The perfect laws

By Rune Valle
(runevalle@hotmail.com)

A game playable in 2 sessions of 6 hours, with exactly 2 weeks in between
Ingredients used (from package two):
Law, Steel and Team

Made for the 2006 game chef project

The Cabberian global research facilities is seeking personnel for an important research experiment. As you are probably aware we recently solved the world's energy problems once and for all by finding the final key to unlimited energy absorbing. The possibilities this opens is as you can probably imagine completely wast. We are thereby reluctant to release this power use to the public before having mapped the possible consequences of this. Our conclusions is at this stage that as the society is today, total chaos and probable destruction of all humanity would have been a likely result. As this is rather unfortunate we have collected the permission from all the worlds governments to research in ways to change the whole order of the world so that mankind may safely benefit from this new groundbreaking discovery.

We are for the time being working on the ancient theory that the best system of government would have been the one made by a committee that after they were done was killed, and reincarnated as something completely random. Thereby having to live in the system they created in their former life. This have by obvious reasons not been possible to arrange at any earlier opportunity, but now it seem like giving a rather fair simulation of this could be possible. There is however quite a bit more research necessary before actually carrying out a project of this dimensions are possible.

This is where you come in; We need a handful of test subject to test out a very simple version of a model we have developed. And worry not, you will not be killed, or harmed in any other way. There is no qualifications at all, except the ability to communicate in English. We want an as broad audience as possible in order to minimize the chance that anything or anyone is forgotten. We have two kind of positions:

1: You are going to create an entire world, together with laws governing how this world is working. One of you will also get the task of overseeing that everything works after the intentions of the second stage of the project. This assignment goes over only two days two weeks apart.

2: You are going to live in the (hopefully) perfect world created by the first group. This is a one day assignment, but requires a bit preparation time. You will be given the laws and a short description of the world one week before having to enter, and are expected to have a understanding of these.

As a part of this test we also run a competition. One of those who are chosen to participate have the chance to win the grand price of continuing to work with us on how to shape the future of all humans, and is reserved a place in the final committee that eventually will constitute the new order.

<div align="right">(Part of a global advertisement program)</div>

The group entered a huge chamber. Transmitters, screens, and holographs cowered the walls completely. In a circle there were placed comfortable looking chairs. The fact that there were the same number of chairs as members of the testing group made some of them conclude correctly that their journey trough the complex was coming to an end. Inside only one uniformed woman with graying hair awaited them.

“Welcome, my name is Aline Rumble” she presented herself before gesturing around the room, “please take a seat”.

None of them needed to be asked twice. And soon the door closed and the woman continued.

Test personnel's briefing; by the institute of computational emotion reading:
I am here to give you a final briefing of your task. I am afraid we are at a schedule, so the brief part of briefing might be a bit more empathized than we should hope for. Soon you will enter a higly advanced computer simulation. It will feel like real, and you are able to move around, and do anything like you could in the real world. [Show planet hologram] At the time being the only content of this simulation is a flat planet covered with grass, about the size of the earth. In addition to a sky that resemble earth's without any clouds, and an earth like, but pollution free atmosphere. There are a few other less important details I have to skip because of the limited time. [Close planet hologram]

You will start out close to each other in this world, and you probably should try not to stray to far apart. All off you will be equipped by a box of commanding [Show emptied box prototype]. It is a black box that is similar to one of the main products we are currently developing using the new technology. You are thereby by the privileged first that have the opportunity to feel some of the extreme power that lies in our energy absorber. If you put one steel piece into the box and concentrate upon the box then anything you want, with a few limitations I will discuss later, will come true within this simulation.

What about this steel piece you may ask. Even tough we can do almost everything with our access to limitless energy, there seem like there will always be something we won't be able to control completely. As these things are one of the things we are interested in testing with this experiments, we have introduced a more graspable symbol of these things. The choice fell on pieces of steel, as an ancient sign of power, a lasting and usable thing, but still able to fade away. Everyone of you start out with 11 flat quadratic pieces of steel. There is some special rules about how these pieces work that we will come to shortly.

There are for you two ways to win the competition. The first is to be chosen as the overlord after todays simulation. The other is to be at the team that have the largest number of steel pieces. Every one of you, except the overlord, will get a teammate in two weeks that inherits those steel pieces you have at the end of today's session. The winner will be determined randomly between the overlord and the member of the, or those, teams that go out with the most number of steel pieces.

Ok, now for the rules, you can see for yourself: [Show rules on screens]

These rules apply for both simulation sessions, and can thereby not be contradicted by laws.
1: It is impossible to affect anything more than 2000km over the simulated planet surface, including traveling there (due to simulation limitations)
2: It is impossible to create other thinking beings (We want to examine small groups in this experiment, the AI project is separate)
3: Test subjects cannot lose consciousness (We do want to have all inn for the whole simulation)
4: Normal physics apply, and can only be broken by persons having the appropriate equipment.
5: Steel may not be created, disintegrated, or in any way be transformed, broken or get any physical properties, except position, changed.
6: Steel pieces is never owned by more than one person in the simulation. If in doubt, it is the person located geographically closest to the steel pieces that owns them.
7: No law may depend on the number of steel pieces a person possesses, except whether he actually possesses steel pieces or not.

Rules that only apply for the first simulation (may and should be replaced by laws)
8: The box of commanding will always be simply usable by their owner, as long as they have steel pieces. (Owned Box and steel pieces may be teleported at will)
9: NO properties, including ownership, of the the box of commanding may be changed (except for those necessary for it's proper usage.)

As you may see there is some references to laws. These is your main responsibility. You are to make laws that apply to the next test group that come here in two weeks. You may make laws about anything. They have to follow these laws. These laws comes into effect at once you make them, except those that might contradict those mentioned in the second part of the rules. Those laws doesn't come into effect today, but from the start of the session one week from now. The process of forming laws involves the formation of teams. More details about this in the instructions about how the box of commanding works. [Switch from rules to manual]

Box of commanding, user's manual (short version)
Simple usage: Put a steel piece into it. The steel piece will remain there, and cannot be used for anything, until someone makes a law. Then wish for anything. As long as it doesn't violate the rules, some team effort, or laws, it will become true!

Simple team usage: Several owners of boxes may form a team to do something. This works in the following way: One of the team members states what they want to be done in a way that the other team members may understand. The rest of the team members may agree, and all team members must put a steel piece in their box, while their boxes is touching each other. The stated effect becomes real, and may only be undone or changed by a team consisting of more members than the team that made it.

Creating a law: This works kind of similar to the team usage, except the team must consist of more than half the members of the test group. No one in the team need to put any steel piece into his or her box when making a law. Instead when a law is made every piece of steel that is currently inside any box is instantly teleported at random to a members of the team. This is the only way a coin may leave a box. A law can never be broken, and must be followed, as long as it is not in conflict with any rule. This is the only way to make a law.

THIS DEVICE IS SUBJECT TO THE STANDARD TOTAL DISCLAIMER CONVENTION.

I believe you will find the properties of the box quite pleasing. We are now almost ready to start the experiment, but I would first like to divert your attention to the time schedule. You will soon enter the simulation. You will find yourself in a seemingly real world, but there may occur minor types of minor strange due to the restrictions of the simulation. You will stay there for exactly 6 hours. Then you will be waked up. Use your time while in the simulation well. We have made this suggestion to how you may get the most out of the time you are there:

Time schedule:
Hour 1: Make yourself comfortable, create a pleasing environment, get to know each other.
Hour 2: Make laws concerning item usage. Remember that humankind is rather restricted without items. But to much resources could give unfortunate effects in the wrong hands.
Hour 3: Divert attention to social matters. How may people interact with each other?
Hour 4: Set the stage for those that will come after you. They will arrive at the same place as you did. Rig a nice welcome, and see to that they will find everything they would want, whoever they are.

Hour 5: Laws of the steel. This will probably be in the back of your mind before this, but now you may divert your full attention to the matter. This will after all be crucial to who will actually win the possibility to form the REAL world. Pay heed to rule 7. It is for instance not possible to make a rule that everyone is to have the same amount of steel pieces at any time. Hour 6: Finishing touches. Whatever you wanted to do that you haven't got the time to do.

The time in the simulation may run a little strangely as it is set to speed up time if little is happening. So if you travel over the dessert of peril to the temple of Morh-halam, and it feels like taking several days, it is still possible that it have only taken minutes in the real world. Each of you will therefore also be equipped with a clock showing real time.

One thing you should have in mind. When you return to the real world you will probably be a bit stiff and hungry after your body have been still for six hours. This is one of the main reasons why we don't run a longer session. You will be given some food and some time to stretch your legs and debrief. After that we will have you chose an overlord for the next session in two weeks.

The overlord is one of you that will oversee that the laws are being handled as you intended. In addition he will be able to make minor changes to the world in case for instance it should show up that you have forgotten anything critical. We need him also in order to supplement the data collected form you in todays session, as we due to storage restrictions can't save every thought you have while in the simulation. He will also be given the honor to join us in choosing the persons that are to enter the simulation next time. As he no longer requires the steel pieces he will give his remaining pieces of steel to one of the other of yours team members first thing on the next session.

This concludes the briefing, please find a good sitting, the simulation will now start. [Start simulation]

Welcome to this game. As you possibly could guess from the introduction you are to play the lucky few who was selected among several thousands appliers to join in this fantastic experiment in a distant future. This is a game played in two sessions of six hours. Each session should be exactly two weeks apart (The most convenient is probably that the second session starts 336 hours after the first started). It should be played with at least 4 players. This game could probably support any number of players, but I think most groups I believe will find it cumbersome with more than 6. The main problem with many players is that everyone should be aware of things the others creates, so they don't contradict this.

The first session of this game relies heavily on trust. But there is the sad possibility that this might be misused, due to ignorance, or more mean reasons. So I have to add this rule: If someone does something truly fishy in this part the rule is that a pure majority may deny him this. This rule should hopefully never be applied, and then also only in the most extreme cases. Don't use it tactically!

The first thing you should do is that everyone writes down a short description of the character they want to play in the first session. As we have no Idea of how the distant future will be, you may assume that anything you can think of is acceptable. This should be done without communicating with any others, as some of the the point of this experiment is that the participants should not be related to each other.

When everyone is done read your descriptions to each other. Then the main game starts. The characters start out on the naked grass plain described in the introduction. Make some kind of arrangement to hold order on how many steel pieces each characters owns, and how many is in each box. The game plays out as a conversation. You are talking about what your character are

doing, saying, and experiencing. Try to be so kind that you let the others take an equal part as yourself. And you should of course be active in the conversation.

Stay true to the rules and descriptions given in the introduction. And play on the things the other players describes. If a player describes how he uses his box to conjure a huge black tower, then there is a tower there, and it is black. Apart from this you are allowed to describe anything you want, like the grand decorations in the tower's gallery (even if it wasn't your character that made the tower).

During all team efforts the team leader's description of the intention, and the number of team members should be written down. If the team effort is to introduce a law, you don't have to record the number of team members, but you have to write down the exact phrasing of the law. All laws should be recorded together.

If a law is made then the steel pieces in boxes distributed among the team members randomly. One way to do this is that every team member throw a dice, the highest roller wins one of the steel pieces, reroll ties, and repeat this procedure until every piece has gotten a new owner. The exact way the character gets the steel piece is left to you, but one possibility could be that they rain from the sky into that characters head.

Someone have to take the time. The clock starts ticking when you begin to make character descriptions (so you probably should take the first that hits you). At once it have gone six hours the characters are waked from the simulation. The time is then come to chose the overlord. The characters are to tired to talk about this doing the eating and debriefing, so when they are connected to the mental voting system they don't have any more information that could shake their decisions. Unfortunately you probably won't have a mental voting system accessible, so at once the six hours are passed count loudly to three in choir, and on three point at someone else. The one that got the most points become the overlord. Revote ties until an overlord is chosen. In case it should be a total tie, decide randomly.

Then this game session is over and there are 2 weeks to digest the happenings. The player whose character was chosen as overlord have one thing to do during these two weeks: He is to make some short descriptions of characters, one for each of the other players. Depending on taste and possibility these descriptions may be handed out one week before the next session, so that the other players have some time to prepare.

Two weeks later, at the same huge chamber. A new group enters. Each of them is greeted by one of the world builders form two weeks before. The chosen overlord and Aline stands a bit of to the side, allowing the new teams in the competition to share ideas to how to ensure that it will be their team that will stand with the most steel pieces at the end of the day. However, time is running, and soon Aline steps forward.

"Welcome to you all. I assume all of you have got the basic Idea of what is going on due to the material we sent you last week. So I will ask you to just sit down and the simulation begins shortly." Every one in group get a seat, and the over lord takes a seat. "You will be awakened in exactly 6 hours, I wish you good luck" The bodies in the chairs suddenly go stiff.

Two weeks in real life should have passed now when your gaming group again is gathered together to finish this game. This should have been ample time for you to make plans on how to break the system you made last time, and maybe forget a few details, making it simpler to understand how the new test group feels when they enter this world they only have vaguely heard about. In addition, it might be that those things that seemed like a good idea two weeks ago, have lost some of it's charm, giving a more objective perspective on things.

The first thing you do is to randomly distribute the character descriptions the overlord made for this gaming session. Each player, except the overlord gets a new character. This is the team member of the character that player played the first session. The character start out in the simulation with all the steel pieces his team mate ended the former session with, including those still in his box. Then the overlord gives all the steel pieces he had to one of the teams. These steel pieces arrive at the team member in the simulation.

The main mechanics of this session is a bit different form that of the former. The overlord describes everything the characters in the simulation experiences. The other players are only allowed to tell what his or her character does with the things that they are experiencing. The overlord is there to ensure that everything is following the laws, and may correct the other players at any point. The simulation machine relies heavily on the mind of the overlord, so he may do anything he like with the simulated world, with one important restriction: If the true majority of the other players agree, they may counter anything the overlord says. This illustrates the interference of the computer, that have at least some data of how things are in the simulated world. This should be used at all times if the overlord abuses his power in any way (Like trying to contradict anything asserted in the first session.

The overlord-character usually is just sitting in his chair, having kind of administrative control over the simulation, feeding it with data from his mind regarding how the world should be. He might however enter the simulation if something should go really bad. He then still has his box of commanding, and rule 8 and 9 still applies to him. He can't use his box however, unless someone willfully sacrifices one steel piece for this purpose. This steel piece is then lost forever. Used this way, the box may only be used for things described under "simple usage" in the user's manual. This should only be done in extreme circumstances, but if it is done, it should be severe reasons to protest against it.

Everyone, including the overlord are still expected to stay true to the laws, rules, and the things that have been said by other players in both sessions. But as suggested above, the overlord is supposed to have a bit freer reins than in the first session.

When six hours are gone after having begun distributing the new characters, the simulation ends. It is then time to decide the winner. Chose randomly between the overlord, and the characters in the team that have the most steel at the end of the session. If there is a tie on having the most steel all characters belonging to teams having that amount of steel are in the final lottery. The player that played the winning character is the winning player.