

The Tao Of Gaming

Verses 1-9

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1

The Game that can be won
is not the eternal Game.
The Rules that can be lawyered
are not the eternal Rules.

Play is eternal.
Rules point the way to Play.

Free from certainty, you experience Play.
Caught up in probability, you see only Rules.

Yet both Rules and Play
describe the same Game.

2

When PCs decide to act for good,
evil arises to challenge them.
When gamers focus on crunch,
they ignore fluff.

PCs and NPCs create each other.
Crunch and fluff support each other.
Players and GMs inspire each other.
Situation and resolution define each other.
Action and consequence follow each other.

Therefore the GM channels her world
and lets it react sensibly.
Situations arise and she lets them play out;
plotlines resolve and she lets them go.
She runs her table but doesn't dictate action,
she presents the world but expects nothing.
When her game session is done, she sets it free.
That is why it endures in memory.

3

If you create heroic NPCs,
PCs become irrelevant to the Story.

If you overvalue MacGuffins,
PCs become glorified pack mules.

The GM leads
by moving players beyond Rules
and into creating Story,
by honoring the PCs' origins
and challenging them to grow.
She grants her players' wishes
in the most unexpected ways,
and encourages them to create solutions
when they lack overt power.

Practice listening to Story,
and decisions will make themselves.

4

The Game is Story
with infinite beginnings, middles, and ends;
perpetually retold, but eternally new.

It is a map with no edges,
an endless frontier of exploration.

The Game transcends mere Rules.
It exists through and beyond the World.

5

The Game doesn't take sides;
it gives birth to both good and evil.

The GM doesn't take sides;
she welcomes both heroes and villains.

The Game is like the Elemental Plane of Air;
it is empty yet infinitely full.
The more you summon from it, the more it produces;
the more you codify it, the less sense it makes.

Be the emptiness at the center of the Game.

6

The Game is the cradle of creativity.
It contains an infinite variety of worlds.
Everything players experience and think
is fodder to fuel the Game.

7

The Game is infinite, eternal.

Why is it eternal?

The World can implode,
and the Game persists.

Why is it infinite?

It has no desires for itself,
thus all players can shape it.

The GM follows the players;
that is how she stays ahead of them.

She is detached from all outcomes;
that is why she offers every outcome.

Because she embraces Story and abandons Ego,
she reaps perfect contentment.

8

The supreme Story is like water:
it makes the World flourish without apparent effort.
It flows into cracks and seeps into every hidden place.
Thus it is like the Tao.

In creating, build on what already exists.
When planning, keep it simple.
In conflict, be fair and flexible.
When behind the screen, don't try to control.
In gaming, focus on what you enjoy.
At the table, be completely present.

When you are content to simply Play
and not compare or compete,
everybody will respect you.

9

Populate your world without preparation
and PCs lack purpose.

Detail how events will unfold in your campaign
and players see railroad tracks.

Under-reward your PCs
and players feel cheated.

Center the entire world on your PCs
and their story dies.

Create just enough to work with
and no more.

Let players discover and follow
their own path.

This single tightrope leads
to both Mastery and Serenity.