

Adventure Scene Tables

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v 1.2

The Original Set

Scene tables are something used in many RPGs from Japan. They're a tool that are useful for keeping action moving and avoiding hangups. The key to using them effectively is to remember they're improvisation tools: they provide a starting point, your plans as the GM are the end goal, and the player's motivation fill the gap between those two.

Results from these tables also work well for spacing out major events, such as if the player characters are spending a significant amount of time doing a given task like traveling across the countryside, or doing research in a library. They also focus less on the locale itself, and more on the people within.

I've also written them with the Information and Investigation system in mind, though they're plenty useful on their own, or with other systems that might use Progress Clocks.

These tables are 2d6.

City Encounters

2	A shady looking person approaches you, and shoves a bag into your hands. "Hold on to this, and meet me at the edge of town tonight. I'll make it worth your while."
3	The town guards eye you for a moment. After awhile, one of them approaches you.
4	Somebody bumps into you. They apologize, and walk off hurriedly. You check your pockets, and notice something is missing.
5	A group of children flock around you excitedly, asking for you to tell them a story.
6	While eating, you overhear a conversation about the local happenings. One of the people invites you to share your opinion.
7	As you're passing through the town, you notice a merchant has a stall set up selling some of your favorite things. You stop to take a look, and consider buying one.
8	A traveling merchant approaches you, wanting to discuss the roads ahead and behind.
9	There's a minstrel entertaining people by telling stories. You wonder what he can tell you about local folklore.
10	"Stop! Thief!" you hear somebody cry out. You see two people giving chase, and one of them bumps into you.
11	A young man offers you his newspaper, saying he's finished with it.
12	You meet a young woman. "You're a traveler right? Take this charm. It'll protect you on your journey."

Wilderness Road Encounters

2	Is that...? Yes it is. It's a bear!!
3	Where there's smoke, there's fire. And there's a lot of smoke up ahead...
4	Highway men block your path. They want a tribute before they let you pass!
5	A flock of scavenging birds are eating something. They scatter as you approach the carcass.
6	Traveling merchants are always looking to peddle their wares, and this one is no exception. Do they have anything interesting?
7	It's peaceful out here. You feel optimistic about your journey, and take a break to consult your map for a moment.
8	You meet fellow travelers along the way. It turns out they just departed from your destination!
9	Along the path, you spot a good place to forage for some extra food and fresh water.
10	A short detour would take you to a shack off in the distance, it looks like somebody is living there!
11	The remnants of somebody's campsite. They seem to have left something behind.
12	A patrolling ranger's route runs along your own. They decide to follow you for awhile.

Remote Village

2	Smoke rises off in the distance, and where there's smoke...there's fire!
3	A band of rough looking guys armed to the teeth...are they looking for trouble?
4	The town watch is running bad into town, scared and out of breath! What did they find?
5	With a flashy wagon and ostentatious outfit, a salesman rides into town peddling all manner of miraculous medicines and gadgets. It sounds too good to be true, but...
6	The village youths are gathering together at the edge of town, what do those jokers have planned today...?
7	Be it gloomy or idyllic, it's another normal, quiet day in the village.
8	A troupe of traveling troubadours are coming through, bearing news, songs, and stories!
9	The rickety wheels of a well worn cart can be heard. A traveling merchant makes their regular stop, with all manner of goods from the city. What did they bring this time?
10	Well groomed and carrying a heavy bag of medicines, a physician is here to check on the health of the villagers.
11	Adventurers are stopping by! Are they going on a quest? Or making their way home?
12	Those tents...a circus is in town!

In the Halls of a Great Library

2	There's a terrified scream, accompanied by a loud tumbling!
3	The book your flipping through has some pages that are torn, messy, and illegible.
4	Somebody wrote some ridiculous notes in the margins.
5	One of the books you were looking for doesn't seem to be where it's supposed to be...
6	Tucked away in the pages is an old invitation from years ago, used as a bookmark.
7	It's quiet. There's the occasional tapping of foot steps, and maybe an errant sneeze.
8	A few people are quietly playing board games,
9	Serendipitously, you found the perfect book among some others you were picking out from the shelves!
10	A helpful note was left inside this book!
11	Loud voices can be heard down the hall. It sounds like some very impassioned conversations are happening.
12	A helpful librarian comes by, and comments on the books you have around.

At the Noble's Gala

2	The influential heir to a vast estate has begun reciting their poetry. It's possibly the worst writing you've ever heard.
3	Somebody exclaims that their brooch has gone missing!
4	The pastries are exceptionally bland.
5	An attentive maid comes by at just the right time to interrupt an interesting conversation.
6	One of the maids is late bringing out refreshments.
7	Pleasantries here an introduction there, and the ever present changing of subjects and attentions. It's a party, after all, and there's a great many people here.
8	A footman comes by to refresh your glass and carry away unneeded dishes.
9	One of the other attendees is boasting rather loudly about their latest deeds.
10	The wine being served this course is of an exceptionally rare vintage!
11	An impertinent footman quietly draws your attention to a spat between two other parties. Scandalous!
12	The wealthy eccentric looks like they're getting very deep into their cups; they can't even remember how many drinks they've had anymore!

In a Seedy Divebar

2	“WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY TO ME!?” follow by silence, and tension thick enough to cut with a knife.
3	Grinning ear to ear, a sinister cardshark invites you to play a “friendly” game of cards. With money on the line to make it interesting, of course. Let’s hope it stays friendly...
4	The door swings open, and everything goes quiet. This person doesn’t seem welcome here.
5	A self styled performer is doing their bit. Based on how it’s going, this place will be their only venue for awhile.
6	The well drinks remain a case of “Well, you get what you pay for.”
7	Loud, indistinct murmuring all around. Just another night at the pub.
8	A chorus of song starts, and for a moment, you forget just how unseemly the people here are.
9	“I know a guy who can get you some good stuff. For cheap, too!” You get the feeling you shouldn’t ask too many questions about their merchandise.
10	The regulars come and go, and you’re able to eavesdrop on some really juicy gossip.
11	Loose lips spill all kinds of secrets. And liquor makes people very loose indeed.
12	Somebody motions you to come over. “I got something good for you, but it ain’t gonna be cheap. I know what I’ve got.”

Biome Specific Tables

The following tables are more specific to the kind of terrain in an area, and reference more specific phenomena than the original Wilderness Table. The focus for all these tables is more on the locale themselves, and what can be found if you take a look off the beaten path. This makes them useful as a method of padding out daily travels through regions.

Additionally, there are variations for if the region is faring better or worse, which could be changed out depending on PC actions or other plot points. E.g. if the players had recently cleared out something that was a menace to the nearby prairies, you could use the “Flourishing” table for grasslands.

Under the Desert Sun (Desert, Harsh)

2	Tan clouds off in the distance...It's a sand storm!
3	There's a lot of people ahead, fast approaching. They're bandits!
4	A recently dead corpse. Death by thirst, perhaps?
5	Bones. Scattered and bleached by the sun. Will you end up like them?
6	Vultures fly overhead. Do they think you'll be their next meal?
7	The sun continues to beat down on your mercilessly.
8	It looks like there's water off in the distance...but what if it's just a trick of the light?
9	A cactus here. A cactus there. You wonder where they all get their water.
10	A small lizard scurries along the sand.
11	A stray cloud provides brief respite from the sun.
12	Dark clouds...thunder...could it be...rain has come!?

Dustbowl (Prairie, Harsh)

2	The village seemed abandoned, until you heard somebody yell "Hold it right there!" Then you were surrounded!
3	This village has gone to the dogs...literally. They seem to be the only things around.
4	A dust storm approaches!
5	This homestead lies abandoned
6	The wind has eroded some much of the soil, it's difficult to tell where the trails go next.
7	Dried up, yellowing grass, and barren fields as far as the eye can see.
8	A field, overgrown with all manner of weeds and brush.
9	These fields are dotted with patches of withering crops.
10	Dark and heavy stormclouds gather on the horizon. Static hangs in the air, unable to discharge.
11	A homestead, with boarded windows and cloth stuffed into every nook and cranny.
12	Amid this arid landscape, a lake manages to flourish.

Farmlands (Prairie, Neutral)

2	Even out here, you can find the occasional village.
3	Up the road, some tough looking people wait at a crossroads.
4	Homesteaders setting to work plowing the fields of their claim
5	Traveling atop a big wagon, a farmer is bringing their harvest into town.
6	A meadow of wildflowers, alive with the sounds of birds and bees.
7	Fields of green, as far as the eye can see.
8	Sitting on a hillside next to a massive dog, a shepherd tends their flock.
9	Farmhands diligently tend to the fields, performing routine pruning and pest management.
10	Rainclouds are gathering. Soon, there will be much needed rain.
11	Outside of their homestead, a family braves the isolation of prairie life together.
12	Camps and small settlements dot a lakeside.

Pleasant Grasslands (Prairie, Flourishing)

2	A village, bustling with life and activity.
3	That fluffy thing lumbering around...would be a bear.
4	Somebody is stranded on the side of the road. It looks like their wagon is damaged.
5	Loaded down with all manner of goods, a traveling merchant makes their way along the road.
6	An ornate carriage rolls by, presumably filled with a noble and their entourage.
7	Fields of green, clouds of white, skies of blue, and the occasional house on the hill to tend to it all. This is truly an agrarian paradise.
8	With a toolbag by their feet, a carpenter updates the road signs.
9	Lush farmlands grow high. If you laid down under them, you could imagine that they reach the sky.
10	A refreshing drizzle begins to gently rain from the sky.
11	Homesteaders are raising new barns and adding more houses. Perhaps this will one day become a village?
12	Trade and fishing communities thrive on the banks of the lake.

Scummy Stream (Riverside, Harsh)

2	Moored upon the riverbanks is a ship. Her crew on land, and armed to the teeth...
3	A shipwreck! Fairly recent, and the crew is nowhere to be found...
4	Mudslides from eroded banks spill into the river.
5	Floating along the currents, a ship floats on by.
6	Algae. The surface of the quiet banks of the river are covered in green scum.
7	The waterways are still. Everything is quiet.
8	The river reeks. Something must be polluting the waterways.
9	Flies and insects are everywhere! Maybe some freshly dead fish or something attracted them.
10	Sitting on the riverbank is a scrawny man with a fishing rod in hand. "No bites today. Another night hungry, it seems."
11	Remains of a shipwreck, already picked clean by salvage crews. Or pirates.
12	A bridge crosses over to the other end of the river.

Brisk Brook (Riverside, Neutral)

2	Moored upon the bank is a riverboat, her crew with tools in hand doing repairs on the safety of land.
3	Travelers walk along the opposite edge of the riverbank.
4	Growing on the riverbank is a tree in a precarious position.
5	A ship cruises by against the currents.
6	The river may be murky, but its current flow freely.
7	in the still waters; birds swim on the surface.
8	Bugs skim on the surface of the water; a fish jumps out to snatch one up.
9	Flowers bloom along the banks, and reeds grow in the shallows.
10	Fishermen have set up a camp on the rivers edge. Several of them, all with rods in hand.
11	Salvage boats cast out their ropes and nets, hoping to find fortune from loss.
12	A bridge crosses over to the other end of the river.

Resplendent Rivers (Riverside, Flourishing)

2	The folks on a riverboat are having a spot of shore leave.
3	City folk have come out to see the splendors of the water ways.
4	Trees on the riverbed bear fruit; a natural orchard.
5	A positively luxurious vessel floats down the river.
6	Crystal clear waters run here. You can almost see the bottom of the river from here.
7	The calls of waterfowl resound through the air.
8	What's that huge thing in the shallows? Turns out, it's a bear.
9	Blooms and blossoms up and down the riverbed, as far as the eyes can see.
10	"They were biting today!" exclaims an excited fisherman. The others are grilling, smoking, and salting part of the day's catch.
11	At a nearby pier is the rechristening ceremony of a salvaged ship!
12	A bridge crosses over to the other end of the river.

Searching Through The Thickets (Forest, Neutral)

2	It's a bear. Why would it be anything else out here?
3	While stomping around, it becomes apparent to you that you disturbed a massive ant colony!
4	Those bushes, you later realize, had poison ivy growing among them.
5	A stream flows down this way, winding its way through the ravines.
6	Felled branches litter the ground here. Even if you don't trip, it'll be obvious something passed through.
7	Bird calls echo throughout the glades. You wonder what they see that you might not.
8	Here is a rocky outcropping. If you stood atop it, you may get a better view.
9	Something is rustling around in the bushes nearby.
10	Hanging from the tree is a beehive. Or perhaps a wasp nest.
11	A trap for an animal lies here, already sprung.
12	Remnants of a camp; it's since been broken. What else may they have left behind?

Modern Spaces

Adventure can be found in the modern, human-made world just as much as it can in nature. While a sprawling cubicle farm or vast set of city blocks may not be the most exciting places to be, sometimes, journeys may require going to mundane places. Either because the protagonist is passing through, or snooping around where they don't belong.

Urban Blight

2	Covered bridges connect the skyscrapers above you; they also block out the sky.
3	A maze of shady and damp alleyways – and somehow, moss manages to grow among the stone and clay.
4	Parking lots as far as the eye can see, and not a building around.
5	Squat brick buildings all around, each as indistinct as the last.
6	Walls line the sidewalk on one side, and empty streetside parking on the other.
7	Steel and glass towers that reach so high you can barely see the skies.
8	The sidewalk is piled up with bags. They're foul smelling, and worse, some are writing.
9	This intersection is...busy, to say the least. Two story buildings on all sides, and cars going in all directions.
10	A sprawling walkway, with people milling about. They don't seem to stop for anything.
11	Highways rise above you as you stand in front of a rundown fuel station.
12	The underside of a bridge is littered with somebody's personal belongings; their owner is nowhere to be found.

In The Office

2	There's a lot of murmuring about how nobody can get anything done; did something vital break down?
3	A putrid, rotten fish smell wafts out of the lunch room.
4	"What!? All my supplies are missing again? I bet I know who did this..."
5	"The toilet's clogged! Again! For the third time this week!"
6	Chatter among the cubicles, the odd telephone ringing, and the sounds of typing.
7	Upper management, sequestered away in their own broad windowed room watch everybody from afar.
8	Hardly anybody is around; maybe the odd worker drone milling about, but for the most part? Quiet.
9	Janitors have blocked off a major walkway; folks grumble as they look for a detour.
10	"Heh heh heh. That's a hell of a thing for you to sneak in here..." You wonder what sort of contraband they're talking about.
11	Somebody is playing around with a strange gizmo.
12	One of the upper management walks out of their office, leaving the door wide open.

Guidelines Used For Filling In Charts

2d6 is used to give a bell curve to the possibilities; i.e. 7 is the most likely outcome, followed by 8 and 6, then 5 and 9, etc. I usually put a mostly neutral and unremarkable event at 7. From there, I put less favorable results at lower numbers, with the worst result being at 2 (One of the least likely results!) The process is reversed for increasing numbers; higher the number, the better the outcome, albeit less likely.

Getting Creative

Using just 2d6 and one “neutral” outcome, you get a decent amount of effects for different locales.

E.g. If you want a locale to have more favorable outcomes, you can set the “neutral” result to a lower number, and keep the same “higher is better, lower is worse” motif. Set Neutral to 5, and with 2, 3, and 4 being the only unfavorable outcomes, and leave 7+ to being increasingly favorable outcomes.

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