



Adventure Writing Like A Fucking Boss II

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The original *Adventure Writing Like A Fucking Boss* was wildly successful. You guys even asked for more! That's why I'm following it up with part 2. Not for the money, recognition, hate mail, and women throwing themselves at me. I just do it to make my readers happy. ;)

Some of these concepts are already familiar to you, that's the way it goes. When it's important, I tend to repeat myself like Don Corleone a scene or two before he starts running around like an orange-mouthed monster.

This book will be most useful if you intend on publishing your own scenarios or want to write better adventures that you'll personally GM. If you hope to submit scenarios to established RPG companies, this will still be valuable. The big companies are more interested in seeing their delicate systems and intellectual property handled with extreme care than unbridled creativity, yet hundreds of smaller companies hunger for quality adventures!

JUST START WRITING YOUR ADVENTURE

If you really want to write, the best way to go about it is just start writing.

I know a guy who's been working on this medieval weaponry handbook for about 5 years - the same amount of time it's taken for me to write 40 books. Ok, some of them are only a couple pages, but still... You don't want to drag this on forever,

especially if it's not something you either love, excel at, or both.

For those trying to write for (self-)publication, I recommend my own personal Three Month Process! In the first month, you work on your concept. The second, you write it out. Third, you revise.

Month One: This is where you do the bulk of your brainstorming. At this point, you're just thinking about stuff, turning things over in your mind, gathering ideas, throwing concepts at the wall and seeing what sticks. Also, create an outline.

Month Two: You start organizing your ideas into a cohesive structure. Refine all the stuff you came up with - subtract some things, add others, tweak what doesn't quite fit - until you have a rough draft.

Month Three: Take that rough draft and smooth out the rough edges, polish it until it shines like a diamond. Everything should have some kind of purpose - take out all of the railroading, don't skimp on the details (but don't go into such detail that it's tedious) and customize monsters, treasure, etc. so that they're non-standard. If there's comedy in there, think of a way to make it hilarious. Fine tune your adventure so it's ready to submit.

OVERVIEW

You don't need to give readers a summary of what the adventure is about, but many readers appreciate it.

I hate spoilers, so if I'm going to give people a snapshot of what I wrote, it's probably going to have candid observations or anecdotes about the actual writing process, rather than merely describing the adventure in a linear fashion.

Additional: These days, many customers expect a map to be included. Something visual they can reference while running the adventure. While not exactly necessary, it helps. If your adventure focuses on either combat or exploration and takes place in more than one area, provide a map.



COVER ART

You need a good cover. Obviously, a great cover is better than a good one. The better the cover, the better your book will sell. That's just science!

Most covers are color and have both title and author, occasionally there will be something else - name of RPG system the adventure is for, logo, stated purpose, brief description, etc.

Notice, I didn't say "great art." Art is subjective, anyway. There will never be 100% consensus on what is art or good art or bad art. But a great cover is more objective. If it stands out, grabs the viewer's attention, captures the imagination, and gives potential buyers at least a hint of what's in store for them if they purchase the adventure, then it's great.

INTERIOR ART

Interior artwork is also important. Like it or not, the work will be judged by how it looks, as well as, how it reads. Even if reviewers don't mention the art inside, it unconsciously influences what they think of it. Plus, casual readers flipping through your adventure will get a kick out of cool art - and that will make you smile.

Even though most of the big RPG companies are using color art, black and white is just fine. Interior art can be even more personal and subjective than cover artwork, so go with your gut, trust your instincts, and choose art that you feel is awesome enough to represent your words.

A nice mix of quarter-page, half-page, and full-page illustrations is preferable, with emphasis on full-page art.

LEAVING BLANKS

It is rumored that further down, there are sloping tunnels leading to fresh horrors!

Not everything should be described in vivid detail. Some things should only be hinted at, just as H.P.

Lovecraft intended. A shadowy glimpse can be more valuable than gazing in a fully-lit room.

The GM needs a blank spot here or there in order to make the thing his own. Not only should the GM be interpreting the adventure, putting things in his own words and through his own perspective, but adding bits and pieces so that his vision of the adventure or campaign is fully realized.

You don't want to just provide an outline. While a fleshed-out outline is fine if you're going to be running the adventure yourself, writing for others or publication is going to need more to go on - giving the GM a list of things for him to breathe life into seems an awful lot like homework.

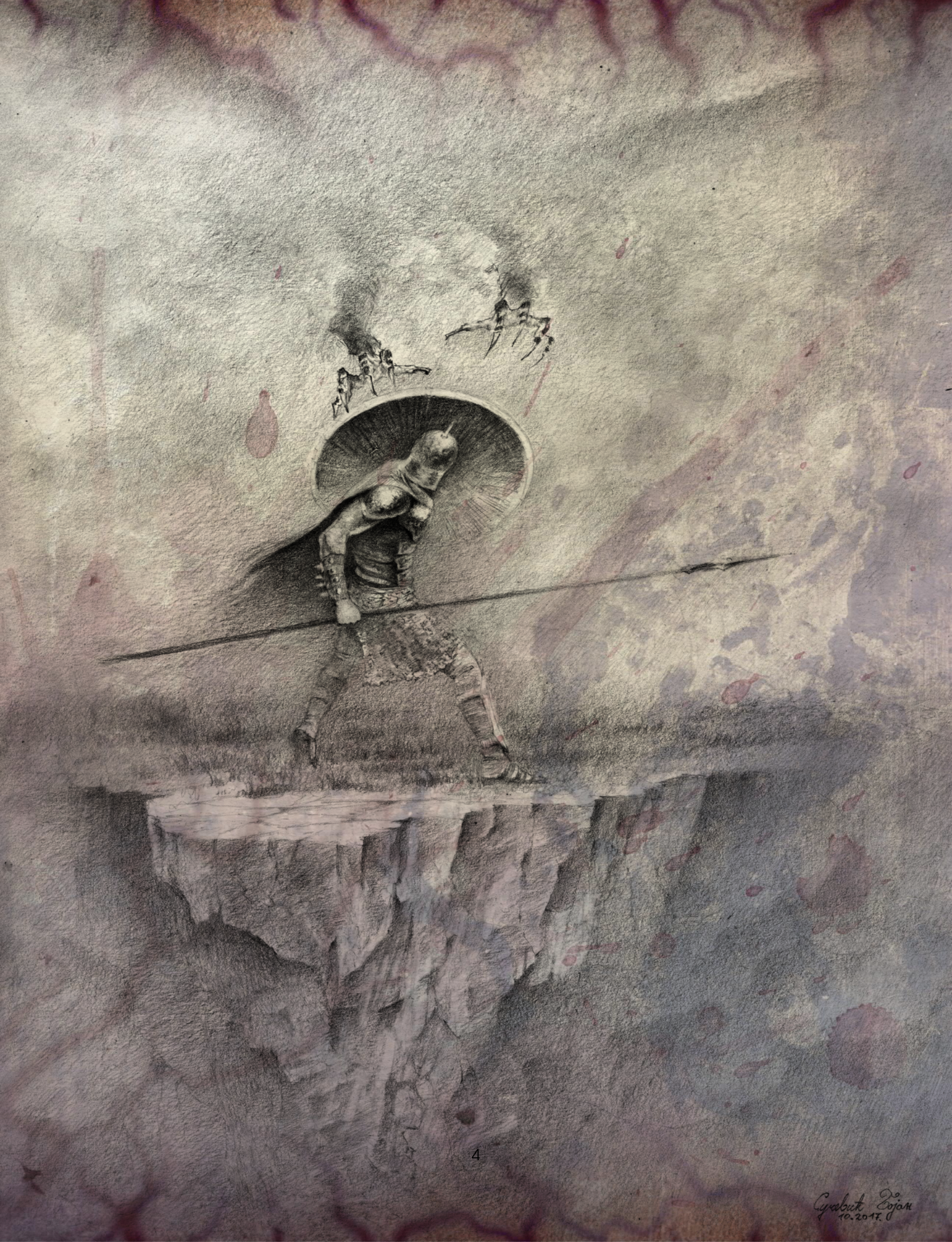
*For the benefit of your readers,
please don't use a ridiculous or
hard-to-read font!*

But before you go and try to provide every possible thing the GM needs, remember to leave a few blanks here and there, spaces or gaps for the GM and occasionally the players to fill in while the session is happening.

Remember the scenario is not the game. The game is the game. As the adventure is being played, it becomes more than what's on the page.

Opportunities abound, and gaps allow those playing the game to utilize those opportunities, putting their own spin on things, bringing their own ideas into the fold, unleashing a more personal aesthetic. For example, you might be writing an adventure about cave exploration. Sitting upon a rock is a book. The book is about alchemy called The Gilded Cage, written by Upensk the mad.

Now, you (as the writer) could conceivably go on and on and on about this book and the individual who wrote it, why it's here, what the alchemical formulas entail, etc. But after a little while, the extra fluff turns to filler and merely gets in the way of the adventure itself. Evoke impressions with your writing without the need to explain everything. If the GM running the adventure wants to detail Upensk the mad or The Gilded Cage, he can do so himself. You've hinted at the possibilities, that's enough. Now, if this were a major plot point in the adventure, a little more information is warranted. But if it's just a throw-away moment between encounters, a few quick details are enough.



GREAT PLACE TO VISIT

One of the great things about RPGs is they allow players to pretend they're somewhere else, as well as, someone else.

Spending time somewhere awesome is part of that good time we all want to feel and bestow upon others. I get a kick out of imagining myself brushing away the cobwebs in a subterranean tomb - the same goes for the players.

Sure, as an adventure writer, you can set the entire scenario in a modern-day kitchen or the inside of a hay-strewn barn circa 1936 - just know that if you do that, the writing, hook, compelling characters, and situations will have to be top-notch to make up for not being in a cantina with wall-to-wall aliens or inside the bowels of a gargantuan purple worm.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

Not only do the players want to visit awesome places, they want to do awesome things - like kick someone's head off, parlay with a dragon, dive off a pirate ship and swim to shore, seduce a princess by negging her physical appearance.

When you write this adventure of yours, give PCs the chance to chew the scenery and live in the fast lane. Real life is boring and stupid a lot of the time, gaming should be the opposite of that.

On the other hand, don't keep handing out roses like it's *The Bachelor*. Or, rather, do hand out roses like *The Bachelor* - because at the end of that rose ceremony, someone gets the thorns. Sometimes, it's a person who deserves it (like the bad guys), but occasionally it's a person you were rooting for (like one of the PCs).

COMPLICATE THEIR LIVES

In our daily life, we want things to immediately work out, to be nice and easy. That's terrible for any kind of story. We want drama!

When adventure writing, the PCs' apparent fate should be so screwed up that it would take a

miracle to untangle everything and get things back in order. Sometimes, miracles are provided at the last possible second. Sometimes, cleverness and ingenuity save the day.

Don't back off just because it looks like the PCs' lives are about to get messy. Dive into that swamp and let the PCs work themselves out of it.

If I've learned one thing, it's this: multiple people motivated by a common problem will eventually find a solution. The writer doesn't need to come up with a way out every time he thinks up a disastrous situation - although, suggestions are always welcome.

Ways out will present themselves. The writer can't know the ins and outs of every group who runs his adventure. How could he possibly anticipate all the gear, experience, special abilities, system hacks, house rules, random dice rolls, and player cunning that goes into potentially dire situations?

TRUST THE GM

Not only should you put your faith in the players and their characters, the Game Master should also be trusted.

The writer presents situations. Their presentation should provide the GM with the basics without doing his job for him. For example, let's say a particular room contains an NPC, a trap, and a treasure.

It's the adventure writer's job to briefly describe those three things. The writer may go into lesser or greater detail about each one. Maybe the NPC is a female with lime-green skin wearing a hooded cloak who likes cheese. The trap is a spear shooting out the side of the room when anyone gets too close to the girl. The treasure is a large ruby enveloped within spiderwebs in a corner of the ceiling. That's close to the bare minimum but sufficient.

If the writer went into more detail, like why the NPC likes cheese, the reason her skin's green, and who set up the trap in the first place... well, that's his prerogative. As long as he doesn't dwell on

unimportant details for more than a sentence or two, we'll let it go.

But some writers try taking away the GM's agency, his decision-making powers, his sacred duties by giving him too much detail. Advising is one thing - the NPC will only speak when spoken to and in hushed tones. Bogarting the story is another. Don't do it. Restrain yourself from telling the GM that anything the PCs say will upset her, forcing her to cast emerald fireball of fiery flames upon them. That's a decision the GM should be making, based on the details provided.

When you tell the GM how he should run the adventure, you've gone too far. At that point, search for the delete button and go to town on it.

GIVE MONSTERS SOMETHING TO DO

Monsters and NPCs (don't forget about them) shouldn't live in a vacuum. If their only reason for existing is to fight when PCs enter the room, you've got a problem... and that problem is fake-ass bullshit. Not only is it unrealistic, but it's a missed opportunity.

Because it's so easy to include, there's no excuse for room after room after room that looks like this...

Room #27: Three ogres attack PCs on sight.

Including a single word like "gregarious," would at least be something. Although, you'd be serving the GM even better with something along the lines of...

Room #27: Three gregarious ogres wearing filthy, stinking animal skins are breaking apart the wooden furniture for kindling.

Now, it's a living dungeon! That revised encounter provides the GM with a foundation. From there, he can improvise that one of them may be a shaman or perhaps they want to start a fire to smoke out the giant hornets in room #28.

What's an "unimportant detail"? If there's no way for the PCs to know that information and no way it affects how a scene unfolds, it's considered unimportant. If details aren't actionable, then 9 times out of 10, you should leave them out.

By the way, I've got a random table full of things monsters are doing when PCs happen upon them in *The S'rulyan Vault*.

TWIST ENDING

Not required by any means. However, a twist ending can be the cherry atop your scenario if done the right way.

Twist endings should not be obvious to the casual observer. On the other hand, they should be obvious to those looking in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.

If possible, avoid the following double-sided cliché: the good guy's actually bad and the bad guy's actually good - unless you can find a fresh way to handle it. Take a step back to see how things look from an alternate perspective.

RANDOM TABLES

Random tables are a great benefit for any type of adventure. I highly recommend including at least one. But what makes for a good random table? Utility, inspiration, and fun.

Utility means that your random table should be useful. It has to function well, efficiently giving GMs logical results that make sense - even if that's only the internal consistency within a gonzo, absurd, or surreal world. Its utility grows exponentially if it can be used in other adventures!

Inspiration means that your random table should provide GMs with ideas that spark creativity. A random table is not the place for lengthy paragraphs of granular detail - it should get across the general idea with enough flair that GMs can imagine the rest.

Lastly, your random table should be fun. Rolling on it should be an enjoyable experience. Fun is subjective, of course. Various results suggesting ways in which PCs will die may be fun for the GM while results providing what kind of hooker is working the street corner should be fun for



everybody. Anticipation is key. In small quantities, the fear of a bad result can be a type of fun because of the risk involved. Similarly, constant benefits such as flavors of pie bestowed to the PCs by gnome bakers will remain fun if used sporadically.

BALANCING ENCOUNTERS

Some are going to be too easy, some are going to be way too difficult. Rather than getting into the accountancy weeds with working the numbers so everything comes out just right, I like to let the chips fall where they may. However, a writer/GM needs to keep such things in mind as the encounter unfolds.

Minimize it: If you know this encounter will barely make it in as a footnote in their hero's journey, hand-wave it away. For example, "Your party of 9th level adventurers are attacked by a couple of halfling skeletons. You brush them aside with your mighty weapons, breaking and scattering their fragile bones. After destroying them you notice..."

Maximize it: Beef it up with either more of the same or a different kind of threat added to the first. For example, "Just as you engage the larger-than-average spider, you see hundreds of glowing red eyes in the darkness saturating this foul web."

Tweak it: Change the nature of the encounter. For example, "If you promise not to slay him, the ogre with the broken leg offers you useful information about the nest of zaarakis down the eastern

What if PCs ask the name of that blacksmith you just made up a second ago? Instead of saying the first thing that comes to your mind or rolling on a random table, try saying the following...

"He mutters some common, peasant name that you forget almost as soon as you hear it."

corridor." But what if the encounter is impossible to defeat? Here's another example, "The god-thing that just slithered its way up from the black well isn't in the mood for distractions this night. It moves like a shadow out of the chamber, seeking formidable opponents."

- 💡 What does he want? What are his goals, what motivates him, what's his focus?
- 💡 How is he going to get what he wants? What is he capable of, who can he go to for help, what resources can he bring to bear, does he have a plan?

Anything else is usually superfluous, unless they are the principle antagonist. For most NPCs, even the above is cutting it close on too much detail. Sometimes, the candlestick-maker just makes candles and keeps to himself. Not everyone has a special plan for this world, fascinating relationship with the bishop, or even a name!

But if your NPC is really something, feel free to come up with even more info about him, such as...

- 💡 How does he get along with other prominent NPCs and various factions?
- 💡 What's his backstory? Does he have a tragic origin? Did he sell his soul to the Devil? Was he a red-eyed tree frog in a previous existence?
- 💡 Does he have special skills, knowledge, training, equipment, or weapon? What sets this dude apart from the rest?

ENDINGS

- 1. Straight-forward boss fight:** You battle the demon lord who was in the last room of the tower.
- 2. Twist ending:** Good is evil, black is white, it was all just a fucking dream... or merely an aspect of the matrix.
- 3. Way of the sly man:** You need to hide in the alcove and read the Latin whilst reversing the polarity in order to seal that thing back from whence it came.
- 4. Something weird:** Now that you've claimed the treasures of the last two crowns, you realize the true extent of man's folly and then some disgusting reptilian slime entity rises from the swamp and tries to skull-fuck you with its snake tentacle!

INTRODUCING NPCs

If I'm reading through an adventure, I don't want to wade through some dude's life story - unless he's an important character and it's crucial to understanding what's going on. But even then, limit your description to the essentials.

- 💡 Who is he? Name, position, rank, profession, etc.
- 💡 What does he look like? Or sound like, smell like, what's he wearing, etc.
- 💡 Why is he here? Does he serve a purpose in the town, the dungeon, the realm, the Federation?

DESCRIBING THE ROOM

Start with the obvious. If there's a neon-lit troll in the room, some wooden chests, a few rats scurrying around, and a tapestry on the wall, describe the thing PCs would immediately notice first (such as the neon troll), then work your way down to the next noticeable thing, until you get to the stuff that can't be noticed until properly investigated.

Put anything secret (stuff that should never be accidentally read aloud) in a separate paragraph - like this!

Keep room descriptions brief. Don't tell us the obvious and/or redundant, such as "this room is a room with a window" or "what the PCs will see when they enter the room is..." That stuff is not only unnecessary, it clutters up the actually useful details. If there are chairs, fine, mention them. But don't go on about the chairs unless there's a key taped to the underside of one of them or it's



actually treasure - the enchanted chair of Prentice Hancock!

Also, if there's a map that goes with the adventure, leave out the room dimensions and whether or not there's a door on the south-side of the room. If the map shows what's there, that's all the GM needs.

If any room you describe has more than three paragraphs, I'm going to hire assassins to kill you. And those assassins will also be full-time bards. So, you know they're bad at assassinating people and will probably just fuck it up, annoying the shit out of you and quite possibly ruining your entire evening. So, don't spend more than three (short, preferably) paragraphs describing a room in your dungeon, old spooky house, space station, or whatever.

If you do go over three paragraphs (and survive my bard/assassin onslaught), that area has to be a major location (such as the throne room / gladiatorial arena) of the adventure.

LINEAR PROGRESSION

The simplest dungeon (or area being explored) is one that's linear - it keeps going in a "straight" line. Ok, usually not a straight line, but there aren't options for taking side-treks, loops, getting to the destination via an alternate route, etc.

Because linear dungeon design is so simple, it's also boring. People like choices! People like new things! They become more engaged when fresh possibilities crop up, so give them a variety of options.

LESSONS FROM MEDELLIN

If you've seen the TV show *Entourage* about the movie star and his companions, then you'll probably remember the film they made - *Medellin*.

The movie's trailer turned out great, but the movie itself was a snooze fest. That can happen. If you have a trailer-worthy idea or scene or seed, and the long version just doesn't seem to capture the trailer's excitement, go back to the drawing board.

Re-examine what made the trailer awesome and use that aesthetic (maybe it's the pacing, characters, color palette, strange world, mystery, gory nihilism, whatever) as your guiding principle. Forge your adventure anew in the fires of awesomeness!

NEEDS MORE TENTACLES

This is a weird little phrase I came up with years ago. Even as I uttered it half-joking, it sounded right - though, I didn't really know what it meant.

Recently, I looked deeper into the phrase to see if there was something essential beneath the Lovecraftian veneer. Sure enough, there was.

Does it always have to be tentacles? Absolutely not. When I say that your adventure needs more tentacles, I'm telling you that it's missing a particular strain of awesomeness. Tentacles being a euphemism for the dark, weird, and sexual.

Let's pretend that you came to me with a scenario pitch. You tell me about bandits at the start, saving a princess, hiding from an evil sorcerer, and it ends with fighting a dragon. It makes sense. It's exciting. And there's plenty of action. All good.

But sometimes being awesome isn't enough. I know this quite well. Harsh reviewers expect the world. Eager fans expect me to out-Venger myself. Even I have high expectations for my adventures. If it's not going to be some of my best work, then why the fuck aren't I doing something more worthwhile with my time - like watching porn?

At least once per adventure, you've got to throw in some metaphorical tentacles. Make it dark - the princess is actually dead, but this demonic thing has taken her place without anyone in the kingdom being the wiser. Make it weird - the sorcerer is blind but can see anything spattered with blood, owing to a curse that befell him when traveling to Saturn (incidentally, that's where the dragon hails from). Make it sexy - the dragon keeps voluptuous slave girls in his sleeping chamber... how else is he supposed to make half-dragon warriors?

Some will read this while shaking their head. They're either confused or outright detest the idea. Why "ruin" a perfectly good adventure with these "much needed tentacles?"

For the few who need more explanation, simply telling you that tentacles are awesome will not be enough. Maybe I should point to the fantasy, sci-fi, and horror movies from the 1970's and 80's? Perhaps I should tell readers to look deep within themselves? Or you could always just trust me - your adventure needs more tentacles.

IMAGERY LIKE GOLDEN HONEY

Certain images should stick in the mind - those are the best kinds of images, the ones that make an impression, that last long after the session has concluded. Flowery prose helps, but what writers are really looking for is emotional connection. The image should elicit feelings in the reader or listener.

Saying that his face was frozen in terror isn't the same as describing the victim's face as a wide-eyed permanent scream as though he'd just lost everything important to him.

The former gets the job done and sometimes the most expedient option is best. But occasionally, an event will be so important that you want to go that extra mile to really solidify the image in players' minds.

If this is difficult, try to visualize the thing yourself before writing about it. If it were occurring right in front of your face, what details do you notice? What's the overall effect on you? Where does your emotional connection come into play?

Everyone within a faction should be painted with the same brush. That keeps things nice and simple. Certain individuals have noteworthy characteristics that make them stand out from the rest of their faction. Don't go crazy! By definition, exceptions to the rule are few and far between.

HAT RACK DESCRIPTIONS

Similar to the above advice, adventure writers should give the GM something to hang his hat on.

By that, I mean descriptions should contain possibilities. A bloody dagger stabbed into the wall conveys menace - and where did the blood come from? Is the person who stuck it in the wall still around... still angry? Was he trying to stab someone but missed?

What about the following description - his hat reminds you of the cyber-pimps from the velvet nebula. That right there brings to mind several things at once - noteworthy things. They're noteworthy because they stand out. Maybe they stand out with importance or humor or because they're odd.

That's why I've used the phrase "sickly purple death-ray" on a number of occasions. It gets the job done, and then some!

DESIGNING MECHANICS

Adventures have the luxury of not needing rules - that's what RPGs are for. However, events will come up in your scenario where it would be faster and easier to roll a die than for the GM to look up a specific rule in the book.

Sometimes, a rule doesn't exist in the rulebook. Sure, GMs can make a ruling, but what should such rulings be based on? GMs don't make rulings out of thin air... rather, they interpret reality based upon several factors such as skill, luck, genre, etc.

Don't re-write a game's rules in your adventure. But if you can suggest a simple way to determine the location of zombie gnome-painted Easter eggs with the roll of a d6, for instance, then go ahead and include that in the text.

Such mechanics should be resolved by rolling dice, following one or two steps, and letting the GM make the ultimate decision as to what happens based on

information provided. For example, instead of the adventure writer saying the fisherman dies if a one is rolled, say his leg gets eaten by a shark. The GM can do the rest.

FACTIONS, FACTIONS, FACTIONS

While not a necessity for every scenario, it's never a bad idea to include factions in your adventure.

Factions are simply groups - could be a group of people, monsters, intelligent plants, incorporeal entities, etc. These groups want something. Their motivation is what makes them special in your adventure. Beyond goals, they have particular ways of doing things, behaviors, clothing, beliefs, items carried, etc.

Each faction should be different from the others with some notes on how the factions interact with each other. How does the snake-men faction deal with the human villagers and how does the cabal of mercenary sorcerers get along with the snake-men and humans?

Things should be happening with the factions independent of the PCs. However, once the PCs meet these groups, things change - the PCs may get caught up in the drama of a particular faction or the leader of a faction may take an interest in one or more of the PCs. It's likely that a faction will try to use the PCs as pawns in order to acquire the MacGuffin or dispose of their rivals... just as it's likely the PCs will try to use a faction to achieve their goals.

Factions not only create interesting situations, but they're realistic. Factions exist all around us in the real world. Including them in your scenario will not only give it more spice, but verisimilitude.

HOW TO BE FUNNY

Humor helps, but not every adventure needs a laugh. Certainly, comedic games expect their adventures to be lighthearted and fun. But even serious RPGs could do with a little hilarity.

If you're not naturally funny, that's ok. Venger's got your back. The following includes the different types of humor with examples.

1. Silly: A character's bell-bottoms are so big that he keeps tripping over them. Someone needs to get to the bottom of a snowy mountain but doesn't have any skis, so he puts two banana peels on his feet and slides down. Silly doesn't have to make perfect sense and it can go outside the rules, like in a cartoon.

2. Ridicule: An NPC does something embarrassing, like ripping his pants while trying to sit down, and everyone makes fun of him. A PC is trying to give a speech, but mispronounces a common word and hecklers start verbally abusing him and then throwing rotten tomatoes. Ridicule can be cruel, mean spirited, and dark.

3. Self-Mockery: A character decides to draw attention to his pirate hook for a hand. He tries to hold an ice cream cone with his hook, knowing how stupid he'll look to others - but it will probably produce a good laugh from his companions. The character is a terrible shot, so he carries around a toy gun with the orange plastic on the end of the barrel. Self-mockery is about making fun of yourself. If you can laugh at yourself, others can laugh along with you.

4. Clever: Using wordplay, you make witty observations like, "What do you call cheese that doesn't belong to you? Nacho cheese." You come up with the name of a creature that sounds like it's from Doctor Seuss - the flomp. Clever humor points out the familiar strangeness of our world, our language, and ourselves.

VITAL INFORMATION

Frequently, it's a good idea to call-out especially important details, making them stand out in the text. This can be done with text size, bold, italics, underline, highlighting, colors, margins, bullet-

You see this shit right here? It's important! That's why I included it in this sidebar. Read it!!!

points, sidebars, and anything you can think of.

If the GM needs that piece of info in order to properly run the game

at the table, certain details should jump out at him - not be buried under a mountain of superfluous text.

IF YOU START GETTING EXCITED

Follow that feeling. When you start to lose track of that feeling, you'll know that you're headed off course.

The stuff you're passionate about should be the driving force behind this project. Explore, investigate, and reveal the content that makes you giddy. Everything that seems tedious - either find a way to make it enjoyable or get it over with as soon as possible.

For instance, if you dread the thought of coming up with 20 items for your adventure's rumor table, imagine all the fun you can have throwing the PCs off the scent - or giving them subtle clues that will enhance the flavorful vibe your scenario exudes. If that's just not possible, make it a d8 table, instead.

If you've come to the end and you realize you never really got excited about what you wrote, then maybe it's garbage. That happens. Either put it away for awhile and revisit it weeks later or give it to a reliable friend to judge if it has merit.

NO SERIOUSLY, DON'T RAILROAD!

I find myself needing to harp on a certain thing because adventure writers keep doing it over and over again - despite my dire warnings!

If you can apply any of the following to something you've written, take it behind the woodshed and shoot it between the eyes.

- 💀 The PCs have to do...
- 💀 The PCs can't rescue...
- 💀 The PCs always fail at...
- 💀 The PCs never...
- 💀 There's no way the PCs can...
- 💀 The PCs will...

Sure, there are exceptions to the rule. For instance, "the PCs have to offer the bounty hunters a substantial reward if they want to hire them for this job." That's fine because "hire" is specific, but not the only way to get things done. Maybe a PC tries to seduce one of the bounty hunters or blackmails him into tracking down their prey. However, if you write "the PCs have to get into a fight with the bounty hunters in order for them to get captured by Ambassador Kehaan," that's just wrong.

The actions of the PCs are for the players to make - not the adventure writer and not the GM! Forcing them or the action along a certain track (like a railroad) robs the players of their immersive roleplaying experience... which is the whole reason they're here.

Do the PCs have several options in front of them? Are there differing consequences should the PCs choose one option over another? If you've answered "yes" to both, you're doing something right!



Ayubuh Sojan
09.2015

REVIEWS & REVIEWERS

Unless a product has just been released and the author has a good track record, I don't buy anything that doesn't have at least one decent review. That review doesn't have to be super congratulatory, but it should give me a sense of what the product is like.

Eventually, you'll want someone to take a look at what you've created in order to give you feedback. This may take the shape of a formal review or it could just be a fellow gamer giving you his two cents.

Prepare yourself for bad news. Nothing is perfect, and your adventure will most likely be far from that state. Reviews are a necessary evil. Don't take it personally. You will, of course. If you care about your creation, let alone the act of creating, you'll take criticism (especially harsh criticism) very personally. But eventually the sting will fade and there may actually be some good advice mixed in with the hatchet job. It'll take time to mop up the blood and sinew anyway.

Finding a reviewer who understands your design goals is key. If your adventures are about what happens between dungeon delves, then a reviewer who loves dungeon delves might find it boring.

There are essentially three types of reviewers: positive, negative, and neutral...

👤 **Positive:** This reviewer briefly wants to express what he likes about a certain thing. Sure, he may discuss the thing's shortcomings along the way, but he's mainly interested in talking about the positives.

👤 **Negative:** The reviewer mostly wants to talk about what he doesn't like. He's got a bone to pick and what he's reviewing is a shining example of that. Usually, this kind of reviewer will gloss over the benefits in order to focus on the problems or inadequacies of the thing being reviewed.

👤 **Neutral:** While it's always nice to see something reviewed by a positive reviewer,

neutral reviewers are the most helpful, useful, and objective of the three.

A neutral reviewer weighs the good and the bad, mentioning both and discussing why he feels the way he does considering his biases - of which he is acutely aware, and mentions somewhere in the review. The neutral reviewer's criticism will generally be constructive and give due attention to places where the creator excelled in his craft.

Neutral reviewers hate writing scathing reviews that rip a product to shreds - but feel it's their sworn duty to do so. Conversely, objective reviewers are pleased to write glowing reviews where there's hardly anything to complain about.

Most times, he will try to imagine the ideal user because he knows that the thing sitting before him was not created for the sole purpose of being reviewed - it has a target audience, and the reviewer may not be part of that demographic.

When possible, seek out positive and neutral reviewers while avoiding the negative ones.

'Finding a reviewer who understands your design goals is key.'

CREDITS

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