



DRAMATIC INTERLUDES



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INTERLUDES

Books and movies often deal with prolonged periods of time in the form of long treks across hostile environments or extended stays at relatively safe locales. These interludes not only show both the trials and normal lives of the protagonists, they're also used to build and release tension. Most importantly, however, they develop the characters by revealing their backstories and personalities.

This is a difficult thing to replicate in roleplaying games because situations like these are largely passive. A grand vista or amusing anecdote told by the Game Master is story-telling—not roleplaying. Alternatively, the Game Master might turn the interlude into a series of combat and obstacle encounters, but that runs the risk of overshadowing the excitement of the destination or locale itself.

The system detailed below turns trips and interludes into memorable events with a high degree of player interaction. It requires the rest of the group to do a little story-telling, acting, and improvisation. Encourage everyone to get involved—even the shy players who don't normally get into this aspect of roleplaying games. They'll be rewarded when it's over and might be encouraged to enjoy the roleplaying part of the game as much as the more "crunchy" aspects.

RUNNING AN INTERLUDE

To run an Interlude, deal each player a card from the Action Deck and let them consult the table below. Resolve each card from the lowest draw to the highest. It's best if you, the Game Master, simply call out "Two?" first and see who has it. If no one has a Two, move on to the Three and so on. That way no one knows what cards the other players have.

Most of the entries require the player to tell a story. The narrative needs to take several minutes and be fairly substantial. A character with the Injury incident, for example, shouldn't get off by saying "Glen was cleaning his knives last night and accidentally cut himself." She might instead describe a story—perhaps even bringing the other player characters into it—where Glen and another hero fought a practice duel and things got out of hand. Perhaps they argued, and the player asks the rival duelist's player if he or she remembers exactly what it was all about...

REWARDS

After the first player completes his card, award her a benny or an Adventure Card—her choice—and move on to the next player.

When all players have had a turn, the Interlude is over.

EXAMPLE

In the Savage Tale *Zombie Run*, Matt is playing Glen Fury, the 57 year old owner of "The Spy Store" in Manhattan. It's not much of a secret that he actually used to do some work for the CIA back in the '60s. Matt draws the 7 of Clubs and tells the following story en route from Manhattan to Camettesville. Matt decides this is a good place to let everyone know a bit about his backstory as a haunted CIA spy, and his technical aptitude as well.

I never did thank you all for what happened a few days ago when we stopped at that hospital to look for medical supplies. I talked Greta into climbing down that busted elevator shaft for supplies.

There must have been twenty of them down there. Trapped us in the morgue, of all places. I know the rest of you were looking for us for hours in that place. Can't tell you how much I appreciate that you didn't leave us. I probably would have. There was this one time in Warsaw when I had to leave one of my informants behind. He was interrogated for days. Worst part was, I found him. Took an apartment right across the street and used my directional mike to listen in. They tortured him for days before he finally gave up the ghost.

I thought about him a lot when me and Greta were trapped down there. How I didn't deserve to be rescued. I did some things in the CIA that...well...they were hard. But Greta didn't deserve to die down there. That's what kept me going. I had to save her. I finally managed to McGyver that radio from that old beeper and some other spare parts I found down there and we got her out. I don't know if I could have lived with myself otherwise.

INTERLUDE RESULTS

Card	Result
2	Trouble: Something really bad happens. Your group is ambushed by enemies, stalked by a monster, or loses their way (and a significant amount of time). Describe the scene, then turn the game back over to the Game Master to run the encounter. After the fight, tell a story relating the events to something in your own past. Game Master: You can either wing this based off the player's description of events, or have a pre-made ambush or other similar encounter ready to go.
3-4	Obstacle: An extremely difficult obstacle bars your way. Describe the obstacle in some detail, then figure out how to negotiate it with your group. When the task is finished and everyone is resting up, tell the rest of your group about another obstacle you once faced. Game Master: Game this out as usual. You might plan for such an obstacle in advance, or simply wing it based on the player's description.
5-6	Injury: You suffer a grievous injury of some sort. (Take one wound that can't be soaked and can only be healed via natural healing.) Explain how it happened, working in something about your character's backstory as you do so.
7-8	Trial: A part of the trip was particularly grueling, exhausting, or mentally draining for your hero. Suffer a Fatigue level for the next 24 hours and describe what happened. Work in an anecdote from your past into the tale.
9-10	Wonder: Somewhere along the way is a glorious vista, ancient wonder, sun-dappled forest, or other thing of beauty. Describe it in character and add a personal anecdote of the most beautiful thing your hero ever saw, or tell a story the wonder might remind him of.
Jack	Anecdote: Something funny happens during the trip that reminds you of a funny (or at least shocking) story from your own past. Relate it to your companions.
Queen	Memento: You find a trinket or item of some sort on your trip that reminds you of something in your past. During a quiet moment, you relate that tale to your companions. You may also keep the memento if you like.
King	Boon: You and your companions find something of significant value. Describe the scene, including what it is, how you found it, and any guardians or obstacles that had to be defeated to obtain it (though you normally shouldn't game this out). Work in a significant role for everyone. The gift should be something of significant worth, but not a game breaker. In this adventure, it might be a couple of firearms and a few dozen rounds, a level of fuel, or a better vehicle.
Ace	Treasure: You find a significant treasure of some sort, such as a really powerful weapon, a truckload of MREs, medical supplies that heals everyone for one wound, a functioning military vehicle, or even a group of helpful Extras who want to join you. Your treasure might also be something personal—like a lost loved one. Narrate how and where you found this treasure and any hazards that had to be negotiated to obtain it. Work in a role for all the player characters in your tale.
Joker	Gift: As Treasure, but you get both a benny and an Adventure Card (or two bennies if you're not using Adventure Cards).