

ChronoCurren*ts*

Next Session

Our next session will be on **Sunday, August 13** at 2:30 pm. Who is Judai's mysterious new guest? Will we ever find out why Judai [CENSORED]? Will Lot have a better day tomorrow? Will Cregor stop sulking? Will Gareth be able to resist Rilta's charms? Find out... next time!

Campaign Notebook

Don't forget to take your classy and official Chrono Scion binder with you when you leave, unless you habitually forget it at home.



As most knowledgeable people are aware, a Coke can is never truly empty.

The Lonely Day

Session 4-45: [CENSORED]. Then Judai came back to the Solarin estate in time for sunrise. Lot had a different approach to his morning activities... right after waking he sent for his armor, which he put on immediately. Lot was through with the idea of encountering dangerous situations without protection. And considering that his estate had been invaded with some regularity lately, even his daily home activity couldn't be considered entirely safe. Lot arrived for breakfast in his armor.

Faris and Judai were surprised by Lot's new "look," but quickly acclimated. Clearly, they were in a better situation today than the day before. The breakfast conversation turned to Judai. Now that the trio had made it out of the caverns, Faris was very interested in all of the interesting bits of

information he learned about him while trying to escape. Faris asked Judai about his past and then openly speculated about his origin—but Judai remained concisely taciturn. Faris made little ground. Lot fielded some questions on Judai's behalf, but Faris became more frustrated by Judai's inability or unwillingness to volunteer information. Making matters worse was a new revelation from Judai—that today he must seek out a man he has not met, whose name he does not know, but who is a foreigner in a red cape.

Faris tried to understand this latest bit, but let matters lie. But on the issue of foreigners, the conversation found its way back to Kirby. In the struggle to escape, they had pushed any grief over Kirby's passing aside, but now they spoke openly

(Continued on page 2)

Hubristic Bastard Tests Coke Emptiness

In one of the biggest gaffes in recent Chrono Scion history, the standing holder of the campaign's prestigious "Most Valuable Player" Award challenged the natural laws of the universe on Saturday when he arrogantly proclaimed that a can of Coca-Cola was truly empty.

The incident occurred when several players noticed a Coca-Cola can in a precarious position. The can could have fallen onto the carpet as a result of any slight jolt to the tactical combat simulation and resolution table. When players warned the owner of the coke can, Timothy O'Neill, of the situation, he flagrantly declared that there was nothing to worry about because "the can is empty."

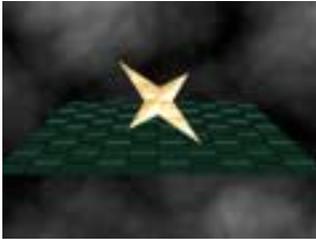
Area players were aghast at the remark. The resident GM, Darien Lynx, informed O'Neill of the well-known universal law that a Coke can is never truly empty. The law, which derives from the theories of the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno, is taught to children around the world at an early age.

O'Neill, however, flouted the chidings of his fellow players and GM. Declaring that his Coke can was indeed "truly empty," he rose from his seat to demonstrate the "fact" to everyone in the room in an audacious display of unmitigated gall. "Look! Look here!" he said. Holding out his hand,

he tipped the Coke over, where several large drops of the brown syrupy liquid inside fell out.

A nearby player who witnessed the spectacle was livid. "You hubristic bastard!" he cried out. "You challenged the law! You tempted fate! In front of God, your country, your campaign, everyone!" Other players' reactions were more sedate but they were no less appalled. "I couldn't believe my eyes," said Eva Gullion, who plays the popular prehistoric character "Ayla." "There he stood, preaching something so obviously false. I kind of feel sorry for the guy." Nathan Walton, player of the dimension-hopping gadgeteer "Kirby Shaw" and O'Neill's former political opponent, said "I know he thinks that since he's the arc's Most Valuable Player and all, he can do anything. But somebody needs to tell him that the Arc that he's the MVP of is *not* the Ark of the Holy Covenant." Sean Brauen, player of "Judai," concurred. "Who does he think he is? Noah?"

Political analysts believe the gaffe may hurt O'Neill's chances at retaining the award when the fourth run's second arc comes to a close. "I'm not going to vote for him," said Walton. Lynx said that the incident would be taken into consideration if he is called upon to break a tie in the MVP category. "That award is all about meta-game behavior—and that was some behavior."



Drayson's Star

"MY... NAME IS... JUDAI?"
 "What a coincidence; so
 is mine."
 "COINCIDENCE?"
 "Yes, it is."

I have new expectations
 of you.

—Pythas

Session Summary (Continued from page 1)

about their feelings. Lot and Faris were saddened by his death, though they did not know him well. But Judai felt no loss at all. This disturbed Faris, who reconsidered the idea that Judai, who had no memory of his past or knowledge of his childhood, might have been magically created.

With Faris' questions on hold, Lot and Judai made plans to go look for this new foreigner. Judai didn't really have enough information to find the person, excepting that he was confident that he would stand out. So he suggested that they start by the docks, since that would logically be where he would have arrived.

Meanwhile, the *Dekari* sailed northward to Bryshia with the rest of our heroes (save one). After an interrupted sleep the night before, Gareth's team woke up. Quite a mess still littered the floor of their cabin deck: the shattered lamp along with solidified alther, a splintered door, and another door that had seen better days. Gareth felt personally responsible for these remnants of the night's fight with his nemesis Drayson, and he started looking around the ship for the materials necessary to clean up the mess and repair the doors.

Where Gareth dealt with the night's ordeal by moping, Cregor dealt with it by moping. On the upper deck, he sullenly engaged in his morning exercise routine. Cregor felt defeated—and more than that, *humiliated*—by Drayson's casual neutralization of his fighting prowess. The ever-alert Ayla sensed Cregor's morose state and she joined his exercises in an effort to cheer him up. "Cregor good! Cregor strong!" Ayla encouraged. "Drayson not man fair fight. If not (*wild gesticulation*) Cregor beat! Drayson use magic thing!" This much, Cregor understood. If he wanted to avoid being defeated so easily in the future, then he would have to find a way to counter Drayson's advantage. And he had a strange dream that night, after the battle... maybe there was something to it. Cregor would have to investigate.

As he descended onto the cabin deck, he saw Gareth sweeping the broken glass in front of Rilta's room into a large barrel. Gareth lost his concentration during the work and cut his finger—probably because he was distracted by Rilta hypnotically brushing her hair through the open doorway. Rilta rushed over to help Gareth, but when she asked to see the cut, Gareth told her to forget about it. Apparently, Gareth didn't want any attention from Rilta for fear that he would be lured from his devotion to his true love, Raissa. Rilta was surprised by Gareth's strong rebuff, but before she had an opportunity to explore it, Cregor asked for a moment of her time. Raissa invited Cregor into her room while Gareth snuck away.

Cregor asked Rilta about the minutiae of the night before. Cregor himself didn't have the opportunity to witness most of the battle. In addition to learning how the fight played out, though, Cregor confirmed that the item Drayson was trying to get from Rilta was his own—Rilta

had managed to grab some star-shaped item off of his belt as the fight began. Cregor asked Rilta to be more specific about the shape of the star—so Rilta traced it out for him (*see perspective picture, left*). Cregor's hunch was correct—this was the item he had dreamed about.

Cregor wasn't through with his detective work, though. Before long, he had gotten the story from everyone else's perspective as well. He was especially interested in learning about the other tricks Drayson effected—including Gareth's story of how Drayson leaped onto the ceiling. Obviously, Drayson wasn't a one-trick wonder with his ability to disappear and reappear at will—he also knew how to fight. Cregor had learned a great deal about the fight, but felt no better about becoming its liability.

Hundreds of miles to the south, another investigation was underway. Lot and Judai approached the docks looking for Judai's mysterious foreign visitor. The harbormaster had seen a strange foreigner around the docks matching the description Judai gave. He was glad that the two had come, since he had his workers try to detain this particular man without success. Unfortunately, the trail was cold—he had long since wandered into the city. The harbormaster apologized and enthusiastically renewed his promise to Lot to try his best to keep islanders out of the city.

The two didn't know where to continue looking, so they wandered around town a bit. And as luck would have it, they *did* run into the one they were looking for. They saw an imposing tan-skinned man wearing a gleaming halo-shaped golden circlet and a bright red cape, gibbering loudly and incoherently in some unknown language to passersby. Lot walked over behind the man and put his arm on his shoulder to get his attention. Suddenly, Lot was lying on his back in front of the man, filled with the vague recollection of moving quickly through the air. Judai thought about attacking the foreigner, but decided to wait for Lot's cue.

Lot got up and apologized to the man, who seemed very upset at him. They couldn't determine much else, since he spoke a language none of them had heard before. Suddenly, out of the string of unintelligible phonemes and syllables, they unmistakably heard the words "Lot Solarin!" Lot tried to explain to the man that he was Lot Solarin, but it was no use—the language barrier was too much. They tried to take a smaller step by getting the visitor's name first. This, too, was a dismal failure. The man tried to reflect back some of the words that were used to communicate with him, including the names of the adventurers. This tripped up Judai, who took the words of the traveler at face value, and started to give Lot a headache. Finally, lured by the promised words "Lot Solarin," they convinced the man to follow them back to Lot's estate. Judai split from the group, however, to run another errand in town where he [CENSORED].

(Continued on page 3)

Character Acting

The Demons of Miscommunication

Role-playing is an interactive endeavor that truly exercises the imagination—that much we know. But one of the things that we often overlook in describing role-playing is the one thing we spend the entire time engaging in: communication. No doubt about it, role-playing is an exceptional communication exercise. Every time you describe your character's actions, ask questions about the world environment, interpret the descriptions and answers the GM gives you, and interact both in and out of character with fellow players, you rely on your communication skills to keep confusion at bay.

It's worth our time to reflect for a moment on the attributes of good communication. Anyone can talk, but the essence of communication is to endeavor to be understood the way you intend. To do that, and do it well, you have to be aware of your audience, their current state of mind, their register of antecedents, their prior knowledge available for use as metaphorical tools, their misconceptions, and any emotional entanglements

they may have with the subject matter. First and most importantly, communication is about perception and empathy.

One attribute you may associate with good communication is brevity. It is said, after all, that "brevity is the soul of wit." And this is true. Where possible, brief communication is much more efficient than a lingering, tedious one. We have all been subjected at one time or another to tiresome barrages of redundant communication—in staff meetings, conferences, and the like, or when listening to that person that can't shut up about that thing that riles them. But we have all experienced the opposite as well—the confusion that occurs when a brief description used in the interests of clarity and expediency is misinterpreted.

So which is better? The answer is the mantra of all great speakers: "Know your audience." I would add "Know your context." Sun Tzu would add, "Know yourself," which I think goes without saying, but misapprehending what can go without

(Continued on page 4)

"Brevity is the soul of wit, and tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes."

—Shakespeare

Session Summary *(Continued from page 2)*

On the way back, Lot finally convinced the visitor through extensive use of gestures that *he* was Lot Solarin. Finally he understood. As they traveled the waterways back to the Solarin estate, he apologized as best he could for his previous indiscretion in knocking the wind out of the man he was looking for.

Upon arrival at the Solarin estate, they discovered that Balin had already made additional lunch and room preparations for their new guest. The man was grateful for the accommodation, but true communication was still a long ways off, as several more unsuccessful attempts to determine the man's name made evident. Judai arrived during lunch, however, and offered to use his own linguistic talents either to teach the man *Dûcorten*, or learn whatever strange language he used. Lot agreed with this idea and gave them the study to use.

Lot had little else to do after this latest escapade, so he wandered around the mansion for a bit. He checked on Judai frequently, where they made some impressive early progress. He had an appointment with his doctor later that day, but he didn't feel content to lie about healing. In short, after several hours at the mansion and despite more than a day of mortal danger wishing for these same quiet moments, he was bored. With his armor still on, Lot went to see Duncan for a workout. Duncan was in the drill room training the estate guards. He rolled his eyes at Lot's approach. "You're not well enough to be here!" he told Lot. "I'm not?" Lot looked hurt. Duncan took him aside and explained. Lot's doctor had been by to warn Duncan that Lot needed to heal, but that he would probably try to train anyway. Duncan disagreed, but clearly the doctor knew best.

So Lot went back to his room. The courier had just visited, bringing the day's mail. Lot sifted through the various petitions, notifications, and audience requests, until he found—to his surprise—another letter from Pythas. This one, written on the same rare wieburn parchment as the first, held the words "I have new expectations of you. —Pythas." Lot lied down on his bed. Maybe some sleep wasn't such a bad thing, after all.

On the afternoon of the following day, the courier boat that Balin sent to try to catch up with the *Dekari* finally did, where a river jam slowed down the traffic. The courier carried the message to Gareth that Lot was safe and present at the Solarin Estate. The adventurers on the boat convened to discuss the situation. Should they continue, and try to stop Pythas from escaping the country? Or should they return, since their goals had been achieved?

Cregor had the most insight into the issue. They had previously decided not to bring in other Desarian guilds and handle the matter personally for fear that the guilds might write off Lot's life in an effort to retrieve the valued fore-cannons. In addition, they had concerns that a conspiracy might exist between certain guilds, or certain powerful individuals, and the islanders—making it difficult to discern who to trust. But now that Lot had managed to escape on his own, there was no need to keep the situation under wraps any longer. With their friend's safety assured, the Naval Guild and the Mages' Guild, or whoever else, could take over from here. The rest of the adventurers agreed. They told Captain Amazhi the details that they knew, and departed on the courier ship for New Telagosa. If they made good time, they could be back in two days—just enough time to rush to the cader's tournament.

"I told the doctor you'd have the horse sense not to come in here. I was wrong. Now I owe him a gold coin."

The worst demon of miscommunication occurs when our words have unintended emotional side effects.

Once we have taken offense or found fault, we can be incredibly unwilling to accept that a miscommunication occurred.

Communication is the art of avoiding miscommunication.

Character Acting (Continued from page 3)

saying is one of the very things that leads to miscommunication! In any event, all communication has these attributes: you, the audience, and the context. You should take care to be aware of these three attributes of every conversation you engage in.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of miscommunication. The first is when the listener knows he failed to understand—this usually occurs when the speaker uses metaphorical tools that aren't in the listener's metaphorical "dictionary," or when the speaker failed to establish the right context. The second kind is evil—when the listener *thinks* he understands, but in fact misunderstands. That kind of miscommunication occurs when the speaker uses ambiguous language or is unaware of another way his words might be "taken"—usually by not "knowing his audience." It also occurs frequently when the speaker has a hostile audience—the kind that will entertain the speaker's words in the most unfavorable light, or will look for ways to be offended by the speaker's words.

Miscommunication usually has ancillary effects, or "demons," beyond the simple misadventure of information in transit. Recovering from bad miscommunication usually takes a while—that's a problem because it's inefficient, but it can usually be corrected on the spot, or sometime later when the demon reveals itself. In role-playing, though, miscommunication can lead to a misunderstanding that can't be retroactively corrected! "Suddenly, the door bursts open with surprising force, knocking Zephyr across the room and out." "But I said I was standing *by* the door, not *in front* of it!" "Crap. But BigBadGuy came in because he saw you through the keyhole!" "BigBadGuy is here!?" "Crap." The potential for this kind of miscommunication causes a lot of stress for the GM, who must take care not to reveal information by unduly confirming communication, while at the same time making sure that the picture in his mind is as close as possible to the picture in the mind of each of the players. Once the GM gives away the plot based on a miscommunication, retroactive hand-waving is a tough judgment call!

But the worst demon of miscommunication occurs when our words have unintended *emotional* side effects. We all have areas of emotional sensitivity. What does it mean to be sensitive in an area? I think of it like this: if I'm afraid and worried, for example, that the players think my acting skills stink, I'm going to subconsciously scan everything they say to me looking for the signs that would verify that fear. The problem is, of course, that because everything can be interpreted in so many ways, I'm going to start seeing the residue of my sensitivity in a *lot* of communication. That's bad because when humans perceive an affront in a touchy, sensitive area, they usually activate their emotional defense mechanisms. Almost all of them are counterproductive—they range from attacking the

person making the "offensive" comment; to becoming depressed, unresponsive, and sulky; to becoming excessively defensive in correcting the perceived slight; to going out of our way to dismiss wholesale the opinions or point of the "offender."

And that's not the worst of it. Emotionally charged miscommunication almost always breeds *resentment*, or "hard feelings." And that means that the whole cycle is even more likely to repeat. This is a demon that goes well beyond the words at hand, degrading relationships with time. And this demon is especially difficult to fight because its stealth—most of us don't let other people know of our sensitive areas, even our closest friends. It could even be because we aren't aware of them ourselves—for example, we might prefer to believe something about ourselves, but have niggling doubts that lead us to sensitively scan everything without even being aware of it. But whatever the reason, it can make us tough to communicate with, because the rest of the world has no way of knowing when they're going to step in it. But the most powerful ability of this demon is not its invisibility—it has to be that most annoying of powers, *nigh invulnerability*. Once we have taken offense or found fault, we can be incredibly unwilling to accept that a *miscommunication* occurred. The very nature of the demon is, after all, that we are *too* willing to believe something offensive to us, *too* willing to see it where it isn't. And once your suspicions are confirmed and the emotional defenses are activated, it can be a real challenge to back down.

All of these demons can be fought, however. One of my favorite ways to think about communication is: "Communication is the art of avoiding miscommunication." Sounds simple, but that's a tall order. When you think about all the possible ways in which your words can be misinterpreted, opening your mouth at all takes a colossal leap of faith—faith that your audience will, by some miracle, pick the interpretation you intended out of the hundreds of ambiguous possibilities, connotatively and denotatively. On the flipside, we as listeners have the awful responsibility of matching a string of waveform sounds and gestures to the proper meaning.

Our faith is usually well-placed, fortunately. But it's worthwhile now and again to reflect on the amazing complexity and wonder of communication. When we gather for a session, spending the better part of a day together, communicating—it pays to give it some extra effort and consideration. Are you putting the extra touch on your words that can prevent miscommunication? Are you paying close attention to your audience's reactions, ever vigilant for the signs of miscommunication? When you listen, are you doing your level best to make an *accurate* interpretation? Are you willing to entertain the notion that you may have misinterpreted someone? And when the demons of miscommunication do rear their ugly heads, are you ready?