

A few thoughts from the peanut gallery.

The Morrow project is primarily a game about the struggle to understand and survive in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. The game predicated the existence of bad guys, mutants, and environmental changes of a horrific status. To this end, the encounter tables are very good with a plentitude of choices.

The necessity of “planning” your random encounters, cannot be stressed enough. Included in this latest level of dreck are some pointers and tweaks you the P.D. can use to individualize these encounters.

Looking at the Random encounter tables we find that there are three different types: Human, animal, and mutant. The differentials on these serve as the motives behind these groups. In the human and mutant realms the motives are quite varied. They usually involve lifestyle, hunger, political view, among many others. When discussing the animal encounters, these are usually due to hunger, the parties’ or the animals. This sort of neutral hungry, alignment, and encounter is the easiest to set up.

In the case of human or intelligent mutant encounters, one of the best way to make an encounter memorable is to customize it. The first and easiest way to customize is through the use of the weapons used.

A group of Razers, that carry fireaxes, as weapons. When marching along, the stay in cadence. Every fourth step, they rap the base of their axes on the ground, and yell Roe Phi Beta. This is of course short for Rape, pillage and burn.

Make the ballooners, cannibals. This is quite humorous when a team gets invited to dinner. Either as dinner or as diners. The ballooners have good control of the sky, using small blimps, powered by bicycle propellers, or gliders. They tend to attack at night. If properly approached, they have great airborne intel.

Give your maggots sharpened bone or wood tools. A very funny variation is to give the largest and smartest maggot in a group a rusty knife. Any barely intelligent primate is going to see the benefits of a large sharp tool. Normally, maggots are a nuisance, but when armed with simple weapons, they are formidable.

Spears, poles, baseball bats etc are great for primitive people. Another great weapon is the 6 foot length of electrical conduit, ripped loose and sharpened on concrete.

As a P.D. I rarely have firearms in the groups my teams encounter. When they do, the calibers in use, are not standard. In the case of primitive black powder or bows, I add plus 20% to all chances to hit. These people have great incentive to be accurate. When your powder is hard to get by, every shot has to count.

The other way to guarantee a cool encounter is to individualize the group encountered itself.

A group of Napoleon’s own, consisting of the following: One that carries a 9 iron, dressed in torn up motley colors, continually practicing his putt. One, that wears nothing at all.. A catatonic robot that is used by the others as a mule. One that is dressed up in the remains of a tuxedo, and carries a small pistol, or water gun. This guy introduces himself as Bond; James Bond. At which point the catatonic hums the James Bond theme song.

The blue undead girl-scout, trying to sell a box of cookies. Quite cute.

The maggot group in the mall. Momma maggot is scrounging for food, leaves baby in the den (Radio Shack). The team takes up residence in the Sears store. During the dog-watch, baby wakes up hungry. The team watch person hears, and investigates. While looking at baby, is jumped by mom who duly tries to stuff a sharpened bone into his eye. The ensuing firefight and fire was worth the price of admission. Note: White Phosphorus will drive these things off, but it will set fire to the mall too. The Klingons have a saying; “ Only a fool fights in a burning house”. Words to live by.

For animals, the following is the funniest one I've heard of yet. Can't take credit for it though. The LARGE, white, mutated electric catfish or gar that has the remains of a person tied to its back with a harpoon, and ropes. Yes the person on its back did have a peg-leg, now that you mention it.

The group of scraggers moving through the area. Our hero on watch, upon seeing them get too close. His definition, not mine; fires a shot. The scraggers take this as an attack. They charge in and proceed to stomp the group into the ground.

Occasionally the character is his own worst enemy. Take for instance the guy who wanted a flawed character. For background, this guy had a tough time keeping any character alive, in any game; let alone project. He decided that he wanted to have a character who was addicted to ephedrine, the active ingredient in most cough suppressants. I discussed this with him at length, and did try to convince him otherwise. He wanted nothing of it though and stuck by his guns. I did a little research. Using my wife's copy of the physicians pharmacy reference, was most enlightening. It seems that this is very addictive, and causes heart problems with long term use. I then developed a percentage chance of effect. When placed in stressful situations, he had a 20% chance of heart palpitations, severe enough to incapacitate him for 1-6 rounds. Real funny for me, not so funny for him.

The gun-jock who tries to duel with the P-47 strafing him. Not a good idea.

The guy who uses the white phosphorus grenade to take out the enemy. Not a good idea if you can't throw it further than its blast radius. Can we say Johnny Human Torch?

The character (survivor) who just had to see how the V-150 fusion plant worked. After finding him, literally waist deep in the engine compartment, it took a lot of diplomacy for the group leader to keep him alive.

In my opinion most P.D.'s don't spend enough time with weather. Here are two variants that may amuse.

Witch Weather: characterized by high winds, frequent lightning, EMP discharge, and LARGE hail. I usually check once per game week, if the team will encounter it. Base 15% chance. This type of weather seems to be attracted to the frequency generated in fusion packs. One variation I threw at a group was a living storm. It pursued the group for weeks before they figured it out. This necessitated leaving behind the MPV. Lots of fun for me.

Brights: Cannot take credit for this one. I saw it in a post-apocalyptic movie called Neon City. It seems that all the tons of sand, glass, and other material blown into the upper atmosphere is still there. It occasionally, 5%, groups together in a cloud, at very high altitude; and acts like a magnifying glass. This tends to heat up, the ground under it, a few hundred degrees. Very cool idea. Check every game week.

These are just a few ideas. Inventive P.D.'s will have many more. Have fun and don't work too hard on these. From personal experience, it really sucks to spend a bunch of time on NPC's just to have a group shoot them up.