

MASTER PLAN

A Solo RPG by

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MASTER PLAN is an RPG designed for solo play in which you play the role of a villain devising their strategy for achieving their ultimate goal, whatever that may be.

THE GENRE

What **Genre** is your villain's story? Is it Fantasy Dungeon Delving, Space Opera, Cold War Espionage, Lovecraftian Horror, Courtly Intrigue, or something else? The **Genre** you pick for your villain will help determine their goals, resources, obstacles, motivation, personality, and more.

Choose a Genre to fit your Villain.

Things to Consider: Who are the well known Villains for the **Genre**? What are their goals? What powers do they have? Who opposes them? How are they defeated?

THE VILLAIN

Every story has a hero and a villain, but the truly great stories are great because of their memorable Villains. Keyser Soze. Darth Vader. Voldemort. They may (or may not) be vanquished in the end, but that conflict between good and evil is only interesting if the Villain is a three dimensional, fully fleshed out person, with a personality, goals, and a conflict. Who they are is almost as interesting as what they do.

Create a personality and history for your Villain.

Things to Consider: Who is your villain? Who is in their way? What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? What personality quirks do they have?

THE TRIGGER

Every Villain becomes a Villain for some reason. It could be as simple as they were just born evil, or it could be more complicated than that. Darth Vader was slowly turned evil by Palpatine's influence and Loki was jealous of his father's favoritism of his brother Thor. There's something in the Villain's past that made them turn down their current path: the **Trigger**.

Create a Trigger that made your Villain become a Villain.

Things to Consider: What was the Villain's childhood like? Who were their friends and family and allies? Where are those people now? What does your Villain hate? Has the Villain always been this way, or did something happen that changed them?

THE WEAKNESS

Every Villain has a **Weakness**, whether it is something physical like the hole in Smaug's chest or something more ephemeral, like Darth Vader's last spark of goodness and love for his children. It's how they can be defeated. The Villain may know about the **Weakness**, or it could be a complete mystery.

Create a Weakness for your Villain.

Things to Consider: How did this weakness develop? Is it a gap in their defenses, or a personality flaw, or something else? Who knows about it? How can someone discover it? How can it be exploited?

THE END

What is your villain ultimately trying to achieve? World domination? Revenge? Ultimate Power? Unbridled chaos? Wealth beyond measure? This is the **End** - the goal your villain sets their eye on, the whole point of their plan. Your villain may have multiple **Ends** that they want to achieve. You will need at least one, but that is not a hard and fast limit. Feel free to choose a few, but don't go overboard. This should be a final result your villain is trying to achieve, not every possible outcome. If you have more than a few, you should be able to combine them under something more general.

Create one to three Ends for your Villain.

Things to Consider: Why does the Villain want to achieve this **End**? Who will want to stop it? What happens if the Villain doesn't achieve it? Is there some sort of timeline during which it must be achieved?

THE MEANS

Your Villain has resources at their disposal. Minions, powers, corrupt officials, allies, artifacts, empires, bases, and trusted lieutenants. The **Means** are the tools your villain will use to achieve the **End**. Select several for your Villain, and don't be afraid to go beyond physical things or people. Knowledge of someone's misdeeds that can be used to blackmail them, an ideology that speaks to an oppressed people or race and can be used to foment revolt and war, an idea for an invention that could power a death ray that can destroy planets, the ability to read which way the wind is blowing and capitalize on opportunities for gain - all of these are potential tools for your villain.

Create five to ten Means for your Villain.

Things to Consider: How did the Villain get these **Means**? Can they be taken away or turned against the Villain? Are they replaceable? Who knows about them? What do people think about them? How successful are they? How dangerous are they? How can they be countered?

THE WAYS

Now that you have your Villain's objectives and resources, how will they put them together? What do they have to do to achieve their **End**, and how can they use their **Means** to do that? These are called the **Ways**. These are the steps the Villain will take to reach the goal. You can determine these by looking at both the **End** and the **Means**. Torturing Gollum and then sending Ringwraiths to the Shire are both **Ways** that Sauron used to try and get his great power back. Destroying Alderaan to send a message that the Empire would be able to crush any support for the Rebel Alliance was how Grand Moff Tarkin intended to defeat the Rebels. It doesn't matter how many systems slip through your fingers as you tighten your grasp if you can just destroy them all. You may notice a certain theme here. Villains are villainous and do villainous things. Most of their **Ways** should generally reflect that.

Create three to seven Ways for your Villain.

Things to Consider: What are the steps necessary to achieve the **End**? Who or what is the best resource for the Villain to use to achieve those steps? How can each of the **Means** be used? How will those methods achieve the greater goal? How will people react to these **Ways** when they are implemented? How can they be countered?

THE CONTINGENCY

It always happens. Every time the Villain starts implementing their genius plan to take over the world, something gets in the way. It could be some plucky, upstart hero or simply a populace that won't bend to the Villain's will. When the Villain can't get everything for their plan, they have to have something to fall back on: the **Contingency**. This may be a less desirable means of getting what they want - like a deal with an adversary, or the destruction of something (or someone) that could have been useful later on - or simply take longer and be more difficult. It could be another **Way** or **Mean** or combination of them, or even another **End**. Regardless, every good villain has something up their sleeve for getting what they want when things go wrong.

Create a Contingency that will allow your Villain to get what they need to achieve their End if something goes wrong.

Things to Consider: Why didn't the Villain use the **Contingency** the first time? What are the drawbacks to using it? What made the Villain even consider it as an option?

THE FLAW

The Death Star's two meter wide thermal exhaust port, Loki's portal generator that was impenetrable by everything except his staff, the fires of Mount Doom in which the One Ring was

forged. Every plan has an unforeseen weak spot that could bring everything to ruin: the **Flaw**. The Villain may know of it, and take great pains to keep it hidden or protect it. Or the Villain may not know of it, and be surprised at any eventual unveiling. You may wish to incorporate the Villain's **Weakness** into the **Flaw**, or you may not. It's perfectly fine for them to be separate.

Create a Flaw for your Villain's plan.

Things to Consider: How is the Villain's plan likely to fail? How is the **Flaw** protected? Who knows about it? Why didn't the Villain eliminate it? How can someone discover it to use against the Villain? How will the Villain react if and when they find out someone is trying to exploit it?

YOU ARE DONE

You are now done with creating your Villain and their strategy. You know their plan, strengths, weaknesses, resources, and actions they will take. Nothing stands in their way of what they want.

YEAH RIGHT

Because they are a Villain, there will always be someone standing in their way: the hero(es). In creating your Villain and their plan, you have the strong base for an adventure or a campaign in any gaming system that fits your **Genre**.

The **End** becomes the main goal for the campaign, the thing the heroes have to stop. You just need a reason for the heroes to care about stopping it.

The **Ways** become the major scenes for the adventure, or the adventures in the campaign arc. The heroes have concrete things that they can do to oppose the Villain and try and spoil their plan.

The **Means** become the main encounters and adversaries for the campaign. The Villain has resources and minions and powers that the heroes will have to deal with to stop the Villain.

The **Contingency** becomes the backup encounter, adversary, or scene that occurs when the heroes have messed up the Villain's plans. The Villain planned for this, so you should use it.

The **Flaw** becomes the hole in the plan that the heroes can exploit. They find it, use it, destroy it, hide it, or otherwise engage with it to impede the Villain's plan when everything else goes wrong.

MASTER PLAN is both a game in and of itself as well as a tool for developing future games. Like developing a setting using Microscope, making characters using Fiasco, or adapting any other aspect of an RPG to assist in creating a larger campaign, the process of strategy

development set forth here can enhance your overall roleplaying experience. Make better villains, get a framework for your campaign, and have a more cohesive story for your next campaign. Or just enjoy coming up with the reasons why a Villain does what they do, and the steps they will take to get what they want.