

The Aftermath

What This Game is About: This is a freeform game about injury, privilege, and the social effects on those with injuries. The subject material is serious, and should be handled with sensitivity. It is meant to model experiences of the loss of mobility, and how this is treated socially. This doesn't pretend to address the physical and emotional aspects of dealing with injury – while some attempt has been made to model fatigue, anything else is too big to have under one umbrella.

What You Need For This Game: Very few props, including: cut-out printed copies of the character write-ups, a yoga band to constrict movement, a box or two of plastic spoons (or any other counter), pen and paper, 4-12 people. One of you should be the facilitator/GM, and the rest will play as characters.

Time: Around 2 hours, plus debrief time.

Location: This can be played anywhere, though a more private space will allow freer communication.

What This Game Assumes: That you know about RPGs and larps. That scene framing and meta-techniques are within your toolbox.

Written by: William Nichols

Creative Collaborators: Rachael Storey Burke, Melissa S. Cohen

Good idea: Alexander Newman, the NOVA small-press RPG group, and many others.

Special Thanks to: Dianne Harris, my caretaker.

Author's Note: John Scalzi has described being a straight, white, cis-gendered dude as playing life on the easiest difficulty setting. I fit all those descriptions, and I also went to a prestigious graduate school, am able-bodied and married. I have known life is harder for people without those accidents in their favor, and due to a minor but mobility impairing injury came to feel it for the first time in a long time.

This little project came about initially to writeup my own thoughts as I dealt with the injury. I know my perspective has limits, and I hope this doesn't come across as unaware privilege.

Lastly, actual people take part from all of these roles. Human beings are complicated.

The Characters – Information for everyone

You may have multiple of each of these. With more caregivers and Challenger, it'll be easier for the injured. As you have more Unaware, helpful and harasser, the injured will have a worse time.

0. The injured – one player will play the injured party. While this will be discussed in the beginning, the character will only become injured at the end of the second act. Make sure the injured has the sheet and some spoons – 12 is probably enough. The Injured can spend the spoons to change how other people act.

1. The Caregiver - someone who is taking care of the injured. They have to deal with it, and it is obnoxious. This person is a saint, but how long will the patience last? The Caregiver's spoons act as a count down until they lose patience.

2. The Unaware -- who expects everyone to conform to his standard, and doesn't notice that others may be ill. Is basically unaware that other people have limitations. Has never thought about it. Possibly into sports. **Assign as many as you want, makes a great injured.**

3. The Underprivileged -- whether a woman or a person of color, or a woman of color, a trans individual, anything. So long as there are mounting problems every damn day. The injured has just become aware of things the underprivileged has dealt with forever, and may be frustrated. Everyone else in the group should have access to more societal privilege. If most characters are women, make sure the underprivileged has something else going on. The key thing is the underprivileged knows is jaded by what the injured is seeing with fresh eyes.

4. The Helpful – This is the person who tries and tries and tries to help the injured, or anyone else.

5. The Challenger -- knows the injured and the disabled can't do quite everything, and tries to get them to get out of their comfort zone.

6. The Child - says things and stares and asks questions. Thinks he has the right to stare at the problem of the injured, and to inquire as to the issue. May or may not be an actual child, but has no tact.

7. The Harasser - Harass anyone lamer than you. Which is everyone. **Use with caution.**

GM Information on Gameplay

Safety Information: Go over safe words (break and cut). Brief the players that this is a game about privilege and power and mobility. That it is serious.

Briefly discuss that this game could be triggering, and safety comes first.

Spoons: The metaphor of spoons as energy will play heavily in this game. This game uses it as a game mechanic, such that some characters require spoons to do anything other than recharge. If this was Carcassonne, spoons would be meeples – necessary to do anything. That being said, only certain characters need to worry about spoons. Many others, such as the unaware and the Challenger, do not need their own spoons.

Explain that different character types have different spoons rules.

Time: About 5 minutes.

Intro – As GM, hand out roles or allow individuals to choose them. Everyone gets a role, and someone gets a second role – the injured. Good rules to injure are the Unaware, the harasser, and the helpful. The unaware is the most obvious.

Make sure everyone knows they can go beyond the detail given, so long as they stay within the idea of each role.

During the intro, make character relationships and figure out how the characters know each other. Not everyone needs to know the injured, but there needs to be an excuse for everyone to be in a scene with the injured.

During the intro, brainstorm with the players about scenes they would like to see. A few examples:

1. Making dinner
2. Going to the grocery store
3. Going out to play games with friends.
4. Having a party or small gathering
5. Going to the office

Any scene where the injury will spark up works. If it is a broken arm, playing a board game. If a broken foot, soccer or walking to get coffee are perfect scenes.

We're looking for small moments in a normal life, which can be dramatically impacted. These should be moments that happen time and time ago. We are going to repeat the scenes three times, but it isn't the same moment. The Acts happen sequentially, and the characters have opportunities to change.

Write down a brief description of each scene the group chooses. This is important, as we will play through each scene three times. Choose three to five. With more people, consider fewer scenes. It is a good idea for everyone to be in at least two of the scenes.

Time: About 25 minutes.

Before act one, hand out spoons. **Spoons Refresh each Act.** Make sure the players know there are reasons you may take their spoons, which do not appear on their sheets.

Act One: During act one, the injury hasn't happened yet. Go through each scene. Help everyone use the spoon rules.

Time: About 25 minutes.

End of Act 1: We see the injury. Have a quick five minute scene showing what happens, and who was there. If the Caregiver is being played, her presence would make sense. Whatever body part is injured should be tied with the yoga band. This body part is messed up, and cannot be relied upon.

Time: About 5 minutes.

Refresh Spoons

Act 2: The After Math

Go through the same scenes as in Act One. In each scene, the injury should be a major plot point. Starting with the injured and caregiver at home recuperating is a natural start, but to speed up the drama, consider starting with a scene involving other characters. **In each scene, make sure to press the injured.**

Time: About 30 minutes.

Act 3: Recovery

In act 3, the injured is no longer injured. In light of the experiences, everyone may change character types, as fits the character's experiences. **Refresh spoons to align to Act 3 character types.** We see the same scenes as in Act 1 and Act 2.

Time: About 25 minutes.

Debrief: Discuss as long as it takes. Make sure everyone is OK, and if the game worked for the group.

Other Guidelines for the GM

1. Make sure everyone has a name, and a relationship, however tenuous, to the injured character. While everyone will be played to an archetype, they should feel free to expand beyond the script.
2. To illustrate that life is difficult, you can remove a spoon from anyone at any time. You should at least once per scene.
3. The Helper can be annoying to those with injuries. When the injured and the helper interact, you are encouraged to take one of the injured's spoons. Don't tell them why, and definitely don't tell the helper.
4. If the injured's other character type is one that needs spoons, he gets the lesser of the two roles. That means a under privileged injured gets fewer spoons. Life is hard.
5. If the injured's other character type is one that can give away spoons, he has the lower limit. This means a Challenger Injured's still only starts with 12 spoons.
6. In building scenes, make sure they are ones where the injury will be important.
7. In Act 3, anyone may change character types. Anyone who feels their character has changed dramatically should be encouraged to do so.
8. You can absolutely have multiple characters of the same archetype. And some can be missing. That's no problem. You need an injured, but all the other roles are optional.
9. The spoon economy: There are very few ways to get new spoons in the game (the Challenger), and several ways to remove them (Child, Harasser, Unaware, GM intervention, requests by the injured, etc). By the end of each act, spoons should be rare and you want the characters looking for how to get more, or to avoid loss. For several characters, getting to zero causes drama. Try to make that happen, and don't be too obvious about it.

Character Write-ups and Special Spoon Rules

Author's Note: I am torn on whether players should read each of these. On the one hand, knowing what to press gets to the drama all the quicker. On the other, I've always loved discovering mechanics during play. That will vary per person and per group, so do what you think is best for your group.

Caregiver: Whomever is wounded, they are special to you. Maybe a spouse, or a child. Or a parent. Your natural allies are the Challenger and the helpful. The Challenger gets your wounded ward out of your hair for a few minutes of peace, while the helpful reduces your work load.
Natural Allies: Besides the injured, try the Challenger and the helpful. Those folks can take some of the load off.
Natural Enemies: Unaware, who. Just. Doesn't. Get. It. The Under-privileged, too.
Spoon Rule: you start with six spoons. Whenever you are in a scene and the injured would lose a spoon, you may spend one instead. If you run out, your patience has worn thin and you no longer wish to take care of the injured. When the wounded needs to recover, they can take a spoon of yours.
Inspiration: Eponine. Every spouse and parent in history.

Unaware: Life is pretty sweet, ain't it? Easy Peasy. After high school, you went to college. Of course you got a good job. You're so awesome, and wish everybody else could just keep up with you. Oh man. What, somebody got hurt? That sucks. Let's go throw round a Frisbee. How come they don't just power through it?
You're not so good at recognizing what different injuries mean – if someone has a banged up leg, maybe they can't open doors. If their face is messed up, maybe they are stupid. You don't know.
Natural Allies: Everyone is on your side. Treat anything less than positive as the person having a bad day. You are awesome.
Natural Enemies: Who'd be your enemy? You are awesome. Feel free to Ignore the under privileged.
Spoon Rule: You don't need any spoons. Whenever you are asked for a spoon, ignore it. Whenever anyone doesn't treat you with respect, explain how they got the world wrong and take a spoon. Do whatever you want to with it. Feel free to throw it on the ground.
Inspiration: Mitt Romney. The Pope (yes, even this pope). Tony Stark. Mr. Anderson (Neo, The Matrix).

Under Privileged; Life is hard. But, life has always been hard and you've gotten used to it. You know not to talk to cops, and you expect to be stared at in public and treated like a criminal. But, at least you are somewhat accustomed to it. At least you can let yourself be invisible.
Natural Allies: The Challenger, though they really don't get it.
Natural Enemies: The Unaware. The helpful. The child. The harasser.
Spoon Rule: You start with nine spoons. Whenever you are in a scene, if anyone complains about how hard life is, you lose a spoon. Your spoons are a countdown; when you run out, so does your patience.
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Challenger: You challenge everyone to be their best. To do what they find uncomfortable. You are aware of the issues other people have, and try to push them. You push those on crutches to use them and go for a walk. You try to make the world a better place by increasing human capability. You're aware society sucks and want to change it.

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Spoon Rule: You always have another spoon. Give it away when you get someone to act outside their comfort zone.

Inspiration: Enjolras, who inspires Marius to join the Friends of the ABC and take up arms ... look, either you've read Les Mis and this name makes sense, or you haven't and should. Anyone in your life that's ever tried to get you out of your skin.

Child: You aren't necessarily a child, but you are inquisitive. You ask questions. About anything and everything, but especially about differences in people. Its rude just to ignore someone on crutches, you should make conversation --- and ask how it happened. You won't notice annoyance expressed by others, unless they are very explicit.

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Spoon Rule: The GM will give you about 12 spoons. You may use these spoons to modify the behavior of any one person for a scene. If you give them a spoon, you can get the person to do anything you want.

When you are out of spoons, you must spend time recovering. At this point, you can only get spoons from the caregiver.

Inspiration: Every injury you've ever had. Every flu, every time you couldn't get out bed. That is this.

--- second Copy of roles ----

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