

DARK MAGENTA

A Twist In The Tale:

Scenario Components & Plot Twists

By Robey Jenkins

Inquisitor, it's often said, is as much about telling a story as it is about playing a game. But when one plays pick-up games with the same people on a regular basis, it's easy for games played using a familiar set of scenarios to start to become repetitive and dull. It's no one's fault, but the confrontations have become games instead of stories.

Scenario components and plot twists are devices that can be used by a Game Master or agreed on by players to inject an additional element of novelty or uncertainty into a game. Each does so in a slightly different way, but because they are all there to serve both the game and the story, they should be seen as part of the same dynamic.

Scenario Components

Scenario components are circumstances under which the game is played. Some may be familiar with the environmental conditions article published in Fanatic Online. Other may recall my article about battles played out on Holy Terra back in Dark Magenta 1. Both were about providing scenario components, and I commend both articles to the dedicated group wanting a new twist on an old theme.

I won't re-hash the ideas there, but I will offer a few new ones for you to mull over.



Frogger

A busy highway bisects the playing space and hulking juggernauts thunder along it to their destinations. The parties must play out their fates at the whim of a merciless transport system.

Once the scenario's other conditions have been agreed or



generated, roll a D10. On 1-4, the highway runs diagonally (roll again or toss a coin to determine which diagonal represents the highway); on a 5-8 it runs lengthwise on the table; on a 9 or 10 it runs widthwise (on a square table, the highway runs diagonally on a 1-5 and widthwise on a 6-10).

The width of the highway is equal to 10+D10 yards. Traffic runs in both directions and there is a space at the middle, 2" wide, on which no vehicles should be travelling (but see "Multiple Pile-up!", below) (masking tape is ideal for marking the sides and centre of the highway and for making an arrow to indicate the direction of the traffic on each side). Any Action spent on either side of the highway is risky. If any risk roll is failed, make an Initiative test. If the Initiative test is passed, the character may dive D6 yards in any direction.

If in the Initiative test is failed, the character has been hit. An impact hits D3 locations, causing 2D6 damage to each location. If a 6 is rolled on either damage dice, roll another D6 (if this is also a 6, keep rolling until a result isn't a 6).

The character is also hurled away by the impact. Immediately move the character 2D6 yards in the direction of the traffic and then roll for D6 yards' scatter.

Multiple Pile-up!

Whenever a character is struck, there is a chance that either the human driver or the vehicle's automated safety systems will have attempted to swerve out of the way to avoid the collision. Once the results of any impact have been calculated, roll a D10. If the result is greater than the number of characters on the highway at the time, nothing further happens. If the result is equal to or less than the number of characters on the highway, then an accident has occurred and a pile-up is about to follow!

Every character on the side of the highway where the original character was struck, or in the central reservation must pass an Initiative test or be struck exactly as described above. Once a Multiple Pile-Up has been resolved, all the traffic on that side of the highway stops. Unscrupulous players may consider throwing opponents or expendable followers into the path of the traffic in order to cross in safety.

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Inner Space

The playing space represents a structure of several layers. This may be the cramped interior of a Hive spire; a collapsed hab-block, buried deep beneath the Ash Wastes, the maintenance levels of a striding titan or simply an Inquisitor's personal manor.

Roll a D3+1 and divide the board into that many roughly equal parts (dividing into two should usually be widthwise on a 4'x6' board and into four, widthwise and lengthwise; dividing into three can be done in any number of ways and we'll leave you to think about the options) – masking tape may come in handy here, again.

Agree or randomly decide on a point on each "floor" that leads to the next. You could use coins (heads are "up" and tails are "down") or markers from the Space Hulk board game. It takes two Actions to move between one floor and another.

Defenestration

If you're feeling adventurous, you might like to decide that certain points or, for the really glamorous hive spires, all walls, are windows. Characters thrown from windows may fall to the next level (if they're lucky) or plummet to utter annihilation. Take your pick!

East of Eden

Whether they are on a daemon world, suffering from a chemical attack or locked into some psychosomatic dreamworld (Inception, anyone?), the characters can never be quite sure of reality or physics.

Whenever you measure any distance, toss a coin. On a head, the distance is immediately doubled; on a tail, the distance is halved.

Applied to shooting, this means that the range you measured to the target – say, 12 yards – if doubled is counted as 24 yards when calculating range modifiers or, if halved, is counted as 6" when calculating range modifiers.

Applied to movement, if the declared destination point of the model was 4 yards away, if doubled the model moves 8 yards (far beyond its intended destination point) or, if

halved, the model moves only 2 yards. If movement would put a model through a wall or other barrier, movement stops immediately and the character cannot perform any more Actions that turn as they regain their bearings. If a character is jumping and halves the distance they jump then, obviously, they may miss their target and suffer the consequences. Movement types are not affected, so a model that has a 4 yard walk changed to an 8 yard walk still counts as walking for all other purposes.



Plot Twists

Plot Twists are inspired by the (very) old strategy cards that were brought out for *Warhammer 40,000*'s second edition (I'm showing my age again!). These represent a sudden turn of events, unexpected advantage or piece of careful planning that can be played at any time. If you want to have plot twists, it's a good idea for the players to agree between them how many plot twists they want in a game (generally, I would say that three each was an absolute maximum and that one was the ideal). Write them down on scraps of paper, fold up the scraps and mix them up in a bag or hat and each player then takes a turn to remove a plot twist up to the agree number. They then keep them secret until the appropriate moment.

The Element of Surprise!

Play this plot twist at the start of the game before any models are put down or entry points chosen.

Your party has spent time scouting the area or has detailed intelligence that has allowed them to take a march on their opponents. If they would have begun on the table or had the first turn, they get to make an entire turn before their opponents arrive. If they would have had an entire turn before their opponents arrived, they instead get two. If they would not have been on the table first, they now get to arrive on the table first.

In addition, their opponents are so flustered by this change of events that they may not sprint, pause for breath or go on overwatch in their first turn.

Bombing Run

Play this plot twist at the start of any turn before the first character is activated.

Your contacts in the Imperial Navy have sent assistance. With a deafening roar of engines an aircraft drops from the clouds to drop a deadly payload of explosives onto the battlefield. Pick a point anywhere on the tabletop and place a *Warhammer 40,000* ordnance template. Roll for scatter and, if a scatter result is rolled, move the template D10 yards in this direction. Then pick a point on any table edge. Place the template again 3D10 yards along the line between the centre of the first template and the point on the edge of the table. Place it again, another 3D10 yards along the line. Repeat this process until a result takes the template off the edge of the table.

Any model whose base is touched by any of the templates is hurled D6 yards away from the centre of the template



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and takes D3 hits to random locations, each causing 2D6 damage. Any model whose base falls entirely under any of the templates is hurled 2D6 yards away from the centre of the template and takes D6 hits to random locations, each causing 2D10 damage. Any model whose base falls under the centre hole of the template is annihilated in a white-hot explosion.

Minefield

Play this plot twist at the start of the game after any characters are put down or entry-points chosen, but before the first character moves.

Your intelligence indicates that there is a deadly minefield in the vicinity and you have arranged your deployment accordingly. You may nominate an area up to 16 yards long and 8 yards wide as a minefield (place suitable markers or apply masking tape to indicate the position of the area). The area may not contain any built terrain pieces (i.e. it must be plain tabletop, woods or similar, not ruins or buildings). Being in the area is risky (of course). If the risk roll is failed, a mine has exploded with the same effect as a frag grenade, centred on the model that failed the risk roll. In addition, roll a D6 for each 4 yards moved through the area. On a 4+, a mine has exploded in the same way. For each mine that explodes in each turn, roll another D6. On a result of 1 another mine explodes: roll D6 yards scatter and resolve another frag grenade explosion at that point (even if it is outside the limits of the minefield – mines are not a precise tool, after all!).

Jumping over, flying over or skimming over the minefield is not risky (or, if it is, like jumping, then a failed risk doesn't set off a mine), but must still roll a D6 for each 4 yards moved across the minefield, exploding a mine of a 4+ as described above.



Strafing Run

Play this plot twist at the start of any turn, before the first character is activated.

Allies in the Imperial Navy have redirected a fighter to provide close support to your mission. Draw a straight line from any point on the board to any point on the board edge. This marks the line of the fighter's strafing run.

Any model touched by the line must make an Initiative test. If the test is passed, the model counts as being pinned. If the test is failed, the model takes 2D10 damage to one randomly determined location. Once the strafing run is complete, roll a D6. On a result of a 5 or 6, the player may play Strafing Run again in a subsequent turn.

Infiltrator

You have cunningly placed an informant amongst your opponent's closest allies and advisors, but your enemy knows that someone is out to get him – he just doesn't know who, yet.

Play this plot twist at the start of the scenario and make a secret note of the identity of the traitor. Your opponent may name one character in his party whose name you may not write down. At the start of the nominated character's activation in any turn, you may claim control. Your opponent must hand over the character sheet and, from that point on, the character is yours to control.



Conclusion

The suggestions above are not intended to make games "balanced" or "fair". Some of the plot twists, I freely admit, make victory almost a foregone conclusion for the player controlling that twist. But "almost" is half of the fun in Inquisitor and victory is all the sweeter when one snatches it from the jaws of defeat or achieves it against impossible odds.

I'm sure, having read this far, that you can think of any number of other possible scenario components and plot twists. If so, then write them down! Send them in to Derek at Dark Magenta and we'll compile the best and funniest into another article.

Until then, remember: everything you have been told is a lie!



About the Author

Robey Jenkins is a veteran player of Inquisitor, founder of the Inquisitor Grand Tournament and regular organizer/attender of Warhammer World campaign days. A retired British Army officer, he lives in Cheltenham where he runs Precinct Omega, providing a range of services in the miniature wargaming hobby, from custom painting to games design.