

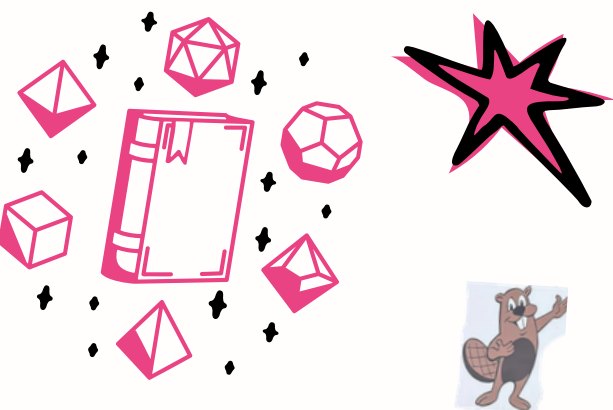
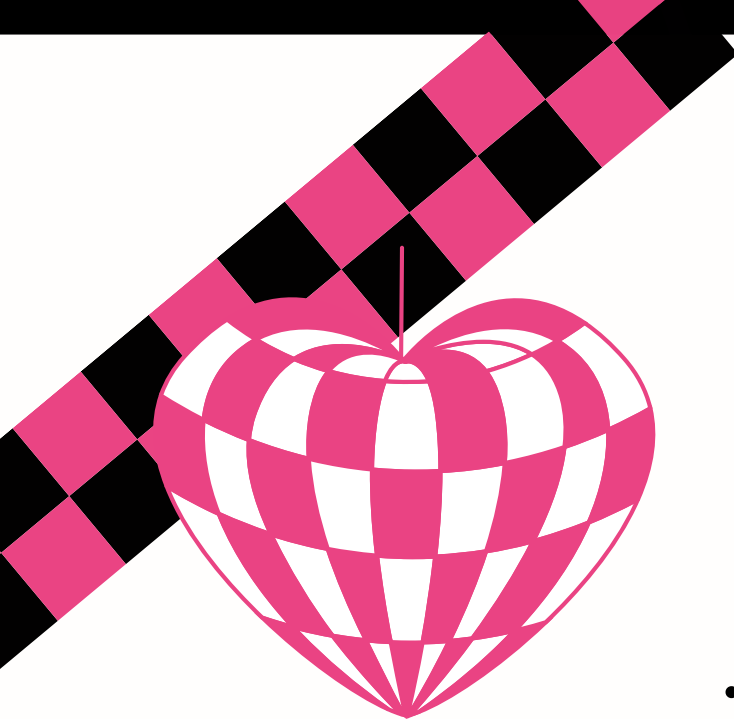
The

# Conington

Post



Vol. I • Issue 3



## THE CONINGTON POST

Where All Are Welcome at Our Tables

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# CONington NEWS



BORN  
TO  
GAME!



Launching 10/8/2026!!

## CONington in the Community October Events

sign up on our website: [conington.org](http://conington.org)



Saturday, October 3, 2026 at Tabletop XP's Grand Opening

- 3pm - TTRPG: Marvel Multiverse: Siege of New York
- 6pm - TTRPG: Ragnaborg: Fate of Bones



Wednesday, October 21, 2026 at Dice on Draft

- 6pm - TTRPG: Vaesen: Vaesen: The Silver of the Sea



DiceDraft



# THE HANIBAL

## ◆ Steve “The Hanibal” Smith

I’m an a\*\*hole. But that’s ok, because I’m the kind of a\*\*hole who always has a plan. And that is the kind of a\*\*hole CONington needs. A couple months ago, Shaun told me that she wanted to extend ownership of CONington to Scott, Michael and me. I asked if that had to include me. Up until then, I had intentionally taken a back seat with CONington, even though it had come to dominate our daily conversations. I was very content remaining “the talent” (my term) and completing other tasks as assigned. No burden of leadership. Reduced stress on Shaun from me being an “a\*\*hole with a plan”. But Shaun believed for this to work, they were going to need those qualities on the team. I had been a Chief Operations Officer for 10 years and didn’t want to return. But then we came across the idea of the “A-Team” and being “the Hannibal” works.

I’ve been gaming since the final days of the Reagan administration, played all of the games, collect obscure old school RPG titles, attended 20 Gen Con’s and others. I have opinions and everyone is entitled to them. And you will get to hear my stories. I like to tell stories. You are welcome.

So now, I develop the financial plans and legal crap for CONington. The others could learn it, but I am already infected with corporate executive processing virus, and no good comes from spreading it. I have impressive spreadsheets with linked tables and equations that feed other equations. As an a\*\*hole, I am comfortable telling people they should give us money, so I’m in charge of sponsorship. Also, I will write season two of The Quest Through the Cov, “The Liberators of Galway.”

Once I commit, I commit. No half measures. That is the mark of a true a\*\*hole. I have a plan. We will make it work and CONington 2027 will be amazing. And I love it when a plan comes together.



# THE NARRATOR EFFECT: UNDERRATED LITRPG WORTH A SECOND LISTEN (PART 3)

◆ Tabi Smith

Multi-narrator productions are still the exception in indie LitRPG, and pick three makes the case for why that should change. When the cast is right, you stop noticing it's a performance and just fall into the story.



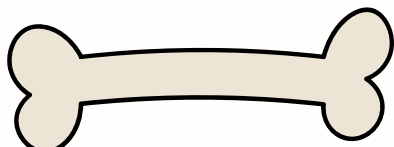
***Mimic & Me** – Cassius Lange, narrated by Ryan H. Reid, Dorrie Sacks, and Jeff Hays*

*A familiar betrayal-and-bonding setup, elevated by a full-cast production that's rare for indie LitRPG. Jeff Hays, already a recognizable genre voice, is the standout, giving the series an edge over similar monster-companion stories.*

Check back next month for Tabi's last LITRPG recommendation.

## NERDY PETS OF CONINGTON: MURPHY

Murphy showed up ready to help his mom Hannah build a legend in Call to Adventure, and he took the job seriously – parked right at the table, watching every card and every rune like it was the best thing happening all week. We're not sure if he's rooting for hero or villain, but he's clearly all in for the story.



We want your nerdy pets! Send yours to [shaunsmith@conington.org](mailto:shaunsmith@conington.org).



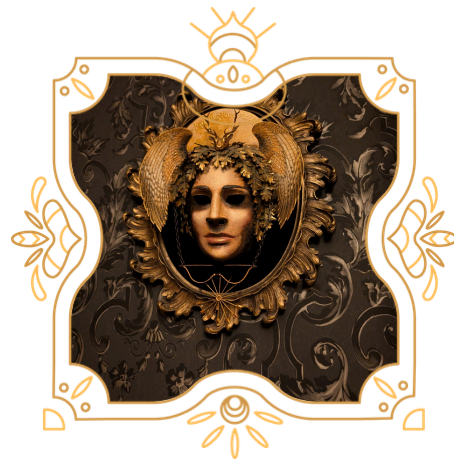
# QUESTING WITH JAMES: HIEROPHANY & HEDGE

◆ James Scott

“Ritual” is a loaded word, especially for those of us who have had a complicated set of experiences with religion. Personally, I’ve been in and out of different practices, but generally gave up on organized religion a few years ago. I’ve been left with a need to still connect with my spiritual aspect and find a sense of wonder in everyday life. To that end, I’ve been exploring a variety of expressions and practices that loosely fit into the word “ritual.”



Enter **Hierophany and Hedge**, perhaps the most wondrous place one can find in our beloved city by the river. Purveyors of “Fine Eldritch Goods & Services,” they are a surprising gem on Pike Street here in Covington. Even from the outside, they stand out with a wooden façade that looks like it’s popped into existence from another plane. Looking through the window, one gets a taste of the literal odds and ends one might find if you explore further inside. For the first year or so I lived in Covington, I had the bad luck of never being able to stop by while they were open, but I stared lovingly at an orrery on display.



When I finally was able to enter, it felt like venturing into a different world filled with wands and arcane texts. My first purchase was The Moon and Serpent Bumper Book of Magic by the legends Alan Moore and Steve Moore, a must read for any nerd interested in these kinds of mysteries. I recently picked up the lovely “Tarot of the Woodland Wardens,” which has given me a great deal of enjoyment so far.

If you are interested in broadening your horizons or simply indulging your curiosity, I must recommend visiting this supplier of bespoke arcana soon! Check their website for updated hours.



Happy wandering!

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR...



## A COOPERATIVE TAKE ON TCGS



Ravensburger is releasing a new Disney Lorcana Illumineer's Quest this month focused on our friends in the Hundred Acre Wood. The Great Hunny Rescue is the third Illumineer's Quest to be released by Ravensburger, a unique take on the trading card game genre. Illumineer's Quest allows players to team up to work together in a cooperative, campaign game using a standard Lorcana deck to fight against a villain. In The Great Hunny Rescue, players will try to explore the tendrils of The Vine, rescue Piglet, and learn what's at the heart of The Vine. Illumineer's Quest: The Great Hunny Rescue comes with everything you need to play the game, including two, pre-built, 60-card Lorcana decks.

Join us at Woodburn Games on Sunday, October 4 to try out the game, make new friends, and get a promo copy of "If I Didn't Have You".



# Pear Tree STUDIO

✦ Josh Hughes

This month it is my pleasure to introduce you to Pear Tree Studio. A small studio, writing great content for multiple systems. Though 3 of his available titles are for Savage Worlds, he is actively branching into other systems. His newest release, Opulus, is for the Mothership game engine.

I've had the privilege to playtest a few of his adventures, as well as write an adventure for a setting that he Kickstarted, featuring local artist Lyn Redder. Beacon Island is a 'kids on bikes' type setting. A New England 'vacation island' with a town, beach, summer camp, and an old WWII military defense fort. Based on the 90s, it's a real throwback to a more care free time with less technology, and more 'weirdness'.

The Iselion Hybrid is one of my favorite one-shots to introduce new players to Savage Worlds with. It is set in a space ship, months away from home and months away from their destination. Hard times ensue as the characters must figure out what has happened to the power of the ship. It also incorporates a terrific new mechanic that naturally adds a dice roll driven resource management system that is effortless, visual, and adds tons of drama for the whole group. Shadows of the Sacred Hills is a weird west adventure. Can easily stand alone or be dropped into other weird west settings. There may be more coming from Pear Tree relating to this... sshhh... I didn't say that though.

Hunter's Moon is a one-sheet adventure, fits right in with Shadows of the Sacred Hills, can also drop into other settings, or stands alone just as easy.

Opulus, once again visits the stars. This time using the Mothership game engine instead of Savage Worlds. "Twenty years ago, the luxury starliner Opulus vanished. Hundreds of passengers, crew, and untold wealth disappeared into the void, leaving behind one of the greatest mysteries in known space. Now, against all odds, Conglomocorp satellite repair contractors have made an impossible discovery: Opulus has returned." Pear Tree Studios has much more in store for gamers. Just keep an eye out. If you run into Pete at a con, make sure to say hi, sign up for a session, and enjoy!



# SPOTLIGHT

# THE PURPOSE OF A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME IS TO

# play...

Jeremiah  
Rose

Our little hobby is so small, and so different from sports or the types of games popular for adults, that we're often called upon to answer the question of what a tabletop roleplaying game is, and what it's for. It's a great question for us also, since how we frame the answer will guide our approach to making and playing games.

One common answer these days is "the purpose of role-playing games is to tell a story." This isn't wrong so much as it is a confusion of ends and means. Narrativization is a fundamental practice of human cognition, and story-telling is a key way we remember people and events, cause and effect. Telling a story about an event is a way to understand and communicate it. One might easily play a game of chess and later recount it in terms of dramatic advances, thrilling sacrifices, and reversals of fortune--a great story. But that's not to say that the purpose of the chess game was to tell a story. Of course sometimes telling a story is a straightforward point. I recommend "Thousand-Year-Old Vampire," by Tim Hutchings, a solo journaling game about a vampire slowly making and losing memories over the eons. For many TTRPGs, from puzzle dungeons to arena combat one-shots, this isn't really the focus. Tabletop role-playing games support a vast range of play goals, more expansive than "telling a story" can explain. More broadly, TTRPGs support structuring play experiences in a way that isn't often otherwise accessible in adult life.



WE'LL  
SURELY  
TELL  
STORIES  
ABOUT IT  
LATER.





play



Children do a lot of free, imaginative play, unhampered by rules. They pretend to bake, or drive trucks, or conduct tea parties. Pretending is amazing for the cognitive development of children; they can experience different social roles, or think through complex physical or social tasks that they aren't ready to handle yet. There can be rules, but they're very loose.

Maybe you suddenly turn from a cop or a robber into a werewolf to scare the other guys off. It's improv. Adults are accustomed to finding this boring. You might play along in order to develop relationships with the youngsters, but the tasks of ordinary pretending aren't very challenging for adults. If we want to, in real life we can go drive a truck or bake a cake, since we are authorized to wield fire, knives, and deadly mechanical vehicles. So we've grown to focus on increasingly structured games in maturity, which have predefined goals and rules that focus play on harder challenges. Competitive games create a challenge by allowing us to test ourselves against other people, while safety rules enforce the boundary between the play mindset and genuine conflict or violence. Abstract strategy games let us pose puzzles with another player in turn, while races and sports let us find a real challenge to our physical capabilities. The difficulty scales with the caliber of the competing players. This habituation to strictly organized goals and rules is why the appeal of a cooperative game with open-ended goals and flexible rules would be perplexing. But what tabletop role-playing games can give us is an experience that's much closer to free, imaginative play, at a level of complexity that can challenge adults. We can try to think through serious moral or philosophical dilemmas, navigate complex social or political situations, or plan out the complex logistics of an expedition or campaign. By relaxing the need for pre-defined goals and strict rules, we have creative freedom to resolve problems in an imaginative, immersive, and interactive way. To play.

We'll surely tell stories about it later.

let's play



# VERSATILE STARTER TERRAIN

◆ Mama Carol

Let's set the scene. A band of heroes walk into a small town, a clearing in the woods, a meadow, they meet a farmer on the side of the road selling Ripley Tomatoes – that one is oddly specific. Each of these scenarios can have some common elements for terrain pieces. I personally see a few smaller huts; simple plan little places that any commoner would occupy, other buildings that I envision are small merchant stalls, almost a shack but protects the merchant and products well enough. Nothing fancy but all are very functional.

Let's build on our Immersive Experience. Perhaps you are at the point of bringing terrain in like we were with bad guy minis 35 years ago. When we all ran out and bought that random pack of flies or ants? If we were REALLY lucky, we found bulk skeletons usually 100 for under \$5 and we bought them from some random retail location that no one ever remembered the name of. It didn't matter anyways when you went back to purchase more, they were already gone.

So here we are once again, "Mama Carol, you are trying to sell me something aren't you?" No but yes. I do sell a starter bundle but again, this is your story to tell and up to you on how to do so. I am simply a guide.



What I think are key points to a starter bundle of playable terrain pieces are as follows:

- Story versatility
- How are you to store it
- Is it easy to transport?
- Are you wanting a project?
- How fast do you need it?
- What are you willing to invest in with time AND money?

All of the above is unique to each individual and the stories they weave. I encourage you to take the time to ponder the above. Let's get this discuss rolling. I do have ideas for our next adventure together but would really like you to actively join me. So, reach out, ([mamacarol686@gmail.com](mailto:mamacarol686@gmail.com)) share your thoughts, ideas, experience and questions.



No matter what my friends I expect all of you to continue on Your Epic Adventure until our stories merge once again.



# DOT GOES TO DRAGON CON

✦ Dot Crane



When CONington's fearless leader Shaun found out I was attending [Dragon Con](#) this year, she said, "Ooooo! Could you write about it for the CONington newsletter?" She also mentioned it had been years since she attended and she wanted to go again. The reply I gave her is the one I offer to everyone who thinks that maybe they'd like to go, "You should! You need to go to Dragon Con!"

One of the reasons we enjoy conventions, whether it's a comic con, an anime con, or a board gaming and TTRPG convention like Gen Con and CONington, is connecting with others who enjoy the same things we enjoy. Many describe it as feeling as though they've found their "tribe" or that it gives them a sense of being home with their big, nerdy family. And one of the biggest nerdy families is the one that attends Dragon Con – attendance this year was 75,000.

No matter what your favorite genre is, or how niche your favorite movie or game, you can find people at Dragon Con who love it too. Sometimes newbies ask if their cosplay idea is too niche and the resounding answer from regular Dragon Con goers is there's no such thing as too niche for Dragon Con.

It takes place every year over Labor Day weekend in Atlanta, beginning officially on the Thursday before and running through Labor Day. Those five days are packed 24 hours a day with hundreds of panels with celebrities from movies and TV, book signings with authors, game shows, fan panels that discuss a jaw-droppingly wide range of topics, movies, drum circles, live music concerts, a burlesque show, a midnight showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show complete with shadow cast, a party at the Georgia Aquarium, a parade on the streets of downtown Atlanta, more parties, 3am raves, and cosplay. So. Much. Cosplay!

I haven't even mentioned the gaming hall, chock-full of tables for D&D and other TTRPGS, board games, and video games. Next door, the vendor hall offers three floors of merchandise and art for you to browse and purchase.

One of my favorite Dragon Con traditions is participating in the Swag and Seek, as well as the Badge Ribbons. Attendees create little gifts for the Swag and Seek, hiding them throughout the con for folks to find, or just giving them to people they meet. This year I hid little horror movie ducks and friendship bracelets. Another fun gift to share is badge ribbons created to tell jokes or quote lines from your favorite stories.

It's so much fun to meet people who love the stories and games that you love. I can't wait to do it at CONington 2027!

# WHAT MAKES A GREAT *Pregenerated Character?*

◆ Jonathon “Mr. Dragonbane” Myhre

You sit down at a convention table with your dice, your drink, maybe a snack with five minutes before your game starts. The Gamemaster smiles, says hello to you, slides a handful of character sheets across the table to you, and says, “Here you go. Take a look at the pregens while we wait and pick the character that sticks out to you.”

This should be the easy part but you look down and multiple pregens have three pages of backstory, nine special abilities, sixteen spells, a family tree, and several paragraphs explaining the political history of a kingdom you have never heard of. Some Gamemasters will build deep lore inside their pregens... trust me, this has happened to me.

But hey, good luck to you hero.

Pregenerated characters are one of the most useful tools we as Gamemasters can have for convention games, one-shots, demos, and introductory sessions. They get people to the table quickly. They let the Gamemaster build characters tailored to the scenario they’re about to run. This removes the need to spend forty-five minutes making characters for a game that lasts two hours... four hours at best.

But pregens can also create an unexpected problem. If they are overloaded with too much history, too many rules, or too much information the player has no context for, they can make someone feel like they have arrived halfway through somebody else’s campaign and this was supposed to be for a one-shot.

A good pregen should do exactly the opposite. It should tell the player who they are, what they want, what they are good at, and why they should care about what is happening right now. Then it should get out of the way and let them play. That is the real job of a pregenerated character.

## *A Pregen Is Not a Complete Character*

One of the easiest mistakes a Gamemaster makes when creating pregens is treating them like protagonists in their novel. Yes, even I fall victim to this. We as Gamemasters start writing down where they were born, who raised them, what happened during their childhood, and how they learned their profession. Oh and don’t forget why they have complicated feelings about the kingdom that’s three borders to the north.

All of that might be interesting, yes but let’s ask a very simple question: does any of it help the player make a decision during the game? That is the test. A convention player does not need the character’s entire biography. They need enough information to understand what matters to this character right now.

Consider the difference between two pieces of backstory.

- The first says, “Your older brother disappeared while exploring these ruins.” In one sentence, I have history, emotional stakes, motivation, and a reason to care about the adventure.
- The second version gives me three paragraphs explaining the character’s childhood, apprenticeship, family relationships, education, and eventual decision to become an adventurer. It may be beautifully written, but as a player I now have to figure out which part of it actually matters.

A great pregen is not about completeness, it's about its usefulness. Give me enough to start making choices, and trust the rest of the character to emerge during play. After all, isn't that a part of roleplay?



## *Give the Player a Handle*

Personality information works best when it tells the player how the character behaves. For example, “brave” is fine, but it is vague. But if you say “you refuse to leave anyone behind” that gives you something you can act on. “Suspicious” tells me a general quality, while “you assume anyone in authority is hiding something” immediately suggests how this character might respond to a guard captain, a noble, or the local priest.

That difference matters because it’s punchy. It creates an opportunity for your players. The players are looking for handles. They need something they can grab onto quickly to use at the table.

Maybe the thief cannot resist showing off when somebody doubts their ability. Maybe the wizard believes every magical problem can be solved by adding more magic, which between you and me... has always historically gone about as well as you would expect.

These kinds of traits create action. They make the character easier to remember. A player may forget two paragraphs of personality description, but they will remember, “I never turn down a challenge,” or, “I don’t trust the nobles.” A pregen should not just describe a character. It should give the player permission to behave like that character. Remember, it’s what my character would do!



# WHAT MAKES A GREAT *Pregenerated Character?*

## *Motivation Makes the Character Move*

Characters become much easier to play once they want something and that desire does not have to be complicated. Money, check. Revenge, check. Recognition, check. Survival, double check. Is double check even a phrase? The important thing is that the character has a reason to care about what happens.

Look at some of these masterful movies and you tell me the characters didn't have motivation. Conan from Conan the Barbarian. William Thatcher from A Knight's Tale. Ellen Ripley from Alien. Alan "Dutch" Schaefer from Predator.

Whatever the goal is, make it clear. A strong motivation helps the player make choices without constantly looking to their character sheet or the Gamemaster for direction. If I know that my character desperately wants the crown, then the moment the crown appears in the adventure, I already have something to react to. Every bargain involving it matters. Every rival becomes more interesting. Every questionable decision suddenly has context.

This is especially important in convention games because players do not have six sessions to slowly figure out what motivates their characters. Give them that fuel at the beginning.

## *Build the Party Before Play Begins*

Pregens become much more interesting and create better teamwork when the characters already know one another. Instead of five strangers meeting outside a dungeon, give them some history. Maybe the fighter trusts the priest with their life. Maybe the wizard owes the rogue money. Maybe the ranger thinks the knight is reckless. Maybe two of them are siblings who care about one another but disagree about absolutely everything.

A single sentence can create an enormous amount of play.

- **"You saved my life six months ago."**
- **"You still owe me for Purple Hollow."**
- **"I think you stole something from me."**

Those one liners are not only useful because roleplaying does not happen in isolation but it happens when the characters react to one another. These built-in relationships also help quieter or less experienced players because they provide an immediate starting point. A player does not need to invent an entire personality from scratch if they already know, "I trust this person," or, "I think this person is going to get us all killed."

Even better, you do not have to explain every detail. If a character sheet says, "You still blame the wizard for what happened in Purple Hollows," you need not explain what happened in Purple Hollow at all. Let the players discover that at the table. Let them invent it together. Again, that's called roleplay and that's exactly what we are all here for.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT *Pregenerated Character?*

## Cut the Homework

Convention players have limited time. They may be coming directly from another game. They may have spent the last ten minutes trying to figure out why Room 204 appears in two different locations of the convention center. They may be meeting everyone at the table for the first time.

They should not have to study before they can play. That means cutting anything that does not earn its space. Trim the backstory. Simplify the rules explanations. Highlight what matters. If the character has a dozen spells but only four are likely to be useful in the scenario, help the player understand which ones those are.

And yes, sometimes that means deleting something you really like. As a Gamemaster who loves to write lore... that can hurt. You wrote that backstory. You know why the ranger's relationship with her grandfather explains her distrust of the royal family. It may be really good material but if the player does not need it during the next four hours, it probably does not belong on the main character sheet.

You are designing for play, not preservation. Leave that for campaign play.



## Leave Space for Ownership

There is another danger at the opposite end of the spectrum. You can define a pregen so thoroughly that the player has nothing left to contribute. You can tell me what the character wants. You can tell me who they care about. You can give me a few personality traits and some useful history. Eventually, though, you have to stop. A famous author I respect once said, "You need to learn when to put the pencil down" and that is something I think about every time I start to write.

The player needs room to make the character their own. Maybe you imagined the knight as grim and serious, but the player decides he is cheerful, loud, and treats honor like a competitive sport. Maybe you imagined the wizard as arrogant, but the player portrays her as nervous and constantly pretending she knows exactly what she is doing.

That is not the player getting the character wrong but that is the character coming alive. Remember, we've talked about it several times already. Roleplay. A great pregen provides structure without becoming a cage. This is what truly allows your players to roleplay. By the end of the session, the player should not feel like they borrowed your character for four hours. They should feel like they played their version of that character.

To recap, a player should be able to look at the sheet, understand the possibilities, grin a little, and think, "Oh, I know who this asshole is."

Perfect, now you can play.



*Jonathon "Mr. Dragonbane" Myhre is the founder and co-owner of Midgar Press, an independent TTRPG publishing company, and a co-owner / the Chief Gamemaster of Lurking Fears, a professional Gamemaster company. Jonathon is a father and a lifelong tabletop roleplaying enthusiast, has spent hundreds of hours behind the gamemaster screen as a gamemaster, adventure designer, publisher, convention organizer, and passionate advocate for the hobby. When he isn't running games or creating new worlds, Jonathon writes about the people, ideas, and wonderfully strange experiences that make the tabletop gaming community worth celebrating.*



**Jake Prewitt**



When the [Crit Talkers Podcast](#) decided to pivot away from that ampersand game (dnd) we ran into a problem. How to get people to listen/play other ttrpgs.

Here's one idea to get them to try something different.

The next time your scheduled game falls through, grab what players are available. Tell them all you need from them is 2 hours, having a good time trying out a new system.

It's called [ATMA](#) by Meromorph games. "Welcome to a world near our own-but with curious ghosts, alien titans, and fledgling AIs." Each player chooses a pre-built character composed of 8 cards including lore. They are all super flavorful and exciting. Like Belyaga. She is a choir of souls in a single body, rapidly evolving fluently in 6 languages. She is also an armored bear with a big cannon.

It uses the Powered by the Apocalypse engine. Dice only hit the table when it is narratively important. The GM never rolls. The player rolls 2d6 with a modifier of -1 to +3. A 10 plus is a complete success, a 7-9 is a mixed success and a 6 or below is a failure. The rule book and reference card do a good job of explaining but feel free to reach out to me for more resources or any questions. I love talking about this stuff!

Chris and I will be playing ATMA with some of the Nerd Louisville folks at Thieves Run in Louisville, KY as a promotion for the upcoming [Game Con Junction](#) Nov 6-8. And at [Acadecon](#) Nov 13-15. It will be released on youtube in October. I will also be running ATMA exclusively for VIPs at the convention.

ATMA is part of Project Infinite. Decisions made by characters in conventions will influence events in the Project Infinite ATMA universe!



# CONington in the WILD!



OUR VERY OWN STEVE "THE HANIBAL" SMITH JOINED IN AT A LOCAL PUMPKIN FARM

GOT A SHOT OF YOU REPPING CONINGTON OUT IN THE WORLD? SUBMIT IT — YOU MIGHT BE NEXT.



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GAME CON

# JUNCTION

2026

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SUNDAY NOV. 8

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TO  
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