kind of guided experience - the group have gone in with the goal of looking for a way out, but it's not clear how they can best pursue that. And there are so many options for routes, with things like teleportation confusing matters further. I'm excited to see how it progresses, though.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, Chapter: The Desert Under The Water, The Darkest House
Report Date
01 Jun 2021
Primary Location
Underwater Desert
Secondary Location
The Darkest House

Convergence, Session 13

General Summary

SPOILER WARNING: This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.

In the Library

In the Library of The Darkest House, the Convergence Player Characters continue their investigation. They investigate the room, identifying the magic in one of the books and finding another scrap of canvas with a green eye painted on it. As they look around, a large, monstrous man enters the room, yelling at them all about "ruining his great work". He throws books at Dvorak-46 and attacks the group.

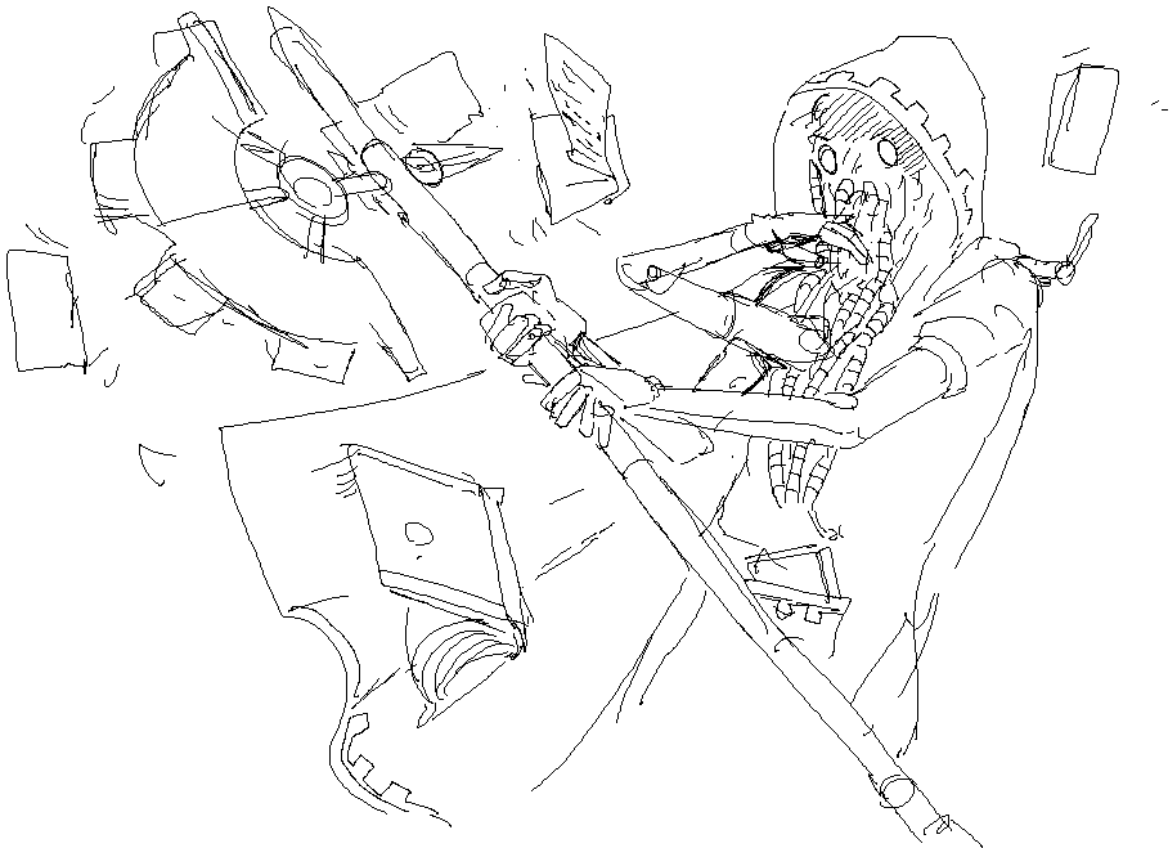


Figure 41 Dvorak-46 and Books Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

A fight ensues, with the group inflicting wounds on the man that seem to heal of their own accord. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka pins him down, Dvorak helps and then Taxi Varlik finishes him off with the use of a Cypher that inflicts fatal blows.

After the battle, the group go back to investigating the room, finding more notable books, hidden curios and another page from the journal that they have been finding pieces of. Iolo discovers some magical effect on the rear bookshelf as the books rearrange to tell him to stop approaching. He doesn't, and is attacked by flying books. He discovers one notable book titled "I'm Alive" and throws it to the rest of the group. Dvorak blasts it, burning it. One smouldering page drops to the floor with a single word on it - "WHY?"

Cyprian Kernow communes with the spirit of the book, discovering that it was alive and didn't have a name. Its spirit is trapped in the house since its destruction, which is an awful fate, so Cyprian

banishes it. He senses that this works differently here - the veil between life and death is either absent or very different. He's not sure where the spirit is now, but it isn't here any longer. He feels uneasy.

A Familiar Room

The group leave the library into a room that looks like a modern-day workshop / computer room. Trace immediately recognises it as the hideout of his old squad, back in his home reality. It looks exactly the same as the last time he saw it. He dwells on the past a little while some of the group investigate the room. He talks a bit about how he feels guilty for the destruction of his old squad.

A Coffin and a Corpse

The group move on to a room with a coffin. A procession of ghostly mourners wanders through the room. The group discuss the nature of the house - that they aren't sure they can trust some of their abilities because they sometimes receive contradictory information. Cyprian's abilities tell him that his body is in the coffin, but he doesn't trust this information. The group open the coffin to reveal a body that is identical to Cyprian's, except clearly dead and prepared for burial. It isn't possible to contact its spirit but as far as anyone can tell, it is Cyprian's body. He animates it with necromancy to have it follow him.

Horrific Trophies

The group enter a room decked out with trophies - stuffed animal heads and carcasses throughout. A giant deer head is the centrepiece. As Iolo tries to retrieve a hunting rifle, the deer head extends out of the wall like a furry snake, screeching, and attacks him. The group fight it for a while but end up fleeing the room without investigating further. They end up re-entering the library from the opposite side to where they exited, which doesn't make spatial sense. They exit the last door of the library.



Figure 42 Dvorak-46 and Deer Head Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

A Courtyard, a Giant Black Hand and a Cellar

They arrive at an interior courtyard with a statue of a weeping woman and a broken stone tablet that once bore the image of the sun. Whenever they stop or dawdle under the sky, a giant black hand reaches down from the roiling darkness. They all manage to evade capture.

They investigate a cellar that leads from the courtyard. There is little there beyond a nice saw hidden behind a tool rack, which required them to enter a code using the hooks as switches.

They leave the courtyard via the last entrance and arrive at a gallery.

Character(s) interacted with

Monstrous man

Created Content

The group destroyed the living book almost immediately, so we improvised a scene where Cyprian Kernow could at least make contact with its spirit (though little information was gleaned).

The tool puzzle in the cellar had an error in its description and I don't know how the players were ever supposed to figure out its solution, so I fed them hints until they got there.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, The Darkest House
Report Date
08 Jun 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House

[Convergence, Session 14](#)

General Summary

***SPOILER WARNING:** This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.*

In the Gallery

The Convergence Player Characters continue their exploration of The Darkest House, with the gallery. They are greeted by the Curator - a strange, humanoid being who moves with grace and seems focused on art. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka starts a conversation with the Curator about the paintings, focusing on one of a child with parts of the canvas torn away (the eyes, specifically), knowing that Cyprian Kernow has collected the missing pieces of the painting. The Curator states that it would be good to have the painting's eyes back, looking pointedly at Cyprian.

The Eyes of the Child

Cyprian shows the painting's eyes to the Curator and tries to place them back on the painting himself, but nothing happens. The Curator offers to grant Cyprian "The Eyes of the Child", if he returns the eyes and gives the Curator an appropriate gift. He explains that they will allow Cyprian to see more than anyone else. Cyprian eventually agrees, trading a couple of the finer books that he took from the library. The Curator holds the painting's eyes over Cyprian's. In a painful flash,

suddenly Cyprian's eyes look like those represented in the painting - green and childlike. The Curator vanishes.



Figure 43 Cyprian with The Eyes of the Child Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Dvorak-46 has been reacting negatively to the Curator, thinking him a Chaos Daemon, but Cyprian accepting the Eyes of the Child forces their hand. Dvorak exclaims that Cyprian is now tainted, and that they should remove his new eyes and replace them with mechanical prosthetics. The group debate for a while, with Dvorak trying to corner Cyprian, but eventually they move onto investigating the rest of the gallery.



Figure 44 Dvorak-46 with Scalpel Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

The Paintings

Atreyu notices that the painting of an old woman has some hidden text saying "take me to the shattered sun". The group remember that there is a shattered stone tablet in the courtyard that bears an image of the sun. Iolo takes this painting there and the old woman materialises to deflect the giant hand, whenever it attempts to descend from the darkness. The group can (relatively) safely linger in the courtyard.

Toho investigates a painting of an adult and an infant. The infants head and eyes move occasionally to follow them around the room. They try to point it out, but nobody else can see it.

Cyprian investigates a painting of a large hunting bird with a pyramid in the background. When he touches it, he is instantly transported into the painting and under attack from the bird. He avoids harm. Dvorak touches the painting with a mechanical component but is also transported in. Toho follows to try to help out. Toho grows large and grabs the bird mid-flight - Dvorak kills it shortly after. Trace tries to enter the painting with a rope, to pull the others out, but his transportation leaves the rope behind.

Outside the painting, Iolo rigs up a system of ropes to move it without touching it. He takes it to the courtyard but nothing in particular happens.

The group inside the painting travel to the pyramid, which takes quite some time. Inside, they find an unlit candle and a painting of the gallery. Those who touch the painting are instantly transported back to the gallery. Cyprian stays behind for a while to meditate with the candle. The Revelation. A question is answered, at a cost.

Cyprian's Madness



Figure 45 Dvorak-46 Sulking Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Out in the courtyard, Cyprian claims to have found a small gargoyle, though nobody else is able to sense it at all (and Cyprian doesn't even appear to be holding anything). Dvorak in particular takes this as a sign that Cyprian is descending into madness, so tries to restrain him again to remove his new eyes. Iolo is interested to see the operation of installing cybernetic eyes, but Toho intervenes, growing large to repel Dvorak. Dvorak retreats from the rest of the group for a while to sulk.

Out of the Gallery, Into a Fight

Dvorak picks the very sturdy lock of the other door in the gallery to exit into the room that the group were transported to by the clock. The monstrous man that the group fought earlier is waiting behind the door. They fight, eventually beating him. His body disappears and they again hear him moving in a nearby part of the house.

With his new vision, Cyprian sees an elevator in this room that nobody else is able to. When he opens its door, it is revealed to the others.

The Elevator

Leaving a door unexplored, the group (except for Trace, who is scared of overloading the old device) take the elevator to its highest floor, exiting into a music room. Toho finds a viola that allows them to masterfully play it, despite no prior experience.

Iolo peeks into a nearby doorway that is ajar, emitting ghostly blue light. The room inside is alien and completely unlike any other room the group have yet seen in the house. A horrific humanoid creature dwells within, within another humanoid at the back of the room that can't be seen clearly.

Eventually, the group enter this alien room. The creature psychically asks each of them *if they want to leave*. Any that say yes prompt her to ask *if they have the key*. None do, so she ultimately tells everyone to go away. The group see that the figure at the back of the room appears to be a man that has had locks grafted into much of his flesh, as well as his eyes and mouth sewn shut. A few try to pass the woman but she prevents them from doing so. They consider fighting her, but she seems dangerous.

A Message from a Radio

From the music room, the group enter a room with a Japanese style. A radio clicks off as they enter. Dvorak turns it back on and retunes it. The group receive messages from a child's voice between patches of static and strange piano music. The voice claims that the "doll room" is safe and that the "door man" will let them leave, but the "smiling man" will make them stay forever.

There are pages from Harlock's journal in this room that give more information about the supernatural nature of the house.

Dvorak plays the tune from the radio on the piano in the music room, which causes a box to unlock, revealing a nice chisel.

Airing Annoyances

The next room features carved wooden faces that speak aloud what features of some of the group annoy others, jeering and naming names:

What about Leofe annoys Atreyu the most?

She seems too dependent for her age, compared to his culture.

What about Taxi Varlik annoys Cyprian the most?

Her accent is harsh and grating.

What about Atreyu annoys Trace the most?

He isn't even interested in learning about technology.

What about Dvorak annoys lolo the most?

They are unwilling to share any secrets of technology - the denial of access to information.

What about Toho annoys Dvorak the most?

They are not just weak but actively a traitor towards their species due to their dealing with xenos.

What about lolo annoys Leofe the most?

He hasn't given her much attention and she needs attention.

What about Cyprian annoys Toho the most?

He wants to touch and try everything, even when it is dangerous / erratic.

What about Trace annoys Taxi the most?

TBD

The group squabble a little in response to some of this insight.

Cats

They emerge into a room crammed with furniture and housing dozens of cats. lolo's goblin tries to pounce on one but is yanked upwards by an invisible force before disappearing. Moments later, it is regurgitated by a cat on the far side of the room. It is initially shrunken, but grows to full size. It is injured and in a catatonic state after the experience.

Leofe uses some magic and a cypher to befriend one of the cats.



Figure 46 Leofe and Weird Cat Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

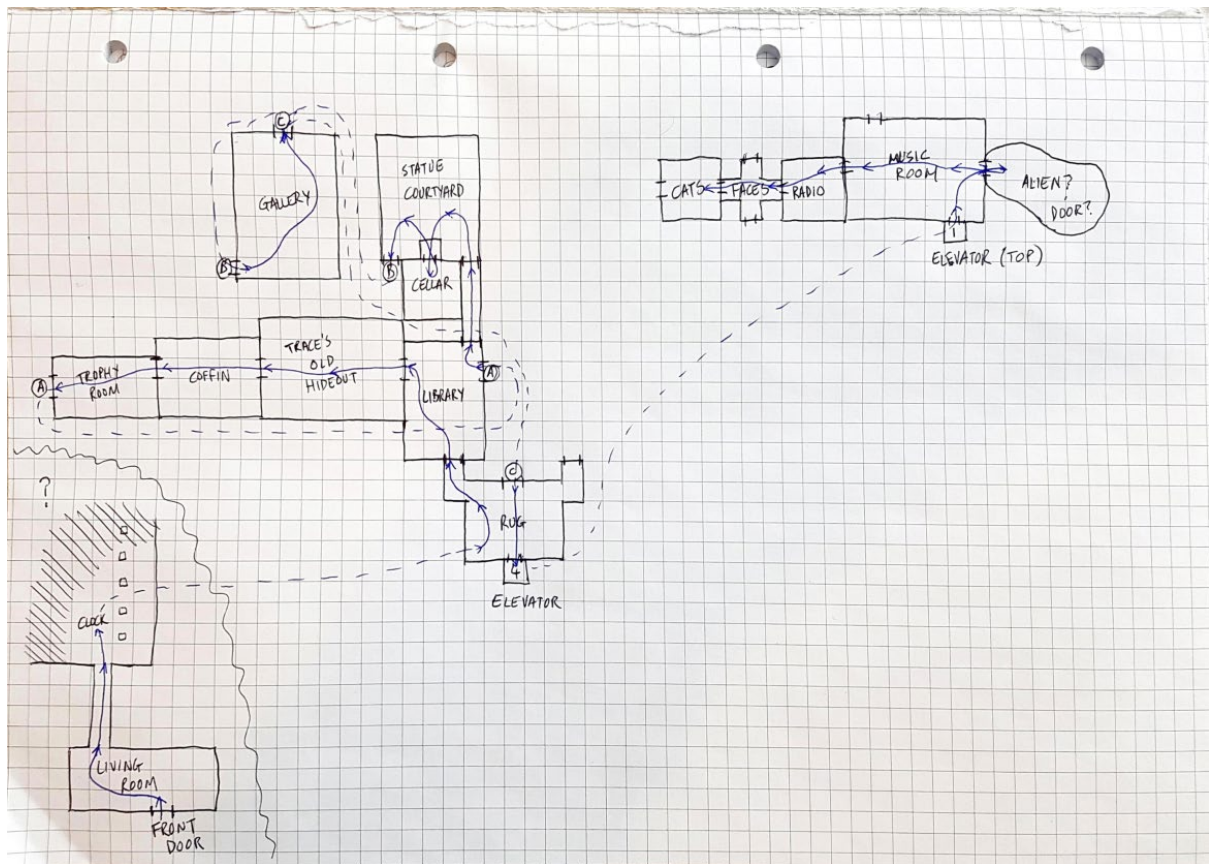


Figure 47 Rough First Map of The Darkest House by Ché Wilbraham

Character(s) interacted with

The Curator, monstrous man, monstrous alien woman

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Sequence Breaking

The rooms with the radio and the cats were clearly designed to be encountered from the opposite direction, going from their entry descriptions and contents in The Darkest House app. But there was nothing to stop the group from encountering them in the "wrong" direction because the entry to the radio room was unlocked from the direction they approached, even though it would have been locked if they'd tried to exit that way. I don't know if this a writing error or just an oversight, but it led to some awkward scrambling while I had to reverse descriptions and skip some events that would only work if the players weren't already behind them.

Hardly Any Prep

With the way the app works, I don't have to do much (if any) prep for The Darkest House sessions, which is quite nice. The story is all ready to go and the app makes all the appropriate elements accessible as and when I need them. I do miss actually creating the story content, but there's a lot of nice atmosphere and

mystery in this so I'm quite enjoying running it anyway. Much of it is new to me as well, as the players experience it. It wouldn't be practical / possible to try to read ahead and read up on things they might encounter anyway, just because of how big and open the house is.

Even comparing it to running an adventure from a book (such as Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit), this is nicer and easier. It's less railroaded than a traditional campaign but doesn't require me to have absorbed all of the relevant info beforehand. The app is also much more user-friendly than a book because of the bite-size, collapsible presentation and thorough hyperlinking.

(Valuable?) Tangents

Tangents and derailments are pretty common in RPG sessions and can sometimes be the enemy of the overall story, but I'm sure that some (if not many) of them are actually valuable to the play experience. In this session we had a bit of a tangent because some players misread the picture of Dvorak-46 holding a scalpel (above) as depicting them holding a spoon. We had a joke about it, but it led to Dvorak's player telling a little side-story about how Dvorak would have certainly found unique cutlery in Perpetual Bernville and claimed it to take it back to their own reality. There, new designs for everyday items are scarce and very valuable - a find like this could be incredibly culturally important.

It was quite a short diversion, but it led to a nice detail that expands on Dvorak's story, laying out threads for what might happen after the campaign, as well as arguably allowing their player (and the other participants) to understand and identify with the character more deeply (which is very important for an RPG).



Figure 48 Dvorak-46 with Cutlery Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, The Darkest House
Report Date
22 Jun 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House

Convergence, Session 15

General Summary

SPOILER WARNING: This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.

With the Cats

In the entryway to the room with all the cats in The Darkest House, the Convergence Player Characters spend some time recuperating from their wounds.

Atreyu finds a silver locket on the corpse of a woman under some of the furniture. He realises that it is a kind of puzzle that will transform into another shape as it is solved - he begins working on it.

Dvorak-46 tries to blast the ceiling to scare the cats away, but realises that their Volkite Blaster isn't working. They panic a little and try to fix it, but realise that the problem isn't mechanical. Some of the magic users of the party assess that the weapon is cursed - the house has directly infected it and it won't function until the curse is removed. Knowing this, Dvorak doesn't want to carry the weapon around, but also can't discard it, so they head back towards the music room to leave it near what they believe to be the exit.

Ambushed by a Monstrous Woman

In the room with the radio, Dvorak sees the silhouette of a woman in the paper screen door. They call out to the woman and open the door, briefly seeing a hideous creature with rotten flesh and long claws before it vanishes. They quickly try the door to the music room but realise that it is now locked.

Dvorak smells rot and hears a whispered "murrrrrderrrrrr" before they are attacked from behind, as the creature reappears. They are wounded quite badly, calling out. The rest of the group come to their aid. The group fight the creature for a while as it disappears and reappears behind people. They realise that it is tough and dangerous, with their attacks not having much impact.

During the fight, Cyprian Kernow asks the ceramic gargoyle to point to the Doll Room, remembering that the voice on the radio said it was safe. It points back through the room with the cats. Cyprian calls to the others to follow him, so he can lead them to safety.

In the Doll Room and the Garden

The dolls are creepy but the group seem to be in no immediate danger. Cyprian reads the room with his magic, which tells him that the dolls will steal the group's souls while they rest. The group notice that the window in this room looks out over a walled back garden, and that it would be easy to climb down to it using the trellis.

Dvorak heads down there first, noticing that there is a moon in the sky (unlike other areas of the house, which have all looked out onto a featureless black void). They try to calculate their astronomical location but are unable to do so. They scan the noosphere outside to try to detect Adeptus Mechanicus signals, picking up some from their master's ship. They communicate for a while, with these signals telling them that they are on a corrupted planet - that all life there must be purged before they can return to their home (including their travelling party).

Some other members of the group spend some time trying to escape over the garden wall, but every attempt ends with them dropping back down into the garden at the point where they climbed.

Iolo investigates the strange flowers, drawing Dvorak's attention to them. Dvorak hacks at one with their axe, causing the flower to shiver and scream as it rises from the ground revealing its true form - the crest of a horrific serpentine creature. The group fight these creatures, killing all but one, which Leofe psychically manipulated into retreating.

Through the Back Door

The group head back into the house via the back door, that connects to the garden. They find a message scratched into the wall that mentions four entities in the house and a Wheel of Blood, as well as a keyring with six keys on it. The inside of the back door has a note attached to it that says "don't answer the door". They begin to hear knocking at the door not long after entering.

Dvorak defiantly opens the door to see that nobody is there. After closing it, the knocking starts again. Dvorak opens it a second time to again see nothing, but this time hears a whispered "may I come in?". They deny entry out loud and are thrown to the ground by an invisible force. This attack knocks Dvorak unconscious and nearly kills them, though the rest of the group tend their injuries. The knocking begins again but the group are keen to ignore it and move on.

Dvorak's Room

In the next corridor, the group find a three-headed key. Dvorak uses it to unlock one of the doors but is then attacked by ghostly, strangling hands, which they manage to avoid. Beyond the door is Dvorak's quarters from their home craft. It looks exactly as it should, except that there is some blood on the floor and the dataslate of one of Dvorak's colleagues seems to have been dropped nearby. The files on the slate mention that Dvorak has been missing for a couple of weeks and that their colleague had been trying to find them.



Figure 49 Dvorak-46 with the Three-Pronged Key Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

The group decide to rest here for a while to tend to their injuries. Atreyu finishes the locket puzzle, assembling it into the final form of a key. Iolo swipe some small items of technology. While the group recuperate, a creepy man appears in the doorway. His shadow seems to act independently of his body and wields a shadow-axe that the man isn't carrying himself. The shadow extends menacingly into the room, axe ready to strike, as the man sneers in the doorway. The group fight, driving the man away with some effective attacks.

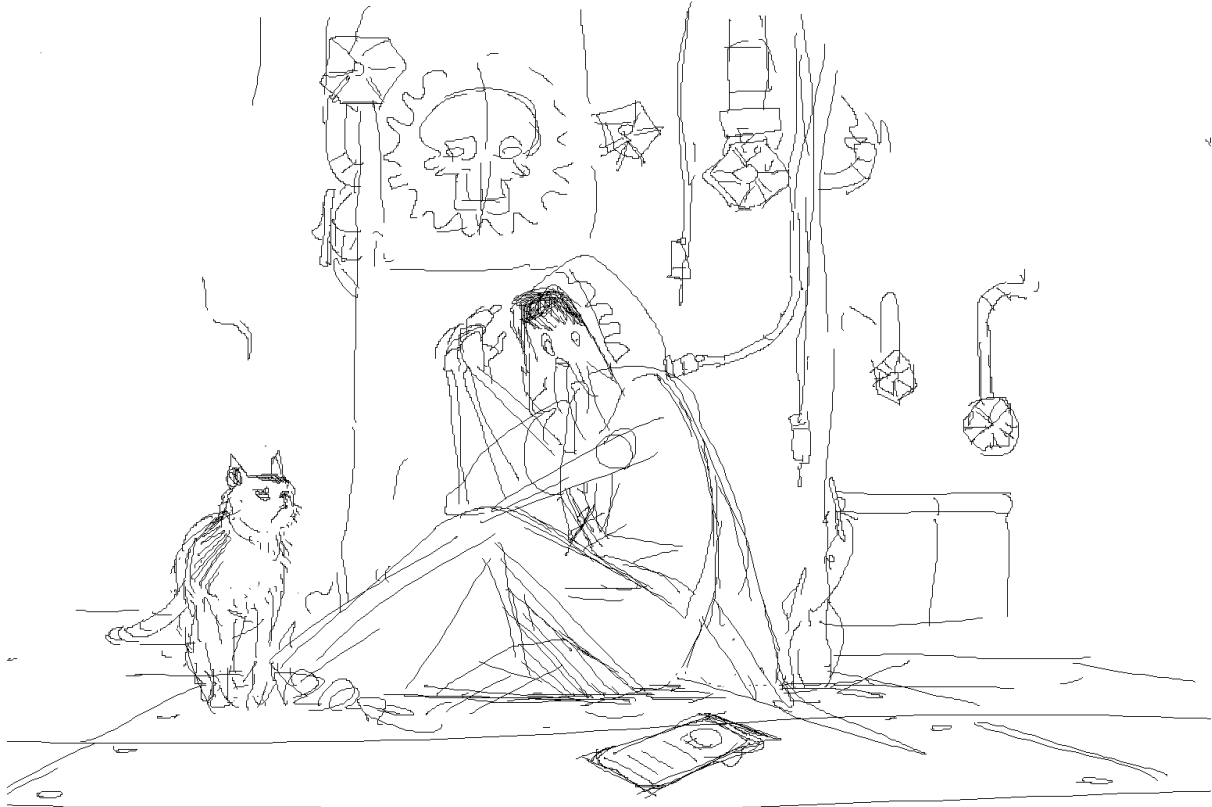


Figure 50 Dvorak-46 in their Room(?) Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

After the fight, the group take stock, discussing what they know about the house, Phillip Harlock, the entities, escape and the keys they now have. Dvorak again expresses disdain over Cyprian's eyes and the gargoyle that he claims he has (which the group have seen no evidence of, some suspecting he may be mad), wanting to remove the corrupted organs. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka in particular intervenes again to try to prevent further conflict.

A Dog and a Chapel

The group move on through Dvorak's room, into a corridor (where they hear a child's laughter) and a bedroom that looks like it belongs to a teenage boy. Leofe spots a dog under the bed and a wall panel covering an entrance to a secret passage. Atreyu feeds the dog (seeing that its nametag says "Buddy") and it befriends him, following him around.

The group remove the wall panel and squeeze through the twisting secret passage. It ends at a strange chapel with a chaotic aesthetic. There are collections of strange items and stained glass with chaotic, multicoloured imagery. There is a stained-glass window on the far wall that has light coming through it, suggesting a possible exit.

Dvorak heads to the window but is distracted by the stained glass partition - the imagery changes shape to reflect Dvorak's home and organisation, but it warps to show all of these concepts tainted by chaos and corruption. They are troubled by this and spend some time smashing the screen.

Toho, Atreyu, Cyprian and Iolo open the stained-glass window and look out into a vortex of pure chaos - swirling shapes colours and concepts that are too much for a sane mind to process. A couple resist the shock, but it was a powerful psychological attack. Iolo wants to climb out into the chaos but

resorts to throwing an item first, which is dissolved and transmuted almost immediately, completely destroyed.

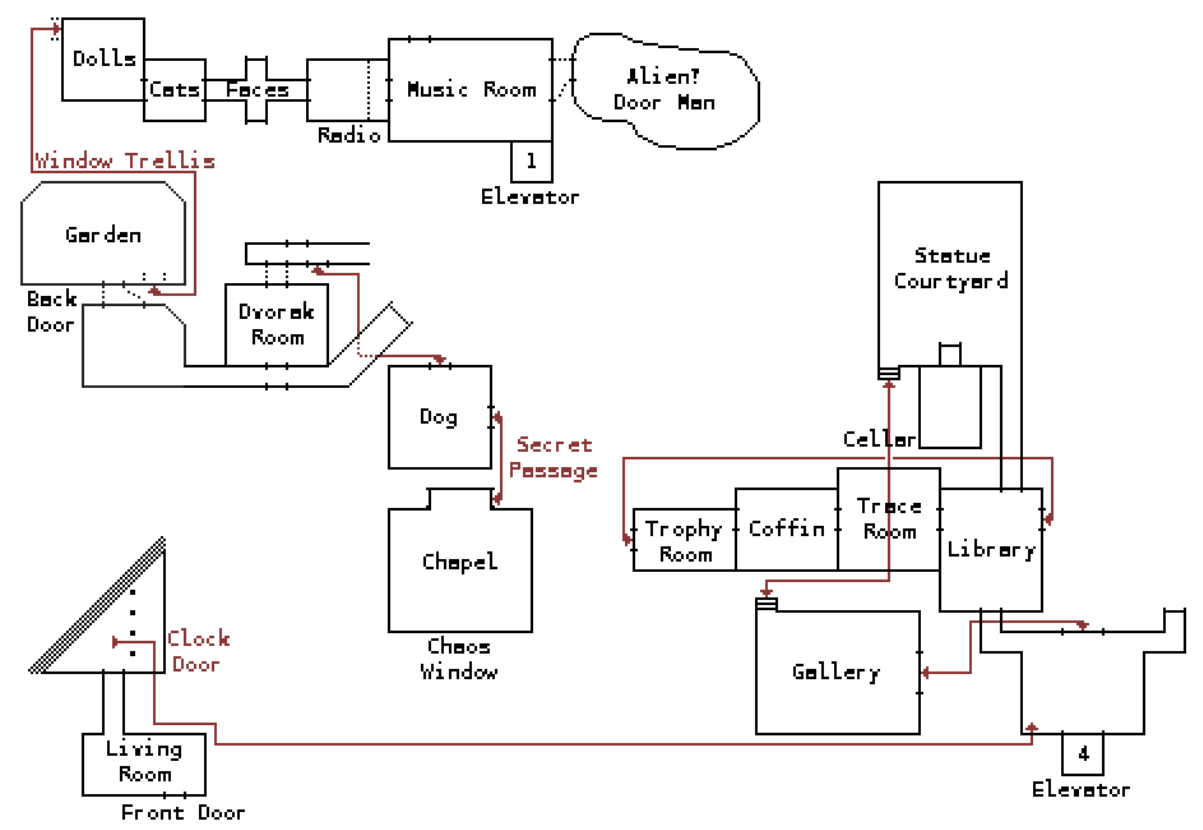


Figure 51 Second Map of The Darkest House by Ché Wilbraham

Character(s) interacted with

Man with a strange shadow, Buddy

Report Date
29 Jun 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House

Convergence, Session 16

General Summary

***SPOILER WARNING:** This session describes some of the content of The Darkest House. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.*

Leaving the Chapel

In The Darkest House, the Convergence Player Characters continue their search for an exit.

While in the chaotic chapel, Cyprian Kernow asks a final question during meditation with The Revelation: "Where's the nearest exit from the house?" The answer returns: "The Door Man. Near the Music Room."

The group leave the chapel via another secret passage, following Leofe (who has wandered off). Halfway up the climbing passage, she notices another passage concealed within this one - the group realise that it returns to the room with the dolls, so they return to the passage's original course and find themselves in a bedroom. There doesn't seem to be much here, so they move on.

In the Ballroom

Not long after entering, a ghostly orchestra appears on the stage of the ballroom and begins to play music. Taxi Varlik, Atreyu and Iolo are compelled to dance. The others hear the clink of glasses coming from a bar on the balcony, so they investigate.

The barman is welcoming and polite, offering everyone drinks of their choice, for free. He chats with the group a while, though doesn't give away a lot of information. He seems able to create any drink that the group ask for. Once people accept drinks from him, he whispers warnings and hints to them:

- He tells Cyprian that Trace knows more about the house than he lets on.
- He tells Atreyu that Dvorak-46's zeal is putting the group at risk - that the house won't tolerate it. He also says that the names of the house's inhabitants can be found "in mother's section, where a corridor displays the wheel of blood", but heavily warns against leading Dvorak there.
- He tells Leofe to go to the room across the crossroad-corridor from here to find something cool.
- He warns Iolo against travelling with Cyprian - that his corruption is risking to trap the group in the house.



Figure 52 Absinthe Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Cyprian asks Trace if he's hiding anything, which leads to him discussing Ingram (and other cyber spirits) with the group. He asks Ingram if they have anything to share - they respond that they have been inundated with communications from the house since arriving, but that almost all of them have been deception. However, the signal transmitted to the radio in the Japanese-style room seemed to come from another entity inside the house (not the house itself), and therefore may not have been (as) malevolent.

Atreyu shares with the group that the barman told him where to find the names of the inhabitants of the house, but that he had been trying to sow mistrust of Dvorak. The barman speaks up to warn the group that Dvorak is a danger to them all. Dvorak reacts with aggression, threatening the barman, who quickly transforms into a monstrous corpse, swarming with giant centipedes. He attacks Dvorak and Cyprian.

Cyprian is harmed and immediately overcome with an intense craving to satisfy his desire to call upon infernal spirits - he starts to leave in the direction the group came from. A brief fight with the barman ensues, with Atreyu also overcome with a craving for lone exploration outdoors. Dvorak is temporarily blinded and the group end up fleeing combat into the next room, leading them back to the crossroad-corridor with the leering faces. Just before leaving, Leofe noticed that there were some items behind the bar that looked useful.



Figure 53 Seeing Through the Servo-Skull Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

A Guest in the Tea Room

The group investigate the last unexplored door off the crossroads with the leering faces. It leads into a tea room, but most notably, there is another person here. Prune sits in one of the chairs, looking confused. Taxi reacts with shock.



Figure 54 Taxi Looking Troubled Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

The group question Prune - she claims that she felt sleepy while heading home (after describing the events of the end of Adventure: The Door in Reality), found somewhere safe to sleep, then woke up here just as the group entered the room. She seems very wary of them and doesn't recognise that Taxi is an older, altered Petunia. Taxi maintains a ruse that she knew her mother, Sequoia, and offers to lead Prune out of the house (after giving her her sickle, to defend herself with).

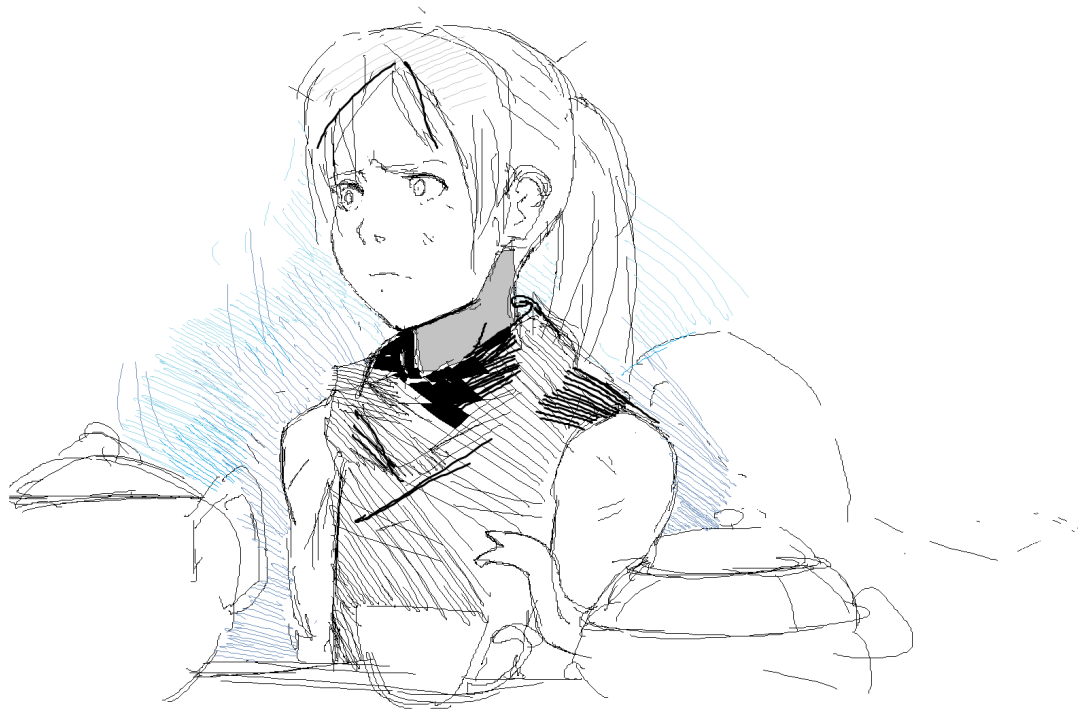


Figure 55 Poor Prune Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Claiming the Radio and Exploring the Floor

Trace heads to the Japanese-style room to investigate the radio, after what Ingram revealed. He is ambushed by the monstrous undead woman there, but Iolo uses a Cypher that summons a monstrous bear to deal with it. The two creatures fight each other to the death as Trace grabs the radio and takes it to the tea room to investigate. As he tinkers with it, Ingram confirms that the source of the signal has since stopped broadcasting (so can't be located), but was definitely a separate entity to the house itself (though still within the house).

Atreyu realises that the key that the silver locket transformed into unlocks the door from the radio's room to the music room - he goes there to anxiously pace around as it's the largest space he can think of, though it doesn't satisfy his craving to wander outdoors.

Dvorak has become frustrated with some members of the group due to their acceptance of various corruptions and manifestations of certain abilities. They head out of the other side of the tea room alone, to sulkily explore. They find a corridor with an old-looking stone archway with the words "meaning is a burden" carved into it - they pass through and nothing seems to happen. Their dataslate grows legs and scuttles off as they find themselves in a grand bedroom, but there's nothing there beyond the furniture and another door. They send their servo-skull back to the group to summon them, saying they've found a way forward.

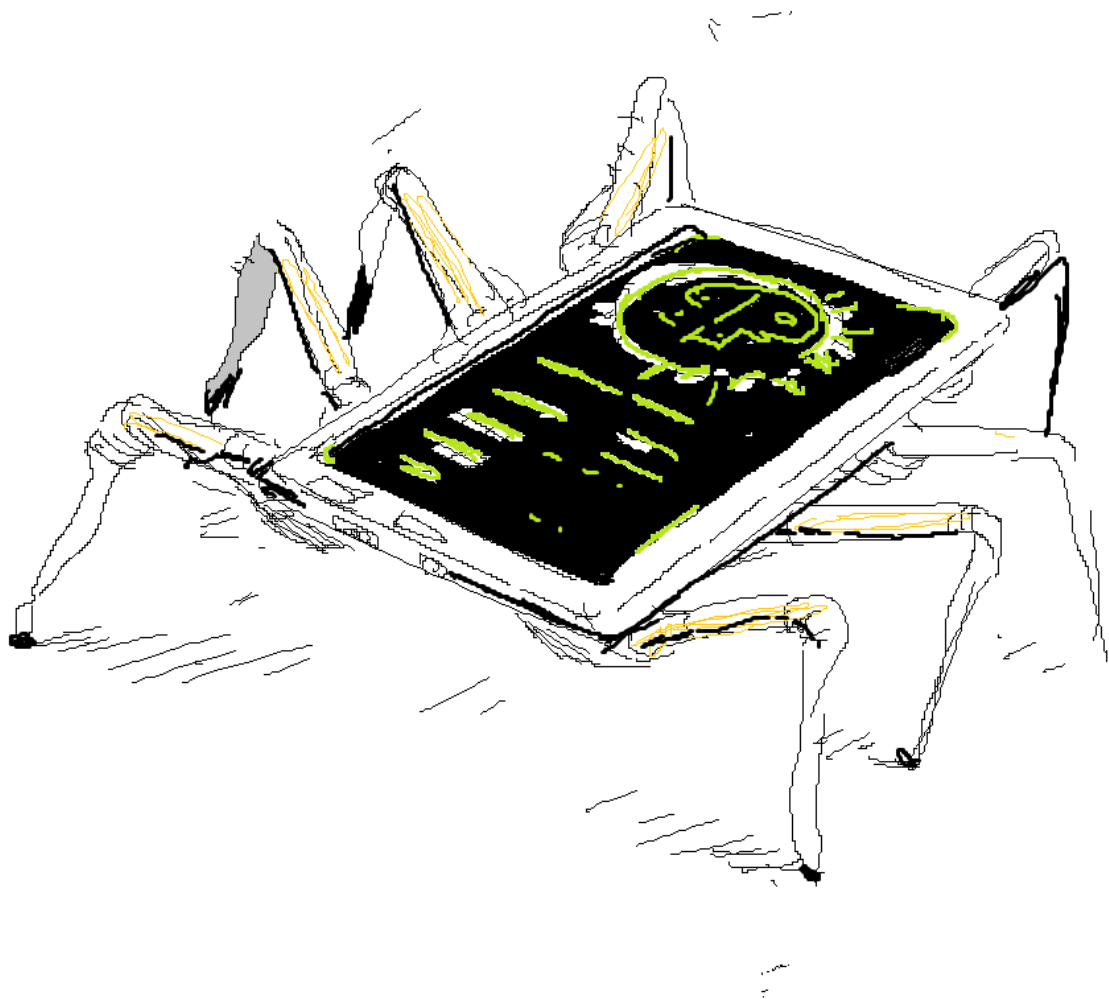


Figure 56 Dataslate Scuttles Off Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Cyprian and Iolo follow - when Cyprian passes through the archway he is completely stripped of meaning and collapses to the ground, catatonic. Because he is meaningless, Iolo doesn't register that anything unusual happened and continues on, but passes through unscathed.

In the bedroom, Dvorak and Iolo see a strange girl open the opposite door a little to greet them. Half of her face is missing, somewhat like a broken porcelain doll, and moths fly in and out of the hole. Atreyu sees her as well, from behind, talking through a door off the music room - these two rooms must connect. The girl tells Dvorak that she also wandered into the house and became trapped, but that she can help them escape - they should find the Door Man. Dvorak doesn't trust her and points out her unnatural appearance. She counters that Dvorak has metal tentacles and extra limbs, and looks strange to her. She says she can take them to the key for the Door Man, but Dvorak refuses. She skips off into a corner of the music room, giggling, and disappears.

As Taxi is heading to the bedroom to catch up to Dvorak, she sees Cyprian slowly regain consciousness and meaning. He claims that the process has allowed him to realise that he is a vislae from Satyrine (terms relating to [Invisible Sun](#)), even though it was incredibly traumatic. She also

passes through the arch and temporarily loses all her meaning - on recovery, she makes no claims of realisation of another identity.



Figure 57 Cyprian Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Reconvening

The group all reconvene in the music room to discuss options. Trace heads into the strange room with the Door Man, to talk to the creature guarding him. She speaks only telepathically, asking the same questions as last time, ultimately telling Trace that the group don't have the key and should go away. She says that the key they need is silver, when asked. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka tries to distract

her while Iolo sneaks past to see if he can pick the lock on the Door Man. This doesn't work - she's hisses threateningly, pointing at Iolo. They decide to back off.

The group discuss where to go next, having seemingly explored this "floor". Cyprian is keen to find the Wheel of Blood, to learn the names of the four residents of the house and find the secret fifth, thinking it will reveal more of the house's mysteries (though maybe not lead to an exit). Dvorak absolutely wants to avoid this, fearing corruption. Atreyu is desperate to go outside, so wants to head back to the courtyard near the gallery. The group suggest various elevator floors for their next exploration, settling on two (which was Cyprian's suggestion).

The Great Hall and the Host

Floor two of the elevator leads to a strange great hall. A host in black mask, accompanied by two people in animal masks, stands where it seems a large door should be. He greets the group warmly, as if welcoming them to a party (even though there are no other people or refreshments here). They talk for a while and the Host reveals some information, even though he seems unable or unwilling to talk about many subjects:

- He recommends that they avoid the storeroom by the kitchen and the bottom floor of the elevator, though won't elaborate and confirms that they are free to go where they wish.
- He notices that they have some of the nice tools and seems impressed. He suggests they look "under the checkerboard".
- He mentions that there are potentially multiple ways to exit the house, that the tools might be linked to one (though the group only currently has about half of them) and that the Door Man is another. He warns that the Gatekeeper asks a large price for her services (to access the Door Man), once the key is found.
- He mentions that he has briefly met Phillip Harlock, though they aren't very familiar. He doesn't think that Harlock is in charge of the house any more than he is - he suggests the house is far more difficult to understand and many of the questions that the group have don't make sense in the context of its existence.
- He says that the Wheel of Blood is nearby, and can reveal that names of the four residents of the house, though this could be dangerous to interact with.

While the group speak to the Host, Atreyu heads to the courtyard on "floor 4" alone, to satisfy his craving. He returns much less anxious.

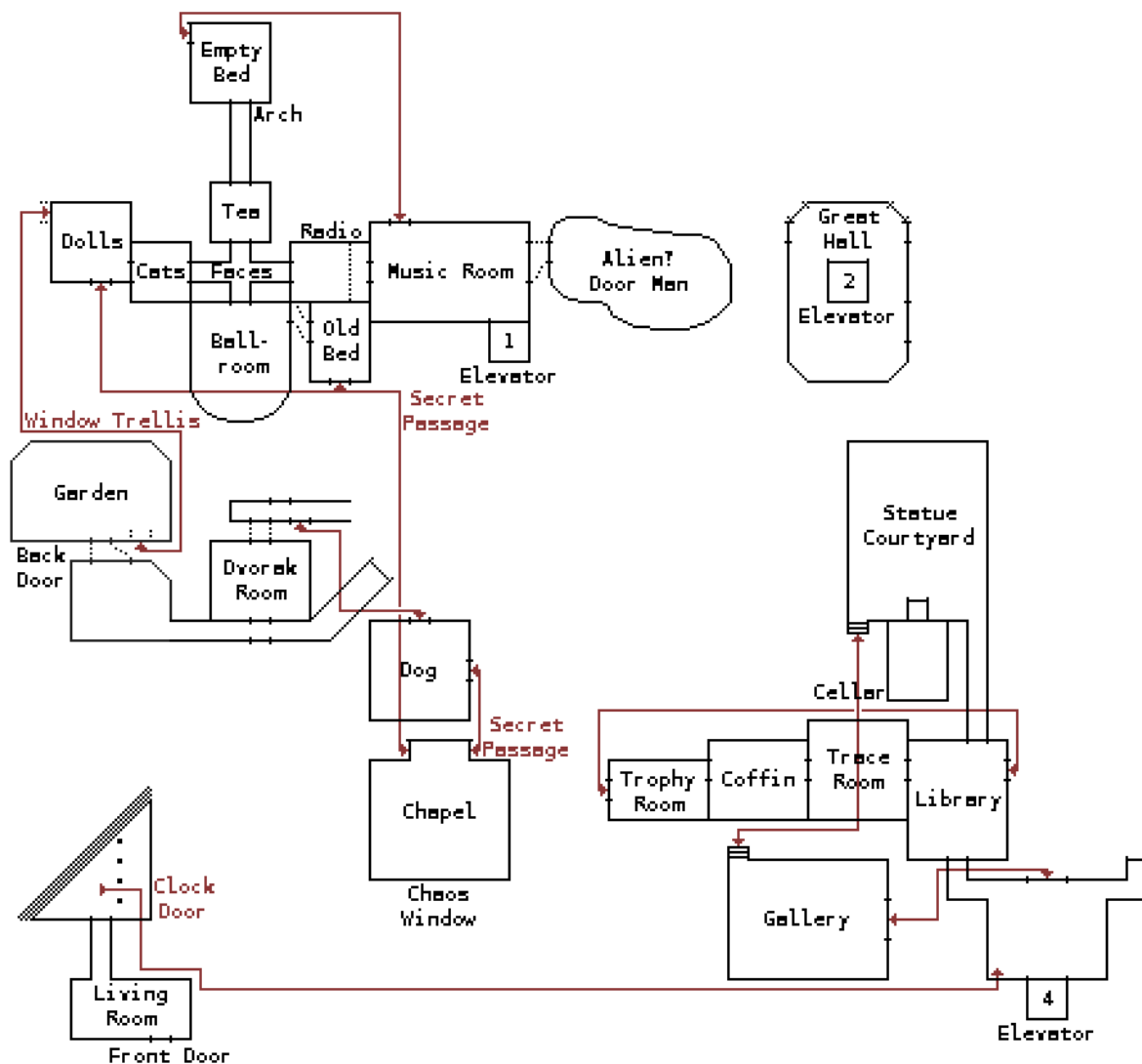


Figure 58 Third Map of The Darkest House by [Ché Wilbraham](#)

Bonus Post-Game Scene

In relation to the Doom they have acquired in the house, Dvorak receives a vision not long after talking to the Host (this was delivered as a private message to Dvorak's player, outside of the session):

They see Mars in its present state, before time rapidly rewinds back through the development of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Before the organisation's establishment, millennia ago, they see a powerful human in combat with some terrible being. The creature is clearly immensely powerful and has a look of the Necron about it - one of their enslaved shards of their ancient gods. The human is able to immobilise the creature, but not fully defeat it, instead imprisoning it in the Noctis Labyrinth region. Dvorak understands that this is the Dragon of Mars. Their view begins to move forward through time, and they realise that this entombed Dragon is the seed from which the Mechanicus grows - they see its influence seeping through the planet, guiding and manipulating the Martians into establishing the organisation and steering its actions across millennia.

Character(s) interacted with

Barman, Prune, monstrous corpse woman, strange girl, the Gatekeeper, the Host

Created Content

I adlibbed some extra conversation details for the strange girl, the Gatekeeper and the Host because I felt that the group were getting frustrated from a lack of leads or reliable information. They don't trust all of it (which is good), but hopefully some seeds have been sown that will help them feel more like they're proceeding in the right direction.

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

The House Punishes the Engaged

There's a pattern that the players who are the most engaged / proactive are seeing their characters suffer more in The Darkest House. This is because any given roll has a reasonable chance of triggering bad outcomes from House Actions (so those who roll more will experience more of these) and many of the things that can be interacted with in the house will do something bad. It makes sense, given the themes and everything, but it feels weird for an RPG. Often, I feel like proactive play is to be rewarded and encouraged by the systems of the game (to a point). I'll have to make an effort to spread any negative effects or events to those who are taking more of a back seat.

The House Acts Too Much

I'm finding that the House Actions occur too regularly. It feels like about one in every two rolls, which is a lot given how they tend to interrupt anything that's currently happening with some sort of event (that I have to come up with on the spot, slowing things down) that often triggers rolls, which further distract from the ongoing action or train of thought. Some of them are very cool at the right time, and sometimes the exploration might be too uneventful without them, but I don't like their default frequency. I'm even curtailing them quite a lot by preventing them from snowballing or happening in groups, but they still often feel too much. They also cycle through their list far too quickly - maybe it needs to be longer, with more entries that are just spooky flavour, rather than immediate attacks.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, The Darkest House
Report Date
06 Jul 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House



Figure 59 Convergence Session 17 Sketches by [Phoebe Herring](#)

General Summary

SPOILER WARNING: This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.

Pursuing Different Goals

The Convergence Player Characters continue their exploration of The Darkest House, looking for an exit. Dvorak-46 is particularly melancholy, after their vision (described at the end of Convergence, Session 16).

Cyprian Kernow is determined to find the Wheel of Blood, to allow entry into the secret fifth area of the house. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka and Atreyu also want to follow this lead.

Dvorak doesn't want to deal with the Wheel of Blood - they instead want to pursue the set of special tools that may lead to an exit. They head back to the corridor with the checkerboard floor, following the Host's recommendation that another tool can be found beneath it. Taxi Varlik, Leofe, Trace and Iolo also follow this lead.

The Wheel of Blood Group

Cyprian, Toho and Atreyu quickly find the Wheel of Blood, following Cyprian's ceramic gargoyle. It turns out to be a corridor with four paintings, each featuring a strangely horrific scene and individual word. These words supposedly relate to the residents of the four "non-secret" areas of the house: *Mater*, *Pater*, *Frater* and *Soror*. The group realise that these are the Latin words for mother, father, brother and sister. Cyprian speaks the words aloud, in order, and disappears. Atreyu and Toho try to plan around the separated group and Cyprian being alone in a new area of the house. Toho leaves a note with instructions on how to follow before they both also speak the words and vanish.

The three find themselves in a vestibule room where they can see a storm outside the windows (though still no clear view of any scenery). Cyprian finds a bag that seems to have belonged to Phillip Harlock, with some notes about how to leave the house (a key for the Door Man's exit can be found behind the bar in the ballroom) and some more explanations of the strange phenomena.

The Tool-Hunting Group

The others make their way back to the checkerboard corridor with no issues. They find a hidden hatch in the floor - one of the sections of Dvorak's three pronged key opens it (without summoning ghostly, strangling hands). A long shaft leads straight down into a partly-flooded secret room. Dvorak and Iolo head down to investigate, finding a couple of locked boxes under the water. They attach them to Taxi's rope to be hoisted up, but are attacked by waterlogged zombies. Dvorak fights them off while Iolo finishes the hoisting, then they both climb to safety.

The boxes contain some valuables and notes, as well as a pair of pliers. The pliers come with a strange note describing a ritual for the use of the tools, which upsets Dvorak further - they had thought that the tools would lead to an uncorrupted exit, but the ritual seems too tainted.

Iolo gives the potion from one of the boxes to his catatonic goblin - it is completely revived and rejuvenated. He also activates a magical ring from the box, which causes this group to instantly teleport to the living room, where they first entered the house. They follow their initial route back to the elevator, stopping to explore the one room they didn't enter near the gallery.

Within this room, they find a pile of long-dead bodies (with a page of the journal hidden among them) as well as one body alone in a hanging cage. The caged body is grasping a gold and silver key - the group take these, thinking that the silver key may work for the Door Man's exit.

Reconvening

Taxi tries to lead her group to reunite with Cyprian et al. They find the Wheel of Blood corridor, and Toho's note, and eventually all follow into the fifth area of the house.

Reunited, the group set out to explore this area and find a way back to the Door Man. They become trapped in a time loop in the first room after the vestibule, repeatedly re-entering a room with a grandfather clock when anyone tries to move on. Cyprian has a fit of insight, understanding that they

each need to call on the house as they leave the room. The rest of the group don't initially buy into it, but end up following suit after continuing to be trapped in the time loop a while longer.

Dealing with a Demon

The next room has no further exits. A young girl is stood within a circular diagram painted on the floor. Various ritual materials are in the room. The girl introduces herself as a demon and speaks with the group for a while. She offers to grant them a boon of their choice (within her power) if they release her by pouring the goblet of wine onto the diagram. The group ask for various benefits - Dvorak inquires about removing memories, others ask for an exit or some control over the house. The demon says she has no mastery over the house, but she could give them the information they need to escape. She says she can certainly alter Dvorak's memories as needed.

Cyprian and Dvorak argue over dealing with the demon and spilling the goblet. Dvorak rants about not trusting dark forces, but Cyprian snaps and criticises the awful regimes of the society that Dvorak is trying to return to. Dvorak tries to free the demon with the goblet alone, but Taxi puts them in stasis mid-spill. The rest have until the spell wears off to resolve the situation.



Figure 60 Cyprian and Dvorak Arguing Over a Goblet Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Cyprian realises from prior experience that there is likely a way to force the demon to speak the truth. He asks her about this and she sighs, saying that she will speak truthfully to anyone who spills their blood on the ritual skull. Cyprian does so. The demon says that she will honour any bargain with Cyprian, as long as the deal is struck before the wine spills on the diagram. They agree that she will give them the information they need to find the safest exit from the house and a way to return from the fifth area into somewhere they have been before.

When Dvorak's stasis wears off, Cyprian immediately receives the knowledge that the Door Man can be found in the cellar beneath the interior courtyard (he can be seen there with the Eyes of the Child) and that the fifth area of the house can be escaped by focusing on the pattern in the vestibule and calling on the house (which will return them to the great hall). Then the demon disappears.

Some members of the group aren't willing to call on the house any more than necessary (increasing their Doom) and want to find a way out of the fifth area on foot. Other members think that the group should pursue exit as quickly as possible.

Bonus Post-Game Scene

In relation to the Doom that he has acquired in the house, Cyprian receives a vision while travelling back to the vestibule:

"Your vision momentarily zooms out from your body and you see lights emanating from yourself and your travelling party - the light of life, magic, exploration, curiosity, goodness, energy. You sense that these lights are under immense strain from the cloying, crushing darkness of the house - they're guttering and barely keeping the shadows at bay.

Your vision then zooms out again, somehow exiting the house, and you see the great light of Perpetual Bernville, fed by its diverse citizenry and exploratory, mystical nature. You sense that even the dead have a sort of light about them - the traces of what they possessed when alive, now flickering dimly through a veil that exists separately to space and time as we can understand it. Some light even emanates from this veil and other dimensions, from things or beings that are incomprehensible - perhaps spirits, "gods", "demons", exerting will and meaning on the world.

Your vision zooms out further, somehow taking in almost the fullest extent of reality, beyond time, space and the veils separating existences. You briefly see the very borders of everything - the true, utter darkness at the edges. You immediately notice that it is creeping inwards, inexorably, snuffing out vast quantities of lights every moment. Even the brightest don't slow its progress. It is the darkness that the house is made of, but the house is such a tiny fragment of it. It hates light and it will ultimately destroy it. It is just a matter of time. Crossing veils will only take you closer and trying to understand it may speed its progress."

Character(s) interacted with

Demon with the appearance of a young girl

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, The Darkest House
Report Date
13 Jul 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House

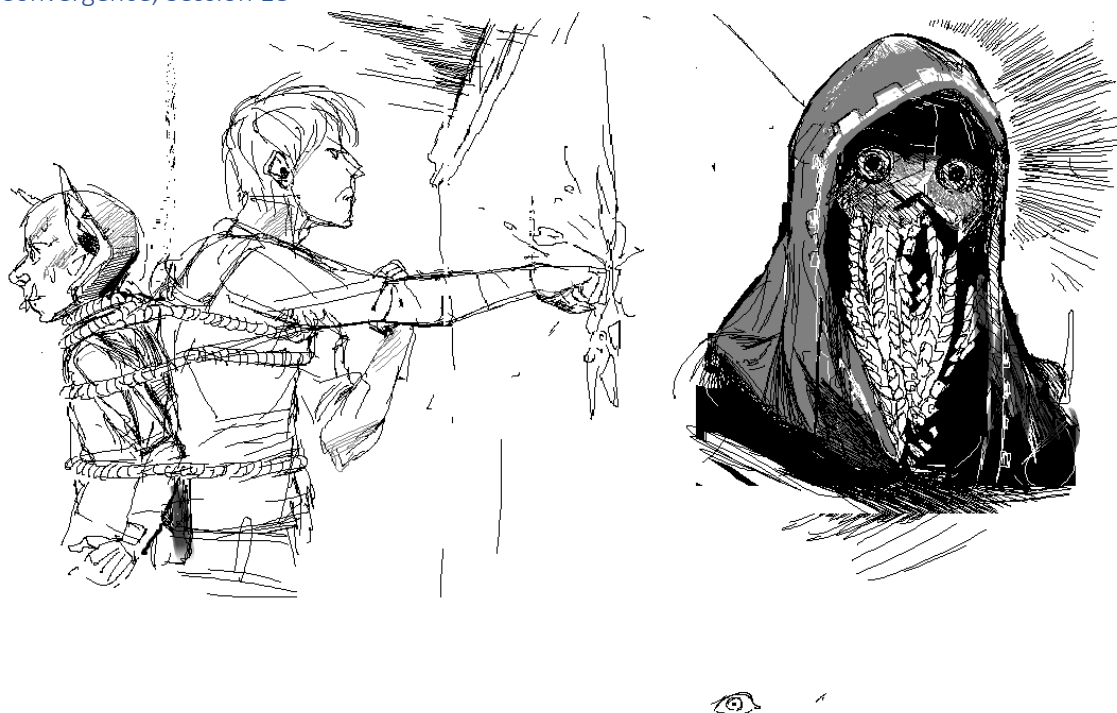


Figure 61 Convergence Session 18 Sketches by [Phoebe Herring](#)

General Summary

SPOILER WARNING: This session describes some of the content of *The Darkest House*. If you ever intend to play it, it's best to avoid spoiling any of its mysteries.

Deciding on the Way Out

In *The Darkest House*, the Convergence Player Characters discuss their best option for escape, given that the route the demon described in Convergence, Session 17 requires calling on the house and acquiring more Doom.

Cyprian Kernow is more certain that the demon's route is the best option, since receiving his vision of encroaching darkness. Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka agrees that this option seems quicker and more certain, so these two call on the house while focusing on the pattern in the vestibule and are transported back to the great hall. (It is assumed that Trace also uses this route, but his player was absent for the session.)

The others set off exploring this secret, fifth area of the house to try to find a route back to the areas connected by the elevator.

The Exploring Group

The exploring group traverse a corridor, but Iolo sees his wife's face in the woodgrain pattern of a door. She looks scared and is mouthing "help". He tries to break the wood to release her, but Dvorak-46 intervenes, implying that this is just a trick of the house. Iolo snaps out of it and moves on.

They proceed into a room with a twisting walkway that defies gravity. Iolo tries to use his drone to survey the room, but it loses gravity when leaving the walkway and floats away. He has to float his goblin to retrieve it. The exit of this room leads, strangely, into a tent.

Atreyu realises that this is the home tent of Tan, one of his hunting mates from his tribe. Tan is sleeping when the group arrive, but wakes, startled. He asks Atreyu how they got here and who the others are. Atreyu and Tan converse for a while - Atreyu's tribe had been wondering where he'd gone for some time. Tan seemed unable to see the door leading into the house, instead implying that he was seeing the exit to his tent. The group try to lift the edges of the tent to see out but are unable to.

Eventually, Atreyu convinces Tan to just stay in his tent and let the group leave to continue their quest. They look through the other impossible door within the tent to see the time loop room and decide to go back the way they came, to the other doors in the blue corridor.

The Group Hurrying to the Exit

The group who used the pattern in the vestibule to return to the great hall find their way back to the ballroom, to attempt to acquire the silver key from behind the bar (on the assumption that it will open the Door Man's exit). When they arrive, the barman seems standoffish but isn't immediately hostile. They chat to him for a while, understanding that he is looking after the key for somebody and is unwilling to give it up.

Cyprian distracts the barman with conversation while Toho swipes the key undetected. They go to surreptitiously leave, but Cyprian is assailed by a vision of darkness (a result of his Doom) and alerts the barman, who immediately attacks. Cyprian and Toho are both wounded and both fail to resist the effect of having to immediately pursue a risky craving. Cyprian is compelled to contact demons and Toho is compelled to fight Kaiju. They to and fro for some time, trying to pursue activities that they aren't really able to, setting off in one direction and then another. Eventually, they both snap out of it, but after maybe half an hour of wandering and rambling together.

Back to the Blue Corridor

The exploring group pick the lock on a door and find a bedroom that appears to have been used by Phillip Harlock. From here, they find a small room with the ghost of an old man sitting in a chair. The ghost greets them in a friendly manner and engages in conversation, saying his name is Charles. He claims that he found his way into this room because it was open to him (through the veil?), but he doesn't know anything of the house.



Figure 62 Ghostly Old Man Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

He occasionally makes strange gestures as he speaks and eventually possesses Iolo's body, displacing Iolo's spirit into his own ghostly form. Charles (in Iolo's body) reacts with glee at having a physical form again and runs off into the house. Iolo takes some time to adjust to his new ghostly body.

Atreyu tracks Charles back to the time loop room, but the group decide not to pursue him into there.

They use a key from the bedroom to enter what seems to be Harlock's secret study. It is also connected to a sort of meditation chamber. Between the two rooms, the group gain much information about the workings of the house from various books and notes. Using some of this information, they whisper their mothers' names (or equivalent) into the orchids in the vestibule and are transported to Harlock's "original house". Taxi Varlik whispering Sequoia's name causes Prune to realise that she is actually Petunia.

In this original house, they don't feel the crushing darkness of The Darkest House - it feels much more normal and seems lived-in, even though nobody else is here. Some of the rooms are basically the same as ones in The Darkest House, but much less strange and configured in a way that makes sense. It's a very normal house, mostly. They can see outside into a quiet town at dusk, that seems normal but completely unfamiliar (it isn't Perpetual Bernville or any of their home realities) - they can even exit the door into this town if they wish.

The Smaller Group Find the Exit

The others, after snapping out of their compulsions, eventually make their way to the cellar below the interior courtyard. Cyprian alone is able to see the Door Man here this time. He uses the silver key in the Door Man's chest and the front door appears (impossibly) in the centre of the room. They can see out of it to a street. They step through the door, successfully escaping The Darkest House.

Exploring the Original House

The exploring group look around the original house, finding a dollhouse in the nursery that has a strange, puzzle-piece-shaped black void in its attic. Dvorak finds some puzzles in a child's bedroom and spends some time searching through them for a piece that will fit the hole in the dollhouse.

The others of this group head into the basement and find a strange object that matches the lacuna described in some of Harlock's notes. Ghostly Iolo touches it and is sucked into the object for three minutes. When he exits, he has received massive mental trauma and experiences fragments of impossible memories and visions. He feels that he may have briefly seen *everything*.

Meanwhile, Dvorak has found a piece from a puzzle called Happy Family that fits the dollhouse. The group gather as Dvorak inserts the piece. They are all immediately ejected from the house in a swirling vortex of energies and find themselves next to the rest of their group at the side of a road.

Escape, At Last

Charles, in Iolo's body, is also ejected from the house, so some of the group spend some time catching him and Iolo manages to re-possess his body, forcing Charles back into his ghostly form (who then escapes).

The dog that had befriended Atreyu also escapes, as well as Prune (though not the cat that Leofe trained or Cyprian's corpse-double). Taxi breaks down in tears upon realising that this is really Prune and not an illusion.

Dvorak had noticed that some of their items had transformed into Chaos-corrupted versions, so they burn their tainted book away from the others.

After catching their breaths (and realising that they have left the house with ongoing hauntings and nightmares), the group take in their surroundings - a grey area with squat industrial buildings. They can see the shimmer of a golden magic circle at the edges of the space, meaning that they must have successfully found their way into The Hole in the World.

Fixing the Hole

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati approaches the group from a building that they seem drawn to. She appears confused, asking how she got here. She doesn't remember anything about a house, but says that the group had left Perpetual Bernville to try to find a route into The Hole in the World - she assumes that they were successful and somehow managed to summon her here.

She leads them into the building, which seems strangely familiar. It's an industrial building, sort of like a warehouse, with a small office space. She wanders into the office and says she's compelled to reminisce with the group about things that they couldn't have experienced together:

- She talks to Cyprian about an anecdote involving a book with chains illustrated on its cover, that causes strange effects when invoked.

- With Dvorak, she discusses visions of a strange reality where immortal space magicians use their incredible powers to conjure useless objects out of light and unnecessarily fight each other to the death while ignoring the suffering of their race.
- Her and Taxi reminisce about wandering to a nearby bakery while discussing in-depth theoretical implications and very specific critique of games.
- Atreyu speaks to her of boys from another land, obsessed with fighting and becoming stronger. In particular, a group of pirates with a straw hat for a symbol. Also, lots of dice and cards.
- With Iolo, she wonders about whether machines can be conscious - what truly makes a "mind" and a "self". Also, detailed information about swords.
- She talks to Leofe about far-off realities where the people tend to have overly-large eyes and live very dramatic lives. Particularly a related group with rigid rules for their combats, where they agree to take turns hitting each other.
- To Toho, she talks about games and mental health. Particularly inspirational, political games - the only ones with any real value. About how games might make people better, make people think more fairly.
- With Trace, she also discusses games, but with a focus on the quality of the design of their interlocking systems - there is a standard that should be aimed for, relating to fairness and balance.

As the group continue to converse together about games, stories, technology and other things that could be considered nerdy in some places, the area around them begins to regain its colour. They start to sense that whatever was wrong here is being repaired, and they feel a sense of belonging. The Hole in Reality is slowly filled, repairing the root of the problem that brought the Convergence Universe into being. With this resolved, they should be able to finally reverse the converging of realities as they see fit. Maybe they can return home, perhaps after they resolve some of the remaining issues in the area.

Rewards Granted

- The Convergence Player Characters all reach Tier 6 (the maximum) in Cypher.

Missions/Quests Completed

- Escaping The Darkest House.
- Repairing The Hole in the World.

Character(s) interacted with

The barman, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

Splitting the Party at a Crucial Moment

It was strange to have the party split for most of the session, both pursuing different climactic goals. While they did ultimately both escape, and the smaller group arguably succeeded at the stated task more effectively (getting out ASAP), the larger group got much more focus for the session and ended up uncovering a lot of information about The Darkest House and even uncovering a sort of "good

ending". It felt a little unfair on the smaller group, but I suppose they did get to be vicariously involved in the actions of the others.

Problematic Compulsions

When the smaller group fell prey to their compulsions during combat with the barman, it led to an awkward sequence that was difficult to resolve in a satisfactory manner. The terms of the barman's ability meant that they both *had to* pursue activities that they weren't really able to, and at a time where they were really just trying to trigger escape from the house. I can see how those compulsions could lead to fun moments in a game, but this just felt frustrating. But then, glossing over them seemed to kind of "spoil" the nature of the house. The solution of just having them wander aimlessly for some time felt inelegant, but I couldn't think of a better way to resolve it. I couldn't even fudge rolls because the system doesn't allow it. This is a situation where gamemaster control could have solved a problem.

My Finale Idea - The Hole in the World

I felt a bit awkward including this sort of heartfelt moment of reminiscing about being together as friends, in real life - I don't know if it was a bit forced, off-tone or underdeveloped (or all of those, or other things). I had imagined that it would be a nice, touching moment but it ended up just feeling a bit strange. It is a bit unfair to drop this on players out-of-the-blue - they're partaking in some escapism, identifying with their cool, fictional character, and I confront them with the reality of work and the separation that the pandemic inflicted on us. I suppose I just wanted an excuse to explore those feelings together, but maybe I should have been upfront about it, rather than vague and mysterious.

It was very nice that Cyprian Kernow's player "got it" very quickly and started playing along before the situation was clear, but I'm not sure how many of the others were invested in the scenario.

A Fun Finale (Funale?)

The group were interested in doing one last session of Campaign: Convergence next time, with them all at their maximum power level, tying up loose ends in the Convergence Universe and making some decisions about the fates of the people and realities involved. Maybe fighting some big enemies. I offered that we could either leave the ending ambiguous as The Hole in the World is repaired, or do a final session as just described. I think a last bit of slightly wacky fun with Cypher will be a good send-off for the campaign.

Related Adventure
Campaign: Convergence, The Darkest House
Report Date
20 Jul 2021
Primary Location
The Darkest House
Secondary Location
The Hole in the World

General Summary

Recovering from The Darkest House

The Convergence Player Characters spend about a week recovering in Perpetual Bernville, after their traumatic experiences with The Darkest House and then mending The Hole in the World. During their rest, they acquire many new powers (reaching Tier 6 in Cypher System terms).

Meanwhile, Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, The Comte de Saint-Germain and other Perpetual Bernville residents investigate the nature of the town's reality-hopping and the convergence of realities, which is slowly resolving itself. The Underwater Desert has disappeared, with its elements going back to their own realities. Similarly with the Chancery of Man and various parts of Falmouths. The largest magic circle to the southwest remains, containing other reality fragments.

Hunting Mothgdanon

The group decide that it would be unwise to leave Mothgdanon roaming free, so they head to the magic circle to the southwest, on its trail. Within this circle is a wasteland, based on [Death Stranding](#), with few features. Two other reality fragments can be seen - one containing a part of a massive starship and the other roiling with chaotic energy. Mothgdanon is resting on the ground near where the other two circles are at their closest.

The group approach the creature and attack it as it rests. Using their most powerful attacks before it can get to its feet, they seem to do some harm to it, but realise that it is incredibly powerful. Taxi Varlik and Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka team up to attack at close range after Iolo performs a stealthy ambush. Dvorak-46 supports in a fury with their heavy weaponry. Atreyu rides atop Artax, taking potshots. Trace grants incredible buffs to his allies. Cyprian Kernow summons a smaller version of Mothgdanon to fight it, providing openings to the others. Leofe uses her precognitive and telepathic magic to aid the group.

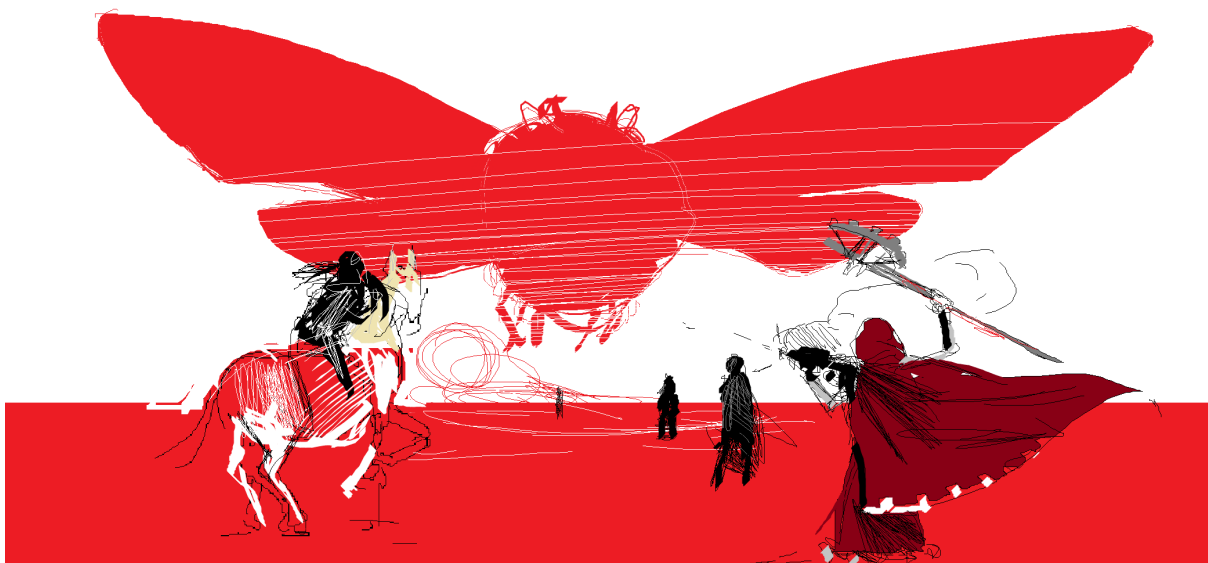


Figure 63 Mothgdanon Fight Sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Mothgdanon flails its massive wings a couple of times as it tries to stand - the force of these blows heavily injures Taxi, Toho, Iolo and Dvorak. Taxi is very nearly killed. The group start to consider fleeing.

The Dei-Phage wanders over from the chaotic reality fragment, watching the fight in amusement. It greets the group in a gently mocking fashion, claiming to be neither friend nor foe. Leofe takes an interest in it.

In a last-ditch effort, Trace uses powerful magic to teleport to Mothgdanon's head and then teleport both of them into space. He is able to survive there, so he abandons the creature to the void as he returns to the ground. The foe is defeated, but the group have sustained some troubling injuries.

The Dei-Phage congratulates the group and talks with them a while. It says that it is working on something in the roiling chaos circle - it invites them to join. All but Leofe are uninterested.

Back to Perpetual Bernville

The group return to town to recover again, having dealt with another major threat. Euphrati talks to them over the next few days about the ultimate fate of Perpetual Bernville, the other reality fragments in the Convergence Universe and themselves.

Euphrati and the Comte believe that they, with the support of other magically knowledgeable residents of Perpetual Bernville, could use the power source taken from PAA Corporation to tap into the town's reality-hopping nature. Given some time, they think that they would be able to steer the town somewhat. They'd be able to force all the remaining reality fragments to return to their origins, now that The Hole in the World isn't keeping them here. They'd also be able to return anyone who requested to their home realities, or even other realities - ones that are adjacent to their homes (similar branches) or completely different.

Endings

Taxi argues with Euphrati a little about branching realities and interfering with fate and destiny. Euphrati's stance is that Perpetual Bernville is capable of performing these actions and its residents have the will, so either this is their fate or fate doesn't exist. She asks what Taxi intends to do, especially with Prune here. They could stay in Perpetual Bernville together, they could return to their home reality, they could go to Taxi's superiors together, etc. Taxi thinks on it.

Euphrati tells the group (but especially Dvorak, who is struggling with lost faith) that she intends to stay in Perpetual Bernville, helping to establish it as a safe haven for those who have escaped or been ejected from their own realities. The invasions and random appearances of residents within the town are slowing to halt, but it will continue to hop between realities quite regularly. Most of its residents like this life, so it will continue. Anyone who wants to leave can be returned home. Euphrati has grown tired of fighting the awful systems of her home, seeing the twisted translation of the works of a great, divine man. Here, she can work to make sure that people are welcomed and cared for in a way that doesn't exist in her reality.

After a couple of weeks, once Perpetual Bernville is set up with the PAA tech and Euphrati is confident they can navigate to different realities, the remaining reality fragments in the Convergence Universe are all sent home. Euphrati asks each of the group where they would like to go.

Iolo returns to a branch of his reality where he is wealthy and powerful, bringing his incredible discoveries with him. He lives a life of relative luxury and comfort.

Atreyu stays until all lingering issues are resolved - until the quest is fully completed - before returning to Fantasia with Artax and the dog he rescued from The Darkest House.

Leofe hangs around with The Dei-Phage for a while, experiencing the The World's Warped Maelstrom, until they are sent back to their realities. After this, she just wanders, curious as she sees fit. She probably just returns home at some point, using her powerful magic.

Trace uses his magic to return to his reality, now more capable of continuing his fight and avenging his old teammates.

Cyprian also leaves under his own power, travelling to Satyrine and realising his true form as a Vislae (terms relating to [Invisible Sun](#)).

Toho wants to follow their instincts as an explorer and use the power of Perpetual Bernville to see many other realities. They start with the origin reality of the keyblade that they found. They travel to the universe of [Kingdom Hearts](#) and have adventures there for a while.

Dvorak really struggles to make a decision as they feel despondent and are questioning their core beliefs. Euphrati tries to help them through it but they seem to largely want to be left alone. Initially, they want to be left in a quiet place to live out the rest of their life in contemplative misery, but they eventually hear of another tech-priest who lost their faith - another of Euphrati's acquaintances - and choose to go and join them in their secluded, progressive home in a branch of Dvorak's reality (40k Branch Universe).

Taxi wonders whether Euphrati is capable of resolving the convergence using Perpetual Bernville and the PAA tech, so she jumps forward two weeks from her conversation with Euphrati, taking Prune with her. Seeing that everything seems to be resolved, she returns to her masters with Prune in tow, ready for another assignment.

Perpetual Bernville continues its journey through realities, with Euphrati and the Comte taking leadership positions. They are well-equipped and prepared for their adventures.

Character(s) interacted with

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, Mothgdanon, The Dei-Phage

Notes

These reflections were all recorded immediately after the session:

A Bit of a Mess

We hadn't used the Cypher System for several weeks, due to running The Darkest House system, so we were beyond rusty with Cypher's rules when we jumped back into it. Given that the characters were all max Tier now, with complex and powerful abilities, the action was even more complicated than when we last played. We weren't ready for it, so there was a lot of clumsily glossing over rules and just fudging things. It was chaotic and I felt frustrated. It didn't last especially long, but I still felt that the experience was below what I'd normally want from a session, in terms of enjoyment and smoothness.

Player Characters

Some of the PC details for this campaign are stored under other adventures, as they were returning characters.

Convergence Player Characters

A group of characters from various realities and times. They are mysteriously brought together in Perpetual Bernville during some strange, multiversal convergence event. Despite being strangers, on first meeting they are certain that they are friends.

Type
Adventuring Party
Alternative Names
Convergence PCs
Location
Perpetual Bernville
Controlled Territories
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Trace's Safehouse
Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">AtreyuCyprian KernowDvorak-46IoloLeofeToho "Ultrathem" TanakaTrace
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Campaign: ConvergenceChapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?Chapter: On The Way To The Broken DoorChapter: The Castle and The Regent
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">2017 CE
A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">2017 CE
Bill in Three Persons: Redux
<ul style="list-style-type: none">2017 CE
The Group Arrive

Atreyu

Literally the character from [The NeverEnding Story](#) - the movie, not the book or any other media.

He is a member of the plains people who hunt the purple buffalo.

Atreyu's belief, by their player:
{The key to success is courage.}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Gender
Male
Eyes

Brown
Hair
Long, brown
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light but tanned
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters

Cyprian Kernow

This section was written by the player:

Cyprian holds dual-faith allegiance to Catholicism and Cornish traditional craft, so his Blessing of the Gods would flow from the abstract concepts of crossroads, intersection, and liminality.

Cyprian is a reincarnation/distillation/amalgamation of all the personalities that were in Matthew Lutey, but re-assembled and integrated in a way that is harmonious rather than painful. Cyprian is Aiwarz, if that character had his shit together (which he didn't, most of the time).

Cyprian is from 17th century Cornwall.

Cyprian is accompanied by a black dog named Jackdaw.

Some reflections on Cyprian's beliefs:

{Cyprian believes fundamentally that his ultimate goal is to commune with the denizens of the Underworld who dwell on the other side of a thin veil that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead

He believes that this veil is permeable and that life and death are a continuum rather than opposed binaries, and that all wisdom and power consists of being able to travel along this continuum at will}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters



Figure 64 [Dvorak and Skitarii](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 65 [Dvorak-46](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 66 [Dvorak-46's Equipment](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

(a.k.a. Dvorak, Dvorak Four Six)

This section was written by the player:

Dvorak-46 is a tech-priest and researcher who just turned 95, and worries they haven't really done anything worthwhile with their youth.

Dvorak's books: 1) the Principia Mechanicum, 2) an unfinished and unpublished study of Necron Gauss technology that is assembled partly from Dvorak's own original research and partly of pages out of a singed journal left behind by a predecessor, and 3) a wildly inaccurate but very heretical contraband tract about old Terran scientific practices.

Dvorak doesn't need to worry about that last one being discovered by their superiors. They have lived their entire life on the Zar Quaesitor, Belisarius Cawl's Ark Mechanicus. They've never met the Archmagos Dominus or any of his high ranking priests, but they have lived and worked under his

protection and away from Mars. The alignment is vaguely Euphrati-ish : pro-Emperor, anti-Imperial dogma, anti-Chaos, curious about xenos.

This is centuries before Cawl comes out of obscurity to try to save Cadia. Because of the secrecy surrounding the Archmagos' projects, the ship rarely visits normal inhabited worlds. Dvorak's entire community is the population of the Zar, hundreds and thousands of priests, servants and servitors.

(and thousands of experimental subjects and WIP primaris space marines, but Dvorak doesn't know about that)

Dvorak resents the Archmagos' ego and the abrupt decisions made that put the Zar's inhabitants in peril or prevent them from carrying out their own research or projects. Dvorak probably sometimes wishes they lived on a proper forge world where they could have some sort of stability, even though that would mean submitting to the Mechanicus' dogma

Dvorak is an ordained priest of the Omnissiah, but also culturally a member of the Mechanicus as a separate and parallel society to the Imperium of Mankind that's its own distinct dystopian theocracy? Dvorak would probably identify with Mars in particular because they are a servant of Cawl, who is from Mars and has lands and forges etc there.

Some reflections on Dvorak's beliefs:

{Probably deep down a desperate hope and belief that their source universe is the 'correct' one and that they'll be able to return and use the power/artifacts accumulated in Perpetual Bernville to attain status. The flip side of that is the fear that the values of the Cult are not actually universal and that it means nothing to declare oneself its most senior Magos if nobody else recognises that. Lonely, I suppose, wanting to speak to other Mechanicus.

I think there probably is an underlying very carefully suppressed dread from meeting and interacting with non-Mechanicus (and xenos!) for the first time and finding that they're actual competent people with interesting ideas. The only way to justify past actions is for the Cult dogma to be the only truth and the 40k universe to be the only real world, etc... In terms of atrocities and war and servitors etc Dvorak probably identified as being quite liberal and progressive, as a servant of Cawl, and is finding that way of seeing himself to be very challenged

Dvorak is obsessed with age/extending lifespan (because of being surrounded by Cawl and his clones/AIs/constructs) although they have had other things on their mind since coming to Perpetual Bernville.

That their source universe is the 'correct' one, that the customs of the Cult Mechanicus are divinely sanctioned and can't be questioned on moral grounds, and that they'll be able to return and bring the knowledge/power/artifacts gathered in Perpetual Bernville back with them.}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dvorak-46's Workshop

lolo

This section was written by the player:

Some reflections on lolo's beliefs:

{At the core of lolo's belief system is inherited reincarnation- his understanding of magic is from a book (he believes) his last reincarnation, his grandfather gave him.

He believes he is part of a long line of druids, which are essentially just the same people reincarnating each generation he doesn't really know why this is, but it seems important, and he feels like the centre of the universe as a result.

He assumes this extends to meeting the same people he met in previous incarnations – perhaps he's different iterations of everyone before, as a previous iteration of himself.

Because he believes in the fates, he assumes he will just be reincarnated irrespective of what he does or how he behaves, so he holds little to no anxiety or weight on anything he approaches, essentially anything that threatened this cycle or his belief in it (especially as his grounding for understanding tries to be scientific, but consistently fails to arrive at anything solid).}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters

Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka

This section was written by the player:

They present dressed in trekking gear, a Xenoarcheology society pin and a weirdly colourful baton with a pink gemstone hanging from their belt.

They study the history of Kaiju appearances by exploring long forgotten ruins and normally find traces of Kaijus just about to awake after thousands of years in slumber. They and their colleagues normally endeavour to stop them from waking up, but always barely fall short, usually because of the shortcomings of a naïve, traitorous or simple colleague (never Toho!). At which point they have no choice but to activate the Ultrathem baton and grow to towering heights to fight the Kaiju.

The Ultrathem baton was made in collaboration with the electric car company, Ultra Cars, when it became clear millennial Kaijus were awaking at uncannily frequent rates and was awarded to the leading Xenoarcheologist focused on Kaijus: Toho. By contract, the armour enlarging power can only be activated if the wearer performs a quirky dance and shouts: "ULTRATHEM" with a voice filter.

Some reflections on Toho's beliefs:

{I think Toho started out as a ordinary archeologist kinda interested in weird mythical creatures that soon became a profound intellectual love for those creatures. They would spend their time exploring dangerous ruins investigating stories about said creatures.

When it eventually became clear some of those were real, they found themselves torn between protecting humanity from them, and protecting those creature they had grown to love.

So when they found these creatures roles in the ecosystem, it was a enough to assuage her moral dilemma. They were not to be harmed, even if it meant endangering humanity a bit more then necessary.

I'm pretty sure Ultrathem never really kills the Kaijus. They just stop them from doing too much damage and knocks them out enough to let them go back to their secluded radioactive lair (underwater temple, uncharted island, hollow earth, volcanoes) to regenerate. Probably only after they've done what they awakened to do (smashing Jeff Bezos, destroy a warship, topple a corrupt

government by toppling the government building, squish a bunch of those overpopulated frogs in Australia).

So yeah, I guess it kinda goes in contrast to Dvorak, in as much Toho is profoundly intellectually interested and empathic toward all forms of life independent of their species and how aggressive they are. They kinda also wanna save humans if they can, but... you know: humans are just not as interesting as a giant moth, and arguably less beneficial for the environment.}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters

Trace

This section was written by the player:

{At a young age Trace went through the collapse of society as we know it today, when 5G was setup across the world. This caused what was, an until then unknown number of entities known as Cyber Spirits to finally take action against what is effectively a kind of pollution called noise. So powerful and constant electronic signals were harming them in this invisible digital space, and they then destroyed in a coordinated attack every single server farm on the planet crippling most global superpowers instantly. This lead to reformed nations enforcing an iron grip over the worlds communication infrastructure and the integration of Cyber Spirits into everyday life. Trace as a 12 year old boy managed to connect to an open network making contact with a minor cyber spirit Ingram, the government keeping very tight control over who has exposure to Cyber Spirits tracked Trace down. Without the knowledge to cover his tracks he was easily caught and watched his entire family die trying to prevent his arrest. He was then rescued by an anti-government cell who took him in.

The team comprised of Bishop the leader and the direct mentor of Trace. Spite the hardware expert, skilled in both electronics and explosives and finally Breach who was an ex-swat officer who helped with the heavy lifting for many of their operations. They were the closest thing Trace had to family for years and they taught him almost everything he knows, there were other cells, who they worked with as a part of joint operations but ultimately through either a mixture of bad luck, stupidity and betrayal, most of them died or were captured and likely killed. Never trust anyone, always have a plan and an escape route. This was the mantra that was hard-wired into Trace, Bishop made sure of it and seeing what happens to those without one Trace was more than willing to adopt it.

Like any skilled resistance fighter, or some would say domestic terrorist a cyber spirit companion is a must, and for Trace that is Ingram who is a free cyber spirit and Traces closest friend. Ingram is able to operate completely separately from Trace though often willing to assist him is under no obligation to do so. This is the opposite of the relationship many of the governments forces have with their Cyber Spirits, where they are bound to devices and forced to complete various tasks, though some spirits willing merge with such devices seeing it as a chance to gain far more power, many resist the notion and hate the idea of such a fate. There came a point where Trace and the team returned to their hideout after what had been a fairly routine operation to retrieve a package from some tech company or another and being the youngest Trace was sent by Bishop to gather food and supplies for the team to celebrate their success, it didn't take long before proximity alerts started being sent to

his phone. He rushed back as quickly as he could but he was too late, taking cover in a nearby building he watched as heavily armored soldiers dragged the body bags of his team into unmarked vans and left. Trace counted the bags, he reviewed the footage from the hideout, checked official death certificates, reports of similar attacks against other cells. Nothing, no news, no reports he took what few things weren't cleared out from the attack and buried them, knowing he failed his team. The security system and alarms were his responsibility and he must have missed something he made a mistake he triple checked everything he was sure of it but he must have missed something.

He spent long days looking for any hint as to what happened to his team, fueled by a mixture of rage and guilt. Those days turned into weeks, then months and finally after three years of searching he finally got a clue, an informant who said he had information about similar attack that had been carried out. Trace suspected a trap, anticipated it, almost wanted it but when he arrived at the meeting location just as he felt for sure he was going to be greeted by a full squad of soldiers and an unmarked van. A flashlight or spotlight appeared blinding him and when Trace finally found his eyes adjusting he saw himself surrounded by strangers.

TL:DR What is the key to success? A carefully laid out plan that accounts for all points of failure, and the equipment and skills to pull it off.

How important are my friends? I would rather die for my friends, than betray them. I must do everything in my power to make sure they have everything they need to succeed, from a plan to a space to live and recover.

What's my ultimate goal? To avenge the death of my team and family and to not let anyone else I care about die.

What's my most important principle of value? Without a proper plan and careful preparation, people die and mistakes cost lives. I cannot make a mistake or else the people I care about will die.}

Current Location	
Convergence Universe	
Species	
Human	
Aligned Organization	
Convergence Player Characters	
Ruled Locations	
1.	Trace's Safehouse

Other Characters

Mothgdanon

A gigantic Kaiju with a moth-like appearance. Its name is whispered in fear - its coming a dark mystery.

Current Location	
Convergence Universe	
Species	
Kaiju	
Related Plots	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign: Convergence Chapter: The Desert Under The Water 	

I'm still not certain whether this was an accident, but the term "mothgdanon" seemed to originate when one of the players (mis-)typed it in a group chat. We jokingly asked about the meaning, and it developed into a mysterious, moth-like creature. So this enemy was included in reference to that.

The Regent

The evil overlord of The Castle – a powerful dark mage, modelled on Dracula.

Current Location
The Castle
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter: The Castle and The Regent
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Castle

Doppelgänger Taxi

a.k.a. Clone(?) of Taxi

A Doppelgänger of Taxi Varlik, created when saving Bill Toge in Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux.

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human

Important Objects

The Short, Stout, Green Glass Grail

Based upon The Green Glass Grail and The Short, Stout Grail.

Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
Falmouths

Extreme Teen Bible

The [Extreme Teen Bible](#) is from [The Adventure Zone](#). It is a holy book with a skateboarder on the cover, allowing the user to more easily spread the word of Pan to teens. It can be found in the Convergence Universe, along with Railsplitter and the Umbra Staff, due to the converging realities of the GASRPGCU.

In Cypher System terms, it is an item that can grant assets on some tasks relating to nature and holy knowledge.

From Setting
The Adventure Zone
Item type
Magical

Current Location
Convergent Woods
Rarity
Fairly common in the right circles

The Unholy Grail

A silver chalice, containing blood, that materialised upon the defeat of The Regent, at the top of The Castle. While The Unholy Grail appeared, The Castle began to collapse.

The blood in the chalice cannot be spilled - it can only be drunk - and analysis of it would not be able to determine what creature it came from. Both the blood and chalice are effectively the same object, which is noticeably magical.

It was claimed by Convergence Player Characters.

In Cypher System terms, The Unholy Grail is an Artifact:

- **Level:** 5
- **Form:** A silver chalice, containing blood
- **Effect:** Drinking the blood increases the user's Might, Speed and Intellect pools by 1 point each. Their complexion pales and they feel colder. They experience an invigorating loss of some of their life force.
- **Depletion:** Automatic

Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
The Castle
Current Holder
The Regent
Rarity
Unique

Lagann

[Lagann](#) is from [Gurren Lagann](#). It is a small red mech, shaped like a head with arms and legs attached. It can be found in the Convergence Universe due to the converging realities of the GASRPGCU.

In Cypher System terms, Lagann is an Artifact:

- **Level:** 3
- **Form:** A mech that looks like a mostly-red head with arms and legs attached.
- **Effect:** It functions like a small mech (this could be re-powered after depletion). Expend one level of Intellect Effort to Activate and choose one:
 - Double the number of levels of Effort available to the pilot for one action (and optionally either materialise cool shades on the pilot or make their cool shades cooler)
 - Attach Lagann to another mech (or similar) to take control (once control has been establish, no further activation is needed for that mech)
- **Depletion:** 1 in 1d8

Buntline

[Buntline](#) is from [Xenogears](#). It is a relatively small, grey humanoid mech. It can be found in the Convergence Universe due to the converging realities of the GASRPGCU.

In Cypher System terms, Buntline is an Artifact:

- **Level:** 3
- **Form:** A relatively small, seemingly basic mech.
- **Effect:** It functions like a small mech (this could be re-powered after depletion). Activate to transform Buntline into a gun that can be fired by another mech. When this functionality is used, the pilot of Buntline also pilots the bullet from within - they choose a damage value to inflict on the target, then must make a Might Task of that difficulty to resist the same damage themselves.
- **Depletion:** 1 in 1d10

Umbra Staff

The [Umbra Staff](#) is from [The Adventure Zone](#). It is an umbrella-shaped magician's staff with the ability to absorb the magic of defeated foes. It can be found in the Convergence Universe, along with Railsplitter and the Extreme Teen Bible, due to the converging realities of the GASRPGCU.

In Cypher System terms, the Umbra Staff is an Artifact:

- **Level:** 4
- **Form:** A nice, purple umbrella with a curved wooden handle
- **Effect:** It functions as a light weapon and magician's staff. Activate to choose one:
 - Add an asset to a test relating to channeling magical power, including casting a spell.
 - Absorb a magical item or effect. This choice requires negotiation with the GM for acceptable targets and potential effects. Examples could include replenishing Intellect points, strengthening a spell, etc.
- **Depletion:** 1 in 1d10

From Setting
The Adventure Zone
Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
Convergent Woods
Current Holder
Trace
Rarity
Unique

Railsplitter

[Railsplitter](#) is from [The Adventure Zone](#). It is an axe with the ability to chop down a tree in one swing, once per day. It can be found in the Convergence Universe, along with the Umbra Staff and the Extreme Teen Bible, due to the converging realities of the GASRPGCU.

In Cypher System terms, Railsplitter is an Artifact:

- **Level:** 2
- **Form:** A humble-looking axe with a long wooden handle and a red head
- **Effect:** It functions as a normal medium weapon, but can be activated to chop down a tree in one swing.
- **Depletion:** 1 in 1d10

From Setting
The Adventure Zone
Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
Convergent Woods
Rarity
Unique

Kaiju

Gigantic, otherworldly (or otherwise mysterious) creatures.

Basic Information

Anatomy

Incredibly varied, but universally gigantic. There are gigantic lizards, moths, strange humanoids and many, many more. It is rare to see two alike.

Genetics and Reproduction

Unknown.

Growth Rate & Stages

Unknown.

Ecology and Habitats

Often slumbering beneath the earth or the sea.

Dietary Needs and Habits

Unknown / Varies by specimen.

Biological Cycle

Unknown. Some seem to hibernate or otherwise emerge and retreat according to some unknown cycle.

Additional Information

Perception and Sensory Capabilities

Varies by individual specimen.

A Piece of The Door

A fist-sized chunk of something black, with indeterminate material and shape. It is the most potent remaining piece of The Door, since it became The Broken Door.

It hovers above the inert chunk of black material that makes up the base of The Broken Door, marking its location.

Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
The Broken Door

Places

Convergence Universe

The many multiple realities of the GASRPGCU are overlapping and coming together, creating this place and time. It is constructed not just of previous RPG adventure realities, but also those relating to the cultures and shared interests of the players.



Figure 67 A map of the Convergence Universe by Ché Wilbraham

Type
Universe
Location under

GASRPGCU
Included Locations
• Convergent Woods
• Falmouths
• Perpetual Bernville
• The Hole in the World
• The World's Warped Maelstrom
• Underwater Desert
Characters in Location
• Atreyu
• Cyprian Kernow
• Doppelgänger Taxi
• Dvorak-46
• Iolo
• Leofe
• Mothgdanon
• Rhys Jenkins' Homunculus
• The Comte de Saint-Germain
• Toho "Ultrathem" Tanaka
• Trace
Related Reports (Primary)
• Convergence, Session 1
• Convergence, Session 2
Related Reports (Secondary)
• Convergence, Session 19
Inhabiting Species
• Clockwork
• Dogpeople
• Human
• Molepeople
Related Plots
• Campaign: Convergence
Related Historical Events
• 2017 CE
Bill in Three Persons: Redux

[Perpetual Bernville](#)

A hub world at the centre of multiple realities. The central idea of the multiple incarnations of Bernville coalesce into Perpetual Bernville. It is Bernville's ultimate form - the convergence of Bernvilles.

A focal / starting point for Campaign: Convergence.

It's unclear how long ago this happened in Perpetual Bernville's history (reality can behave strangely there), but it used to be a fairly normal town in the Pacific Northwest USA until it was cast adrift from its home reality in the 2010s. A perfect circle surrounds the town, marking its borders. Everything within the circle occasionally drifts between realities. Perfect circles also sometimes appear within the town (briefly or permanently) altering their contents and removing or depositing lifeforms. These immigrants are sometimes hostile, sometimes friendly. The friendly, sentient ones sometimes

become residents of Perpetual Bernville, as do some who arrive from a reality that the town is currently residing within.

Demographics

It's difficult to keep count, due to the reality distortions and so on, but the estimate is that the residents of Perpetual Bernville are roughly 50% humans who were in the town when it was cast adrift from its own reality and 50% beings from other realities. These immigrants were either deposited into Perpetual Bernville through a circle or arrived into Perpetual Bernville from a reality that it coincided with. They are either resident by choice or because they haven't yet found a way to escape.

Government

The original power systems of Perpetual Bernville have mostly dissolved since it began its drift through realities - circumstances change too much to keep any consistent control. A defence group operates out of the centrally-located old police station - this group handles most of the outside threats, though others are free to contribute as they like. Cooperatives have been established at various now-disused locations around the town to handle care, distribution of goods, trade and so on. Very little is centralised.

Defences

A loosely-organised group of defenders, who meet to plan building barricades and coordinate patrols, etc.

Infrastructure

Via incomprehensible means, Perpetual Bernville still maintains some of its connection to broader infrastructure from its home reality. Some power and water flow into the town, some sewage flows out. There is a mobile phone connection and (unreliable) internet. Residents have also built local food production (small-scale farms and a retooled fishing industry) and repurposed the less-necessary local facilities into more suitable uses.

Architecture

2010s Pacific Northwest USA.

Type
Town
Location under
Convergence Universe
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dvorak-46's Workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Trace's Safehouse
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bill Toge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bootleg
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rainy Day
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sheepish
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sheriff Ragoczy
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Convergence, Session 19

• Convergence, Session 3
• Convergence, Session 6
Related Reports (Secondary)
• Convergence, Session 1
• Convergence, Session 2
• Convergence, Session 4
• Convergence, Session 8
Related Plots
• Campaign: Convergence
• Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
• Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
Related Historical Events
• 2017 CE
A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
• 2017 CE
The Group Arrive

[The World's Warped Maelstrom](#)

A convergence of the concepts of The Warp and The World's Psychic Maelstrom within the Convergence Universe. Both a space and phenomenon. A roiling maelstrom of pure chaos and psychic energy.

The Dei-Phage dwells here, perhaps manipulating the forces at work.

Type
Dimensional plane
Location under
Convergence Universe
Owner/Ruler
The Dei-Phage

[The Hole in the World](#)

A mysterious, as-yet-undefined place in the Convergence Universe. An opaque, golden circle surrounds the site in Falmouths where the [Games Academy](#) should be. The Hole in the World is inside this circle. The circle is near-impenetrable, unlike the boundaries of some of the other converging realities.

Type
Portal
Parent Location
Convergence Universe
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
• Convergence, Session 18

[Convergent Woods](#)

The woods that make up much of the Convergence Universe to the north of Perpetual Bernville. They are comprised of similar woods from numerous realities, including Perpetual Bernville's home reality

and The Overgrown Wilds. They are dark and dangerous, especially away from the safety of town. They sometimes seem to bend space and reality, making navigation difficult.

Type
Forest, Boreal (Coniferous)
Location under
Convergence Universe
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Castle • The Unburied City
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence, Session 7
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign: Convergence • Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door

Convergent Blasted Lands

The Convergence Universe version of the Blasted Lands. A treacherous area of multiple cliffs and canyons. Tribes of Dogpeople live in the caves and corners.

Type
Canyon
Location under
Underwater Desert
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence, Session 10
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

Underwater Desert

The Convergence Universe version of the lands around [The Source](#) and some locations from Adventure: Ultra JankenSquad Forever and Adventure: Re:Don't. This desert lies underneath the water between Perpetual Bernville and Falmouths.

The water tends to a level high above the ground - the top of the Convergent Source Tower, whose foundation lies in the desert, juts out through the relatively thin "ceiling" of water. Those in the desert can clearly see the water above, with sunlight shining through. Those above the water level can just about see the top of the tower, but it isn't easily clear that a desert lies below.

Type
Desert
Location under
Convergence Universe
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battlegrounds • Convergent Blasted Lands • Convergent Source Tower
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence, Session 12

Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convergence, Session 9
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

Convergent Source Tower

The Convergence Universe version of the Source Tower. This ruined skyscraper extends up from the Underwater Desert, piercing the ceiling of water. The top of the tower is said to be home to The Source, which relates to the life-giving properties of the water and, perhaps, mechs.

Some Molepeople, who would ordinarily live underground, beneath the tower, have paid for access to study The Source at the top of the tower and learn its secrets. These knowledge-seekers live near the top of the tower. Some of them work hard, learn the secrets of The Source and end up piloting a mech away from here, leaving to join the fight. Many of them don't have the drive to apply themselves to the study, instead complaining that The Source isn't revealing itself to them in the way they demand.

Many mechs had been abandoned at the top of the tower, though all but one have now been claimed by successful Molepeople. The final remaining mech, Lagann, awaits a pilot who can unlock its potential.

Type
Skyscraper
Parent Location
Underwater Desert
Related Report (Primary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convergence, Session 11 Convergence, Session 9
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

The Unburied City

A chunk of The Buried City, from The Overgrown Wilds, that was brought to the Convergence Universe.

Pieces of a large city have been completely overcome by the encroaching forest.

Type
Forest, Boreal (Coniferous)
Location under
Convergent Woods
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Broken Door
Related Reports (Primary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convergence, Session 8
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign: Convergence Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door

Falmouths

In the Convergence Universe, the Falmouths of [the real world](#), Adventure: The Short, Stout Grail, Adventure Using *InSpectres*, and Conspicuous Events Setting bleed together into "Falmouths", detached from its parent realities.

Location under
Convergence Universe
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Britannia

The Castle

A mysterious, shifting castle that gives off strangely evil vibes. It is ruled over by The Regent.

The Castle is the Convergence Universe merging of the concepts of the castle and the regent from Rhapsody of Blood and Dracula and his castle from the [Castlevania](#) series of games and other media.

The areas and defenders of The Castle are covered in more in detail in Chapter: The Castle and The Regent.

Purpose / Function

To bleed evil and darkness into the world.

Alterations

Many and shifting. The Castle itself is a being of chaos, changing under its own will and the will of The Regent.

Architecture

Mostly a dark, gothic castle with many towers and spires, though large sections have wildly different architectural styles due to its shifting, chaotic nature.

History

It manifests in the real world in a cycle, disappearing for decades or centuries at a time. Each time it appears, it changes its shape and substance, spreading new evil and luring new victims. It is unclear how long it has been visiting the real world for.

Type
Castle
Parent Location
Convergent Woods
Owner
The Regent
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Regent
Related Report (Primary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 4• Convergence, Session 5
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 6
Related Plots

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign: Convergence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter: The Castle and The Regent

The Broken Door

The remnants of The Door. It shattered as a chunk of The Overgrown Wilds was brought to the Convergence Universe (making up The Unburied City and much of the Convergent Woods), due to its attunement to connections between realities.

When it travelled via the convergence, many of The Cult of The Door were also brought along. When it shattered, many of its pieces ended up embedded in their bodies, transferring some of its reality-warping nature into them, and altering their minds. One piece remains, imbued with power, hovering above the inert base - A Piece of The Door.

Type
Portal
Parent Location
The Unburied City
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign: Convergence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter: On The Way To The Broken Door

Dvorak-46's Workshop

A well-equipped workshop established by Dvorak-46 in the northwest part of Perpetual Bernville, in an abandoned church.

Type
Workshop
Parent Location
Perpetual Bernville
Owner
Dvorak-46

Battlegrounds

An area that perpetuates combat. It creates foes that wander the region - lesser Kaiju and other monsters, as well as seemingly-human bandits. When these foes are defeated, more will mysteriously emerge somewhere else in the area. The fights are provided by this place for whoever comes here seeking them, to get stronger, find loot, or whatever else. The foes here will not leave the area (or even chase combatants very far, if they flee), meaning that it poses no real threat to other parts of the Convergence Universe.

The enemies here drop various nonsense currencies, crafting materials and other miscellany when defeated.

The Molepeople who successfully learn how to pilot mechs at the Convergent Source Tower travel here to join the fight after claiming their own mech.

Mothgdanon was temporarily held here by the fighting, before escaping into the Convergence Universe at large.

Its design was inspired by the areas of random battles in JRPGs - in essence, it is one of these.

Geography

A great desert area, scattered with the ruins of buildings of various ages and styles. The constant combat kicks up vast dust clouds that hinder visibility.

Ecosystem

Foes are created via some unknown process. They then wander until they meet something to fight. When defeated, they drop "loot" and their bodies disappear once unobserved.

Type
Region
Location under
Underwater Desert
Related Reports (Secondary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Convergence, Session 10Convergence, Session 11
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

Trace's Safehouse

A hacker den / safehouse established in Perpetual Bernville by Trace. He gathered plenty of supplies and tech into a first-floor space in the south side of town. He also established a good surveillance network that feeds into here.

Type
Room, Security, Saferoom
Parent Location
Perpetual Bernville
Owner
Trace
Owning Organization
Convergence Player Characters

Dark Heresy

Barnes et al.'s *Dark Heresy: Core Rulebook* (2017) presents a system designed to have the players taking the roles of agents of the Imperial Inquisition in Games Workshop's *Warhammer 40,000* setting. It's a traditional RPG system, with the standard relationships with the GM, players and story.

I quite like the *Dark Heresy* system. It uses percentile dice, making target values for rolls quite easily understandable – you might have a 44 target, meaning a 44% chance of succeeding, for example. I like the Fate and Fortune points. Fate points are very limited but allow a player to prevent their character from dying (or can be used for similarly important purposes). Fortune points recover frequently and can be spent on rerolling dice each session. These feel like they give the players some control over randomness and allow them to protect their characters, but they aren't so powerful as to hinder the job of GMing.

The aesthetics of the setting are quite powerful, though. If you don't enjoy the grimdark flavour of 40k, it's hard to get into the games. I know this was a problem for at least one of my players, while others are big fans of the setting and absolutely loved being immersed in it.

Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit

This campaign, run by Ché from March to October 2020, was based on *The Apostasy Gambit* adventure trilogy: *Dark Heresy: The Black Sepulchre* (Martin and Counter 2017), *Dark Heresy: The Church of the Damned* (Martin et al. 2017) and *Dark Heresy: The Chaos Commandment* (Huckelberry et al. 2017). This campaign was not recorded in detail, though it did generate some reflections and ephemera. The initial session was in person, then the group transitioned to online sessions using *Roll20* (The Orr Group, LLC 2019) due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Because this campaign wasn't recorded in detail, most of its elements weren't entered into the *World Anvil* site. Because the bulk of this document was extracted from that site, many of the entries in this section are incomplete or have very little information – they were mostly only generated as stubs to be referenced by other adventures, etc.

Having to learn how to use *Roll20* added an extra burden for this game. It's normally enough work to have to do all the other jobs as GM – learning the system, prepping the content, etc., but adding a virtual tabletop program into the mix made a noticeable difference. Players were no longer just looking to me for story and system information, but for help with the UI and workings of an intermediary program that I was also unfamiliar with.

Some players were more invested than others in their characters and the system/setting. Some engaged with the system and/or setting better than others, often this correlated with whether they were fans of *Warhammer 40,000*. I created a custom race/class for one player to engage them better, as their interest in the setting was almost exclusively related to a particular fictional species. I also created custom talents suited to each PC to encourage character engagement – this seemed quite successful, as the players seemed to feel like they were receiving tailored content based on their choices. I observed their playstyles and areas of interest (using social cues as well, like my knowledge of their interests outside of the game) and tried to play into them. I also created a lot of patched-together/custom content for character advancement, like unique progression schemes and rules tweaks. There was a lot of catering to players, and I feel like it paid off.

Relatedly, I offered extra story and engagement between sessions, usually via group or private messages with the players, providing extra off-screen story details or some character choices. Some players very much enjoyed these extra opportunities for engagement (maybe Specialists/Character Actors, to use Laws' (2002) typology) where some largely ignored them. One player engaged more with discussion and analysis of the systems mechanics, rather than details about their character's story. Notably, one player began to generate a lot of art of their character, and the fictional circumstances, perhaps due to their preexisting

interest in the setting and engagement with the additional content between sessions.

Stig is a notable character from this campaign who had broad impact – he appeared in future games and generated art and reflections well beyond the lifespan of this campaign. Related to the previous paragraph, it seemed that Stig’s player became very attached to him, in a way that is perhaps one of the goals and unique strengths of RPGs – something that GMs should encourage?

Because this campaign was run primarily using prewritten adventure books, I experienced some struggles with “keeping hold” of the story. There were numerous inconsistencies in the books themselves – plot threads that were mentioned and not explained, characters that were inconsistently described, elements that were alluded to in one section but then never materialised, etc. This inconsistency made it very difficult to make definitive statements about elements of the story – I found it hard to be sure when the information in the book was reliable, and if I could overrule it without that causing a problem with a later part of the plot or similar. Relatedly, I would also sometimes introduce inconsistencies, for example due to forgetting a detail. When these elements combined, it led to some rough and/or slow sequences of trying to work out story details in order to answer a player’s simple question about a character’s whereabouts, for example. It was good practice for me, having rarely run long-form prewritten content before, but I didn’t like not having freedom with the story.

Related to the above – where possible, I would insert content of my own creation, to replace, expand on, or run parallel to, content from the books. These sequences and characters tended to be amongst the most well received, and certainly led to some memorable moments. A notable example is the PC’s Inquisitor (fictional boss) – fleshing out her personality and details helped the campaign find an identity and some core themes (the party was very strange, so she had to be from a radical faction, for example, meaning we would deal with themes of skirting heresy and conflict between the radical and the orthodox). With her defined, I could then create an antagonistic rival who would interfere with the party, and another character who could act as a middle-ground, potential ally. The encounters and conflicts with these three characters were some of the most memorable sequences of the campaign, and they weren’t from the books.

Relations

There were more characters than these, but their details weren’t recorded on the *World Anvil* and so don’t appear here:

Protagonists

Euphrati's Acolytes: Aiwaz, Stig

Allies

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Adversaries

The Dei-Phage

System
Dark Heresy
Plot type
Campaign

Player Characters

There were more characters than these, but their details weren't recorded on the *World Anvil* and so don't appear here:

Euphrati's Acolytes



Figure 68 [Flashback...](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

The ragtag group of Acolytes assembled by Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati. Their story is told via Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit.

Type
Adventuring Party
Leader
Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati
Parent Organization
Ordo Malleus
Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aiwaz
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eiko
Members
Stig



Figure 69 [Best to keep that arm wrapped up in public...](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

This section was written by the player:

On the planet of Sleef, I listened to closely to the voice of The Warp that spoke through the murmurings of the volcanoes. I became, not just Warp-Touched, but madly obsessed with The Warp. The Blighted Schola recruited me and allowed my Warp obsession to break my mind, which they then reformed with the aim of pursuing the Will.

Current Location
The Warp
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Euphrati's Acolytes

Eiko

Eiko is a stealthy, roguish/assassin-type character.

Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Euphrati's Acolytes

Stig

Most of this section was written by the player:



Figure 70 [Cybernetic Arm](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

a.k.a. STYG-0, Styg

First Impression

Yikes, absolutely horrifying lower facial scars. Very unnatural green eyes. Speaks the language badly, with a guttural Germanic-sounding native tongue.

Bio

A tall wiry man in his late thirties, always wearing a red robe. His eyes are an unnatural green, lit from within. His lower face is very very scarred, and the stained cloth wraps over what was once his mouth do not conceal enough of the fleshy horror below. The ornate axe he carries on his back is distracting - a huge spiny thing made of rare metals and carved with deaths-head symbols. Look more closely, and see that it is attached to his spine by a tentacle of living metal, like a snake. The same scales cover, or perhaps replace, the skin on his arms.

He speaks the local language crudely and hesitantly. His native tongue sounds guttural and germanic. Occasionally, he makes a deep hissing static noise that also seems to be a form of speech. These foreign sounds alternate when he performs his compulsive rituals around machines.

He can scrawl very good copies of the letters inscribed on old buildings and tech from Before.

STYG-0 says that he has devoted himself to the worship of three things that are also one thing:

1. The thousands of thousands of little ghosts that live inside all clever things built by human hands,
2. The great flowing-forward of all things and especially of people and animals and the little ghosts,
3. A metal god-dragon that lies below the holy red sands of a desert that is so far away that it cannot be walked to, even in a hundred lifetimes. Asked to point to the place, he will raise his plated hand to the sky and not to the horizon.

Lifestyle

STYG-0 travels around cataloguing technology, searching for an STC.

You don't eat for pleasure, you need only fuel. You don't care for comfort. You sleep little and in silent dreamlessness. You collect no wealth.

The World's Psychic Maelstrom

STYG-0's Maelstrom is a data connection to what he believes to be the local noosphere. He experiences it as raw data, but with a visual element that presents as black feathers. The "connection" can access all beings and maybe more, but he might not realise that because of how he rationalises it.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

Early Life

Stig was born in the lower levels of Vaxanide's capital Hive. He was raised by his grandfather and went into his dead mother's trade of tending the lumens in the higher levels of the hive. He was curious about the electrical circuitry he worked with and by lucky coincidence was able to demonstrate his understanding to an enginseer visiting his workplace. He was invited to study at the seminary in the Mechanicus enclave on Vaxanide and his grandfather insisted he accept the offer.

Stig converted to the new religion and did well with his studies. He specialised in Technography, but had limited opportunities for further research into STC libraries. The enclave was not set up for scholarship like a Forge World would be and the expectation was that the newly ordained priests would staff the servitor production plant. Stig was horrified by the factory and the fates of the condemned people. He felt himself wavering in his new faith.

He was tempted by a job offer from an upper-hive noble, as a means of escape from the situation. The job was to assemble strange parts of machinery, guided by grainy pict of structures which didn't seem to make geometric sense. A week into Stig's new job, the mansion was violently raided by the Ordo Malleus.

Stig complied with the Inquisition completely and was subjected only to comparatively mild interrogation. The information he provided resulted in the burning of all of the members of the tainted noble household, but he withheld mention of his grandfather or of the hallucinations of birds and feathers he'd experienced when working on the heretic machinery.

While recovering from his torture, he was visited by Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati, who offered him a place on her staff.



Figure 71 [Exoskeleton](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)



Figure 72 [Apocalypse World](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Current Location
The Door
Species
Human
Birthplace
Vaxanide Capital Hive
Current Residence
The Buried City
Pronouns
he / him
Gender
Male
Eyes
Cybernetic, glowing green (originally blue)
Hair

Dyed white
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Dark
Aligned Organization
Adeptus Mechanicus
Other Affiliations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Euphrati's Acolytes Inquisition Ordo Malleus Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure: The Door in Reality
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STYG-0's Workshop

Other Characters

There were more characters than these, but their details weren't recorded on the *World Anvil* and so don't appear here:

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati is a radical Inquisitor and a major ally (and the boss) of Euphrati's Acolytes, the PCs.



Figure 73 Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati by Ché Wilbraham

Current Location
The Warp
Species
Human
Gender
Female
Eyes
Grey
Hair
Black, curly but straightened
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Pale brown
Owned Vehicles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cudgel of Drusus
Aligned Organization
Ordo Malleus
Other Affiliations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquisition
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign: Convergence • Chapter: A Home in Perpetual Bernville?
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
A Home in Perpetual Bernville?

[The Dei-Phage](#)

The Dei-Phage was a greater daemon, and the major antagonist of Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit.



Figure 74 The Dei-Phage by Ché Wilbraham

From Setting
Dark Heresy, Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit
Divine Classification
Greater Chaos Daemon
Current Location
The Warp
Species
Lord of Change
Realm
The Warp
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign: Convergence
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World's Warped Maelstrom

[Inquisitor Rhia Jezail](#)

Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus, rival to Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati.



Figure 75 [Jezail](#) by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Current Location
40k Branch Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Ordo Hereticus

[Blasphemy Zero](#)

a.k.a. Binary Zero, B-0

An experimental life-form, resulting from tinkering with alien DNA.

[Inquisition](#)

An important, powerful faction within the Imperium of Man.

Type
Religious, Holy Order
Parent Organization
Imperium of Man
Subsidiary Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordo Hereticus Ordo Malleus
Location
40k Branch Universe

Ordo Malleus

A radical faction of the Inquisition.

Parent Organization
Inquisition
Subsidiary Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Euphrati's Acolytes
Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Adeptus Mechanicus

A faction that is highly focused on technology.

Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stig

Imperium of Man

The bastion of humanity in the setting.

From Setting
Dark Heresy
Type
Geopolitical, Empire
Demonym
Imperials
Subsidiary Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquisition
Location
40k Branch Universe

Ordo Hereticus

An orthodox faction of the Inquisition.

From Setting
Dark Heresy
Type
Religious, Holy Order
Parent Organization

Inquisition
Location
40k Branch Universe
Notable Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquisitor Rhia Jezail

Chaos Daemon

Chaotic, evil denizens of the Warp.

From Setting
Dark Heresy
Genetic Descendants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lord of Change
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40k Branch Universe The Warp

Lord of Change

A type of very powerful Chaos Daemon.

From Setting
Dark Heresy
Genetic Ancestor(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaos Daemon
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40k Branch Universe The Warp

Places

There were more places than these, but their details weren't recorded on the *World Anvil* and so don't appear here:

40k Branch Universe

Due to the inconsistent application of the rules of the canon setting, and the changes made to the setting through the course of the campaign, the universe that Campaign: An Apostasy Gambit took place in was dubbed a "branch".

Type
Universe
Location under
GASRPGCU
Included Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Warp
Included Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imperium of Man Inquisition Ordo Hereticus
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquisitor Rhia Jezail

Inhabiting Species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaos Daemon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lord of Change

The Warp

A metaphysical dimension within the setting. The source of psychic powers and daemons.

Type
Dimensional plane
Location under
40k Branch Universe
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aiwaz
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Dei-Phage
Inhabiting Species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaos Daemon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lord of Change

The Cudgel of Drusus

Euphrati's spacecraft.

Owner
Inquisitor Gallia Euphrati

Dungeon World

LaTorra and Koebel's *Dungeon World* (2012) is based on *Apocalypse World*, and presents a similar system but in a traditional high fantasy setting. It adds and changes some elements of *Apocalypse World* to be more like traditional fantasy RPGs, such as *Dungeons & Dragons* – it features stats and mechanics that would be familiar to players of those games, while mostly playing like *Apocalypse World*. It is very focused on player choice and freedom – playing to see what happens – and it requires the GM to be reactive, not plot stories, and never overrule the system.

I like *Dungeon World* a lot, and the players have gotten on with it very well every time I've run it. While it still prevents the GM from plotting out storylines, the conventions and settings of traditional fantasy RPGs help frame straightforward adventuring, I think, which can be easier to adlib in a compelling way than the more freeform and loose scenarios that arise in something like *Apocalypse World*. There is enough to the "back-end" of the system to allow the GM to establish threats and hooks for the players, and these look enough like plotting out villains' schemes and so on, that it still feels like the GM can create compelling scenarios and intriguing situations for the players to respond to. It feels like a good balance of player freedom (rewarding agency) and GM control (satisfying authored content), somewhat like *Blades in the Dark*.

Campaign: Schrödinger Fantasy

This short campaign, designed and run by Ché, had the players taking the roles of a group of heroic adventurers who were trapped inside an enormous cube. They had to investigate the area as they adventured, realising they were stuck in a time loop. Ultimately, they got strong enough to defeat the threat outside of the cube and save the universe.

This campaign wasn't recorded in detail, so there is little to include here, beyond some reflections.

While we weren't quite using *Dungeon World* correctly because I had some essential plot elements to run through, this campaign felt quite successful. We were learning the system, but the group's familiarity with *Apocalypse World* helped with expectations around the player-driven nature of the action. It felt like everyone enjoyed the system.

The setting/story was an exploration of a concept that I'd been mulling over for a while – it wasn't fully-formed, and I'd need to do more work on it before adding it to my bank of prepared adventures, but the players found it compelling enough to play through and remain engaged. The idea was applying some principles of quantum mechanics to a high fantasy setting – the PCs are trapped inside a box (like Schrödinger's cat) and opening it observes the world outside, thus collapsing its waveform into a fixed state. They must repeatedly experience this observation in a time loop until they trigger some circumstance that can change the state of the outside world. It's a bit flimsy, but it was fun to play. The premise is based fairly heavily on some elements of *Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward* (Chunsoft 2012).

Dungeons & Dragons

Wizards RPG Team's 5th edition of *Dungeons & Dragons* is presented primarily through *Dungeons & Dragons Dungeon Master's Guide* (2014a) and *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* (2014b). It is the most notable RPG brand in the world, and is quite traditional as a system, with standard relationships between the GM, players, story, etc. It is designed for players to experience playing as adventurers in high fantasy settings.

Campaign: Pelvuria

This adventure, run by another player, saw the group playing as a party of adventurers in a snowy land. It didn't run for very long and wasn't recorded in detail, so there is little to include here.

This was a rare occurrence of me playing in a game GMed by another. I played as an outsider, shapeshifting character. I kept secrets about my origins from other PCs. I just wanted to learn about others and thoroughly disliked violence. These elements of the character led to friction and stress when combat and killing were necessary or enacted by other PCs – this was a bit frustrating and probably an example of me not being a great player. It's one thing to have a strongly defined character with their own morals, etc., but if that gets in the way of other players' fun then it's an issue for the table.

Fiasco

Morningstar's *Fiasco* (2009) is a GM-less game designed to be played in a single session, that creates stories of disastrous situations, often akin to a sub-genre of crime movies. It is played using discrete sets of elements that produce stories of a specified setting and genre, such as family drama at a wedding, or chaos at a luxury penthouse. As such, the roles of the players can vary wildly from game to game.

Fiasco is fantastic, though on the border of being a "true" RPG. The rules aren't especially clear when it comes to conflict resolution – it relies on the players really collaborating to build a story together, regardless of investment in their own characters. Some of both the best and worst gaming experiences I've had have been with *Fiasco* – it really depends on the group of players and their attitude towards the system and ongoing story.

Adventures Using *Fiasco*

The group has played numerous sessions of *Fiasco*, though none were recorded. They were wildly different in terms of story, genre, setting, etc.

In my experience, mundane settings have always provided the most compelling play, but I tend to find that players are attracted to the more fantastical settings. I wonder if this is something to do with those settings seeming more exciting, or their concepts being much simpler and easier to grasp. The number of players is key (I think it's best with 3-4), but their attitude is more important. Maybe it's more about matching interests or desires for play/themes than a "correct" player type. With no GM to keep things on course and try to cater to each individual, I've found that any player can potentially spoil the game. When everyone has equal power, that power can be used to harm the group's enjoyment.

The Darkest House

Cook's *The Darkest House* (2021) is both a system and setting in itself, but it's designed to be played as part of another ongoing campaign in another system. The setting is akin to an archetypical haunted house – one that the PCs are somehow attracted to and then become trapped within. Ideally, players are coming into it with characters that they are familiar with and attached to, as it is designed to threaten their safety and psychology.

Ché ran *The Darkest House* for these groups as part of two other campaigns: Campaign: Convergence and Campaign: Schrödinger Fantasy.

Most of the detailed reflections on *The Darkest House* are within Campaign: Convergence, but the general feedback is that it was very well received by the players. The production value of the elements that are shown to the players is great, and it maintains a solid mysterious and horrific atmosphere throughout. I did feel that the system itself was too clunky in places, in ways that harmed the

atmosphere at times, but some of that could be mitigated with a smaller gaming group and players who had familiarised themselves with the mechanics.

Type
House, Large
Parent Location
GASRPGCU
Related Report (Primary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 14
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 18
Related Report (Secondary Locations)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence, Session 12

Electric Bastionland

McDowall's *Electric Bastionland* (2020) is a quick and relatively simple RPG in which the players take on the roles of treasure hunters in a surreal, fantastical, semi-modern setting. The system is designed to have rolls and conflicts be dealt with quickly (especially combat, which should always be over in three rounds), so that the focus can remain on the ongoing story.

Adventure Using Electric Bastionland

Ché ran a short adventure for the group. This wasn't documented in detail.

While I and a couple of the players really enjoyed *Electric Bastionland*, and saw a lot of potential in it, some of the players really disliked it. I am a big fan of the design of some of the mechanics, especially those that keep the combat short and lethal. It's great how this is also tied into progression – the only real way for a character to “level up”, is by getting hurt in combat and then recovering from those injuries. I understand that the unusual setting does make the game a bit hard to get into though – I found it difficult to conceptualise and plan out the locations, which sometimes made the play feel a bit flat and directionless.

InSpectres

Sorensen's *InSpectres* (2002) presents a simple system designed to let the players take on the roles of a franchise of supernatural investigators. The mechanics focus on taking cases, getting paid for those, and then using that funding to develop the budding business.

The system was designed in part to explicitly address an issue with how mysteries tend to play out in RPGs – that a GM would generally plan out clues that players might then fail to find or misinterpret, leading to potential dead ends in an investigation. *InSpectres* instead has the GM establish the presentation of a mystery, but then has the players decide what any clues mean as they succeed in the fiction, meaning that the players collaboratively decide on a solution to the situation (Sorensen 2002: 6).

Adventures Using *InSpectres*




Ché ran at least two sessions of *InSpectres* for these groups. These weren't recorded in detail.

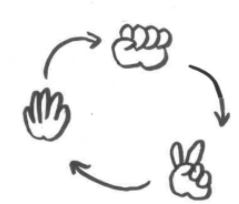
I have found that *InSpectres* tends to go down well with players, though they need to be in the right mindset. It tends to be somewhat silly, and really relies on them collaborating on a satisfying solution to a mystery "seed". In some situations, I've seen players not really engage with the mechanics around building the trail of clues into a coherent solution, meaning that they can contribute poorly to the ongoing story, which can make it difficult for other players. That being said, they do seem to enjoy the high amounts of agency it grants.

JankenSquad

'JankenSquad' is an unreleased, work-in-progress RPG system developed by Ché Wilbraham. It is designed to provide the players with action anime style experiences, using a rock-paper-scissors resolution mechanic.

ULTRA JANKENSQUAD FOREVER

 ROCK RESOLVE	 PAPER GUILE	 SCISSORS AGGRESSION
DEFENSE, WILLPOWER, RESISTANCE, FORTITUDE, STEADFASTNESS,	WIT, CRAFTINESS, LYING, DODGING, SNEAKING, CHARM,	RECKLESSNESS, CHARGING, GOING ALL-OUT, SHOOTING



Several players may perform a **JOINT CHECK**. All **WINS** and **LOSSES** count and players can **BRUISE** each other.

O/□/× stats are the number of times you can **LOSE** with that stat (taking a **BRUISE**) before taking a **WOUND** and rendering that stat unusable.

For a **CHECK**, decide what kind of approach your character will take and throw the appropriate sign in a round of Rock, Paper, Scissors with the GM (if your stats allow). A **WIN** means your character **SUCCEEDS** in some way. A **LOSS** means your character **FAILS** in some way and you take a **BRUISE**.

A **DRAW** means a **FREEZE FRAME**. A player may drop out at this point. If they continue, throw a symbol against the GM again (may be different) and the next **WIN** or **LOSS** will be **CRITICAL**. **CRITICAL WINS** are better and earn the player one **JANKEN POINT**. **CRITICAL LOSSES** inflict two **BRUISES** on the player.

Spend TWO **JANKEN POINTS** to heal one **BRUISE** or grant ONE **JANKEN POINT** to another player. Spend ONE **JANKEN POINT** to upgrade a **LOSS** to a **DRAW** or a **DRAW** to a **WIN**, if the nature of the **CHECK** **MATCHES** one of your **SKILLS**.

Figure 76 Scan of the JankenSquad playtesting rules by Ché Wilbraham

JankenSquad often sounds attractive to players when I offer it for a session, though I've found that engagement with it varies a lot. The system is quite unusual when compared to traditional RPGs, so I think that sometimes players aren't expecting to have to think in this different way when considering challenges and so on. I have found that, even though the system seems quite approachable to me, it tends to work better with players who are familiar with multiple RPG systems and conventions, as they can more quickly assimilate a new and unusual set of mechanics. Players who have a little experience with traditional RPGs, but who are fans of anime, often want to play, but I tend to see them struggle with it the most.

There seems to be a key issue with the system in that the link between stats/symbols and in-game actions can be unintuitive in the middle of play. I suppose that, in normal rock-paper-scissors, a player would throw whatever symbol they wanted to try to beat the opponent. In this game, the symbol should be chosen as being representative of the character's approach to a situation – this means that there should be some time spent deciding on and justifying an approach, for both the player and GM. It can slow things down a bit, and I see players struggle with it. I think that using cards to resolve the conflicts could help, but I haven't gotten around to testing this.

Adventures: Ultra JankenSquad Forever and JankenSquad Origins

Ché has run numerous short adventures using JankenSquad for these groups. These are usually straightforward sessions with the players taking on the roles of anime heroes, opposing some wrongdoing and fighting back – these types of adventures usually followed one of the two stated plans. These sessions weren't recorded in detail, but some of the planning documents were kept and there are some reflections.

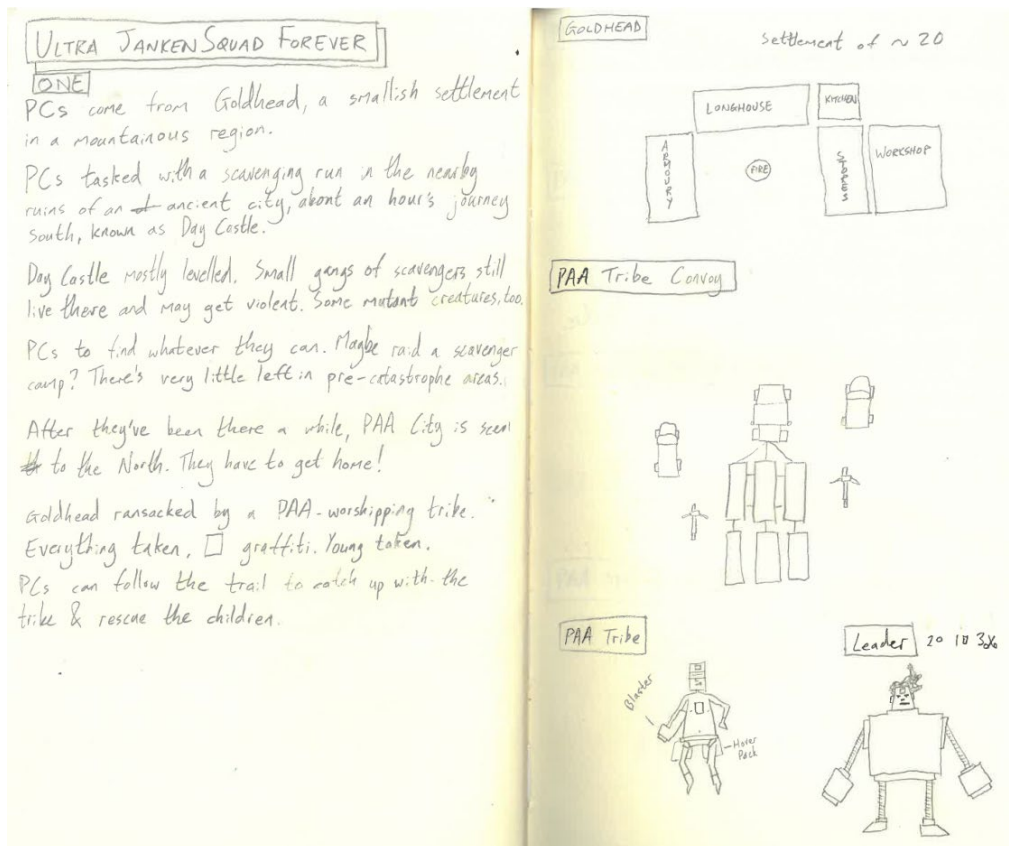


Figure 77 Scan of the first part of the Ultra JankenSquad Forever plan by Ché Wilbraham

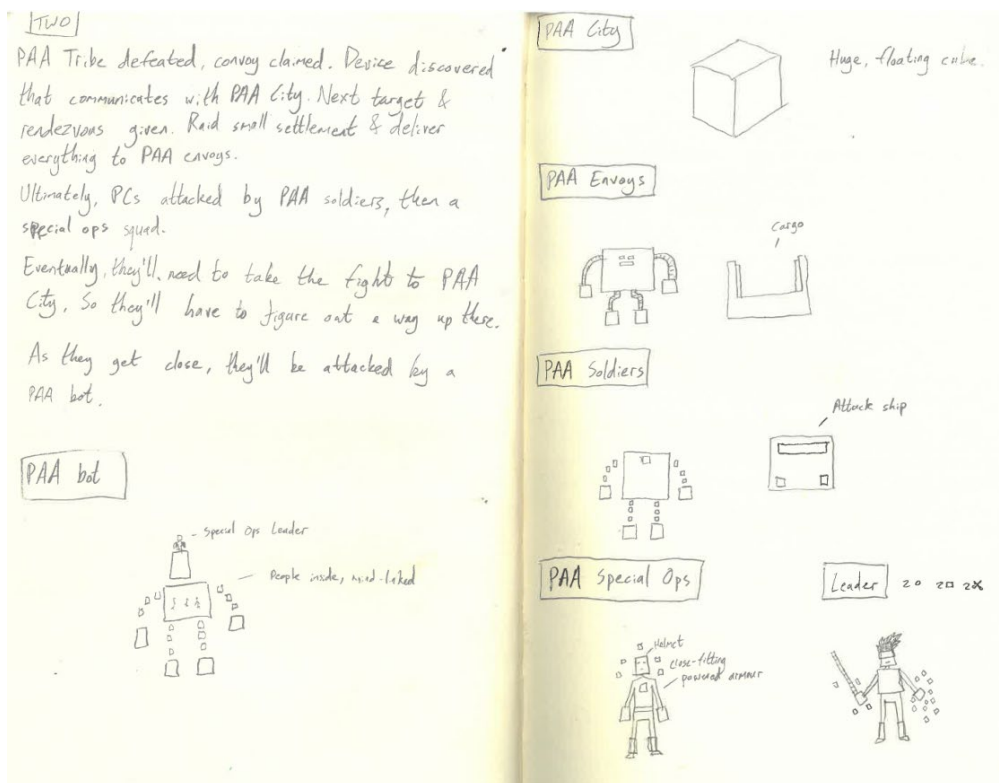


Figure 78 Scan of the second part of the Ultra JankenSquad Forever plan by Ché Wilbraham

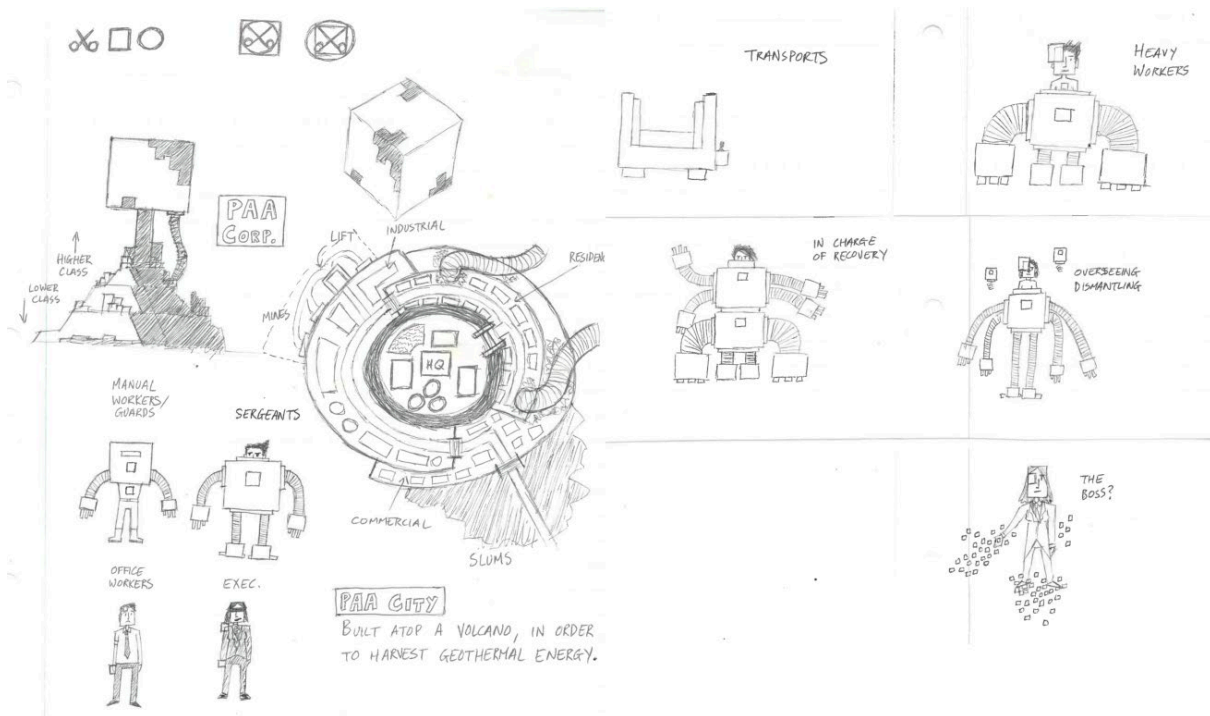


Figure 79 Scan of the first part of the JankenSquad Origins plan by Ché Wilbraham

HISTORY	PAA City originally a decent enough place to live. A bit exploitative, but hard work led to reasonable benefits. As PAA Corp. grew & consumed many of the natural resources, they started to take more from citizenry. Air of distrust fostered as inter-corporation conflict grew. PAA became more exclusive, setting up checkpoints, monitoring workers, etc. Kicked all non-PAA from higher tiers, slums formed. Now, non-PAA mostly live & work in & from slums (a little in commercial area, where they can be exploited). Many help at the mines, when they can.	CURRENTLY IN SECTORS	Teams are currently dismantling the residential & industrial sectors & will start on commercial soon. Anyone in commercial will be kicked out or kidnapped (depending on readings of this supernatural substance or desirability for PAA - physical fitness, etc.) - or killed if too much resistance.
SLUMS	Explosions from the mines are commonly felt. Convoys come through. Agents of other corporations are common. Some food is farmed, but not enough. Often bought/compulsed by PAA. Commercial sector heavily policed. Access to other sectors heavily restricted (& patrolled). Checkpoints abound. Life is hard, there. A few have managed to flee PAA & ended up in slums.	CURRENTLY IN MINES	The mines are more heavily guarded & non-PAA aren't allowed in. Teams are preparing to detonate the final section under the slums. To recover materials, heavy PAA units will surround the expected crater & move into the rubble once detonation is complete.
PAA CITY	PAA Corp. is working on (& has nearly completed) "PAA City" (a new one) - the giant cube atop their HQ. Constant racket of construction, falling debris. Huge pipes connected, have wrecked parts of city, run underground (entry points guarded). It's very nearly ready for flight, after which the rest of the old PAA City will be destroyed and absorbed as materials. They're excavating the last of the ore & magma from the volcano & surrounding earth. (Uncovered some strange substance from ages past that they need-supernatural?) The last of this materials that they need lie under the slums - harvesting them will sink the area (& much of commercial). Everyone important is already inside the cube - they are working on their consciousness-transfer tech. Some are able to project. Mostly it's used for influence & monitoring. Supernatural substance is known as WILL. Pure white, solid gas, cold.	TUBES	The two tubes are no longer guarded. The magma has all gone & the waste tube will be irrelevant, soon.
		HQ	PAA HQ is almost empty. Now largely just used as a tube for feeding materials into PAA City. Remaining office workers seem largely in a trance. Number crunched in what areas remain, their wills overridden by their PAA Squares. Some Many over doing menial tasks. Don't even notice intruders - not part of their programming. Those resting are just laying on the ground.
		BOSS	Kakita is overseeing the whole operation of launching PAA City. They have control of a body (not their own) on the ground. Mostly they are overseeing from HQ, but they will reach to interference. They can take direct control of anyone with a Square, transferring control of their cubes, even when their body is defeated. They can also transfer mass commands to Square users.
		TRANSMISSION	Square-related commands, etc, are transmitted via pylons, distributed throughout the zones. The HQ itself is one, as is PAA City.

Figure 80 Scan of the second part of the JankenSquad Origins plan by Ché Wilbraham

PAA Corporation

A key, antagonistic faction in JankenSquad adventures. Some details are provided in the plans in the above section.

Type

Corporation, Conglomerate
Location
PAA City
Controlled Territories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAA City
Organization Vehicles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter: The Desert Under The Water

PAA Cuboid Mobile Headquarters

The headquarters of a key, antagonistic faction in JankenSquad adventures. Some details are provided in the plans in the above section.

Nickname
The Cube
Manufacturer
PAA Corporation
Owning Organization
PAA Corporation

PAA City

The origin of a key, antagonistic faction in JankenSquad adventures. Some details are provided in the plans in the above section.

Type
City
Owning Organization
PAA Corporation

I've run Ultra JankenSquad Forever much more frequently than Origins, but the latter felt much stronger when I ran it. I think it's because I designed that scenario much later, with more familiarity with the system and the way people tend to play it. There's also clearer worldbuilding detail in the session, which gives the players something to start building around.

Both are quite thin in terms of planning/prep materials – like some of my other adventures, this is how I tend to prefer to run things (short adventures anyway). I just have some essentials recorded about the setting and especially any antagonists' plots, then I can adlib the rest during play. It lets me operate in that comfort zone of familiarity with the setting (because I constructed it myself and don't have to worry about contradicting anything) and freedom for the players to just do what they like (making sure that I can bend things to reward them for their approaches, rather than requiring very specific actions from them to progress).

Adventure: Re:Don't

'Re:Don't', run by Ché, was an experimental, one-off session of JankenSquad. The players had expressed an interest in trying a high-concept, silly anime adventure, so the group made some tweaks to the system and ran an adventure that was designed to resemble a "flashback episode", with the party already established, but recounting key moments in their journey together.

This adventure was not documented in detail.

This session was a complete mess, but it was fun to joke around together. The system didn't really work, with the additions we made and the way we hacked it, and the story was completely adlibbed. It was full of stupid humour and broken mechanics, which I would normally consider to be a waste of a session, but it was a pleasant evening of hanging out with friends, doing a fun activity together.

Monster of the Week

Sands' *Monster of the Week* (Revised edition) (2015) is based on *Apocalypse World*, but with an action-horror focus. Players take on the roles of monster hunters (or similar), usually in a modern fantasy setting, though the system is flexible enough to work with related occupations and settings. Like its inspiration, *Monster of the Week* focuses on player choice and freedom as a system, with limited GM plotting. Though it is structured such that the GM creates threats and establishes what they will do if uninterrupted, which provides them space to plan and guide player action somewhat.

We've played *Monster of the Week* a few times and generally enjoyed it. Like *Dungeon World*, its structure aids with some of the aimlessness that can seep into *Apocalypse World* games – having clear threats and being based on established tropes ("monster of the week" TV series, in this case), frames player action and sets expectations for working together to combat a threat. We seem to particularly enjoy these kinds of "middle-ground" games that offer a lot of player freedom but still allow the GM to plan and structure the action to some degree.

Campaign: The Madness of Ages

This was a several-session campaign, run by Ché. The players were a group of people drawn together to defeat monsters that were appearing in their town. The overarching plot was that the chaotic monster invasions were caused by a god of time, Ages, going mad and trying to end the world. The PCs were assisted by his sisters, the three Fates, in opposing him. At the end of the last session, one of the PCs used a powerful ability to "unmask" Ages, revealing the whole campaign to have been an elaborate ruse.

This campaign was not documented in detail. There were many more characters and places, but they were never recorded on the *World Anvil*, and so don't appear here. The ones listed here were for the purpose of referring to them from other games.

This was a strong campaign that created quite a lot of memorable moments that resonated with the group for a long time. It felt like most people enjoyed the

setting, the ongoing story, and their characters. The system, as stated, does a good job of giving the characters agency, and cool things to do, while allowing the GM to still plan threats and guide action effectively.

The ending was very disappointing, though, and quite frustrating to experience as a GM. Because of the nature of the system, character abilities can be quite strong, and the GM is required not to deny their use or alter their effects. So when a character used their ability to state that the main antagonist had actually been a normal person in disguise the whole time, and that all of the monsters and supernatural occurrences had been ruses and delusions, there was nothing I could do about it. It made it feel like all that work of constructing a cohesive plot behind the scenes had been wasted. I know that it frustrated some other players who were invested in the mystery, also. I think there's a lesson here about the effects of player freedom on coherent and satisfying storytelling, especially when some choose to play a game somewhat adversarially.

Plot type
Campaign
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bernville
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fantastical Reality Universe

Leofe

This section was written by the player:

Mysterious and creepy.

Some reflections on Leofe's beliefs:

{Leofe is very much child-like in their belief structure, naïve if you will

there is always more discover i guess would be a fundamental belief

there's always more to perceive - a situation isn't to be taken at face value

Leofe values companionship, doesn't like being alone

doesn't trust words very much

Leofe is easily distracted, so inquisitiveness probably trumps companionship whilst in a new place

Leofe tends to be curious and playful

and just does stuff without really thinking through the risks}

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Aligned Organization
Convergence Player Characters

Tarasque

Based upon [the legendary creature](#), the Tarasque is a dragon-like hybrid monster. It has a lion's face, six bear legs, a serpent's tail, and a spiked tortoise shell. It can expel poisonous breath.

The Tarasque invaded Bernville during the adventure and was defeated by the PCs.

During the events of Campaign: Convergence, the Tarasque reappeared in Perpetual Bernville, wreaking havoc and hitting the defence force hard.

EXTINCT
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fantastical Reality Universe

Bernville

Bernville is a recurring setting for several of the group's games. It is a relatively small town in the Pacific Northwest of North America.

Type
Town
Location under
Fantastical Reality Universe
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Campaign: The Madness of Ages

Monsterhearts

Alder's *Monsterhearts 2* (essentially the second edition of the game) (2017) is another system based on *Apocalypse World*, but focusing on teenage angst, personal horror, and literal and allegorical monsters. Players take on the roles of teenagers adjusting to their bodily changes in a USA high school. Like its inspiration, the system is somewhat freeform and features a lot of player freedom and choice, requiring the GM to play reactively and not plan too much.

Adventure Using *Monsterhearts*

Ché ran a short adventure for this group, lasting a few sessions. This focused on establishing the setting and then playing through some encounters based on PC choices – no clear central storyline emerged. This adventure was not recorded in detail.

The whole group felt that our *Monsterhearts* game didn't go very well. We felt that the system didn't provide clear mechanics for some of the situations that arose, and the aimlessness of not having the GM provide a plot harmed the enjoyment. This was very early in our contact with games based on *Apocalypse World*, though, which in hindsight was a big part of the problem. I could have done more to make the story feel less aimless, even while remaining reactive. Also, greater familiarity with the system would have helped, from both GM and players.

Nil Escape

'Nil Escape' is an unreleased, work-in-progress RPG adventure developed by Ché Wilbraham. It features its own, very simple, system, though the game is much more about roleplaying PC interactions than any specific mechanics. The PCs have a lot of secret information that may be revealed over the course of play, and each has reasons to distrust other characters.

The premise of the game is based quite heavily on some aspects of *Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward* (Chunsoft 2012).



Ché has run this adventure several times for these groups. The starting situation and premise are always the same (though the setup is slightly different depending on the number of players), but the scenario has played out wildly differently with different groups. There are no NPCs and few scripted events, so the interactions and dynamics of the players and their PCs dictates how the games go.

RESERVED, COP, SHIFTY, SMOOTH
 Smooth finds keys, shift notices
 smooth opens door (kitchen)
 arguments
 shift steals smartphone from smooth
 smooth takes shell, hides under mattress
 shift takes gun, pretends not to have
 shift reveals stolen phone, pretends to have found lockpick
 arguments.
 shift tries to take shell, apprehended by cop
 keys got.
 Yela key bustled through gap, and deadbolt
 discussions about prisoners dilemma -
 shift got shell, loaded gun
 discussions about prisoners dilemma. 'il *
 everyone allied.
 reserved isolated, got antidote, chose self
 reserved went to toilet, found note
 shift found +3, jacked in *
 cop went +2, +0 for others
 reserved sacrificed
 shift mentioned dilemma room - suspicious, back there now
 shift pulled gun, explained that he hasn't killed anyone yet
 handed gun to reserved
 discussed prisoner dilemma. All picked betrayal 2v2
 isolation room, shift isolated, others chose reward
 swap room. shift reserved -> cop -> smooth
 danger room. discussed avoiding traps. blocked nozzles with pen & pick
 cop & smooth, nozzles, burned, reserved rotated, bit and
 shift sacrifice, loses arm. *
 everyone healed a little.
 dilemma room 1v3, discussion, bet on reserved to win 1-0
 1v1, 1v1 - reserved, cop, smooth and shift on 6
 head to out. shift committed suicide to take revenge on smooth
 cop attacked reserved just outside exit, cut his throat
 reserved pinned cop with blade to throat, but bleeding out
 reserved passes out. (after saying photos behind tree)
 photos are behind tree, but smooth says they aren't
 cop hits reserved's throat.
 cop & smooth stagger off

Figure 82 Scan of notes from a Nil Escape session, an early attempt to record play by Ché Wilbraham

It's often commented that *Nil Escape* is my best one-shot adventure. I think it's because it's a clear, tight premise that's instantly recognisable and easy to get into. Some tropes are helping here – movie-style amnesia, betrayal within the group, life-and-death games run by a mastermind.

Inter-character conflict and intrigue drives everything in this game, so players have to be ready for that. Interestingly, I have seen it work quite well even with players who aren't too into roleplaying, but it's important that each player meshes well with their character – this is something that I can step in on to make it go smoother. The best instances of this game are those where the players become really absorbed in playing their characters well, pushing at conflict, not being too nice, etc.

It requires careful balancing of clues and nudges to get the most out of. Moving from one puzzle to the next too quickly doesn't give enough time for character discussions that can lead to interesting conflicts and uncovering information, for example. I often find that the group are too nice to each other, so I have to nudge characters to take actions that might lead to conflict, and that doesn't always work. The problem is, if the party just make friends and work together from the beginning, then the challenges are largely trivial and all the tension is gone. I have found that it works best with groups of players who are very familiar with playing

RPGs together, as they are usually more comfortable with playing through PC conflict.

Plot type
Adventure
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nil Escape Bunker

Nil Escape Bunker

The location that the adventure takes place in.

Type
Bunker
Parent Location
GASRPGCU
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adventure: Nil Escape

Paranoia

Varney's *PARANOIA – Troubleshooters* (sometimes referred to as Paranoia Mongoose Edition or similar) (2009) is one of a long line of editions and versions of the system, which presents a game of a comedically dystopian sci-fi underground civilisation. Players take on the roles of agents of Friend Computer, tasked to solve problems in Alpha Complex, while hunting down mutant traitors – but each PC is a mutant and traitor, and must try to conceal this while revealing the wrongdoings of the rest of the group. It largely functions as a traditional RPG, but emphasizes GM power – the players aren't supposed to know the rules of the system, for example, and the GM is encouraged to overrule even dice rolls where they want to. All of this is in aid of generating an atmosphere of frantic paranoia and stressful fun.

Paranoia Setting

There are many more details to the *Paranoia* setting, but they were never recorded on the *World Anvil* and so don't appear here. The fragments that are here were just to be referred to by other adventures.

Alpha Complex

The setting of *Paranoia* – a dystopian sci-fi bunker society.

Type
Underground / Vault
Location under
GASRPGCU
Owner/Ruler
Friend Computer
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Friend Computer

Friend Computer

The AI that keeps all citizens of Alpha Complex happy and safe.

Current Location
Alpha Complex
Ruled Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alpha Complex

Adventures Using Paranoia

Ché has run several *Paranoia* adventures for these groups, with various characters, goals and foci. The players always take on the roles of 'Troubleshooters', who are tasked to fix some problem while trying to divert any suspicion away from themselves. The missions are often nearly impossible to complete without causing trouble and therefore needing to pin the blame on someone.

These adventures were not recorded in detail, but some ephemera and reflections are included here.

DISASTER IN -CLASSIFIED- [PARANOIA]

The PCs are instructed to deal with an -unspecified- MAJOR DISASTER, threatening all of Alpha Complex, in an -unspecified- location. The Computer ^{won't} give all of the information, for fear of causing a panic.

THE CALL

Blaring alarm, flashing red lights, etc. The Computer speaks, suddenly calm "no need to panic", etc. Troubleshooter Team immediately required at room PDQ-325, urgently. No rush. All's well:

THE BRIEFING(S)

PDQ-325 is a bare room with 3 doors. The three sub-rooms are identical - quite small, one desk, two chairs, one GREEN ~~board~~ official in glasses reading from a single sheet.

~~PDQ-325A~~ Script:

"None of these briefings contain the whole ~~the~~ truth, in order to avoid spreading panic. Sector * is experiencing a major shortage of *. You MUST resolve this situation - the whole of Alpha Complex is depending on you. Expect ***."

PDQ-325A:

* CLASSIFIED
** LMJ
*** Heavy resistance.

PDQ-325B:

* PPD
** Good humour
*** DATA MISSING

PDQ-325C:

* CENSORED
** Safety
*** Good humour.

Once briefings heard, :

Figure 83 Scan of part one of the plan for Disaster in Classified by Ché Wilbraham

OUTFITTING

Nearest PLC - battle scarred.

SECRET SOCIETY STUFF

R&D

Assigned amazing redbot DR-307.

Also: New weapon - (brick on string)
Bag of pills labelled "mine."

PPD is a huge, dark warehouse full of crates marked VHS, all taped up with warning signs, quarantine, to be destroyed, etc. Crates are huge and very difficult to open. Computer repeatedly reminds players that they can request a "purge" of the sector using the central console.

LMJ - nobody knows where it is for certain and there are several barriers along the way. The Computer cuts off all corners once

inside. Lights are off, dust everywhere. Looks like it used to be a living quarters. One of the taps was left running in one of the WCs. Once it's turned off, the PCs are contacted.

BARRIERS

Nobody knows where LMJ is.

"Quarantine" alarm room.

High-clearance corridors.

Security checkpoints.

A BLUE orders the PCs to dispose of a bag of "rubbish".

Mutant Commies in LMJ?

DEBRIEFING

Figure 84 Scan of part two of the plan for Disaster in Classified by Ché Wilbraham

Paranoia is probably the most divisive game I run. I tend to find that players either really enjoy it or really dislike it. I think it's partly because it's quite a particular, unusual experience – they have to be able to find some fun in stressful, paranoid play. I think there's a link between those who enjoy hidden role games and those who would enjoy *Paranoia*. The harsh and strict (though comedic) GMing style for this game can also put people off, especially if they just want some light-hearted escapism or cool action from their games. But, for those who enjoy it, they tend to really get into it and rave about it for a while – again, I think because it's quite unusual. There aren't many systems that give you this kind of fun, so it might feel quite rare to those who enjoy it.

Despite the extreme GM power, it's quite difficult to run it well. You need to strike a balance of keeping the stress on the players, but not driving them away or disengaging them. It takes some getting used to. You need to direct their frustration and stress to each other, to encourage the backstabbing and betrayal, as that then begets more and keeps the atmosphere going. Again, it relies on the players bringing the right attitudes and energy to the session for it to work. I think it works best with fairly experienced players, and those comfortable with each other, but it can also be very effective on novices (as it encourages picking on

them and highlighting their inexperience, so can give them an especially intense experience).

Pathfinder

Bulmahn's *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Core Rulebook* (2009) presents a high fantasy system of adventurers performing heroics and undertaking quests. It is somewhat similar to *Dungeons & Dragons*, and span out of an earlier version of it. It is a traditional RPG, with the standard relationships between GM, players, story, etc.

Campaign: Demons Below

Ché ran a short campaign of several sessions in 2018. The setup was somewhat standard, with a group of adventurers tasked to take on quests in a fantasy setting. The storyline revolved around demons being sealed underneath the locale, and the characters would be pushed to resolve this.

The campaign was not recorded in detail, but some diagrams were created to record disruptions to the planned content and the adjustments that the GM made to account for them. These appear below:

Disruption and Adjustment Examples

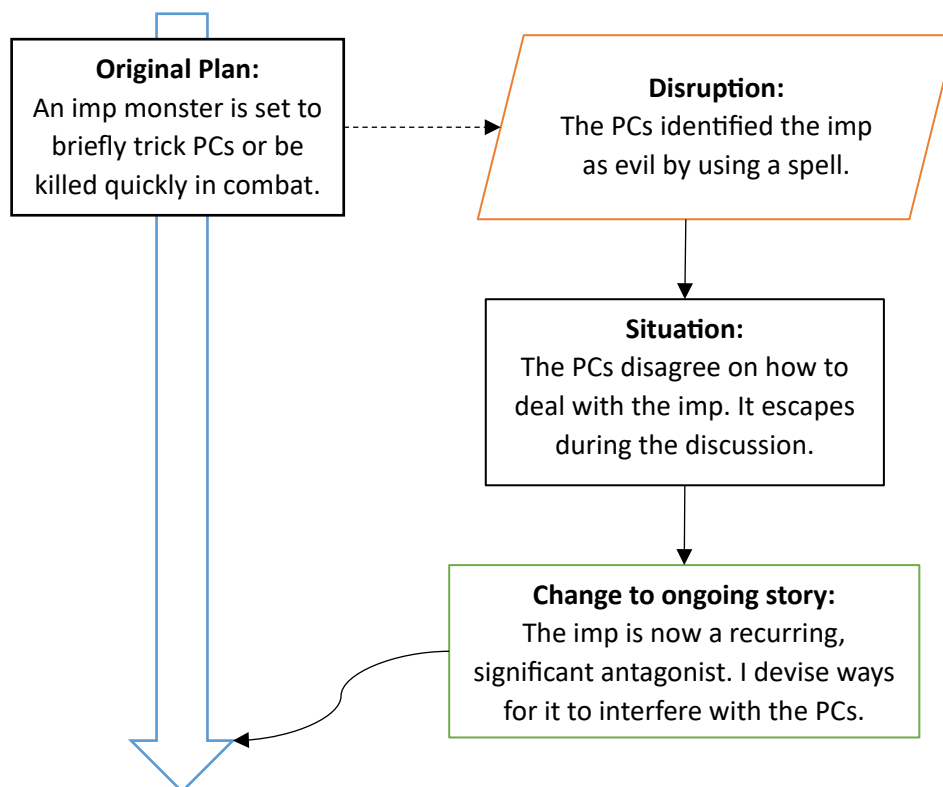


Figure 85 Diagram of disruption and adjustment 1 for *Demons Below* by Ché Wilbraham

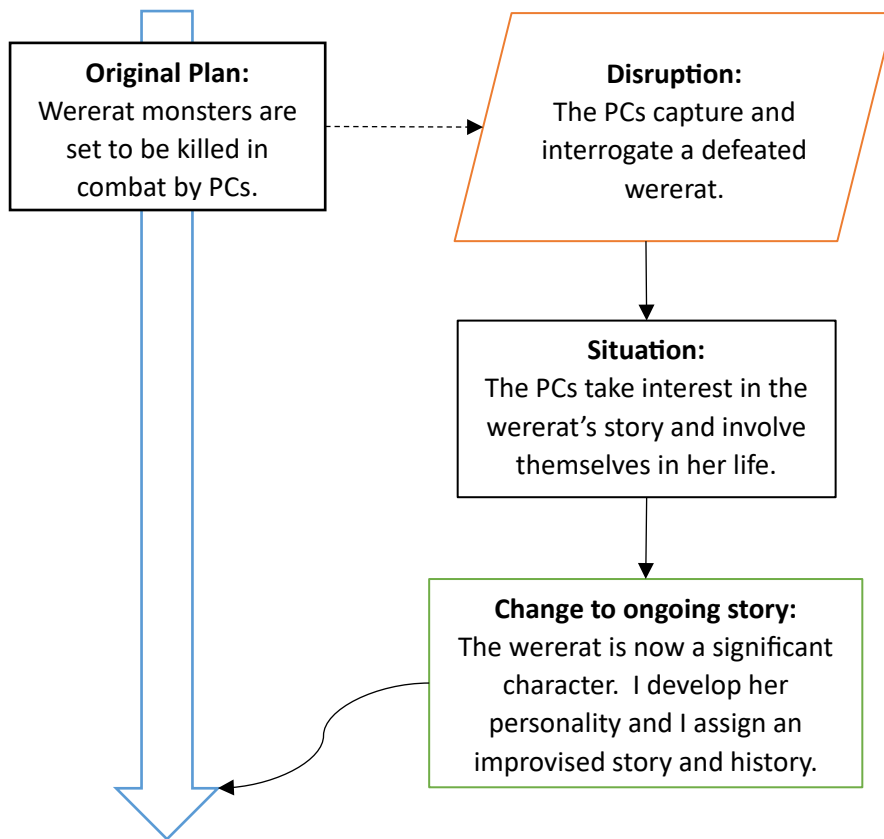


Figure 86 Diagram of disruption and adjustment 2 for *Demons Below* by Ché Wilbraham

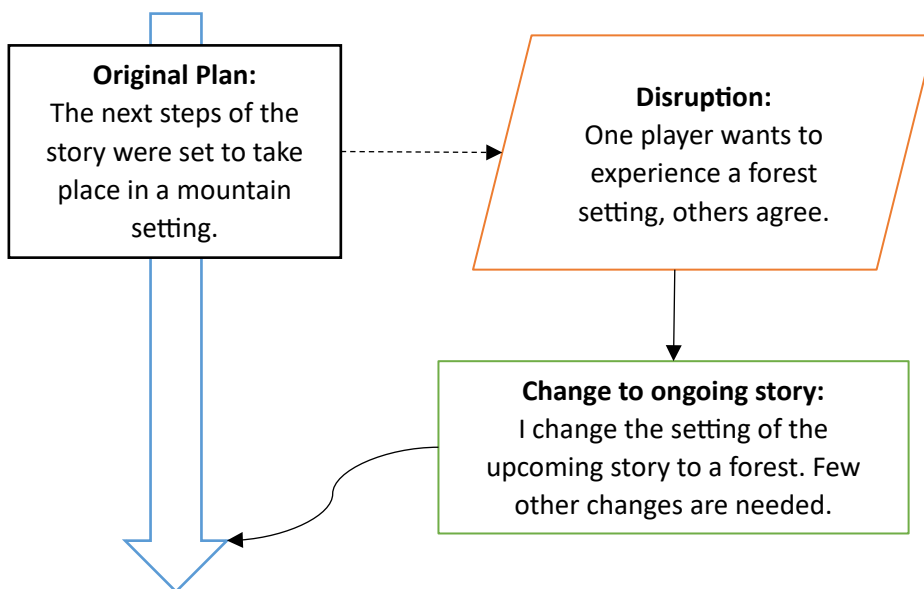


Figure 87 Diagram of disruption and adjustment 3 for *Demons Below* by Ché Wilbraham

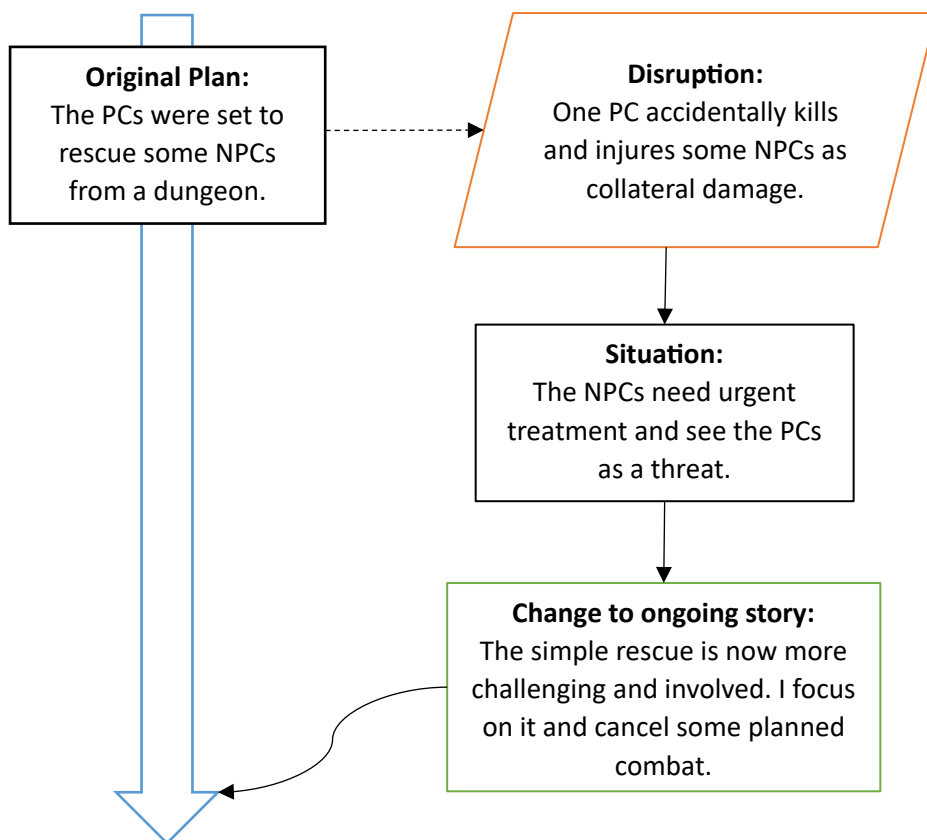


Figure 88 Diagram of disruption and adjustment 4 for *Demons Below* by Ché Wilbraham

In another early attempt to record sessions, I made these brief notes while the game was running:

- Introductory session: As a group, we reflected on the fictional setting and the rules. The players created their PCs, defining their character concepts and used the rules to determine their abilities.
- Between the introduction and first play session: From the source material on the fictional setting, I chose some locations, spells, monsters and so on that I found interesting and built the foundations of a story around them.
- Between sessions: I designed challenges for the PCs using Pathfinder's inbuilt Challenge Rating system, to balance the challenge appropriately. I also planned out chapters for the story, aiming for the goals and situations that I had in mind, while accounting for player preferences and alterations to the ongoing story.
- During and after sessions, live: I repeatedly adjusted and designed story in response to in-play events.

This method of trying to recognise and record disruptions and adjustments was useful for considering certain parts of the GM job that often feel instinctual while playing.

The system and campaign were fairly straightforward. I would have preferred to have been more familiar with it before we played, but I hadn't had a lot of time to learn it. Otherwise, it was standard fantasy adventure content – quite easy to plan out and put together. It's not my favourite – I find these kinds of games fairly generic and often a bit dull.

Player Characters

There were other characters, but they weren't recorded on the *World Anvil* and so aren't presented here. The details here were only included to be referred to by other games.

Petunia / Taxi Varlik

Most of this section was written by the player:



Figure 89 Taxi Varlik sketch by [Phoebe Herring](#)

Taxi Varlik a.k.a. Petunia

Childhood - Petunia in The Overgrown Wilds

Still a young child.

Petunia (5 years old) is carefree, eager to please, and prone to wandering.

Petunia is a five year old girl taught to survive in the unforgiving Overgrown Wilds.

Her "sister", Prune, is her last remaining family after the recent death of her mother Sequoia. Sequoia normally adopted daughters above a certain age to teach them to survive but made a special exception for Petunia. The World's Psychic Maelstrom indicated to her that Petunia had been gifted weird power. Trained to kill and survive, the young Petunia found her upbringing harsh and difficult. She understands the need to survive well but is hesitant to take action. The power of life and death comes. A new world approaches birth.

After The Door - Taxi the Midwife

Taxi Varlik was an oracle and midwife operating in a remote town in the REDACTED (Campaign: Demons Below) universe. Gifted from a young age by deities unknown to her, she was given the power of foresight at the cost of a curse which deprived her of her vision. From what little she remembers of her upbringing she has always strived to keep the world in balance by personally meting birth and death.

Outside of Time - Taxi the Time Cop

Following the opening of a demonic seal and the eventual destruction of her entire world, she was abducted by those who attempted to prevent this destruction. A nameless powerful parauniversal organisation, temporally headquartered at the birth of all existence, thus recruited her as an arbiter to ensure stability of the fates. Her own cursed fate as an Oracle suited the demanding requirements of travelling across time and space and the fissures between. Although left with little choice in taking on this role, Taxi understands that fate has placed her where she must be. Through her work to restore order across the universe she has set countless cataclysms to rights, no matter if it saves or dooms a civilisation. Although an agent of godlike power, her freedom is strictly curtailed by the watchers.

She seeks to one day break her curse through the grace of the power she serves. Nameless, formless, and awesome, her superiors deploy her into one of the most unpredictable instabilities on record.

Some reflections on Taxi's beliefs, from R:

{Everything is fundamentally balanced. The balance exists across space and time and while things are in a perpetual state of imbalance they will eventually balance out. The balance is neither good or bad, it simply can't be any other way. All forces work to average the balance}

Species
Human
Parents (Adopting)
Sequoia
Pronouns
she/her
Gender
Female
Eyes
White
Hair
Black, straight
Skin Tone/Pigmentation

Dark
Other Affiliations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence Player Characters • Those Who Will Open The Door
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: The Door in Reality

Rhapsody of Blood

McJanda's *Rhapsody of Blood* (2018) is a game based on the *Apocalypse World* system and inspired by the *Castlevania* series of videogames by Konami. Players take on the roles of heroic monster hunters seeking to destroy an evil, supernatural castle and its overlord.

Like its inspiration, the system is focused on player choice and freedom, though like some of the other spinoffs of *Apocalypse World*, it features aspects that allow the GM to define and plan out threats clearly, helping to guide the action.

Adventure Using Rhapsody of Blood

Ché ran a several-session adventure of this game for this group. The setting was standard – heroes opposing an evil overlord. This adventure was not recorded in detail.

Like some of the other *Apocalypse World* spinoffs, we felt like we got on better with *Rhapsody of Blood*. It felt less aimless than some of these more freeform games. Again, I think the setting and tropes help here. The framing of the party opposing an evil overlord of a castle sets expectations and guides the action in that direction – even when they have theoretically free choice, they have a clear goal. There are also some nice mechanics for the GM to use to design clearer boss-like challenges based on the players' contributions, meaning that the experience generally felt quite authored and focused.

The legacy mechanics were also nice – have a second layer of character development that represents the PCs' bloodlines, which also improve through play. The players seemed to enjoy those.

The Skeletons

Morningstar's *The Skeletons* (2015) is a game where the players take on the roles of animated skeletons defending a tomb in a fantasy setting. It's on the borderline of being an RPG, and is very freeform, but it features some of the hallmarks of the genre. It features no GM, but the book guides the players through making and resolving decisions together to tell the story.

Adventure Using The Skeletons

The groups have played this game a couple of times, with Ché guiding the play. These sessions were not recorded in detail, but there are reflections.

It's an unusual game – very meditative and atmospheric. That's the main takeaway. Even though it's short and quite light on rules (or perhaps because of this), the mechanics help build an eerie and reflective experience. The game

prompts the players to sit in the silent dark for increasingly long periods during sequences of fictional downtime (between invasions of the tomb the PCs are defending). This increases the link between player and PC, and helps lean into the themes of the game.

Unknown Armies

Stolze and Tynes' *Unknown Armies* (second edition) (2002) presents a game in a modern fantasy setting with unique metaphysics. The players take on the roles of characters who somehow become embroiled in the secretive supernatural underground. It's a fairly traditional RPG system, with standard relationships between GM, characters, story, etc.

This might be one of my favourite systems because it's so full of flavour and it has a very clear identity. The metaphysics are unusual, but very well defined and interesting. The book is written in such a way that it makes the aspects of the system sound very mysterious and appealing.

I've found that it can be very hit-and-miss with players. I think that, when people hear "modern fantasy", they want to play cool spell-slingers in modern cities. But *Unknown Armies* doesn't really work like that. The magic in the game is unusual, obtuse, and often of limited power unless a lot of time is spent in preparation. Perhaps I don't do a good enough job of presenting the intrigue and mystery of the setting, and hooking people that way.

Unknown Armies Setting

There are many more details for the setting, but these weren't recorded on the *World Anvil* and so aren't included here. The details included here were only for the purposes of being referred to by other games.

The Comte de Saint-Germain

a.k.a. The First and Last Man, the Marquis de Montferrat, Comte Bellamarre, Chevalier Schoening, Count Weldon, Comte Soltikoff, Graf Tzarogy, Prinz Ragoczy

The Comte de Saint-Germain is a key character in the *Unknown Armies* setting. Refer to the rulebooks for full information that I won't publish here.

He is the First and Last Man. The most human. Invincible and immortal, taking any form he pleases and travelling as he sees fit.

Physical Description

Apparel & Accessories

Whatever is needed.

Specialized Equipment

Whatever is needed.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

See the Unknown Armies books.

From Setting
Unknown Armies
Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Human
Circumstances of Birth
The birth of the world
Gender
Changeable
Eyes
Changeable
Hair
Changeable
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Changeable
Height
Changeable
Weight
Changeable
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaign: Convergence

Clockwork

Clockworks are a concept from the Unknown Armies setting, so I will not explain too much. They are essentially incredibly complex clockwork automatons magickally given life, and often sentience.

From Setting
Unknown Armies
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convergence Universe• Fantastical Reality Universe

Homunculus

A small, artificially (magickally) created humanoid. Not truly human.

From Setting
Unknown Armies
Geographic Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fantastical Reality Universe

Adventure: Jailbreak

This adventure is included in the *One Shots* (Dedopulos et al. 1999) adventure collection for the first edition of *Unknown Armies*. Ché has run it several times for these groups. It features very few NPCs and has the players taking the roles of up to nine characters involved in a hostage situation (including

many parties in conflict). The group must spend some time stranded in a remote farmhouse, where strange events unfold as the night draws on.

This adventure wasn't recorded in detail, though some reflections are included. The details of the adventure weren't filled out on *World Anvil*, so appear sparse here. They were only included to be referenced by other games.

This is one of the more successful one-shots that I run. Players seem to enjoy the inter-character conflict and mystery of the setting. Like some other games, the energy and entertainment of the session mostly comes from the players interacting as their characters – it requires the right pairings of players and PCs, and that they bring the right attitude to the game.

One game went very badly when players didn't take it seriously enough – it seemed they didn't identify with their characters and took to lethal violence very quickly. Once some PCs were dead, the game ended fairly quickly. I think it was a mistake for me to suggest this unusual adventure for a group that I didn't know very well, many of which were RPG novices. This seems to work best with quite experienced players, and those that know each other well and are happy to collaborate on a story when their characters are at odds.

System
Unknown Armies
Related Locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Krazmersky Farmhouse

Tristan

A seemingly normal dog.

From Setting
Unknown Armies, Adventure: Jailbreak
Current Location
The Krazmersky Farmhouse
Species
Clockwork

Bors Slavandrov

He seems to be a large, angry man.

From Setting
Unknown Armies, Adventure: Jailbreak
Current Location
The Krazmersky Farmhouse
Species
Clockwork

The Krazmersky Farmhouse

The setting of Adventure: *Jailbreak*.

From Setting
Unknown Armies, Adventure: Jailbreak
Type
House
Parent Location
Fantastical Reality Universe
Characters in Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bors Slavandrov • Tristan
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure: Jailbreak

Campaign Using *Unknown Armies*

Ché ran an unnamed, brief *Unknown Armies* campaign for this group. They players took the roles of mundane people who were drawn into magical strangeness in a modern setting. The campaign combined these two adventures together into a series of sessions: Adventure: Bill in Three Persons and Adventure: Pinfeathers.

This campaign wasn't recorded in detail, though some reflections are included.

This campaign didn't go very well, even though I was excited about it and I tried to sell the mystery of the setting. The players didn't gain skills and progress quickly enough. They wanted magical power fantasy, but I wanted to play out a grounded mystery story. This led to some friction and decreased enjoyment on both sides. I could have overruled my plans and the system to some degree, to give them the magic they wanted and satisfy them, but it would have been drastically changing the game I had planned.

Adventure: Bill in Three Persons

This short adventure is included in the *Unknown Armies* rulebook (Stolze and Tynes 2002). It's designed to introduce mundane characters to the magical strangeness of the setting. Ché ran this adventure a few times for these groups.

This adventure wasn't recorded in detail. The details of the adventure weren't filled out on *World Anvil*, so appear sparse here. They were only included to be referenced by other games.

From Setting
Unknown Armies
System
Unknown Armies

Bill Toge

A normal man.

From Setting
Unknown Armies, Adventure: Bill in Three Persons
Current Location
Perpetual Bernville

Species
Human
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
Bill in Three Persons: Redux

[Sheriff Ragoczy](#)

Sheriff Ragoczy is a key character in Adventure: Bill in Three Persons in the Unknown Armies rulebook (as well as other Unknown Armies stories). Refer to this for further information that I won't publish here.

A Bernville Sheriff, first met by the player characters on attending the scene of an accident in Adventure: Bill in Three Persons. His badge number is 333. His left arm is in a sling, so he requests help with moving the injured drivers. This encounter leads to a strange reality- / time-hopping experience for the player characters.

Sheriff Ragoczy is The Comte de Saint-Germain, embroiling the player characters in some reality-tending (and perhaps testing them in the process).

Physical Description

General Physical Condition

Fit and strong.

Facial Features

Strong jaw, authoritative gaze.

Apparel & Accessories

Badge number 333. Service revolver.

Mental characteristics

Personal history

See the Unknown Armies rulebooks.

Gender Identity

Man

From Setting
Unknown Armies
Current Location
Perpetual Bernville
Species
Human
Circumstances of Birth
The birth of the world
Eyes

Grey
Hair
Blond, neat
Skin Tone/Pigmentation
Light but tanned
Height
6'00"
Related Plots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: Bill in Three Persons, Redux
Related Historical Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 CE
Bill in Three Persons: Redux

Adventure: Pinfeathers

This short adventure is included in the *Unknown Armies* rulebook (Stolze and Tynes 2002). It's designed to introduce mundane characters to the magical strangeness of the setting and deepen the mysteries. Ché ran this adventure once for these groups.

This adventure wasn't recorded in detail.

System
Unknown Armies

Adventure: The Green Glass Grail

This adventure is included in the *Weep* (Neal et al. 2006) collection of adventures for the first edition of *Unknown Armies*. Ché has run it a few times for these groups. It has the players taking on the roles of a group of people in pursuit of the titular magical artefact, while investigating related supernatural and mundane and mundane events.

This adventure wasn't recorded in detail. The details of the adventure weren't filled out on *World Anvil*, so appear sparse here. They were only included to be referenced by other games.

This adventure was much more successful than earlier UA experiments (except, perhaps *Jailbreak*). Most of the entertainment seemed to come from the PCs' relationships and personalities – the system is set up to create strange, compelling characters with entertaining abilities ('Adepts', anyway). The group did seem to get frustrated with the mystery by the end – perhaps the adventure took too long?

As with many other games, group size was an issue. It's very difficult to tailor story content and challenge to so many players effectively. It seems that each player exponentially increases party effectiveness due to more input to tactical approaches and flexible abilities. Especially with UA, where PCs get weird, high concept, very powerful/useful spells.

From Setting
Unknown Armies
System

Unknown Armies
Plot type
Adventure

The Green Glass Grail

A magical artefact.

From Setting
Unknown Armies, Adventure: The Green Glass Grail
Item type
Unique Artifact
Current Location
Fantastical Reality Universe

Adventure: The Short, Stout Grail

This adventure was adapted by Ché from Adventure: *The Green Glass Grail*. The structure and story remained largely the same, but many of the locations, items, and characters were changed to fit a UK setting. Ché ran it for the group once.

This adventure wasn't recorded in detail. The details of the adventure weren't filled out on *World Anvil*, so appear sparse here. They were only included to be referenced by other games.

This was an exercise in adapting and localising a scenario. It played out similarly to the original, but with seemingly less frustration from the group. Again, there were great character moments driving play. I had to generate more content on the fly, including characters (to some degree) to account for unexpected actions.

A major story moment came out of players following a non-clue and the situation that occurred during that sequence. This then led to quite large changes to the later parts of the story.

It helped that I was more experienced with the system by the time I ran this. I let the players start with quite powerful characters to help satisfy them, and I felt more confident with handling the rules and delivering on the interest of the setting.

Based on
Adventure: The Green Glass Grail
System
Unknown Armies
Plot type
Adventure

Rhys Jenkins

A reworking of the character Vince Jenkins from Adventure: The Green Glass Grail.

Current Location
Fantastical Reality Universe

Species
Human

[Rhys Jenkins' Homunculus](#)

a.k.a. Rhys Jenkins, Little Rhys, Tiny Rhys

A reworking of the optional character of Vince Jenkins' Homunculus from *Adventure: The Green Glass Grail*. A Homunculus of Rhys Jenkins.

Current Location
Convergence Universe
Species
Homunculus

[Falmouth](#)

Based upon the real-world town of [Falmouth](#).

Adventure: The Short, Stout Grail and *Adventure Using InSpectres* primarily play out in fictional versions of Falmouth where supernatural things happen.

Another Falmouth also exists in the *Conspicuous Events Setting*, though we have yet to play a game there.

In the *Convergence Universe*, the Falmouths of the real world, *Fantastical Reality Universe* and *Conspicuous Events Setting* bleed together into "Falmouths", detached from its parent realities.

Type
Town
Location under
Fantastical Reality Universe

[The Short, Stout Grail](#)

Based upon *The Green Glass Grail*.

Item type
Unique Artifact

[Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay](#)

Pramas' second edition of *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* (2005) (*WFRP*) is set in Games Workshop's *Warhammer Fantasy* setting. It's a fairly traditional RPG with the standard relationships between GM, players, story, etc. The players will generally take on the roles of people who have taken to an adventuring lifestyle in the gritty fantasy setting.

Campaign: *Paths of the Damned*

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay: Ashes of Middenheim (Davis 2005) is the first book of *Paths of the Damned*, an adventure trilogy. The *Paths of the Damned* campaign continues on from the introductory adventure included in the *WFRP* second edition rulebook. The group intended to try the *WFRP* system, with Ché GMing, while considering settling into a long-form campaign. *Paths of the Damned* seemed appealing as it features three books of authored adventures, which would take

some of the burden of generating story content off the GM while the group learned the system together.

The campaign stalled quickly, after only two or three sessions of play. There had been frustrations with some unclear and/or incomplete information in the books, but one moment early in *Ashes of Middenheim* proved to be the final straw. One of the first few challenges for the PCs requires them to track some monsters through a sewer. In terms of the game mechanics, this requires at least one of the PCs to have a skill named “Follow Trail”, and to succeed at a roll against it. None of the PCs had this skill to attempt the roll, so the adventure should have ended there according to the rules. Ultimately, the GM had to overrule the book to keep the story moving, allowing for a different skill to be used in its place (and ensuring that the roll against that skill ultimately succeeded). As if to further add to the frustration, the following three optional tests to gain further information about the mysterious circumstances adventure also required the PCs to have skills that none did.

After this experience, the frustrations with the authored adventure became too much for the group, and the campaign was abandoned.

This was one of my first experiences with trying to run a more long-form campaign from a book, as opposed to authored one-shots (in which inaccuracies are less frequent and can be more quickly dealt with) or longer adventures/campaigns of my own design. Some of the problems were due to my lack of confidence in running something like this – I wasn’t especially familiar with the system and setting, and I didn’t know which elements of the adventure I could gloss over, adlib around or otherwise alter, due to not knowing what might have repercussions in the campaign.

The requirement of a PC having Follow Trail seemed like poor design, though, and caused the group to further lose confidence in the adventures. The book states that it is intended for PCs in their first or second Careers (*WFRP*’s progression system), but only eight out of sixty of the starting Careers even have access to Follow Trail, meaning it’s quite likely that this would happen for any party.

Ultimately, my lack of confidence and the flaws in the design/writing of the adventure combined to harm the player experience and cause them to lose their engagement with the game. As a GM, there are things I could have done to address this (in hindsight). I could have hidden the flaws in the book by glossing over them or better predicting issues that could arise during play, but this would have required me to spend more time preparing the sessions than I’d been able to – I would have had to read ahead more thoroughly, while revising the rules of the game. Admittedly, this preparation would have also probably helped with the other issue of my confidence. I suppose the lesson here is that time spent preparing for games can help address problems before they arise. It can be difficult to balance this with other responsibilities, though.

One other, minor, issue arose during this campaign. One of the players was a fan of the Warhammer Fantasy setting, and very knowledgeable about the fictional cultures, laws of the land, politics, and so on – certainly they were more

knowledgeable about the setting than I was. When another player played their character in a way that would have caused problems in the setting (they were treating magic in a carefree manner, when magic is heavily regulated and treated with suspicion in the fiction), and I didn't punish them for it (in-fiction), the knowledgeable player became frustrated. This resulted in slight real-world friction between some players, but more fictional friction between the characters, which was an issue for player enjoyment and a pleasant play environment.

This fan-/knowledge-based friction is a tricky GMing problem to solve, as I'm not inclined to crack down on players who don't understand/care deeply about the fiction (unless we're playing something like *Paranoia*), partly because I want them to feel comfortable playing and partly because I'm usually not overly invested in established fictional settings (and I usually haven't had enough prep time to fully absorb all the details). But in taking this stance, I frustrate those players who are invested in the established setting. Particularly since this campaign, I usually try to be clear with players when I haven't been able to delve deeply into fictional details, and state that we'll tend to play flexibly with the setting, but that I'm open to discussions about which established elements we should consider important, and so on.

Campaign: The Enemy Within

Enemy in Shadows (Bambra et al. 2020) is the first instalment in the *Enemy Within* campaign, a five-book long-form campaign. A synopsis would be too large to be useful, but the basics are that the PCs rise from humble beginnings to face world-ending threats within the setting. This campaign is still ongoing, but Ché began running it for this group in early 2022.

The recordings of this campaign are beyond the scope of this thesis as it began near the end of the investigation, but some useful reflections are noted:

Having previously run several authored adventures by the time we started this, I felt more prepared for some of the challenges that they present.

I tried to make time to read ahead more, to avoid stating anything about the setting, or doing anything with NPCs, that would contradict content in the future. This was largely successful, but I still felt very hesitant much of the time to stray at all from established content, which can make the sessions feel a bit dry or lacking in character.

I did still struggle to manage challenge quite frequently – as usual, the player group is quite large, and they are generally quite experienced players, which meant that most of the combat challenges in the books were trivial for them. The most successful and memorable fights were those that I managed to heavily tweak, usually drastically increasing the power of the opponents. Whenever I didn't do this, especially with fights with notable enemies, the drama and tension was usually completely removed from these moments.

Miscellany, Reflections & Other PhD Practice

This section is for content and articles that don't neatly or directly relate to any of the individual roleplaying games or stories that the GASRPGCU is constructed of. Mostly, it's for content that relates more directly to Ché's PhD - reflections on narrative structure, proposals or designs relating to translating the concept of the gamemaster into a framework, etc.

Virtual Gamemaster *Twine* Experiment

As part of early explorations of some Virtual Gamemaster principles, Ché developed an experiment using *Twine* (Klimas 2023). The development was never completed. The premise was that the interactive story would be run poorly first, under the guise of being run how the author intended, then it would run the same scenario but cater to the player's choices and interests. This concept was further developed in the Virtual Gamemaster Playable Presentation.

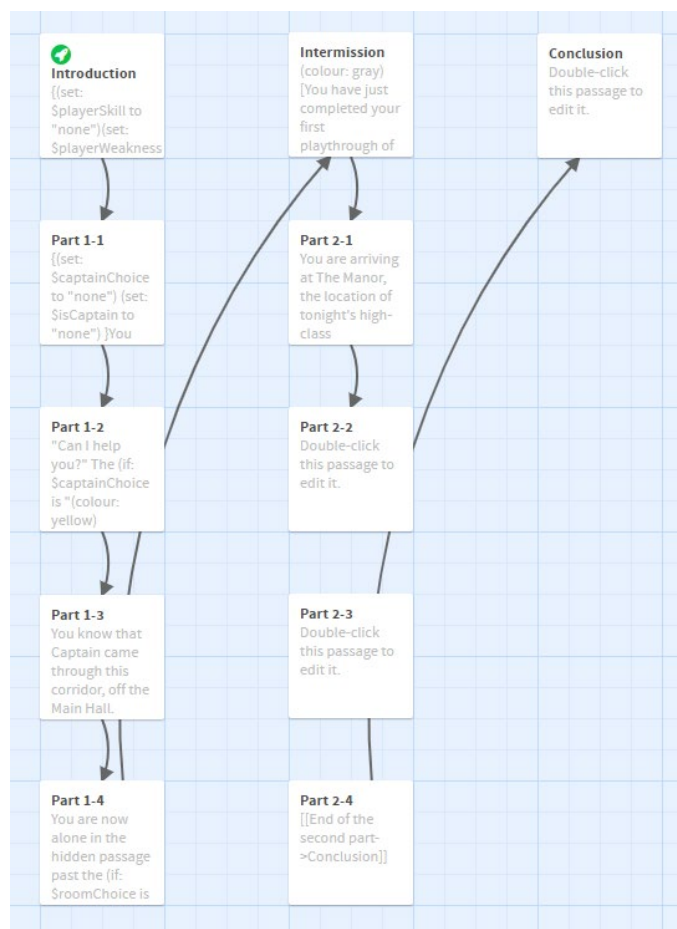


Figure 90 Screenshot of a work-in-progress *Twine* experiment to test some Virtual Gamemaster principles by Ché Wilbraham

While I never finished this, it was useful for thinking about some of the principles behind a potential Virtual Gamemaster. The message was a bit heavy-handed, I think. It did a good job of showing how not catering to player choices and interests misses opportunities for engagement, but the coding became quite complex for even a very small project, to try to factor aspects of the player's choices into every branch of the story.

Virtual Gamemaster Playable Presentation

Following on from the Virtual Gamemaster *Twine* Experiment, Ché developed a playable presentation to demonstrate some principles of a Virtual Gamemaster. It appears to guide two players through similar stories, but it manipulates story elements, choices and probabilities behind the scenes to illustrate some of the strengths of concepts like catering to players and emphasizing story over rules. Ché has run this presentation several times. It has to be run live, and does not work as a standalone program.

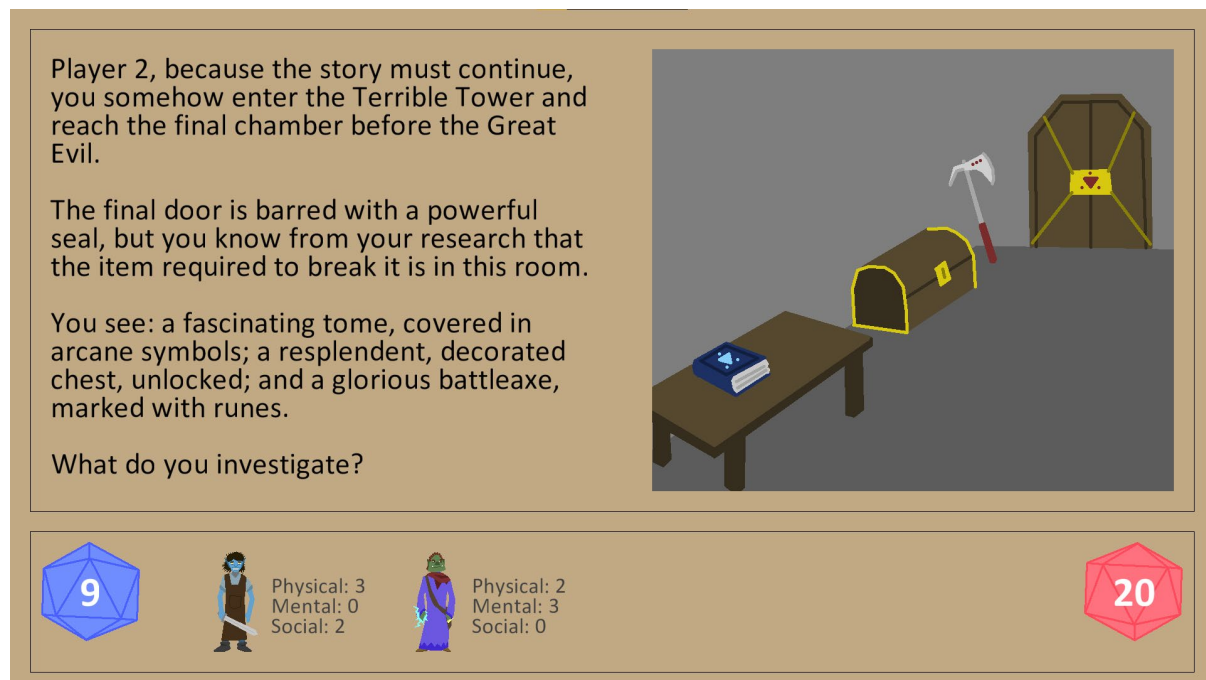


Figure 91 Screenshot of the Virtual Gamemaster Playable Presentation by Ché Wilbraham

I think that this has been a real success. Again, it's heavy-handed in places, but it does seem to get some of the important principles over to an audience very quickly, because it communicates through interactivity.

RPG-Supportive Software Experiments

Over the course of the investigation, the group has tried several software tools and applications to accompany their games. Reflections are recorded below:

Virtual Tabletops

Virtual tabletops have generally been quite helpful to me as a GM – they aid with some of the administrative burden of running a game by cataloguing information on game elements and they can handle calculations relating to mechanics and dice rolls very quickly. They do each come with their own learning curve, though, which can increase time investment at the beginning of a campaign. This can also burden the GM with having to teach these to the players as well as the RPG system. I've found that the ones that are more flexible and powerful in terms of helping during a game also take longer to learn.

They can be useful even when playing in person, especially if everyone has a laptop or similar for managing their own character, etc. You can still receive the benefits of a reduced admin burden.

They can make it difficult for a GM to fudge rolls and overrule the system where desired, as they tend to default to playing everything by-the-book.

Mapmaking Software

There are many mapmaking tools available, aimed at producing worldbuilding or battle maps for RPGs. I've found them useful for laying out spaces for set piece battles, but I've found that I can often spend longer making maps than we'll spend using them in games. It takes significant time investments to learn each tool, then creating a nice-looking map can take a long time too. It's probably best when I can make reusable, generic maps, or just to purchase packs of maps from other creators.

They are especially useful when they integrate with virtual tabletop software, carrying over map information such as lighting, obstacles and so on (for systems and situations that use those).

Random Generators

Many random generators are available online, akin to random tables used in some RPG systems. They can be used to rapidly generate almost any game content, if you can find the right one, including names and other character details, encounters, items, locations, etc. I have occasionally found them useful, but I think I tend to prefer adlibbing or trying to create something that resonates with established details of a game, when I'm called to bring in a new element.

Character Creators, Token Creators, and Similar

There are tools available for quickly generating character visuals – these can be apps that let you design a character portrait from pieces, choose from a large list of available character visuals, etc. I've sometimes found them useful when brainstorming characters – it is sometimes useful to find an interesting visual hook and then generate the details from there, and these can help with that. I find them less useful for trying to create an image of a character that I have already clearly imagined – they tend not to be precise or flexible enough to really get a feel across.

Handout Creators

I've enjoyed using some tools to create handouts online. There are small apps that can create images that look like handwritten letters, for example, which can be a little more "authentic" than word-processed documents and the like.

Organisation, Planning and Note Keeping

World Anvil has already been discussed in detail, but the choice of tool for planning, prep and organisation can be very important. I tend to prefer flexible and simple note-taking and diagramming software, so that I can quickly records and rework my thoughts. Ideally, the tools also have some rapid diagramming functionality such that I can also organise things spatially and connect them with lines, etc. Pen and paper tends to work very well for me, and I like to run from simple notes and diagrams in a pad, but it's nice to use some of the functionality that software affords, like easy sharing, editing, and access.

More structured software can be useful for more rigorous planning – if it has features to prompt you to define important aspects of things like characters and places that you might have overlooked.

Reflections on Writing Up The Door in Reality

These are some brief reflections that were recorded just after finishing all of the detail for Campaign: The Door in Reality on the *World Anvil*.

Writing up Campaign: The Door in Reality was a lot of work with quite a lot of redundancy. I'm not sure how much of it adds value, to record details that were unnecessary to play and log so much information. How many of the articles were really needed, when many of them have very little info or were of no real consequence to the game?

Is it worth really fleshing out elements of the world if it doesn't come up in play? Is this wasted effort? Does it help the GM tell a better story, just to have this detail?

I also felt that literally describing (some / most of) (what I can remember of) what happened in the fiction doesn't make for especially interesting reading or accurately represent the experience of the game (the session reports). It doesn't cover discussions, deliberations, moments of impact, what was influenced by who, or many other things. These are all very important elements of the live play of an RPG, but they're very difficult to record.

Phoebe's art really sells some moments, but represents only one player's image of what happened (edited to make cool visuals). It also sometimes illustrates things that didn't happen in-fiction.

Related Adventure

Adventure: The Door in Reality

Reflections on The Door

This section was written by Ché in the first person, reflecting on The Door:

Origins

The Door, from Adventure: The Door in Reality was initially included in The Overgrown Wilds as a way to foreshadow The Lost Swords Gamechanger from Apocalypse World: Burned Over.

When I was establishing the basic details of the setting for The Overgrown Wilds, before we started play, I saw a chance to organically include the monolith-like capsule for the Lost Sword in The Skyway. The flavour text for this location stated that there was a "cult of humanity's rebirth" there, so I figured that they might worship a black monolith while misunderstanding its purpose. Thus, the idea of The Door was born. Its name was initially intended to be a red herring or general hook to attract interest.

Early Developments

As we played the game, some running themes of fractured realities and multiverses started to surface. Matthew Lutey's nature was a key part of this, but also having STYG-0 in the setting (when we had decided that it wasn't necessarily the same reality as 40k) played into this idea.

Outside of this game, I had also started to come up with the early concepts for Campaign: Convergence, which fuelled this thinking about The Door as some kind of mysterious portal. It seemed like it would be a good lead-in to a crossover campaign, if the players were interested. I started to float the idea and the group seemed up for it, so I started to treat The Door as an unresolved mystery, whose form would be decided later.

During The Door in Reality, Session 3, Matthew confronted The Door in-game with a very good roll, leading to some adlibbing about its nature and relating it to Matthew's character and interests. This led to some reveals about its unresolved form and its potential, which I think paved the way for the direction of the rest of the campaign.

Towards the Endgame

After more information / mystery about The Door was spread as a result of Matthew's interaction with it, other players started taking interest in its potential. Ultimately, most of the party wanted to at least see it, if not use it for something, which resulted in much of the game focusing on The Door towards the finale. It was the ultimate destination of the game, really, and its nature (with some negotiation and adlibbing) allowed characters with wildly different motivations (as is often the case with Apocalypse World) to focus on one goal and each get some kind of resolution or ending.

Game Narrative Structure Diagram

This section was written by Ché in the first person, discussing this approach to diagramming narrative structures:

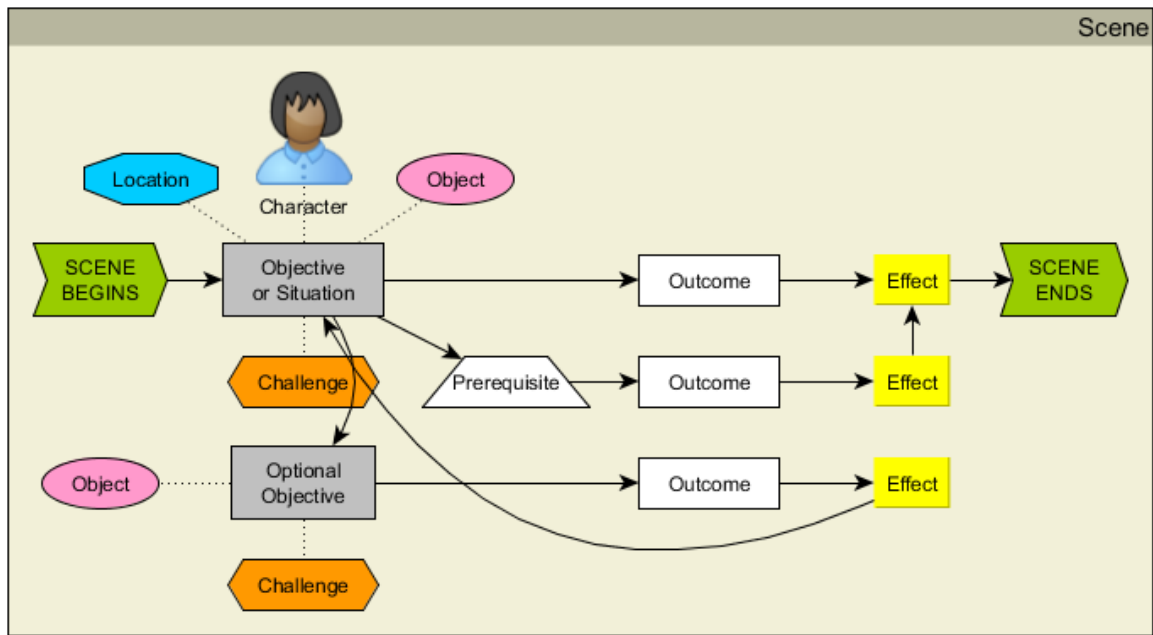


Figure 92 Narrative Structure Diagram Key by Ché Wilbraham

Overview

The above diagram demonstrates a proposed key for representing game narrative structures. Tinkering with ways of illustrating the branches and components of game stories has led me to this format. While I don't suggest that this is the ultimate or perfect approach, I haven't found one that works better under most circumstances.

Components

Generally, I've found that the most important elements of a game / interactive story are included here. The (fictionally) physically represented elements being the people, places and important objects relating to any story situation, linked as relevant to a particular situation or objective. Beyond these, any interactive (story-focused or story-important) circumstance or scene tends to contain some situation that prompts an uncertain outcome, to be determined either by choice or some kind of challenge. Some elements, often even the establishment of the scene, require the satisfaction of some prerequisite. Potential outcomes of the situation(s) lead to effects that will alter elements of the storyworld in some way, before the scene or circumstance is closed out, often leading to or overlapping another. I have found that any story can be described by constructing these scenes into an overview.

Applying the Structure

I have found that this structure works for videogames and roleplaying games alike. I suspect that this is because they have particular kinds of similarly-structured stories - that the circumstances or scenes described within are centred around the actions, efforts, choices and challenges of protagonists. I suspect that there are types of stories that this structure wouldn't be well-suited to, but it works well for the purposes of my investigations.

Scale

The scale of action that each "scene" container describes is very variable. Sometimes a scene might describe a whole half-hour, combat-focused level of a videogame, especially where there is little impact on the overall story structure as a result of player action or choice. Sometimes, a scene can describe a single action lasting (fictional) seconds, such as a particularly story-important individual choice or challenge. This scalability seems appropriate when we consider that checks / challenges / rolls in roleplaying games work similarly - sometimes a roll represents a seconds-long attack, sometimes it represents hours of investigative efforts. The size of the "unit of story" scales up and down to fit what is structurally or dramatically appropriate.

Referenced in
Diagrammatic Report of a short Apocalypse World Session

Narrative Structure Diagram of an Excerpt of *Dragon's Dogma*

The below diagram represents a test of the Game Narrative Structure Diagram, applying it to an excerpt of the beginning of *Dragon's Dogma* (Capcom 2012), an action-RPG videogame.

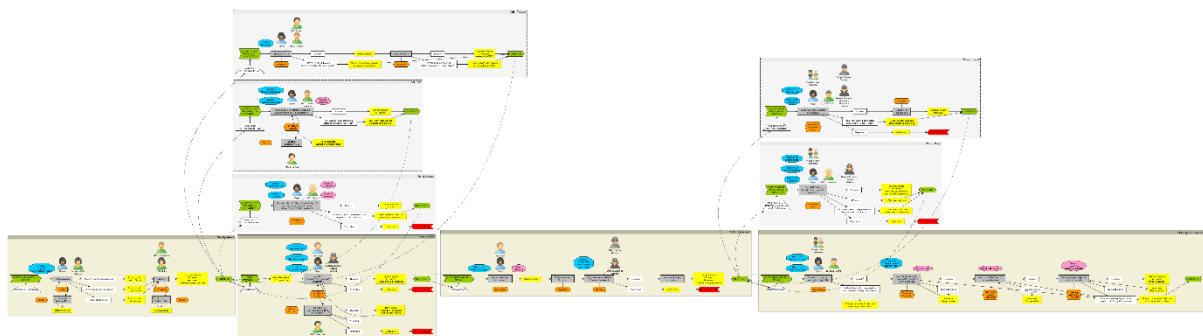


Figure 93 Diagram of the narrative structure of an excerpt of *Dragon's Dogma* by Ché Wilbraham

A full-resolution version of the above image can be accessed here: [Dragon's Dogma Beginning Excerpt.png](#)

This was the first test of the diagram, and it seemed to work. I felt that it captured all the important considerations of playing the story of the game – it didn't feel like I was missing out anything structurally crucial when I recorded information this way. Obviously, it misses important details such as dialogue and specifics of items, etc., but it does the job of revealing the structure of the interactive narrative, which was my intention. This shows that it can be applied to videogames.

Narrative Structure Diagram of the 'Basic Moves' of *Apocalypse World*

The below diagram represents a test of the Game Narrative Structure Diagram, applying it to the 'Basic Moves' of *Apocalypse World* (Baker and Baker 2016). These Basic Moves (and some others) make up the play of the game and they are how the story is structured – theoretically, the story of any session would be "built" of these moves.

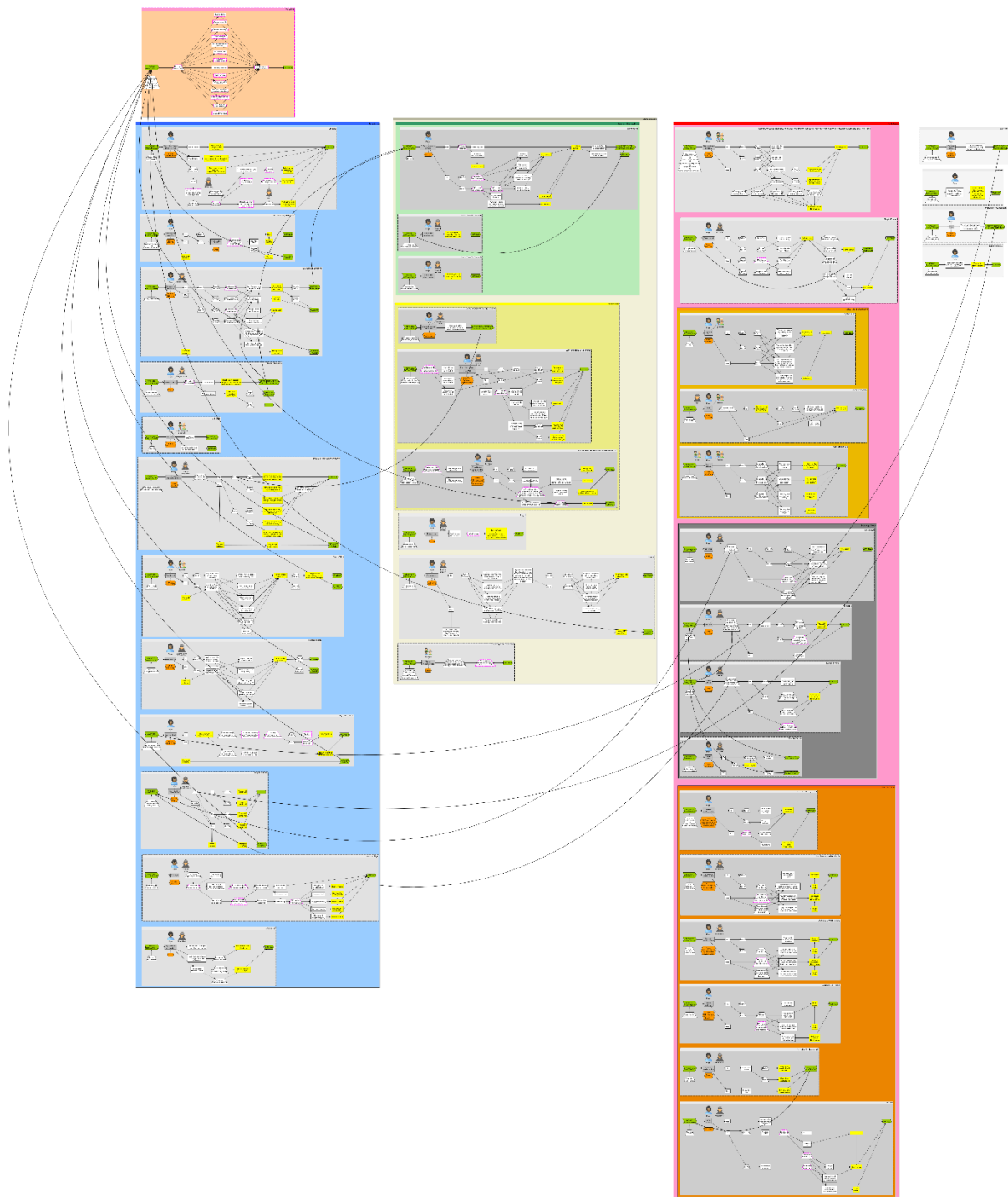


Figure 94 Diagram of the narrative structure of the Basic Moves of *Apocalypse World* by Ché Wilbraham

A full-resolution version of the above image can be accessed here: [Apocalypse World Basic Moves.png](#)

Being able to use the Game Narrative Structure Diagram to break an RPG system into clear “pieces of story” was an important next step. I’m aware that not all systems work the same, but the test proved successful for *Apocalypse World*, I feel. It would get complex quite quickly, but theoretically the interactive narrative of any session of play would be constructed exclusively of these pieces (and

similar), meaning that we can diagram RPGs and videogames in the same way, capturing all the important structural details.

Diagrammatic Report of a short *Apocalypse World* Session

This section was written by Ché in the first person, discussing this approach to diagramming a session of an RPG:

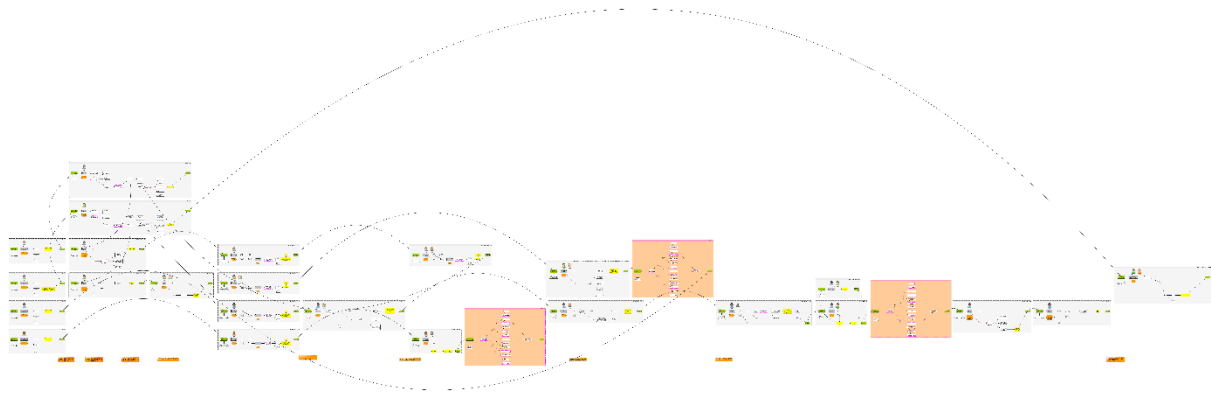


Figure 95 *Apocalypse World Actual Play Diagram* by Ché Wilbraham

A full-resolution version of the above image can be accessed here: [Apocalypse World Actual Play.png](#)

Overview

The large diagram above charts out a short session of *Apocalypse World*, using the structure described in Game Narrative Structure Diagram. The actual narrative or story of the session is briefly summarised along the bottom of the diagram, while most of the space and complexity is given over to the interlocking structure of *moves* (the system's term for actions attempted by the fictional characters, using dice rolls). These moves sometimes occur parallel to or flow into and out of each other - four player characters were acting, sometimes with consequences for each other.

It's worth noting that this session was short and relatively straightforward, and as such has generated a minimal-complexity diagram. The number of moves was low for a session of *Apocalypse World*, in my experience, perhaps because the players were fairly unfamiliar with the system, and roleplaying games in general.

The Gamemaster and the Players

Apocalypse World has a very distinctive and rigid structure that defines when the gamemaster may (and must) make *moves*. This is reflected in the diagram via the pink-tinted elements. The gamemaster may only make *hard moves* when the players fail a roll - these are the larger pink boxes. Otherwise, the gamemaster generally may establish details of scenes and prompt the players into taking action. They also are occasionally called to intervene in player moves with some decision-making.

This balance of power and responsibilities is quite particular to *Apocalypse World* (and systems that are based on it), so I suspect that other systems would not present such a clear-cut distinction between player and gamemaster actions, or the gamemaster actions would be less regimented.

Storylines

The diagram represents the interwoven stories of four distinct player characters, each with their own agency. While still relatively low in complexity, the threads intermingle in a way that makes the whole difficult to read as "a story". However, any one character's route can be followed through from beginning to end in a linear fashion, representing their linear storyline.

This was to “prove the point” of the previous section. I was able to record a session of RPG narrative using the diagram, in the same way as recording videogame narrative structure. It appears to be a useful tool for visualising interactive narrative structures, so that we might analyse them.

Narrative Structure Diagram Experiment for Some Elements of Nil Escape

The below diagram represents a test of the Game Narrative Structure Diagram, applying it to some elements of Nil Escape. This test was performed as Nil Escape relies largely on player interactions to drive the action, though the group of PCs will encounter some scripted puzzles and challenging areas.

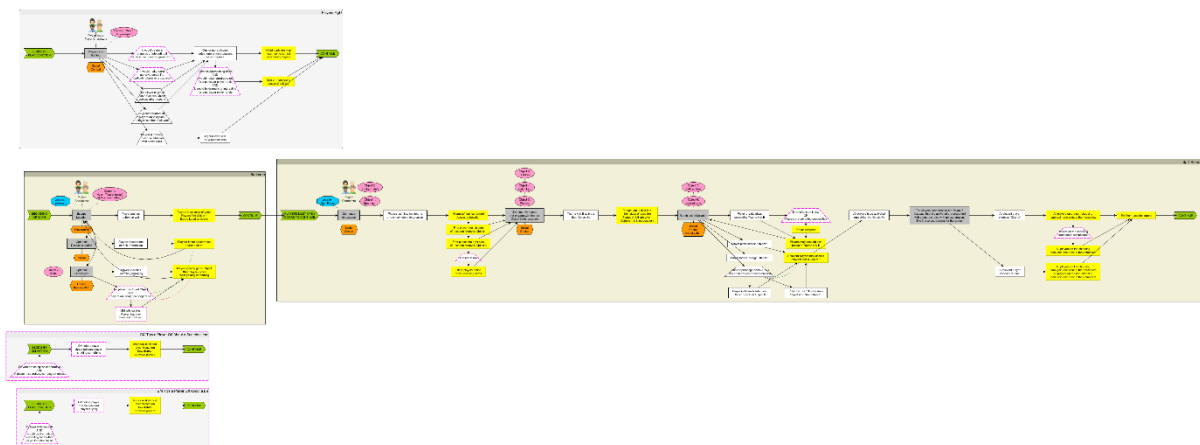


Figure 96 Diagram of the Narrative Structure of some elements of Nil Escape by Ché Wilbraham

A full-resolution version of the above image can be accessed here: [Nil Escape.png](#)

The diagram also seems to be able to be applied to less traditional aspects of RPG play – being able to represent GM decision-making and situations that arise purely of out PC interactions. This is probably less relevant to the overall investigation, but I was inclined to test it out.

Diagram of the “Flow” of *Blades in the Dark*

The below diagram represents an attempt to visually represent the “flow” of the basic resolution mechanics of *Blades in the Dark* (Harper 2017). This was created as an aid to learning and teaching the system, partly due to reflection on the inconsistency of rules presentation styles across RPG rulebooks.

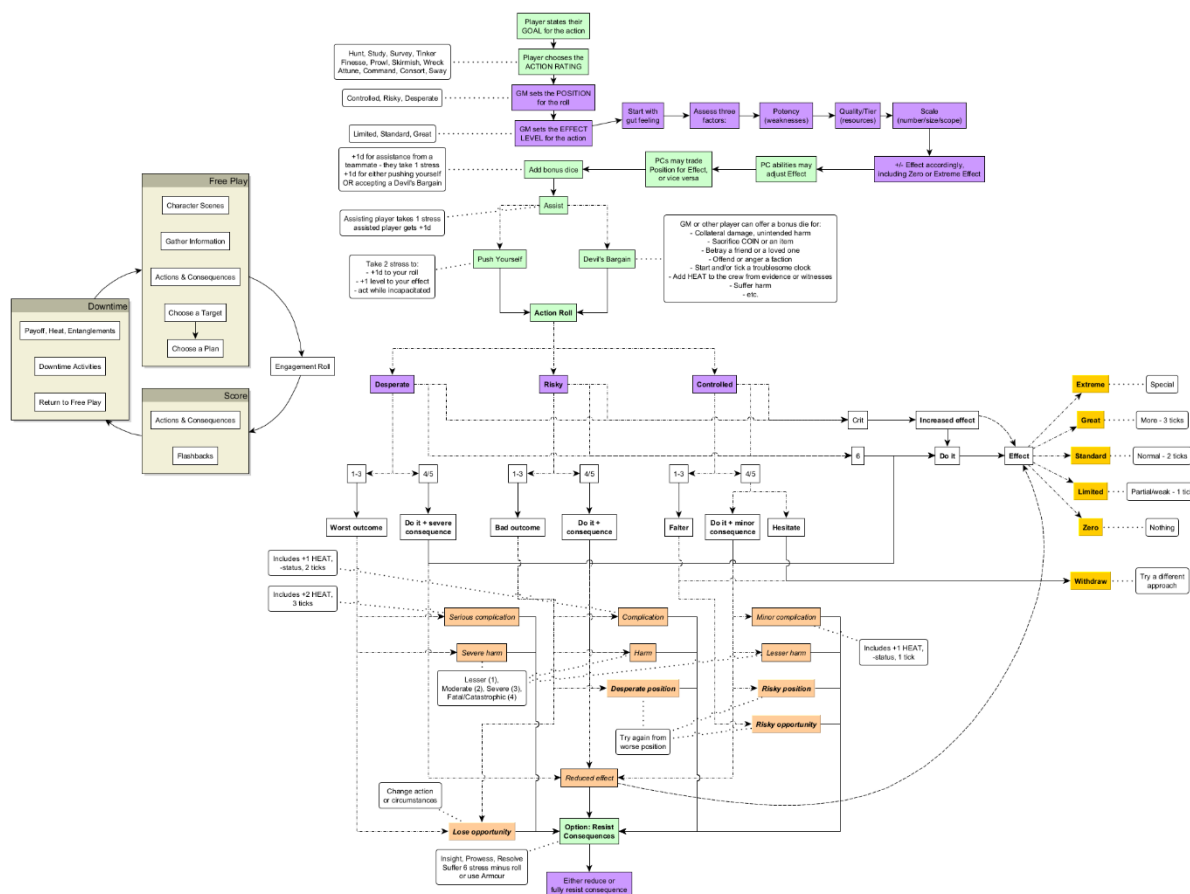


Figure 97 Diagram of the flow of the basic resolution mechanics of *Blades in the Dark* by Ché Wilbraham

A full-resolution version of the above image can be accessed here: [BitD Flow.png](#)

This is something of a tangent and probably outside the scope of this thesis, but the beginnings of investigation into the potential for a “universal language” of RPG rules. Learning a new system often first means learning how they present their rules, as different systems then to structure their rulebooks in wildly different ways.

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