The Hidden Parlor
NST Elections - September 2017
Candidate Q&A: Ben Evans

Question 1:
Setting style is everything: Just how dark should the World of Darkness be? On a scale of 1-10, what is the creep factor? On a scale of 1-10, what is the desperation factor?

Answer 1:
I think that this question is varied by venue. If you have a Changling game with the same creep factor as a Sabbat Vampire game, I'd want to commend you on the originality of a Thallain game.

That said: Creep / Desperation / Hope / Stasis (This is to indicate how resistant the world around you or the society itself will be to change. Representing push back on new ideas and change.)

Camarilla: 3 / 7 / 3 / 7

Sabbat: 6 / 5 / 4 / 4

Independent Alliance: 6 / 8 / 8 / 3

Anarchs: 4.5 / 6 / 7 / 5

Werewolf: 7 (The Wyrm is very dark)/ 7 (The Wyrm is also Powerful) / 6 (Why fight without some hope?) / 4

Question 2:
Your public statement of intent wasn't very enthusiastic; just how serious are you about doing this job? Will you even take it seriously?

Answer 2:
I mean....I'm answering these questions before the deadline right? Honestly, Joe seems to be really prepared and taking things very seriously and that is awesome. He has a staff lined up and is taking a very professional approach to things. I have just a more laid back lack of style. I would rather be overly approachable than have people hesitate to tell me what they think I can improve.

What I can promise you is I will think through the ramifications of anything I personally approve or allow into the games. I recognize that my decisions will have a profound effect on the collective story we are telling together.

TL;DR I will take it seriously, but I will still try to keep it fun. Burnout is real and happens to everyone but I'm hoping to avoid it with levity and goodwill.

Question 3:
Between you, Joe, and the Ketchup bottle at Denny's, who do you think would do the best job? Who do you think would do the next best job? Give details.

Answer 3:
Ketchup Bottle's policies strike me as overly permissive. It fails to make it's positions on important matters known and I think we need more than that from a NST. Furthermore, could you imagine Ketchup on a taco? I don't want to live in that world. So In order of who will do the best job.

Going to give it to myself. Why else would I run? Though I feel Joe would be the most professional candidate and Ketchup Bottle would be the best tasting.

Question 4:
No, really, are you serious about doing this job?

Answer 4:
Serious enough that I'll answer this question again. Yea, I will do the job. I take my commitments and personal responsibility very seriously and will do the best job I can in the position. Can't promise more than that.

Question 5:
Unlike your opponent, you made no mention of potential support staff. Do you have any ideas about what you'll need and who might fill those roles?

Answer 5:
Yea, I didn't mention any staff. I'll definitely need staff but why waste the time interviewing and picking staffers before I have the job. Furthermore, it would be my intent to keep those filling the roles anonymous. In the end, their decisions would be a reflection on me and responsibility for those decisions falls on me. This also prevents those I pick for staff from being asked to play favorites or be looked at harshly for calls that I have approved that go against a PC. Ideally, only the venue assistants, the ones logging their prestige, their Chapter Storytellers (to help avoid CoI through national plot interaction) and myself would know who they are. Though the BoD will probably insist on knowing too. Seems like something they would do.

Question 6:
For overarching theme: Intrigue or Cataclysm? Explain.

Answer 6:
I think that the two work well hand in hand. Often some of the best intrigue comes from those who are unable to put aside their personal mechanizations in times of collective strife. If I have to choose one over another though, it again comes to venue.

Camarilla: Intrigue - Stasis is a major factor of the Camarilla. Even as the world burns around them, they believe that following their traditions will keep them safe through the foul weather. This means that even in times of collective strife, the Jyhad continues and alliances are as strong or as weak as those who wish them to exist.

Sabbat: Cataclysm - While the internal struggles of a group as diverse as the Sabbat lend themselves to intrigue, I feel it takes a back seat to cataclysm. As soldiers in Caine's army, and with bonds reinforced through Vaulderie, while the tensions are presented in faction conflicts like those between the Orthodoxy and the Ultra Conservatives, the threat posed by the Antideluvians will often galvanize the faithful.

Independent Alliance: Intrigue - While they are onset from all sides and coming together to find strength. Their end goals are very different and the political prowess of each faction within is unlikely to be questioned. These new bonds, still ill-defined, are rife with opportunity to manipulate yourself into a position of power, but fly too close to the sun and...

Anarchs: Cataclysm - While rowdy, there is a strong sense of community and kinship often expressed among those who struggle against the chains of the ancients for freedom. The world at large tends to be their enemy and intrigue, while present, often takes a backseat to survival. After all, they aren't in the Camarilla, no matter what others may say.

Werewolf: Cataclysm - It's the Apocalypse. That said, while the fight against the Wyrm (and the Weaver?) is paramount, there is room for intrigue and strife and the traditions expressed in the litany, along with the trend for those who honor the spirits of their ancestors, are hard to shake and change even as a younger generation and the bitten bring new ideas.

Question 7:
Many LARPs struggle either with recruiting new storytellers or retaining storytellers. Do you perceive this as an issue within The Hidden Parlor, and if so, how would you plan on addressing this issue as NST? Please walk us through what your steps would be at 3, 6, and 12-months out.

Answer 7:
Recruiting new storytellers shouldn't be too hard. We have a vast pool of creative people to pull from and many of them want to flex that creative muscle! My hope is that my plan for anonymity among the staffers will encourage new people to apply themselves and pitch ideas. As for retention, I don't plan to address it. I hope that the burnout won't be as much of an issue for my staffers because their positions will be mostly private. I don't want to have it interfere with their day to day. I want them to be able to focus on creativity and developing plot. Also, the anonymity of the role means if they want to be done with the position, or even take a break for a while, there won't be the

judgements or prejudices that tend to come with it. We are all human and life can change without notice. I want people storytelling that WANT to be there. I want an enthusiastic staff that is having fun. Retaining a ST shouldn't be an issue because who wants an ST that doesn't want to be there? I am prepared to pick up the pieces when that happens and, hopefully, it will cause a minimal disruption in play because, as always, it is my responsibility to ensure content. Staffing issues shouldn't disrupt play.

Question 8:
How do you see the National Storyteller office working alongside the National Administrator's office in order to foster a healthier gaming community?

Answer 8:
Do you know how crazy keeping track of all that VP would drive me? I want to provide a creative and immersive world for people to lose themselves in once or twice a week. I recognize that wouldn't happen without a lot of hard work behind the scenes from the Admin staff and while several years of improv classes at an arts school taught me to adapt and think on the fly in creative ways, I don't have that role in me. Without the National Admin staff, these would be a series of unconnected games and the role of NST wouldn't matter. The reverse is true to an extent. Without a cohesive narrative, these are just a series of troupe larps with a club atmosphere. That may be fun but leads to a disconnected feeling when traveling between chapters.

Question 9:
The World of Darkness utilizes a setting where there are extreme power dynamics (rich vs poor, influential vs powerless), and where player-characters and non-player characters are encouraged to act amorally for survival or in order to gain power. Given the American parlor LARP play-style (ongoing chronicle + competitive) and contemporary environment, this can lead to minority players feeling alienated as there's such a strong connection between the fantasy world and their real-life experiences. Do you feel that this is an issue that game runners should concern themselves with, and if so, what steps should they take to assist such players?

Answer 9:
I am a big fan of checking in. I think that if you hurt someone, that is on you. If you feel your character concept is going to have the potential to cause these issues or that the nature of an upcoming scene could be triggering for someone participating then you should take a quick moment to check. It doesn't have to be major, just a quick "Hey, this could get pretty intense/loud/offensive. It's just a part of my character, are you going to be okay with that?". If not, pausing play and getting an ST to help you narrate is probably the way to go forward.

That said, there is a potential of abuse there. I recognize that but feel we need to err on the side of caution in these instances. If someone is frequently causing offense to a player, please bring that to the attention of your advocate/local admin/chapter ST. We will work with you to find a solution but this is not a game for the feint of heart either and I ask that people look within if this is a game they want to be playing, with grim and hostile subject matter. We can take steps to protect players from offenses but we can't make people roleplay with your PC and if you frequently find yourself needing to stop play for any reason, be it frequently being offended or triggered or having a habit of playing

offensive or triggering concepts, justified or not. I wish there were a better answer and am always open to new ideas and hoping for better solutions

Question 10:
How well do you know non-Camarilla genres as described by BNS? How true do you intend to be in portraying/developing those other Settings? Have you ever ST'd any of these other Settings in BNS?

Answer 10:
How well do I know... Shoot. How well for I know the Camarilla genre for that matter? Honestly, I've been playing Camarilla, Sabbat, Anarchs, Independants, Garou, Fera, Wraiths, Kinfolk, Ghouls, and a shining host of others since shortly after the Avatar Storm hit. While my higher self seeks to give a serious and well thought answer, my Po nature tends to want to Monkey around a bit.

I will be honest. I intend to divert from the BNS canon. My hope is to use it as a guideline for the unfolding of potential things to come. I want to roll the clock back a bit and Make WOD Great Again. I want to give players a chance to impact some of those key events that occurred in the books. See how things unfold with you at the helm. There will be plot twists and deviations along the way because if it simply follows along the dotted line, no one is surprised. I intend to blend some of the previous edition timeline into the BNS book. While setting mechanics would be untouched, the lore from the early 2000's on would drastically alter or not have happened at all with key points making cameos in your lives and leaving you to direct your setting in the aftermath of those events. It's a big undertaking but I think it will be worthwhile and hopefully set us apart from other orgs and draw in a broader player base. A vote for me is a vote for the Defiler Wyrm.

Question 11:
In your own words, how would you explain the difference between being a storyteller in a troupe game and being a storyteller in a networked game? Target audience - an individual planning on either being a storyteller of a Chapter within our network or someone planning on having their game apply to become a Chapter of The Hidden Parlor.

Answer 11:
In a troupe game, you have to hustle a hell of a lot more. You are going to generate a buzz for a few sessions but things will die down and you'll have little way to entice people back. The more players you lose, the more faster the ones that stay behind will get disinterested. Just being honest here, save your time and get a table top game together. Those are amazing and thrive with a smaller group.

In contrast, running a chapter in a National game is going to give you a broader player base than you might have otherwise and even if you should fall to the same size trap your remaining, hardcore group will have more options in the way of event games, travelling to other chapters to generate new players, new interest, and even have the ability to affect a larger world. All it takes if your creative soul and freedom.

The Hidden Parlor does the best I've seen of balancing the two. Chapter Storytellers are given extreme power over their game. National influence is severely limited and almost solely creative in nature as an add-on to your game if you opt into it while still giving your players access to other pools to swim in. If you want to run a LARP right now, this would be my suggestion.

Question 12:
Storytelling style is everything. Would you consider yourself more of a "sandbox" ST, or more of an "enclosed box" ST? Have you ever been criticized for railroading plots?

Answer 12:
I can railroad LARPers no more than I could heard cats past a pile of tuna flavored treats spilled on the floor. I tend to have a "If all goes as expected" arc in mind and then rely heavily on improv when things invariably go wrong. If your main antagonist gets killed in the first act, you have two choices as a Storyteller panic and try to undo the damage through shady methods (i.e. ST cheating. I hates this) or begin thinking of how that stone in your pond causes the water to ripple and see what it wakes up beneath the waves. I have included a sample of a Storyline as I would put forward at the end.

 I like to think of my ST style as below

Sandbox on the beach

Question 13:
How do you perceive your reputation in Hidden Parlor? How important do you feel reputation is in a National Storyteller?

Answer 13:
Um… Gonna go with "A-hole that no one seems to think actually want the job of NST" but I hope to change that to "That A-hole who somehow became NST and isn't doing super awful at it".

As for the importance of reputation…I guess it depends? I want the games I run to have a reputation as being fun and fair. I want to have a reputation of being even handed and not playing favorites. That doesn't mean people have to like me. They just have to like the game and if they don't that is a shortcoming on my part. Reputation and word of mouth is the fastest way to grow your game.

Question 14:
Rank the following responsibilities of NST in order of importance, as you see it:
- Plot writing - creating plots on a national level for introduction to the various Chapters.
- Rules Clarification - making org-wide rulings to clarify gray areas in the rules.
- System Management - Establishing and maintaining systems and policies that enhance the RP experience on a national level.
- Accessibility - being accessible to the membership for questions, concerns, and brainstorming.
- Neutrality - actively working to avoid conflicts of interest, cronyism, and biases in yourself and your staff.
- Division of Responsibility - ensuring that you and your staff remain focused on your own duties, and avoiding interfering in the responsibilities of the NA, MAs, CSTs, CAs, and BoD.

Answer 14:
1. Rules clarification. Ensuring that we are all playing the same game is immensely important to me. It is needed for a game to have a fluid and cohesive feel.
2. Neutrality. Playing favorites is NEVER healthy for a game and if you get that reputation your game will fold or you will be required to step down. Your friends shouldn't expect or ask for special treatment and if you find yourself giving with without them asking, you should step aside as quickly as possible or you will not have a game for long.
3. Accessibility. While I am a superhero and have a vast array of powers at my disposal, omniscience isn't one of them. I need to be available to my players to hear what they like, what they don't like, how I can improve the experience of the game(Guess what is coming next) and help them feel as though they are a part of the world they are in.
4. System Management! Surprise! Enhancing RP experience seems like it should be higher priority than 4th but I think the first 3 are integral to achieving the baseline that makes this

fourth option possible. Keeping things on pace is important and the flow of the systems is a
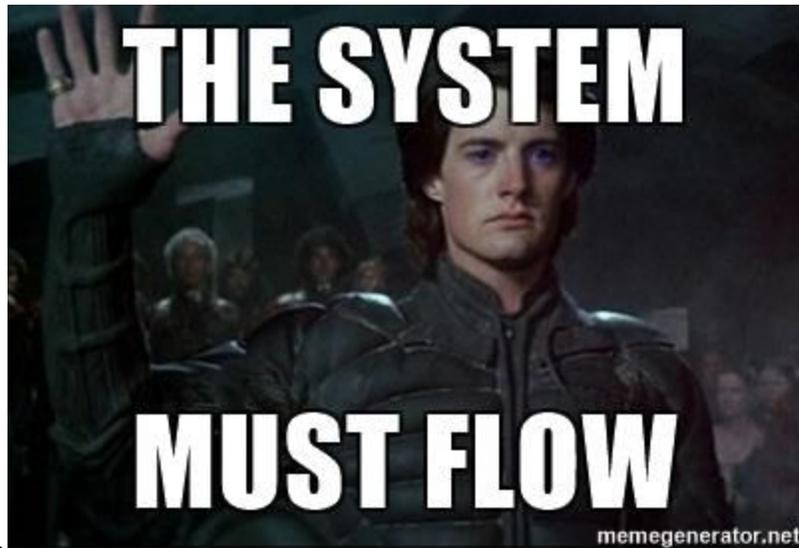
huge part of that.

5. Plot Writing. Really? 5th? Ugh. Fine. The fact of the matter is, I trust Chapter ST's to know their players needs better than I possibly can and the bulk of plot will come out at a local level with specific players needs in mind. While I have plot I am eager to throw at you it is less important to me than ensuring you have a free flowing and immersive world that those local plots are in and only the smallest portion of that is the fact some important guy across the country is making moves. Until you go to an event game....

6. Division of Responsibility. Least important, in my opinion, because we all have to have at least a cursory eye on those around us to ensure that CoI's are being avoided and that everyone on the team has the tools they need to get the job done. It is important not to let your duties slip if you can avoid it but we should be able to look to each other for a little help every now and then and be open to at least hearing advice and ideas when offered because it could lead to making the game better.