**Non-player Characters**

**Purpose:** This section is here to help storytellers. It is a collection of my observations and suggestions on the subject of NPCs. If you think you have a better solution to one of the common problems addressed here by all means try it. If you aren’t interested in my advice for whatever reason stop reading.

**Creation:** In my experience, there are two kinds of NPC. Those that you planned to put into the story beforehand and those that were unplanned and born of improvisation to unforeseen events. For planned characters, the normal character creation works fine. In the heat of the moment however you won’t have the time to run through the entire process. For unplanned characters just make the character’s concept and fill in the flavor and skills as they come up.

**Skills:** leave most of an NPC’s 11 starting skills blank. Fill them in as situations come up where they need to do something they don’t have a skill for. This keeps NPCs fair because after all the good skill slots are used only crappy ones remain. After the first 11 skill slots are filled make new skills for that character in the same way you would for a player-character. Roll 2d6 for each new skill and use the total as the skill level.

**Flavor:** This is trivially easy for NPCs. Just don’t do it unless you have to or want to. In other words, if your players are talking to a merchant you don’t have to decide what kind of relationship that merchant has with his mother until it comes up in the story and in all likelihood, it won’t. The rest of the time an NPCs flavor is apparent based on how you describe them to your players. Write it down if you think you will forget it I suppose.

**Items and Loot:** The items an NPC has are largely flavor and for that you should follow the above advice on flavor. Loot is a different matter entirely. When a location or person is searched the players expect to find more than what you described as being immediately visible. A laundry list of objects thematically relevant to their owner will satisfy this expectation. I do not respect random loot tables as they oft put leather boots in the stomachs of wild animals. That said they are an option but you will have to make or find your own if you wish to use one as I have not included one.

**Leveling:** When a character succeeds at a skill check they are supposed to get experience. This works fine for planned characters. It is actually easier for unplanned characters. Because they will probably never be seen again after they leave the scene you just don’t have to bother with experience at all.

**Grouping:** Big combats with lots of NPCs are boring for players. Grouping your NPCs is one way to make such combats faster. Let’s say you have 5 goblins and 3 zombies, an evil wizard, and 4 player characters all in the same combat. Rather than have 13 separate turns you should make all the goblins take their turns at the same time and the same for the zombies. This will result in 7 separate turns and dramatically speed up combat. This is general roleplaying advice and the only reason I have included it is because you need to make sure any characters you put in a group all have the same skills with the same skill levels including modifiers from items and flavor. They also need to have the same health but this is usually 10 for all characters so it is less important.

**Persuasion:** Be it players persuading NPCs or NPCs persuading players there can be a lot of animosity generated from the act. Sometimes—most times—you don’t want them to talk down your final boss and conversely they don’t take kindly to being mind-controlled. I have no idea how to handle this. THE PROBLEM IS THAT WHEN YOU MAKE A CHECK TO PERSUADE AND YOU SUCCEED BY THE TENANTS OF THIS SYSTEM IT SHOULD JUST HAPPEN. UNFORTUNATELY THAT JUST ISNT THE CASE. I THINK PERSUASION NEEDS TO WORK ON AN OPT-IN BASIS. WHAT THIS WOULD MEAN IS THAT IF AN NPC IS MENTALLY AVAILIBLE TO BE PERSUADED THEN YOU CAN MAKE THE CHECK AND IF IT SUCCEEDS IT SUCCEEDS (TAKING MOS INTO ACCOUNT TOO). IF SHE JUST ISNT THAT INTO YOU THEN THAT ALSO HAPPENS. MIND CONTROL REALLY CARES ABOUT MOS AND CAN BE RESISTED. SO BASICALLY I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE NPCS OPT IN AND WHEN THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO RESIST. MAYBE THIS WHOLE DISCUSSION ON PERSUASION SHOULD BE MOVED.