

QUEST / LOCATION DESIGN EXAMPLE

Del Mar Fairgrounds + Twisted Mar Faction

Game Developer Notes

I wrote this location to be massive in scale and added a ton of backstory to it. The organization of the Twisted Maw is complex and their relationships to other groups is an interesting one. However, because everything is maxed out, it makes it easy for you to define constraints and shrink the actual implementation of this.

The Fallout and Elder Scrolls games did this, so you can do it too. If you choose to have below 30 NPCs in the fairgrounds, I suggest taking out two commanders and “Fielder” raiders entirely. Even with a few neighbors it should be easy for the player to grasp the hierarchy if they see 4-5 settlers in a pen. Fallout 3 did this same strategy with their slave trading camps.

Cinematics and buildings can be shrunk too. Instead of being led across the bridge into an area where peasants are mulling about, you can simply be on a moving escalator that shows you the fairgrounds, with a few raiders stationed nearby.

Quests are designed straightforward and linear, with a boolean switch in mind. If the faction controlling Del Mar changes, then the alternate set of dialogue options will be used along with their models. If you have a better implementation in mind, feel free to use it.

The Reason

Why did the raiders take the park?

This boils down to the raider’s culture. This raider group is known as the Twisted Maw and they are forged from the remnants of a larger faction that controlled a massive ranch back east. When that faction fell apart, this small group made its way to San Diego and pillaged several small neighborhoods before settling on the main prize: the Del Mar Fairgrounds. With access to the rivers, ocean, bridges, and a race track, the Twisted Maw rapidly gained power and influence by tolling bridge access and controlling sea trade with settlers. Just like back at the old ranch, they view people as cattle; a herd animal that needs to be corralled into doing its job. It doesn’t take much elbow grease to convince the ‘animals’ that reside around the area to do as they are told.

Why do you want to come here?

You are invited to the fairgrounds by the leader. As you enter through the controlled path (over a bridge or ride in on a barge) you see the massive fairgrounds area open up around you. serfs are chained together and working on several building projects, including the construction of a giant ferris wheel that has spikes jutting out. The atmosphere feels lively despite being shown such a savage picture. As the raiders lead you to the control building, they pass by a cotton candy stand. However, what’s on the menu does not look as appetizing as the faded artwork on the walls.

The raider leader, Hector, suspects a rebellion is underway and wants you to investigate his soldiers quarters to find proof. You meet the commanders and do quests for them, while trying to figure out which one is heading the rebellion. It turns out that the serfs are planning to rebel and you have the option to arm them and assist in the takeover of the Fairgrounds or keep them oppressed.

Do they have something you need?

Hector is in possession of not just important territory, but one of his patrols uncovered a strange weapon in a crashed helicopter. It's an assault rifle that looks to be powered by some unknown energy source. If you can obtain this weapon it will improve your arsenal.

Is the park important to the main storyline?

The park can be an optional storyline, but the choices you make will carry over into the main storyline. You might also be tasked to rescue a slave from the Fairgrounds and sneak them out Shawshank style.

Culture of the raiders

How did they form?

The Twisted Maw are the remnants of a larger group from a ranch out east. They banded together when heading West, seeking a new territory. While they were a small band, they have grown into a formidable clan that is highly organized.

What is their social structure?

They view power as a means to an end and their social structure follows suite. The strong are in control and use the weak like tools to increase their power.

- With the belief that some humans are lesser than others, they herd helpless settlers like cattle. These slave-like humans are the bottom run of the Twisted Maw's hierarchy. Several of the fair stands have been repurposed to serve as 'pens'.
- Next up the chain are newcomers to the clan. These "Crawlers" oversee the cattle, give them assignments, discipline them, and are often treated no better than the cattle themselves. Often scrawny, underfed, and not sporting any armor, they use their lightweight frames to crawl, roll, and hop from cover to cover in combat. Their main weapon is a knife or metal pipe, with some possessing metal bats.
- The "Hands" are the lower caste of warriors. Most of them have armor of some kind and they carry firearms. They are sent out on raids, patrol the fairgrounds, and do menial tasks. A single Hand is often accompanied by several Crawlers.
- Tough brawlers who make up the middle caste are known as "Fielders". They are experienced, pack heavy armor, and use devastating weapons. They are dispatched in teams of 4 and leave a path of destruction. Normally on the offensive, they are also the main force guarding the bridges and riverways. If they don't have access to their guns, they use spiked knuckles, chains, or any weapon that can hurt someone.
- Those raiders who can read, write, and strategize are placed in the upper caste. They are called "Keepers" and serve as snipers, bodyguards, assassins, and any other job that requires skill. With high dexterity they can use any weapon to great effect and serve as officers to lower castes. They are also advisors to the leading caste.

- At the top of the ladder are the commanders. Each one commands a small legion consisting of different castes and are dedicated towards a task. Some commanders are offensive, others defensive, some might be leading engineering efforts, while others handle intelligence or patrols.

Who is their leader? Their top commanders?

The current leader of the Twisted Maw is Hector Bard. He's a broad-shouldered man who is draped in chainmail fatigues, which are crafted from barbed wire and iron.

Sporting a luxurious cloak and machine pistol, one might be distracted from the fact that he has combat knives strapped to each boot. With a rough brown beard and long hair, he almost looks like some wasteland viking. He oversees management of the fairgrounds and dispatches his commanders.

Commander

- Struss
- Gan
- Shady
- Cora

What is the leader's desire, motivation, or hobbies?

Hector is motivated by power. He was often heckled and abused back when he was a member of the old clan. One night, a raging fire descended upon the ranch and caused chaos. Multiple groups had been planning to rise up and each one took this opportunity to seize control. With cattle stampeding, gunshots zinging, and buildings being torched, Hector rushed into the main house and pierced his superior through the heart with a rail spike. He rallied a group of close companions and they looted a few buildings before fleeing into the dark wilderness. He always wanted power, now he had it.

His motivation is to create a world where those with potential are given power, reflecting his suffering in the past. In a twist of fate, many of the settlers he came across were rational and intelligent. This terrorized him, because he felt each one could be a threat to his power. He preached to his followers that the weak are to be used like cattle and with this mindset he was able to suppress any threats.

He often goes fishing and describes the battle between fish and lure as a metaphor for how the weak cling to those who provide for them, only to get killed off in the end to serve the strong. He is a natural born entertainer and can draw a crowd. This can lead to him wowing an audience while playing pool or another sport which lets him showcase his ego.

How do they fight? Are they smart? Reckless? Passive?

Each caste has its own style, with the lower ranked raiders being reckless and violent while the higher ones are precise and deadly. They attack in groups and are loyal to their cause.

If the battle takes place in the fairgrounds, they are more passive and use the buildings to surround the enemy.

What items do they use? Armor? Weapons?

They use most basic melee weapons, guns, and forms of defense. The higher ranking ones, like the keepers, may have rifles or grenades.

How do they interact with other raiders?

Other groups are not a direct threat to Hector because they are loosely organized and lacking intelligence. They are also too small to launch a real offensive against his forces, but they still provide a nuisance on the border of Twisted Maw territory. Several of these groups serve as funnels to recruit new Crawlers or Hands.

How do they interact with other groups?

Other groups possess more intelligence and skill than raiders and are a larger threat. These groups are rapidly put down and separated in an attempt to assimilate their members into the raider culture.

How do they use the park to survive?

The fairgrounds offer close access to water, letting them monopolize the fishing industry up and down the coastline for almost 10 miles in each direction. With enough fish to feed a city, Twisted Maw trades them for supplies, food, and alliances. They can send a stream of fish to a starving raider group and get them to fight a rival clan with ease. They can also starve out a settlement that is refusing to pay them tribute.

The structures in the park also offer a vantage point that sees incoming threats. The massive area can have farm animals and the grassy areas outside can have food grown. Serfs build factories and workshops, as well as take up jobs within them to provide for the ruling caste.

What is their desire?

Twisted Maw believes that the world needs strong leaders to survive the wasteland and that if the weak take control they will end up leading everyone to demise. New initiates are beaten with bats and tire irons, then tossed into the river. Those who crawl back to land become crawlers. Those who grab the bat and smash the face in of their assailant become Hands.

With these ideals clenched firmly, they are expanding their influence across San Diego.

The fairgrounds

- What is the layout of the park?
 - The park is a sprawling area with a third of its space being taken up by concrete. A massive raceway takes up another third and has pools, grass, and buildings within it. Administrative buildings and halls take up the rest and are wedged between these two areas diagonally. The fair rides are currently set up and take up a lot of the concrete area that's by the ocean, as well as some of the racing green.
- What kind of rides and buildings are there?

- Ferris Wheels, Drop tower, Carousel, Gravity Ride (could be a torture chamber), Pendulum Ride, Roller Coaster, Dark ride, water rides and swing rides.
 - What is their condition?
 - Most of the rides are intact but they require electricity to run.
 - Several need repairs, but the raiders are able to find settlers with enough intellect to be engineers.
 - Some rides, like the gravity ride, are repurposed as torture chambers. Spikes point down from the ceiling and as the ride speeds up, the strapped individual slowly is lifted up towards it.
 - The drop tower is used as a vantage tower.
 - Is there electricity? Do the lights work? Do the rides run?
 - The raiders have managed to rig up several hydraulic generators in the river along with solar panels.
 - Some of the rides run. Most buildings have lights working.
- How big is the park?
 - Del Mar fairgrounds is 370 acres.
- What kind of weather is there?
 - It is fairly sunny and dry, with some precipitation mixed in. There is a massive demand for shade and water, which the park can provide.
- Was there another group that was here before?
 - A small group of refugees would come to the Del Mar fairgrounds to have a celebration or take a day off. One day while they were enjoying the abandoned park, the Twisted Maw raiders decided to drop by. The settlers ran in every direction but one by one the raiders would drag them out from their hiding spots across the park and beat them to death in plain view of the other refugees who were still hiding.
 - Several refugees were kept alive and interrogated in order to discern the location of other groups, as well as fill the raiders in on the area.
 - These refugees became the first serfs for Twisted Maw and were put to work constructing fortifications around Del Mar.
- Are there areas of the park that the raiders don't know about?
 - A Keeper named Sara discovered a storage area underneath a haunted house attraction. She's kept it secret from everyone else and uses it to horde supplies or chill out.
 - The raiders are aware that there is a sewer system running beneath the park, but they have not fully mapped it out and many areas are unknown to them. They set up a few traps and barricades at key intersections to protect the park from a subterranean assault.
 - There is a security room where one can see everything going on in the park...if the cameras were still operational. To get to the room, you have to move a pile of rubble in the basement of an administrative building.
- Do other groups try to come here? Are there conflicts?

- Due to the overwhelming power that Twisted Maw has, no group has attempted a direct assault yet. There are conflicts on the border of their territory, but most of these raiding groups find themselves pursued by multiple ATV riding Fielders.
 - There is some internal conflict among the lower castes, as they often sabotage each other's efforts to be promoted. Fighting is very common and discipline is violent.
- What vehicles are there?
 - Tractors
 - The Fair has several tractors, which are used now for the farms.
 - One of the tractors has been refitted with blades and can be used to run over people.
 - ATVs
 - The main vehicle that Fielders use on patrols. They are easy to handle and highly mobile.
 - Horses
 - Horses are a staple for the farm fields, but high ranking Keepers ride them for transportation.
- Is there any writing? Books? Pamphlets? Notes? Tickets?
 - There are books in the administrative buildings. Hector has his own personal library with writings salvaged from across San Diego.
 - Several of the commanders have books.
 - There are notes all across the area. Some are slipped between peasants, others are orders to Hands or Crawlers, some might even be rebellion propaganda.
- Are there vending machines, fridges, supplies?
 - There are vending machines but the products are long since spoiled. Some of the machines have been repurposed and supply water or fish.
 - Fridges are a luxury that only Commanders and certain Keepers have. There are fridges in the fishery as well.

Territory

The lively California ambience can still be felt in this post-apocalyptic wasteland. While the Twisted Maw are calculating, orderly and strict, other bands of raiders you come across will be enjoying the environment. Some can be seen cracking open a cold one and others will try to sneak into Del Mar to get on a ride for free. It really is a fair for raiders after all. Raider camps will often include lounge chairs, umbrellas, coolers, and busted TVs. They tend to renovate homes they take over, adding a bright splash of color to the pale stone. Decorated with rugs looted from fancy homes, these raiders also tend to use spray paint.

None of these groups can compare to the Twisted Maw, and even if a dozen of them unified they would be crushed underfoot. The largest camp has around 10 occupants and the average one has 4. Rather than destroying them, the Twisted Maw uses them as a kind of advance force to patrol the furthest reaches of their territory. The north has neighborhoods filled with settlers

hoping to shelter from the lawless lands. The south is more heavily wooded and several resistance groups are hidden out there, hoping to one day cripple the Twisted Maw.

The immediate beachfront is full of once luxurious homes that are little more than tombs half-buried in sand. Some construction has been attempted on them over the years, but raiders still don't know how to build on shifting sand. There are the remains of trenches and holes dug by warring factions long past, but perhaps a settler will try his luck searching for a forgotten treasure.

The main area east of the fairgrounds is plowed farmland, with several outposts guarding the fertile ground. Rather than outright assaulting it, groups will sneak in at night and steal food. These attempts have reached moderate success, forcing the raiders to erect fences out of scrap metal, plywood, stakes, and wires. A few salvaged batteries have turned this makeshift fence into a lethal surprise.

Questlines

There are several quests to be completed in this area. Most are related to helping out Twisted Maw. If you choose to betray them, then the Del Mar fairgrounds will eventually be purged of raiders and the settlers will run their own democratic society. Without the pressure of Hector's forces, raider gangs will openly attack and violence will erupt across the San Diego coastline. This is the price of freedom, so weigh it well.

Side quests will be coded to be related to the faction that owns Del Mar.

Main Quest

There are several ways to begin the main questline for Del Mar. Finding one of several warning signs near the area that says, "This land is now territory of the Twisted Maw", a bloody note from a settler begging for help, or being approached by a well-dressed keeper who offers you a contract are all ways to begin. Your journal is updated to say, "I should investigate this 'Twisted Maw' that appears to control the area" or if the later event triggers the quest it will say, "I was approached by a member of the Twisted Maw and was given a contract that states their leader wants my help with a critical matter."

If you approach Del Mar before any of these triggers happen, the quest line will start with the same update as if you had seen a sign. After all, you are starting at a giant fairground that has working rides and has a crowd coming and going. Why wouldn't you want to investigate that?

When you reach the main gate, two Keepers escort you through and you see the Del Mar Fairground open up in front of you. It's a sight that radiates raw power, if not a sense of dread. Hundreds of serfs are working on various construction projects, while off in the distance the beautiful San Diego bay glistens from the touch of the ocean. The air is humid with sweat but also heavy from dust. Clanking noises fill the air as buildings are assembled, walls fortified, and machines repaired. As you walk by the various fair stands and rides, you notice a green race

track that is populated with tents bearing insignia's that look like slanted fangs. These must be the quarters for the raiders.

A rattling noise catches your eyes and you see several stalls have been converted into pens on your left. These are brimming with peasants, meandering about without purpose. Shuddering, you continue on towards a massive stone building that stretches along a third of the race track. It's polished white-stone blinds you, with architecture so impressive that it's like nothing you have seen before. Inside this building you follow a twisting path of corridors and come to a staircase leading up. Ushered on by the raider escorts, you march up the steps towards an unseen destiny.

At the top level, the population is sparse. There are no longer grunts lingering around or trash strewn about the floor. It's clean, proper, and everyone seems to have a purpose. Without much effort you find where you are supposed to be -- a pair of heavy wooden doors that have polished gold handles. For a raider, this guy sure seems to have style.

On the other side, a broad-shouldered and imposing figure towers above you. He has a grizzled brown mane that flows freely down his neck, making him look like some post-apocalyptic viking. Draped in a white cloak, you see glints of silver chainmail beneath as he flourishes his arms or moves. He introduces himself to you as Hector Bard, the leader of Twisted Maw. There is a growing suspicion among his commanders that someone is organizing a rebellion. Notes have been discovered in the possession of several serfs, urging them to take action against Hector and claims he is a weak ruler. You are tasked when investigating each of his commanders to figure out which one is plotting to overthrow him.

From this moment on, the Fairgrounds are open to you and may pursue the investigation as you see fit. Key quest markers are as follows:

- Commander Struss
 - He oversees the fishing operations and trains specialized Keepers who can submerge themselves in water. His offices and living areas are on the West side of the Fairgrounds, right by the ocean.
 - Searching his desk you discover a note from him to a confidant
 - *Damn that Hector! Because of me, the fishery is producing enough to fill our entire clan, yet insists his genius is behind the organization I build! All I would have to do is snap my fingers and he would never be able to get this fishery working again. That would serve him right...but the other commanders would side with him. Perhaps there are several positions opening up soon...fish carry all kinds of diseases after all.*
 - *Checking out the fishery, you uncover a jar of rat poison. It is unopened and clearly has not been touched in years.*
 - Even if he was planning to poison the other commanders, he doesn't seem to be the kind of person who can carry out a rebellion under the surface.
 - When interrogated, Struss gets aggressive and doesn't cooperate.

- Keeper's conversation
 - There are several instances while going about the fairgrounds you will overhear Keepers discussing how Commander Gan is treating the serfs better than they deserve.
 - You wonder if this commander is appeasing them in a bid to seize power.
 - Several serfs might exclaim this when you pass them
 - *Gan is so great! He looks out for us unlike the other commanders. Why, he ought to be the next leader.*
- Commander Gan
 - Gan oversees supplies, transportation, and farm operations. He has the ability to supply an army overnight, making him an ideal candidate to lead a rebellion. Investigating his storehouses, you uncover crates of weapons. Shipping manifests show that these are to be sold to raiders down south. What if every shipment has a few guns go missing? No one would notice.
 - When you ask him directly, he insists he treats the serfs well in order to quell rebellions.
- Ambush
 - If you investigate the corrals, a group of 4 peasants will attack you wielding clubs. It's easy to fend them off, but even if you don't kill them they will take a suicide pill. Their body has a note which can be looted that reads: *The newcomer is a threat to us. Find him when he is alone and gut him.*
 - The handwriting is rough.
- Commander Shady
 - Shady is in charge of enforcing the Twisted Maw's rule over the territory. This includes commanding raiding parties, policing the interior, and setting up espionage missions.
 - If you complete Patrol Down before investigating Shady, he will give you a list of Keepers who are under suspect.
 - There are 4 Keepers on his list and they are supposed to meet at midnight under the Ferris wheel in the maintenance room.
 - When you go to the location at the appropriate time, you will discover the bodies of 4 all Keepers. However...none of them can be identified.
 - If you have not completed Patrol Down, Shady will not trust you and will ask you to interrogate a prisoner. If you already tortured the prisoner, then the above condition will be considered met.
 - You wonder if this mysterious commander is assassinating those who know what he is plotting. Better be on your guard...
- Commander Cora
 - Cora is in charge of recruitment and training. She works with independent raider groups to bring in new peasants, clanless raiders, and expand influence. She works every day to turn the Twisted Maw into a fighting force that cannot be matched. You can find her at the race track, having several new Crawlers run laps.

- Talking to any of the Crawlers reveals that they hate Cora and wish Hector would appoint a different trainer.
 - Cora has a book in her quarters about an uprising on a ranch back in the old US.
 - Reading correspondence in her desk reveals that she actually goes out of her way to promote serfs to Crawlers.
- Interrogation
 - One of the Crawlers was caught handing out treasonous propaganda. He is being held in the torture chamber gravity ride. If you activate the lever, it will spin and slowly raise him towards the spikes, dealing damage.
 - Do this 3 times and he will tell you that the rebellion is loosely organized so the leader is not known to anyone but the top lieutenants. He insists the person who gave him orders was a member of the Keepers, but he didn't know their name or face.

After you have completed 3 of these triggers, you may continue investigating or go back to Hector with your findings. When you approach Hector, he will be with 4 Keepers on the top floor in front of the windows that stretch across the race track. You have several dialogue options now.

- If you accuse any of the 4 commanders of being behind the plot, they will flee and join up with a resistance group.
 - *Struss is planning to poison you and your men with fish!*
 - *Gan is arming the serfs to take over the fairgrounds!*
 - *Shady is assassinating men loyal to you and replacing them with his own!*
 - *Cora is filling your ranks with former serfs who are loyal to her for freeing them!*
- If you claim that the serfs are starting the rebellion, Hector will have 10 random serfs executed.
 - This will trigger the serfs to attack the raiders with pipes. While the battle plays out, Keepers will slowly leave the fray. When the battle is over, they will return and surround Hector and his commanders.
- If you declare that the Keepers are plotting to overthrow him and the Commanders, Hector moves back slowly, realizing who is surrounding him. The Keepers suddenly swing around and attack him, sending him out the window. They turn to face you and open fire. Your character fights the Keepers and then heads downstairs. Outside, a battle is raging. Someone has freed the peasants and they are fighting the raiders!
 - The end result is the same as the other options, except Hector will be limping and you will be outside the Keepers perimeter, making the fight easier.
- If you decide that the rebel groups are behind it, Hector will send out his forces to rout them out from the woods. During this state of defenselessness, raider clans will attack the fairgrounds and the civilians will fight back.

It turns out that the Keepers have been planning to overthrow Hector and his commanders for a while, with those who disagree with their views being taken care of accordingly. The 4 Keepers who Shady was suspicious of were reported to him by Keepers who wanted to eliminate them. When the Keepers surround the raiders/serfs, they give you the option to help them or be killed.

- If you fight the Keepers, they will attack you and the raiders will support you. The serfs will try to escape during this battle.
 - You and Hector kill the Keepers, but now his clan is missing their best warriors and menial labor. It will take years to rebuild what was lost.
 - News comes from a Fielder that Struss was poisoned by the Keepers in his fishery. With his death, Twisted Maw is dealt another major blow.
 - Finally, the resistance groups are making a move.
- If you fight the raiders, the serfs will join you.
 - In this scenario, Hector will flee to the Ferris Wheel and begin riding it, taking shots at you from cover. You have to climb a ladder up to a support platform and shut down the ride. From there you can battle Hector and when he dies you get his rare items.
 - After the battle, the commanders will be stripped of their titles and sent into the wastes. Gan and Cora will be found at a settler encampment, continuing to do some good. Struss will be found dead in the fishery and Shady will join a raider gang.
 - The Keepers will open the gates and let the resistance group in and the people will elect representatives to govern them.

Depending on your choices, Del Mar will either be raider controlled or settler controlled. The settler route has one final main quest, where you track down Shady and eliminate his gang. After this, you unlock new vendors, get a house, and gain a follower in Keeper Sara or Resistance Fighter Kamel. Both are engineering styled characters.

Eye Spy

Finding the old security room. You receive this quest from a settler named Hamlet on the farm. If Del Mar has been taken over by the resistance, you can find him near the Ferris Wheel and renamed Auxiliary Hamlet. He wants you to find the lost security room and connect a USB drive to it. This will allow the resistance to network into the cameras and help their covert missions. You may choose to give access to the Twisted Maw or Resistance. If the Resistance has control and you choose the Twisted Maw, the fairgrounds will become more prone to raider attacks.

The security room is found by following electric lines from cameras to the administrative building. Once inside you look for a directory and notice the basement level is blacked out. Heading down there you are stopped by a pile of rubble. Moving this aside, you discover a locked door. There are several ways to get through this and inside is the security room along with a stash of items.

Breakfast Corner

Finding a Keeper's hidden cache

Patrol Down

Find out what happened to a missing patrol

Repairing the Rides

Help fix several rides.

Who is watering my farm?

A mysterious stranger has been seen planting something in the field.

References



