

## Untitled - June 23, 2025

**Speaker** Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out for a walk and deliver an episode to you while I stroll around. I'm Brendan Riley. Well, good morning, listeners. It's a beautiful day here in suburban Chicago, although it's really hot. This is the second day of a or third day of a heat wave that we're having here, where already at 630 in the morning, I would say it's 82 degrees. Probably by the end of this walk, I'm going to be very warm. And it's of course just going to get warmer. So I'm glad I'm getting out to do this early. We're almost to the end of June, which marks the halfway point in the year. If I've been keeping on track. That means that the halfway point for the podcast should be episode 750 for the season. And guess what? Today is episode 750. So I'm actually a little bit ahead of where I need to be, which is important because it's gonna be, you know, in the second half of the year, I always run out of time. And so it's good to get a little bit ahead of the curve if I can. Well, today I thought I would talk about something that came up in a conversation I was having recently. Uh, so I recently played the game Even Fall, which I'll talk about in another episode. Uh, but I couldn't remember why I had purchased even fall. So there's a thing about how I buy games. Sometimes I'll listen to a review, or I'll watch a playthrough or something, and I'll have a game and I'm like, oh, I definitely have to try that game. It looks like it'd be a good purchase for sure, but I've been trying to do less just buying on a whim, uh, more keeping an eye out for sales or buying used or whatever. So I'm trying to do a little bit more keeping track of games I might like to get in the future, and then using that to kind of control my impulse a little bit. So instead of buying a game, I would put it on my I'd like to get this game in the future list, which is what happened with Evenfall. At some point in the past, I heard about the game. I put it on my list and then when my birthday was coming up, I looked at my list and I was like, oh, this game's not that expensive. It'd be a good one to have the kids get me whatever. That's how it worked out. And one of the kids got it for me for my birthday, haha. But I, I honestly didn't remember why I had put it on. I had to trust past Brendan not to screw me over and he was right. I'll talk about it more, but I also didn't know exactly why I put it on there, because I didn't make any notes to myself and then I figured it out. Evenfall uses a mechanism that I haven't seen in very many games and I think is neat. Which leads me to my podcast episode for today great Underused Mechanism. So what I've got here is five games that I love or yeah, five games that I think are really good. Now I have five mechanisms, I have five subjects, and for each one I've got a mechanism that I think is underused or I haven't seen used very much, and I would love to play some more games that use this idea. So to begin with the first the great underused mechanism game, and one that I keep saying, oh, I got to get that back out. I got to get that back out. And I keep not getting that back out is Elysium. Elysium is a game, I think 2015. It's the game that put Brett Gilbert and, um, Matt Dunstan on the map as game designers. It was a big hit when it came out, and I haven't seen anything since. It hasn't been republished, which I don't understand why it's not still in print. It's so good. But then again, I don't play it that often, so I don't know, how can I say it's so good anyway? So Elysium. Elysium has two mechanisms in it that I think are great. And until now, until even fall, I didn't know either of them had been used. Even fall reuses one. The other one I still don't think has been reused. So the one even fall reuses is an up the upper row bottom row, and you could point to some other games that have a similar thing. I would say the Valley of Kings, which is a

deck building and deck deconstruction game, has this sort of, uh, but it's very different. So in Elysium, one of the things that happens is you get these cards to your tableau, and they all have not all of them, but a lot of them have some sort of ability that they give you a bonus, an action, something like that. And you are allowed to use that ability as long as the card is in your upper row. I don't remember what the game calls it, but at some point you can transfer that card to the lower row. Your Elysium, and transferring the card to your Elysium is really important because you don't score the card unless it's in your Elysium and in the game Elysium, you lose access to the power on that card once you've transferred it down to your scoring area. Evenfall borrows that idea. Now there's a twist on it and evenfall. The top row again has powers that you can use, or action spaces that you can take, and the action spaces you can take with your witches, which are four of your characters. But then if a card is in your bottom row, you can take the actions with your elders who are not able to go out and take the same spaces the witches can take. So it really behooves you to move it to your bottom row, because then you'll get to score what your elders are doing. You can use your elders well if you haven't moved stuff to your bottom row, it's really hard to use your elders well. There's also this element of scoring. If your card is in the bottom row, you can score the ritual that you have put on it. If it's in the top row, you can't score it. So there's this question of when do you move it down? Now in Evenfall you are motivated to move it down because you have workers you can't use until you do move things down. In Elysium, that choice is more difficult because you don't have workers down that you can use at the bottom. Once a card is down on the bottom, you don't get to use it anymore. So slightly different experience, but the mechanism was used now, the other mechanism they use in Elysium that I have not seen anywhere else, and I'd love to hear if any of you listeners know of other games that do this. Are the action selection pillars. The way it works in Elysium is you have four pillars, one of each of four colors, and those pillars are your four turns each turn. After you take a turn, then you set aside one of the four pillars that you've used. So after the fourth turn, you set aside a fourth pillar and your game and the round is over. The clever part of the tricky bit is each round it begins. You. You take a card, you add a tableau, and then you get to do an action or two. Actions I don't remember, it's been a couple years, but the trick is when you take a card from the tableau, you can only take a card if it. If you have all the pillars that match the colors on the card. So each card has little dots in the corner symbols actually, because it's colorblind friendly, that match the four different pillars. And as long as you have the pillar that matches the card, you can take the card. But each round you're setting aside one of your pillars, which then reduces the number of cards in the tableau that you can take. The tableau does not refill between turns, so there's a number of cards in the tableau at the beginning of the round. Everybody goes around drafting those cards toward the end. You might not be able to take a card, in which case you take a citizen which is like a generic card. It doesn't do much and it can hurt your score at the end. So there's this really interesting gamble of when do you get rid of each of the four pillars? Because every time you get rid of a pillar, you are limiting what cards you can take. And you really it really drives an interesting element where you're watching the other players because you need to spot which pillars they have discarded so that you can keep track of which which cards they might take. It's great and I've never seen another game use it, so let me know if there's another game that uses that or you know, think about it. If there are other similar mechanisms that other games have used in the same way. All right. The second game I

wanted to point to that has an underused mechanism is Android Netrunner. Now, you knew I would talk about Android Netrunner. It's my favorite game. And of course there are a variety of different mechanisms that are really interesting in Android Netrunner, but the one I want to point to is that somebody has all the points in Netrunner. One player is the corporation, their deck has all the points in it, and they are trying to score those points, put the cards into play and score them. The other player, the runner, is trying to get into the corporation's stuff and steal the points. So there's a asymmetric quality to the game where you are trying to do related but different things, and you are oppositional to one another. But the whole idea that one player has all the points and the other player is trying to steal some of them before they can actually actualize those points, is really interesting. And I think there are certainly asymmetric games, but I haven't seen one with that dynamic before or since, at least not that I can recall. So that is Android Netrunner. One person has all the points. Next up, this one. It does feel like a mechanism that I have kind of encountered in other games, but it's hard to tell for sure. This is in glory to Rome. The follow action. Now, I know there are other games that have follow actions in Puerto Rico. When you take one of the roles, you do the strong version of it and everyone else does the same thing. In broom service, there is an element where you might follow someone, although that's never a choice. That's a that's never a direct choice because you don't know what cards the other people are going to play. But the way it works in Glory to Rome is particularly interesting. So in Glory to Rome, on your turn, you choose to take one of the action types. Every other player can then discard a card to take that action type as well. And it's the card discard that makes that really interesting because you're giving up opportunity in order to take opportunity. But the whole point of the game is this is the efficiency of doing action. So if you're able to follow when someone else does an action, then you get to do your actions more quickly and you can rush toward the end of the game. Now, Glory to Rome has a lot of other really great stuff as well, but I think that the idea that each round or each turn, somebody might pick a thing, and then I might choose to follow them and do it also is really compelling and I and worthy of exploring in more detail. Now, Glory to Rome also has another thing that I have seen in other games, which is really crazy powers, but there's so many really crazy powers that they stop feeling unfair because everybody's got access to really crazy powers. Obviously other games like Innovation and Mutiny do that to varying degrees. Impulse does as well. I haven't played a GNC yet, but apparently that also can do that. Uh, the that new even fall game that I was talking about earlier has a bunch of specialists that are very strong and can do lots of stuff. Uh, there are a variety. There are a lot of different games that have kind of taken this idea that if you have one really strong power that could feel I'm unbalanced. But if you have a whole bunch of them that are all situationally really good, then it becomes it's sort of like drafting, it becomes or auctions. It's sort of up to the players to decide which one is valuable and figure out how to use it best. So that one is, I would say, more often used. So the next mechanism that I wanted to point to as interesting and not used as often as it could be, are auctions you don't mind losing. Now, I've seen a number of there are plenty of games where in an auction you might try to bid up the score because you are trying to get the other person to spend more money and you don't really mind losing it. That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm thinking of is games where there are auctions and you place bids on them or bets on them, and your bid or bet has different qualities depending on if you win or lose the auction. So if you in the two games I'm thinking here of are Furnace and Brian Boru. And so in

furnace it's a straight up auction. You're playing a card with a or you're bidding on different spaces on these cards, and the cards have a win benefit and a lose benefit. And the whole thing is if you win the auction, you get the win benefit. If you get the card, if you lose the auction, you get the lose benefit. It's a little spiff and you don't get the card. The game also has these very set bidding tokens, so you can kind of see what other people are bidding or can bid. And it makes for really interesting bidding and simple engine building without too much difficulty. So from that perspective, I think fairness is really interesting because it has these auctions in it that you just don't mind losing. Losing the auctions is sometimes the point. And if you if someone else, if no one else over bids you, you're sure this one person's going to bid on it and they don't, and then you end up winning the card. Sometimes that's annoying. You don't always want the card. So, uh, and then Brian Boru is the other one. Now, to be fair, Brian Boru is not an auction game. It is a trick taking game. Sometimes you have no choice but to lose the trick, but it is not at all uncommon to intentionally lose the trick, uh, or to play into a trick that you mean to lose. So I'm putting it in this category because, again, like in fairness, the cards have two benefits. There is you win the auction, or you win the trick with this card and you lose the trick with this card. And if you win the trick you get you get the area control benefit. And if you lose the trick, then you get these other benefits instead. And the other benefits are often really important. It's a key part of winning the game is balancing those. So this is something that I like. I said, I came up with two examples of games that do this, but it's not something I've seen a ton of, and I would really like to see other game designers use it. That's auctions you don't mind losing. Once again, if you have other examples of games that do these things, I would love to hear them. Uh, the last thing I want to mention is Concordia. Now, Concordia has a mechanism that I have seen used fairly often, which is hand management. Play all your cards and then take an action to pick them up. Of course, Concordia is the earliest game I know of to do this, although I'm sure there are other games, but this is actually relatively common now in a game where you have a bunch of actions in your hand. One of the actions you can take is the reset action, where you pick all your cards back up. In mechanically, this isn't really very different from worker placement, particularly if you have a worker placement game where the spaces are unlimited in terms of who can go there. But you know, you could have cards where only the first person to play the card gets to take the action or something. But in worker placement games and in this kind of hand management game, you take a reset turn where you're picking everything back up. So the idea of the reset turn is interesting, particularly when you get a benefit for how long you waited. Nucleum uses that reset turn idea as well. When you take a reset turn, you pick up all of your tracks and picking up your tracks gets you your actions back, but it also gets you reward based on how high how many turns you played. So that's useful and interesting and thoughtful. But then there's a whole bunch of chimney swifts just going crazy up in the sky. It's very cute. But then you have a secondary, uh, thing in Concordia, which is what I want to talk about here, which is action cards that also shape scoring. So I think one of the things that makes Concordia particularly interesting is the combination of those two things. If you haven't played Concordia, one of the things you do or you can do is acquire new cards, and acquiring new cards shapes what you're going to be able to do in future turns. But it also shapes your scoring, because at the end of the game, there are like six different scoring categories, and your score in those categories is based on how much you achieved and then multiplied by how many cards you have that score in that category. And

so if you acquire if you're doing really well in one category, you want to acquire more cards that score in that category. And of course, the tricky thing is the cards that help you do well in that category aren't always the ones that score in that category. Sometimes they they don't overlap all that well. So finding a place to combine those two is really interesting. So this idea of actions that also shape your scoring and having to think about which action energy you take and how that affects what scoring possibilities you have, is really interesting and useful. And I think something that I would like to see more games do. So I'm curious which what games did I or what mechanisms did I mention here that have been used more than I'm realizing? I would love to hear over on Board Game Geek. There are literally thousands of games that come out every year. I bet I'm wrong about all of these. I bet there are games that use these mechanisms, and I would love to hear what they are. Because I think they're really neat and I'd love to try them out more. If you have examples of that, head over to BoardGameGeek. Yield 3269 and share them with me. I'd love to know what they are. Similarly, if you have a message to send, you can send me a message on BoardGameGeek. Wombat 929 is my username there? Or you could send me a message by email Brendan at rattlebox. Games.com is my email address there. Well, thank you for joining me on my walk today. I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.