



**WINDMILL  
GAME CO.**

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2009

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## **WINDY CITY NINJAS -OR- CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DICE DOJO**

Summer is always insanely busy for the Windmill crew. The season is bracketed on either side by major conventions: Origins in Columbus, Ohio in June, GenCon in Indianapolis in August. We've always got a lot of extra things to do, both for convention prep and for other events that aren't directly related to Windmill Games. Weddings, LARPs, people visiting, family reunions, graduations, hiking trips to Urundi Burundi... so our free time is often limited, rare, and as precious as cold water in the Sahara. When we have the ability to run events, we want to make sure that they give us good exposure but are also fun and involve a lot of cool people.

Enter Chicagoland Games Dice Dojo (<http://www.chicagolandgames.com/>). Nate Scheidler, the Director of Community Marketing for Chicago Toy and Game Group <http://www.chitag.com> and the organizer for Chicago Boardgames Meetup <http://www.chicagoboardgames.com>, our agent for lack of a better term, and a guy who has our back every day of the week, got us in contact with them, and we arranged a night of Dread games. Jon Paul and the rest of the Dice Dojo crew did some great promotions, so when July 25th rolled around, we had over 30

players signed up! We showed up in Chicago early, as every sane person hates Chicago traffic, and we knew full well that it would take us at least four times as long as is reasonable to get to wherever we needed to go. A few parking shenanigans notwithstanding, we found our way to the store pretty easily and in plenty of time.

The store itself is huge by Chicago standards. It has an open and airy feeling, with vaulted ceilings and walls painted in friendly colors. There were plenty of tables and a good selection of board games, card games and role-playing games on the shelves – plus approximately a ton of in-house games for people to sit down and play. And then there was the basement. Oh gods, the basement. I am jealous of Brandon and Avery, who got to run *Dread* in the underground – cool and pleasantly humid, with walls that muffled sound, flickering fluorescent lights, and exposed girders with cobwebs randomly interspersed. It was still quite clean, and I heard that it lent amazing ambiance to the games.

I ended up running *Devil In The Dust* in the main area, and it was fun. I had an excellent group of players, and they really seemed to enjoy the game. Close by Mason was running *Beneath The Mask*, and had a fair number of spectators, but that didn't seem to detract from the immersion all that much. Even with people playing cards at the front of the store, people were able to get into the story and the game, and predictably were sitting pretty far away from the table by the time the action got tense. Thanks to my players for a great game, and a thousand thanks to Jon Paul and the rest of the Chicagoland Games crew for

promoting and hosting us! Chicagoland Games has become the official store for Windmill Game Co. in the Chicago area, so if you're anywhere near, go check them out!

Enough about me, let's hear from the rest of the family!

-Akira Barnes

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## **DREAD: BENEATH THE GAME STORE**

I wouldn't call myself a Chicago native by any stretch of the imagination. But after having lived there for several years, taking the El everywhere, living on both the North and South sides, and having an addiction level craving for Giordano's Pizza, I consider the city one of my homes. So when we got the chance to go down to Chicagoland Games I was more than excited!

Chicagoland Games and Dice Dojo, located on the North side of Chicago, is one of the coolest places I have ever (and I mean EVER) run Dread. Most of the six games we ran were held in the main gaming area of the store, and two games were held in the creepy basement. Also we got a chance to experiment with a new feature that we're working on in running Dread events... The dead-man's table, where a character that dies in one story can choose to join a table that begins running as soon as the first person enters it. Jason handled overflow to the DMT this session, which was held in the store's alleyway parking area!

The games themselves ran really well, and everyone had a really great time. I personally got to run Little White Birds, a scenario that we wrote for /Dread:

Tales of Terror Issue 2: Precious Illusions/, and I had a phenomenal group! Running Dread is always such an organic experience and as the lead writer for the Tales of Terror series it's a ton of fun to see how each table and each player interprets the characters in a given scenario. That is honestly one of the best things about Dread from my perspective. Without giving anything away, we ended up having a group that had a few characters that were exactly as I had imagined them when I wrote the scenario, and one or two that surprised me.

Probably one of the best things a Dread event can have is ambiance and we were afforded an awesome space to play in. Many of the buildings along some of the more major streets in Chicago still have their original basements, and Chicagoland Games was no exception. The low ceilings and chipped masonry really brought a sense of danger to the game that is hard to manufacture. What's better is that the store knows that the space is great for that, and maintains it in a manner that preserves the creepiness of it, while providing the players of the game a safe, if scary, atmosphere to play in. One of the coolest features was the acoustics! The floor was right above us so we could hear all of the games going on upstairs, and anytime a tower up there fell the sound of falling blocks would fill the basement and ratchet that tension up a few notches.

All in all, an amazingly wonderful store, a great group of players, and one of my favorite cities in the US, added up to making a successful and hopefully repeated Dread: Tales of Terror event. Next on the horizon is GenCon and we hope to see all of you there!

-Brandon Grinslade

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## **JASON IS ACTUALLY A VAMPIRE: FILM AT 11**

Now, I'm going to leave it to my brothers in dice to discuss the absolutely awesome time we had at Chicagoland Games Dice Dojo this week and instead focus a little bit more on one of my major jobs within this company, as one of the main writers for ADGNPSEF555. While most recently I have put my Dread hat on and have been writing up one of the scenarios for our Tales of Terror series' September release, my mind has very rarely strayed from that land of candy, crayon and explosions. At this point I have written quite a bit myself, not to mention all of the stuff Akira, Brandon and I have written together. The end of this fairly monumental work of staggering insanity is close to being done, and what is the one thing I have learned from the whole process? It is extremely difficult to be a comedy writer. There is almost no way to count the number of "great ideas" I have had, put to ink, or pixels as the case may be, only to realize in the light of day they don't all work. For example, it turns out that the pasteurization process is not, in fact, comedy gold and making an entire dimension around the joys and wonders of such a thing, well, maybe it wasn't exactly what I was looking for. I understand that all writing is hard, but simply put, writing comedy, something that is truly funny, not just to yourself put to a large percentage of the people out there may be one of the most difficult things to do. For ADGNPSEF555, its even harder. Those of you who have played

ADGNPSEF555, you will understand the abject insanity that the game brings out; not just in the sugar addled brain of the GMs, but in every player we encounter. In fact, the players often do crazier stuff than any of us GMs can imagine, so much so we need to step back and marvel in the sheer mad comedic genius of what our players do. The trick that I am finding interesting is how to convey that insane spontaneity and ever shifting creative space in to such a finite thing as print. In fact, people often ask me or my brother in dice Akira; where do we come up with the ideas and energy to keep up the free flowing ideas that bounce around like a super ball thrown by a hyperactive 10 year old who wants to know how much carnage he could cause in his mom's living room with one well timed bounce? It was when I really thought about this question, that the secret of writing this game came to me and it is the same one I use for running the thing; listen and feed off the energy of those around me. Seriously, total psychic vampirism and all that jazz.

The secret to running ADGNPSEF555 is to begin with as much energy as we can muster, go crazy, lose all sense of self and just feel free to look like a fool. Doing that at the start of the game gets everyone else into the spirit of the thing. And seriously, that spirit, that energy is contagious. People feel that and get moving with it and from that point it is easy. Just listen and watch the chaos, maybe throw in something that someone said in a previous game in order to build the comedy even further. Taking that idea and shoving it into writing is what has allowed me to keep going with this thing. When I am running, I almost literally hear in my head the voices of

everyone who has played this game. I remember random quotes, laughter, joy. I almost instinctively begin to duck as the candy is being thrown across the room. It is those voices; it is that remembered energy that carries me through. At least that's the only way I have discovered to successfully write comedy, maybe in the future I'll figure something else out, but for now it works, and it has helped me write a fine book so far, if I don't say so myself. And hey, if you like the idea of the pasteurization planet, drop me a line, let me know, maybe I'll totally run with it.

I know my editor is going to hate me for going on longer here, but I neglected to mention something very important in my last newsletter article. I need to really throw a hug and shout-out to the Silvervine games guys for helping us out at Origins. They came through for us like champs and I don't want you guys to think I forgot. Until next time, this is Jason P.

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## **FEAR AND LOATHING ON THE CON-CIRCUT.**

It's convention season once again, and even as I write, I'm off to another convention. This one's called Connecticon, and I've never been to it. Weirder still, I'm going but I'm not running anything. No GM badge, no will call, nothing special. For the first time in many years, I'm going to a convention as just another Joe Gamer. And I like it. At home, I have some great players. I've had the honor to run campaigns that have lasted decades (okay, two decades, but that counts) with players fondly remembering games years after they've moved all over the country, all over the world. And while I've had my share of

convention nightmares, which I'll save for another day, I've been blessed with good players and good games on the road, too. The point is, as lucky as I am in my gaming, here at Windmill Games we try to keep every gamer in mind. And when I go to a convention like this one, where I know only a few people, where I'm not running anything, I get a better sense of what's going on in the world of gaming. I sit on the other side of the table, among the players, be one of them, which is something I don't get to do much of at home. I get to see things from a player's perspective again, with new people to play with, new styles and new stories. It's exciting. It's also educational. That's something I bring over from my day job, teaching college history. When I step into a classroom with a group of students, I'm not there to fill their empty heads with knowledge. That model supposes that they are empty vessels, and they're not. It supposes them I'm an infallible source of wisdom, and I'm not. Rather, I try to keep in mind that learning is a two way process, and I learn and grow with each class I teach. I bring the same mindset to the game table. When running a game, I listen to the players, try to find a game that makes them happy, to guide the kind of story they want to tell about the kind of characters they find interesting. Over the years, this has become easier at my home table, with a good group of players and new ones joining all the time. But at a new convention, in a city I've never really spent any time in, with people I don't know...this should be quite the learning experience. And here at Windmill Games, we're not just a game company, or a bunch of gamers starting up a company. Where gamers and writers who listen, learn and play with other gamers, because we are fans as

well as writers, players as well as Game Masters. That's what Windmill Games is all about, to me.

-Kevin Kreiner

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## **AN OUTREACH HORROR DOUBLE-FEATURE**

As head of marketing here at Windmill Games, one of my jobs is to find and speak with local gaming groups all over the country. This, of course, makes me long for the days when we will all have chips in our heads. That way our benevolent overlords can tell exactly what our hobbies are, and adjust our happiness chip rations arbitrarily. Or...I'd have an easier time searching for gaming groups on the internet. We are trying to move in a slightly different direction than most other gaming companies. Our goal is to mix the effectiveness of a big company with small company outreach. After all, we make games for you folks who play our games, but we're gamers, too. This means that we are going to be doing more than just publishing great modules and games like clockwork. We want your input on games. We want you to come up to us at conventions and tell us what you like and what you don't. Heck, we want you to suggest modules for us to write!

So keep an eye out, faithful viewers. In the months ahead, we will give you loads of opportunities for bragging rights with your friends. With a little luck, you can be the first on your block to say you've contributed to the wild world of Windmill Games. Because there are only so many ways one can say "we love players and want to get them involved," I'd like to devote the rest of this column

to my musings on horror. I see horror as dividing into two types; psychological horror and gore and splatter, axe-murderer kind of horror. I personally enjoy psychological horror in gaming. After all, gore horror is difficult to accomplish. When you present players with gore, or some hideous monster, part of them will likely start thinking about numbers, a character sheet, and combat. In lieu of this approach, I prefer to be minimalist with the genre. After all, who knows what is going to be more scary to a player than the player themselves? Doing things this way can go a bit against instinct, but can turn out very well. It's the way movies can be more scary when they don't show you the monster, they show you people reacting to it. When running horror, I find that I frequently want to describe things in exacting detail. However, some of the best games in this genre that I've participated in had stretches where the GM was doing very little narration at all. Instead, he spent a good deal of time letting the players interact with each other. This let them make the situation more real to each other, which in turn made the whole game that much more immersive. Speaking of minimalist horror, I am currently putting together a Dread scenario set in a biological laboratory. Can't say more about it now, but there will be twists and turns and scares like you've never seen before. Well, then. Back to the lab.

-Ryan LaRanger

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## **GEN CON SCHEDULE UPDATE**

Finally here's an updated Gen-Con Schedule for those keeping track at home! There are still some games that haven't sold out!

To make things easier we've made **BOLD** the remaining seats in the various games. Still feel free to show up and watch though, and who knows we may have extra people there to run more games! So show up and say hey!

#### **THURSDAY 08/13**

- 1200-1400 RPG0903780 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **25 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1600 RPG0903783 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **26 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1800 RPG0903814 Dread – 13 (Brandon: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)
- 1800-2200 RPG0903817 Dread – Henchmen (Avery: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)
- 2200-2600 RPG0903819 Dread – The Wild Hunt (Avery: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)

#### **FRIDAY 08/14**

- 1200-1400 RPG0903785 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **24 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1600 RPG0903786 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **25 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1800 RPG0903815 Dread – Beneath the Surface (Brandon: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)
- 1400-1800 RPG0903808 Golden Hour – In My Day (Kevin: Omni - Gates Hall – 1, **4 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1800-2200 RPG0903818 Dread – Henchmen (Avery: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)

- 1800-2200 RPG0903810 Golden Hour – Operation: Top Hat (Kevin: Omni - Gates Hall – 2, **2 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)

#### **SATURDAY 08/15**

- 1200-1400 RPG0903787 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **27 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1600 RPG0903788 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 (Akira, Jason: Omni - Illinois Ballroom – 1-4, **28 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE**)
- 1400-1800 RPG0903816 Dread – Beneath the Mask (Brandon: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)
- 1800-2200 RPG0903820 Dread – The Wild Hunt (Avery: Omni - Indiana – 2, **SOLD OUT**)
- 2000-2400 RPG0903811 Golden Hour – Passages (Kevin: Omni - Gates Hall – 1, **SOLD OUT**)

#### **SUNDAY 08/16**

- 1200-1600 LRP0903789 Golden Hour – ADGNEPSEF555 LARP (Akira, Brandon, Jason: Hyatt - Cosmopolitan Ballroom D, **29 TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE, SIGN UP FOR CHARACTERS ON OUR FORUMS!**)
- 1200-1600 RPG0903813 Golden Hour – Children of the Atom (Kevin: Omni - Gates Hall – 1, **SOLD OUT**)

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#### **BREAKING NEWS!**

Our web-store is now up and running! Order all your favorite Windmill Products online!

<http://windmill-games.com/shop.shtml>