Fair Play

A multi-media fantasy RPG

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Introduction

Fair Play is a work in progress, currently. Generally the design is meant to create role-playing in a fantasy world that grows from nothing at the start but our commonly held memetic notions of what fantasy worlds are like. As play proceeds, various extant bits of media (likely mostly pictures) are added to text play to create information about the world. This new information, then, creates routs for further investigation, and growth of the world.

Design Goals and Constraints

Below are the goals that have been identified, reflecting Mike Holmes' vision for the game, and constraints on what the design will attempt and how. These may change over time.

- The game is an "RPG" in the traditional sense that there will be players playing characters through events in a fictional world.
- The world will be designed by all of the participants of the game. This distribution will likely be inequal, but hopefully done in a way that makes the players all feel ownership of the evolving game world (at least enough to obtain greater feelings of interest and engagement with said world).
- The game will have a GM, but their role is mostly as facilitator of play, and player of all characters who are not the responsibilities of the other players.
- Invention of information regarding the world will be primarily textual or verbal as usual (we're envisioning play on the RPG Refuge Discord server and the like), but will seek to incorporate a lot of stationary visual media (mostly art from the internet).
- To avoid analysis paralysis of selection of such media, there will be collections put together so as to create limits on what can be perused, allowing (hopefully) faster selection. (Currently I have Pinterest boards set up to accomplish creation of collections of pictures).
- It is understood that the nature of the media placed into the collections will impact what tends to exist in play (may even constrain it significantly). This is hopefully a feature, not a bug. (Yes, the author in inflicting his collections in the playtest will selfishly be having greater control of the environment, but hopefully the players will be OK with this, or even enjoy working within these constraints).
- Character definition in terms of their expertise in certain things will result in the player of said character having additional control of world-building of elements related to that expertise. The notion being that the exclamations of such experts are likely to be factually correct, from an in-game perspective.
- Character definition will revolve significantly around the character's relationships with entities in the game world. This does constitute "expertise" per the above bullet, but exists also to link the

character solidly into the game world, and hopefully as the world evolves, so to will the plot as the characters deal with these relationships.

- Character definition will also be about ranking in terms of "fictional positioning." Inspired by Game of Thrones (even moreso by ASOIAF), this means that we will at times know which character is the best in the world (or thought to be), and who challengers to that title might be. This is a relatively tentative goal.
- Travel, or some other themes, should exist in play to encourage world growth. This is a relatively tentative goal, and may be found to be unecessary, or just optional.

Structure of Play

Play generally starts with a concept creation phase, player role selection, character generation, and then general play.

Concept Creation Phase

Overview

During this phase players will create certain basic concepts about the nature of play. The concepts should probably involve the characters being peripatetic or some other explanation of a way in which the characters come across enough elements of the world to keep play involving discovery of new things.

Initial Setting

Each participant goes to any of the "Fantasy Setting" boards that the facilitator provides, and selects a place picture. The players should select this primary place picture with the understanding that the main characters of the game will be developed from ideas that come about from this selection. They may live there, be traveling there, are there to get something, etc, etc. Play may not end up staying at the location of the initial setting, or even starting there, but it provides a locale that ties the characters together in some way.

Once everyone has selected a picture, and showed it to everyone, everyone votes on one they like that is not theirs. The one with the most votes wins. If two or more have the same number of votes, eliminate the rest and have a run-off for the remainder; in this case, the participant who selected the art can vote for their own piece. The facilitator calls the vote, and decides the order of the vote, voting last themselves in each case.

Continue doing run-offs as necessary. If it ever gets to a tie, determine randomly which picture to be the central place.

Interrogating the Initial Setting

Each player then asks one other player a question, again in facilitator selected (or random?) order. Once a player has been asked a question, they are no longer eligible to be asked a question by

another participant. In this way every participant asks one question, and answers one; the last participant to ask a question will have no choice as to who to ask. The second-to last question asker must ask the player who will be last, to prevent the last player asking from being the only one to ask.

The question must have to do with the picture selected and must be open-ended. For instance one can ask "Who lives here?" but not "Does the captain live here, or the magician?"

Examples:

- "What does that turret look down upon?"
- "What is the meaning of the banners over the entrance?"

Centralizing Concept

From the information generated, the participants should figure out a concept for play to revolve around that will involve characters who are interested in each other in some way, and interested in investigating the world in some fashion.

Examples:

- Picture: A King's palace with a group assembled. Concept: A team of explorers working for the king to map out the realms
- Picture: A temple with a high priest giving a command. Concept: A retinue that travels with a high priest doing espionage in foreign lands
- Picture: Shady characters gathered in a den of iniquity. Concept: Characters are all involved with organized crime in a series of cities along a coast
- Picture: A baroque ship that floats above the sand. Concept: The ship serves as the palace of a wandering Sultan moves about the realms bringing on newcomers from everywhere to entertain the Sultan's wishes, and all the while the various passengers are involved in intricate espionage and intrigues
- Picture: A ship being sucked into a maelstrom. Concept: On the other side of the maelstrom, the crew and passengers, almost all from the same city, end up in an unknown land, relying on each other to find a way back home.
- Picture: A caravan leaving a burning city. Concept: A caravan of merchant folk, mostly family, have lost their home, and have no place to return to, and become constant travelers to survive.
- Picture: A man is interrogated by guards at a gate. Concept: The characters are a team of investigators and their support being sent by their Duke to investigate a strange cult popping up all over the realms.
- Picture: A wizard stands before a crystal portal. Concept: The mighty wizard and his selected companions from all over the world travel through his portal to strange lands they've never been to before, and right wrongs as they come across them.
- Picture: An ancient ruined city. Concept: a sage, having gained a large sum of money from a patron, leads a team she's hired to ruins across the land in an attempt to study the cultures of the previous age, and the team has to deal with the very real dangers that still reside within these places.
- Picture: a rowdy group celebrates in a tavern. Concept: A group of roguish folks of various backgrounds and professions, friends through many adventures, are chased out of town after town, while pursuing their vices and taking on dangerous tasks that nobody else will face (this last should be very familiar to players of other fantasy RPGs).

Player Roles

Before creating characters, players select roles for the game. This is done first, as selection of roles my influence how players generate characters. The roles that may be selected are:

- Facilitator - this player organizes play, and maintains media caches for the game.
- Main Character Player - this player will play one or more of the main characters of the game. Main character here defined as ones who the players agree to keep the plot revolving around.
- Secondary Character Player - this player will be assigned to play characters who are not main characters. The plot does not revolve around non-main characters and the action rarely, if ever, follows them solely.
- World-Builder - this role involves the player being involved in the world-building mechanics, and making up details about the nature of the world as needed.
- Event Creator - this role involves coming up with events to be played out in scenes (typically involving one or more main characters).
- Host - if playing online, the service admin is the host in effect. As are event coordinators if playing FTF at an event. Otherwise if playing FTF, somebody must be a host.

The default is that all players are either main or non-main character players (or both), and world-builders. A player may "GM" by opting not to play a main character, and other players may do the same, essentially. Though they may well want and have secondary characters that are of significant importance.

Play may begin once every role has been filled.

Changing Roles

At certain times in the game, a player may drop or add a role. They may not drop a role, however, if they are the last player who has that role. They must instead wait until somebody else takes up that role before they may drop it. Note that a player may petition the game to have one of their secondary characters become a main character, which then makes them a main character player. And characters may be similarly demoted, with the player no longer being a main character player if this is their last such character. But this may not happen, again, if there are no other main character players.

WIP

Character Generation

Players invent characters that make sense given the concepts worked out above. These should include one main character or one secondary character for each player in the game, and one additional secondary character for each main character who is somebody important to the main character. Normally the player most involved in creating a character will play that character, but players may decide to swap, up to and including changing the player role if necessary to accomplish this.

Generally the player of one of these designated characters has the usual prerogatives of a player of a

Player Character in most RPGs.

Players of main characters should indicate if the character is a protagonist or some other type of character. There must remain one protagonist among the characters for play to begin, and players can negotiate which characters these will be.

General Play Phase

Play is conducted using the usual scene-setting procedures and so forth.

Scene Framing and Turns

Who frames scenes, and how?

Players take turns (ala Universalis), during which they can make stuff up voluntarily, or compel other players to do so (see below).

Interruptions

Players may pay a Karma to interrupt.

Adding Media

Ongoing with this normal play, players are compelling each other to add elements to the setting, and/or doing so voluntarily. In many cases, the additions will be accomplished by placing a piece of art into play inline with the text (or showing it to other players for FTF play). When this happens, everything in the picture presented is created in the shared imagined space, unless a player goes further and "edits" the picture. Pictures are selected from specific galleries.

Other types of media can be entered voluntarily, but only compelled if somebody creates a "gallery" of that sort of art. A playlist for music, for example.

Challenge

If a participant in the game finds that an entered piece of media changes details from previously established egregiously (especially if established by previous media entries), they can protest to the facilitator who will make a call on whether the submission is suitable, or if the player must edit it or select another.

Interrogation

Once a piece of art is exhibited, players may interrogate one another about the piece. This can be accomplished by having a character investigate, or at the player level, in which case the information

may simply be player knowledge. In the latter case, a player can use a knowledge test to figure out if the character knows the information already, making investigating unnecessary.

Compelling and Bounties

Each player starts a session with a bounty of 3 Karma. A player may, once during their turn, compel another player to create something, and when doing so the compelling character takes karma in the amount of the current bounty. The next player to compel that player takes one less, and so on each time. When the bounty is zero, the player may still be compelled, but there is no reward for doing so.

If a player wants to create something, instead of another player, they may offer Karma from their own pool to add to the bounty, and the player doing the compelling may change their mind at this point.

Reference Wiki

There will be a wiki that stores added media and notes about them, which will be maintained by the facilitator. The facilitator may get help from other players, who will get a reward.

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