

CREATION PROCESS AND BRAINSTORMING NOTES

In creating my adventure, one of my major goals was to encourage actual role-playing. I wanted to see if I could get my players to try speaking in character, and I definitely hoped that each player would assume a frame of mind consistent with his character's situation when making decisions about his actions.

At the same time, I wanted to keep things lighthearted and low-pressure. I still find role-playing daunting myself (except for a couple specific character types to which I'm well-suited), so I wanted to create a forgiving atmosphere in which both I and the players could make asses out of ourselves without feeling like it was a big deal.

BRAINSTORMING

How to push role-playing?

- 1) Get people to do special voices for their characters—it seems like some small, weird thing but can make a ton of difference, both for the player speaking and for those listening
- 2) Make sure that the game world impacts the characters in meaningful ways, so the players don't feel themselves to be acting upon a passive game world in a sort of one-sided conversation
- 3) Use clichés—make characters have strongly-defined roles and characteristics so it's easy for people to intuit how they would behave in different situations
- 4) Choose character and place names that don't make people feel silly when they say them and are straightforward to pronounce

This brainstorming directly resulted in the hook for my adventure. Losing one's head to a wizard fits well with #2—it has a meaningful impact upon a character and also impacts that player's ability to act/interact within the game world. It also helped encourage special voices (#1). I'm bad at accents, and my players (Daren, Vimal, and Wiksy) already have diverse accents, so I didn't want to use accented speech to distinguish characters in my adventure. Instead, because some characters had had their heads stolen, I was able to have those characters with magical wooden head replacements speak in muffled tones.

I asked my players what sorts of characters they felt they would enjoy playing and based the player characters on that feedback.

I also looked on the internet to learn more about any commercial role-playing game modules that had been well-received. Although I am not particularly familiar with the *Ars Magica* RPG system, I found a thread in which some people said good things about the *Ars Magica* adventure *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*. I read over *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*—it was useful to see the ways in which the authors structured their adventure and balanced the Storyteller's need to respond flexibly to players' actions with the need to maintain a logically consistent game world.

Before skimming *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*, I'd felt a bit lost on how to begin creating my adventure. Once I had this example in hand, however, I felt more confident fitting my own ideas into a loose framework of characters, places, backstory, and potential and planned encounters.

I opted to use simplified White Wolf *Old World of Darkness* game mechanics for my game rather than the Roleplaying 101 system. I like the way that White Wolf's system allows flexible combinations of attributes and abilities to reflect a wide range of character actions and intentions. D&D-based rules feel much more restrictive and mechanical to me in comparison.

I searched the Internet to find riddles that fit or could be modified to fit my needs, and also drew from a general knowledge of folklore and the psychology of fairy tales. The wizard Grimsby is similar to the wizard Howl from *Howl's Moving Castle*, and also has some elements of Koschei the Deathless, a figure in Russian mythology.