

Yesterday was the first game session with "Hantverksgruppen" via Discord. The idea with Hantverksgruppen is to practice the "crafts" of role-playing games, the skills we have as role-players. Things like descriptions, staging, role-playing, dramaturgy, and so on. The group is open and anyone is welcome to participate. ... [unnecessary September 2020 information snipped – RE]

The purpose of the first session was not to practice anything special, but to test the style of play. This style of play is based on three elements:

- No game leader
- No mechanics
- No preparation

Lukas, Zonk, Kim, and I attended the first game meeting. After a bit of gossip and bullshit, we started. The only preparation we allowed ourselves was a discussion about "lines and veils" as well as a genre. We said we would play pirates. That is all. No characters were made, no relationship maps were drawn, nothing was said about the gaming world. Zonk set the first scene: Four people in a small rowing boat in the middle of the sea. Based on this, we improvised a story of betrayal and loyalty, of revenge, of selling one's soul and paying for one's sins. Here is the back cover of the novel:

*LaFayette, Montague, LeRoy and Pierre are the only surviving pirates from a kidnapping operation that went horribly wrong. Ten years later, the responsible woman, now a dreaded pirate queen called The Red Marquise, appears in the pirate city of Port Royale, where the four pirates now live separate lives. Their destinies are woven together again in a plan of revenge that will have consequences not only for themselves, but for the whole of Port Royale and for their immortal souls...*

It was so much fun! The style of play worked great and everyone showed impressive improvisation skills. We had some after-talk after the session. Here are some of my reflections:

The style of play allows for proper, dramatic and complicated stories in a short time. We had about two hours of playing time, and we did not finish because we ran out of time but because the story felt clear. If you compare this with the games we often play in the Indian Room [referring to the room used at Gothcon – RE], it is really good, considering that these require time for preparation and explanations of rules, which can easily take over an hour. Here you are up and running and playing at once, and 100% of the time is spent on games. You do not even have to slow down to use the mechanics, as there are no mechanics.

We said in the pre-talk that something that often poses problems for this type of improvisation is an unwillingness to step on the toes of others. That you do not want to make decisions that concern other people's characters. We were good at avoiding this and established things about each other's characters that were incorporated in a nice way.

It was surprisingly quick to get started and get into drama and relationships. I never felt that I lacked a prepared relationship schedule to fall back on.

This style of play is certainly possible thanks to the fact that three of us have already played many drama / hip / improv games and have become used to many of the principles. It seems

likely that four beginners who would try the same thing would have had much more problems. But this is also the point of the Hantverks Group: to focus on building skill as a role player and improvising storyteller. It's not a problem that it's difficult: It's a feature!

So, the Hantverks Group will continue. From next time, we will have a topic every time we want to practice. We have a list on Discord of topics. The rules are that anyone can add a topic to the list, we graze them in chronological order, but we do not work with a topic unless the person who suggested it participates that evening. The topic next time will be "Descriptions", unless Zonk is absent, in which case it will be "Staging".