d20 MODERN:

THRILLING TALES

GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE TO *PULP* ADVENTURE

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The fiendish Manchurian doctor casually kicked over the wicker basket, and three deadly vipers slithered out, winding their way across the marble floor towards the chair where the young woman was bound, helpless to the danger that approached.

"Your time is running out, Ms. Van Meter," Tsung-Chi Sin said, his voice like a silken strangling cord. "I cannot control my pets once they've scented their prey. Tell me: Where is the Green Falcon?"

Suddenly the window shattered as a green-clad figure burst through, twin 45s blazing. The snakes were obliterated in an instant, blown like rubber toys across the floor. "Right here, Doctor Sin," the Green Falcon laughed. He levelled his guns at the insidious devil of Chinatown.

Suddenly, he felt the sting of a bullet grazing his shoulder, slicing through the green overcoat, and moments later heard the crack of the pistol's report...from behind him! He spun to see Rita Van Meter, his own girlfriend, standing by the chair , ropes pooled at her feet. In her hands she clutched a smoking revolver, and her eyes were glazed in a vacant stare.

A chilling laugh filled the chamber. "You fool...you forget that I am a master of mesmerism. This entire scene was a trap, played purely for your benefit. Now, you will die at the lovely hand of Ms. Van Meter...or you will be forced to kill her!"

The Green Falcon's mind raced, as Rita's finger tightened on the trigger....

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **GM's Guide to Pulp Adventure.** In these pages, we present an overview of the various genres that appeared in pulp fiction, as well as some tips on using Pulp elements in your role-playing game adventures. We then devote the rest of this Guide to a Random Pulp Adventure generation system, based in part on the secret formula used by pulp writer Lester Dent to craft the famous Doc Savage stories.

So, hang on tight, because the first thing we're going to tell you is that there is no such thing as the "pulp genre."

WHAT IS PULP?

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as the "pulp genre." Pulp was a medium, a method of delivery, not a genre in and of itself. Saying "pulp genre" makes about as much sense as saying "television genre" (or, for that matter, "cinematic" as a genre, which is another misnamed term used by gamers, but I digress).

The Pulps were the magazines of popular fiction, delivering stories of adventure, action and romance in several genres from their birth in the first years of the twentieth century to their demise in the mid-1950s. They represented the greatest explosion of mass entertainment by way of the written word that had been seen until the creation of the Internet.

There were pulps for every taste. Detective pulps, science-fiction pulps, western pulps, sports pulps, romance pulps and more. There were pulps devoted to the exploits of everyday heroes, and pulps that were spiced with the macabre and unusual. They all had one thing in common: they delivered escapist entertainment, printed on cheap pulp paper sandwiched between slick, gaudy color covers. There was something for everyone.

The pulp magazine was a twentieth century

publishing sensation, the roots of the form can be traced back to the mid-nineteeth century, with the invention of the dime novel: serial fiction printed on newspaper that was aimed at the middle and lower classes. "Low-brow" entertainment that offered lurid stories full of action, suspense and thrills.

With the birth of the new century, and the growing literacy of the public, the market for serial fiction exploded, leading to the creation of the pulp magazine, with brightly-colored covers designed to lure potential readers in a market that quickly became filled with competitors.

The pulps reached their heyday in the years between World Wars One and Two, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In a world that seemed increasingly hopeless and hard, the pulps offered an escape from the bleakness of everyday life, priced so that anyone could get away for a few brief hours. Gone were the breadlines and the dust bowl of their hard-scrabble lives, replaced by the thrill of soaring through the clouds with air aces, or travelling to far-off worlds, or galloping after a band of desperadoes, guns blazing.

The most popular of the pulps featured crime fighting heroes. The average American saw during Prohibition (1920 to 1933) the rise of a powerful criminal class that could flaunt authority as they wished, becoming rich and powerful in the process. They saw government and business become corrupted by these new criminals and their money....and most importantly, the average American felt helpless to stop it.

The lure of the crime-fighter in pulp stories was obvious: a simple wish-fulfilment of fighting back, of taking control of a situation that seemed out of control. It is the same basic human need that later fueled the popularity of superhero comics and even later still, action

movies. Putting oneself in the imaginary role of a hero who takes action against those things which you feel helpless to affect.

The pulps, along with radio (which often produced dramatic presentations based on the stories printed in the pulps) became the prime source of entertainment for the American people before the advent of television. Stories which relied upon the audience's own imaginations to envision. In some ways, a purer form than the passive process of watching television or a film.

The pulps didn't last, however. Paper shortages during the Second World War dealt a crippling blow to the form, which limped along for another decade or so after the war had ended, and finally died out, replaced by the television, the comic book and the mass-market paperback novel.

So, if there is no such thing as the "pulp genre", then what are we talking about?

PULP GENRES

When gamers speak of the "pulp genre," what they're really talking about is an amalgam of several genre elements taken from the various genres of pulp stories, radio shows, cliffhanger film serials and later "post-modern pulps" like the *Indiana Jones* films and *The Rocketeer*.

The following section is a breakdown of the most popular genres from which these elements are lifted. It is not an exhaustive list of every pulp genre--only those that often provide fodder for the RPG interpretations of the pulps. For example, Sports pulps were very popular, but you don't often see gamers clamoring to play a golf pro in a tense tournament!

CRIMEFIGHTING

By far, the most common and popular genre in the pulps was the crimefighting genre, which itself can be broken down into several distinct sub-genres, the most popular of which were the Detective Mystery and the Hero pulp.

The Detective Mystery has survived into the present day as a staple of the mystery section of every bookstore--A hero or heroine whose purpose is to solve mysteries, usually involving murder.

The formula of these tales usually involves a detective (either private or official) brought in to puzzle out a baffling crime. The tale progresses with the detective figuring out the answers to the questions of Who, What, Where, Why and How, most likely facing peril of some kind as they get closer and closer to The Truth, which they inevitably do by the end of the tale.

Detective stories of the pulp era usually ended with the criminal brought to justice. It was later that the focus shifted and the unravelling of the mystery became more important than the result.

Hero pulps are the tales that most gamers think of when they hear the word "pulp," and as such make up the majority of the RPG-created "pulp genre." They are tales of larger-than-life heroes, proto-superheroes, if you will, facing larger-than-life villains and solving bizarre and unusual crimes. *Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Spider, The Avenger,* all of these are famous examples of the Hero pulp.

Since the hero pulps led directly into the creation of the superhero comic book, it is easy to see the genre as, essentially, low-powered (or no-powered) superheroics. There are, however, major differences. Believability, for one. The Hero pulps, however strange or unusual the topic, held at their core a level of "this could happen." Superhero

comics, with their demi-godlike powers and huge battles, are by their very nature more farfetched. Think of the difference between early James Bond films and more recent ones--the early films, even with the gadgets, had an air of reality about them, albeit stretched, to be sure. The later films, with orbital heat-rays and spy-car duels have ventured far into the realm of superheroics.

The byword of the Hero pulps was "exotic." Strange crimes, far-off locations, cutting-edge (for the 1930s) technology, etc. The Hero pulps were the pinnacle of escapism, and the more exotic things that they could show the reader, the better. This wasn't limited to pure fiction, either. The writers would be careful to include real elements as well--for example, Walter Gibson, the author of most of *The Shadow* novels was a part-time professional magician, and would often include real magicians tricks in his fictional hero's arsenal. If *Doc Savage* author Lester Dent had recently read some interesting things about the Yukon, you could be sure that Doc and his men would be visiting the Yukon in an upcoming adventure.

As mentioned previously, the Hero pulp provides the largest amount of inspiration to pulp RPGs, and so will form the basis of the Random Adventure Generator later in this product.

AIR HERO

For readers in the early twentieth century, air travel was a novelty. It was seen during the Depression as a romantic escape from earthbound problems. The pilot was a dashing heroic figure, and the pulps provided many such heroes to thrill readers.

Many of the air heroes of the pulps were World War I flying aces, fighting against the Germans in what at the time was known as "the Great War." These pulps were adventure tales set during wartime, and provided enough actual aeronautical detail to whet the appetite of would-be pilots.

There were tales set in the present as well. The contemporary air heroes flew aircraft at the cutting edge of aviation (and beyond)--the period equivalent of a Tom Clancy technothriller.

Air hero pulps weren't limited to simple adventure tales of the air war, or tales of daredevils touring air shows, however--the most popular of the air hero pulps, *G-8 and His Battle Aces*, combined the Air
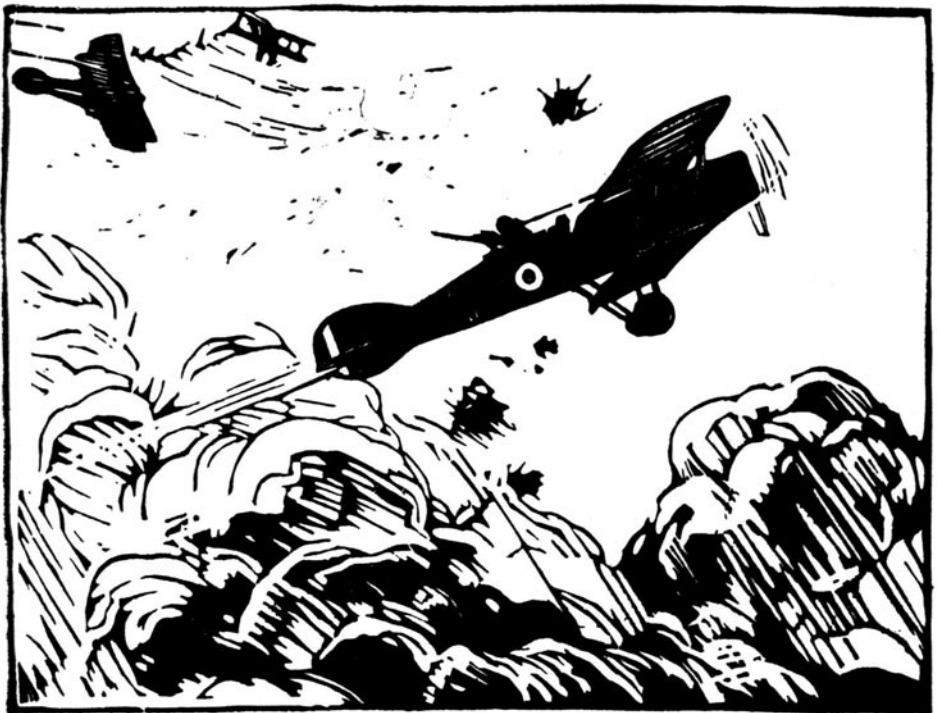
hero formula with the Hero pulp and even Horror, featuring the World War One aces fighting off flying armies of zombies, giant bats, supervillains and more.

FOREIGN ADVENTURE

Similar to the exotic elements of the Hero pulps, but without the focus on crime-fighting, this genre tells tales of action and adventure in distant locations. These tales could be stories of globe-trotting fortune hunters, military adventures of the Foreign Legion, or rough-and-tumble tales of life as a merchant seaman in the South Pacific.

The focus of these stories was always on the location, and the strange things and people that could be found there.   By today's standards, a great deal of this genre's tales are not exactly enlightened in their viewpoints--the stories are full of ignorant, animalistic savages, shifty, untrustworthy foreigners, seductive half-naked women, and the like.   The hero is the embodiment of the "civilized white man in a world of danger", and to modern eyes, it can be pretty offensive.

That said, though, the *Indiana Jones* films and *Tomb Raider* games draw heavily on the elements of this genre, so it is more than possible to remove the insulting elements and retain the heart--adventure and excitement in far-off lands.

ESPIONAGE

The period between the World Wars was rife with intrigue. Some historians have said that the World Wars can be viewed as a single conflict, with an intermission where nations gathered their strength and maneuvered for the next round.

The Espionage pulps were often reluctant to deal with real-life politics, and so usually shrouded their tales behind fictional nations.   Bolsheviks from places like "Bulkavia", rather than Russians.

Fascist leaders of secret world-spanning empires, rather than Nazi Germany.   As the thirties drew to a close, however, and war seemed more and more immenent, the gloves came off and real-world issues appeared on the pulp pages.

Whether they were facing real or fictional menaces, the heroes of the Espionage pulps are a familiar archetype to modern readers. James Bond is their direct descendant, and the usual Espionage pulp could, with very little tinkering, be made into a serviceable 007 adventure.

HORROR

The horror pulp genre has gotten quite a bit of attention in the RPG hobby, due to games based upon one of the most famous horror pulp writers, Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

Not all pulp horror was concerned with mind-shattering nameless things from beyond space and time, however. Even that particular variety (which has been termed Lovecraftian, for obvious reasons), was limited largely to the pages of a single magazine: *Weird Tales*. There were other horror pulps, though: *Terror Tales, Strange Stories, Ghost Stories,* among others.

The stories ran the usual gamut of horror elements: vampires, ghosts, werewolves, mad killers, voodoo, gothic castles, etc. Tales were usually one-shots with no recurring characters--it's easier to kill off protagonists that way, increasing the scare factor. There were, however, the occasional series of tales that would center around an occult investigator of some sort, who would encounter a supernatural threat and defeat it by the end of the tale, ready to move on to the next. This form of story is ironically much more "game-able" than the Lovecraftian variety, and yet Lovecraft still forms the basis of most pulp-horror gaming.

WEIRD MENACE

Everybody loves a good villain. This was also true of pulp readers, and so it was inevitable that magazines devoted to villainy would start to appear.

Inspired by the gothic romances of the 19th century,
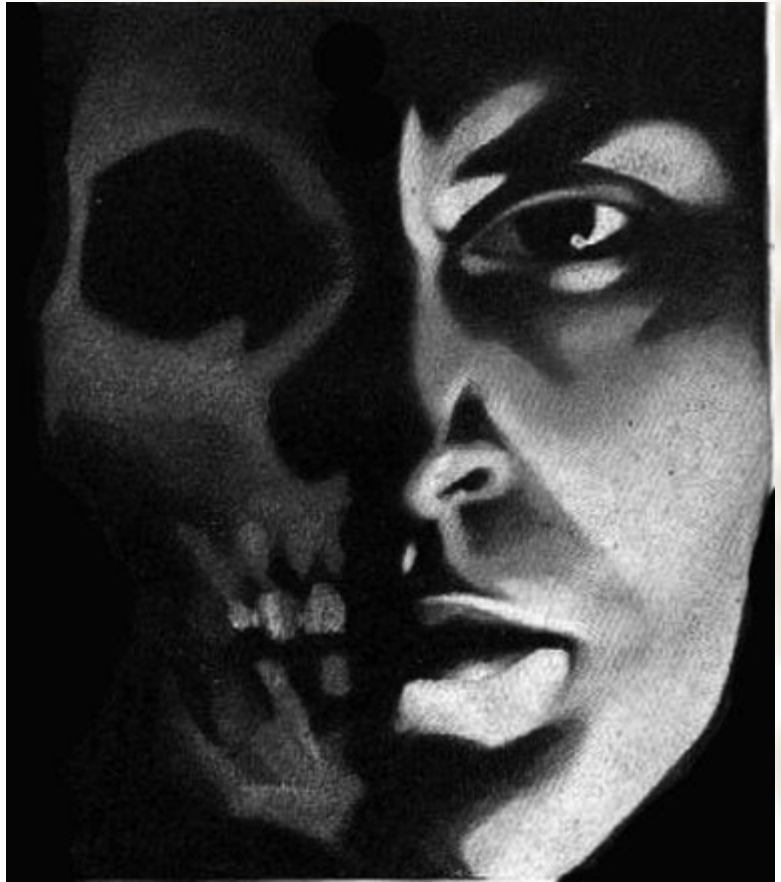
and the infamous Grand Guignol theatre of Paris (which shocked audiences with realistic scenes of horror and bloodshed), these pulps were dark reflections of the Hero pulps. The magazine would focus on the exploits of the featured villain, who would always be defeated by the often bland, unremarkable hero, yet would always escape justice at the end, to return in the next issue.

The stories delighted in detailed descriptions of torture and fiendish plots, usually performed on a scantily-clad damsel in distress, or on the hero himself. Mild by today's standards, they were shocking stuff at the time, with stories that flirted with sadism and "adult themes." They were often sold "under the counter", rather than displayed openly, and were definitely part of the reason that pulps began to develop a reputation for salacious thrills.

The villains of these stories were the draw: always brilliant and unredeemably evil, and usually given some sort of weird gimmick, whether a costumed secret identity (*Doctor Satan*) or being inscrutable and foreign (*Doctor Fu Manchu*, the most famous alumnus of this particular school).

SPICY

Another "under the counter" genre, Spicy pulps were simply tales from any of the other pulp genres with "adult themes" added. Usually this involved women in various stages of undress (prominently displayed on the cover, naturally), and often threatened with a sado-sexual "fate worse than death." Again, almost laughably tame to twenty-first century eyes, but scandalous in the thirties.

The "damsel in distress" element of Spicy pulps certainly finds its way into the other genres, albeit with less of a concentration on whips!

One of the best things about this genre was the magazine titles, which put "Spicy" in the name to let prospective readers know that titillation awaited within. This led to such stalwarts as S*picy Mystery, Spicy Detective,* and *Spicy Western*. Pulp fans have often joked about an imaginary entry into this field, *Spicy Zeppelin Stories!*

JUNGLE STORIES

This genre was made famous by the Tarzan stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, which first appeared in *All Story Magazine*. There were plenty of imitators, however, and soon the market was flooded with tales of Ki-Gor and Kazar and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle.

Not all Jungle stories were tales of Noble Savages, however. There were tales of intrepid explorers, big game hunters, treasure hunters and more, crossing over with the Foreign Adventure genre. Remember

that at the time, there were areas of the globe that were largely unexplored--and many of those were in the tractless interiors of the jungles of Africa, South America, the South Pacific and Asia. These unknown regions were ripe for adventure in the minds of the readers of the Thirties.

The Jungle Story pulps also crossed over quite a bit with the Lost World genre (q.v.) -- Lost cities and secret civilizations were a common staple of this genre.

SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction was, essentially, an invention of the pulps. Born of the earlier form, the "scientific romance" of the nineteenth century, the science fiction story (a term coined by pulp publisher Hugo Gernsback in his *Science Wonder Stories* magazine in June of 1929) was tailor-made for the pulp format. Of all of the pulp genres, it is the one that has thrived beyond the medium that created it.

The science fiction stories of the pulps leaned heavily toward spectacle. There weren't a lot of thoughtful examinations of the impact of technology upon human civilization and culture... but there were a lot of rocket ships, alien invasions, two-fisted scientists blazing away at Bug Eyed Monsters with ray-guns, etc. In most cases the science made no sense, but the readers didn't care. If it sounded like it had the ring of science to it, that was good enough!

That is the biggest difference between pulp science fiction and modern variety. Even in the most far-fetched space operas of today, attempts are made at a certain degree of "realism"--perhaps not scientific accuracy, but at the very least internal consistency of the genre elements. We all know that "Warp drive" is ridiculous, but we also know that there is a consistently stated exposition of how it works within the fictional world. Not so with pulp sci-fi. There was no attempt made to justify anything. The science was often flat-out wrong, but breathlessly described nonetheless. The rocket is powered by "Atomic Radio Turbines" --- what the heck does that mean? Who cares! On to the next exciting chapter!

As with all pulp genres, there was a great deal of cross over. You could see science-fiction meet horror in tales of alien invasion and body-snatching, or thrilling to the exploits of science fiction heroes like *Captain Future*.

WESTERN

Westerns were a popular pulp genre as well, and not just period tales of gunslingers and Indian raiding parties. In one of the stranger creations of the pulp era, the western magazines would occasionally print contemporary westerns, set in the 1930s.

This strange mix of Cowboys, Indians, Radios and Tommyguns was especially evident in the cliffhanger serial films of the time, and naturally was reflected in print as well. For a jaw-dropping experience, track down a DVD copy of the 1935 Gene Autry serial *The Phantom Empire*, which featured the singing cowboy star fighting the super-science of the underground city of Maurania!

LOST WORLD

The Lost World genre also grew out of the scientific romances of the nineteenth century. These stories usually featured a location that, by virtue of its isolation from the rest of the world, developed separately. Lost Worlds could be found within the hollow earth (reached by caves), in jungles inexplicably found in the middle of the Antarctic (warmed by the presence of active volcanoes), hidden islands in the South Pacific, or deep within primordial African jungles.

Lost Worlds are often populated by remnants of Earth civilizations long past...Ancient Rome, Vikings, Lost African tribes, Sunken Atlantis. Some are populated by creatures whose evolution progressed differently than their more familiar cousins (intelligent, talking species of apes were always a popular choice here). Naturally, Lost Worlds almost always featured dinosaurs, who have survived extinction due to the isolated environment...and, let's be honest: because they're cool.

The stories of Lost Worlds usually involved the adventures of a member of our society upon finding themselves in this strange place, but on occasion (in tales that crossed-over with the Jungle Stories genre), would be tales of Lost World natives.

OTHER GENRES

Other genres from the pulps are also useful for RPG purposes, but usually form the basis of entire games already: Notably the Swords & Sorcery genre, which thrived during the pulp publishing era, and directly led to the creation of the role-playing game hobby in the first place!

PULP GAMING

Now that we've discussed what the pulps actually were, we can get to the meat of the matter: using pulp elements to run a "pulp genre" role-playing campaign.

This section discusses pulp elements that are essential to the pulp gaming experience, with guidelines for how to use these elements within the modern d20 rules.

Heroes & Sidekicks:
Most pulp tales were devoted to the exploits of a single hero, often with a cadre of assistants. This can make things problematic in a role-playing setting. Gamers usually prefer to play heroes, not sidekicks.

There are two ways to address this in your game. One way is to go ahead and put together a group of heroes working together. While it is true that you never saw teams featuring Doc Savage, The Shadow, G-8 and Tarzan teaming up to fight evil together, there were hero groups in the pulps--the Secret Six, for example. The trick to putting together a group is to ensure that each character is a specialist, with as little cross-over with the other characters as possible. Give everyone something that they can do that the others cannot. If you have one investigative specialist, then don't allow someone else to create a character who focuses on investigation. Give everyone their chance to shine. Specialists also make more sense in a group than a haphazard collection of polymath heroes, each of whom is a brilliant Jack-of-all-Trades (One wonders why such heroes would need to team up at all).

Generally speaking, the Advanced Classes presented by Adamant Entertainment in this game
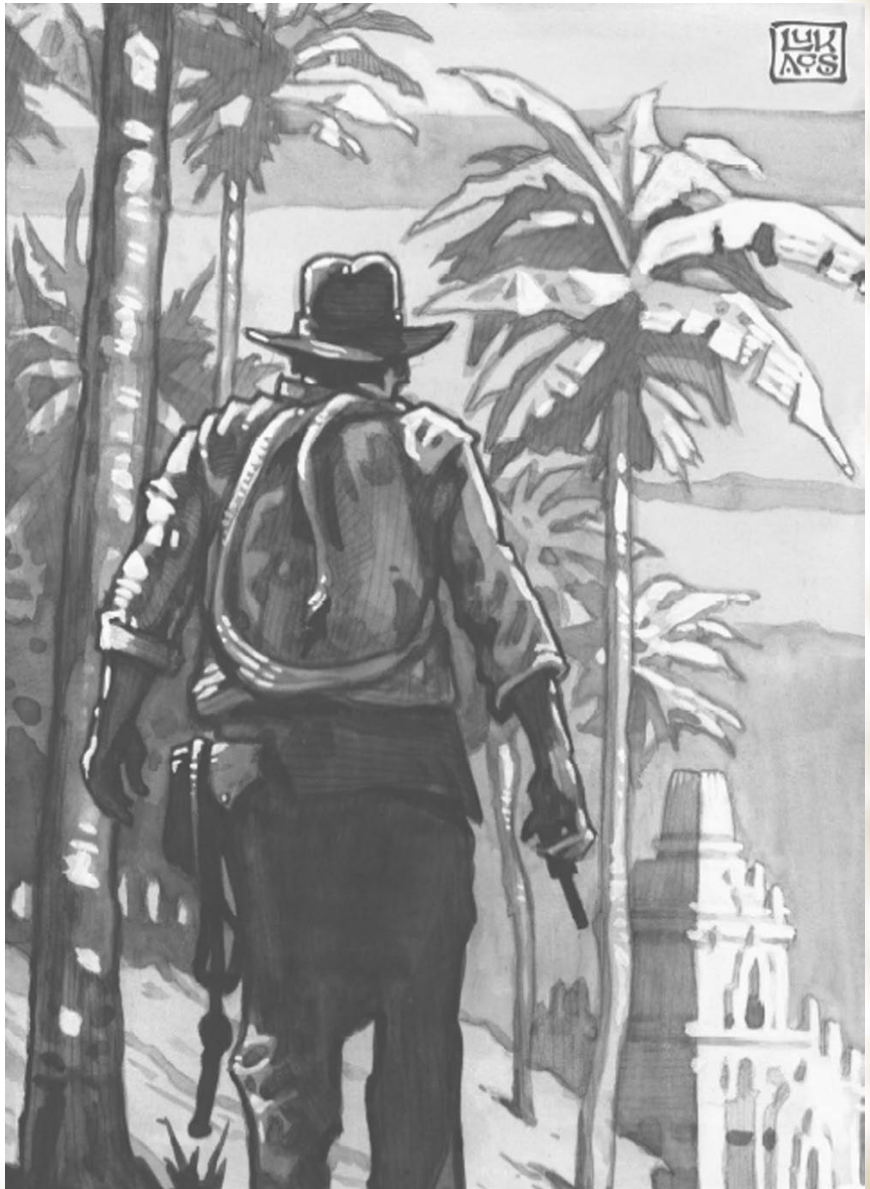
line are intended for story-focus heroes. They don't really work for team play, although individual GMs make make exceptions in certain cases. Classes like the Paragon and the Man of Mystery, however, are nearly impossible to work into a team setting.

The second method is a bit closer to the source material: run a hero and his assistants. In the Doc Savage stories, Doc's assistants are all experts in their individual fields--specialists who each are heroes in their own right. The Spider stories often featured his assistants going off on their own--and on more than one occasion saving The Spider himself!

The only difference between this and the group advice given above is that there is one character who is everything the others are, and more. In this sort of campaign, a hero should be at least 3 levels higher than the assistants, and usually has levels in one of the THRILLING TALES Advanced Classes.

The players will have to be comfortable with the fact that one character is going to placed above the others. However, this really isn't that different than playing a game set in a military hierarchy (whether a World War II game, or a game set on a Starfleet vessel), which gamers do all the time. If the players have no problems with that, just go ahead and do it.

If they bristle slightly at this, another solution is to have every player create an assistant (following the guidelines for groups) and then have the main hero created as a character that is shared--played by all players. The hero is run by a different player in each scene (usually a scene where their regular character is not present).

In a Hero & Sidekicks campaign, the sidekicks should be rewarded, in-game, for behavior that reinforces the common elements of this genre:

If a sidekick gets captured, or otherwises manages to find themselves in a situation where the main hero will need to come to their rescue, the hero will receive an temporary action point (which must be spent during this adventure), and the sidekick will receive a bonus experience award of 425 XP. This system rewards not only the sidekick, but gives the hero a direct bonus as well.

Villains, Henchman, Minions and Mooks:
Villains in pulp RPG should be the equal (and preferably more powerful) than the PCs. They are the equivalent of the Evil Wizard or the Dragon in fantasy d20--the big threat, the focus of the adventure. As such, they are created as Heroic characters, as described in the Modern d20 rules.

A Villain will typically have one prized Lieutenant (occasionally more, but usually one). In THRILLING TALES, we refer to this character as the Henchman. Henchman are the "level bosses" of the game--they are are also created as Heroic characters. The Henchman will usually be encountered by the PCs long before they ever get to the Villain...occasionally before they even realize that the Villain exists!

Minions are the rank-and-file of the Villain's loyal subordinates who follow his orders. They are created as Ordinary characters, as described on the Modern d20 rules.

The ability to attract Minions is a class ability of the Mastermind Advanced Class, bestowed at 1st level. For that reason, most pulp villains should have a level of Mastermind. A GM can decide instead to bestow this ability to all Villains, in which case it differs slightly from the Mastermind class ability.

The number of minions available to the Villain, and the NPC level of those minions, can be found on the table on the following page.

Minions are gained based on the sum of the Villains's total character level and his Charisma modifer, modified by the factors listed below:

       Reknown feat: +3
       Infamy feat: +3
       Leadership Feat: +1
       Provides room, board, equipment +2

Wealthy (16+ on Wealth): +1
Rich (21+ on Wealth): +2

Regardless of the Villain's total level and Cha mod, they cannot have any minions with a level greater than their level, minus one (so, for example, a 4th level character could not have any 4th level minions, even if their modified score was 17 or better). Minions can be of any class.

Minions that are lost are replaced with new ones by the next adventure only in the case of the Mastermind class ability.   Non-Mastermind Villains have non-replaceable minions.

| Total Level + Cha mod | Minion Level | | | | | |
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
9 or less	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	5	-	-	-	-	-
11	6	-	-	-	-	-
12	8	-	-	-	-	-
13	10	1	-	-	-	-
14	15	1	-	-	-	-
15	20	2	1	-	-	-
16	25	2	1	-	-	-
17	30	3	1	1	-	-
18	35	3	1	1	-	-
19	40	4	2	1	1	-
20	50	5	3	2	1	-
21	60	6	3	2	1	1
22	75	7	4	2	2	1
23	90	9	5	3	2	1
24	110	11	6	3	2	1
25	135	13	7	4	2	2
26	150	15	8	4	3	2
27	165	17	9	5	3	3
28	180	19	10	5	4	3
29	200	20	11	6	4	4
30	220	22	12	6	5	4
+1	+20	+2	+1	+1/2	+1/2	+1/2

Mooks are a new type of character for THRILLING TALES.   They are the level below Ordinaries. Mooks are the faceless cannon-fodder who get thrown at the PCs in combat. Use the 1st level Minion entry on the Minion table to determine the number of Mooks that a Villain has available per adventure.   Mooks are renewable for every villain, regardless of class.

Mooks have:

* Entirely Average ability scores (every score is 10 or 11, giving a +0 bonus)

* No hit points. If they are hit, they're down (either dead or unconscious, depending upon the attack used).

* No action points.

* No class features.

* No levels in any advanced class

* 1 level only in one of the Basic Classes.

The primary purpose of the Mook is as cannon fodder. The Villain will throw these at the PCs in an effort to slow their progress, with the off chance that one or more Mooks might get lucky and do some damage.

Mooks do not have to be limited to only the service of a Villain. If a GM wants to, he or she can throw Mooks at the PCs in any situation where a large-scale combat is called for. A Fortune Hunter, for example, might face a horde of cannibals, all of whom are Mooks, led by an Ordinary. A Man of Mystery might find himself ambushed by Mook gangsters completely unrelated to the current Villain, who are simply taking the opportunity to strike at someone who has plagued their operations!

Stunts & Action Points

Action points are a useful part of Modern d20 play, giving players the ability to alter rolls in dramatic situations.   In a pulp campaign, players should have access to more action points than they would under the normal rules.   This is addressed by stunts.

Any character who attempts a stunt action should be rewarded with 1 temporary action point. Temporary action points are spent just like regular action points, but must be spent during that adventure. They do not carry over between adventures.

What is a stunt action? A stunt action is any action which is performed in a flashier manner than one would normally observe. Get on board a train before it pulls out of the station is an action. Leaping from a moving car onto a moving train is a stunt action, and should be rewarded.

In game terms, a stunt is an action where the player purposefully makes the action more difficult for themselves. In the above example, the player would have had the option to get on board the train, but instead announced that the character had gotten there too late, and instead described the stunt action. In a way, the player is taking on the role of the GM for a moment, changing the situation for his or her character in such a way that a more difficult solution is required.

A stunt action should always require a roll, at a minimum DC of 15. The GM is the final arbiter of the DC of a particular stunt action. Pulling off Impossible stunts (DC 40) may even result in the character earning more than 1 temporary action point, at the GM's discretion.

Quips, Soliloquies and Gloating:

Characters in pulp stories are a talkative bunch. Heroes and villains always seem to have time to banter back and forth, even in the midst of combat! To reflect this, any character may speak during a round as a free action.

In addition, one of the familiar recurring elements of pulp stories is the propensity for villains to spill their guts and tell the hero every detail of their plan, once they think they're in the clear.

To reflect this, any villain who has captured the hero (or otherwise is in a situation where they feel that there is no way that their plan can be stopped) must make a Will save at DC 35 to avoid revealing their entire plan.   If the save is made, but the roll was still within 5 of the DC, the villain will still reveal some (but not all) of the plan.   The temptation to gloat is simply too irresistible.

The Thirties

The pulps are very much a product of their times, and GMs looking for ways to bring that feeling across in a pulp campaign should try whenever possible to include events that place the adventure in a historical context.

Historical detail can make a setting more "real" to players, and can also provide GMs with inspirations for adventures.

1930

The Nazi party places second in German elections, but Adolf Hitler is kept from his seat in the Reichstag because he is an Austrian citizen.

In South Africa, white women can now vote, but blacks are still excluded under the regime that would soon be called apartheid.

Pluto, the ninth planet, is discovered by astronomers.

President Herbert Hoover signs the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act, weakening the already failing global economy.

Over 1,300 American banks fail and unemployment exceeds 4 million as the Depression sinks lower.

In Jamaica, Rastafarians proclaim Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie as the new Messiah.

A Fire in the Ohio State Penitentiary near Columbus kills 320.

Chicago Tribune journalist Alfred Liddle is shot. Newspapers promise $55,000 reward for information. Liddle is later found to have had contacts to organized crime

British Airship R101 crashes in France en-route to India on its maiden voyage.
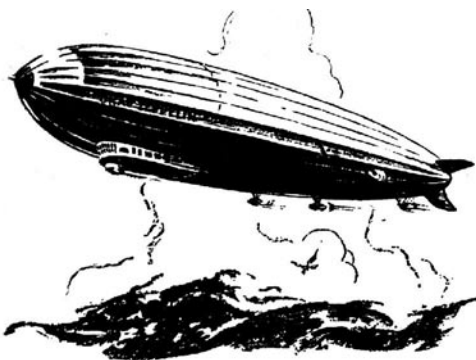
1931

The Scottsboro affair begins when nine black men are arrested on false rape charges at a train stop in Paint Rock, Alabama.

A 34-year-old Baptist preacher named Elijah Poole joins the Nation of Islam and becomes Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims.

Chicago mobster Al Capone is convicted of income tax evasion. Capone is sentenced to 11 years in jail and a $50,000 fine.

Unemployed Americans march on the White House, demanding a national program of employment at a minimum wage. They are turned away.

Japan occupies Manchuria (which they call Manchukuo), beginning a period of Sino-Japanese conflict which doesn't end until Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War.

"The Star Spangled Banner," originally written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key, becomes the American national anthem by order of Congress.

In China, the Yangtze River bursts a dam, causing massive flooding, famine, destruction and death.

Construction of the Empire State Building is completed in New York City

In organized crime, the so-called "Castellemmarese War" ends with the assassination of Joe "The Boss" Masseria, briefly leaving Salvatore Maranzano as *capo di tutti capi (*"boss of all bosses")--undisputed leader of the American Mafia. Maranzano is himself assassinated less than 6 months later, leading to the establishment of the Five Families, a national commission headed by Charlie "Lucky" Luciano.

1932

Mohandas Gandhi begins fasting to protest British treatment of India's untouchable caste. After just 6 days, he wins concessions.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, pledging a ``New Deal,'' is elected president for the first of his four terms.

Wall Street's Dow Jones Industrial hits its Depression-era low, 41.22.

Physicists Sir John Douglas Cockcroft and Ernest Walton split the atom for the first time.

The Great Depression continues to take a heavy toll: in this year alone, 1,161 banks fail, nearly 20,000 business go bankrupt, and 21,000 people commit suicide.

The son of noted aviator Charles Lindbergh is kidnapped and dies. Richard Bruno Hauptmann is arrested for the crime, beginning the "Trial of the Century."

1933

Prohibition ends in the United States.

Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany. By the end of the year, Hitler has proclaimed the Third Reich, opened the first concentration camp at Dachau, eliminated all political parties other than National Socialism, and consolidated his dictatorial rule.

President Franklin Roosevelt begins to record his ``fireside chats'' for weekly radio broadcast.

Giuseppe Zangara attempts to assassinate President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, but instead kills Chicago, Illinois Mayor Anton J. Cermak.

The federal government passes a flurry of innovative social legislation, as part of Roosevelt's "New Deal."

Fiorella La Guardia elected mayor of New York.

US airship Akron crashes near New York - 74 dead

Karl Jansky announces the detection of radio waves from the centre of the galaxy.

1934

The "Dust Bowl" hits the US Midwest, blowing 300 million tons of topsoil into the Atlantic, devastating farmland in Kansas, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma.

General Lazaro Cardenas, elected president of Mexico, begins a program of agrarian reform, redistributing land and building the power of organized labor.

The FCC is created to oversee U.S. telephone, telegraph, and radio communications.

The National Labor Relations Board is created to regulate collective bargaining between labor and management.

Baseball's Negro National League pitcher Leroy Robert ``Satchel'' Paige breaks Dizzy Dean's 30-game winning streak.

Bank robbers Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker die in a shower of police bullets near Shreveport, Louisiana.

Alcatraz becomes a prison.

Surgeon R.K. Wilson allegedly takes a photograph of the Loch Ness Monster.

The FBI guns down John Dillinger and Baby-Face Nelson.

Japan renounces the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 and the London Naval Treaty of 1930.

1935

The Nuremberg laws, enacted by Germany's Nazi party, make anti-Semitism the law of the land.

FBI kills Barker gang, including Ma Barker, in a shootout

Congress passes the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act), reasserting workers' right to collective bargaining. Dissidents within the AFL create the CIO.

Irish Protestants in Belfast riot against Catholics, provoking retaliation from Catholics in the Irish Free State.

The Social Security Act becomes law in the US.

America's first public housing projects are established on New York's Lower East Side.

Italy invades Ethiopia.

Hitler publicly begins to re-arm Germany, creating the Luftwaffe in violation of the Versailles Treaty.
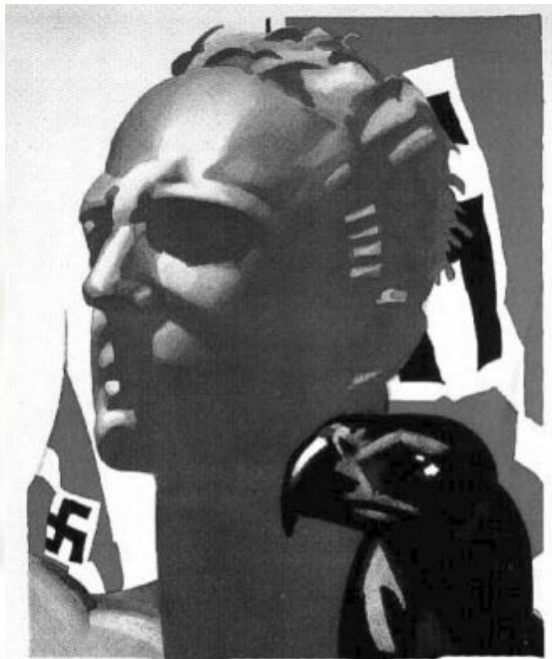
1936

The Spanish Civil War begins. Hundreds of Americans volunteer for ``Lincoln Brigades'' to help fight General Francisco Franco's fascists.

In India, statesman Jawaharlal Nehru is elected president of the Indian National Congress.

In violation of the Locarno Pact and the Treaty of Versailles, Germany reoccupies the Rhineland.

Joseph Stalin begins a "great purge" to liquidate his enemies. By 1939, over 8 million are dead and perhaps 10 million imprisoned.

Richard Bruno Hauptmann is executed for the kidnapping and death of the Lindbergh baby.

A major heat wave strikes the Midwestern United States, hundreds of high temperature records are set.

In baseball, Joe DiMaggio joins the New York Yankees, who win the World Series, 4-2, against the New York Giants.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt is re-elected president.

Edward VIII of the United Kingdom abdicates, announcing his intention to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Rumour asserts that he was asked to step down due to his pro-Fascist, pro-Nazi leanings.

1937

Howard Hughes sets a new air record by flying from Los Angeles to New York City in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

After staging a series of sit-down strikes, the United Auto Workers win official recognition from General Motors.

Pro-Franco German forces attack the Spanish city

of Guernica. Pablo Picasso paints his cubist masterpiece as a reflection upon the destruction.

Amelia Earhart and her aircraft disappear mysteriously over the Pacific.

The Golden Gate Bridge opens in San Francisco.

Sino-Japanese War: Japan invades China. Shanghai is occupied. 250,000 civilians and prisoners are slaughtered in the Nanjing Massacre.

1938

In its most violent display of anti-Semitism yet, German Nazis attack Jewish people and property in Kristallnacht (so named for the sounds of breaking glass).

The Dies Committee (AKA the House UnAmerican Activities Committee), charged with stamping out Nazi activity in the United States, changes its focus to Communist activity instead.

In the Halloween radio broadcast "War of the Worlds," Orson Welles panics Americans who believe that Martians are actually invading Earth.

Under the presidency of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico nationalizes its petroleum industries.

Anschluss: Hitler annexes Austria. German troops march into Sudetenland.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is Walt Disney's first full-length animated film.

Howard Hughes sets a new record by completing a 91 hour airplane flight around the world.

1939

Hitler's Germany invades Poland, which falls in a month. France and Great Britain declare war.

Dictator Francisco Franco conquers Madrid, ending the Spanish Civil War

Ho Chi Minh creates the Viet Minh party to oppose colonialism in the French colony ``Indochina.''

The SS St. Louis, a ship carrying a cargo of 963 Jewish refugees, is denied permission to land in Florida after already having been turned away from Cuba. Forced to return to Europe, most of its passengers later die in Nazi concentration camps.

President Roosevelt believes that a longer Christmas shopping season will boost the economy and proclaims that Thanksgiving will fall on the fourth Thursday of November. This shift is soon passed into law.

Based on recent research, Albert Einstein writes a letter to President Roosevelt regarding the possibility of using uranium to initiate a nuclear chain reaction, the fundamental process behind the atomic bomb.

In Munich, Adolf Hitler narrowly escapes an assassination attempt while celebrating the 16th anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch on November 8th.

Gone With the Wind, starring Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, premieres. *The Wizard of Oz*, another blockbuster of this year, opens before Christmas.

RANDOM ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The pages that follow feature a series of tables which can be used by a GM to randomly generate the outline of an adventure, from plot, to locations, to action scenes, and more. It is based on a Master Plot Formula that was used by Lester Dent, the creator of Doc Savage. The italicized sections are quotations directly from Dent's formula.

Dent advocated the division of a pulp story into four sections, which we'll call Acts. He then broke each Act down into the elements that he felt were necessary to feature within that section. Our random adventure generator will work the same way. For each section, there will be a number of variables which a GM can determine via the tables presented, and when completed, the generator will create a full outline of the adventure, ready to be fleshed out with statted NPCs, and waiting for victims....er...I mean eager players.

Here's how it starts:

1. A DIFFERENT MURDER METHOD FOR VILLAIN TO USE
2. A DIFFERENT THING FOR VILLAIN TO BE SEEKING
3. A DIFFERENT LOCALE
4. A MENACE WHICH IS TO HANG LIKE A CLOUD OVER HERO

One of these DIFFERENT things would be nice, two better, three swell.

We'll combine these suggestions into three elements, which are determined before you start laying out the adventure itself. The three elements are:

1) The Villain (who is it?)

2) The Fiendish Plot (what is the Villain doing?)

3) The main Location. (Where does this occur?)

Each element is arrived at by rolling on the tables that begin on the next page.

Table 1: The Villain

D% Roll	Result
01-04	Gangster
05-09	Occultist
10-13	Murderer
14-17	Supernatural Threat
18-21	Communist
22-25	Cult Leader
26-29	Ruler of Lost Civilization
30-33	Mad Scientist
34-37	Wicked Foreigner
38-41	Thief
42-45	Assassin
46-49	Femme Fatale
50-53	Crooked Cop
54-57	Dictator
58-61	Nazi
62-65	Business Magnate
66-69	Crime Lord
70-73	Pirate
74-77	Anarchist
78-81	Society Swell
82-85	Crooked Politician
86-88	Alien Invader
89-93	Mastermind
94-97	Nemesis
98-00	Roll Twice and Combine

Gangster: One of the many members of organized crime gangs that plagued the period.

Occultist: A villain with an interest or skill in Occult matters (whether magic is real or fake is up to the GM).

Murderer: Someone who has killed another person--this individual may not have been a "Villain" prior to this event, and may not fit the classical villain modes--best used in murder mystery adventures.

Supernatural Threat: A ghost, a mummy, a vampire, etc. (The GM will have to determine whether or not the supernatural exists, or whether this is a "scooby doo" mystery)

Communist: Used almost interchangeably with Nazis in latter pulps. An evil member of the International Communist Conspiracy, looking to subvert and conquer freedom-loving countries.

Cult Leader: The mad leader of a group of fanatics.

Ruler of Lost Civilization: Anything ranging from a descendant of Genghis Khan trying to re-assert the Mongol Horde, to a Witch Doctor who rules a hidden African Tribe.

Mad Scientist: "They called me Mad at the University!" They were right.

Wicked Foreigner: Historically speaking, these were almost always Oriental (q.v. *Fu Manchu*), but any foreign culture will do.

Thief: A villain who specializes in burglary and other forms of theft.

Assassin: An individual whose business is killing. Not a simple murderer, but a professional.

Femme Fatale: You knew she was trouble when you got a look at those gams....

Crooked Cop: A man who has turned his back on his oath to uphold the law.

Dictator: The power-hungry despotic ruler of a nation.

Nazi: Evil Fascist. The classic pulp villain. I hate these guys.

Business Magnate: Capitalist gone wrong.

Crime Lord: The ruler of a vast criminal empire, not neccesarily connected to "classical" organized crime.

Pirate: One who steals from (and using) vehicles, whether on sea, land, or in the air.

Anarchist: Madman dedicated to the overthrow of civilization.

Society Swell: A member of the upper class, including the rich and famous.

Crooked Politician: Power-mad and sticking it to the little guy.

Alien Invader: Either the actual invaders themselves, or their earth-bound servant trying to bring about the invasion.

Mastermind: The pinnacle of the criminal class.

Nemesis: If the main hero (or team if there is no main hero) has a nemesis, they re-appear. If none exists, create one--a dark reflection of the the hero, Moriarty to Holmes...The Joker to Batman.

Roll Twice and Combine: GMs can either combine both rolls in a single villain, or feature more than one villain.

Table 2: The Fiendish Plot, Part 1	
D% Roll	**Result**
01-04	Manipulate
05-09	Sell
10-13	Acquire
14-17	Kill
18-21	Control
22-25	Steal
26-29	Create
30-33	Hunt
34-37	Terrorize
38-41	Infiltrate
42-45	Overthrow
46-49	Obliterate
50-53	Ransom
54-57	Blackmail
58-61	Hijack
62-65	Bomb
66-69	Smuggle
70-73	Murder
74-77	Rob
78-81	Attack
82-85	Rule
86-88	Take
89-93	Destroy
94-97	Extort
98-00	Roll Twice and Combine

Table 3: The Fiendish Plot, Part 2	
D% Roll	**Result**
01-04	Monster
05-09	Building
10-13	People
14-17	A Country
18-21	Treasure
22-25	An Enemy
26-29	An Object
30-33	An Invention
34-37	A Woman
38-41	A Man
42-45	The Hero (or team)
46-49	Money
50-53	A City
54-57	The World
58-61	A Vehicle
62-65	A Business
66-69	A Lost World
70-73	Jewels
74-77	A Ruler
78-81	Someone famous
82-85	A rival
86-88	The Law
89-93	Innocent Victims
94-97	Hero's Friends or Family
98-00	Roll Twice and Combine

To determine the Fiendish Plot, roll once on Table 2 and once on Table 3, and combine the results. A result of 98-00 on either table can be interpreted as either a second roll on both tables, or just one, as the GM sees fit.

For example: A roll of 16 and 44 would yield the result: "Kill The Hero." The villain has decided that his plans would work much better without the hero in the way. A roll of 48 and 67 would generate: "Obliterate A Lost World." The villain has decided to destroy a hidden island or secret city. Why?

On occasion, the rolls may not make sense. ("Bomb Jewels," for example) The GM is encouraged to think the result through anyway. The pulps, after all, were known for bizarre stories. Perhaps the villain plans to build a bomb using diamonds, the hardest substance known to man? What for?

Table 4: Main Location	
D% Roll	Result
01-04	City: The Docks
05-09	Far-off Jungle
10-13	Asian Country
14-17	European Country
18-21	Third-World Country
22-25	City: slums
26-29	City: Chinatown
30-33	Desert
34-37	At Sea
38-41	Lost City
42-45	Secret Base
46-49	City: Entertainment District
50-53	City: Warehouses
54-57	In the Air
58-61	City: Tenderloin District
62-65	Farmland
66-69	Forest
70-73	Another City
74-77	Cross-country (train, etc)
78-81	City: University
82-85	City: Government
86-88	City: Museums
89-93	City: Skyscrapers
94-97	Arctic/Antarctic
98-00	Roll Twice and Combine

The assumption made on this table is that the GM is playing a generic Hero Pulp campaign, where the PCs are based in a big city (usually New York). Pulp campaigns set elsewhere (Lost Worlds, etc.) should have locations determined by the GM.

EXAMPLE OF ADVENTURE SET-UP:

Rolling for all three elements, I get:

63: Business Magnate
87, 16: Take A Country
38: Lost City.

Thinking about it for a moment, I come up with an idea for a William Randolph Hearst-style tycoon, who is trying to take over a small, oil-rich desert nation, looking for an artifact in a Lost City in the desert sands to do it! He's looking for the fabled Scimitar of Al-Azif, and if he finds it, he will

have a legitimate claim to the throne of Qurania! If he gains control over the country, its people are doomed to a life of slavery...can the heroes stop him?

ANOTHER EXAMPLE:

Rolling for all three elements, I get:

00: Roll Twice and Combine. I get a 85, 22, which gives me Crooked Politician and Cult Leader, which I decide to combine into a single villain.
63, 81: Bomb Someone Famous
47: City: Entertainment District

Wow--this is a juicy one! This one unfolds in my mind, giving me the idea of a District Attorney who is secretly the head of a Cult called the Red Hand. The Red Hand has decided that America's troubles are due to their worship of false idols, and so have decided to plant a bomb at the gala premiere of a movie--which will wipe out most of the screen stars of the time, who will be in attendance.

The First Act:

Now that you've got the set-up, we move to the first act of the adventure.   Let's see what Lester Dent has to say about the first act:

First line, or as near thereto as possible, introduce the hero and swat him with a fistful of trouble.

We'll call this the hook--what gets the PCs involved. We'll have a table for that.

Introduce ALL the other characters as soon as possible. Bring them on in action.

For this, we'll move to another table which will give us the supporting characters that will feature in the adventure.

Hero's endevours land him in an actual physical conflict

Now we get to the good stuff. We'll create the first action sequence, using a table designed specifically for that.

Near the end of first 1500 words, there is a complete surprise twist in the plot development.

And to mark the end of the act, we add a twist in the plot which spins us into the second act. You guessed it, we've got a plot twist table.

Table 5: The Hook	
D% Roll	Result
01-11	Solicitation
12-20	Dead Body
21-30	Disaster
31-42	Attack
43-56	Bizarre Occurance
57-65	News
66-77	Friend in Need
78-90	Up To Our Necks
91-96	Roll Twice
97-00	Other

Solicitation: The simplest of plot hooks--an NPC (unknown to the characters) comes to the characters and asks for their help.

Dead Body: The characters encounter a corpse, which has some clue on it regarding the Fiendish Plot.

Disaster: A horrible disaster occurs, somehow related to the Fiendish Plot, and draws the character's attention.

Attack: An attack occurs (on someone other than the characters), somehow related to the Fiendish Plot.

Bizarre Occurance: A strange, inexplicable event happens, somehow related to the Fiendish Plot. In the tradition of the pulps, the more outlandish and bizarre, the better---an early test of the Villain's new ray cannon, for example, turns the sky over the city a brilliant green for 10 minutes at Noon.

News: The characters read a story in the paper, or hear a story on the radio, that is related to the Fiendish Plot.

Friend in Need: Similar to the Solicitation hook, except that the NPC is a friend of the characters. The NPC comes to the characters for help.

Up To Our Necks: In media res: The characters are involved in the plot from the starting gun. They are attacked, or implicated in a crime, or the victim of a theft, or somehow made to suffer in a manner that is directly related to the Fiendish Plot.

Roll Twice: Roll twice on the Hook Table, and combine the results.

Other: A Hook not represented on this table, created by the GM.

Table 6: Supporting Characters			
D% Roll	Descriptor	Descriptor	Type
01-04	Big	Neat	Entertainer
05-09	Ugly	Unlucky	Pilot
10-13	Shifty	Menacing	Soldier
14-17	Secretive	Weak-willed	Politician
18-21	Strong	Foreign	Contact
22-25	Small	Rich	Business Owner
26-29	Trustworthy	Small-time	Guide
30-33	Helpless	Ambitious	Servant
34-37	Quirky	Skilled	Socialite
38-41	Troublesome	Helpful	Scientist
42-45	Smart	Feisty	Doctor
46-49	Charming	Wild	Criminal
50-53	Strong-willed	All-American	Investigator
54-57	Famous	Hard-boiled	Spouse
58-61	Sloppy	Distinctive	Expert
62-65	Dense	Professional	Informant
66-69	Cold	Young	Vehicle Operator
70-73	Impulsive	Violent	Thug
74-77	Clumsy	Urban	Fanatic
78-81	Lucky	Amateur	Academician
82-85	Dangerous	Old	Assistant
86-88	Agile	Native	Worker
89-93	Beautiful	Evil	Henchman
94-97	Weak	Odd	Occultist
98-00	Talented	Ordinary	Kid

The above table gives you the featured supporting characters for the adventure. Note that unless otherwise specified, featured characters are always Heroic characters, rather than Ordinary.

First roll 2d4 for the number of featured supporting characters that will appear in the adventure. Then, for each character, roll three times on Table 6. This will give you two descriptors and a type, which will give you a concept for the NPC. Then, using the standard modern D20 rules, generate the NPC's stats.

EXAMPLES:

I need the featured supporting characters for an adventure. I roll for the number of supporting characters and get a 3.

For the first Supporting Character, I roll three

percentile rolls, and get: 58, 94, 61, which gives me a "Sloppy, Odd Expert." I envision an unkempt inventor of strange devices...someone who can help the characters, if they can get past his strangeness.

For the second Supporting Character, I roll a 00, 72, and 06, which gives me a "Talented, Violent Pilot." Even though this does not specify that this character is the villain's henchman, I decide that the idea of a bloodthirsty air ace is just too perfect a henchman to ignore.

For the last Supporting Character, I roll a 18, 52, and 66, which results in a "Strong, All-American Vehicle Operator," who I decide will be a pilot and owner of a small cargo airline, who is being victimized by the villain and his henchman.

Table 7: Action Sequence Type	
D20 Roll	Result
1-4	Chase, foot or mount
5-10	Chase, vehicle
11-14	Fight, unarmed
15-20	Fight, Armed

Every action sequence is comprised of four elements: Type, Participants, Setting, and Complications. Using the provided tables, roll a d20, check the result, and assemble your action sequence!

The results are fairly self-explanatory, with the exception of the Complications:

Bystanders: The action sequence will feature non-participants who will get in the way.

Environment: The environment in which the sequence occurs causes difficulties (examples include rain, dangerous surroundings, hazardous conditions). All combatants should be taking penalties on their actions due to this.

Props: The sequence features elements of the setting which can be used by the participants during the sequence (examples would include metal rods at a foundry, or trash cans in a street chase, etc.).

New Sequence: The original action sequence will lead immediately into another sequence--re-roll this new sequence from the beginning. It is possible to have a linked chain of multiple sequences!

Table 8: Action Sequence Participants	
D20 Roll	Result
1-6	Few (1-2 per PC)
7-15	Some (3-4 per PC)
16-20	Lots (5+ per PC)

Table 9: Action Sequence Setting	
D20 Roll	Result
1	Nautical setting (ship, docks, etc.)
2	Natural Setting (park , jungle, etc.)
3	Rooftops
4	City Street
5	Residential Setting
6	Entertainment Setting (theatre, stadium, nightclub, etc.)
7	Church/temple/other religious
8	Business Setting (office, factory, warehouse, street market, etc.)
9	Transportational Setting (airport, train station, or even on trains or planes)
10	Educational (museum, college, etc.)
11	Civic setting (post office, city hall)
12	Slum or Rough neighborhood
13	"Middle of Nowhere"
14	Secret/hidden location
15	Headquarters (PCs or others)
16	Military setting (base, etc.)
17	Restaurant
18	Laboratory
19	Landmark
20	Unusual setting (underwater, in space, underground, etc.)

Table 10: Action Sequence Complications	
D20 Roll	Result
1-5	Bystanders
6-10	Environment
11-15	Props
16-20	New Sequence

EXAMPLES:

Rolling on the Action Sequence Tables, I get: 9, 15, 13, 13. This gives me "Chase, vehicle", "Some Particpants," "Middle of Nowhere" and "Props." Mulling it over, I decide that the characters are going to be chased by three carloads of the villain's minions along deserted back-country roads. There are numerous obstacles which will appear during the chase, which can be used to try to force the other drivers into crashing (fallen trees, slow-moving wagons, etc.).

Giving it another try, I roll 17, 6, 18, 10: "Fight, armed," "Few Participants," "Laboratory" and "Environment." I decide that the PCs are going to be attacked by the Henchman and a handful of minions, while in an inventor's lab. The place is filled with sparking electrical machinery, which will cause electrical damage to anyone falling into it!

For our last example, I roll 15, 17, 15, 20: "Fight, armed," "Lots of Participants," "Headquarters" and "New Sequence." Rolling for the new sequence, I get 3, 7, 3, 6: "Chase, foot or mounted," "Some participants," "Rooftops" and "Environment." This one looks like a corker! How about this: A horde of the villain's minions attach the PC's own headquarters, eventually leading to a rain-slicked rooftop chase as either the minions or the PCs are trying to beat a hasty retreat!

Table 4: Plot Twist	
D20 Roll	Result
1-2	Betrayal!
3-9	New Location
10	Greater Villain
11-13	Hidden Plot
14-15	Reversal!
16-18	Bizarre Occurance
19	Deus Ex Machina
20	Other

Betrayal!: An NPC changes his or her allegiance in a dramatic fashion.

New Location: Roll again on the Location Table (Table 4). The plot will move to that location at the beginning of the next act.

Greater Villain: The villain of the adventure is actually a henchman of an even greater villain. Re-roll on Table 1 to reveal the new threat.

Hidden Plot: The supposed plot is actually a smokescreen for the villain's true purpose. Re-roll the Fiendish Plot on tables 2 and 3.

Reversal!: Events shift, leading to a direct reversal of the PC's fortunes. If they are working with the police, they suddenly become implicated in the crime. If they are following clues, the trail goes cold. This works both ways, however. If they are losing, they suddenly start to win.

Bizarre Occurance: Similar to the Hook of the same name. Something weird happens, without apparent explanation.

Deus Ex Machina: Help comes from some improbable source, not hinted at all previously. This can apply to the villain as well--he just happens to have a underwater breathing invention when he's apparently drowned, etc.

Other: Any twist that the GM's evil little mind can come up with.
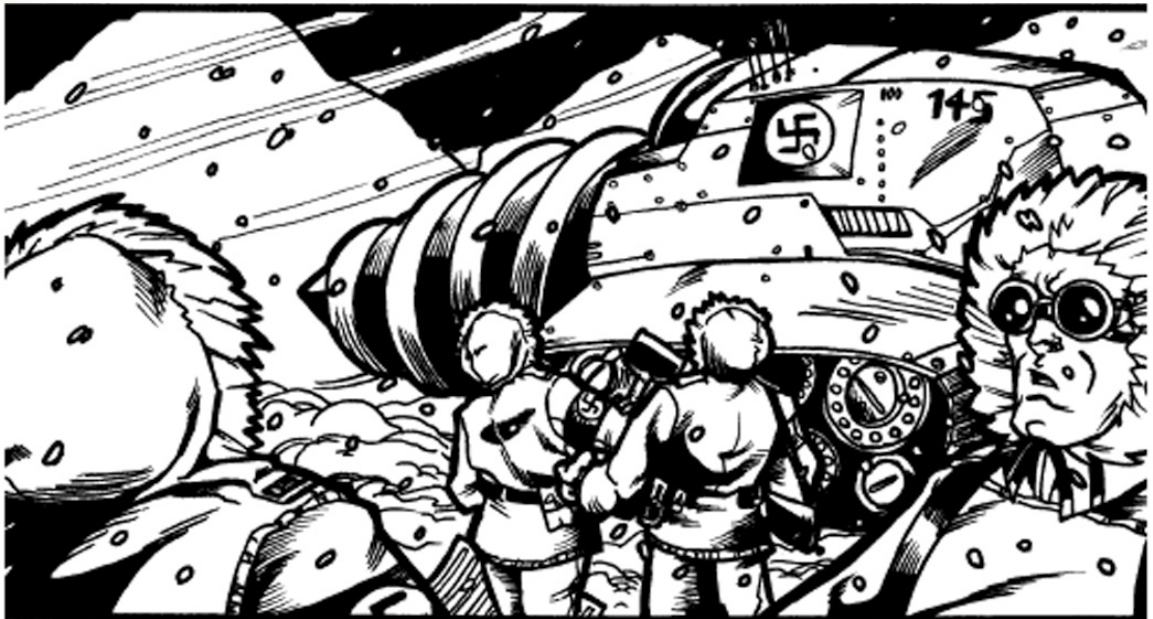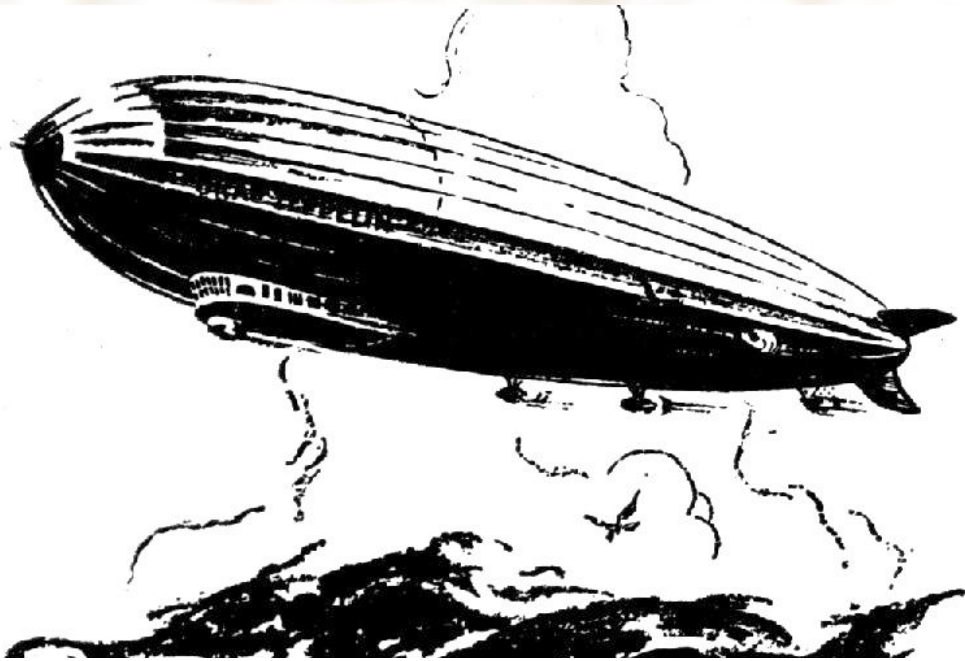
The Second Act:

Once you've generated the First Act, it's time to move on to the second. Here's what Lester Dent says about it:

> *Hero, being heroic, struggles, and his struggles lead up to another physical conflict, and a surprising plot twist.*

Using the previously provided tables, generate another action sequence and another plot twist.

The Third Act:

Same as the above. As Lester Dent says:

> *Hero makes some headway, and corners the villain or somebody in physical conflict.*
>
> *A surprising plot twist, in which the hero preferably gets it in the neck bad, to end the act.*

The difference here is that the action sequence should directly involve the Villain, and the plot

twist generated at the end of the Act should negatively affect the PCs.

The Fourth Act:

Now you're ready for the climax. There's really nothing left to do at this point that can be generated by random rolls. Everything at this point is up to the actions of the PCs.

In Dent's words:

> *The hero extricates himself using HIS OWN SKILL, training or brawn.*
>
> *The mysteries remaining--one big one held over to this point will help grip interest--are cleared up in course of final conflict as hero takes the situation in hand.*

That's it you should have a rough outline now for a pulp adventure. Just generate the NPCs, and off you go!

Turn the page for an example adventure outline created with this system.

EXAMPLE ADVENTURE OUTLINE

Villain: (59) Nazi
Fiendish Plot: (13, 18) Acquire Treasure
Location:(07) Far-off Jungle

Act 1:

The Hook: (90) Up To Our Necks
Supporting Characters: Three of them: (00,04,33) Talented Neat Servant, (42,38,03) Smart Helpful Entertainer, (23,92, 40) Small Evil Scientist, (62, 85,67) Dense Old Vehicle Operator.
Action Sequence (18,15,6,4) Fight, armed, Some particpants, Nightclub, Bystanders
Plot Twist: (7) New Location (given the nightclub fight, I decide to have the adventure start in the PC's home city, and then shift to the previously-rolled jungle location here).

Act 2:

Action Sequence (15,13,1,11)Fight, armed, Some partipants, Nautical Setting, Props.
Plot Twist: (7) New Location (European Country)

Act 3:

Action Sequence (19,20, 18,10) Fight, armed, Lots of particpants, Laboratory, Environment.
Plot Twist: (2) Betrayal!

Act 4: Climax.

So, looking at the results at left, here's what I come up with: The Nazi's are looking for a legendary artifact. No, not the headpiece to the Staff of Ra. The Jewel of Zinj, which is said to be a phenomenal source of power. However, it is said to be located in the temple at the center of the Lost City of Zinj.

The PCs are at a nightclub, watching the beautiful singer, Elaine Nightengale, perform. Suddenly shots ring out as a group of Nazi secret agents attack, led by a hideous dwarf! The PCs fight them off, with the help of Carstairs, Elaine's fastidious ex-army servant, but not before they snatch a necklace from around Elaine's neck!   Elaine says that the necklace was a gift from her dead father, who was an archeologist. The medallion was supposedly a map to the Lost City of Zinj!   Elaine is able to recreate the map from memory, and the PCs (with Elaine and Carstairs in tow) head off to the jungle nation of Mubullah.

In Mubullah, the PCs are taken upriver by a senile old river boat captain.   Along the way, they come under attack by hostile natives, trying to prevent them from reaching Zinj.   They finally reach the lost city, only to discover the jewel missing (I'll probably throw another action sequence in here, too...lots of Indiana Jones-style traps and such). They find a dead Nazi (killed by the natives), who has a telegram on him, revealing that the dwarf is a scientist working for the Nazis, and will be experimenting on the jewel at his lab in Berlin!

The PCs then travel to the heart of the Third Reich, and assault the laboratory of Herr Doktor Liebenohne...a deformed dwarf spared by the Nazis purely because of his brilliance, which is as twisted as his body.   The fight takes place in Liebenohne's laboratory, filled with experimental weapons and other inventions. Suddenly, just as things are reaching a climax, Carstairs betrays the PCs! He was a Nazi agent all along!

Can the PC's defeat Carstairs and Liebenohne, get the Jewel of Zinj, and get out of Berlin with Elaine before the Gestapo closes in?

Gosh, I sure hope so....

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