To whom it may concern (yes, that's you, Mearls!),

Having been a player of D&D off and on since 1977, I would like to re-iterate the corporate admonitions given to Tweet, when creating 3rd Edition D&D, that the brand identity be maintained through carefully conserving the best parts of the original RPG as it has existed over time. But what are these elements that create said brand identity? Well I humbly propose the following items to be crucial to maintaining the core brand identity of D&D.

Races, Culture and Alignment

- First you need to ensure that races are kept to just a few sketchy details that relate to their abilities and how one is superior to another, because to do more will mess up attempts to fit these races into previously generated worlds. And because most players can't claim inherent racism is involved when the details are kept relatively abstract. Whatever you do, ensure that the black-skinned matriarchy of the elves (Drow) remain objectively evil… we don't want to give in to political correctness.

- Similarly, please ensure the ambiguity surrounding the cultural notes that you DO include about each race, especially the Deities associated with each race. For example, which deities each race worships in each world. Doing so ensures that players can't look up the pertinent details on the internet without confusion, keeping them from attempting to forge an understanding of their character's culture. They should have to come to ME for that. It's OK that the information provided gets me confused, too; in the end cultural details like deities aren't really all that important anyhow. Give people clarity on these subjects, and they might start into boring explorations of said culture. D&D is about the majesty of slaying creatures in fascinating underground labyrinths, and obtaining their treasures, after all. Nothing should get in the way of that.

- Alignments… just brilliant. Again, please do not allow players to get away with abusing character morality by having characters with personalities that are shades of grey, or sneakily complex. After all, that's what Chaotic Neutral with Good tendencies is for. And I need to be able to punish a player who has such a character do something lawful, for instance. Consistency is what we're after here! Characters who don't behave consistently are completely unbelievable.

Class/Level System

- There must be classes to create “niche protection.” Players should not be put upon to create character interest that has anything to do with personality, character history, character relationships, or anything else that might lead to drama. Any attempt to do so, of course, could only lead to a strangling of player creativity in “roleplaying” their characters anyhow. And in any case, these set limits on character capacity most realistically reflect the nature of human talent and how it develops so specifically in each sentient being. Other than monsters, of course; classes for monsters is an abomination.

- Levels, of course are a given. No other system yet devised by any other game, more accurately reflects the progress of humans from one level of asskicking ability to another, both in real life, and in the source material. Think of all of the levels that Frodo went up during the War of the Ring! Or how I leveled up when I got my last promotion at work! It's such a great reward to have gained so much skill after I got my promotion. Make sure that stays in the game!

- Oh, and to combine the last two, please make sure you bring back level caps for demihumans. Everybody knows there were no elven clerics in LotR! It's important to punish players who try to game

the system by coming up with such obviously abusive combinations, especially ones that aren't in the source material. Claims of spiritual elves in other literature are completely unsubstantiated.

- Oh, and definitely be sure to keep the restrictions on Demi-humans from multi-classing, while leaving humans to be able to. And the part about switching classes. Or was it the other way around? I can't remember. See what happens when you take away great rules like this from us? It's been so long I can't even remember these very realistic rules now! What a shame.

- EXP! And how does one level? Experience Points, of course. Please, let's have none of this non-sense about characters getting EXP for “role-playing” any longer. Obviously they represent the life-changing moments that are involved when doing something like slaying your thousandth orc (what a milestone that must certainly be). Please also bring back EXP for treasure; once players have purchased all of the equipment that I'll allow with gold, and have accumulated millions of Gold Pieces, they become meaningless, unless the players can get EXP for them.

Hit Points and Combat!

- Hit points are, of course, just as impossible to do without as levels and classes. Not only has no other RPG ever come up with another way to simulate character injury and death, but no other system COULD possibly do justice to the way in which a character like Conan manages to stay alive. I'm not sure how he got to second level, frankly (nor any of us, really!), but I'm thinking it must have been an evolutionary process, combined with a really high constitution. Which again explains why he's so darn asskickin! It just makes so much sense!

- While we're on HP, we shouldn't fail to mention all of the various damage systems that are involved. Whether it's weapon damage from polyhedral dice that's so small that it can't possibly kill Conan (again, what an asskicker he is), but yet cunningly includes strength modifiers; or it's falling damage from a 100 foot cliff that while it will pancake any zero level human, again can't kill Conan… I mean, we can't have Conan dying from something like gravity… D&D damage does it all!

- And healing magic that heals a couple of polyhedrals worth of hits… why would you go to those silly “surges” in 4th! Please, please, please go back to a system that combined with the damage systems above will keep my players so confused as to what HP represent that they cannot possibly complain for lack of being able to figure it out. Give them a system that's comprehensible, and soon we'll be having to explain them in a way that makes sense. So much easier to handwave.

- Armor Class. This key feature of D&D shows how armor makes somebody harder to hit. I mean to hit effectively. Well except when it's a touch thing. And the other exceptions that have to do with dex and positioning. Again, keep those players guessing as to what it's about!

- Saving Throws. Please go back to when we had more of these, and it wasn't clear which one pertains. I don't want my creativity hindered by having to go with a save that my players are likely to make, when it would be more fun to pick one that they're likely to fail! I mean… how do you expect a plot to emerge from play if I can't use tools like paralyzing the entire party whenever I want to in order to move the plot along?

- And whatever you do, please do not make it clear what these saves represent, as I'd rather just make it up each time. Especially because I can often make the PCs look like dolts with clever descriptions of save fails (there's nothing as fun). And we've already had the argument about just how

it is that folks save from AOE spells like fireballs, and I don't need to have that one particular argument again. Keep it fuzzy, and I can just handwave.

- To me, the best part about D&D is how combats are extremely detailed affairs in which we see the back and forth of characters and monsters missing each other, making each actual hit an event that deserves a burst of exuberance. Players who complain that this makes their characters look like retarded jackasses in play simply have never watched one of the many accurate Hong Kong action films out there, that show just how combat really goes. Yes, D&D combat takes roughly 30 times as long to conduct as one of those long HK action combats, but that just makes these details all the more exquisite to watch unfold. Oh, and players have to realize that a lot can happen in a one minute combat round. Yes, it's even more dodging and evading blows than most people imagine!

Magic and Wizards

- Spells! Why have thou forsaken the vision of Gary! Please, do away with other-literature-emulating ability to cast spells repeatedly… I just can't do without something that emulates the only interesting magic from literature, ever, that of the most masterful Jack Vance! OK, so it doesn't even quite exactly emulate Vancian magic, but it's was always good enough for me! Again, players who claim this is an obvious balance kludge left over from the Chainmail days can just go play some other RPG for all I care.

- And while we're at it, you need to go back to wizards having only one spell per day at first level. I mean, come on, we need to keep that whole dynamic where it's more fun to play a fighter at low level, and more fun to play a wizard at high level to balance out class selection. Any more spells at first level, and ALL of my players are going to play wizards! I mean given that they can just take turns casting sleep and then retreat to rest and re-memorize… what are you trying to do to my game! I actually had a player who had the gall to ask me how it was that he had learned a first level spell at a wizard college or something, and then couldn't go back to learn more! See EXP above!

- Oh, and please, the last thing I want to hear is somebody telling me again about how Gandalf uses a sword throughout the LotR. What is this, the LotR RPG? The restriction on mages not using armor and only using staves and daggers matches exactly to very nearly 11% of the source material. You can't do better than that! Again, claims that it's a balance kludge can only be from players who haven't played RPGs for nearly 4 decades as I have; only people like me know how things are really supposed to be in RPGs.

So Called "Skill" and Resolution Systems

- whatever you do, do NOT include a system for general universal resolution of events! 4th got close to this, and we all know what sort of Imagination annihilating play that created! It's far, far better to just have GM fiat be the method for resolution of most things in the game. Because this way I can always just force play to go the way that I as the DM think is interesting. And if a few malcontent players complain about this, I'll just use Gary's old “Blue Bolt” to put them back in their places.

- OK, I'm just kidding about the above one. Oh, no, I don't want a resolution system, I'm kidding about the Blue Bolts. What I'm really fond of as a GM is the actual core D&D system of having players shout at me when they don't like my fiat adjudications, until I submit to their protestations in a glow of masochistic delight. There is nothing that makes me feel more appreciated than to have people be so invested into the events of play that they'll spend an hour or maybe even two explaining to me how

implausible it is that they cannot tunnel through the hard clay walls that separate the parts of my dungeon that are secured by locked doors. It's only by hashing these things out in exquisite detail that we ever really truly know a place like the World of Greyhawk.

- I just have to add a third point about resolution systems here. Some have protested that not having a resolution system, one that the players all agree to use, leads to folks in examples like the above actually leaving games instead of fully arguing out the details for hours. All I have to say to those people is why would I want a player who thought that arguing for hours about these details was useless to be in MY game? Obviously anyone who sees this as a waste of time is an imagination-less troglodyte who is better off playing World of Warcraft (ackthwipt! I can't even type that name without choking!)

Conclusion

Obviously anyone who points out that any edition of D&D has flaws is simply possessed of green envy of the sort that refuses to allow for rationality. We have all had nothing but great times with D&D in the past, and they know it. They just wish that they were making the millions that WOTC rakes in with the one great RPG line in existence.

What's more, any so-called “problems” with D&D are ironed out by good old “Rule Zero.” Which is that, when in doubt, the DM should just make up rules that keep the game going in the way that he sees most fit. There's no way you could ever make a set of rules that people actually played by in entertaining fashion anyhow, so just don't bother trying. Keep D&D what it is, so we can all enjoy it's wonders in perpetuity.

This Moment of Zen Brought to You With Great Love (and apologies to Stephen Colbert) by,

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Last update: **2012/03/07 07:38**