# People are Interested in People

## Encounters

### Location
- Danger
- High
- Fast
- Sharp
- Traps
- Ambush
- Awkward
- Beauty
- Don’t damage the foliage

### Weather
- Temperature
- Wind
- Precipitation / fog
- Weird – ball lightening

### Lighting
- Dark / dull / bright / too bright
- Colour
- Strobing / varying / disappearing

### Footing
- Helpful
- Hindering
- Levels
- Vehicles / moving

### Time Limit
- Success required before a certain time
- Failure occurs after a certain time
- Things change after a certain time

### Second challenge
- Cut off escape
- Multiple foes / riot
- Mental + physical challenge

### Props / Extras / Scenery
- Carrot on a stick – reward out of reach

## Descriptions

### Show don’t tell
- Don’t state an attitude – show it with word and deed
- Setting: props, scenery, extras: how can these demonstrate attitude

### Visualise before you speak
- Take 10 seconds
- Think of Movie / Game / Fly through view

### Player specific descriptions based on PC interests
- Delay with details in the beginning and middle
- Save the best for last
  - 6 senses
    - 3 details for a glance
    - 5 details for a look
    - 7 details for inspection

### Speech: tone, pauses, pacing
- Unrelated campaign details
- Use appropriately

### The Art of Providing Evasive Answers

#### Use appropriately
- NPCs
- Divination and prophecy
- Not rules, or PC’s eyes and ears

### Metaphors and similes
- Direct – the king is a plague on the land
- Indirect – my sword shall dog my foes
- Obscure – secrecy locks the gate to friendship

#### + follow it up with a question / greeting / challenge
- Answer with a question
- The answer to this question answers the PC’s question
- Question is deliberately challenging or evasive

#### Answer a few steps ahead
- Where is this line of questions going
- Answer the question a few steps forward

### Half answer
- Don’t answer – run
- Body language (if the NPC would use it)

## Improvisation - Art

### Know the finale
- Let them go off on tangents
  - Return to main plot when and if able to
  - Be flexible with time scale. Nick of time is when they arrive
  - Replant the plot to the new location “illusion of freelwill”
  - Plant clues in the new tangent

### Let the heroes lose
- Steal player ideas if they discuss what could be next
- If you’re stuck
  - Take time out
  - Admit you haven’t planned for this
  - Ask the players what they think you should do from here

### It’s OUR plot not MY plot
- Encourage and describe feelings don’t state them
- “chill runs down your spine” not “you’re afraid”
- Never force a player action (and if they’re being mind controlled, allow them to role play it.)

## Rewards

### Non monetary
- Lands / House
- Services / training
- Titles, Status, Epithets, Nick names
- Reputation, name, ego rub
- Promises, fealty, love or respect
- Relationships, servants, marriage offers, fans and groupies, enemies, patrons, DNPCs
- Duties

### Exotic foods
- Meats
- Herbs and spices
- Drinks
- Treats and sweets
- Nuts and berries

### Beasts / Monsters / Trophies
- Fur / hides / scales
- Claws and teeth
- Skulls and horns

### Strange materials
- Normal things with cosmetic differences
- Silk not cloth
- Teak not wood
- Bronze not iron

### Art
- Named items
- Other monies

### Spells or info
- Sheet metal (Make sure to vary the metals)
- Tattoos
- Clay tablets
- Burned into wood
- On the backs of paintings
- Rawhide
- Soft leather
- Book covers
- Engraved onto armour
- Glass tablets
- Metal tablets/bars
- Directly on walls

### Spot light time:
- Not necessarily in the character’s speciality
- Always roleplaying / developing background / character / NPC

### Cinematic points to be traded in for cinematic stunts
- Their turn to GM / serendipity / wish list

## Improvisation - Science

### Start at the ending
- Face down the demon

### Work backwards
- Magery backfire
- Investigate mage collecting X
- Need to get X themselves

### Add a twist
- Hired by demon flunky so PCs need to get X themselves

### Plant clues to the twist
- Give NPCs personalities

### Use averages for stats (max’s for bosses)

### Continuity
- Write stuff down
- Go for constant cinematic realism

### Balance
- Start small then re-enforce
- Overkill and have the PCs work out how to back out
- Fudge dice rolls
- Let the PCs lose
### How to fix botched encounters

**Take a break**
- Regroup your thoughts
- Talk to players about options

**Dream up ideas**
- Stream of consciousness
- Write
- Talk to players about options

**Give the encounter something new**
- **Hook**
  - Give the encounter a purpose
  - Give the PCs something to fight for
  - See table of player wants
  - See encounters table
  - En-reforcement / new dangers

**Give the NPCs a new feature**
- Tactic
- Go cinematic

**Re describe scenery / props / extras**
- lights / camera / action

**Things that make a campaign better**
- **Recurring NPCs**
- Hierarchy of Evil ™ interacting with PCs
- Foreshadowing and symbolism
- PC / NPC / Plot / World development
- Relationships
- An overall goal

**Plot Features**
- **NPC**
  - Background
  - How did they get from there to here
  - Good at
  - Bad at
  - Blind spots
  - Evil aren’t all evil
  - Good aren’t all good
  - Mundane aren’t all mundane
  - Looks / Mannerisms

**Scenes and speeches**
- Boxed text (player passive)
- Points you must get across
- Good turns of phrase
- Ideas of how to vary plot for predictable PC induced alterations

**Background**
- People. Make it about the people
- Who’s involved
- Motivations
- Interactions – with NPCs and PCs
- How to and what if they fail or succeed

**Clues, Leads, Plot hooks**
- Flexibility
- Duplication and repetition
- Where When Why What Who How

**Improvised Encounters**
When an improvised encounter is needed – the players are bored, or have done something unexpected, imagine

- Most Obvious
- Most Surprising
- Most Challenging
- Most Pleasing

And choose the one that will best please those involved

### Plot Twists - types

**Cosmetic changes only**
- Prince kidnapped by evil warlord
- Complete reversal
  - Evil princess keeps wizard locked in tower

**How many?!**
- 10 wizards trying to kidnap 1 princess
- 1 wizard trying to kidnap 10 princesses
- 10 wizards trying to kidnap 10 princesses – but only 1 counts

**Bait and Switch**
- Someone or ones are not who they appear to be (or think they are)
- Amateurs, Darn Amateurs
- Because of incompetence something’s gone wrong

**Humour**
- weird or funny side effect of plot
- Princess wants to marry rescuer.

### Clues

**Use of clues**
- Any kind of mystery or secret
- Reveal the powers of magic / technology
- Reveal special abilities of monsters / foes
- Foreshadowing / Use as warnings
- Use them as plot hooks
- Turn a plotline into a character-driven story: rather than having a bunch of scheduled events which lead the PCs through the adventure, plant clues to generate player interest and desire to proceed

**Define the secrets to be revealed**
- Plot
- NPC
- Hierarchy of Evil
- Relationships
- PC secrets

**Write down every clue you can think of**
- People Places Things
- Who What Why Where When How
- 6 senses

**Repeat for each sub clue**

**Work out which are:**
- Helpful
- Essential
- Distracting

**Divide into:**
- Clear and easy placement
- Easy to improvise placement
- Don’t know

**Highlight any essential don’t know clues so you remember to look for how to get them in**

**Choices**
- Don’t render PC choices meaningless
  - If offered, make it matter
  - If it won’t matter, skim over it
  - Point out there is a choice

**Change the nature of the choices**
- ☑️/☐ Cost
- ☑️/☐ Reward
- ☑️/☐ Available choices
- Link to another encounter/NPC/PC
- De-link to another encounter…
- Change how the choice affects the party
- Change who in the party the choice affects
- Choice directly vs indirectly affects the party

### Plot Twists – how to

**Divide into steps and twist each step**
- Encounter – make more interesting
- Plot – change nature of plot
- Campaign – change campaign features or PC motives

**Change nature of props / scenery / extras**
- Appearance / Illusion
- Misdirection / misinformation / sabotage
- Systems failure
- Wrong target

**Combine two stories**
- Create story line A
- Create story line B
- Work out why for each
- Swap the why’s and see what emerges

**Don’t twist too often**
- Twist in PCs favour sometimes

### Plot Hooks

**Grab their attention**
- Dramatic
- Threatening
- Confrontational
- Serendipitous

**Point out there’s something in it for them**
- Healing
- Information
- Revenge
- Favours from friends, leverage over enemies
- A present for a birthday
- Equipment
- A new skill, spell or tech
- Family
- Job/income
- New mystery to explore
- Opportunity to roleplay

**Call to arms**
- Direct action towards them
- Thrill of the chase
- Time limit on taking action
- Sixth sense fudge

**Give the players options**
- Or at least let them work out what’s happening as their options dry up
- Adapt your hook so it happens anyway “Illusion of free will”

**Hook can happen to a PC – will provoke an action**

**Hook can happen around a PC – provoke a reaction**
- Riot
- Rumour
- Background event
- Foreground event
- Props / Scenery / Extras
- Grey areas of morality

**Recycle existing game elements**

### Conflict – Narrow Focus Lens

- Fight – direct confrontation / traps / capture
- Hide – avoid / divert attention / infiltrate
- Run – escape / buy time / chase
- Deal – negotiate / bluff / intimidate (blackmail)

### Conflict – Wide Focus Lens

- Mislead – activities / goals / other interactions
- Investigate – dig up dirt / discover plot
- Competition for influence with third party
- Taking Hostages – people / things / information
- Call in the cavalry
A Story is Made or Broken by its Villain

Villains
Goal
Motivation
Background to motivation
Method
Look the part
Resources
Ending

Writing Effective Villains
Don’t hold back
Don’t overdo it
• As evil as needed for the story
• True to type, plots and ideas
• Don’t steal the limelight
• Not all bad – still human foibles
• Blind spots
• Fatal flaws
• Likeable characteristics
Have a line of reasoning behind methods
Plan the villains demise

Quick and Dirty Villains
Give the a % chance of success
Strengths and weaknesses
• Behavioural (intimidating stare, flinches easily)
• Physical (incredible strength, poor vision)
• Mental (always cool, genius, fear of snakes)
• Political (Emperor is ally, merchants are enemies)
• Economic (healthy bank account, poor credit)
• Social (people never suspect, shy around ladies)
• Military (large, well-trained army, poor general)
• Family (mother is Queen, must protect his sons)
• Special (spells, the force, delusions of intuition)
Point form plan
• Start at goal
• Work back to achievable
• Now you have a plot
Create a number of the above
Mesh the plots together

Hierarchy of Evil
Decide on goal
• Has to be something to interest the PCs
• Doesn’t have to be all bad or all selfish
• Can choose a good goal that will twist later
Arch villain
• No single PC should able to defeat them
• PCs don’t have to know / recognise them
Chief Lieutenants
• Personal goal / motivation
• Link to Arch Villain
• Can be tougher to deal with than the Villain
• Arch Villain’s last line of defence
• Complex relationship with Arch Villain
Cannon Fodder
• Eyes / Ears
• Mouth / Hands
• Lead PCs to the Lieutenants
• If they become a recurring NPC, make them a Lieutenant

Relationships
• Cannon fodder want to become Lieutenants
• Lieutenants want to further own goals
• / become a power in their own right
• Arch villain have complex relations with Lts
• Can be weaknesses the PCs can exploit
Evil flunkies make their masters look bad
• PCs may hate the villains because of their flunkies’ evil behaviour

Villain Tactics
Answering questions
• Answer a question with a question
• Villains can lie
• (and then follow up with a question)
Ask a question then be silent.
“I lie who speaks first loses”
Be on the PCs side… but
• Don’t tell them everything
• Lie about objectives or outcomes
• My enemy’s enemy is my enemy
Give the PCs (bad) choices not ultimatums
• Assume the thing you want to be done will be done, and give choices about how to do it
Manipulate the PCs
• Family
• Occupation
• Relationships
• Money
Followers are expendable
Treasure
• If the NPC has cool stuff, use it
• Especially if it has shots
Thinking
• Monsters can use clever tactics
• May figure out PCs tactics
• Can Bluff
Home field advantage / tactics
• Entrances
• Escape routes
• Alarm systems
• Barricades
• And traps on the barricades
• Traps
• Deliberately misleading trails
• Ambushes
• Guerrilla tactics
• Split the PCs up
• Secret passages allow the PCs to be surrounded
• If winning push on
Run away, revenge later
• If the PCs retreat, make them pay

Goals
• Power and conquest
• Safety / Self Defence
• Greed and money
• Achievement and prestige
• Seeking (forbidden) knowledge
• Food (+ little effort)
• Revenge
• Cubs
• Sympathy / love
• Compassion and conversation
• Survival
• Get the job done no matter what
• Religious Mania
• Twisted code of honour
• Sheer Malevolence
This will define what the monsters are willing to sacrifice, and how they act.
Goals may change mid encounter

Interesting Villains
• The villain has a different view of good and evil
• Things the party does wrong, the villain does right
• Makes allies
• Sides with the law when the party don’t
• Fixes the problems the players create => popular
• Gathers intelligence
• Gets there first
• Weakens PC / NPC relationships
• Strengthens their own
• Romantic attachment to party
• Villain is the source of
• Services the players need
• Info
• Items
• Plot

Order of villainy
• Seducer
• Corrupter
• Merchant
• Torturer
• Murderer
• Maybe be nice to the players for a change
• Reputation for being wonderful
• Be a thorn in PCs side just to be malicious

NPC Goals
• Army (or avoid it)
• Avoid attracting attention
• Avoid becoming scapegoat
• Attract Attention
• Be as passive aggressive as possible
• Build a better mousetrap
• Defend against political enemies
• Dig up dirt on enemies
• Family man
• Fix specific family problem
• Get a better job
• Gossip – either do or avoid
• Impress people
• Impress superiors
• Impress the Joneses
• Keep my job
• Make a little extra cash
• Marriage
• Marry off children
• Marry up
• Money / Land
• Obsession with hobby / job / person / goal
• Pass on my wisdom
• Political standing
• Power
• Reputition
• Social Climb
• Social standing
• Use job to get time for hobbies
• Wishing was in an alternate career

Improvising NPC personas
• Give any NPC a characteristic line or two. Even if you never use this piece of prepared dialogue, it will help flesh out the character, and give you a framework for their dialogue.
• Give NPCs a (single) personality trait (list below)
• Cast an Actor or book character to play the NPC
• Don’t use a persona you’ll regret when they (inevitably) become a recurring character.
### Props - Scenery - Extras

#### City numbers
- **Town of 10,000**
  - 90 people per acre
  - ½ mile diameter
  - 3d mins to cross
  - 3 deaths, 3 births per week

#### Town types
- **College town**
- **Agriculture / Fishing / Mining**
- **Market / Trading / On a trade route**
- **Defence / Military / Tactical**
- **Secondary industry**
- **Religion / Politics**
- **Tourist / Historical by-product**

#### Town features and Buildings
- **College, School, Academy, University**
- **Library, Museum, Art Gallery, Historic Site**
- **Church, Monastery, Temple, Graveyard, Shrine**
- **Prison, Stocks, Cages, Police station, Law Courts**
- **Palace, Mansion, Residence, Stately Home**
- **Ancient relic (known or unknown), Ruins**
- **Monument to Monarch, Conqueror, God, Hero**
- **Aqueduct, Viaduct, Sewers, Storm drains**
- **Bridge (long, tall, pylons), Arches, Tunnels**
- **Subterranean Labyrinth (natural?)**
- **Spring, Fountain, River, Lake, Dam**
- **Gardens, Fields, Arenas, Playgrounds, Parks**
- **Inn, Tavern, Cafe, Saloon, Way house**
- **Whorehouse, Gambling Dens, Seedy sections**
- **Crossroads, Town square, Town Hall**
- **Warehouses, Docks, Ports, Quays, Factories**
- **Shops, Merchants, Markets, Bazaars**
- **Cafés, Restaurants, Food Halls, Roadside Vendors**
- **Guilds, Meeting halls, Council Chambers**
- **City walls, Gates, other Defence structures**
- **Watchtowers, Lighthouse, Beacons**
- **Entertainment, Play houses, Theatres, Buskers**

#### Personality Traits

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### Personality Traits

- absent-minded
- accommodating
- ambitious
- angry
- argumentative
- authoritative
- awkward
- bad tempered
- bland
- blithe
- blunt
- broad-minded
- bureaucratic
- cautious
- charming
- childish
- cold
- concealed
- confident
- conservative
- contrary
- controlling
- corrupt
- courageous
- curious
- deceitful
- defiant
- dependent
- diplomatic
- dissolve
- distrustful
- dithering
- down-to-earth
- dull
- eager
- easy-going
- eloquent
- emotional
- energetic
- enigmatic
- excited
- fearful
- flamboyant
- foolish
- forgiving
- friendly
- generous
- gossipy
- graceful
- greedy
- gregarious
- gruff
- gullible
- happy-go-lucky
- histrionic
- honest
- icy
- ideological
- ignorant
- incapable
- intimidating
- inventive
- irresponsible
- joyful
- kind
- licentious
- load
- lustful
- malicious
- mean
- meek
- menacing
- miserly
- mournful
- narcissistic
- officious
- overbearing
- overconfident
- paranoid
- perky
- petulant
- pious
- plain-spoken
- pretentious
- puritanical
- quiet
- rational
- rebellious
- reckless
- resourceful
- respectable
- responsible
- retiring
- rugged
- rustic
- sacrificing
- sarcastic
- seductive
- seething
- self-effacing
- selfish
- self-righteous
- sleepy
- slick
- slothful
- smug
- soft-spoken
- stammering
- stoic
- stubborn
- submissive
- superstitious
- surly
- swaggering
- tactful
- uncouth
- unfazeable
- unfriendly
- unkempt
- unpredictable
- vacuous
- violent
- vivacious
- voracious
- wary
- weird
- whiny
- wily
- wise
- witty