NOAH

This is a tough concept to get a handle on for me - a bit like asking someone to "Point at the perspective" in a landscape painting. It's a difficulty I gestured toward in the post you reference by saying that "What's next" emerges as if by magic in successful play.

However, I'll hazard a couple of observations: **in theory**, the process of framing the next scene from the events in of the last seems dizzyingly open-ended. There are a billion little considerations of pacing, artistry and camera-work that seem to apply, to the point that it's difficult to imagine "What is next" emerging at all.

In play, though, I never seem to feel overwhelmed by how to get to what happens next. In fact, it is obvious to me. Sure, when "playing cool" we may spend extra time in the framing stage, asking "What does your character do after this? Has the storm from last scene subsided?," etc., There may be input from the instrumentation - in Burning Wheel, for instance, a Research test might require months of time.

But once things have heated up, "What's next" seems like the simplest question in the world.

While in the GM seat, particularly while playing cool, I guess I reference the following questions, among others: Does a PC-player have an action they want to perform/a scene they want to frame? Do the events of last scene affect an NPC in a way that demands action from them/demands another scene? Is there an event in my prep (religious festival, cult ceremony, etc.) that demands a scene? If the answers to these questions are "No," I might ask myself "What's obviously next, and how much time do we have to jump over to get there?" (doesn't have to be dramatic...it's fine to play slow and explore the situation further).

Failing that, I might ask "What am I excited to see 'on-screen?'" Let's go there, I'll play my saxophone a bit and see if someone in the band picks up a lick I'm throwing down.

In addition, I'd say my own experience suggests that the above process should be kept as simple and obvious as possible. Really ostentatious or elaborate techniques just create barriers for getting into the next scene.

This has been a week of looking at movies through the lens of roleplaying for me. I saw a very nasty, very fun Mike Flanagan horror movie called Ouija: Birth of Evil last week. The middle of the movie is a masterclass in ratcheting tension. It's preceded by an opening act where time passes leisurely and the 'distance' between scenes isn't that consequential. The pivot commences with a great cut where you discover a main character, a middle-school girl sensitive to spirits, hasn't been at school for four days - has essentially been trapped at home communing with ghosts and demons.

It's a great oh-shit moment where things get real, and it would be tempting to enshrine this scene cut into a 'technique' that could be used to ratchet up tension when the GM judges it necessary to sprinkle more tension into the cauldron.

What I realized on reflection, though, is that this time-jump emerges with zero 'dramatic additives,' all by answering the above questions about the previous scenes.

The girl and her mother have both made it clear through their actions that they don't view the spirits as evil, and it makes absolute sense that they'd skip school to experiment with communicating with the other side - fuck middle school! we're piercing the veil between life and death here!

(in roleplaying terms, this could have been established through a failed roll to see through the demons' deception, a Passion roll, the players making it clear through their actions, etc...it doesn't matter how it's been established, only that it is.)

Seen from this perspective, the time jump isn't effective because it's a particular 'technique' that has been deployed skillfully; it is effective because it is sensitive to the events of the last scene and how they impact the situation - it has answered the questions posed by the constraints with honesty, clarity and verve.

RON

If it's OK to try to paraphrase you as well as provide my own spin ... the point is that it isn't magic at all. Do you see what I mean by referencing the situation? Either when determining (deciding, perceiving, whatever) what part of the "setting" (really backdrop) has been jogged or when deciding what feature or person or thing in the current scene does next, either within it or, as you or someone described elsewhere (maybe Erik?), translating into a shift to the next scene.

NOAH

100%, Ron. Working through the four-day jump-cut in Ouija helped clarify this for me. No need to enshrine it or treat it like magic (it only looks like magic because, in certain instances, these very minimalist techniques have extremely memorable outputs). But it's really an application of simple principles, the same ones we use, without even noticing, when 'playing cool.'