

Chronicles of Ballidrous

Campaign Setting

Gamemaster Playstyle:

Greetings! I am a worldbuilder and storyteller, filled with visions that *hopefully* will astound your mind. Yes, a bit dramatic... but isn't that the point? We will dive deep into the gritty to then embrace the fantastic! That is what makes gaming so special. It is a journey we all wish to experience, and to make our own.

I have been GMing since the early 80's (over 40 years) thanks to being raised in a household playing the earliest editions of D&D and other systems. Since then, I have jumped with the later editions of D&D and experienced other exciting TTRPGs throughout the years.

My style is more toward story and immersion, incorporating images and voices to bring the adventure to life. I am a creator and publisher, having released many TTRPG titles and fiction. Some of my adventures will be play-test opportunities and a chance to experience new settings. I tend to include various elements of gameplay - combat, role-playing, skill challenges, and some new and unusual challenges, to shake up the traditional adventure. As is the core intention, it is about the story to dictate the theme and style - high adventure, dungeon or hex crawl, horror, sword & sorcery, survival, and beyond...

I value players who are here to have fun and find their place in the story, contributing to the adventure's overall experience. I am readily willing to take on new players, as they can be the most entertaining, and anyone hoping to have a great time. The campaign setting will most likely be new to you, so there is no needed background beyond character creation. Details will be provided as we go.

I have run countless games, with many using The Chronicles of Ballidrous campaign setting, as well as gamemastering and familiarity with other well-known settings - Forgotten Realms, Golarion, Dark Sun, Krynn, Ravenloft, etc... My resume includes managing Adventurers League, Pathfinder Society, and similar organized play formats, as well as convention-style play.

Essential elements of my gaming philosophy:

Contract – The Contract is my way of trying to hold myself accountable to the rules I impose on the Players. True, there will be exceptions, but I don't use the rules to find ways to inflict pain. Having fun is the goal. If something is happening that seems out of place, assume that there is something going on. I will not purposely use 'magic' as a way to explain the fantastic. If there is a demon suddenly standing in front of the party, there is a plausible



reason (hopefully). The reason may not be immediately apparent, but there should be one.

Common Sense – first, always trying to lean towards Occam’s razor - the simplest answer is most likely the most probable answer. There are always elements of randomness, but the story and its primary and secondary arcs are heavily considered first and foremost to drive the adventure.

No Roll Needed – not all situations require a roll. If a roll is requested, DCs can vary based on the situation, external factors, and how handled by the PC. An example: a PC wants to look down a low-lit city street. I will not penalize a low roll, somehow not seeing the cart sitting 30 feet away. Your roll allows me to add to the obvious.

‘Gotcha’ – I am not a ‘gotcha’ DM. I cannot win against the players. My creatures are not sacred to me and must be protected from death. My traps will not be instant death. If a situation arises where a PC is about to do something insanely dangerous, I will express this in some fashion, such as the typical “Are you sure you want to do that?” phrase. A PC has a desire to live, even if the Player starts to lose sight of that.

All the XP – Players earn XP for playing the game. Whether you kill a creature or find a clever way to stop it from rampaging through a village, XP will be earned. In some cases, PCs may earn more. PCs are not penalized for deescalating a situation and can earn points for efforts to build upon the story.

My goal is for everyone to have fun at the table. We are coming together to escape our daily troubles and put smiles on our faces. If I did my job right, you will want to come back for more, whether my table or someone else’s.

- James S. Austin

