

Season 6 Episode 3

Weapons

0:00-0:36 – Intro Song

0:37 – Intro/News

Joe: Hi, Welcome to 2 GMs 1 Mic, I'm Joe

Kevin: And I'm Kevin

J: And today is episode 3 of season 6. We're going to talk about weapons!

K: How to use them, yes, no, maybe?

J: Correct and also maybe talking about how cool they are and why they are cool and how to make them cool for your character.

K: And how to make them not broken or make them broken.

J: Right, I know I plan on talking a lot about some of my favorite ways of dealing with weapons in RPGs

K: Any news?

J: No, these episodes have all been late because Joe started a new job, so that would be why everything is late and pushed back. That's why the break has seemed so long. It's actually been less of a break than you think because we've been recording all along and I just haven't had time to put them up.

K: So yeah, I think we might have landed on the moon a few minutes ago

J: Maybe.

1:33-2:03 – Music Transition

2:04—Main Discussion

K: And we're back

J: It's time to talk about weapons. What do you have to say?

K: I think weapons are really what is at your character's hands at the time of combat

J: But don't you think that speaks to a character more than one with a finely crafted sword?

K: I think in the right hands, even the hardest baguette can beat any +5 magic sword

J: True, true. I know that's a lot of... your king stunt. I've noticed in our group, no one gives a shit about their weapons. They're just tools.

K: No, people give a shit about their weapons. Their weapons, to them, is like look at how big my dick is, my dick is gossamer embossed wonderful steel sword from the 14th century.

J: No one ever describes their weapons in our games.

K: No... people do.

J: They do in games where the weapons have no stats

K: Yeah.

J: More than in games with stats. Most people, if it has a stat, it's like "It's a longsword, it does a d8," whereas if it's FATE, where it's totally generic, or Shard where there are no weapon stats, our group tends to describe them more.

K: Well, yeah. In D&D there's so many goddamn +6 longswords of swordening. There's only so much that you can be like "Well, this is my +6 longsword that's got a notch in the sword where it... clashed with Thunder Fury, Seeker of the Thousand Winds." You can't really describe them too much without getting bogged down because then you run into the problem of like... alright we have to sit through Jeff's backstory for the 400th time.

J: Well, that, and I think mechanics on weapons can make them super bland

K: I feel like systems that make you want to have special and unique weapons generally provide them for you, whereas... "It's a vorpal sword" is their signifier of finding a vorpal sword in like D&D or D20 or any of those

J: Challenge to listeners: Make a book about weapons in D&D that isn't just boring lists of weapons. Make D&D weapons not boring

K: That would be pretty cool

J: They don't have to be intelligent talking weapons. It seems like that's the only interesting kind of weapon in D&D.

K: Even then, it's kind of boring.

J: It can be, I mean, at the end of the day in D&D or any game that is descended directly from D&D, not just OSR games, but many different designs from the previous century, weapons tend to do like one thing. So, a sword does Damage X, a pistol does damage X, an axe does damage Y, a bow does damage Z. It seems to me that when a system makes a weapon just a damage multiplier, they lose everything

K: That is true, you do lose a lot when you just try to make it a static number or a number that –

J: Maybe I phrased that wrong, because if a weapon was literally just a roll your damage and multiple X, Y, or Z, that would be kind of cool as a mechanic, but if the weapons... like in **Deadlands**, I would think **Deadlands**, people would care about what kind of pistols their characters have. Back then, pistols were

a pretty expensive item. Most people only had one, of course all of our characters have 2 because it's Deadlands, duh, and they made that purchase with very specific ideas in mind. After the Civil War, sorry for Joe's history corner here, but after the Civil War when there was tons of cheap pistols around, people gravitated towards designs that may or may not have been used in the war a lot but they bought the ones that they thought were the best. So you'd think that pistols in Deadlands would matter. Generally, they don't, because they all do 3D6.

K: Yeah, they're all generic

J: A pistol is a pistol is a pistol, system wise. Whereas, I feel like a game that says "Eh, you always do whatever damage you always do," it seems like our group especially really describes their weapons because they're not the same as everybody else's.

K: They're flavor

J: Right, like I noticed when I ran **Dogs in the Vineyard**, set in the Firefly universe, basically I just took Firefly and made it Mormon, right? The characters all had different guns and, of course, in Dogs in the Vineyard, the author mentions that guns are kind of important and that you describe them a lot. But then, there's really no mechanics to having a gun other than your using a gun changes the nature of the conflict. Games that do that where the weapon sort of... multiplies consequences or multiplies damage seems to encourage more creativity, at least in our group, than a game where there's just a list of weapons that all have super similar stats.

K: Yeah, I agree

J: Have you ever read **Ultramodern Firearms by Chameleon Eclectic** for the game **Millennium's End**? The way the guy did the book is he got tired of looking at gun books and seeing all of the crappy photographs because it was before the internet, so he did meticulous drawings of all of the most common firearms in the world and then he did throw the stats for Millennium's End in an appendix at the end of the book, but he also did a features list with little check marks. So, you'd go to the pistols spreadsheet, it was actually well designed, and you want a pistol that was concealable, holds more than X rounds, and is this caliber and then you just look for those dots along the spreadsheet and it would line you up with guns that would make sense with your character.

K: See, that's pretty cool.

J: They made a D20 version, I've never read that one so I don't know how different it is from the Millennium's End, but that Millennium's End book was great. I still have it, I still use it.

K: I mean, the only firearms that I've ever absolutely loathed in the gaming universe were modern D20 because modern D20, the guy who made that book has no idea what a gun is

J: Yeah

K: I could try to say something nice about it, but when a glock does a D6+1 damage because it's considered master craft. What?

J: There was a... now I can't remember the name of the supplement, it's the player's guide for **All Flesh Must Be Eaten**, it came out with a supplement that is just survivors. I've talked about it on the show, the name will be in the show notes... It's called like one of us or survivors or something, I can't remember. One of the Living, that's what it's called. **One of the Living** is the name of the book. They have a whole chapter on guns and they add a lot of really cool rules that, if you were doing a survival horror game with people who don't know anything about guns, you can throw in all of those rules and it will actually show in the way that their characters handle the weapons. So one of them is like, if a gun has been fired in the last couple rounds you take a point of burn damage if you touch the top, like if you touch the barrel. They're so loud that they screw up your hearing if you shoot them indoors or outdoors if they're a certain caliber. They are heavier than you think they are, they kick harder than you think they will, there's a special, not just a modifier to hit or not, but you can actually drop them because you've never shot one before. And they actually put a lot of really cool thought into these little rules that can emulate someone who has no idea what they're doing with a gun. So, in the game if you're playing one of the living and your character is fighting off zombies and "Oh my god zombies. Zombies are real" we're past that part, but my character throws your character a shotgun and he's never shot a gun in his life before, he could shoot it, burn his hand and then drop it and he can't hear anything.

K: Well, yeah.

J: You know what I mean, I think that's cool. That kind of weapons rules adds a lot to the game. I read a lot of fantasy literature, less than I probably should because it's not my favorite genre, but when you read fantasy literature... what are Drizzt's Sword's names?

K: I don't know, Icingdeath and Twinkle?

J: There you go. Icingdeath and Twinkle. Those are like iconic to his character but if you think about it, they're swords that have one or two magical effects and do a D8

K: Pretty much

J: I think because of the way... they're just not emphasized in D&D. Weapons are just not emphasized. They're just a means to an end.

K: And even then, if you make them special or magical, that's a story property

J: It's not supported by the game

K: I feel like certain games hinder more than help weapon creation. On top of it, I remember the one Castles & Crusades game that I ran and I was like, "I'm going to give everyone sentient weapons because that'll be neat" and then it got to the point where it's like... Now I have to memorize all of these different personalities and give them these powers they don't have... yeah this is stupid. Like they all

loved their weapons and they gave a lot of unique flavor to the game, but I was not willing to bookkeep that because that's more junk on my end

J: Right, and it seems like in D&D, I know we keep ragging on OSR games, and Pathfinder's included, it just seems like weapons... the only way to make them special is to add a ton more bookkeeping than is worth it. Like, the only way to make it special, like anything in D&D, is to add more special shit. Whereas, if you have a game like **Shard**, where the damage is static, if I recall – Or no, you just always do damage based on your strength, right?

K: Right.

J: So it doesn't matter what your weapon is. If you use your claws or your teeth, it's the same damage as if you were using a sword or an axe. So, in that you're much freer to describe what it looks like without being tied to a specific bracket that says it does 2d20 or a d10

K: And it also works that way in **FATE**. You know, you're doing a generic action if your weapon looks like this or this. And then you can take it an extra step. In, what is it, **Tianxia**, it becomes... I think it's a trait or a stunt or something. It becomes a fixed part of your character and if you don't have it on you, you can't access that trait or—

J: Oh, so it's like a stunt—

K: Aspect

J: Oh, aspects are the wordy parts and then stunts are the stuff you pay for out of refresh

K: I think it's an aspect. I think it's directly tied to your character and if you don't have it for so long, you lose that aspect.

J: **GURPS** has a lot of optional rules for gadgets and equipment where you can treat super science gadgets or magical weapons as advantages that you pay for with character points and they work similarly. I think that makes a signature weapon more playable. The game has to back you up. If you're going for a certain thing, the game has to back you up. I've always said that. When Nicky and I debated does system matter or not, we kind of went back and forth on the argument but never stated our actual positions. For me, I think that system does matter to a degree, because a system has to back you up with what you're doing. I've run successful Castles & Crusades games that were all political intrigue and very little combat. Honestly, it was mostly LARPing. There was very little dice involved at all. We basically just sat around and talked, which is fun and great, but I think that game would have worked better in **FATE**.

K: Yeah

J: Because, now you roll dice and there are consequences like, much more specific consequences to your actions. When it comes to weapons, they're so central to roleplaying. Combat is very much a central part to just about every roleplaying game out there. I wouldn't even argue that's a bad thing, but it

seems like, especially OSR games, just don't support special weapons. They don't back you up. To make your gun special or your sword special, the OSR games especially and most games in general just don't back it up. Look at 7th Sea. It really doesn't matter what weapon you have unless you have the super special Montaigne Polo Sword.

K: Which are incredibly rare and few and far between

J: Or you say it's beautiful or whatever. It doesn't matter, a pistol's a pistol's a pistol. All games designed at that time were like that. Now, the new 7th Sea, I think they got rid of it—weapon damage.

K: Really?

J: Well, from what I can tell based on the quick preview, damage is based on you making sets, so you roll your skill plus your stat, you roll a bunch of D10s and then you make little sets that add up to or defeat 10 and then the amount of sets on either side determines who wins and just how many sets you go over is damage. So that gives me a lot more room to have my character have a super cool sword with the springy bits and shit in or a reservoir of poison. That makes the game support me. It backs me up. I don't just hit you with a sword and then roll a d6 to see if it breaks.

K: I think my favorite thing in 7th Sea was the entire improvised weapon fight school. I've never gotten to use it because it never really jived with any of my characters. I have all of these archetypes for characters that I want to eventually run, but I had to play the Ussuran Bear Mage this time for many, many reasons. The improvised weapon is just so great because it turns whatever you have at hand into a great weapon. I feel like the best fighters in the world are the ones who can be like "Well, I've got this teacup, I'll just kill you with it."

J: Yeah, and D&D sucks for that

K: Oh yeah, because if you do anything in D&D, depending on who's GMing, you're going to take negatives, you're going to take improvised weapons and all kinds of stuff. You lose a lot of cool factor when you start being hindered by the system to try and do something

J: Yes, I think you – well, it's the system actively working against you and it's a great example of either your character concept or the game not being the one you should be playing.

K: I feel like weapons themselves can kind of pigeonhole your character into what they're doing

J: They can...

K: You can only do so many cool shots with a bow and arrow before you're like "I just shoot him."

J: You can. I think anybody can be very super creative with the weapons. I don't know if games can go too far with your weapons. If your game is absolutely centered on the weapon your character is using, that would be weird. When I look at a game like Warbirds or Remnants, where making your mission suit or your plane respectively, that's an important piece of your character and that's where you get all of these design parameters and whatnot and they build it into the game. So, I don't feel like all games

should have weapons totally built in. I feel like you need to go to one extreme or the other. I think it's that middle ground, like, I find the OSR games or the D20 games to be kind of a middle ground that is just not satisfying to me. It's like you have to completely ignore anything mechanically with weapons and just use them like *Shard*. You do X amount of damage no matter what you do because you're so strong. Or you do it like **Warbirds** where you're like "Okay, this is your weapon, you're designing it." Like *Tianxia*, you need to either make it central to your character if you want it to be central to your character or ignore it completely and just describe it. It seems like that middle ground is where I'm frustrated.

K: It's like a half measure, and you don't want any half measures in your games. Unfortunately, for certain games, that's just going to be how it is forever. There is no happy middle ground. It's just a "well, this is just how it is." For some people, that's okay. Some people really like "Well, that's a d8 and because it's magic it does a +3"

J: Well, and I'm not saying that everything's about the weapons. I mean, I love me some OSR games. I love the new D&D. I loved our D&D game, and it had all sorts of weird shit in it. Honestly the weapons though, the damage didn't matter as much as your description. So like, laser pistols and things, the weird description, the fact that you had access to a laser pistol was cooler than all of the fantasy weapons. I mean, everyone kind of described their weapons a little bit because they were supposed to look like foreigners, so there was that. But once again, the special weapons weren't so much mechanically in there. That game's probably a poor example because the weaponry didn't matter in the story. But if we were playing *Tianxia*, it absolutely would matter to the story. In *Deadlands*, I feel like it should absolutely matter to your character.

K: It does to mine because I'm the mad scientist

J: Right, and so the game backs you up. You make all of this crazy shit. You know, that's the whole point, that's why it does it. I think that in certain games, in certain genres especially, the weaponry they choose really matters. It doesn't have to be weapons specific like in *Tianxia* where you're building a very specific weapon for a reason. I could be like in that *One of the Living* supplement for *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*, where it doesn't matter what gun you're using, but we use all of these crazy cool rules to show how guns would be in the hands of untrained shooters. *GURPS* is fantastic, I think, at allowing you to pick and choose different pieces of genre you want to do and plugging them into the system. If you read the *GURPS* 4th Edition player's guide and the GM guide but the player's guide specifically, you probably only need about 10% of the rules to run *GURPS*. So you take your base 10%, you add a couple of things you like. Like, say you want to add tactical shooting stuff, we're doing a SWAT game and you want to be hyper realistic with guns, they have a supplement for that. Then they have their *dungeon fantasy* series, so you take the 10% of the rules you're going to use from the main book and then you use their *dungeon fantasy* stuff. One of these days I'm going to review their *treasure tables* books. They have two books that are just treasure. They blow every treasure table that I've seen out of the water

K: That's probably cool

J: Yeah, I mean, it's fantastic. But without the tangent, I mean, I could do the same gritty survival horror in GURPS and they have rules for making those guns so scary and unusual and hard to use and whatnot. It's cool that I can plug and play that stuff in. Not all systems could do that. I don't know if you could build a system that would make weapons in D&D super cool or super strange or super awesome.

K: I think the best example of cool, strange and unexpected is probably in the module **Expedition to the Barrier Peaks** because you start finding some weird, technological bullshit and you have to go through all of the flow charts and see if you can figure out how it works, and it's all stuff like you and I understand what they are but the way it's designed in the hyperfuture alien surrealism leads it to being like it's a bracelet that you kind of hold like you're stabbing someone and it wraps around your wrist and then points out... that's the gun. That's a pistol and it's powered by like... bluray discs. And the way you discover what it does and how they describe it adds character to the weapon.

J: I forgot all about that part. Thank you for reminding me, because you're right. That is just one more reason to love that adventure. I want to run it again now.

K: Well, now that is not like in D&D where it's like "I find the +4 sword in the treasure trove" it's like "Alright, you find this weird thing that looks like a bracelet, what do you do? You put it on, alright, you notice that you can grab it and there's some buttons." And then you're exploring this bracelet and you may or may not shoot your friend in the face. It may blow up in your hands. You don't know what it is until you're done.

J: And you don't know any of its stats, because remember Keith had a BB gun and it was like a BB gun and he figured out how to use it and it was like 1 d2 damage. It was hilarious when he started shooting things with it and it just pissed him off

K: Well, he found it in that secret room that was like the shooting gallery arcade. So you find all of these weird things. Isn't there like a bazooka or a rifle and it's like a chest mounted sun lamp that's got like a handlebar in front

J: Yeah

K: And that's like a bazooka, but the way it's described, you're not going to figure that out so you have to go through the paces and the motions and roll on the charts to figure out if you can make it work reliably, do you understand it vaguely?

J: What's funny is when you read the whole thing and you go through the adventure, there's actually a lot of technological artifacts that aren't weapons that are the same way. There's stuff that is obviously a pump action shotgun but what it is is a Geiger counter. Then there's another one that's obviously like a Smith & Wesson six shooter and that's a hypodermic needle full of healing potions

K: Hilarious

J: Yeah they have stuff like that, like they make things look obviously something X but it's actually a weapon or not a weapon. It's pretty cool, you're right I had forgotten all about that. They have some cool shit in there.

K: I feel like that is a wonderful way to add nuance and flavor to your weapons, but how can you seamlessly interact that into a common world where weapons are a way of life? It's kind of hard.

J: Right, or if, I mean, in that case the adventure writer did a good job of saying "These are alien weapons that do alien things," and did a good job of making it feel like that. I think that if weapons are going to be in important part of your character, you really need a system, or to invent a system, that really backs that up.

24:53-25:44— Transition Music

25:45—Joe and Kevin's Favorite Games of the Week

J: Alright, favorite game of the week. Do you want to go first or do you want me to go first.

K: I'll go first because you're incapable of saying "Favorite Game of the Week"

J: I am, I've said it like 4 times you guys. There were like all of these takes, it was really bad. So go ahead Kevin, what do you have for us?

K: My favorite game of the week is a **Pathfinder** campaign setting called "**Thunderscape: The World of Aden.**" If that sounds familiar, it's because back in the way when of like 1995, it was a crazy computer game produced by SSI, and based on a campaign by a guy named Shane Hensley. Apparently that game did really well and it even got, not a true sequel, but a spiritual successor and it takes place also in the world of Aden. And then the property was licensed to another company and it went out of print and now it came back like last year or so through Kickstarter and gave us this beautiful book with ridiculously exciting settings and characters and classes. The whole premise of Thunderscape is you have this giant burgeoning society that is just fuckin plowing along. It's doing really well. It's just hitting this magical/industrial revolution and then all of the sudden this horrible tragedy happens called "The Darkfall" and the sun blots out for a few minutes and thousands of people die and all of humanity's fears and worries become real and just murder the shit out of everyone. So the world becomes horrible like overnight and then you have all of these old vestiges of civilization clinging together trying to survive. So you have this... it's almost like a post-apocalyptic wasteland, but it's not as terrible. So you get this crazy world where you've got golem people and steam-powered machines, but also magic and wizards and like talking falcons and shit. It takes all of the crazy stuff from all of the settings and glues them together. Normally, I hate that. I think that's stupid and you shouldn't do it and I hate you all for thinking it's cool, but this actually does a really good job and makes me want to play it because they handle it very well. It's well thought out. They add classes that aren't just stupid, cobbled-together bullshit. I feel like when you're making new classes, a lot of people are just like "I made this new class, it's half samurai, half assassin"

J: Or it's a ranger that lives in a city

K: Yeah. Stuff like that. When you have really terrible ideas and you glue them together and you're like "This is my special, custom made class" generally it's bad for a reason and you should feel bad. But these people actually took the time and play tested and did a really good job and I actually wouldn't mind playing half of the classes that they bring in because they're not just some kind of trope glued together and hung up with paper characters. Also, they add races which are reminiscent of other races but also they're pretty cool that they make it so you can play bug people

J: Ah, I love bug people

K: They've got giant chitinous bug people. They've got quasi-furry people for you furry people. They've got... they're kind of gnomes, kind of goblin little green people that are scaly. There's lizard people. There's orc people that aren't called orc people because they're still orcs. And then there's humans, dwarves, elves. It's just crazy that they did bug people that look cool and make me want to play bug people

J: I think the best settings in my favorite settings list all have bug people in them actually

K: Also, they add these classes, and these are all brand new that aren't from other supplements, these are all brought straight from this world into flesh in this game, called the Arbiter, which is essentially like paladin police that they try to bring back the old world order and keep the world together instead of letting the nightmares rip things apart. There's the Entomancers which are like savage beings that live in the wilderness that use bugs for magic. There's The Fallen, which kind of resists the Darkfall power and generally they are able to not like be consumed by it and they can harness the power and still maintain kind of sentience. Everyone hates them, so they're really just trying to survive. You've got the golemoid which are people that have shed their humanity to be infused in magic/steam powered automatons

J: And that's a class not a race?

K: It's a class

J: Oh that's kinda cool

K: So you don't have to be completely stripped of your existence, you can be like "I want a robot arm" and they're like "here's your robot arm."

J: Oh that's actually a really cool way of doing it instead of doing it through feats or I think they did it through feats in the new Iron Gods book. I don't remember how they did it in other Pathfinder variants but that sounds really—that's a cool idea

K: Yeah, it's really awesome. And that's not even like all of the classes. There's Mecamage which combines mechanical engineering and maging. There's the Seer which deals with prophecy. There's the Thaumaturge which is cool because instead of being like "I'm a necromancer and I summon the ghosts of Christmas past to kill you," it's more like they summon the spirits, talk to them and talk to their knowledge and they're not based around a religion. While there are religions in Thunderscape, the Thaumatergic spirits are just common knowledge, common held beliefs verses like "I don't believe in no

ghosts.” Then there’s the Thunderscout which is essentially like your badass ranger on a motorcycle traveling the wastelands, bringing justice with his boom stick.

J: I’d probably play that one. That sounds really cool.

K: And they add all kinds of nuance and campaign and story hooks. A lot of it... I’m not saying don’t buy the book for those things, but buy the book for the extra classes and the new races. The setting is awesome and, to me, that’s like a bonus.

J: So it’s almost like they gave enough flavor to the races and classes that you could make your own wasteland?

K: Oh yeah, it doesn’t even have to be a wasteland. Their classes and races are just so cool that you could pretty much just seamlessly fit them into any other D20 OSR system and they work well enough. They have their stat progression, they have their spell lists and they add spells for the other new casters and all kinds of stuff. There’s nothing in it that’s inherently ridiculously game breakingly broken.

J: That’s pretty cool. That sounds really neat. Did they do—I don’t remember. We met them at Gen Con, were they doing other systems for the setting or was it just Pathfinder?

K: I don’t remember

J: Yeah, I don’t either. I have a feeling that they were going to do it in Savage worlds or D&D 5th, so when you search Thunderscape it may not all be Pathfinder, but Pathfinder version sounds really fuckin cool.

K: It’s really good

J: Cool. My game this week is **Volant** by **Flying Mice Games**, written by a friend of mine named **Clash Bowley**. He’s done a few games that I’ve read. I actually did one of my few, when I used to write my reviews and post them to the website, one of his games is on there. It’s called Pig Boots, In Harm’s Way: Pig Boots. Anyway. So, Volant is a kind of bizarre game that I really like. So, about 1,000 years before the setting—about 1,000 years or so before the game begins, there was this huge wizard war on the planet. The wizards opened up portals and let in abominations and fought a basic giant wizard war. The last ditch efforts of the good wizards, if you can call them that, lifted all of the mountains of the world into the sky into floating islands and that ended magic on the planet. There’s no more magic. Magic is still in some things, but magic is generally gone. There are no wizards, there is no spellcasting, there’s none of that. The way the game is written is pretty fuckin cool. So, you start off with your association. When you make a character, you build an association. That can be an assassin’s guild, a pirate crew, a castle, a small kingdom, a single barony, whatever you want. All of these floating islands, which range in size from a rock you can stand on to Belgium, contain various Skylands, which is what they’re called, skylands countries. This is where civilization went after the wizard war. And, so they’re the ones that have pre-renaissance, the 100 years’ war technology, although there’s hints that it might be breaking through to renaissance. They are a myriad of different cultures. When you play the game, you can, of course, design your own Skyland, or there’s a random generator that can create a living, breathing Skyland that feels real enough just through random tables. You could run a game where you’re a

merchant crew that's on a 5 year mission to explore strange new worlds and trade with them and you can go from place to place and you could literally whip up the skylands before the game starts, it's that comprehensive. The ground is still inhabited as well. It's inhabited by huge, abomination creatures, small abomination creatures. It's completely overrun with monsters and hell horrors, but also there are savage tribes of humans living in a post-apocalyptic existence down there and they've turned into like savages. I think of them as looking at the natives of Carcosa or the island from the remake of King Kong. The other neat thing is that there's, they use the same word as Warbirds, the islands float because they're made of float stone and some of the float stone can be mined for big ships, but the ships can't reach the surface. Skyships are stuck in how high they can go and how low they can go. They're kind of stuck as being ships that basically roam a flat plane between the different skylands. So, all of the different skylands have have trained and bred riding birds. Huge birds which can also be made randomly, so you can have thousands of different types of giant birds that people ride so sky knights and air knights is what they're called, can ride these giant birds around and attack ships and other islands and such.

K: That's right people, this is Joust, the roleplaying game.

J: Yeah, you can really nail Joust the roleplaying game. In fact, I was looking at the chart just before we came back from break, which you guys don't really see because of the magic of editing, but I was rereading the section on the birds and you can totally have a joust ostrich with big wings that can be randomly rolled. Now, mechanics. There's a couple of mechanic things that I want to bring up. One, there is air combat, which is done ship-to-ship, ship-to-bird, or bird-to-bird. Air combat rules are actually 2 different subsystems. Ships use a completely different subsystem for crew and the way the ships fight than birds, but they're still compatible. When you play bird combat, you actually pay attention to what maneuvers you're doing and air speed and relative height and that determines initiative and how much power you have to do things and how many maneuvers you can do. So, there's a minigame in ship combat. There's a whole minigame right there that can get as intense as you want. You can kind of move a few dials, for lack of a better term, to make it less intense. Now, for those of you unfamiliar with Flying Mice Games, all of these games are what are called Star Cluster, is the name of the system. The system is a framework, as they put it. It's a framework of stats, generally +1 to + whatever and the resolution mechanic is, in this case, one of 4 that you can choose from. Everybody in the group has to use the same ones. So the Star 0 system is $d6 \text{ minus } d6 \text{ plus your skill rank or your attribute}$ and then if you have more than 3 in a skill, you get a bonus. But anywho, you roll $d6-d6+\text{stuff}$. That gives you a relatively low number. It's an average mechanic. Supposedly, every time you use this system, it should average out to about skill level. You almost always roll within one of your skill level. It's built in the book as a more gritty type of system, so it tends to result in the character being pretty average and then dying quickly. Although you can actually more the constitution score, which is like your hit points, you can actually move that around in any of these systems to make them more or less deadly. The Star Nova system is very deadly. It's more deadly than I would even say GURPS. It's almost like... there was a video game I used to love. It was 2 samurais fighting each other and you get hit once and you're dead.

K: Bushido Blade?

J: Bushido Blade! That's what it was. I loved that game. I played it on play station for hours and hours and hours and hours. That's what the Star Nova system is like. You get hit, you're dead. If you get hit and you have armor, you might bleed to death, so you might still have time to stab somebody else. Game of Thrones level carnage. My favorite of the systems in here is called Star Pool. It's relatively gritty in that you can still die quick if people roll well, but it feels the most cinematic because you're rolling handfuls of D20s and you want to roll under your attribute or skill—or you roll dice equal to the skill rank and you want to roll under your attribute and count how many successes you get. And then modifiers are applied to a number of dice usually. Since I like this mechanic the most, I actually remember one of the nifty things about initiative. You can adjust your dice pool—the way initiative works is everybody rolls a D20, lowest goes first. If you want to add +1 die to every roll for the combat, you can raise your initiative by 3 or you can subtract a die from all of your rolls and lower your initiative by 3 per die

K: That's pretty interesting

J: Yeah, so I can make sure I go dead last but I can add like 3 or 4 dice to my dice pool

K: If you're already going last, why not

J: Well yeah, I mean you're stuck between 1 and 20 but between 1 and 20 you can keep adding 3 for as many dice as you got

K: Oh, so you can't just be like "Well, I'm already at 20, let's go to 29"

J: No, you have to stop at 20

K: Lame, next game. I'm done. [laughing] just kidding.

J: The other mechanic they have in here is called Star Worm. They're shooting for a much more story gamey kind of thing like Dresden Files where you determine the stakes and roll to see if you get what you want or don't get what you want and how many successes you get determines if you get "yes, and...", "yes", "yes, but...", "no, and...", "no", or "no, but..." So you get one of those types of answers based on how you roll. So the mechanics are pretty cool. The setting is what I think is particularly awesome. Characters, you're encouraged to create your association and make a group of characters. So like, if one guy is going to be a knight, then everybody would also have like a squire or page character that works with the knight. If you make an assassins guild, you could all be different assassins and like the people who work in the assassins club house that you build. So everyone's encouraged to make multiple characters. Your physical stats decrease as you age your character, but if you make your character older, you have a ton more skill points. The author says that all characters are intentioned between a depth and breadth of skills so you can go deep and only be good at a few things or you could go wide and just kind of be okay at all of them. The thing I really dig is the random setting elements like building your birds. The combat system for air-to-air combat, I don't know how much detail people really want. It's pretty cool. It's one step back from a miniatures game. So it's involved enough that your choices really matter but not so involved that you really have to care about the airspeed velocity.

K: That's good.

J: Yeah, so it's not quite a game of X-Wing on the table, but it's more than just describing combat and rolling dice. There's more to it. It's probably a more comprehensive dog fighting system than even Warbirds has. I don't think Warbirds abstracted dogfighting too much, I think they did a lot to it. They were working on that really rapid-fire system that they deal with that they really like, I think it's called the rapid-fire system, whereas this game wants to give you more tactical options. You can actually print out little cards if you want to show the different maneuvers for the warbirds.

K: That's pretty cool

J: Yeah, there's a neat level of depth there. Especially when you're attacking ships because they can move crew around and they have all sorts of cool stuff. I think Volant is a surprisingly cool sandbox game. The setting is rich, you can do anything from political maneuvering between a cold war of 2 skylands all the way down to pirates who hide on the surface or treasure hunters on the surface. And instead of magic, I meant to mention this, sorry, instead of magic, they use alchemy. So they can make potions and the way potions work is they mostly just give you bonuses or minuses when you drink them and they last for a while and you can decide how to build them. There's actually a really cool list in the alchemy section of the book that literally lists ingredients and how they're prepared so you can really build an adventure to find one specific rare ingredient. So it's a pretty nifty game. I think Volant sounds super cool.

K: It sounds super cool, I'd play the hell out of it.

J: Link in the show notes, folks. And to Thunderscape. Actually, I would play both of these games. Both sounds really fucking cool.

K: I agree

J: So what did the Dragon do for us?

K: Well, after the savage beating we gave him last time, he kind of got out. Haven't seen him.

K: Oh. So again? Nothing?

K: Yeah, I mean he's bound to get hungry and come back

J: Yeah, he'll come back for next time, I'm sure.

K: It's not like he can fend for himself out there.

J: No, no. I wonder if any of my books are missing. I'll have to look. Instead let's do a shout out to Josh and let's talk about **Dead of Winter**.

K: Oh yeah, Dead of Winter was really cool

J: It's a board game. Josh brought it over to my house. We didn't have gaming this week because I think Nicky had to work late or something. So Josh said "Hey, is anybody doing anything" and I was like "Board

games at my house” so everybody came over and we played dead of winter and that game is pretty fucking cool.

K: Yeah, it’s a zombie survival group game where you have to manage resources and manage people and kill zombies and not get eaten or murdered

J: Or frostbitten

K: Yeah, because it’s winter.

J: IT was really neat. I liked how if you had too many people at base, they would eat all of your food and pile up garbage and if you don’t clear out garbage or have enough food, people start dying or losing morale. It’s by **Plaid Hat**, I think is the company. The link’s in the show notes, so you’ll have it. It’s a crossroads game, so every player turn the person to the right who just went, they draw a card with a little narrative thing on it that sometimes the table votes, sometimes there’s a triggering event that has something happen. It’s one more way to make the game more tense.

K: Honestly it’s really cool. Also, there was another mechanic where you can have secret objectives, every player has an objective to win

J: Oh, hold on let’s back up a step. So there’s random objectives for the board game, so when you start the game you draw a random objective. Remember, we had to collect samples, we kept calling them “poo bags.” That’s different every time you play almost, unless you play the 160 times or however many cards they have in the deck. And there’s the crisis you have every turn, so there’s like a goal for the turn and a goal for the game as a whole

K: And then the goal for the game as a whole also sets how long the game goes because there’s a set amount of turns.

J: Right, and then you were talking about betrayals.

K: Right, they’re not all betrayals. Everyone gets a unique—everyone can have a unique objective and your objective can be a betrayal to like burn the place down or your objective can be to make sure you have enough fuel to leave the area when it’s over or the other one can be like get exiled and start a murderous rampage. And you can also exile a player you don’t like. The whole group will vote yes or no and then when you’re exiled you now have a new goal.

J: Josh told me, when he first described it to us, he said it was semi-cooperative and at first I thought “Oh crap, it’s going to be like Munchkin where we all kind of have to work together until we start beating each other up,” it’s not. You could have an objective that means you have to help everybody all the time

K: Yeah

J: Technically, you and Josh won, right? Because you had enough fuel to jet and he got his barricades up

K: He got his barricades up and we had enough fuel to burn everything down, but we still technically lost because he came over to the gas station and we got eaten.

J: Oh yeah, that's right. One of his characters got eaten. Each person, each player at the table isn't just one character, they're actually—each person's a group of characters, like there's 4 groups hiding in the clubhouse. So Dead of Winter, I'm pretty sure it's Plaid Hat Games, if it's not, sorry guys. But check it out in the Show Notes. Great game.

K: It was a real good time.

J: Alright, you want to talk about currently playing now?

K: Currently Playing!

J: Let's go over to currently playing

49:30-50:37– Transition Music

50:38 – Currently Playing

K: And we're back!

J: Yeah we are.

K: Currently playing **Deadlands** still.

J: Yep! Still playing Deadlands. It's been good so far. Little bit of intro, no combat.

K: Having last week canceled really kind of sucked

J: Yeah, I was really looking forward to it.

K: Not much you can do about that. Life finds a way. But there's always next week

J: There is always next week. I'm still excited about playing Deadlands. It's one of my favorite games of all time.

K: Who doesn't love using rooty tooty point and shooties

J: That's correct. I love everything about it. I love how I have that Halloween cowboy hat that we fill with chips and we've got the cards everywhere and it just looks like the old west when we play

K: Since we're Americans, there's just guns all over the table

J: They are black powder guns that are unloaded and they're not considered firearms under federal law

K: In most states

J: Indiana is one of those states, so they're props and one actually is a prop gun that I bought in a store in St. Augustine Florida I think, a long time ago. The Colt is a prop gun. So yeah, we have guns and cards and, I mean, it feels like Deadlands. One of the things I'm doing with the game too, that's different is I tend to throw out like all of the backstory, all of the background of Deadlands and just make it weird people in the real Wild West. I tend to do that. I don't think it matters much to the game, unless you're really invested in the plot or the metaplot or you're using published adventures. You can just set it in the Wild West and put monsters in it.

K: Yeah, that generally works

J: And as someone who reads a lot of Westerns, I am never short of things to talk about or games to run or plots to hatch. So yeah, Deadlands. It's fun, it's cool. Classic. Deadlands Classic, not the Savage Worlds version

K: There's paperclips and everything

J: Mhm

K: Alright!

J: Hopefully next time we can talk more about Deadlands

K: Hopefully we can talk more everything

J: That's what I'm hoping for too. So, nighty night y'all. Call us, tweet us, facebook us.

K: Tattoo our visages onto an animal and sacrifice it to the Dark Lord Ganis

52:47-53:58 – Ending Music

53:02—Credits

K: 2 GMs 1 Mic is a 3 Die Stunt production hosted by me, Kevin, who's nothing but an amorphous blob shoved into multiple latex gloves giving him shape, form and function. Also hosted by Joseph Wolz, who happens to eat 36 Big Macs every 4 hours to sustain his gluttonous need. Edited by Jay Dehlinger who is in a relationship with 13 inflatable pool mannequins and no one's judging him. The intro song is called Roll the Dice, Make My Day by the Mustard Men (Stick Jones Remix)