



SCRIPTING THE GAME

By Mike Pondsmith, with concepts provided by Flint Dille • Art by C.A. Bates • Copyright 2020 by R. Talsorian Games

You've got a Game Name, Limits, Genre(s), Universe Rules, and some nice bits you know you want to put into your Game. Now it's time to write the **Script**.

Whether for a TV show, movie, or RPG adventure, you need a script to tell you where the action's going. And pacing is the most important part of that script. You not only have to tell a story, but also have to break it up into manageable chunks for your players. Each "chunk" of story should convey information, be entertaining, and help provide excitement by pushing the plot along in some visible way. One way to do this is by using a writing trick called a Beat Chart; a framework in which certain actions or scenes take place in a certain order. The order of the scenes helps both maintain dramatic tension and allows the storyline to make sense.

Each Beat Chart has five parts, or **Beats**: the **Hook**, the **Development**, the **Cliffhanger**, the **Climax**, and the **Resolution**.

Some Beats, like the Hook, Climax, and Resolution occur only once. Other Beats, like the Development and the Cliffhanger, are used over and over, but in alternating order.

THERE ARE THREE RULES FOR SETTING UP A BEAT CHART

1. **The story always begins with a Hook.** The Hook is a short piece of action or suspense that is used to involve the reader, viewer, or player in the story.
2. **The story always ends on a Climax, followed by a Resolution.** The Climax is the big finale of the story; the battle where Good defeats Evil (maybe), or where the murderer is revealed. The Resolution is the tag line; it's the part at the end that tells what happens as a result of the Climax. It's the part in the show or movie where we see the supposedly dead villain flying away in his escape craft, Rick and Inspector Renault walking into the *Casablanca* night, or the hero and heroine living happily ever after.
3. **Developments** are basically non-action Beats that move the storyline along; they involve clues, revelations, conversations, and character Developments. Cliffhangers are always action scenes; chases, dogfights, battles, and so on. **Developments and Cliffhangers always appear in alternating order;** you will never have two Cliffhangers or two Developments in a row. As a general rule, if your Hook has a lot of action and battle, you'll start the rest of the story with a Development; if the Hook was more cerebral and inactive, you'll want to start with a Cliffhanger to liven things up. You will also want to make sure that you'll end on a Development if your Climax is on an active one, and a Cliffhanger if your Climax is more mental.

A BEAT CHART EXAMPLE

Let's take a look at a Beat Chart with the Beats in place, in this case, from a typical show: the mythical *LUGER, P.I.*

Hook: Luger, P.I. finds the body of an old friend in his car, clutching a bloody book.

Cliffhanger: Three minions attack Luger and try to get the book from him.

Development: Luger discovers that the book contains an important document. He gives the book to his boyfriend for safekeeping, while he sets out to find out who the minions are.

Cliffhanger: The minions kidnap Luger's boyfriend. He tries to stop them, but is overpowered. In most shows, this is the halfway point of the show, and the Cliffhanger is broken in the middle by a commercial. This makes sure that you'll come back to see how the Cliffhanger is resolved. However, in a typical RPG, your Players aren't gonna stand for it if you get up at the start of the fight and say, "Man, it's time for a pizza break!"

Development: Luger is approached by an old Military Intelligence buddy who is also seeking the book. The MI buddy agrees to help Luger storm the enemy stronghold to get back his boyfriend (and the book).

Climax: Our heroes, armed to the teeth and backed by half the U.S. Army, storm the bad guys' stronghold. A million minions are cinematically blown away, resulting in the boyfriend getting saved and the book being recovered.

Resolution: Luger discovers the book contains a secret Russian military document bound into the spine. The minions were Russian agents sent to recover the missing information. As usual, our hero's boyfriend decides it's too dangerous to hang around Luger and leaves him for an accountant.

As you can see, the Beat Chart for a show is designed to make sure all the scenes happen in an orderly manner, and that things stay interesting throughout. If Luger finished fighting the first group of minions, then turned around and got attacked by another group, you'd groan and say, "Is that all this guy ever does?" Likewise, if Luger spent the entire first half of the episode staring at the book and muttering about it, you'd probably recommend he see a good therapist. A good Beat Chart keeps a balance of action to introspection and makes everything flow smoothly.

MY BEAT CHART by Bob

1. **HOOK:** How about a Discovery? The Players find a ring in a tavern.
2. **CLIFFHANGER:** An ambush. Two huge MONSTERS with black capes and glowing eyes attack them.
3. **DEVELOPMENT:** Warning. An old WIZARD joins the battle. At the end, she tells them the ring belongs to the Evil Sorcerer. They must take the Ring to the Black Volcano and destroy it (wait, have I heard this plot before?).
4. **CLIFFHANGER:** Pursuit. The Party is chased by lots of MONSTERS riding huge DRAGONS.
5. **DEVELOPMENT:** Advantage. One of the Players finds out the Ring can be used to turn him invisible.
6. **CLIFFHANGER:** Confrontation sounds good. The VILLAIN catches up to the Players and tells them to give him the Ring or else something terrible will happen.
7. **DEVELOPMENT:** Lie Revealed! The Players overhear the WIZARD talking through her crystal ball! The VILLAIN is actually a Good Guy! The WIZARD is actually evil and wants to destroy the Ring.
8. **CLIMAX:** Final Battle! The Players fight the WIZARD on the slopes of the volcano and (they hope) defeat her. The Ring is saved.
9. **RESOLUTION:** Happy Ending. The Villain was changed into a MONSTER by the WIZARD. He puts on the Ring and changes back into a handsome prince who marries one of the Party members.

GRAB A SHEET OF PAPER

Grab a scrap of paper, and quickly jot down a rough idea of the Beat Chart for your adventure. You know you'll start with a Hook, and end on a Climax and a Resolution. But how many Developments and Cliffhangers are you going to need? One way to determine this is to decide just how long you want your adventure to be. A good rule of thumb is that each Beat in the chart should take about one half-hour of game play. Your Hook, Climax, and Resolution automatically account for one and a half hours; subtract this from the total hours of play, then divide this remainder between Developments and Cliffhangers.

For example, say your typical one-night game is about six hours. Subtracting one and a half hours from this gives you four and a half hours remaining; enough for several Developments and/or Cliffhangers. Decide (in a general way, since you haven't started to plot things out yet), whether you want to start on a Development or Cliffhanger, and which type of Beat you want to end on. Number the list in order of appearance and you've got a Beat Chart.

1 BEAT = 1/2 HOUR OF REAL WORLD TIME



A FEW GOOD BEATS

In this section, we've listed some of the all time best Beats; Beats found in shows, movies, books and plays throughout entertainment history. Start by picking the type of Beat (Hook, Cliffhanger, Development, Climax, or Resolution) that you'll need for each part of your Beat Chart. Next, read each Beat listed under that area for ideas and possible directions to take that Beat. With a little imagination, you'll be surprised at how fast you can construct an interesting story line!

THE HOOK

The Hook is how you get your Players involved. It can involve any type of situation which poses an immediate threat or interest to the Players. An ambush could be a Hook. So could finding a suitcase full of gold. Both situations get the Players involved and moving. A Hook need not be directly connected to the main plotline; it can be a self-contained scene, just as long as it does its job: to wake the Players up. For example; in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the opening scene where the hero breaks into the tomb is a Hook. It tells the audience that Indy does interesting things, that he has enemies, and that the pace of action will be fast and frenetic. No one ever leaves *Raiders* to get some popcorn in the lobby after this scene.

The Hook is what you'll use to get your Players into the adventure **fast**. Its sole reason for existence is to start the action rolling and make things interesting from the beginning of the Game. You don't want to waste time with all the Players fumbling around trying to decide what to do. Instead, you Hook them and reel in the line.

KIDNAPPED

In this Hook, the Players are either kidnapped by an unknown force, or one of their friends is kidnapped. The unknown force should be mysterious and far more powerful than the Players (the idea here is to begin the Game with the kidnapping, setting the Scene for the next actions).

CORONET BLUE

The name of this Hook is taken from an old 60's TV show in which the hero wakes up to find he cannot remember his identity, yet everyone he meets knows him and assumes he knows the score. In this Hook, the Players awake in some type of dangerous or difficult situation. They have no memory of how they got there or who they are expected to be. Meanwhile, friends and enemies alike treat them as though the Players know the whole thing.

PLAY A CLIFFHANGER

A Hook can also begin with a furious action scene (most action shows begin like this, as do most *James Bond* flicks). The best Cliffhanger Beats to play are CONFRONTATION, AMBUSH, or FIST FIGHT. A Cliffhanger Beat should serve to propel the Players immediately into the Game's plotline, by introducing them to either their opposition or their allies.

PLAY A DEVELOPMENT

You can also elect to play a Development Beat as a Hook (this tactic is a common tactic in mystery and crime shows). The best option for this are Secret Meeting, Mistaken Identity, Romance, or Treachery. Once again, your choice should immediately propel the Players into the Game's plotline and introduce major allies or opponents. For example, a Player could fall in love with a Princess they'll ally with later, be betrayed by a friendly force, or find themselves in route to a secret meeting with their opponent.



DISCOVERY

This Hook marks an adventure started by an important discovery. The Players might find a new invention, or uncover a mysterious relic. In all cases, the discovery Hook should directly link into some important element of the later Game (the mysterious relic is a rosetta stone needed to translate the Pharaoh's curse, or the Players have discovered the invisibility formula the Villain wants).

CRISIS

The Players are immediately embroiled in an ongoing crisis; a disaster of world threatening proportions. The Evil Hordes are destroying the Good City, the Aliens are landing in Washington D.C., an earthquake is shaking everything to the ground and plague is killing everyone in sight. The Crisis begins the moment the Players walk into the Game, and doesn't let up for moment until they either escape or set out to stop it. Once again, it's important that the Crisis Hook relate directly to the Game; the Aliens are led by their enemies, or the Villain has caused the earthquake with his destructo-ray.

REVELATION

The Revelation Hook represents a previously hidden fact that will dramatically change the Players' lives. A Revelation could include an unexpected inheritance, a secret past, mysterious parentage revealed, or a terrible curse. In this Hook, the revelation will directly be linked to the Game in some way or another (You're probably wondering why I called you all here).

MURDER

This Hook begins with a murder, either of a friend/relative/ally of the Players, or of an obviously innocent victim. The murder can occur either near the Players, or the victim can be discovered by them. In no case may you allow the Players to actually capture the murderer in question; the aim is to link the murder into the subsequent Game.

FALSE ACCUSATION

In this Hook, the Players are falsely accused of a heinous (or not so heinous) crime. Merchants run after them screaming "You didn't pay for that sword!!" A terrified man rushes up to one of the Players and points him out to the Guard as his attacker. A man falls dead in a Player's arms, a knife slicking out of his body. Anything that could get the Players into major trouble is laid (undeservingly) at their doorsteps. The important part is that the accusation be unfounded and that the Player be given only a limited number of options: fight (against impossible odds) or flee (with everyone in the world after them).

LOOMING THREAT

This Hook immediately places the Players in a situation similar to the Crisis Hook. However, in the Looming Threat, the actual danger hasn't broken over their heads yet. There are mysterious portents, and an aura of dread pervades the air. In the Looming Threat Hook, the Aliens haven't yet landed; they're just overhead. The Evil Warlord is massing armies

in his stronghold and everyone knows it's just a matter of time. The plague hasn't started yet, but dozens of people have all died from a mysterious and horrible disease. Once again, the Threat should be directly related to the Game's plotline.

CLIFFHANGER

A Cliffhanger is defined as "a contest whose outcome is in doubt up to the very end." All Cliffhangers involve physical conflict or peril of some sort. A Cliffhanger can take many forms: a car chase, a dogfight, a sword duel, or even a fist fight. Cliffhangers serve two purposes in your script; they speed up the plotline by increasing the pace, and they wake up the audience by interjecting a note of danger. Sure, it may be important that the hero discover the secret mind control weapon in the basement, but the monster guarding the secret mind control weapon is a far more exciting problem. A problem only combat can resolve.

You don't want to pile Cliffhanger on top of Cliffhanger; your audience will get tired of unrelenting battles pretty fast. Also, Cliffhanger after Cliffhanger begins to dull the impact of danger and excitement. The best rule of Cliffhangers is to keep them short, deadly and with the threat of defeat (or death) right up front.

Another ground rule of Cliffhangers is to save the best for last. At the start of a script, the heroes are unknown quantities; a few short battles will tell both them and their opponents their strengths and weaknesses. This is when you send out a reasonable force of bad guys that the heroes can defeat unless they do something stupid. Once they've got the hang of it, you want to raise the ante enough to make the heroes and the audience a little more worried; can they defeat this stronger foe? By the end of the script, you want to hit them with the toughest thing you've got – but hopefully, they've now defeated the Villain's henchmen and have the Crystal sword they must have in order to defeat (barely) the Big Threat.

CHASE

The party engages in a hot pursuit of the opposition. Obviously, you aren't going to be able to get the Players to follow anyone unless they've got a good reason. This Cliffhanger is best used right after a Kidnapping or Revelation.

PURSUIT

The Players are chased by the opposition, who have superior force on their side. This Cliffhanger works best when you make it really obvious that the enemy has far superior numbers and will do bad things to the Players if they don't run.

RACE

The Players must race the opposition to reach a goal first. The goal can be a person, place, or thing. This is best played after some type of Revelation or Discovery Development, this often gives the Players the focus for their race.

FIST FIGHT

In this Cliffhanger, the Players (or a single champion of the Players) meets the Opposition in face to face combat. This doesn't have to be a fist fight; it can be any contest where physical, weaponless combat can take place. Wrestling, kung fu, fisticuffs are all acceptable. The rules of the combat are usually ritualized in some way (inside a circle, one hand behind the back, salt thrown at the opponent).

DOGFIGHT

A Dogfight is any Cliffhanger that involves flying combat; this could be flying vehicle, riding animals, or just Magic Users using flight spells. A Dogfight Action gets played when you want to have the opposition attempt to shoot down the Players.

CONFRONTATION

A Confrontation is a non-physical fight; a scene where the heroes face the opposition on a verbal combat level. Threats are exchanged and intimidation resorted to. One side either backs down, or both do. The confrontation Cliffhanger is a tough one to play; the opposition should have an overwhelming advantage over the heroes, yet choose not to exploit it in combat. A good example is the scene where the Villain's minions come to the hero and tell them to "get outta town by sundown, or else". Unless the Players push it, the baddies aren't going to attack just then. The idea is to simply lean on the Players, and give them a reason to want to beat up the opposition when they finally get the chance.

DUEL

A Duel is a one-on-one combat between two participants. Weapons are usually of equal power and lethality (for example, a sword vs a dagger would be considered a Battle, not a duel). Duels do not have to be to the death in most cases, the object is to prove who's the better combatant between the two parties. A Duel can also be used to ritually decide the outcome of a situation; if A wins, B agrees to do something A wants.

BATTLE

This Cliffhanger is played when a full-out, formal combat is staged. A Battle differs from an Ambush in that both sides are fully aware of the battle to come and meet openly. Unlike a Duel, all the participants can join in at any time; it's a combat free for all. When playing this Cliffhanger, you'll want to scale each subsequent Battle (you'll probably have several in the course of a Game), at higher and higher levels. For example, if you have three battles, the first one should be with mere Grunts, the next with Henchmen, and the next one with the Villain. To make this easier, we have set up the following examples of battles in order of appearance:

Battle 1: Grunts. low level bad guys (zombies, troopers, etc). Grunts are usually of far lesser Skill than the Players, but outnumber them by 3 to 1 (if there are 4 Players, there are 12 Grunts).

Battle 2: Minions. Again, more low level baddies of skills just slightly less than the Players. The Minions outnumber the Players 2 to 1 (if there are 4 Players, there are 8 Minions).

Battle 3: Henchmen. Henchmen will always be of equal or slightly greater Skill than the Players. There will be an equal (or nearly equal) number of Henchmen as Players, and they will usually be accompanied by half as many Minions as there are Players.

Battle 4: Henchmen and Villains. The Villain (one only) now makes their appearance; they are always substantially more powerful, skillwise, than the Players. They will be backed by as many Henchmen as there are Players, and may have a couple Minions around just to liven things up.

MONSTER

Monsters are a special type of Cliffhanger. Monsters are non-intelligent threats to the Players; the creature guarding the castle, or the horde of demons in the basement. Monsters are rated in four levels (just like Grunts, Minions, Henchmen, and Villains): Scares, Frights, Horrors, and Terrors. Monsters can be moved around throughout adventures, depending on the mythos, giving you one heck of a Monster Field Guide.

AMBUSH

Generally, this Cliffhanger is much like a Battle; two sides meet and have a fight. But in an Ambush, one side always gets a first free shot before its opposition can respond. There are two ways to play this. If the intent is to have the Players stage on Ambush, the Gamemaster should set the stage so that it is obvious that their opposition is nearby and completely unaware of the Player's presence. Whatever happens after this is up to them. In most cases, however, when this Cliffhanger is played against the Players the opposition drops out of nowhere, and the Players must make a successful Awareness check against their opponent's Stealth in order to know the Ambush is coming.

OBSTACLES

Obstacles are traps, natural hazards, or other dangers the heroes must physically overcome. Obstacles are ranked by difficulty to overcome, and what happens if you fail. The great part about obstacles is that they are pretty generic; you can move them from adventure to adventure with only a little window dressing.

A trap is any type of deadfall, snare, or confinement. A trap need not be physical; it can incorporate a puzzle, or some type of magical/psionic/superpower component. The object of this Scene is to capture the Players or subject them to a situation in which they must either perceive and defeat the trap before it is sprung, or escape the trap after they have walked into it. An example of a Game trap might be a bobby trapped cave or passage, a pit or cell, a giant rolling ball chasing them down a narrow passage, or a closed loop of time where the Players are doomed to repeat a small selection of their lives over and over and over...

All Traps must have a solution available, and clues to that solution must be obviously present, either in the Scene in which the Trap is played, or in Scenes that have already occurred in the Game.

CONTEST

A contest is some type of ritualized confrontation, in which one side wins and one side loses. A Contest could involve riddles, feats of strength, feats of memory or cleverness, or any other type of one-on-one competition. Note: You may not use a Gamemaster fiat to win a contest; if it involves riddles, you must come up with a riddle better than the Players; if it involves memory or brainpower, you have to out think/remember them. If physical actions are involved, then Skill or Strength rolls must be made as well.

SKIRMISH!

The party engages in a small battle with the opposition. If the party is winning, the opposition escapes via trickery (hidden panel, smoke bombs, magic spells, illusions). If the party is losing, the opposition is content to capture them or leave them wounded but alive.

DEVELOPMENT

A Development is a scene where the plot moves ahead without a physical conflict. Also known as the “bump”, it is the part of the script that sets the direction of action until the next big Development. For example, in *Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf the Wizard’s visit to Frodo to tell him about the Ring is a Development. The direction of action is set: Frodo and his companions must find a way to destroy the Ring or face the destruction of Middle Earth.

A Development can also be used to give the heroes a clue, pass on information, warn of danger, or reveal an aspect of the plot previously unknown. For example, in the movie *Casablanca*, the return of Ilse Lund to Rick’s Cafe is a Development that forces the cynical Rick to help the Resistance.

Developments are also used to give the heroes clues on how to gain advantage against their foes. In the movie *Star Wars*, meeting Obi Wan Kenobi is the Development Luke Skywalker must pass through in order to learn the ways of the Force, and thus be able to defeat Darth Vader.

Developments can also lead to new Developments; Luke meeting Ben in order to learn about the Force leads in turn to the Development of Luke mastering the Force to defeat Vader. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke’s mastery of the Force requires him to visit Yoda for greater training, which in turn leads to his discovery that Darth Vader is indeed his father.

WARNING

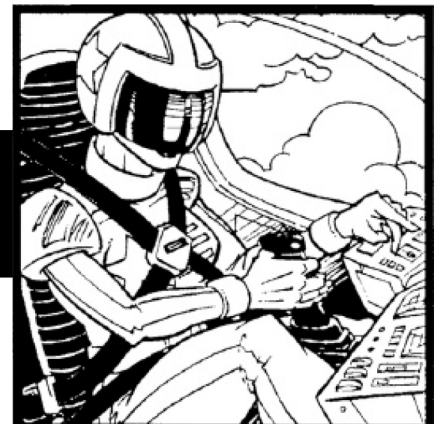
The Warning Development tells the Players of something to come, or of a threat they may not be aware of. Warnings are mysterious voices in the night, notes slipped under doors, or allies coming to the Players to tell them what’s about to happen. The main difference between a Warning and a Foreshadowing is that a Warning is always explicit: it tells the nature of the threat or problem, while a Foreshadowing gives only vague hints.

HIDDEN WEAKNESS

A Revealed Weakness shows the Players some previously unknown weakness of their opposition. The weakness could be physical, mental (a hidden fear or phobia), a special weapon or Tool which can be used against the opposition, or a traitor within the enemy’s camp. Revealed Weakness is always clearly described; “The Dragon has a hand-sized gap in his otherwise impenetrable scales that allows you to kill him with one arrow shot...”

REVELATION

A Revelation is played when a key piece of information is uncovered. Revelations don’t tell the Players the same things as a Hidden Weakness or Clue; instead, in a Revelation, they discover the entire story; all of what’s going on in one shot. It’s not merely a clue, like “Someone is buying up all the alluvium phosdex in the city”, but rather, “The Martians have allied with the Jovian slimeheads to steal all the alluvium phosdex in the universe to build a shaving cream bomb.” Revelations should only be used when you really want the Players to know the whole story and this knowledge won’t affect the outcome in any critical way.



ADVANTAGE REVEALED

The Players uncover a previously unknown ability, advantage, tool, or weapon in their quest. Examples are the undistinguished sword that is really a magical weapon in disguise, a hidden power that manifests under stress, or knowledge of a technique that didn't seem all that important at first (how to weave baskets under water).

CLUE

An ambiguous Revelation. One part of the puzzle is revealed, but not the whole thing. With a Clue, the Players learn only that "Someone is buying up all the alluvium phosdex in the city" instead of "The Martians have allied with the Jovian slimeheads to steal all the alluvium phosdex in the universe to build a shaving cream bomb."

RETREAT

Usually played after a Cliffhanger. For an unknown reason, the Player's opponents are suddenly forced to break off an Attack, Ambush, or other Action, and retreat to their current stronghold. As a Gamemaster, it's up to you to decide the reasons for this sudden reversal. Perhaps there has been a setback or betrayal in the enemy camp, or the opposition has realized that the fight will not serve its original purpose. When a retreat is played, the enemy will always cover its tracks with some delaying tactic that makes it impossible for the Players to immediately follow; a landslide blocks the way, overwhelming forces are released upon the Players, or the pursuit is interrupted in some way by a third party (a school bus full of children slides into the road between the two parties).

HESITATION

The Hesitation Development is much like the Retreat; the opposition breaks off its attack without warning. However, they do not quit the field. Instead, they may pause to negotiate a temporary truce. A typical version of this is the old, "Hrrmm. You guys are a lot better than I expected. I'm impressed. Perhaps you would be willing to work with me." Note that in most cases, should the Players go along with him, the Villain will betray or backstab them at the earliest opportunity.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

One (or more) of the Players is mistaken for someone else. The identity will always be that of an important person; however, it may be a good or bad guy. "Aren't you the King/the Hero/my old Lover?" With the mistaken identity can come problems, advantages, or information, which can be played as Developments after this is played. For example, if everyone thinks a Player is the Long-Lost, Missing Hero, this may provoke the real Hero's traditional nemesis to attack as soon as possible. Later, the Hero's romantic interest may show up with information for the same Player. Use this Development carefully; it's dynamite.

VILLAIN'S MONOLOGUE

The leader of the opposition is in a talkative mood. Like Villains everywhere (especially in *James Bond* movies), they

have the need to brag about the Master Plan; what the Goal is, how it will be accomplished, etc. This Development is only played when the Players are totally in the Villain's control, after a Kidnapping, Trap, or Confrontation. The bad guys feel like it won't matter; the Players are going to die anyway, so why not make them sweat?

SECRET MEETING

A secret meeting is called, in which the Players can gain new allies or information. Secret Meetings are usually played before a Clue, Revelation, or Alliance Development. An Action can be played between the two Developments (the Meeting is broken up by an Ambush or some other type of conflict). Most of the action in this Development comes from setting up, reaching, and meeting people at the Meeting.

PERSONAL STAKE

This Development raises the ante of the Game by interjecting a personal stake into the action. Examples would be: one of the Players is poisoned and now the Players have to Beat the opposition to get the antidote; a Player's friend or lover is kidnapped by the opposition; the Player's learn that the bad guys set them up in some way and the only way to clear their names is to get the real culprit, etc.

SECOND CHANCE

This represents another crack at the problem. The Players have suffered a major setback in some way (they were unprepared or just missed the clues). This Development can be played to "save" a disintegrating Game; new Allies appear with new information, new clues can be revealed, or comrades previously thought dead may be brought back by an act of God (or scriptwriting; i.e. "When Harry's space-fighter crashed, he ejected at the last moment, but was knocked out and lost his memory, but then he recovered and has rejoined the party") This is a very powerful Development to play, and should be used with extreme care.

GAIN MASTERY

This Development represents a period of learning or improvement; a long session with a teacher or master, special training from a skilled source, study, or long practice. The Players spend weeks in the swamp with the Jedi Master, or travel to the mountaintop to learn swordsmanship from Musashi. At the end of the Mastery period, they will possess the skills needed to win the Game; if they use them wisely. It is best to compress time in this Development, don't cover each, moment of every day; just the high spots (training montage!).

ALLIANCE

This Development represents the gaining of help from outside sources; an ancient hero takes up your cause, a population is swayed into giving you aid, etc. The Alliance Development will always give the Players a new "manpower" resource in the Game. The Allies will be powerful, but not enough to tip the battle's outcome by themselves.

BETRAYAL

The Party's been betrayed! It could be a trusted Ally, a Lover, or just another Actor. A Betrayer can be anyone involved with the Party, except a Guide (Guides must always remain trustworthy). What form will the Betrayal take? Maybe the Party's plans are revealed to the opposition. Maybe the betrayer helps the bad guys set up an ambush (or drugs the Players so that they can be captured). Maybe they kidnap another important Actor and turns them over to the Villains as a hostage. Or even steals the magic weapon needed to defeat the enemy. A Betrayal should always allow the Players a chance to stop the Betrayer in the act, or catch them soon afterwards.

SABOTAGE!

An important artifact, device, or vehicle of the Party's is disabled by sabotage. Like the Betrayal Development, the party should have a chance to detect the sabotage and avert/repair it.

FORESHADOWING

Like Warnings, the foreshadowing Development gives warning of events to come. However, the warnings are always ambiguous and hazy: instead of saying 'Watch out for the flying saucers', Foreshadowing says 'Watch the skies!'. This Development can be played at almost any time, but shouldn't be played immediately before the event (as you're going to want some time for the suspense to build). Foreshadowing can be used in a number of ways; the Villains may meet the heroes in a non-threatening situation, or someone may warn the Player's about the Villain. Foreshadowing is unique in that it can encompass messages from dreams and obscure hints. The nature of the threat is not obviously explained.

NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

An action in a previous Beat is not as it was originally perceived. Friends may turn out to be enemies, something harmful is actually good, etc. A classic example is the ally who changes sides in one Beat, then is discovered to be infiltrating the opposition as a double agent. This is a tough Development to play, as it requires that the Gamemaster knows what the true meaning of the original action, and makes it obvious that the change was intended all along.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

A common threat suddenly forces the party to ally with the opposition. This works best when the enemy suddenly shows up and says, 'We have a common problem and need to work together.' The common threat must be both compelling and convincing for this Beat to work.

TURNABOUT!

One member of the opposition decides (for their own reasons), to aid the party. Classic examples of this would be the henchman who betrays the Villain in order to get their job, or the bad guy who joins the Players because they fall in love with one of them. A good way to balance the odds when the party has been reduced in strength and needs some support.

ROMANCE

Ah, love! (We couldn't resist.) In this Development, Romance comes to one or more of the Players; an attractive person takes a strong liking to them. This doesn't have to be all hearts and flowers, though; a new lover can come complete with secret alliances to the Player's enemy, jealous suitors, angry parents, vile curses placed upon them by wicked witches, doomed by telepathic powers or brain cancer, etc, etc.



LIE REVEALED

Something previously thought to be true turns out to be a lie! This could be a clue, a piece of information, the identity of an Actor or Guide, or any other vital fact. The Revealed Lie does not automatically reveal the truth; it just becomes clear to the Players that what they were originally told is untrue.

HAZARDOUS QUEST

The Players are forced to embark on a journey of hazardous proportions to destroy, find, or recover something. The way will be long and arduous, with traps and pitfalls everywhere. There may be terrible storms or other deadly environmental conditions. In the Hazardous Quest Beat, any combat or attacks will be of a minor nature unrelated to their Opposition; wild animals, slinging insects, random monsters. A hazardous journey can, however, start, be interrupted by, or end with a Battle, Ambush, Trap or other combat-related Beat.

PUZZLE

A riddle is posed to the Players; something that must be solved before they can move on. It can be any type of riddle of puzzle. Unlike a Contest, a Puzzle does not involve two sides, it is merely placed before the Players, who must then solve it before they can escape, get into the stronghold, learn the secret, etc. Like a Trap, a Puzzle must always have a solution, and clues to that solution must either be present in the same Scene or in a Scene that has already occurred.

FRAMED!

The Party (or a member of the Party) is set up for a crime they didn't commit. The frame should be obvious to everyone except the authorities (who will have convincing evidence to the contrary).

OBSESSION

A member of the party is the target of another's obsession. This obsession may be for love, hate or curiosity. The obsessed Actor will do their best to follow the object of obsession around, trying to stay close to them. They will not attack the Players and will avoid confrontation whenever possible.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

An old opponent returns from a supposed death. Like the Second Chance, this is a tough Beat to play; you must devise a reasonable excuse for how the old enemy escaped their doom (the fighter crashed in the water, the wound only looked like a death stroke, etc.). Only use this once. It's best used when the Players have overwhelmingly defeated the bad guys early in the Game and you want the final Battle to be a challenge.

RESCUERS!

The Players must save someone from capture, death, or confinement. The important part of this Beat is to provide a compelling reason for the rescue to take place. Maybe the victim is a friend, or has information the party will need to succeed.



VENGEANCE!

One member of the party becomes the target of the opposition's vengeance. Maybe it's something the Player did. Maybe the bad guy just doesn't like the Player's face. In any conflict, this enemy will make a point of attacking or challenging this Player, no matter what the risk.

CLIMAX

Climaxes are scenes that happen at the near end (or end) of the game. Thus, they are played last. The only other Scene that can follow a Climax is a Resolution.

FINAL REVELATION

In the Final Revelation, the Players (and other Actors) are gathered together in one place, and, like the participant in an Agatha Christie novel, must decide what is going on and expose the true facts. What has been going on must finally be revealed in its entirety; the Player's learn about the Martian's alluvium phosdex plot, the murderer is revealed, and their secret identity exposed. The outcome of this Revelation is already decided—once the killer is revealed, the police will arrest them, or once the Baron's illicit business affairs are uncovered, they will slink away in disgrace. The goal of the Final Revelation is to merely uncover the underlying mystery.

FINAL BATTLE

This is the big magilla, the last showdown between the Players and the Bad Guys. In this one, you can feel free to bring in the Villain, their Henchmen, assorted Minions, and whatever Monsters or other Opposition forces you can muster. A Final Battle should be a dramatic slugfest, with destruction meted out on the grand scale (for example, in *The South Seas Treasure Game*, Richard Lopez sent nearly 200 zombies after the players). Like the final Revelation, the Final Battle wraps up the Game for the most part, the Bad Guys are Beaten, the young royal rescued, and the kingdom saved.

RESOLUTION

Resolutions are like the "tag line" of a show; they are a tiny afterscene in which plot ends are neatly tied up (or the possibilities of a sequel revealed). They may only be played as the final Beat in your script, and are the result of all the other Beats. But how can that be, you ask? Didn't the Final Battle Beat resolve things? Not necessarily. The Resolution Beat can overturn all other results of the Final Battle.

HAPPY ENDING

The Players win the day, and resolve the situation! The girl gets the guy, the city is saved, and everyone rides into the sunset. Hopefully, the most common Resolution.

VILLAIN IS KILLED

Take that, evil Horde leader! Zap! Snicker-snak! The Villain is dead and the Gamemaster gets to hand out XP. The second most common Resolution, especially if your Players are as bloodthirsty as most Gamers ore.

VILLAIN SURRENDERS

Usually the third most common Resolution. The Players win, and the Bad Guys give up. End of story, cut to the happy ending, and hand out the Points.



VILLAIN ESCAPES

The Bad Guy is Beaten, but not in custody. They've got a secret bolt hole, or it really wasn't them at all—it was a clone. If this Scene is played, the Villain gets clean away; the heroes have no way of tracing them and no way of recapturing them. They're out there, waiting. A great way to re-use a Bad Guy, assuming that you don't do it all the time.

HEROES CAPTURED

This Scene is best played when the Players have really messed up, but you don't want to kill them out of hand. Instead, they are captured, and the Game ends with them in durance vile, locked in a foul dungeon or a block of carbonite. At this point, you have the option of starting a new Game, picking up where the old one left off. A hot Gamemaster tip; don't immediately start the next Game. Instead, put the PCs in limbo, make them create all new ones, and run a totally different Game first. Not only will this make your Players suffer as much as if they were really in the dungeon, but it'll give you some time to design a whole new Game that can move beyond a Daring Escape and create a new set of problems.

HEROES ESCAPE

This Scene is best used when your Players are on the ropes and you don't feel like killing them. Heck, they've already lost enough points, and you've proven to the International Fantasy Gaming Society what a stud Gamemaster you are; you can afford to give 'em a break. Instead, you allow them to escape—an earthquake interrupts their losing battle, another force attacks and distracts the opposition, or a gateway magically opens up on the battlefield and a figure in glowing robes beckons them in. The object is to save the Players for another round, because they really did do a good job. Like the Heroes Captured Resolution, you should make the Players sweat out another Game first. Not a commonly used option, and one to apply with great care. A benevolent Gamemaster is a pushover Gamemaster.

ENDING CLIFFHANGER

So, they Beat the Evil Hordes of Zorgon, eh? Just as the Players are about to break out the wine and song, a huge gateway opens up and disgorges the Zorgon Overlords! The Ending Cliffhanger is another way to set up for a sequel, but keeping the tension on all the way. As with the Captured Resolution, you should space the sequel with another, different Game first.

GREATER THREAT

So, you thought getting rid of the Villain ended the problem, eh? No, behind them stands a far greater threat! You've killed all of the aliens only to find they were only the advance invasion fleet. The Mastermind was only a flunky for the World Crime League. In this Scene, you discover that this is only the beginning, and another Game lurks in the offing.

