

The College Games

The campaigns of this era were mostly conducted with two groups: one that I GMed for which had a couple core participants and some who came and went--but mostly between campaigns, each campaign's group was generally fixed; and one long-established local group which I was invited to join. Its membership was much more variable on a week-to-week basis.

“World of Air”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** 1 semester (spring 2005)
- **setting:** Based on Arianus from “Death Gate Cycle.”
- **summary:** Caught up in a revolution against a totalitarian elven state, a group of people stranded from other universes blows up a lich's floating island and leads a continent of slave dwarves against their elven oppressors.
- **notes:** *My first RPG ever, as GM or player. Contained a lich.*

“Elves and Kings” (Mark)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** player (first appearance of The Librarian)
- **duration:** I'm not sure how long before I joined, but maybe a month after that the campaign was dropped. (2005)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** I used the Power Of Literacy to convince xenophobic elves to help us unmask an evil king. Then someone did something stupid in the middle of the sourt and the plan went south.
- **notes:** *My first time as a player; I was invited to help an existing group learn to RP.*

“Too Many Tarrasques” (Chris?)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** player (two-headed hound archon monk)
- **duration:** One session (2005)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** Tarrasques crawled out of a sinkhole in the middle of town and ate everything. We saved the bank vault, but not the orphanage. Priorities.
- **notes:** *It was Chris's first time as a GM. He threw three-to-five Tarrasques at level 12 party. Some of the PCs survived, but the campaign didn't.*

“Evil PCs” (Mark)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** player (Gordian the Quarterling; Kawnyin Flying Arrow the cowardly serial killer)
- **duration:** a couple months (2005?)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** Unsavory traveling companions rally together to help defend an evil-aligned city from attack by an army of paladins.
- **notes:** *My first time as an evil PC; I learned a lot about metadynamics of parties. I also started learning about making PCs that don't force everyone else to the sidelines.*

“Rod of Seven Parts” epic campaign (Mark)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** player (abortive Rakshasa, The Librarian, and Shachm the Any-Faced) & GM (round robin GMing with Mark as overseer)
- **duration:** one summer (2005)
- **setting:** 3.5 Great Wheel cosmology with custom bits added (the Plane of Indefinite Article and the Lone Power’s New York from “So You Want to Be a Wizard”)
- **summary:** The party raced from plane to plane trying to reach an epic version of the Rod of Seven Parts first and summon a hero to defeat the dead god whose adherents were also seeking the Parts.
- **notes:** *My first experience with epic play; was v. silly. Learned about edge-cases of optimisation. The round-robin GMing style worked well with the game’s episodic find-the-plot-coupons structure. I played an arch-demi-lich and a doppelganger who could become almost literally anything.*

“The Valley of Light and Dark” / “Party of Fatal Flaws”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** fizzled out after about a month (summer 2005)
- **setting:** Valley divided between eternal night (where people prefer beauty to truth) and eternal day (where people prefer truth to beauty).
- **Summary:** A group of misfit explorers stumble into a valley where adherents to truth and admirers of beauty are poised for war.
- **notes:** *Too academic a concept combined with too silly a concept (PCs each had a terrible and comic flaw); failure was inevitable. Should have been a novella about the secret courtship of Prince Reason and Princess Rhyme. Partially inspired by “The Magic Flute” and “The Phantom Tollbooth.”*

“The Mage Railroad”

- **system:** Mage (old World of Darkness)
- **my role:** guest NPC (ghoul), player (Prime Mage English professor)
- **duration:** One session after I joined as a player.
- **setting:** old World of Darkness city
- **summary:** I have no idea what was going on. The STPC sacrificed himself to defeat a giant magical goo which was immune to all our attacks.
- **notes:** *The ST was famous for having awesome stories but using PCs as little more than puppets to tell them. That, combined with interpersonal drama between friends in the group, caused the game to disintegrate after my first session as a player. The ST joined my next D&D campaign.*

“The Artifacts of Chance”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** two semesters (fall 2005, spring 2006)
- **setting:** Material-plane-focused custom 3.5 variant with setting details inspired by “The Vorkosigan Saga,” “His Dark Materials.”
- **summary:** Forced by the loathesome Hades Acheron to help him acquire the first Artifact of Chance, the party dedicated themselves to stopping his plan for bending Fate and Destiny to his whim.
- **notes:** *Dragged on too long because of level-up necessities. This was the first time I had to seriously deal with party incohesion. Half-fiend ogre mage villain inspired by “The Eyre Affair.” The first appearance of my waterboat halflings. Contained a lich.*

“The Twin Minotaurs” (twosie campaign)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few months (fall 2005 or spring 2006, concurrent with The Artifacts of Chance)
- **setting:** Barbarian North of “Artifacts of Chance” setting.
- **summary:** A lawful good half-dragon minotaur is forced to stop his chaotic evil twin sister when she becomes a herald of the Rat God.
- **notes:** *Ran for a friend who wanted to play D&D but didn't want to join Artifacts of Chance game already in progress.*

A Game I Can't Remember

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few sessions (probably fall 2005)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** I have no recollection.
- **notes:** *My first online game, run for an online friend called “The.”*

“Fiery Temper” (The)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** player (monk with fists of fire)
- **duration:** a few sessions (probably fall 2005)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** A young woman, enrolled in a monastery for training to control her temper, used her anger to smite her foes with fists of fire.
- **notes:** *My second online game, run by “The.”*

“A Short Story about Short Brothers”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one session (summer 2006)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** Halfling brothers went to a bar and told bad jokes for free drinks.
- **notes:** *Ran for a friend and *his* friend while at home for the summer.*

“The New World”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** two semesters (fall 2006 to spring 2007)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval giving way to homebrew re-skinning of same.
- **summary:** As magic dies on a bog-standard D&D continent, the party explores a recently-discovered new continent steeped in magic, adventure, and terrible secrets. Highlights included a magic-drunk tarrasque, the redemption of a pirate king, and the resurrection of an ancient Rakshasa queen.
- **notes:** *I spent all summer prepping for this one; got great results. Setting details inspired by Allende's “Zorro,” “HDM,” “Digger,” the Book of Revelations, Walt Whitman. The Librarian appeared as the party's NPC mentor/sponsor.*

“The Epic Test”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
 - **my role:** GM
 - **duration:** one month (winter 2006)
 - **setting:** epic 3.5 kitchen sink
 - **summary:** A group of heroes makes an unlikely alliance with the Pharaoh of a dead kingdom in their efforts to stop a plan to create an army of unstoppable undead warriors.
 - **notes:** *We ran this so we could get a feeling for epic-level play before New World game hit epic levels. I railroaded too hard at the end and left a sour taste in everyone's mouths. Contained two liches.*
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The “Trogdor and Melon” Collection

“The Pyromancer”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few weeks (late 2007 or early 2008?)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** A dungeon crawl with a fire-flinging sorcerer at the end.
- **notes:** *One of the first games I ran with Trogdor and his brother Melon; perhaps the first, it's all a bit muddled. Also one of the only times a rust monster ever appeared in my games.*

“The Dragon Orbs”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few months
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval
- **summary:** Hired to track down the Dragon Orbs, the party encountered horrific corrupting power.
- **notes:** *This one experimented with the Taint mechanic and giving super-powerful artifacts to mid-level PCs. Contained a lich.*

“That One With the Necrotic Cysts”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few months
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink, but Renaissance flavoured
- **summary:** Stopping some bandits turned into a desperate hunt for the necromancer who infects people with mind-controlling tumours.
- **notes:** *I tried to give the setting a bit of Renaissance flair, with moderate success. Contained a would-be lich.*

“The Evil Minions”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a few months
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink medieval

- **summary:** As the evil henchmen to the powerful warlord Moloch, the party was instrumental in nearly defeating a group of four unlikely heroes.
- **notes:** *Unexpectedly successful! We went in knowing that it was the job of villains to be menacing but ultimately to fail, and we did an excellent job of it. Lots of fun being the henchmen trusted to come up with the strategies for supporting their master's plans.*

“Shambhala”

- **system:** SG-1 (Spycraft)
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one session (to be revisited as Fate Core game)
- **setting:** the Himalayas of SG-1 contemporary Earth
- **summary:** A covert team investigates an electromagnetic anomaly in the Himalayas, and accidentally releases an outlaw goa'uld from its exile in Shangri-La.
- **notes:** *I started designing this in 2006, but it never got tested until Trogdor and his brother were willing to try it out. In this session, we learned that it couldn't work with two players running two PCs each.*

“The Origin of Ajani”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
 - **my role:** GM
 - **duration:** one or two sessions (but see below)
 - **setting:** 3.5-style fantasy ancient Egypt
 - **summary:** A temple thief's life changes forever when he's attacked by a priestess of Bast.
 - **notes:** *A one-shot for Trogdor while his brother was otherwise occupied. Ajani returns in The Werecat Chronicles below.*
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UOG and Beyond

“Knave Port” AKA “The Island of the Scale”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** several months (spring 2010-fall 2010) (later revised as a Storium game; maybe to be revisited as Fate Core game)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink tropical island port/wilderness
- **summary:** Members of an adventurers' guild discover a sinister yuan-ti plot which threatens to overthrow a notorious island city.
- **notes:** *An over-ambitious game because I was excited about having a new bigger group with local college students--but I didn't take the time to learn what they wanted out of a game. Contained a worm that walks.*

That One Matt Ran (Matt)

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** erratic player (pacifist priest, scythe-wielding wild elf)
- **duration:** unsure; several months? (2010-2011)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink
- **summary:** I didn't catch enough of this to know the whole story; there were dinosaurs and undead and powerful artifacts.

- **notes:** *While Knave Port fizzled, another player took over while I was busy. This may have actually been two campaigns; I wasn't there often enough to notice.*

“The Sandbox”

- **system:** D&D 3.5
- **my role:** GM (and player for one session; toad druid)
- **duration:** several months (spring 2011)
- **setting:** generic 3.5 kitchen sink desert
- **summary:** Exploring a desert filled with ancient artifacts guarded by mummified sand-kraken and magical jackal men, the party kept a mad cyborg gnome from ending the world.
- **notes:** *After the group for Knave Port and That One Matt Ran fell apart (theatre majors), I ran Matt, Trogdor, and his brother through The Sandbox. This is the one that turned me off 3.5 for good. Contained a lich.*

Dogs in the Vineyard Test (Melon)

- **system:** Dogs in the Vineyard
- **my role:** player
- **duration:** one session (2011ish)
- **setting:** Dogs in the Vineyard setting
- **summary:** An unusual group of Dogs were ambushed by highwaymen, and dealt with them using unnecessary force.
- **notes:** *We tried to min/max this.*

D&D 4e Test: Coppernight Hold

- **system:** D&D 4e
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one session (summer 2011)
- **setting:** 4e Points of Light
- **summary:** We cleaned out a kobold-infested dwarven ruin ruled by a young white dragon.
- **notes:** *Tiring of 3.5's imbalances, we turned to 4e. I used the level 1 adventure from the Dungeon Delve for this test.*

“The Imperial Wars”

- **system:** D&D 4e
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** summer 2011-spring 2013
- **setting:** 4e Points of Light
- **summary:** Set during the world-spanning war between the tiefling and dragonborn empires, the party was a crack team of specialists for the dragonborn side who performed tasks the empire couldn't be associated with. In the process they discovered and foiled an attempt by the Far Realm to end the mortal world.
- **notes:** *I love the 4e POL setting. We enjoyed the solid mechanics and balance of 4e after the wibbly bits of 3.5, but the ending was rushed because people were leaving island. And this is where I learned my problem is with D&D, not any particular edition. Contained a lich.*

The Dark Sun Game (Trogdor)

- **system:** D&D 4e (Dark Sun variant)
- **my role:** player (various; I died a lot)

- **duration:** erratic, ~1/month sessions over about a year (spring 2012-fall 2012)
- **setting:** 4e Dark Sun
- **summary:** Never got far enough to learn much about the plot. We *all* died a lot.
- **notes:** *Trogdor ran this when I wasn't up to running the Imperial Wars game. It was his first major GMing experience and he did well, but the balance was hinky.*

My Life With Master Test

- **system:** My Life With Master
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one and a half sessions in mid 2012
- **setting:** Generic Überwald
- **summary:** Can't remember many details; there was a werewolf, and the Master had a Napoleon complex.
- **notes:** *the atmosphere was successful, but the mechanics dragged. Trogdor thinks we weren't doing it right. And I may have gotten a little too into the role of Master.*

DFRPG Test AKA "Mimes and Mercenaries"

- **system:** DFRPG, or something like it
 - **my role:** GM
 - **duration:** one glorious post-session encounter in late 2012
 - **setting:** modern ridiculous
 - **summary:** A gunslinging clown and a martial mime ambushed by a mafia hit man in a roadside bar.
 - **notes:** *My first time running Fate, their first time playing it. Gloriously silly and generally successful.*
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The Sparse Years

"En Garde" (Brian)

- **system:** En Garde
- **my role:** player
- **duration:** fizzled after one round took two months
- **setting:** ~1700s France
- **summary:** There was going to be duelling and drama.
- **notes:** *Online chat/email game*

"The Toys Are Alive"

- **system:** DFRPG
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a handful of sessions (technically still on hiatus) (spring 2013)
- **setting:** Dresden Files universe, just outside Myrtle Beach, SC.
- **summary:** When a boy's Skylander toys come alive one night, a rich inbound college student and a handyman try to find out what's happening.
- **notes:** *We should really move this to Fate Core and finish it up.*

"The Enchanted Forest Games"

- **system:** Fate Accelerated Edition
- **my role:** GM (and sometime player; witch's cat)
- **duration:** erratic sessions over several months (technically still on hiatus) (spring 2013)

- **setting:** Wrede's "Enchanted Forest Chronicles" setting
- **summary:** Rather confused and scattered, but with a plot thread about an evil wizard trying to gain control of a shadowy primal power.
- **notes:** *What started as a simple one-shot to justify sharing the beta rules with a guy on rpg.se chat turned into a game with a dozen players and too few GMs spread over every time zone. Had some great moments, but was spread thin, like butter over too much bread.*

"The Werecat Chronicles"

- **system:** Fate Core
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** a handful of sessions (now on hiatus) (summer 2013)
- **setting:** Magical Ancient Egypt
- **summary:** Continuing from "The Origin of Ajani," the title character must adapt to temple life and cope with the prejudice, rivalry, and politics of his newfound position.
- **notes:** *I wrote myself into a corner on this one. May contain a lich.*

"Sen the Magnificent, AKA The Newt Caper"

- **system:** Fate Accelerated Edition
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** two sessions (room still for a third concluding installment) (summer 2013)
- **setting:**
- **summary:**
- **note:** *online campaign*

"Tribute to Wyrrest"

- **system:** Fate Accelerated Edition
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one session (room for a concluding installment) (summer 2013)
- **setting:**
- **summary:**
- **note:** *online campaign*

"The Homeless PI" (Trogdor)

- **system:** Fate Core
- **my role:** player (homeless ex-PI-turned-shaman) (summer 2013)
- **duration:** one session (now on hiatus)
- **setting:**
- **summary:**
- **note:** *set in The City from the Thief franchise, with Trogdor GMing*

Aeon Wave Mk I

Pilgrims of the Flying Temple Test

- **system:** Pilgrims of the Flying Temple
- **my role:** participant (GMless system)
- **duration:** one session
- **setting:**
- **summary:**

- **note:** *online campaign*

“Saving Astrid’s Diner”

- **system:** Fate Core
- **my role:** GM
- **duration:** one session (fall 2013)
- **setting:**
- **summary:**
- **notes:** *Trogdor was joined by a player from the Knave Port campaign who was new to Fate. We used the “Tribute to the Dragon” formula for a satisfactorily concluded one-shot.*

“The Metropolis Suite History”

- **system:** Microscope
- **my role:** participant (GMless system) (fall 2013)
- **duration:** one session (room for more)
- **setting:**
- **summary:** A futuristic history inspired by Janelle Monae’s “Metropolis Suite” concept albums.
- **notes:**

Lady Blackbird Mk I

Aeon Wave Mk II

The Carpenter King