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Vormithrax is basically the Lobos of Cataclysm. He plays the game with challenges that'd make it impossible for other people to survive even for a few minutes.

While his challenge runs are stunning, it is annoying that there *is* a meta.

In each, "normally I'd ___ but I can't do it so easily now, so ___"

What usually happens is someone watches a Cataclysm video, gets it, and then dies.

Then dies and dies and dies, having tons of fun in the process.

And then they learn the meta.

Grind slings to level crafting, search bushes to level survival. Make a knife spear. Stop making a knife spear, they nerfed it.

And before you know it, every game starts the same way. Like a video game, not an apocalypse simulator, or a story generator.

Cataclysm, like Dwarf Fortress or Crusader Kings, is a story generator. It pumps out narrative.

The existence of a meta, an optimal way to minmax munchkin it, removes that narrative generation unless done carefully.

Vorm gets around that, still generating stories, by constraining himself in weird ways.

He has to *work* to avoid falling into that meta.

In Cataclysm, or Project Zomboid, there's an established meta for the zombie apocalypse. Almost a chess opening or joseki, a formal series of tasks to do for optimal results.

This bothers me, the encroachment of video gamey mechanics on narrative generation.

It's not a technical problem with a technical solution. Like DPS in dark souls, there's an objective, knowably optimal strategy governed by the game mechanics, even if it makes little sense from the story perspective.

It's almost like a generalization of ludonarrative dissonance.

"Oh yeah I'm gonna help you find your father. First wait a sec while I take my sweet time looting everything in here not nailed down"

"Oh no the princess is in danger!"

calmly loots every single broken rake in the village before leaving to find her

But in this case, it's the inescapable dissonance of video game mechanics themselves inevitably hampering narrative generation.