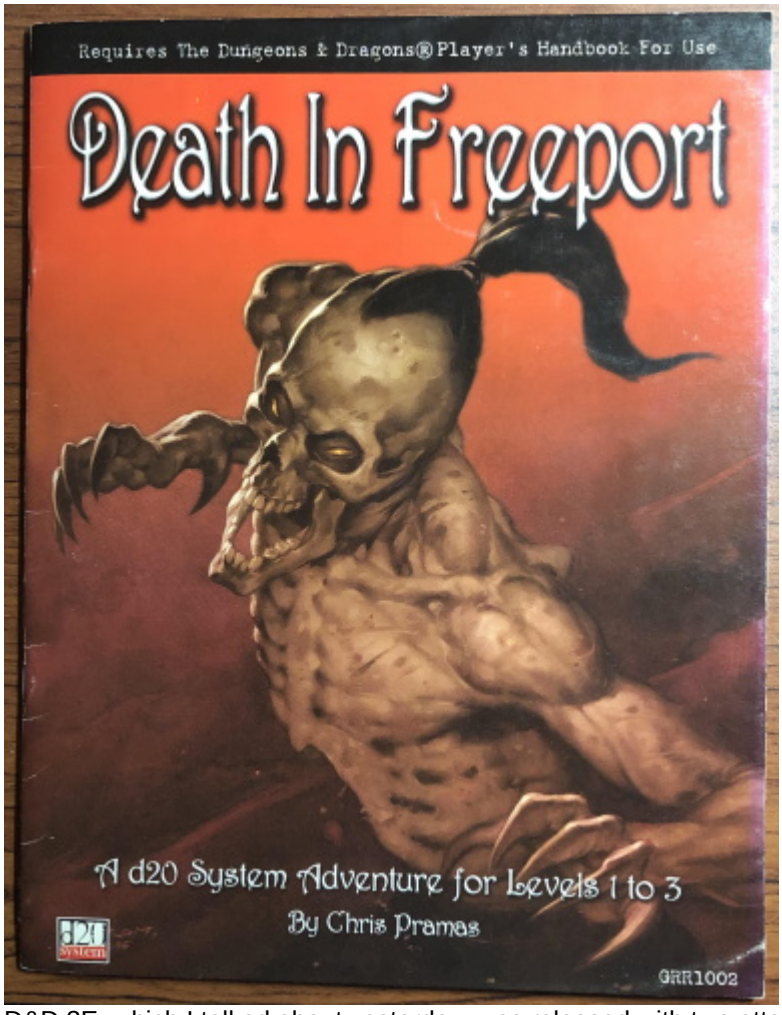
Twitter Thread by Chris Pramas



Chris Pramas
@Pramas

Today's game supplement is Death in Freeport (2000) from Green Ronin Publishing. I haven't really featured my own work on #CuratedQuarantine to date but it is relevant to the d20 story.



D&D 3E, which I talked about yesterday, was released with two attached licenses: the Open Game License and the d20 System Trademark License. #CuratedQuarantine

The basic idea was to give other publishers a legal way to release D&D compatible material and to be able to indicate that with a special d20 System logo. This would eliminate a lot of legal headaches that TSR and then WotC had to deal with. #CuratedQuarantine

It was also hoped that certain types of support books that WotC had difficulty selling in large numbers—short adventures in particular—could be taken up by third party companies. I remember the work meeting where all this was pitched to the staff. #CuratedQuarantine

WotC was too big to be agile, it was argued, so let other companies provide support material. The more people kept playing D&D, the more WotC would benefit. #CuratedQuarantine

There were many dubious faces at this meeting and some of the concerns expressed were, in fact, proven to be correct but it got me thinking. #CuratedQuarantine

I had left Roleplaying R&D by this point to join the brand-new miniatures team (a whole other story I should tell some time). I found I missed RPG work though, so I decided to start a side company to keep my finger in the pie, as it were. #CuratedQuarantine

This was Green Ronin Publishing, and I was already working on our first release, a beer and pretzels RPG called Ork! The Roleplaying Game (now in its second edition). I figured my tiny company could be plenty agile, so I started working on a short adventure. #CuratedQuarantine

My idea, licenses permitting, was to publish it at GenCon 2000, the same day the new Player's Handbook would debut. I knew WotC was taking a "back to the dungeon" approach, so I decided to do a city adventure instead. #CuratedQuarantine

I spiced it up with pirates and Lovecraftian horror and that's how the city of Freeport was born. The question was, would these licenses be ready for use in time for me to pull this off? The answer may surprise you: no! #CuratedQuarantine



The earliest d20 material was actually released under a “gentlemen’s agreement” with WotC. We proceeded under good faith with the idea that they would get the legal stuff squared away and we’d make any required changes when the time came. #CuratedQuarantine

At GenCon that year, you could buy two third party adventures: my own Death in Freeport and Atlas Games’ Three Days to Kill. I took a huge gamble and printed 10,000 copies (in most circumstances, a terrible idea!) but I made the right call. #CuratedQuarantine

Death in Freeport sold like crazy and put Green Ronin on the map. This was obviously a great thing for me and Green Ronin is still here 21 years later. Was it great for WotC and D&D though? Tomorrow I’ll look at some of the unintended consequences. #CuratedQuarantine

FYI, we published a 20th Anniversary edition of Death in Freeport last year. It’s available for both 5E and my own RPG, Fantasy AGE. #CuratedQuarantine
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