PATREON DISCUSSION FOR DECEMBER Q&A

Sean: re: Regarding Champions Now: no I think your answer (speaking for myself) is exactly what I was looking for. I did note upon listening to your answer that there is a difference between engagement, which feels more like a condition that limits action versus an attack of opportunity that interrupts the flow and order of operations, letting another character act. And then that lead to me thinking about Champions and how dodging (for instance) uses up your next action and is that a condition or reaction or neither? So the answer satisfies my question but has spawned new questions in my mind.

- **Me:** Describing the sequence of action in Champions is frankly kind of terrible-sounding. "Abort your upcoming action to dodge" sounds like reducing your presence in play - basically, the attacker has ruined your turn, right? But it works out differently as an experience.
- **Me:** I don't see much difference between a condition and a reaction. The "sticky front" concept, for example, implies that the person you're running past has done something to make you stop and pay attention, if not enough actually to land an attack. So they still "reacted." Whereas the attack of opportunity is exactly the reverse, in that you don't have to stop, but they do get to land an attack. So you are in a new "condition" of being attacked. Do you see what I mean about them NOT being different? A/B or B/A, either will do, and for the same reasons; it's merely a matter of what this particular fiction imposes as a specific constraint. The Dodge in Champions provides +3 defense against that attack, in addition losing your next scheduled Phase and maintaining the +3 to defense until your (real) next Phase, i.e., the one after the scheduled one that was lost. So it all seems like reaction+condition to me with no distinction between the terms.

Sean: re: Arms Law: I appreciate the response. I have noted in my reading of an older version of RM that the game feels like design by reaction. Having seen a bunch of rpgs, the designers desgined based on how they felt about other games. Which is perhaps not fair because I think Rolemaster is a fine system. But looking at extensive turn order, my impression is that its an answer to questions that don't appear in the text. Questions the designers asked about other games.

- **Me:** Riffing rather than replying. Thinking about both Rolemaster and the Avalon Hill RuneQuest, it strikes me that the mythology of "role-playing comes from wargaming" is especially untrue. To be unsympathetic and to focus for a moment on certain well-known aggravating details, these designs show the downside of wargamers not liking what they saw in early role-playing and making it more like the way they "knew" it should be.
- **Gordon:** I mail ordered Arms Law (charts on cardstock, basically) and The Iron Wind (a proto-setting book) back around 1980, and the ONLY way to make use of them was as tools you'd have to adapt into your game. A lot of stuff I got in that 1976-1981 timespan (Judge's Guild, I'm including you for sure) could not stand as anything on their own, and I never even really saw a model for "the" way a gamer was supposed to use them. We used everything however the hell we felt like, to occasional disaster. But often, somehow - it worked out. At least, that's the way I remember it now.
- **Me:** I'd like to see that Iron Winds thing. I also saw and used a ton of auxiliary material at the time, just as you describe. However, Sean's question specifically referred to modular, insertable fully-baked combat or magic systems presented as replacement devices, like Arms Law or Melee, not adventures or or monsters or setting materials.

Christoffer: Besides having modifiers to rolls in combat and having a target number that could be whatever (later edition also says, if uncertain, roll 2d6 for target number) there's this in the early editions: In Traveller (77 edition up until The Traveller Book I think) you have in the text the idea of skills

not being a set modifier but instead an expertise level that is scaleable due to circumstances. Looking at the Ship's boat skill for example, hostile attacks for example means you need to roll 8+ with +1 per expertise level in Ship's boat. Bad weather gives you a +2 per expertise level to avoid emergency landing. If not avoided then during an emergency landing you roll with -1 per expertise level to see if the ship is totally destroyed (10+) or wrecked (6+) and also, the skill is used with the same level as a roll against strength for each passenger to see if they are wounded or not..... But, it's not there as a general thing how to set this scale due to circumstances but instead every skill has their own way of doing it. Also, add in that every one of these examples also use different target numbers. Although, at least to me, when reading the skill descriptions it almost feels like it is examples of application more than set rules for specific situations....

- **Me:** That's probably a good indicator. I was just reviewing my copy of Empire of he Petal Throne (1975, but unfortunately I only have the 1987 reprint - which I think is not altered, but you never know). It has a careful arrangement of general and specific skills, but resolution is based on the class/level model rather than the individualistic/attribute model ... e.g., level-based chances for spell success are shoehorned into the skill resolution ("roll for skills as if they were spells"), with little or no cross-reference to the attributes for the skills. One might extrapolate an equivalent attribute's effect on a skill roll in the same way that Psychic Ability is involved in a magic roll, but it's no mentioned and anyway that's not situational. The encounter rules and references to skill use don't include any situational modifiers or even hints that they might have been used in play, and as is usual for TSR-adjacent design, saving rolls are presented as absolutely fixed by level. I don't think one can extrapolate any such modifier system from the existing procedures; it would have to be invented and bolted on. Crudely, and knowing we should look at more games, EPT looks to be just one step "off" from a situational modification of skill rolls, and Traveller looks to be just one step "onto" it.

JC: RE: RoS - Insight and Spiritual Attribute Usage Clarification I'm going to use your succinct explanation on engaging with Spiritual Attributes by spending for advancement, and using for a bonus. I was toying with the idea using more specific verbs when teaching the game - example: you invest for advancement, and invoke for bonuses. However, going "spend to advance" and "use for bonus" is just straightforward. S When Spiritual Attributes are spent for advancement, those points spent do not go away but become Insight for your next character. I am unclear if Insight *resets* when your next character enters play, or if Insight stays with the player and not the character. If Insight is tied to a player, as the campaign continues, one would have more flexibility with making new characters. Also, the only Spiritual Attributes that require refreshing after being used for bonus dice are Luck (which refreshes every session) and Destiny (after every scene). However, I did read a post where Jake advised using Destiny like Faith or Passion Spiritual Attributes, where the bonus dice applies to any applicable rolls rather than needing to be refreshed between uses.

- **Me:** Let's find some time to go through it together by screen. The book is clear - for example, "use" vs "spend" comes from there - and I think the larger internet dialogues cause more problems than they solve.
- **JC:** Ya! That sounds good, hopefully we can find the time. I've only played in one game and ran two others. All within the same circle of people, including Ben Lehman being a GM (which they have a long history with the game too). This probably informs my understanding of the game. I am giving the book (second printing) a closer read over the holidays. The internet had such a weird reaction to the game. I have been reading old threads on The Forge and The Big Purple/RPGnet, and saw *odd* ideas about The Riddle of Steel develop. Like some folks just wanted it to be Phoenix Small Arms Command with swords, then seem annoyed it doesn't work that way or got outright hostile(!?!). It is interesting to say the least.

- **Me:** That's an excellent description of plenty of the game's fanbase. In fairness to them, Jake and others did promote the Phoenix Small Arms Command concept. It seemed at first as if that were splitting the difference - after all, given the critical hits and ARMA perspective, these people would be getting what they wanted, right? But after playing it, I came to think of this promotion as too much of a bait-and-switch on them.

JC: RE: RoS & Destiny I *don't know why* I was stuck on Destiny being a scene to be reached rather than a situation to play. So, I am going to use the first destiny that pops to mind to see if I get this. This is from Babylon 5. So, Londo Mollari has the Destiny: To die at the hands of G'Kar Londo would gain a point (or more) of Destiny when confronting G'Kar, like getting in his face (justified or not). At these times, his Destiny bonus would apply as well. Likewise, I could see allowing the use of and gaining of Destiny when Londo pursued a genocidal conflict against G'Kar's people The Narn. Also Londo could even use Destiny dice to help G'Kar as well, as long as destiny is relevant to the situation. In the end, when Londo reaches his destiny - G'Kar kills him. However, we've seen these characters' relationships develop and the greater conflicts play out in the series. The context for Londo's destiny is entirely different, than when we're first introduced to it. I think I understand it now.

- **Me:** I think you have it. I have one small point: that "in the end, when he reaches his destiny," might not occur. Given a lot of played events in the way you're describing, it's conceivable or available to occur, but I want to nail down that we're not driving toward it as a fixed expectation, in playing this particular game.
- **JC:** Definitely. I couldn't imagine driving towards a fixed point in TRoS. The mechanics are too "powerful" for lack of a better word. I hope *someone* takes Destiny next time I play The Riddle of Steel. I want to see it in action. It is The Riddle of Steel, and too find the answer - dice have to hit the table.