

One Thousand and One Nights and One Night

a role-playing game campaign design 'zine

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Have At Ye!

With the renewed public popularity of dashing pirates, villainous lords, proper ladies and heart-of-gold rogues due to the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, I've decided to explore some of the other settings available in gaming. This issue has some info on a fantasy genre called *mannerpunk*. I've also included the latest Actual Play and a new webcomic I'm reading. If you be man enough to take the plunge! ARGH!

New Webcomic

I recently discovered a fantasy webcomic called *Wayfarer's Moon* (www.wayfarersmoon.com). The art's pretty good and the story line is progressing nicely. A mysterious female assassin/ranger fights a bunch of soldiers while another woman seeks her uncle and strikes out on her own in dangerous lands.

My Style: Last Train to Clarksville

Railroading is a GMing technique that most gamers hate. Players want to tell their stories in the world the GM creates (sounds crazy, right?) but some GMs force them to play out a rigid story with no deviations. The PCs

HAVE to be in Clarksville so everything they do leads them directly to Clarksville, often taken to the ludicrous. It's frustrating and leads to anti-social behavior on the part of the players.

I prefer to place constraints on the players rather than force them down a specific path. The importance of have them working for a "community" that provides them with specific goals to achieve and gives them the leeway to meet those goals cannot be stressed enough. I then set up a "sand box" with defined borders where the game is set. The players actions then dictate the direction of the game in that area rather than forcing them to go to Clarksville.

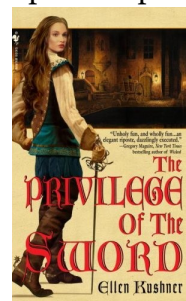
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Mannerpunk!

I've been reading about a "new" subgenre of fantasy writing called *mannerpunk*. Most novels of this style are nominally in a fantasy setting. Magic and exotic races are kept to a minimum and the action is upper crust social situations or lords slumming in the depths of depravity. Combat is usually infrequent, limited to street fights and formal duels between equals, and for good reason as the good guys are trying their best to secure their social positions with allies while defeating their enemies at witty repartee. Several RPGs, both old and new, almost demand to be run in a *mannerpunk* style. *Flashing Blades* (FGU), *GURPS Swashbucklers and Scarlet Pimpernel* (Steve Jackson Games), *7th Sea* (AEG), *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (Hogshead) and *Lace and Steel* (TAGG) represent *mannerpunk* in the default setting, but other games can also do this, like *Shadowrun* (FanPro) or even *Star Wars* (WotC). Explore this exciting genre yourself!

What I'm Reading

I picked up a copy of *The Privilege of the Sword* (Bantam) from my local library. Written in 2006 by Ellen Kushner, like her previous works, *Swordpoint* (1987) (which I've read) and *The Fall of the Kings* (2002) (which I haven't), it's considered *mannerpunk* or a fantasy of manners. It's an entertaining read – a young noblewoman,

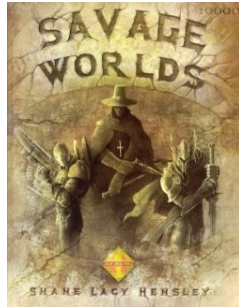


her family impoverished by her uncle, the Mad Duke, is given an opportunity to live with him and learn to use the sword. Adventure ensues. The book jumps from character to character, with different points of view. The heroine is in the first person and the rest of the cast are in the third. I liked the book and suggest it as good background material for anyone who wants to play a poor noblewoman who's forced to learn a trade (the sword) outside of her normal one (marriage).

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Actual Play: Savage Worlds!

Savage Worlds (Pinnacle/Great White) is rapidly becoming my system of choice. I'm still somewhat unfamiliar with it, though, so to improve that, I invited XO, GT and NF over to play *Savage Urban Fantasy!* XO was a young street mage named Zack Bonaparte and GT was an intelligent, talking wolf (his usual PC), but NF couldn't make it. He was going to play a rookie cop that I named Napoleon Thunder. I handed out the 3 Bennies each to the players and we got started. XO and I have about the same experience in the system but this was new for GT, who had only read the free system PDF.



The scene opened in Ottawa, with the PCs, not knowing each other, joining a large crowd around a small neighborhood police precinct. Everyone in the station was killed except for Napoleon Thunder. The PCs spotted each other and learned some specifics from the crowd. A strange man had entered the station, demanded a special mirror and then started killing. Zack talked briefly with Thunder while Wolf found a trail. Zack and Wolf introduced themselves and followed the scent.

It lead to an old stone culvert with a strange symbol on the wall. Zack took a picture of it and XO used a Bennie to say that an occult bookstore run by his friend Sal was nearby. I was OK with that, so they met up with Sal, who told them that all the mages around town are hiding out because a "dark walker" was loose. He examined the symbol, a mix of Celtic and Native American symbols, and said they were against some sort of undead.

Sal gave them some magic items to help them out and Officer Thunder joined them to avenge his friends. They entered the culvert where they fought a ghost warrior and defeated it by destroying it's sword, but didn't have time to face the Big Bad. It was a fun game and we all got more experience with the system. Yay!

My new Play By eMail D&D Game

I joined in a PBeM recently and chose to play a half-orc warrior. The GM started with:

A merchant spoke from the block in the town square "Word has come from Lord Hammerson that the passes are open again and that he is paying top price for a number of items that the heavy winter has kept the merchants from delivering. Dwarven Ale, Khitarian war horses, Dragon-moth silk. Things that I have to sell! Still, I will not brave the passes without a suitable caravan guard. Younglings, this is your chance for adventure, your chance to see the fabled city of Mithraltir, your chance to earn a fat purse of gold. I have need of any and all! Come, step forward!"

To which I responded with this character intro: "A garishly dressed young Half-Orc steps from the crowd and eyes the merchant carefully. Though short of stature, only about 5' tall, he is



powerfully built. His arms and face are criss-crossed with old scars. Upon his head is a dirty bright orange silk turban, wrapped haphazardly around his dented helm. He is clad in a rusted breastplate, with leather shoulder pads, that covers a faded blue wizards robe adorned with gold stars, moons and suns. Standing arms akimbo, the long flared sleeves of the robe drag along in the churned mud. A plain leather belt with a throwing ax thrust in it encircles his waist and a sword baldric containing a battered long sword hangs on his right side. The robe ends shortly above his knees, cut off roughly and frayed, underneath a studded leather skirt with an old short off-white bartenders apron on top. His left foot is shod in one new leather shoe and a scuffed riding boot is on the right. Across his back is a short moth-eaten sickly-green cloak of questionable fashion, a serviceable Northman steel shield with a chewed rim, a slim longbow and quiver, and a rough pack."