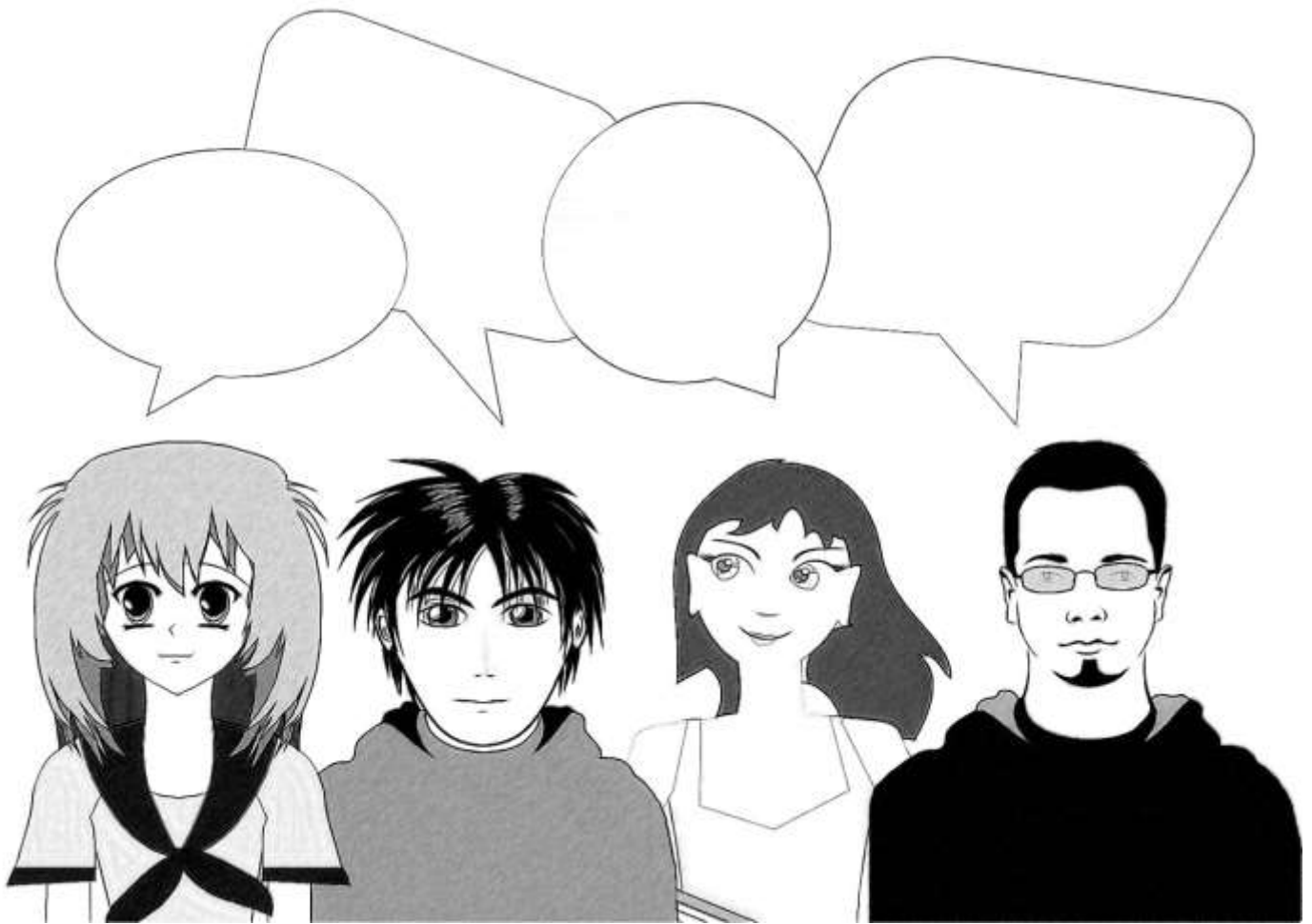# Solo NPC Conversations

By Shane Freshwater

Introduction

This set of tables are probably totally superfluous to the experienced solo player, but I wanted to think through how to run a complete conversation and this is what I came up with.

It is worth adding this is intended as a generator for detailed, realistic conversations for players who enjoy role playing the social aspects of your adventures. If just you want an overview of a conversation without too much detail, I suggest using UNE, Covetous Poets Adventure Generator, or a similar NPC generator to create an outline of their character and motivations and you should be able to use an oracle to get roughly what you need.

So, the idea behind this is that real conversations are made up of three elements.

1. You asking open questions that require answers other than yes or no.
2. You asking closed questions that require a yes/no answer
3. The NPC starting a topic by making a statement or asking you a question

I have assumed that you already have a system of generating a random NPC which provides details like appearance, personality, quirks, motivations etc. My system is designed to use these random rolls to gradually reveal the NPC rather than rolling them all in advance.

Secondly, I have assumed you have some sort of yes/no oracle that give shaded replies. My preferred oracle gives six outcomes: No And, No, No But, Yes But, Yes and Yes And. If yours doesn't then I would say:

- No And is a very extreme No
- No is a normal no
- No But is no but not by much
- Etc. etc.

My Oracle has gradients of Highly Unlikely, Unlikely, Evens, Likely and Highly Likely.

Finally, I have assumed you have a creative source or random ideas generator like the Event Meaning Generator in Mythic.

Version History

Version 4 clarifies the system around 'Will they answer' and explains that 'Evens' is equivalent to '50/50' in Mythic.

Version 3 doesn't change the system but expands on the explanation and examples.

When I reread version 2, I was disappointed at how poorly I had expressed myself.

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Creating NPCs:

If you already know the NPC skip this section and jump to the conversation.

If this is a new NPC, then rather than creating the NPC entirely, you only really need to know just two things when you start, what they look like, and what they are wearing/doing.

Conversation Begins

Once you start interacting you will immediately need to know what their reaction is and then after a few words their obvious personality. E.g. Mocking, Kindly, Slow of speech, etc. So, roll those from your favourite NPC generator.

As the discussion progresses you may uncover their name, motivations, complications, and oddities rolled up using your favoured system.

The Conversation in full

A conversation should be made up of three elements:
1. Open questions by the PC - "How did you know the missing person?"
2. Closed questions by the PC - "Did you see them last night?"
3. Topics of conversation they start - which is covered in my NPC Led Topics table.

After each segment you might want to modify the NPCs mood and disclose motivations as you feel it's appropriate.

Resolving these three elements:
1. Open questions are the hardest to resolve and needs a combination of the Oracle, your creative sources and imagination. Split it into three stages:
    a. Ask the oracle Will they answer? - Use the table below to interpret the result.
    b. Do they know the answer? – If you are not sure use the oracle.
    c. If they give an answer then use your creative sources to answer the open question.
2. Closed questions are easier and again need to be split in three
    a. Ask the oracle Will they answer? - Use the table below to interpret the result.
    b. Do they know the answer? – If you are not sure use the oracle.
    c. Then ask the Oracle the question – Start at Evens (or 50/50) and is moved by the GM in the normal way
3. For topics they start, use my discussions table. Roll d100 and d20 and use the column that suits the NPCs mood. Then interpret the results and try to create a topic from it.

Will They Answer?

The Oracle starts at Evens (or 50/50) and is moved by their relationship to the PC. E.g. If they hate you it is very unlikely they will answer. As the conversation progresses you might feel an enemy is warming to your PC and shift a column, conversely a friend might be upset by an insensitive comment and become less likely to respond to future questions. You might also want to add in a modifier for how persuasive your PC is.

From experience I would only roll occasionally or if the question is personal, threatening, etc.

Oracle Result	Conversation Result
No And	Ends conversation
No	Refuses to answer this question. Consider worsening NPC mood towards the PC
No But	Distracts by starting a different topic
Yes But	Requires something from the PC
Yes	Answers and may raise reaction
Yes And	Offers additional information. Consider improving the mood towards the PC

NPC Led Topics

Action 1d100	Angry	Neutral	Friendly	Thing	1d20
Rage/Yell/Attack/Offended	01-10	01-05	-	Event	1-2
Dominate/Subjugate	11-20	-	-	Personality Insight into NPC	3
Demand/Order/Tell	21-30	06-07	01	Attribute	4
Threaten	31-40	08-09	02	Allegiance	5
Lies	41-50	10-12	03	Resources/Allies/Status	6
Mock	51-57	13-15	04	Inconsequential	7
Challenge	58-64	16-18	05-06	Clue or lead	8
Boast/Preen	65-71	19-21	07-08	Gossip or rumour	9
Question	72-78	22-31	09-10	Knowledge/Facts	10
Misunderstand	79-85	32-36	11-14	Relationships/Friends/Enemies	11-12
Preach/Moralise	86-88	37-39	15	Sins/Faults/Behaviours	13
Appease/Diffuse	89-91	40-42	16-17	Occupation now or historical	14
Trade	92-94	43-52	18-24	Skill	15
Convince	95-97	53-56	25-28	Quest	16
Offer	98	57-60	29-34	Crime/Misbehaviour	17
Cooperate	99	61-64	35-41	Person/Pet/Livestock	18
Thoughts		65-68	42-47	Travel/Place	19
Dilemma		69	48-51	Possession	20
Ask Opinion		70-73	52-58		
Share		74-77	59-65		
Teach		-	66-70		
Joke/humour		78-85	71-76		
Entertain		86-93	77-82		
Aid		94	83-89		
Flirt or Befriend	00	95-99	90-93		
Ask favour		00	94-00		

An example of answering open questions

My meeting with my new patron is going well.

We are meeting in a private room in The Silver Helm, a clean and serviceable establishment which provides simple but good food and beer for an upmarket type of customers. It's nothing too fancy but it suits my requirements. The furniture is sturdy and made of wood stained dark by years of use.

Across from me sits my patron, Jane. She is a middle-aged woman with a round face and dark complexion. She is nibbling daintily on a slice of cake and sipping tea politely. Everything about her is tidy and elegant, without being ostentatious. She is dressed in clothing appropriate for a woman in the better off merchant classes.

Jane has explained that Sally has gone missing. She was last seen at the North Gate eight days ago.

She explained that Sally is the co-owner of a warehouse in the merchants' quarters.

She has described Sally as 58 years old, with ash blond hair, hazel eyes, and bronze skin. Her acquaintances are Richard her husband, Jim her business partner and Jane.

Jane has approached you as she hasn't heard from her in over a week and neither her husband, nor work know where she is

Me, "So Jane, what do you think has happened to her?"	We know she is positive to us as she has initiated the contact
	She is extremely likely to answer: = Yes
	What does she think?
	Break down into "Does she know?" I think it unlikely: No
Jane, "I have no idea. She didn't give me any indication, and this is very unlike her."	
Me, "How does she get on with her husband?"	
	Does she answer? (Extremely likely) – "Yes And" she volunteers information
	I used my creative sources to give "suspicious", and "strange amounts of money".
Jane, "Their relationship is normal, really. They seem very sensible and calm. Although she did say she couldn't understand where Richard had got the money for his latest project."	

Another Example in more detail

Narrative	Mechanics
You approach the bar and find yourself standing next to an elderly man wearing clothing that is covered in paint stains of various colours. He is ordering a drink from the barman.	The PC meets a new NPC in a bar.
	Using my random tables, they look (12) Artistic, (even) male, (90%) old
	The PC is going to try and talk to him so what is his reaction – UNE conversation mood table for neutral relationship (64) neutral.
PC, "Evening. What do you recommend drinking?"	I don't bother to roll on the table for every sentence. Just when I need a nudge or response.
Artist, "The beers vile so I'd stick to spirits. Don't let him put any water in it though, not if you want to wake up healthy."	I allow myself to improvise where appropriate.
PC, "Thanks, I'm Petr by the way."	Quick trip to a random name generator for the NPC.
Artist, "Joshy, pleased to meet you Petr."	
Petr orders a glass of spirits and turns back to the Artist.	Now I think we might be seeing his obvious personality by now, so I roll that up. (39) Cranky
	I'm going to interpret that as irritable in style of communicating but not truly unfriendly.
Petr, "Joshy, I'm new to town. Can you tell me what the latest news is?"	This is an open question, so we split this into two stages:
	1) Will he answer? I think it a sure thing he will answer as it's a chance to voice his opinions (45) Yes
Joshy, "I suppose the main news is that the prince has sent a detachment of his troops out to deal with a band of raiders who have been harrying the villages to the north. Bloody waste of time if you ask me. Those northerners aren't worth the effort."	2) Now to answer this I roll from my creative random tables and get 048 – someone has mounted an expedition and 57 pirates or local ruler
	Now I could let Joshy ask the obvious question about what Petr is doing in town, but this is a demo, so I am going to use the topic generator.
	I get 79 & 20 – Joke/humour and possession.
Joshy laughing, "My that's a mighty big sword you're carrying there. I'm sure it gets all the girls swooning."	(Just in case there is any doubt, I will not be winning any prizes for humour or acting.)
Petr smiling, "In my line of business a sword is essential. On a more serious note, have you seen a half orc with a nasty scar on his left cheek?"	This is a closed question so will he answer extreme yes (or Yes And) so he is going to volunteer info.
Joshy excited, "Yes! I saw him breaking into the docks last night."	Has he seen him (I think it likely) 68 so Yes
	What extra does he volunteer – creative sources for a location and action: 790 docks & 981 violate