

MASTERING GAMES

For many, when describing a world and seeking ways to describe and systematize it, the task and the work can seem daunting, as each crevice provides a little spark, and around each bend is a new vista, and there is always something that you did not notice before and that you realize anew.

Wyrld is a Starting Point. From here out, all the adventures and actions and consequences and lots and schemes and dreams and desires will shape and change and grow and deepen the world as the Sisters may allow.

For Adventures, the common thing forgotten when planning them is the whole "what happens after?". People spend hours and hours figuring out the particulars of their "boss fight" -- the scenario, the locale, the lair actions, the powers, the tactics and strategies. They will pour energy and time into figuring out the perfect path or the perfect hooks and baits, to get the PCs into that final confrontation.

And not have a clue what happens *afterwards* in the world -- either should the PCs succeed or should they fail. The following is a set of commentary regarding the assorted roles, tasks, and functions of the Dungeon Master, or DM, within the game as it pertains to Wyrld and the running and creation of campaigns and adventures.

*Hello there, darling.
You may call me Acacia.
Some have asked me to step
in and give you some advice
regarding the nature of
stories and heroes and
villains, and so I shall be
your guide for this task.*

TYPES OF GAMES

There are several broad types of games that can be played, even though Wyrld is generally designed and intended to work with only some of them. It can, however, be used with all of them.

LINEAR STORY

A Linear story is like a video game, a movie, a book. It is a story that follows a direct line, however wavy that direct line may be (as in the case of time travel stories). The Protagonists do this, then this, then that, and finally these things, and then they all have a happily ever after.

Linear stories generally tend to require some degree of "railroading" or forcing players to react or behave or operate in a fixed way. In a video game, the game designers create a limited number of set paths. In a novel, film, or TV show, the writer(s) create the path that the protagonist takes. The railroading is built in. Wyrld, however, as a roleplaying game, does not generally limit the paths that a PC can make, and seeks to give them the freedom to do as they will (within the constraint of consequences).

There is, however a form of linear storytelling that Wyrld is great for. This is generally called a Dungeon Crawl. The PCs enter a location that has a fixed series of rooms and spaces that need to be explored. This is very familiar to those who played D&D in the early days, as most games were little more than a dungeon crawl full of chaos and wanton wildness.

NON-LINEAR STORY

A Non-linear story does not have a set sequence of events, a defined path that moves forward and onward towards an inevitable conclusion. They are built around sequences, and while there may be connections between the many sequences, it is only when all of them are linked together that one becomes aware of the larger story, and the role of the Protagonist within it. Non-linear stories do not have a fixed ending – they remain undetermined, open, but with a marked change to the environment in which they occur.

Wyrld is designed for non-linear storytelling, which is what Wyrld's creator feels is the ultimate form for stories in this format. Later we will talk about how to build a non-linear story, but basically, a non-linear story is developed from the plans and actions and activities of someone other than the PCs, and happens without regard to them unless they interfere.

WEST MARCHES

A West Marches game is structured so that PCs come from a fixed location and then journey out into the world around that location, and return after each adventure, which takes place away from the fixed location (the eponymous West Marches).

The key to a West marches game is that it consists of several different groups of PCs who are available at different times, and all of them engage in the same world at the same time. They are ideal for large groups with limited time to play and no fixed time to do so.

Wyrld is structured well for such a style – the world is large and diverse, and you can even have different groups in different locations, linked by the mighty Adventurer’s Guild.

SANDBOX

A sandbox is a world that is open to exploration, where everything in the world is able to be interacted with and has no regard for a story as a foundation for the world. *Gulliver’s Travels* is a fictional version of an Open World, as is *Brave New World*, with all the wonders in it.

PLAYER DRIVEN

A Player Driven world is a world where the events and activities and occurrences are all determined by the actions of the players, the world around them reacting to their decisions and choices.

Wyrld is designed to be a Player Driven setting.

STORY DRIVEN

A Story Driven setting is one where the story drives the decisions and choices of the players. The story is what defines what is possible, and how it is possible.

PLAYER CHARACTERS (PCs)

The first thing one must understand when playing the game is that the game is the story of the Protagonists, or Heroes, and that means the Player Characters, or PCs.

Wyrld is a game where PCs are encouraged to be heroic, and at times outlandish, and to take chances. It is *their* story, and it is the Players who are telling that story. Your role as DM is to create the backdrop and challenges for that story, not to tell it for them.

Unless the Players themselves opt to decide otherwise, there are no deuteragonists or tritagonists. No one is secondary or tertiary to another PC – they are a group of protagonists.

Sometimes, one player will seem to feel that their character is the Main Character of a given game and begin acting as such. The role of the DM in this case is to remind them, pointedly, that all the PCs are equally important, and to ensure that all the PCs get equal “time in front of the camera” so to speak.

PC ROLE

As the Protagonists, it is the role of the PCs to break things, to make a mess, to screw up the plans of the Villain and deny them the success they crave.

With this it is important to understand that no matter what you think a PC will do, the odds are more in favor of them doing something you did not think of, no matter how well you may know the Players behind those PCs.

This is what sets a role-playing game like Wyrld apart from things like video games, books, films, television, shows, comic books, and related media. The author in those circumstances doesn’t have to deal with a group of unruly people who all have their own ideas and thoughts and emotions coming in and messing up all their plans and outlines.

PC OWNERSHIP

A Player Character belongs to the player. Always. Even if the DM created the character and gave it to the player, that is a Player’s character from that moment on. There are no exceptions to this. You can kill off a character in your game, but that character still belongs to the player, and they can do anything they want with it, even take it to a different game.

The only control you have is what characters you allow into your games – that isn’t ownership, however, that’s selective permissibility.

Conversely, what happens to NPCs in your game, and a character in your game that is not a PC (say, the left in the middle of the game after a fight and quit your group) is an NPC, you can do whatever you want with them.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCS)

A non-Player Character is anything that is not a layer Character. That includes monsters, animals, rocks, trees, wind, insects, weather, food, the planet, deities, the sun and the moons and the stars above, as well as every single person the PCs encounter on their journey other than PCs.

NPCs do not operate according to the same rules as PCs, in terms of how they come to be. They do not have classes, they do not level up, they do not collect milestones or experience – but they can also do things that the PCs cannot do, and their role can vary from being support personnel to being the Villain in the game.

VILLAINS

If Players are the Protagonists, then the Antagonist is the Villain. Or Villains, as the case may be – nothing says that a Villain need be a singular being. The stories told through role-playing games are not the stories of the Villain. The stories are about the Heroes, the PCs, overcoming a problem.

Villains are always a problem. They may merely be *a* problem, they may often be *the* problem, but either way, they are still a problem. They are a problem for the wider world, a force that is fundamentally aiming to disrupt and distort the world as a whole, and they have motivations to do so and they have plans, schemes, and ploys to achieve their goal, which is always going to be a problem that, with luck, the PCs will solve.

In some way.

Villains, as a whole, do not care about the PCs. They are, most often, not even aware of the PCs when the campaign or adventure starts. The most compelling villains do not have a personal stake in the PCs – heroes are a bother and Villains are usually well aware that they are better because they have a scheme, plan, and/or ploy in place that will take care of them long before they could even think about being a challenge.

What they are concerned with and focused on, however, is their plans, and their backup plans, and how to achieve their goals despite the problems and how they treat their minions and so forth. The only time a Villain generally becomes aware of the PCs is shortly before the final showdown, or if they disrupt a particularly sensitive element in their plans. Another possible way is that the renown of the PCs becomes such that they come to the attention of the Villain – who will want to know how much of a threat they might pose.

VILLAIN ARCHETYPES

There are a whole host of possible kinds of Villains, and while the following will help you get an idea of some of them, it is by no means exhaustive or complete.

AUTOCRATIC

This is the take no prisoners, has no loyalty, no morals, nothing stopping them from manipulating their way to their goal of gaining wealth, power, authority, and status. Once they have that, they hold on to it at all costs. Personality wise, they see things in a framework of Win or Lose, and they never see themselves as a loser under any circumstances. They are manipulative and cunning, collecting minions, lackeys, flunkies, stooges, and sycophants, as well as a few henchmen and devoted fanatics, of which they are abusive and dismissive at best, murderous and deadly should they fail or prove no longer of use. They often disguise themselves, being one way in public, then their true selves in the sanctity of their personal spaces where they do not perceive risk.

BEASTLY

This is your basic capable critter, filled with cunning, experienced as a predator, wary and watchful, never giving prey a chance, always seeming smart enough to get around things while it pursues its sole set of standard goals: provide food, defend territory, protect young, destroy threats, and play with what will become the first goal. This is not a *reasoning* creature, nor does it necessarily have to be a predator or even carnivorous. It cannot be bargained with, cannot be stopped, and cannot understand things that are of importance to people. Beastly

villains are often considered “misunderstood” by those who are outside of the range of it, and considered beyond saving by those who are victims of it.

COMMON

No villain would ever deign to be considered common, even those who are indeed common villains. Brilliant, thoughtful, perceptive, elegant, arch, and absolutely confident, this villain is the patient sort, the kind of planner and plotter whose machinations can take great lengths of time to unfold, each step meticulously researched and crafted with a precision that makes even their foes look on with admiration.

They are ruthless, merciless, and exacting, punishing failure swiftly and without warning. They do not care who knows they are the Villain. That knowledge will do little to help them by the time they have learned of it. They do not mess with traps or games; they are direct, pointed, and brazen when it is useful and subtle when it is called for. Their plans have layers, and there is always at least three backup plans for each primary plan, and there are false plans to lead the suspicious astray, and there are cut outs at every level of every scheme, ploy, or scam. This is the villain who reads Machiavelli and Sun Tsu.

When they do finally feel that something may be a threat, they will seek to get close to them, to aid them, to be their friend and trusted advisor, the close friend, a colleague, that houseguest who hides a psychopathic killer mentality behind a normal facade. Then they will choose a moment of calm and strike in a way that is calculated to cause the greatest harm with the least risk.

CORRUPT

Some Villains are good people. People with good and noble intentions, a history of good and noble works, a life and recognition of things that are admirable and idealized. People who used their power, authority, influence, wealth, or status for the best of reasons and in the best of ways.

Or at least, they once were. Then, as ever, *something happened*; something tragic, something embarrassing, something endangering, something that enabled them to be corrupted, to seek to keep that hidden, secret, to keep their hold on their comfortable life, their authority, their influence, their position, their reputation.

For some, it may be a hidden past as the cast away embarrassment, the black sheep; for others it maybe a moment of indiscretion, in speech or action, while for others it is little more than raw ambition kept hidden beneath a crafted veneer. In all cases, their plans and schemes seek to preserve and further their position, while also keeping such things as far away from their clean and pleasant image as possible.

CRIMINAL

This villain does it for the money, and benefits of wealth. They will tend towards crimes which do not shed blood and may even have a kind of code that they follow, even though they trust no one (even their own helpmeets).

They can be bought off, they can be negotiated with, but they are always looking to the money, fist and foremost, and that is what they do. They will pay well, but then betray or turn on their helpmeets, and they will have few scruples about letting others kill for them if it means a large amount of coin in their hands.

DESPERATE

This is a villain who is desperate, trapped by consequences, running, escaping, fleeing something – physical, emotional, imagined, psychological, spiritual. To survive, they will do anything, become anything, by any means, at any cost, in any way that they can. And it is this that makes them villains, for they will use others in whatever way they can to achieve that goal.

FAULTLESS

This villainous type constantly tells people it wasn't their fault, they were forced to agree to some nefarious plan. They can deny any responsibility for the things they have done because they truly believe that their hand was forced, it was someone else's responsibility, and genuinely feel they are being wrongly judged. So long as they remain safe and secure, this villain is capable of doing anything all while resolving themselves of any blame or guilt

because *somebody else made them do it*, they didn't have a choice. They are unreliable witnesses, and will seek to shift the blame onto anyone else.

HONEYED

This Villain uses their charms, good looks, sexual prowess, and creativity to prey on others. They seek wealth, power, control, and adoration; usually all at once and they will take it by any means necessary. They may have started off as powerless victims, but now they are powers themselves. They often use their playthings, their victims, as followers and helpmeets, people to do the dirty work, to bear the burdens, to provide for the lifestyle and adulation they deserve.

IDEALIST

This Villain has a goal, and that goal is absolute and unwavering, their reason for living, their purpose for being, and the sole sum of their life. The agenda, the ideology, the religious belief, the adherence to tradition, the extremism of their goal is always complete and utter, with black and white thinking an essential part of it.

They are on a mission, rigid, disciplined, exacting, precise. Their own well being is tertiary at best to the goal, and they are obsessive and focused to the point that self-sacrifice is an ultimate expression and culmination. They instill this into their followers, a total sense of subservience, and a complete awareness of the end goal, even if they do not always understand the path to achieve it.

INFERNAL

These are the Villains that love the game of it all. From Devils and Demons and Hags bent on corruption to narcissistic intellectuals, this is the villain that ruins not only days, but years. They are the ones who select targets, lay traps, and play with their victims, before an often-gruesome ending that was carefully arranged.

This villain is a grand master when it comes to reading actions, guessing thoughts, predicting behaviors, identifying weaknesses of the emotional, social, psychological, and moral sort. They are masters of temptation, of lulling, of manipulation and deceit, and they use all of it liberally. They see themselves as the smartest person in the room, in the settlement, in the region, in the realm. To them, all of it is a game, a challenge, a competition, and none of it is ever personal, merely play, for the joy they gain from matching wits and watching failure is the ultimate goal they always have.

They will intentionally leave cryptic clues, maneuver heroes into sets of puzzles and games, all of which will be rigged and structured to ensure this Villain's victory. There is only one thing one can trust about them, which is that it is always foolish to trust them.

MANIACAL

These are the villains who have lost connection with reality in many ways, yet retain a deep sort of cunning madness, and may often seem to be quite normal, ordinary even, everyday, commonplace, typical, unremarkable. They are, however, completely insane, likely aware of it and even how it happened, but utterly unconcerned by it. Usually, they have an inverted set of values, ideals, and beliefs, and so seek to bring to the broader world an expansion of the poor quality of awareness, an increase in the amount of joy that they see as pain, a hilarity that they see as grief in their small little minds. This kind of villain is one of the rarest to directly go after the heroes and will react in an exaggerated way whenever a plan or scheme is disrupted, but then will calm down quickly, dismiss any losses or consequences of that loss of control, and come up with a new scheme or ploy.

SECRETIVE

This is the kind of villain that likes to keep things secret. Plays their cards close to their vest, so to speak. They often have no origin story, and their background is shrouded in mystery and has no ties to anything, because they long ago erased any evidence of it. On Wyrld, for Mages, This is a fairly fruitless task for those seeking to become a power, as True Names can always be ferreted out, since that is part of the magic of True Names, but for those seeking secrecy the power they want isn't obvious, isn't overt, isn't direct.

This villain will even keep their identity secret from helpmeets and followers, all except for their confidants in few cases, but normally even they won't be aware, and instead will be apparent face of the overall effort, seeming to be the one(s) who are the makers of the plans and schemes and ploys and scams.

SHEPHERD

This Villain will initially seem to be someone who has been ostracized, cast out, living alone and isolated but still nearby to other people, who will shun them. Often, they will offer salvation or succor to those in need, and they always seem to be in need of care and support themselves. They are the kind of person you feel sorry for, the sort that brings up empathy and sympathy, and shows a sharp wit, a deep intelligence, and carries experience and wisdom with them. They will turn away offers of kindness, however, because they are doing all this kindness for a single reason that they share readily and easily: the seek to be accepted once again by the nearby community. Those they help are often mistreated, solely for accepting their help.

This is all a front, however, for they are not what they seem.

The truth will only out after the foiling of some ploy or scam, but what it reveals is that the local settlement cast them out for vile and unspeakable things crimes such as they had never seen, perhaps even service and sacrifice to the Dread Host. They really do want to be accepted back into the community, and are bitter and angry, resentful and jealous, filled with a desire for revenge. Revenge and redemption best gained through the very acts that got them expelled, such as cannibalism, sacrifice, torture, and such, with unsuspecting new friends who show a lack of awareness.

TERMINATING

One of the more common Villains, they have one focused goal, to destroy the hero normally. They are generally unstoppable and terrifying, have little or no remorse, and they can't easily be harmed, stopped or killed. This bloodthirsty villain takes no prisoners. This is a hut, a sport, and they favor violence and brutality, and do not plan anything intricate or involved – they are simply going to keep coming and keep hurting, maiming, and killing anything in their path as they seek to directly face off with the heroes. They will kill friends, family, people talked to, animals, pets, hamlets, villages and they may be slowed down, but they will just keep coming. When the final fight does happen, it will take something outside the arsenal of the heroes, often something in the environment, to end them once and for all.

Terminating Villains are sadistic, craving the fear and terror they cause as they rampage; they do not worry about being found and captured because they will escape by killing everyone around them. They cannot be reasoned with, cannot be bought off, cannot stop their quest, do not turn away or take shortcuts or the long way. About the only emotions they ever do show are satisfaction once they kill the heroes, and often a smile as they kill.

VENGEFUL

At some point in the past, someone or something hurt this Villain. The pain of it, the humiliation of it, the trauma of it, it still lingers in them, and they remain unable to move on. That was then, and this is now – now they have the power to fix this, to punish those responsible, to stop others from doing the same, and now they have the power, authority, or wealth to achieve this goal. They have no faith or trust or concern about the system of justice beyond viewing it as a hindrance, and consider themselves above and beyond such a system, out of its reach and not under its authority.

VILLAIN MOTIVATION

Villains generally have a series of things they are trying to accomplish, all in service of a greater thing they seek to do that is drawn from their Motivation. Motivation is often suggested by their archetype, but otherwise can be anything.

Motivations shape the Plans, Schemes, Ploys, and Scams of a Villain. For each of these things, there are a few questions they have to ask themselves about each little element.

What is it I want?

What is my goal?

- Why am I doing this?
- How will I accomplish that goal?
- What do I need to do to accomplish that goal?
- When do I need to accomplish this goal?
- Who will I need to accomplish this goal?
- Where will I accomplish that goal?
- What will I do to achieve this goal?
- What do I need to have under my control to accomplish that goal?
- Where will I find those parts to do it?

These questions help to outline the size and scope of a scheme, plan, ploy, or scam. These efforts often mean turning to and relying on followers, also called helpmeets.

VILLAINOUS HELPMEETS

All intelligent Villains have helpmeets. Hired, recruited, bribed, cajoled, whatever. They are the people who keep hands clean, who keep distance and can be a pair of hands and legs and a strong back when needed.

Helpmeets have similar cravings and amorphous morals to a villain they work for. This is because although the henchman craves the same profits from their crimes, they don't often believe they have the ability or status to run the plans. The Villain who leads them uses the Helpmeets for the dirty work they possibly don't want to take part in. Some may have ambitions to take over the business as soon as they can dispose of those above them or even the villain, but these intentions will never be displayed. Many are expendable, while a few will end up in hospital or running away.

Helpmeets come in different sorts, ranked by their overall level of closeness – confidants, inner circle, middle circle, outer circle – and generally have a structure.

Position	Ranking	Description	CR
Sycophants	6 th - Unrelated	These are people who don't know anything, but go along with whatever because they get something out of it or suspect something that they will benefit from.	-10
Lackeys	5 th - Outer	The cut outs, the fall guys, the scape goats, the ones who get the blame if something goes wrong.	-9
Flunkeys	5 th - Outer	The ones who go along because this is what they do, don't really see anything wrong with it, just a thing they do and hey, they can have fun.	-8
Minions	5 th - Outer	The smarter of the least of them, ambitious, angling to move up to Henchman, dreaming of being an overseer, maybe one day runnigh the whole show themselves.	-7
Fanatics	4 th - Middle	Fanatics are the highest ranking followers, usually given higher position because they demonstrate absolute loyalty and commitment.	-6
Stooges	4 th - Middle	These are the folks that are part of something through bribes, coercion, and greed, the ones who enable others to achieve things. They are corrupt officials, usually innocent at first before becoming too deeply embroiled.	-5
Henchmen	4 th - Outer	Supervisory Role; those who handle the outermost ring of folks, the flunkeys, lackeys, and minions. Henchmen are always present in person.	-4
Overseer	3 rd - Middle	Supervisory Role; answering to Chiefs, these are the folks who run the crews and projects being undertaken. They are oly rarely at the forefront.	-3
Chief	2 nd - Inner	Supervisory Role; these are the folks who support the Bosses and are considered part of the Inner circle, privy to the villains most closely guarded things and able to assume the role of the Boss if given a chance.	-2
Boss	1 st - Confidant	Supervisory Role; these are the highest ranking, most important, closest to the Villain followers. They will be the sub-villains, charged with tasks.	-1

The table above serves as a kind of guide to the followers of a Villain, showing the role they occupy in a plan, scheme, ploy, or scam. There is also an occasionally useful CR modifier to guide how powerful the helpmeet might be in relation to the Villain.

Not all Villains have huge organizations, and so may not use all of the assorted kinds of followers, but the general roles and descriptions remain within nearly any grouping, even if the Villain themselves is only a Henchman of some greater power.

Nevertheless, the role of a Helpmeet is to ensure that the Plans, Schemes, Ploys, and Scams come to fruition.

PLANS, SCHEMES, PLOYS, AND SCAMS

A **PLAN** is the overarching idea, the whole big deal of the Villain. "I will own the Docks of this City!"

A **SCHEME** is a portion of the larger plan. To take over the docks, first you must have the dockworkers, then you must have the harbormaster, then you have to get the gangs under control.

A **PLOY** is the way that a Scheme is done. Cajole the dockworkers, bribe the harbor master, take over the gangs.

A **SCAM** is a betrayal of some sort that is the truth of a ploy. After taking over the gangs, they all found themselves sold into indenture on board ships headed for faraway ports.

These are the tools that a Villain and their Followers, or Helpmeets, will use.

At the heart of a Villain lie the plans and ploys, schemes and scams, machinations and connivances that make them a problem for the world as a whole, and which in turn becomes a problem for the Heroes.

First, be aware that these are not ploys and plans about the Heroes. These are the designs of the Villain in a world where there are no heroes, for in their mind they will always act to avoid the notice of those who could thwart their schemes.

Which is not to say that sometimes the whole point of a villain is to cause harm to the heroes – but if so, they have a reason, and the most common reasons involve them interrupting or ruining some ploy that Villain had, or else it is something deeply personal and obsessive – but that all too often comes across as cartoonish and trite, the mustache twirling evil doer whose only purpose in life is to cause the heroes' pain.

Well, on Wyrld, that kind of person generally does it in a way that is direct – they hire assassins, they poison supplies, they expose foibles and ruining their reputation, they kill family and friends, and the like. That is, a Villain who is realistic of that sort isn't going to create a complex plan, they are going to go straight at the PCs in the most devastating and brutal way possible, because Wyrld is a brutal and devastating place.

Those villains of Wyrld who are more common, though, are those who seek to effect a change in the world that they perceive as benefitting them, or as being of the greater good for all (if they lean towards the more crazy, helpful sort).

GETTING HOOKS

Mistakes are what you can use as plot threads, as the bait to lure the PCs into a story, and the hooks to drag them into it. All Villains make mistakes -- that's kinda the whole thing about the Heroes and the Villains. Those mistakes are in things that will allow the PCs to unravel the plan and ultimately find out who is behind it all.

The other part to this is that sometimes those mistakes are success in their plans. Perhaps they burnt a village, or allowed a prisoner or turncoat to escape, or perhaps they did something that picked up on a backstory of some character.

These things aren't directly about the PCs. None of it is "this happens to this PC". They happen to things around the PCs. Often the things the PCs care about. Or need. Or maybe even want. They are always things that affect the PCs, but indirectly -- and the reason is that the Villain doesn't give a damn or even think about the PCs.

The next thing is to answer the question "What did they do wrong?"

Villains always do something wrong. It is how the heroes and them end up facing each other.

For this, look to the PCs backstories for some hook, but not in terms of something that is direct to the PC personally – that is, nothing that was done to them as an individual, but rather something that was done to someone or some place around them, that ultimately had the effect of causing the PC a problem.

For example, it wasn't that the Villain attacked the PC, it was that the Villain attacked the parents of a close friend, or the family of someone who trained them. Always keep at least one degree of separation between the PC and the Villain when looking to back stories for this planning stage. There will be enough time for direct stuff later.

Then look at other things. Maybe they burned down their town. Maybe they kidnapped a good friend. Maybe one of their followers robbed someone close to them because the Villain wasn't keeping a firm grip on them. Whatever it is, try to think up a half dozen things.

Sometimes that means something like this:

Early in my career, I used a spell to turn my best friend into my most loyal ally -- and I did it because he was going to turn me in. I wasn't aware until the end, but he nurtured a huge grudge, and wanted to be free from the spell and to take me down and end my blight upon the world.

TIMETABLES

These Plans, Schemes, Ploys, and Scams happen on a timetable, and unless stopped, these nefarious and dastardly things will come to fruition, and thereby have an impact on the world in which the PCs live, and that means they will be affected; something that happens unless the PCs stop it, a lesson so often learned early on that wise Players will try to do their best to stop the plans.

This is why there is a calendar provided – to help with planning out when things will happen. And there are always timetables for complex plans. Knowing the timetable for all the little parts of the plan also gives you an interesting ability to introduce hooks and bait that don't come from what they did wrong, but more likely what they did right, as each little thing the Villain does has an impact in some way on the world around them.

One of the interesting things about timetables is that they make schemes, ploys, and scams dependent on each other. If the gangs are controlled but the harbor master isn't, then the plan becomes unwieldy and there will need to be corrections made.

Initially, Villains have no clue the PCs exist. Villains are above them, they aren't a threat, Villains won't even consider them until and unless the Villain sees a beautiful plan unraveling and finds it is too late to fix things and get back on track. That is when a Villain will get angry -- and either the Villain will plan a faceoff so they can have their revenge, or they will get the hell out of there and hope the Heroes don't find them (usually making another mistake that inevitably leads the PCs straight to the Villain).

Such an event happens very late in the game, as well – so for most of the time, the Villain won't usually know the Heroes are a problem, even if the Villain here's about a group causing problems. They are likely to just send some followers to take care of it.

WHAT CHANGES

That impact is always in the form of some kind of change. The Docks are closed down. Ships are having strange fires. The trade in the city is getting strange. Grain prices are up.

Something always changes. And this is not just important for the little things that lead up to the final confrontation, it also must apply to what happens if the Heroes never get involved at all -- or lose.

When you are figuring out the Plans of your villains, always have two outcomes prepared: Success and Failure. You should know before you even start to run a session what the possible outcomes of the plan are, just as your Villain would. But also, be aware of one more thing.

Time. As the DM, your job includes tracking the time as part of your responsibilities to run the NPCs, and in this case, Time itself is an NPC. All Plans are linked to a timetable as we just noted, so you should know what is going on around the PCs that they do not see or may not be looking for, in relation to the plans of your villains.

Because if the Heroes don't act in time, the plan will succeed.

STOCK CHARACTERS

Other NPCs of a sort that is rather commonly found or encountered are kinds of archetypes in and of themselves, and variations of all of them may weave in and out of the PC's lives during the campaign or perhaps even just a single story.

These are not personalities, they are roles in the larger schema, and frequent sorta of people that one may encounter, each of them being different from others, but all of them having the same general role in the story of the PCs, giving the Heroes points of reference in the game.

These archetypes need not be people, but they are still characters of the DMs, still NPC. They could be monsters, books, messages, elixirs, spirits, muses, powers, and other assorted things just as readily as a person. There may be several of these that appear throughout a campaign, but generally an adventure will only have one appear during its period.

The big benefit to having rough sorts of ideas about these particular archetypes is that when they are called for, you already have them handy.

ALLIES

A character whose role is to help and support and stand by the PCs, even when it isn't in their best interest. From loveable rogues to ardent fans, this role is often a key one that can be tragic, comedic, or inspirational.

CONSCIENCE

A character whose role is moral and ethical guidance of the PCs.

ENFORCERS

A character whose role is to enforce the will or authority of someone with power, influence, and responsibility. From street thugs to consiglieri to police, they are the

EXAMINERS

A character whose role is to test the PCs, to see if they are worthy, to challenge them and show them what they are missing, and they are not usually directly kind, not usually offering assistance, merely showing them that they have weaknesses and limitations.

GUARDIANS

A character whose role is to move the PCs away from the storyline. They are the folks who stand at the gate and turn the PCs away, and often the first and earliest of the beings that will test and challenge the PCs. They are not typically part of the storyline or the Villains team; instead, they are the people who remind the PCs of what they have to lose, what they have to overcome, what they will need.

HEALERS

A character whose role is to heal the PCs. Physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually.

HERALDS

A character whose role is to move the story along by giving insight to the PCs, offering a metaphorical push in the right direction, and acting as a kind of omen of things to come. Heralds are great for adding in Foreshadowing.

INNOCENTS

A character whose role is to be innocent. Children, mothers, helpless villagers, the old, the ill; these are the innocents of the world, those the Heroes must defend and protect.

MENTORS

A character whose role is to teach, to guide, to prepare the heroes. From wise old men to smart mouthed kids, they possess experience and knowledge the PC lacks about the world, and about things going on.

MERCHANTS

A character whose role is to be, well, a merchant. They sell, they barter, they exchange, and can be anything from a traveling peddler to a girl working a market stall to an indolent trader in rare antiquities with some bad habits. What they sell can be information, goods, or just useless bauble that no one would ever want – except that one group of people who seem to believe it has importance.

NEMESIS

A character whose role is to be the opposite of the heroes; the competition, the challenger, the bully, the mirror universe version. They are not always an enemy, and may even become friends, but they are always there to reflect back at the heroes their own shortcomings and answer the question “what if?”

PARAMOURS

A character whose role is to be a love interest. It is important that when you introduce potential romance subplots, that you inform the players and get their permission before hand, and romance should never be part of a mainline plot, only a subplot on the side. Paramours can be anything from a single person to a host of them, but typically there are two, in order to form a triangle or to provide competition.

RULERS

A character whose role is to be the person who rules the area the PCs are in. They are, in their region, the major authority, and can be corrupt and wicked or wise and noble, but in all cases, they will be someone who can be scary simply because they wield so much social power.

TEMPTERS

A character whose role is to dangle a path away, to distract, to betray or to embolden the PCs. Tempters may be ally or enemy, but they are always engaged directly with the PCs, their actions based on their goals. Tempters can often be competitors to the primary Villain, and so seek to play both sides of the field, then striking at the PCs when there is risk to their own plans.

TRICKSTERS

A character whose role is to shake things up, to inject spice, humor, and to throw off the normal order of things. Tricksters defy patterns and habits, disrupt tactics and strategies, and are counterpoints that appear when things become tough. A trickster may be helpful one time, and troublesome the next, or may even be both at the same time.

SESSIONS

A DM has many roles and responsibilities, and often people will forget a few them in favor of others, and so it can become a challenge to identify the assorted aspects of what it means to be a DM, and how those aspects interplay with the roles and responsibilities of being a Player.

UNVEILER

A DM is the person who unveils the world to players. Through Theater of the Mind where the art and craft of storytelling is revelatory, to the use of images and art, to the employment of virtual table tops and battle maps, to the combinations of all of these things, the DM is the one who provides the words and senses that bring to life the imaginary and unfamiliar, that sparkle in the eyes of players as they visualize what lies before their Player Characters, or PCs.

A large part of the adventure of Wyrld itself lies in exploring and coming to see and understand the world itself, to tread in places where no other has before.

With the rise of digital artistry, access to tools and time, the creation of imagery for display through virtual table tops, or VTTs, has become a major way of revealing the world to players, but the visual aspect is only partial, and so ultimately the skills of a DM still come down to what is often called the theater of the mind, where the

task of explaining things comes to rely on the nature of what it means to experience something, and therein we have the keys to good descriptive styles.

DESCRIPTIONS

When describing a place, there are certain things you should always include unless their inclusion is unnecessary – and there is a difference between unnecessary and merely distracting, as distraction is good. These essential factors are divided into three broad categories with five aspects to each:

Sensory	Sight	Sound	Scent	Taste	Texture
Dimensional	Height	Width	Length	Depth	Volume
Perceptual	Shape	Substance	Atmosphere	Mood	Resonance

Each of these factors helps to build up and is related to the others, such that they all combine to create a whole vision of something. Often, things can be described simply because they have acquired a broad familiarity to your listeners – a chest is a chest, a door is a door, a chair is a chair, a table is a table.

When describing something, use adjectives over adverbs, use repetition over singularity, use association or familiarity over originality. Focus more on spaces and places, and develop a habit or system of doing so, such that it is always going on whenever you describe something.

This habitual aspect is important for two reasons: first, it allows your Players to focus on what it is they need to know and makes it easier to do so over time, as well as prompting questions more effectively. Second, it becomes a way for you to describe things that may include something that is meant to warn them or disguise something and does not call out a surprise in the description or give them a sense of foreboding that you do not intend for them to have.

In short, you don't spoil it if you do it all the same way every time.

Some of these may require explanation. **SENSORY** elements are always the way that what lies before them impacts their senses. Sensory information should always be presented, with every sense involved. We taste the air, we feel the air, we intuit the graininess or slipperiness. **DIMENSIONAL** elements are primarily part of how we visualize something. They have to do mostly with size and shape of something, and often can be described in terms of familiarity and as a common thing.

The one that often escapes people, however, is the **PERCEPTUAL** stuff. These are things that deal with how we feel about something in ways that we cannot put into simple terms as relates to the size and shape of something or what our senses tell us individual, because often it is the unique combination of all those factors and then other things that give us our perceptual awareness.

Shape is the easiest of them, often because we can turn to the shapes of things we already know to describe them, and we have the benefit of the dimensional aspects to help guide this. Substance, of course, can often be subsumed into the item – this is always and essentially what the thing is made of. Describing a Troll, though, can be a task, as they can often be made of the things that exist around them. Is it wood, is it metal, is it ceramic – these are the kinds of things that Substance covers.

The last three are all of a common sort as well, but are about how a place makes one feel, in terms of physical, psychological and emotional awareness. Atmosphere is the overall sense of the space, almost like a genre of an area. The atmosphere can be welcoming, abusive, dreadful, intimate, and such. Mood is the emotional feel of a place, the particular emotions that it brings out. In Wyrld, Mood can give a sense of connection to planar aspects, since the planes are tied to different emotions – but they may not, as it could be caused something in the area or that has recently passed through it. Lastly, resonance describes the way the place seems to fit into the world around it. Resonance is how out of place something feels as a whole and can even include psychic emanations and Palescent vibrations.

A strong descriptions will include all of these things about an area, and many of them about a single object.

NARRATOR

The next element of the role and responsibilities of a DM is that they are a Narrator for the game, with some limitations. That is, they describe the actions and activities and consequences and reactions to the things the Players do.

When playing the game, there are things that different creatures and beings and objects do that have to be described or narrated. Narration is a hallmark of TTRPGs. There are no clear-cut lines for what is narrated, by whom, and when, but it does generally follow that there is a division between what Players describe and what DMs describe.

Players Narrate their actions and their reactions to consequences.

DM's narrate consequences, and everything in the World that is not a Player Character, with a couple caveats.

The first Caveat is Drama. If a Player narrates an attack with something like "I attack with my sword.", well, it is ok to take that and describe the flashing and whirling exchange, the ring of steel upon steel, the sounds and smells of that exchange – but do it fast. Equally so, if a Player says something like "I chop his head off" and is using a weapon that isn't going to chop the head off anything for several more hits, then you cannot narrate that.

What you should do is let them change their narration. Because they should know that the game's rules don't allow you to chop off limbs and such. But you can narrate what happens, so long as you still use what the player described – or simply narrate what happens as a result of what the player describes – the consequence of the action.

The second Caveat is when the player leaps ahead – interrupting you. Give them information they can use, and let them know that they need to react after you are done.

WORLDBUILDER

The next role of the DM is that of the World Builder. A DM plays everything in the game except the player characters. As a DM you can offload things like sidekicks, familiars, pets, and assorted similar things to the PCs, but the responsibility for them is ultimately still on you as the DM, as is every creature, every Power, every person, every antagonist, thugs, person on the street, and so forth that exists in the world.

Much of this is done improvisationally – you might have a few small guidelines or brief personality notes about a given NPC (Non-Player Character, every monster and person and critter in the game), but much of what happens will be determined by you in the moment.

These interactions are a large part of how the world comes into being, and comes alive, and that is the essence of world building, for that is where the details arise, shaped and influenced by the larger stuff already in place.

REFEREE

The next function of the DM is that they are the game's referee, the person who enforces the rules of the game. Like Umpires and referees in Sports, DMs are the final arbiters of things in the game world, but they are not the opponent of the players, even when they are playing that opponent.

They are the moderators of the game as well in this capacity – they determine if behavior is out of line or not. They decide if an action is within or against the rules of the game. They do have a couple of things to be aware of when doing so, though.

The first is that this is a game of fantasy. Every group of players and a DM, often just called a Table, has a different degree of realism that they tolerate at their tables. Often there will be an effort to try and conform things to the behaviors of science on Earth. As a game, play on Wyrld does not incorporate any advanced sciences, nor should it – this is a game where the rate of falling is always explicitly stable, and always causes a basic amount of damage derived from that.

This leads into the second, which is that if something someone wants to do seems cool to everyone at the table or at the bare minimum most of the people at the table, then let them try it as long as it doesn't seriously break the rules. This doesn't mean someone should say "I flap my arms and try to fly". But it does mean that if they say "I leap up and try to drive my sword into the dragon" that sure, that sounds pretty cool, pretty cinematic or

drama influenced, then let them give it a whirl and have them make a few rolls to try. This is sometimes called The Rule of Cool. Use it sparingly.

That, in turn, leads to the next point: The Rule of Consistency. When you make a call, you must remember to make that call the same way in a similar or future event. That is, you must be consistent. It is a good idea to write down the calls that you made during a game, and why you made them, for your reference later on.

Ultimately, many of the rule additions and expansion to Wyrld owe their existence to the rulings and calls made by DMs during play.

They are also all written out herein. Writing rules out allows you to fix them, to ensure they are stable and are able to be referenced, so that you can reduce arguments.

That leads, in turn, to the next point: The Rule of Afterwards. Sometimes you will make a call that will be strongly disagreed with. As a referee, you have a responsibility to listen actively, ask probing questions, and given due consideration to such arguments – but After the Session. Do not argue during the session. Even in the Zero session this is made clear, but sometimes in the heat of the moment Players will forget and try to argue. Rulings always stand during the session – but it is quite possible you could be wrong. That is part of why it is suggested to write them down. If you are wrong, admit it, and then don't make that bad ruling again the next time. The one possible exception to this is when something results in a character death. In such a case, refer to the Rule of Cool, or refer to the next rule.

The Rule of Story is the rule that even though sometimes the fates are against the PCs in terms of rolls, there is story to be had for the PC down the road, and so you may choose to enable the character to live instead of die. This can also give you a story hook that you may not have had previously or open up a new possibility in the story as a whole.

In each of these cases, the role as referee requires that a DM practice Active Listening skills, be aware of the bigger picture, and avoid becoming the Enemy of the players.

CONSEQUENCES

The next part of the role and responsibilities of a DM is applying consequences. This is to the adventures, and the campaign, and the World, and the NPCs, just as much as it is about applying them to the Player Characters, the Heroes, the PCs.

Often, people will say that “death” is a consequence in the game, and while it is, it is not always a final consequence, and focusing on that tends to lessen and minimize all the other kinds of consequences that are possible. It is here that the variations of the proverb “may you live to suffer” comes into play.

Consequences are the result of someone's actions. They can be good, they can be bad, they can be indifferent. But they are there, and every action, particularly social actions in public settings like a hamlet, village, town, or city, will have a consequence for the PCs.

Consequences are always reactive, always a response or something caused by the actions of the PC. The simplest example is “triggering a trap”. How they do so will determine the outcome of that action – they might have nothing happen if they were cautious, or they might fall into it if they didn't know it was there.

ADVENTURE CONSEQUENCES

For adventures, the key really comes down to the concept of Consequences. I don't mean "death", I mean **change**. I suggest to folks that you start with the question of what *will change as a result of this adventure*.

This is true even if you are running a published module that is somehow fit into the world you have created; what changes about your world as a result of this adventure? What are the consequences of the adventure?

The villain wants to depose the king and take over the lands. That's the Plan. The consequences are if he fails, he does not do that. If he succeeds, he causes massive death and destruction, killing thousands and laughing maniacally. He can force the people to give him a harem or she can send all the men to the mines.

Now, why does this matter if the players are dead? Well, in *a living world*, you create new characters. Now let us say that the previous heroes failed. Well, now the world is different. It is darker, crueller, harsher, and so a new band of heroes arises to break it.

Or let's say that the heroes lose but they still live. Now they have to find a way to put things back to rights -- the king may be dead, but they can try again - and this time the odds are even more stacked against them.

PLAYER CHARACTER CONSEQUENCES

Everything is a consequence. Sometimes a consequence may be bad, but a player will want to change that outcome. They can do so, but it will require them to spend a milestone point. That gives them a "do-over".

However, sometimes a Player will do something that results in a consequence for their character they didn't want, and they will attempt to argue that they didn't mean to or that it wasn't part of what they planned or they were misunderstood or...

That is a DM call, however, when it comes to the results of a player action, what happens should remain what happened. If it was something they could roll, then they can use a milestone point for a do-over, but otherwise, they are the ones who made the decision, and in this style of game, there is going to be a consequence.

This is why "Evil Campaign" games do not work well on Wyrld - commit a crime, and they will send Watch officers and Agents and Reeves and more after you. Get caught, you may go to jail. Go to prison, however, and your character is gone.

IMPRISONMENT

Jailing PCs should be used exceedingly sparingly, and the idea of starting them as prisoners already, unless it comes from them during the Meeting of Minds session, should be avoided at all costs. You can set things up so that they may be arrested, but if you do, try to set it up so that only some are likely to be arrested, and that way there can be a jail break sequence in your story if you want. However, if the PCs are sent to Prison, their characters are effectively dead.

STORYTELLER

There are a million and one stories in the
naked world.

This is but one, and it begins...

Of course, the part that many tend to look to as a defining characteristic of the roles and responsibilities of the DM is that of Storyteller.

This is also the part that attracts the most attention from those who would like to become a DM, because these are worlds and

places that enable the greatest of imaginary things, and there is little that is as satisfying as telling a great story.

However, remember, again, that the DM is not the one who is actually telling the story. The DM is the Observer, the Reporter, the Watcher, the Neutral party who sees all this unfold, and the part where they come in is in the development and creation of what those who are telling the story will tell it about.

As a story teller, a DM has the task of handling multiple kinds of story all at once, weaving them and their individual parts together into a kind of tapestry that tells the whole of tale and creates memories and nostalgia.

STORYLINES

The kinds of stories that are told are usually classified into a few general groupings for role-playing.

CAMPAIGN storylines are the big stories, the kinds of things that become visible only very late in the whole or at the very end looking back.

ADVENTURE storylines are the primary elements most know of and think of, the larger portions of the campaign that when strung together form a whole picture.

IMBROGLIOS are the interpersonal storylines of PCs, embarrassing or slightly off.

SUBPLOTS are the more involved backstory storylines of the PCs.

IMPLOTS are improvisational subplots that arise during play, sparked by reactions and consequences of PC actions and interactions.

All of these are things that move in and out of each other, reacting with each other, and creating a complexity that ensures that every time someone runs an adventure or a campaign, they will be different, above and beyond the results of the dice and the Sister's Wills.

As a DM, you should never have plans for Player Characters.

You can have plans for the Antagonist(s), but never for the group of hardy folks who are the Protagonists. Your plans should be about what is happening, whose plan it is, how they are going to make their plan work, who all will be doing the work for them, how long it will take, what effect will be seen from outside it, what can happen to draw people from outside the plot into it, what the antagonist(s) will do if things change about their plot, and ultimately what the story changes about the world if they should succeed.

This is not your story. It is the story of the Player Characters. More specifically, it is the story of the PCs messing up whatever plans your antagonist(s) have. Because that is what heroes do – they mess up the plans and change outcomes of the bad guys.

Wyrld is intended to enable and promote Player Agency, the ability of players to determine what it is they will do and how they will do it and when they will do it and why they will do it. The limiting factors on this are the world itself and the tools (spells, equipment, abilities) of the game as it applies to them.

The characters have Agency, the ability to be self-directed, to make mistakes and have successes, to grow and learn and change; to act independently and make free choices. Wyrld is described as a Player Driven Sandbox – this means that they are responsible for the actions of their characters, and they are responsible for the speed of and engagement with any storyline or effort.

Remember, character advancement on Wyrld is a function of Milestone Points. It takes 348 Milestones to reach 20th level. They do get one Milestone for each full session they attend (start to finish), but other than that, they have to get milestones in order to advance in level. Milestone points are gained by following parts of the Storyline. So while they can advance by simply attending the session, they will do so very slowly. They have that power, however: it is their story, and they control the speed at which it moves.

MILESTONE POINTS

The Wyrld Milestone Point system is a peculiar hybrid of the traditional Experience Point and the traditional Milestone system, that simplifies the process and acts as a means by which PCs are encouraged to follow a storyline that is presented to them in order to improve and level up their characters, becoming more potent and powerful.

There is a challenge to this, system, however, in that it requires the DM to design campaigns in such a way that there are set points where a Milestone point can be obtained, and that there needs to be a great many of them, varying according to the current level of the PCs and projected level that is desired for them to reach. Some story points may be worth more than one milestone, or a DM could choose to just say that if they complete a given adventure, they earn x number of milestone points. All are valid approaches, but the underlying idea remains that they are tied to story progression and each story should have a more involved structure and more links to uncover as they PCs increase in level – facing ever greater dangers and ever more involved and complex stories. For example, an adventure that is meant to take a character from 1st to 2nd level has to have 3 milestone points within it. The goal is to tie each one to a story point, but there is an additional factor involved: attending and participating in a session gains a single milestone point.

So, if a single session for a 1st level character has two milestones within it, and the play proceeds for an entire session, the PC will have earned 3 milestone points.

On the other hand, to go from 17th level to 18th level means the adventure must have 32 milestone points within it. This means that the adventure will necessarily be more complex and involved story-wise in order to justify all those many story points.

TIERS

For folks new to Wyrld, it is suggested doing Campaigns by Tier: Novice, Yeoman, Adept, Master, and Grand Master, with one to three Adventures in each Tier. There will be more about how each Adventure is a part of the larger story in a moment.

CAMPAIGN MILESTONE POINTS BY TIER AND STORY PART

Segment	Novice	Yeoman	Adept	Master	Grand Master
Beginning	1	2	4	8	16
Middle	3	4	6	12	18

End	4	6	12	18	24
Connections	1	2	4	8	16

The figures above represent the general Milestone Points for each stage in a full campaign and are generally inclusive of an estimated number of sessions involved for each stage. Because Wyrld is a layer driven sandbox, there may be side quests and other elements that also add to milestone points, ensuring that in between and around the adventures there is an assortment of points available that allow someone to reach a given goal.

Connections are the points in one stage of Adventure that lead to the storyline for the next Adventure. These can be simple (a piece of paper with a clue) to complex (an involved conversation with a former minion).

Tiers can also increase Honor, Renown, and Piety through a bonus on completing each tier:

Score	Novice	Yeoman	Adept	Master	Grand Master
Honor	1	1	2	2	3
Renown	1	2	3	4	5
Piety	1	2	2	3	4

GENRES

Every storyline has a genre. Wyrld, in particular, is intended to draw from several different genres, each one providing a slightly different mood or feeling.

A Genre is exactly what it sounds like. Here is a list of genres drawn from Film and Television more than books, because it makes for quicker building and greater ease of engagement.

Action	Action/Adventure	Adventure	Comedy	Coming of Age
Detective	Disaster	Drama	Dungeon	Epic Fantasy
Gangster	Gaslamp	Heist	Heroic Fantasy	Horror
Life Fantasy	Madcap	Mystery	Nautical	Noir
Romance	Slasher	Subterranean	Supernatural	Survival
Sword and sorcery	Thriller	Travel	Urban	Western

When creating a Campaign, it is always wise to follow a few simple rules for selecting what genre to make an Adventure.

Never repeat the same genre twice in a row.

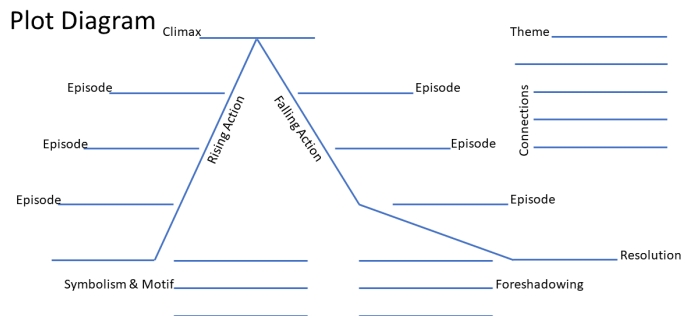
Never follow Horror with Drama.

Never follow Coming of Age with Disaster.

The purpose of a genre is to help frame and guide the plot in a certain way to achieve a certain kind of atmosphere, mood, feeling, and style of storyline. It feeds into the structure of how to set up the plot of a given storyline.

PLOT

A **Plot** is the sequence of events in which each event affects the next one through the principle of cause-and-effect.



A Plot is the structure of a storyline, but not necessarily the order of a storyline, and Plots can be small and brief or long and complex.

A Plot sets up what could happen, what will happen without involvement from the PCs, and what might happen if they do become involved.

If one is familiar with writing, it is somewhat key to understand that there are several parts of the traditional plot that are already determined by the nature of the game, and so

do not need to be included.

When creating a Plot for Wyrld, they are usually built through a concept of **Episodes**. The term is used because the approach that fills most Wyrld adventures is based in part of films, plays, and television shows, drawing out their plots and then adapting them to the setting.

This allows for a way to make a structured Plot that does not rely on a linear narrative, but instead can support wholly the actions of the PCs.

Plots include things such as Theme, Symbolism, and Foreshadowing, giving the overall storyline a bit more depth and providing ways to link each of the episodes together. These are all elements that are often thought of before one is even into the plot and can help shape and direct it in tandem with other things, such as the Villain type or the Stock Characters, or even previous or later adventures.

A Plot has several features to it, each of which contributes to the whole of the structure.

EPISODES

An **EPISODE** is: a series of connected events that tell a story in and of themselves, with a beginning, middle, and end, while also only telling a part of the larger story. An episode is a contained portion, a single unit of an overall story. Each Episode has elements that combined create a single unit and may or may not be used in a given adventure but will need to be prepared anyway.

The benefit to an episodic structure is that an episode or part of episode that is skipped by the PCs in one adventure or campaign can always be re-used in a later one, giving you, as the DM, greater flexibility and adaptability to the unending surprises of PCs.

Early in a plot, Episodes build upon one another. The first episode might be calm. The second episode will ratchet up the tension or be a little more difficult to deal with. The third episode will have even more challenges and be more difficult or more tense and with greater stakes. Each of these things leads up initially to the Episode known as the Climax. Episodes after the Climax will slowly be less tense, in the same way, such that over time you get a series of Episodes that create a kind of roller coaster ride in regards the stakes, emotions, effort, and information provided.

THEME

Episodes, like Plots as a whole, often have a **THEME**. Themes are somewhat like a genre, through more detailed. A Theme sets up the atmosphere, mood, and idea of the Episode. Is it spooky, busy and bustling, haunting, dangerous, mystical, eldritch, arcane, natural, off, or ordinary. Theme colors the way the place is described, unveiled, and narrated, and can even influence the consequences that may occur. Theme is the adjective to the other parts of an Episode.

LOCALE

An Episode has a place that it happens, a location where it takes place. This is the place where battle maps and location shots come into play, the description of the place giving the PCs the layout, contents, and notable features. A dungeon room, a marketplace, a forest. Add in the theme and you have a dingy dungeon room, a bustling, loud, and boisterous marketplace, and a creepy, unnerving forest.

Some **LOCALES** are visited frequently in some campaigns, used over and over again. A Political intrigue may have locales that are the room of a noble, a western may have a ranch or a general store, a horror show may have a creepy crawlspace that has to be visited several times.

Other locales are one shot and done.

SYMBOLISM

Locales are the most common place where one will find the **SYMBOLISM** of the Episode. Episodes usually, but not always, have some sort of symbolism within them. It may be a physical object – everywhere you go within this episode, you see carvings of birds or figures of mice. It may be an actual creature – there are strange worms everywhere, in everything. It may be artistic, a pattern or design that shows up often and marks some elements.

Symbols are extremely useful as subtle ways to create new hooks and are excellent bait for existing hooks.

Symbolism can also be something less tangible. An apparition, a feeling, a but the key to symbolism is that they are used over and over again, they are repetitive, showing up in spots both likely and unlikely, and connecting the Episode to itself or to other episodes.

MOTIF

A **MOTIF** is a form of symbolism that is much more subtle and far less overt. Motifs rely on things close to themes – colors, shapes, smells, materials -- that repeat and also link things. When describing a series of rooms within an episode, each room may make note of the materials used, or the shapes involved, or the colors of things in that room. These elements are repeated in each space and become a motif.

FORESHADOWING

FORESHADOWING is a thing that happens, a thing that is encountered, a moment of something – a few words, a bad feeling, a song or melody, that hints at something to come in a way that may not be obvious at the time it is first encountered but becomes obvious once the event it foretells comes to pass. Foreshadowing is a fine art, a tricky skill, and when creating an episode, sometimes it can be used – like symbolism and motifs, to create a linkage or connection to a different episode, to a different scene, and even to an different campaign altogether. Foreshadowing is much like the results of divinations spells, and is a pure narrative device.

SCENES

A **SCENE** is a staging space, an entry into or exit from an Incident, that carries the Plot forward and connects different threads. A scene is the action, the stuff that happens or hopefully will happen, when an episode is entered. Scenes are multiples, but usually (though not always) found in threes, with one scene leading to the next, and that one leading to a third.

Scenes are how an Episode gets a beginning, a middle, and an End, with each Scene being a portion of the whole and developing out the Episode.

Scenes take place in Locales, and one scene can blend into another scene seamlessly. An example of this is the exploration of a room. The beginning is the entry into it, discovering it. The next scene is the exploration of the room, discovery of the things within it, examination and triggering or disarming traps. The final scene would be the leaving, possibly interrupted by a visitor or a group of residents.

Scenes are great for how you incorporate a milestone point into the whole – one milestone for one scene. This also allows you to control the flow of the adventure as a whole, because if they skip a scene, they can always come back to it if they want.

INCIDENTS

An **INCIDENT** is: an engagement with something that presents an interaction for the characters. Encounters are not just combat; they can be a rumor or a bit of lore or an NPC interaction, or a task that needs to be done.

In our example above, an incident would be the finding of a trap, or the locating of a key piece of information, or the encounter with a creature. A single scene can have a great many incidents in it.

CLIMAX

A **CLIMAX** is a special kind of Episode where the key thing happens, the most important part of the whole Episode. Maybe they fight a monster, or perhaps they discover a secret or a clue; perhaps they stumble into a puzzle or complex trap that requires extraordinary effort and teamwork to overcome.

A climax is only set aside because it is the most tense, most troublesome episode – the episodes that lead up to it increase in difficulty, challenge, danger, or whatever, but the next few episodes will become less risky, less dangerous, until they reach the resolution.

RESOLUTION

A **RESOLUTION** is the final Episode in a Plot, where things are wrapped up and the state of the Heroes has been returned to roughly where it was before they started – but now they have new information and new things to deal with. In many cases, a resolution leads into downtime or a session of figuring out what it all means, and may even offer an opportunity to use a hook or find some bait, or even hare off into an interlude.

PROLOGUES

A **PROLOGUE** is: the lore and set up for a campaign; it is a point where exposition sets the stage for the larger conflict. Prologues are uncommon, but happen outside the storyline, and essentially describe the storyline. They can be useful for foreshadowing and introducing a new idea.

Prologues happen before the first Episode in a Plot. They may even set the theme of a Plot, or give clues as to how to follow through with it.

Prologues are optional.

INTRODUCTIONS

An **INTRO** is: the events and circumstances that lead to the start of a story. Where a Prologue happens outside the storyline, an introduction happens inside the story. It is the case of the Innkeeper who tells the story of the wizard and their mighty tower out in the wilderness who succumbed to mistakes in their dreadful experiments and died while unleashing a local horror.

Introductions are optional but are often quite useful.

BEGINNINGS

A **BEGINNING** is: a sequence of rising action that reveals something that motivates or pushes the protagonist forward.

In tier one, a beginning might have 3 Episodes, while in tier 5 a beginning might have ten Episodes. Each builds on the one before it in tension, drama, and theme.

HOOKS

A **HOOK** is: a thing done to attract the interest of the PCs in following the story. The best Hooks play on the Reason for venturing, or the backstory of the character, though the old reliable is still “go get some money”.

Hooks may work well enough by themselves, but sometimes you need to bait a hook.

BAIT

BAIT is the temptation, the benefit, the gain that makes a PC want to grab the hook. In a real sense, milestones points are a built-in form of bait, but they don't always give a good reason. Sometimes a hook doesn't catch the attention of PCs, and so you need to bait it.

Good bait often comes from the background of the PCs, or from some role playing encounter. There are, of course, the old standards, such as the person who dies in their arms with a packet containing vital secrets or some strange McGuffin.

THREADS

A **THREAD** is: the manner of connection between encounters that forms an episode, adventure, and campaign. Threads are tiny bits of story woven around the encounters to tie them together, give them reason and basis, and provide for the “sense of story”.

MIDDLES

A **MIDDLE** is: a setback in the rising action that causes the protagonists to have to regroup and find a new path forward along the rising action, culminating in the first half of the climax. It is this that is a key point – a good middle always ends as the Climax begins, or shortly after it starts.

As with beginnings, a middle may have only a few Episodes at lower levels, and many more at higher levels.

CONNECTIONS

A **CONNECTION** is a linkage, an element that can appear anywhere in anything. It can be a symbol, a motif, a bit of evidence, a thread of storyline, but the deeper and important part of a connection is that it links outside the current Episode to another one, or outside a current Plot to another one, or links and adventure to a previous one or a Campaign to a new or old one.

Connections are best used before either the middle of a Plot or before the End of a Plot. Connections are ways of keeping the story together, even if it isn't an obvious thing, and also make outstanding foreshadowing.

ENDS

An **END** is: The second half of the climax and the falling action into the resolution. This is when the players actually face off with the antagonist of that story or experience the fallout from not having done so. Ends usually have fewer Episodes than Beginnings or Middles, and they always stop with the resolution of the larger story as a whole.

EPILOGUES

An **EPILOGUE** is: The What Happens After that follows the final events of an Adventure or Campaign. Epilogues happen within the storyline, and are optional.

CODAS

A **CODA** is: a reminder of a previous story or thread, presented at the close of one story. Cods happen outside the storyline, are narrative and optional.

INTERLUDES

An **INTERLUDE** is: an Encounter or series of encounters that is outside the primary storyline, and could exist for character development, side stories, or just as a break in the action. They happen in between the Beginning and the Middle, and the Middle and the End.

DIVERSIONS

DIVERSIONS are all the assorted back story things that PCs have going for them, or something that pops up during play and often wholly improvisational. They are diversions, distractions, little things that keep the game from feeling like a one-way ticket to the end of the storyline.

SIDE QUESTS

There are always **SIDE QUESTS** to go on. They may choose, for example, to go get a Roc feather, or maybe start a tavern, or any of too many different things to anticipate. So, a story should always describe what happens if they do nothing.

FETCH QUESTS

A **FETCH QUEST** is often the most common kind of side quest, and usually deserves special mention because there is little as easy to create as a fetch quest. In a Fetch, the PCs have to go and get something and bring it back.

That's the quest, that's the whole of it, but the devil is in the details – why is it wanted, what will it mean, what happens there and what happens on the way back, as well as the age old *why don't you go get it yourself?* Fetch quests can often be a point of entry and meeting between the villain and the Heroes, simply by having the Villain hire them to do something for them.

ADVENTURES

An **ADVENTURE** is: a series of interconnected episodes that tell a story. Adventures are made up of at least three episodes, telling the beginning, middle, and end of a story. This may sound very familiar after having learned what an Episode is.

This approach nests many stories together in a sequence, with the general Plot applying to an Episode, and Adventure, or even a Campaign – and the scale is what determines how it applies.

Adventures are the bread and butter of role playing. You can have a thousand adventures and never be in a campaign, but you can have a campaign that isn't made up of connected adventures as easily as you can have one that is.

A single Adventure can have one Plot or several and can have only a few Episodes or many. The key to an adventure, though, is that it builds upon everything and connects it all, so that one can sit there and say that the PCs did this and so they had to that and so they then did this and so...

An Adventure, then, takes everything noted so far and puts it together.

ADVENTURE INSPIRATION

One of the things a lot of folks will wonder about after a while is where to get ideas for a new adventure. Wyrld is built around a host of ideas and concepts pulled from books, movies, and television shows, and those are outstanding examples of a resource for good ideas.

TO pull a storyline out of a film or show, do not look at the characters, which is often where most people first turn. They see an anime show and say I want to do that and try to make that villain exist or get their Players to play those characters, but not.

Instead, look at what happens, and use that to fill in the parts above.

An example for this is the film *The Magnificent Seven*. People will look at it and see the genre and say western, they will see the bandits attack the village, the villagers head out in search of heroes, the heroes showing off their stuff, then collecting the assorted members of the seven and finally head to the town where they train the villagers. After an initial encounter with the bandits which they win, They will take out a group of bandit spies, and they will be betrayed by a villager to the bandits who force them to leave, but they will turn around and go back and wipe the bandits out, with several of them dying in the process.

It is a good story. So good, it is also the story of the film *Bugs*.

Note where that description of it is wrong for this kind of game. Remember how we talked about you cannot have plans for the PCs. So instead, let's break that up into what we *can* do:

A Bandit leader wants to feed his horde of bandits and find a way to live an easy life and become an important person in the region.

He subdues and takes over *several* villages, demanding they feed him and his men, taking what they want, including all the valuables.

Villagers go out and find an adventurer's Guild and post a rather sad little bounty and request, that many adventurers dismiss.

If the players take the job, they will travel to the village, likely having random encounters. If they do not, a hook can be used – perhaps there is a cousin of a shop owner who was getting married and they are worried, or maybe it is a small town one of the Heroes came from in their backstory, or perhaps the PCs stumble across a group of toughs beating up the poor villagers who beg and plead as innocents.

If the PCs arrive at the town, they will meet an old man, a blend of Conscience, Mentor, and Ruler who gives them the lay of the land.

Shortly after arriving, the bandits return, and a huge fight erupts. With luck, the PCs are victorious, but if they are, they have now upset the bandit leader.

The bandit leader sends in spies to watch them, possibly to try and kill them.

The villagers will betray the party, leading to the next encounter, only this time there are more bandits. If the PCs lose, they are captured, and then run out of town.

If the PCs do not return to finish off the bandits, the local villages are ultimately burned, the people forced to move into a single village, and there is much sadness as a new warlord rises and begins to get more ambitious.

If they do return and finish off the bandits, the PCs are hailed as heroes and gain renown at least, if not great wealth.

That's a general layout for the adventure. Note how most of it deals with the actions and behaviors of NPCs. It is built around the consequences of actions or inactions, and the plans that the villain has for the towns. It also increase the stakes – there are several villages, not just one.

That simple set up gives the Players have immense agency in their actions and decisions – and there is an effect they will see if they don't do anything (warlord rising, burned villages).

From that general outline we can add in all the elements ad bits and pieces to a plot, and we can have it become anything from a low-level adventure to a high level one.

That storyline can be expanded or contracted to be anything from a side quest, to an adventure, to a whole campaign.

CAMPAIGNS

A **CAMPAIGN** is a series of interconnected Adventures that tell a large-scale story. Campaigns are generally best made up of *at least* three adventures, each of them telling the beginning, middle, and end of a larger story than each of them tell alone.

While an adventure can short and sweet to long and drawn out, a Campaign is always a larger scale issue, and can be somewhat difficult to plan out if it contains many Adventures. Campaigns often need an additional thing to help them become more solid and well thought out, especially if planned from the beginning.

The thing that is most often helpful here is known as a Framework, or a Cycle, or a Journey.