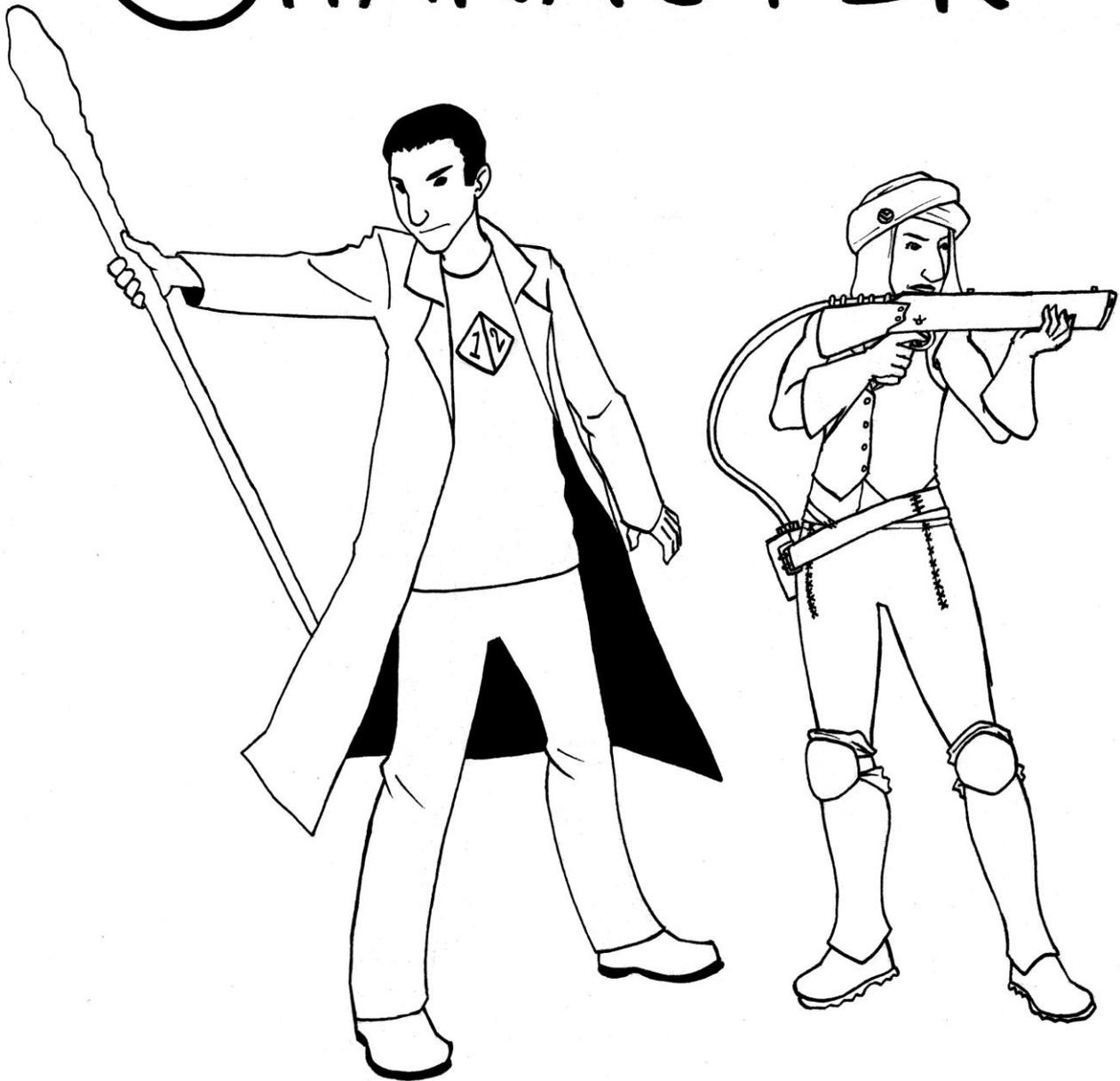# Out of Character

Issue #1 2013

President's Address

Welcome!

My name is John and I'll be your President for the year. First of all, thank you for picking up the first Out of Character and hopefully deciding to join Saga Incorporated for 2013.

We've got a great year planned. We've got weekly meetings where you can play Boardgames or join a Roleplaying Campaign. We've got special events planned such as our opening Fish'N'Chps'N'Games, minicons (for boardgames), nanocons (for one-off roleplaying sessions), and of course <sound of trumpets> Buckets of Dice, Saga's Annual convention and the largest gaming convention in the South Island. This year's Buckets will feature three days of gaming goodness including another classic Dillon Burke Grand Strategy, a Dresden Files based LARP, and lots of other gaming goodness. Buckets will take place over Queen's Birthday weekend, so be sure to mark it in your calenders.

So that's some of the cool stuff we'll be doing, but why should you join? Speaking from personnel experience, Saga is a great place to meet new people, learn new games, and just unwind and take your mind of things with a boardgame when the stresses of study are getting a bit too much. If you need a financial motivation your $5 membership also entitles you to a bunch of cool discounts (check out the Sponsors page).

But say you're not into Boardgames and/or RPGs, maybe wondering what all the fuss is about or if it's the kind of hobby that might be for you? Well, to answer that question I get to ramble on about why I enjoy the hobby.

The appeal of RPGs is pretty straight forward; you meet up with interesting people and craft a story together. You collaborate, your ideas meet and change, by the end of it you've shared a memorable experience that can end up going in a very different direction than what anyone could have predicted.

The appeal of boardgames is a little tougher to nail down. Thematic games like Incan Gold, King of Tokyo, Talisman, or Battlestar Galactica are fun because they simulate an experience you can't get in real life. You can't really hide the fact you're a cylon and kill the entire ship, but by playing Battlestar Galactica you can. King of Tokyo is really just souped up Yahtzee but the theme is that you're a giant monster smashing Tokyo and if you want to be a little silly it can be a lot of fun.

But then there are games like Agricola, one of last year's more popular games. A lot of thought has gone into Agricola to make it an accurate representation of

rebuilding a family farm in post Black Plague Europe, but that is not a fun idea for a game. So why is Agricola one of my favourite games?

It can be hard to explain the appeal of this style of game to people who don't get it because after all what you're doing is intense strategic planning, weighing up options, trying to out-guess opponents. Games that require you to think, like Agricola, Steam, Power Grid, Race for the Galaxy, Dominion or the classic Settlers of Catan, might not sound all that appealing, but once you play them and get into the strategy, it can be very rewarding and addictive. For me at least, the appeal of the 'heavier' games is that it's a chance to stretch my brain, to think in new and interesting ways and to compete with others to better utilize the shared resources. .

So hopefully my musings have convinced you to give Saga a try. If you are interested, there will be a day of casual boardgaming (and a free dinner of Fish and Chips) at my flat on Saturday the 23rd of February. We also have two intro sessions on Tuesday the 26th and Thursday the 28th of February in KH07 and KH08 in the Kirkwood village where we will be running some one-off roleplaying games and having some intro boardgames. After that we'll have meetings every Tuesday and Thursday in KH07 and KH08.

All the best for 2013, and may the dice be with you.

John Massie

Saga Inc. can be found online at: http://www.saga.org.nz
Or our facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/sagainc?fref=ts

Meet the Committee

The President
president@saga.org.nz

Facts that may or may not be true about your president:

He is in his second year of studying accounting.

He works part time at Pak n Save where he has been employed in various positions for over five years.

He is the real life inspiration for Barney Gumble, Ron Swanson, William Murderface, and John from John Dies at the End.

He has survived three zombie apocalypses and died in two others.

He won the 2002 Commonwealth Games Bronze medal for Downhill Skiing in a rigged poker game.

He'd tell you his favourite bands but you probably haven't heard of them.

He tried to shoot a man in Reno just to watch him die, but it turned out to be a police sting to catch people who listen to too much Johnny Cash.

He will play any version of Munchkin or Fluxx once and then never again.

One third of all clothes he owns are black T-shirts.

He has never worn a scarf.

He killed Kenny and therefore is a bastard.

Twice he has had Agricola come to life Jumanji-style and as a result he is now very experienced at harvesting corn by hand.

The end of The Godfather Part II made him cry a little bit.

He was driving that tractor you could see in the background of the first Lord of the Rings movie.

He let the dogs out.

He has received a call from Anthrax Guitarist Scott Ian wanting his beard back.

He has rocked the Casbah on five separate occasions and once it rocked him back.

He stole the cookies from the cookie jar.

He is looking forward to the challenge of finding enough free time to successfully running SAGA this year, or alternatively delegating all the work to the rest of the committee without them realising they're doing all the work.

The Secretary
secretary@saga.org.nz

I am Keegan.

I like games.

There, is that enough? No? Really? Then I shall press on. I was born 753 years ago I have lived a pretty boring life—apart from the wars and magic and accidently killing off the dragons—but lately I haven't have much trouble with semi-divine immortal beings… apart for having to destroy the Twice Stone and imprisoning the Elsewhile King. So yeah, how's that then? Good? Ok.

One more word of advice: don't stare into the void. It's just a bad idea.

The Treasurer

treasurer@saga.org.nz

Hi! I'm Nate. I've been studying chemistry here at Canterbury for 4 years (starting a PhD now), and I've been in this club for just as long. This is my first time on the committee. When not doing nerdy things (gaming, reading, reading gaming books, plotting to take over the world, and swearing at lab equipment), I can be found complaining about the state of NZ cricket or chasing a white plastic disc around Ilam fields. Plans for the club for the year include ensuring that no-one embezzles club money (at least not without giving me a cut), making the smaller cons even awesomer, and trying my hand at running Apoc World.

Quartermaster

quartermaster@saga.org.nz

I've been a member of SAGA since early 2010 when I found out I could be and that there were regular meetings. I had attended a couple of one off events in prior years but didn't know I could join the club as I wasn't a student. In the time since joining I've been playing board games, and more board games. I haven't been inclined to take part in RPGs (with two one-shot exceptions) as I've found myself preferring the stability and certainty found in board games. (I also don't have to talk as much.)

Every month or so I run a game of WereWolf online in a FaceBook group. Initially it started as a way for me to run Quantum Werewolf games, where you start out only knowing your chance of being each role but aren't actually sure of what you are. I've since run a few other more normal games with various roles besides the standard Wolves/Villagers/Seer.

Since September of 2011 I've been attempting to track what Board Games get played at all the SAGA events and I will be doing so again this year.

http://boardgamegeek.com/plays/bydate/user/SAGA_Christchurch/subtype/boardgame

Besides SAGA I play board games at least two other nights a week, work part time, attend church, volunteer with child minding, and "suffer" from tsundoku.

Promotions Officer

The Promotions Officer is Batman.

If you have any gaming-related content you wish to see printed in Out of Character, please contact Batman at batman@saga.org.nz

Assets List

Being a complete list of every boardgame, rulebook, and miscellaneous gaming item which Saga Incorporated owns. This list is maintained by the Quartermaster.

Board Games

Catan
The Settlers of Catan
Settlers of Catan 5-6 expansion
Seafarers expansion
Cities & Knights expansion
Event Cards expansion
The Great River expansion

Doctor Lucky
Kill Doctor Lucky
Save Doctor Lucky

Dominion
Dominion
Dark Ages expansion
Prosperity expansion

Ghost Stories
Ghost Stories
White Moon expansion

Lord of the Rings
Lord of the Rings
Sauron expansion

Once Upon a Time
Once Upon a Time
Dark Tales expansion

Pandemic
Pandemic
On the Brink expansion

Race for the Galaxy
Race for the Galaxy
Rebel vs Imperium expansion
The Gathering Storm expansion

Ticket to Ride
Ticket to Ride
Map Collection: Volume 2 India & Switzerland expansion
Alvin & Dexter expansion
The Dice Expansion

Other Games

7 Wonders
Agricola
Alibi
Apples to Apples to Go
Arkham Horror
Brass
Ca$h 'n Gun$
Chinatown
Cosmic Encounter (1991 edition)
Diplomacy
Doom: The Boardgame
Egizia
Family Business
Gang of Four
Incan Gold
Junta
Junta: Viva el Presidente!
King of Tokyo
Mahjong
Munchkin
Power Grid
The Princes of Florence
Saga
StarCraft: The Board Game
Steam
Talisman (fourth edition)
Tobago
Trax
Treehouse x2
Role Playing Games

Dungeons & Dragons
D&D 3: Dungeon Master's Guide
D&D 3: Player's Handbook

D&D 3: Psionics Handbook

D&D 4th Edition Core Rulebook Collection (3 books)

Player's Handbook

Dungeon Master's Guide

Monster Manual

GURPS

GURPS Basic Set (Third Edition Revised)

GURPS Camelot

GURPS Space (Third Edition)

GURPS Traveller (Second Edition)

GURPS Vehicles (Second Edition)

Mind's Eye Theatre

Mind's Eye Theatre: Laws of Ascension

Mind's Eye Theatre: Laws of the Hunt (1st Edition)

Mind's Eye Theatre: Laws of the Night (Revised Edition)

Mind's Eye Theatre: The Book of Ghouls (White Wolf)

Mind's Eye Theatre: The Shining Host, Changeling the Dreaming

Pendragon

Pendragon: The Boy King

Pendragon: King Arthur Pendragon (5th Edition)

Pendragon: Knights Adventurous

World of Darkness

World of Darkness

Mage: The Ascension (1st Edition)

Vampire: The Masquerade (1st Edition)

Werewolf: The Apocalypse (1st Edition)

Other Games

Apocalypse World

BESM (Big Eyes, Small Mouth) (Guardians of Order)

Call of Cthulhu (6th Edition)

Edgerunners Inc.

Fading Suns: Passion Play LARP

Gamemastering Secrets (2nd Edition)

MechWarrior: The Battletech Role Playing Game

Mutants & Masterminds Hero's Handbook (Third Ed)

Pacific Rim Sourcebook

Paranoia

Savage Worlds Explorer's Edition

Space: 1889
Spycraft
Star Wars Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook
Tales from the Floating Vagabond
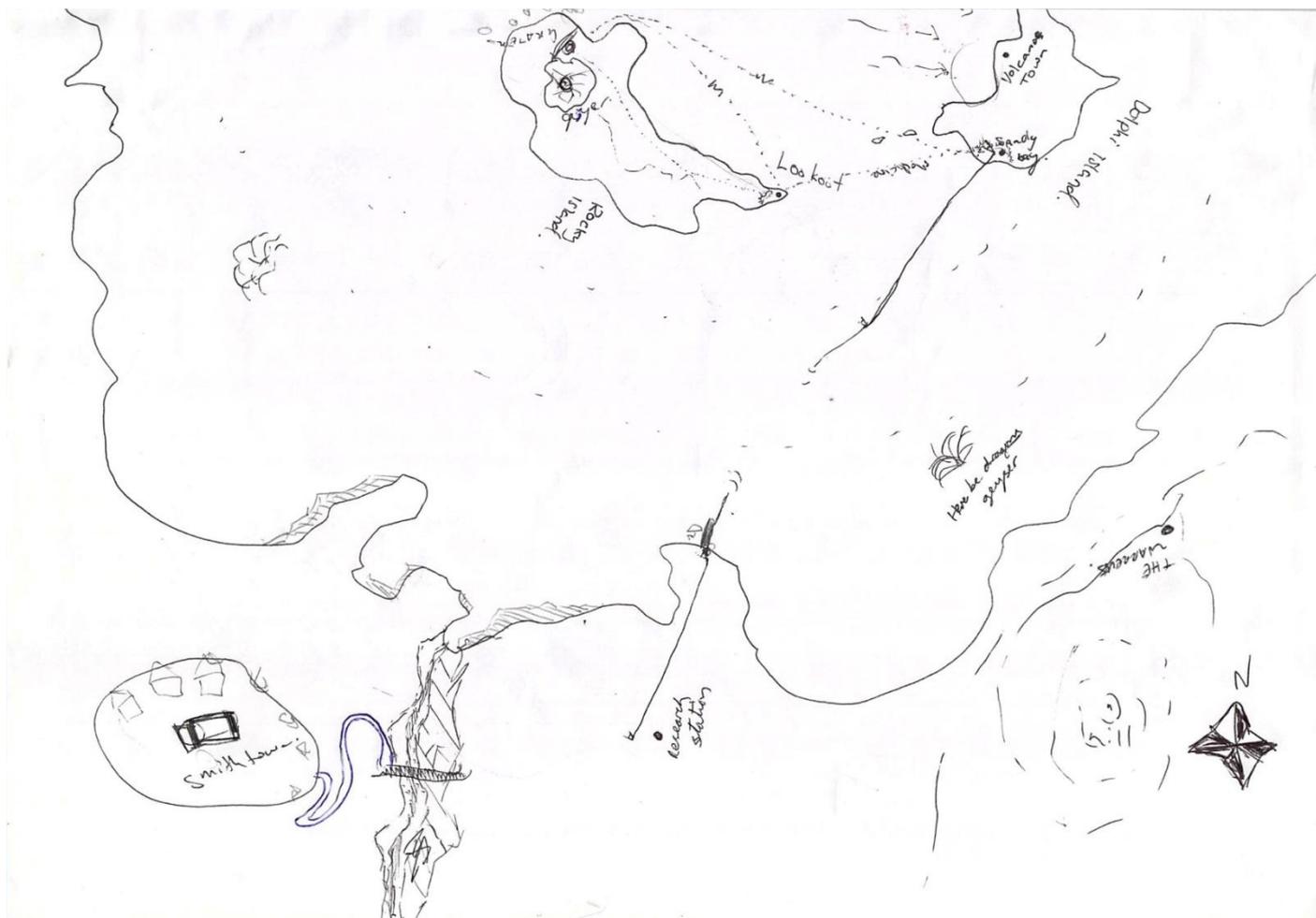The Dresden Files Roleplaying Game, Volume 1: Your Story
Toon
Volume 1: Nexus: Live Action Roleplaying

Fudge Dice

Collaborative World Creation

A how-to guide written by Jan-Yves Ruzicka

Last campaign I couldn't be bothered making a world. So I got the players to do it for me.

Benefits

A surprising number:

* You don't have to spend hours poring over the world on your own.
* Your world focusses on the things the players care about, because they're the ones directing the creation process.
* Your characters are more tied into the world, rather than feeling like tourists who just arrived ten minutes ago.
* People will actually remember details. Again, because they helped write it.

Drawbacks

You no longer have complete control over your game world. The characters are going to mess it up to kingdom come *anyway*, you might as well give in now and enjoy the ride.

How it works

First, get some stuff together:

* A sheet of A3 paper, to draw on. This will be your map and people will treasure it.
* Pencils, at least one per player.
* Index cards.

This is going to take all session, just so you know. You're going to go through four stages: establishing the world, outlining the terrain, adding settlements, and detailing those settlements.

Step one - Establish common ground

Discuss with your players the sort of game you're planning. Gauge their interest, and get their feedback on what they want in the world. Determine how far along the gonzo/cinematic path your game is.

One good trick I've nicked from the game Microscope: have a palette. This is an index card, divided in two lengthwise. Down one side (labelled: "YES, OH DEAR GOD YES") you list all the things you want in the campaign. Down the other (labelled: "FOR THE LOVE OF GOD NO") you list all the things you'd rather not see. Someone starts by writing down something under one column, then passes it ot their left. You keep passing it until someone is finished writing things down - then everyone else gets one more go (if they want) before finishing up.
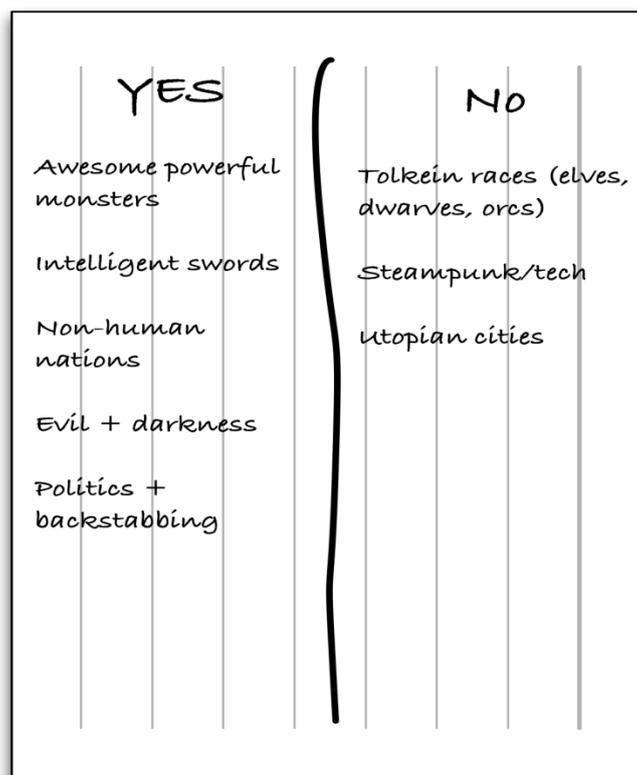
If you end up with opposing concepts in the same column, or very similar things in both columns, maybe you need to step back and discuss the game world again.

By the end of this step you should all be on the same page as to what kind of campaign it's going to be, and what kind of world you're making.

Step two - Create an outline of the world

OK, step one is vital but boring. Here comes the fun. Take a pencil (yes, you), and draw some land-masses on the map. Tell the group what you're drawing. For example:

* "This is a bunch of rocky islands in the middle of the giant lake. They're all cliffy except for a few sandy bays on each island."
* "This is the edge of the Great Continent."
* "This is the pensinsula where the campaign will take place. I think there's probably about five different city-states along its length."

What you've drawn is *narrative truth*: no one can contradict what you've drawn. What you say is, let's call it *narrative encouragement*: this is your suggestion for what should happen next.

Now, it's the turn of the person to your left. They can draw in some other physical feature of the surroundings. Stick to terrain right now - you may want to start with more permanent features (mountains, land-masses, hills, gorges) and then add other features later (rivers run from mountains to the sea, forests grow along rivers, swamps pop up around river deltas, etc.), or you may just want to add features as they seem cool. The important thing is: everyone gets to draw on the map. In fact, everyone *has* to draw on the map. Think of it as a very genteel Fight Club.

You should go around the table maybe twice, but if you think your map is a little bare, by all means go around again. Similarly, if you have six people at the table and by the time you've gone around once you have a busy little world, maybe it's time to stop there.

By the end of this step you should have the world you're living in. Now it's time to put some people down on it.

Step three - Populate your world

Take the pencil and put a dot on the map somewhere. This is a settlement. Think about where it would be cool/obvious to have a settlement: at a river mouth, where two rivers meet, in a mountain pass, next to an oasis in the desert, on an island right in the middle of the map, deep in the jungle, underwater, on that abandoned oil rig, wherever strikes your fancy. Remember how cinematic you made the game: something that's supposed to be grittily realistic probably shouldn't have dome cities on the bottom of the ocean (unless, of course, that's something on your palette).

Give your settlement a name. It could be obvious ("This city is called Yarmouth, because it's at the mouth of the Yarin River"), or it could be obscure ("This town is called Lookout, because once there was a lookout here, when this was a mountain, about three hundred years ago, but everyone's forgotten that"), or it could be unexplained ("This village is called Twofer, because that sounds weird and cool"). You may want to tell people why it's there, what it's like, or what ideas you have for it.

Again, you may want to go around the table more than once to put a few good towns on the map. Consider what sort of world you're looking at - if it's a bustling trade hub around here you may want to go around the table three times to get enough places on the map. When it looks busy enough, that's time to stop. Don't be afraid to ask your group for feedback on this.

By the end of this step you should have some settlements for people to live in. They'll have names and ideas, but they won't be fully fleshed out. Don't worry - that's why we've got the next step.

Step four - Detail your settlements

Take an index card for each settlement and write its name at the top. Draw up a little roster on each card that looks something like this:

Everyone should have a card for each settlement they made. Take one of your cards, and pass it to the left. Keep the other one around: we'll get to it soon. You'll receive a card from your right with someone else's settlement on it. Now write down one fact about the settlement on that index card. It only needs to be a few words: "trading post", for example, or "heavily defended", or "good fishing spot". It doesn't have to be something that the creator specified, but don't be a dick about it. After all, you've got to live in this world too. Write down a resource under either "Resources" or

"Scarcities" - these are things that the settlement either has a lot of, or needs. Examples could be: food, water, electricity, people, ships, guns, tools, etc.

Now take the card you just wrote on and pass it to the left. You'll receive another card, with one fact and one resource/scarcity on it. Write another fact under the first, and add a resource/scarcity. You should all be talking while you do this, throwing around good ideas, crying in pain and anguish as your original idea is twisted beyond all recognition, or laughing in triumph as a boring town in a logical place that was going to basically be Humdrumville, Monotony becomes something weird and wonderful.

Pass your card to the left once again. Now you have a card in front of you with two facts, and two resources/scarcities. Write down a third fact and a third resource/scarcity. Note that you should only have two each of resources and scarcities by the end of this, so if there's already two resources, add a scarcity (and vice versa).

Pass your card to the left one final time. You'll get one full card, with three facts and three resources/scarcities on it. Add the last recourse/scarcity (remembering that you want two each when you finish), and write down what sort of settlement this is in the top-right (town, city, keep, village, etc).

Now pass your card back to whoever named the settlement. They get their settlement back, in whatever form it's in after being through four other players' hands. Remember that second card you had sitting in reserve? Start the process again, but this time pass the other way.

If you have additional cards, pass them around, whichever way you choose. This system is designed to maximise group input for a five-player group, but if you have more or less players I'm sure you can mangle these guidelines to fit.

By the end of this step, all of your settlements will be character-filled towns and villages, with their own needs, wants, and surpluses.

Step five - play

You now have your own world. I'm sure if you want you can add your own touches - trade routes, wars, nations, and borders - but I'll leave that up to you. For now, you've got a nice new sandbox to play with it.
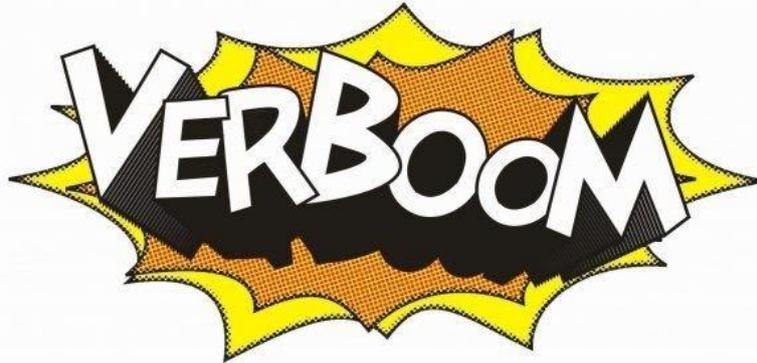
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