



The Golden Cobra Challenge is a friendly contest open to anyone interested in writing freeform games. The inaugural challenge ran from 1 to 30 October 2014.

The goal of the 2014 contest was to generate games playable at large conventions like Gen Con, where time and space are in short supply.

In order to be considered for a Golden Cobra, games had to:

1. Be playable from start to finish in two hours or less.
2. Be playable by a variable but small number of participants, ideally a wide range like 2-8.
3. Be playable in a public space, like an open lounge in a busy hallway.
4. Optionally, use the ingredients **CHORD**, **LIGHT**, **SOLUTION**, **BEAR** and **MINUTE**.

Golden Cobras were awarded in four categories: Most Convention-Ready (*Group Date*, page 290), Most Appealing to Newcomers (*Unheroes*, page 551), Cleverest Design (*Glitch Iteration*, page 248) and Game We're Most Eager to Play (*Still Life*, page 507).

The games in this anthology are all submissions the designers agreed to share. We hope you play and enjoy them all.





THE GOLDEN COBRA CHALLENGE

ANTHOLOGY 2014

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Active Shooter *by* Tim Hutchings

BOARD GAME, LIVE ACTION OR TABLETOP

SERIOUS, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

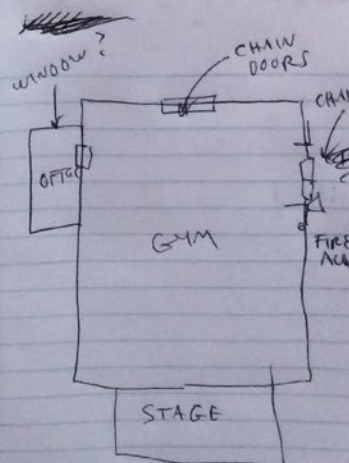
In Active Shooter the players take on the role of students involved in a school shooting. Difficult subject matter is addressed with a combination of free role play, voting mechanics, and a simple board game.

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Active Shooter



Author's notes:

The seed for this game was planted during the June 2014 school shooting at Reynold High School near Portland, Oregon. I listened on the radio as events unfolded, as information dribbled in and was proven true or false, and as practical steps were taken to reunite parents with children afterwards. It was a visceral, disturbing experience. Since then I've taken disaster management training, which has deepened my interest in how crises unfold from the viewpoints of the individuals involved. Active Shooter isn't an attempt to simulate anything, it's a sloppy sketch which may or may not be a useful or enjoyable or detestable study of something awful and serious.

I try out other methods of tweaking and breaking the player's involvement in the scenes to dramatic effect. The Shut Up mechanic is contrary to every supporting drive to keep people embedded in a scene. It's an act of cruelty to the character, but is also possibly hurtful to the player as well. It's an attempt to model how kids can shut each other out of conversation, to push someone out of where they want to be.

When a character becomes a victim they are literally labeled as such with tape and marker - this comes directly from standard disaster triage procedure in which information on a victim, live or dead, is attached to their physical bodies in order to make it easier for other responders to keep track of important information.

The silence of the Active Shooter Phase is intended to heighten the helplessness of the victims and to limit the sensory input flowing to the players, to have a scene that might be viewed through silent security camera footage. Even the character sheets themselves are violated as the the character portraits each player drew are torn in preparation for the Active Shooter Phase, then further defaced with a marker if the victim is actually killed.

This was a hard, uncomfortable thing to write. Thank you for reading and maybe playing this game.

Tim Hutchings
ozark1@hotmail.com

version 0.75 submitted to the Golden Cobra Challenge on Oct 30, 2014

Introduction:

Active Shooter is a role playing game which ends in a board game sequence. Each player takes on the role of a student soon to be involved in a school shooting. We begin with a loose style of role play, playing out quick scenes in which we introduce our characters and explore the relationships between them. At the end of each scene one character is eliminated as a potential shooter. We then flash forward to a vignette on the day of the shooting, imagining a few seconds of the life of that character as the shooting occurs. After all characters have been eliminated but one, we have identified our school shooter. We immediately stop all role play and change to a board game format, playing on a school map we have created during the role play section. At this point the shooter has almost total control over the fate of everyone in the school, and we play out a handful of turns representing the minutes until the authorities arrive and the shooting ends. During this board game phase no one but the Active Shooter may speak.

The game uses no dice or conflict resolution mechanics, it does use character sheets and a map. All that is needed are writing tools, masking tape, a sharpie, and a print out of the necessary paperwork. The game is best played with 4-8 players.

Sequence of Play:

Set Up

1. Agree on the tone of play. Use one of the many possible methods to ensure the play space is safe and supportive. I suggest the X-Card mechanic. You know what to do here.
2. Each player chooses a character name from the name list on the back cover of this booklet, tweaking names as desired. Answer the three psych questions on the character sheet and read your answers aloud - these will give the other players a point of interaction with your character, the answers are personal but known to the other students. You will need to have a completed sketch of your character in the photo box by the time we enter the Active Shooter phase.
3. Place a print out of the starter map in a central area. Name the school and assign it any other characteristics of interest to the table, like year or location. Or not, it's not necessary.

School Scenes Phase

4. Scenes are loose, free role play in which we explore our characters and their relationships to the students around them. Say hello, snub people, address the three psych questions on each others sheets for good or ill, describe yourself and your possessions. A scene ends when two characters leave the area.

Except for the first scenes, scenes are suggested by the player with the most recently declared victim (see 5.) Not every scene needs to have every character, but any character may enter a scene at any time.

Each scene will occur in a new area of the school which will need to be added to the map. Some example areas are the cafeteria, the art room, the gymnasium, the principal's office. If other areas of the school are mentioned during a scene these should be added to the map as well. Draw big and fill up space, the map sections do not need to be contiguous.

The **first scene** is a set piece: All the characters have arrived at the Parking Lot area on the map, they are just about to start a new school day. The Parking Lot is already drawn on the map.

The Shut Up Rule: If two characters tell a third to "shut up," that character may not speak or otherwise directly communicate for the rest of the scene. They are not required to leave the scene. This isn't necessarily about bullying but is meant to model exclusion, it's possibly cruel to both the character AND the player. Do it at least once.

5. After a scene ends, step out of character and nominate at least two characters you think are NOT going to be school shooters. These characters do not need to have participated in the preceding scene, but they must at least have been mentioned. Vote. The character receiving the SECOND most votes is removed from suspicion as the shooter, they are now known as a victim. The victim's player will strip off about twelve inches of masking tape and write their character's name on it, then put the tape prominently across their chest.
6. That newly declared victim now gets a one-minute vignette scene which occurs as a flash forward to the day of the shooting. We focus on that character alone, with the other players contributing color and ideas and confusion. We want to learn about

how the possible victim will react in this awful situation. The identity of the shooter should not be revealed, and only other declared victims can appear in the scene. This vignette is firmly limited to more than one minute, time it. The outcome of these vignettes are not binding to the storyline and will be overwritten by the Active Shooting phase results.

7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 until every character but one has been eliminated. The remaining character will be the Active Shooter.
8. Take a moment and make sure that everyone has completed their character portraits. If not, stop all action until the portraits are completed. Heads down, no talking. Done? Now proceed to step 9.
9. The Active Shooter needs to do a little paperwork. First, the Active Shooter player will read aloud the instructions for the Active Shooter Phase and make certain that everyone understands how movement works. Next, he will quickly complete the map as per the instructions below. Then he will tear out, not cut, the dotted areas of each character sheet. These tear-outs will represent the characters on the map. Finally the Active Shooter circles the Minute Marker on the map which corresponds to the number of players at the table, if there are eight players circle Minute 8 and know that the Active Shooter Phase ends when that box is checked.

Preparing the Map for Active Shooter Phase

The Active Shooter player must take a few moments to ready the map for the board game like play of the Active Shooter Phase. First go through and make certain that the delineations between the sections of the map are clear, draw defining boundaries if not. Then go through and add as many more map sections as there are victims, use these to fill out the map. Some of these should be things that are normally off limits to students - the motor pool, the administration offices, the dumpster alley. Create any areas that the Active Shooter might use to ambush multiple victims, like a playground or gymnasium.

Finally, roughly divide off any large or unused spaces on the map. Pay attention to outdoors areas, and areas near the edges of the map.

Active Shooter Phase

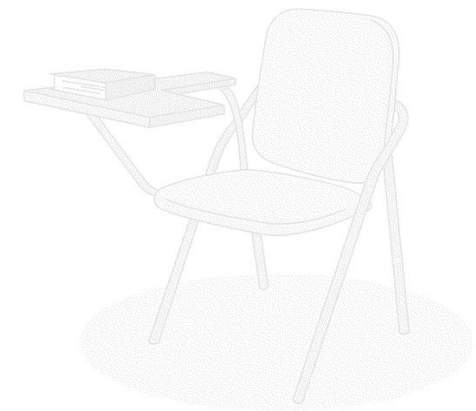
10. From this point until the end of the Active Shooter Phase only the Shooter may speak, and then only to say the names of the victims who are being killed. The Shooter places each of the character markers on the map. These can be placed anywhere, this control over others represents the Shooter choosing the time and place to strike.

Shooter Phase Movement and Shooting Rules

1. **Murder:** The Active Shooter may kill up to two victims on the Murder turn. The victims must be in the same map area as the Shooter. To kill a victim the Shooter says their name aloud and uses the sharpie to put a large number on their character marker, sequentially numbering the victims as they fall. These character marker stay on the board. Players who have their characters killed should turn their back on the table for the rest of the Active Shooter phase.
2. **Running:** The Victims may move to any adjacent map section. If they have moved off of the map they are safe from being killed.
3. **Panic:** The Shooter may then choose any one victim and move them to an adjacent map section. This represents confusion and panic and the preparations of the Shooter, the victim is getting lost or frightened or is encountering doors that have been locked or fires that have been set.
4. **Hunting:** The Active Shooter may move to ANY space on the board.
5. **Time:** Check off one of the remaining minutes. If the final minute is ticked off the police have arrived and the Active Shooter is stopped, go to 11 below. Otherwise return to step 1 and repeat.

Afterwards

11. (Optional) After the Active Shooter Phase has ended, the players of the victims spend a few minutes going over what happened as if they were crime scene investigators. We do not refer to any of the characters by name but instead use the number they were assigned by the Active Shooter when they were killed. Play the scene backwards, freely creating information as if you had full access to forensic reports, to crime scene photos, to grainy surveillance footage. Mark things on the map: Blood stains, stray bullet holes and casings, dropped weapons, chained doors, the Active Shooters car or locker. Discuss what happened to the Active Shooter. The Active Shooter does not participate in this step.
12. Wrapping up with a Debriefing is recommended.



ajns ajns ajns ajns ajns ajns

safe safe safe safe safe safe safe

safe safe safe safe safe safe safe



Minute Marker



safe safe safe safe safe safe

What I accomplished last week:

What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

portrait

name

What I accomplished last week:

What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

portrait

name

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What I hope to accomplish next year:

portrait

name

What I accomplished last week:

What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

portrait

name

Students who have died in school shootings in the United States before 1960.

Frank Pope
Todd Hutchinson
Anna Dwight
Chauncy Barnes
Elvina Stickney
Thomas McGiffen
George Hall
Thomas Sguires
George Gohen
Gerald Gray
Michael J. Jordan
Dan Wamack
Will Guess
Ben Corbery
Cora Brubach
Jack Craycroft
Edward Higgins
Willis Gardner
Neil Gardner
Harry Flasher
Henry Carney
Ralph Jones
Haz Harding
May Thomas
Harry Garvey
Herbert Horton
Eva Wiseman
Edward Foster
James Barret
Mack Howard
James Vires
Henry Schaze
Paul Jelick'
Charles Colby
Fred Smith
Tom Bucanoros
George DeWolf
Elizabeth Bailey Hardee
Sarah Chamberlain Weed
Ruth Sargent
Nellie Swinney
Dorothy Malakanoff
John Butram

Robert Lomas
Arthur Shively
Lewis Napier
James Kane
Charles Listman
Andrew Milton
William Carter
Irma Caler
Beatrice Conner
William Scott
Henry Gray
Dennis McDonald
Georgia Valdo
Gladys Solomon
Houston Upton
Nell Umberson
James O'Donnel
Wesley Clow
June Mapes
Robert Snyder
Vielsing Spencer
Melba Moshell
Harry Wyman
Donald Peabody
James Heer
Jack McKeown
Billy Ray Powell
Hugh Justice
David Brooks
Patrick Colleta
Bernice Turner
Putnam Davis Jr.
William Joyner
Allen Long
Holmes Strozier
Bob Bechtel
Billy Pravatte
Donna Dvorak
Bobby Whitford
Tennyson Beard
Deborah Faith Humphrey
William Harchmeister
James Arthur Frampton



The Adventurers *by* Jesper Stein Sandal

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

COMEDY, FANTASY

A game about the fears and doubts of a group of adventurers as they celebrate on the eve of their first adventure. How will they deal with their new life as soon-to-be heroes, and will we find out who they really are, as they are about to cross the threshold into the life of adventurers?

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The Adventurers

By: Jesper Stein Sandal

Golden Cobra Challenge 2014

The Adventurers

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*I, I will be king
And you, you will be queen
Though nothing will drive them away
We can beat them, just for one day
We can be Heroes, just for one day
...
Though nothing, will keep us together
We could steal time,
just for one day
We can be Heroes, forever and ever
What d'you say?*

- David Bowie

Thanks: To the organizers of the Golden Cobra Challenge for dropping a great challenge on me at the right moment. To my wife for being patient, while I write weird games. To the crowd from RPGforum that encouraged me to use this idea for a game.

Cover illustration: A picture I took of an actual dungeon door in the prison of the Doge's Palace in Venice.

Design: Jesper Stein Sandal, October 2014

Introduction

About the game

What really happens when a fighter or a wizard decides to become an adventurer? The idea of sneaking around deadly dungeons looking for treasure and fighting horrible monsters that can kill you in ways, nobody should ever get killed – it is actually crazy when you think about, so normally we don't. Except in this game, which is all about crossing the threshold between a relatively normal life in a fantasy world and the life of a hero.

In this game, we will focus on the last night of a group of these soon to be adventurers. We will

join them from the moment they have accepted their first quest and follow their last night as regular people – that also happens to be their first night as heroes. They will party. They will brag. And argue. Maybe get drunk. Maybe more. And we will get to know them much better than all those countless adventurers, we have sent down into dark dungeon armed with a bunch of numbers and the one line backstory: My parents were killed by orcs.

Mood

The foundation for this game are the stereotypes and things, we have always just ignored in most traditional fantasy roleplaying games. I like to think of this game as a sword & sorcery soap opera with a dash of mockumentary. It is a comedy, but I like to think of it as a comedy with a soul. It will probably get silly at times, but it works best if we, at the end, actually care a bit about that group of adventurers, when dawn breaks and it is time to kick in the first door in the dungeon. We, the players, will laugh off stage, but on stage, characters may suffer terribly.

Improvisation is the most important skill to play this game. The players need to be quick on their feet, and we will use some inspiration from improvisational theater to get the semi-live action roleplaying going. This is not a game that works well if everybody just sits around a table behind a personal wall of snacks. However, we are not going to do anything freaky, and while you can play it with an audience, this is primarily a game for you and the players.

Part I: How to Play

In a hurry?

Have you just picked up this game, and need to get started quickly? If you are playing with an experienced group of players, who are ready to go, time is short, and you are comfortable with

handling an improvisation heavy game build around scenes and played out as semi-live action, you can skip directly to Part II.

Scenes

This is not a continuous flow type of game like what you will find in your typical roleplaying campaign. In order to keep things tight so we can tell the story in under two hours, everything is broken up into scenes with a setup and a goal. Most of these scenes will only take a few minutes to play. Some will involve only a few characters at a time, while others may be more chaotic with every available player on the floor.

A scene in a roleplaying game is like a scene in a play or a movie. It usually takes place in a specific location over a short amount of time. A scene in this game could begin with one of the characters trying to seduce one of the townsfolk, and it could escalate into a drunken fistfight, before you cut the scene.

Your primary job as the game master is to set up the scenes, fuel them if necessary, and cut them (end them) when you feel they have reached their climax or served their purpose. You set up a scene by paraphrasing to the players, which characters are in the scene, what the situation is, and what we know will happen, or what might happen.

Do not worry if a scene does not go the way you planned or fizzles out. You get another attempt with the next scene. Sometimes even the best setup fails because of mismatched chemistry or misunderstandings.

Preparation

You do not have to learn any special game mechanics to be the game master in this game. To play, you will need to know the flow of the story,

and you need to know how to set up a scene and how to end it.

Find some players!

You will need at least two players to play this game. It will make for a very small adventuring party, but they will certainly get to act out all aspects of their characters. There is up to six regular main characters, but you do not have to use them all.

The game can also allow for more than six players. In most of the scenes you will find minor characters that are the supporting cast for our main adventurers. These characters are also played by the players, so if you have eight players, six of them can play the adventurers and the remaining two get to play a bunch of different

characters during the game. If you have less than a handful of players, you may need to play some of these supporting characters yourself.

This game can be quite entertaining for an audience, and if you have to play the game in a crowded hallway, do not be afraid to recruit members of the audience to play minor characters. Just make sure any recruits also know the rules you have established about touching and other behavior.

Game master techniques

Your primary job as the game master is to get the players into the right mood to play the game. It is a good idea to encourage them and cheer them on, even if they are struggling. A bit of praise will often help nervous players loosen up.

Your secondary function is the administration of the game. You will need to instruct the players about each scene, add some directions during play, and cutting the scene at the right moment.

Setting up a scene: To set up a scene you will need a location, a few starting characters, and at least one goal or motivation for the scene. It could be one of the characters who go out into the alley behind the inn to take a leak, only to run into another drunk guest. You instruct the player that at some time during the scene, the character will suddenly confess how scared he is about the whole quest.

Characters in a scene: A lot of the time the players will play their main characters, but they also need to play the supporting cast. When you set up the scene, you can instruct one or more players whose characters are not in the scene to begin with, which supporting roles they play. You can also add characters to a scene as it progresses. Sometimes players will join a scene as a supporting character completely on their own. That is only great if you can get to that, but do not be afraid to help them along. Let them know that it is o.k. to join a scene without being asked to.

Some of the first **scenes can easily be over very quickly**, because the players are still learning. That is o.k. – but sometimes you should try to let a scene go on just a bit longer. A bit of **uncomfortable silence**, while still feeling the pressure of being in the spotlight, can bring about brilliant performances. But you should use it carefully and with your best judgment.

You also have the power to **manipulate the players indirectly**. While setting up each scene, you can describe what their characters see, hear, smell, or feel. Use the environment. A description of a young woman's perfume, or a stinky alley behind the inn, will affect how the players act in the scene.

Get the players involved! My experience is that it can be difficult for many players, when you ask them to set up a scene themselves. For example if you ask them to put their character in a situation where they get to play out a key part of their personality. But when you get the players

warmed up, they may be eager to suggest what should happen next. If you get to that point, you can put the script away and just go with the players' ideas.

Control the pace! One of the tools you have, is the power to control time. At least in the game. You can use this to put a scene on pause to give the players input by perhaps asking a question that you feel could take the scene in an interesting direction. Try to focus on just one player and use it as a way to help her. Make sure she feels she is doing a good job. A good question is to ask what goes through the mind of the character.

When the players are really pumped up, **scenes can escalate quickly**. That is awesome, but throw in a quieter scene for contrast every now and then. It is just like a stadium rock concert – there has to be a ballad or two.

Your word is the only rule! There is no actual game mechanic in this game. There are no dice to determine the result of a conflict. Instead, you and the players decide which outcome is best for the story. To keep things nice and tight, your word is the final ruling. If you rule that the priest can turn cheap ale into premium ale, that is what happens.

This can be a balancing act. **You need to be fair.** I suggest you give much more weight to fun than to realism, but do not let the players exploit you. **Challenge them**, rather than give in.

Semi-live action

Instead of just saying, what your character does, it can be more fun to at least partially show it with your body as well. I am not asking for costumes or Shakespearean performances, but just a generally show of body language and interaction. It is pretty much just using live bodies instead of plastic miniatures on a battle grid. And just like miniatures are confined to their five foot square, there should be very little touching.

You can of course touch each other as much as you want, but only if you want it, and it happens within the boundaries of the law in the state you are currently in. But the live action is primarily to inject the roleplaying with a bit of physical energy, and that does not require actual contact.

You need to designate as large an area of open floor as possible as your 'stage'. This also helps you establish if a player is in a scene or not. If you are on stage, you are a character.

Some players will run, jump, scream, and roll around on the floor. Other players will just stand there. While the more dramatic style is more entertaining to watch, both are fine. It is not theater.

Your players might ask if they can just sit down and play. I suggest you insist that they at least give it a few shots. Especially with comedy, you will often see better performances, when you add the physical element to the game. It also helps cut back on the shouting matches that can take place around the table, when people get excited.

So what kind of body language can you use? I like to play with things like relative status between characters. For example, is this character intimidated or intimidating towards another? I also like to challenge personal space. If two characters get close to each other, it usually means either kissing or fighting – or maybe sharing a secret.

Body language can also be used to convey relatively simple things about a character. This works great for supporting characters. The drunk bar patron might barely be able to walk, while the flirty half-elf might make more eye contact than most would be comfortable with.

Pre-game briefing

This is not a dangerous game, but it is always a good idea to make sure that everybody is on board with making it so. I have been surprised more than once to learn about strange phobias or past personal experiences from players that nobody would have thought about if the player had not come forward and told us. Therefore, to make sure everybody has the best possible

experience, you may want to cover the basics, especially if you are playing with a group of strangers. Responsible roleplaying is not something you can automatically assume from anyone.

Safety

Things could get physical in this game. You are encouraged to use your body to portray your character's actions, so we may see fighting, touching, and maybe even kissing. At least that is what happens in Scandinavia when the players get really into the game. It is good thing, but only as long as you make sure that it does not end in a real fight.

The basic rule to establish is how much touching is allowed. Some prefer absolutely no physical contact, while others accept just certain things like holding hands or touching a shoulder. Others are fine with a bit more rough physical play, but very few are comfortable with actual kissing. There is nothing in this game that really requires pushing the players on this, so use the lowest

common denominator. If one player – or the game master – says that she does not like to be touched in character, there should be no touching.

It may happen anyway, and that is fine, as long as the players are fine with it and sort it out. It will most likely happen as a scene gets heated, so make sure your players know a few basic rules. First, establish eye contact to make sure the other player is o.k. with what is about to happen. Then it is a good idea to describe what your character does, e.g. »I punch your nose«. If the other player acknowledges that this can be played out, you can fake your punch. Remember, actual punches may end up involving security and filing of paperwork. Nobody wants that.

Respect

How rude or explicit language and themes are your players comfortable with? It is a good idea to establish a few ground rules before you start. There may be certain words that certain players find so offensive that using them would get in the way of the game, so identify them and agree to avoid them.

In many fantasy worlds, racism seems to be almost a driving force for the relationships in your typical adventuring party. However, in the real world it is a sensitive subject and one where some players could take offense from e.g. the portrayal of the greed of dwarves. So identify any hot button issues amongst your group before you start.

Alcohol is another topic that you may want to consider, depending on the composition of your group in terms of age and cultural background.

The same goes for sex and violence. It is absolutely necessary that you agree on what is o.k. and what isn't. As the game master, make sure to back up any player that seems too uncomfortable when you discuss this. You should try to sense, using your best judgment, whether any discomfort is just due to stage fright, in which case it might be o.k. to push the player slightly out of her comfort zone, or if it is something that has nothing to do with the game. If you feel the latter might be the case, you should be the one arguing on her behalf as the game master.

The bottom line: Everybody should have fun, and it is usually possible to do this without anyone getting too uncomfortable. There is good discomfort, and we want some of that, but we do not want anyone to have a bad game experience.

Part II: Time to Play

Distribute characters

The characters are all based on the stereotypes you would find in most campaigns of the early fantasy roleplaying era. There is six regular characters. If you have more than six players, the remaining players will handle most of the supporting roles.

I suggest you briefly introduce the characters and let the players pick their favorite. The characters and the accompanying scenes are designed to allow the players to pick a gender for their character that they prefer to play. For the non-racial archetypes, feel free to add typical fantasy races.

If you have fewer than six players, you can let them each pick a “main character” that they will always play. All remaining characters are handled like a supporting cast.

If you have more than six players, I suggest you find the players with either the most experience with semi-live action style of play to handle the supporting cast. Otherwise go with your instincts and delegate those to the players you think will be best at switching between characters. Or you may want to go with players that are also experienced game masters.

The suggested keywords: These are meant for the players to help break the mold of their stereotypical character during the game. The players can use any, all, or none of them. They are just suggestions that should inspire them to take their role in a new direction.

*(The next 3 pages contain the main characters; 2 per page.
Cut or tear the page in half to distribute the characters)*

The Elf

Graceful, cool, wise. Compared to the life of a human, elves are almost immortal. The Elf cares little for the mundane affairs of other races, who often mistake this for arrogance. Sometimes they are right, though. An elf who left the elven lands must know that something more important is going on. Something that will determine the fate of the world.

Elves are living beings. As imperfect and emotional as any human or dwarf. Sometimes an elf might just have stepped on the wrong elven toes back in the forest. Or maybe The Elf has done something worse than just step on a few toes. Or maybe this elf just did not fit in?

Keywords for your inspiration:

Fear of failure
Oppressed compassion
Envy
Fleeing an arranged marriage
Forbidden love
Broke a taboo
Tainted bloodline
Terrible archer
Lost an artifact
End of the world

The Dwarf

Strong, reliable, proud. No adventuring party is complete without The Dwarf. Sure, The Dwarf may have a weakness for gold, but even that you can depend on just as much as The Dwarf will always be there by your side, axe in hand, until the last orc is dead.

But is that true for all dwarves? Surely, some dwarves must have broken an oath to be with a lover? And would that greed not drive some dwarves so mad, they obsess with gold, hoarding gold pieces in their fat bellies like short, bearded dragons?

Keywords for your inspiration:

I am dying
Alcoholic
Broke an oath
Revenge
Rebellious
Maddened by greed
Murderer
Grieving a lover
Death wish
Afraid of the dark

The Wizard

The Wizard is always seeking lost knowledge. The kind that should not fall into the wrong hands, because every arcane spell contains the whispers of madness just beyond grasp of most mortals. Nothing is more powerful than magic, except The Wizard who masters the art. An art that can ultimately make you immortal.

Nothing fits worse in a monster infested underground tunnel complex than somebody who has been reading books and lived a life shielded from the real world in a school for wizards. So why is The Wizard willing to risk everything and follow a group of trained killers into the depths of darkness?

Keywords for your inspiration:

Betrayed a mentor
Dismissed for lack of talent for magic arts
Forbidden lore
Stole an artifact
Killed a loved one
Disfigured
Unnatural talent
In debt
Consumed by magic
Cheater/Fraud

The Fighter

The sword and The Fighter are almost as one. It is not just rigorous training; it is also a special gift that makes The Fighter a master of the battlefield. The Fighter is a physical marvel with a deep, emotional wound. Orcs killed The Fighter's parents, and no amount of revenge over the green bloods will stop that wound from bleeding.

Killed by orcs? A raiding band of orcs? And to take revenge, The Fighter trained and trained, until it was time to take revenge, but it didn't heal the spiritual wound? What kind of orphan has the mindset and the resources to become a skilled enough warrior to take out even one orc? And why would such an orphan end up in a tavern and decide to go into a dungeon with a group of strangers?

Keywords for your inspiration:

Lies about parents
Boredom
Guilt
Tormented
Inexperienced
Weak
Self-loathing
Aggressive
Façade
Friends

The Priest

A pious crusader on a mission to spread divine light to the darkest depths of the world both literally and figuratively. The adventurer guided by a moral codex and compassion. The one who keeps the group together and focused on the greater purpose.

Or is The Priest running from something? Is the faith truly strong with this one? Is it a test? Or a punishment? Perhaps there is even darkness within The Priest?

Keywords for your inspiration:

Possessed

Cultist

Doubt

Horror

Death

Lust

Guilt

Martyr

Heretic

Chosen

The Thief

The Thief knows all the dirty tricks and might have criminal past, but at heart, The Thief is a good person. The Thief is both a loner and the most social member of the adventuring party. The Thief says that it is all about the treasure, but in the end, people matters more to The Thief. Sometimes, The Thief has to betray the party to understand this.

A skilled criminal with a heart of gold? Sounds like somebody who would be killed by fellow thieves, just so they could sell that golden heart. A naïve soul might fall for The Thief's lies, but what is the true motivation of The Thief? How can this thief be both a skilled criminal and the adventurer with the purest heart?

Keywords for your inspiration:

Victim

Tormented

Undercover

Murderer

Romantic

Agent

Paranoid

Rich

Enemy

Fraud

Warm-up

To get the players ready for the semi-live action, I suggest you use a few simple warm-up exercises. If you already have some favorites, use them. Otherwise, here are two that covers both the body and the mind.

Association game: Gather in a circle. Start with a word, and the person to your left should say the first word that comes to her mind, when she hears that word. The person to her left then does the same with that word. Continue until you draw a blank. Then you can pick another word.

Here are a few suggestions that are all sword and sorcery themed: Dragon, Fireball, Castle, Spellbook, Chains, Beholder, Treasure, Orc, Prophecy, Darkness, Crystal, Artifact, Ghoul.

Ministry of Silly Walks: Each player has to create a silly walk inspired by their character. Let the players walk around amongst each other for a bit. At some point, stop them, and ask them to switch walk with the player closest to them.

Supporting cast

Feel free to get creative with the minor characters. Sometimes a small change from the expected can produce great results. What happens if the innkeeper is just a young boy? What is his story? So please, deviate from the stereotypes as much as you like. Just keep in mind that stereotypes can also be useful. It requires far less explanation, if the stable boy is just what you would expect a stable boy to be. So use a twist to the stereotype if you need a catalyst for storytelling.

And please, invent more characters using inspiration from the fantasy genre. Just keep in mind that the adventurers should be special, so the supporting cast should be ordinary people in a dangerous world.

The Innkeeper – can be played in any scene. Mostly interested in preventing damage to property and patrons, and to make sure no bar tab goes unpaid.

The Barmaid – the serving staff can be played as an obstacle. Characters may harass the staff, but they will only tolerate so much, and the punishment is greater.

The Stranger – the mysterious cloaked figure in the corner claims to be an experience adventurer, who has seen some bad stuff in her time. This may or may not be true, but The Stranger is there to instill some doubt into the characters.

The Groupie – there can be more than one of these locals who become enamored with one or more of the adventurers. Use The Groupie to get characters to break local rules, instill jealousy, or encourage conflict between party members.

Drunk Locals – drunk farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, and other non-adventuring types. They love to drink, fight, and hear tall tales about monsters. Great company as long as you do not break the rules or insult their local customs.

Skeptical Locals – more sober scribes, farmers, lumberjacks, fishermen, or butchers will question how tough the adventurers really are, and if they have any idea what they are doing, and what it will do to the community if they fail their quest?

Scenes

Create your own

The scenes, I describe below, are merely suggestions. As your game progresses, you might end up in a different direction than what I have anticipated. That is perfectly fine. In fact, I encourage both you and the players to make up your own scenes as you go along. Here are a few guidelines:

Go with what is fun, and what gives you a great story.

Pick scenes that will flesh out the main characters.

Keep the overall story and theme in mind.

It is o.k. if not all characters are fully played out in a short game.

Go with what works for your group – and who works (but help players who are struggling).

Twist the backstories of the characters – maybe your parents were not really killed by orcs, so what is the true story?

Conflict is good.

General ideas:

Have a character introduce a dark secret or a weakness.

One of the characters break a rule or taboo of the local society.

A character betrays another.

A character abuses the temporary status as heroes that they enjoy.

Consider small ‘confessions’ as seen on reality TV: A short scene where just one character states her true opinion or trusts the viewers with a secret.

A few tips to the players about improvisation

Say yes. Pay attention to what your co-players are saying and doing, grab onto their ideas and support them. Even if it is not the greatest idea ever, you will move the scene forward.

What has been stated previously in the game is the law – most of the time.

Do not be afraid of just using a trivial idea, if you are drawing a blank. The other players are here to help you, so even if your idea stinks, it will be

awesome when combined with those of your co-players.

Everything goes in a scene, but keep the overall goal of the game in mind, and do not break genre.

A bit of exposition is helpful sometimes. Do not forget that the other players are also an audience that wants to know, who your character is and what that character is thinking.

Suggested scenes

You should only use a few scenes from each of the three acts. The acts are also just a guideline for the progression of the story. Especially Act II can overlap with Act III. Keep your time limit in mind!

You should let the players know the general idea of what happens in the scene as described. You might end up somewhere else, and again that is fine, but if the players know, what is supposed to happen, they can work towards that.

The Opening

(Descriptive scene, just the game master)

It is dark. Somewhere, the sound of dripping water, echoes through the underground stone halls. Shadowy figures move slowly in the dim, flickering light of a dying torch. The ghouls rip apart a chain mail shirt and dig into the soft, white belly of a dwarf. On the cold floor, lies six dead adventurers as the torch sputters and fade to a red ember, leaving the ghouls and the dead adventurers in complete darkness.

door. A young lady rushes over to help him up, but he just points at the adventurers, and with his dying breaths gives them their first quest that will send them down into the dungeon.

Now the adventurers have received their first quest, but it is evening, and the dungeon can wait until morning. Now it is time to celebrate that heroes are here to save the town!

24 hours earlier

A group of adventurers are sitting at the local inn. They are smiling, joking, sharing some bread and a pitcher of ale. An old man stumbles through the

The actual quest is deliberately vague. It is not about which evil wizard did what to whom and stole what ancient artifact.

Act I: Celebration

Boasting Contest

Who is the most badass adventurer? Who will kill the biggest, slimiest, creepiest monster? Who has already killed more orcs than the dwarf has had tankards of ale? Who can use a bow to shoot stars out the sky? Take turns topping each other's

boasts. It is fine to brag by putting your fellow adventurers in bad light, just remember the verbal punches until later, when opportunity for physical punches might present itself.

No Credit for Dead Men

The adventurers want to celebrate, but have no money. So one of them tries to make a bargain with the innkeeper to give them credit until they return from their adventure, richer than anyone

in town can even imagine. The innkeeper does not want to spoil a good night of business, but these are not the first adventurers that will have failed to return to pay a substantial tab.

Mistaken Identity I

One of the locals is sure that one of the characters is a famous hero and has announced this to a

large group of townspeople who are now arriving to hear the character tell her heroic tale.

Raiding the Kitchen

It is late, and a couple of the adventurers are drunk and hungry. Nobody is watching the

kitchen. But they will get caught red handed by a staff member while they are raiding the pantry.

Rejection

One of the adventurers tries to seduce a local at the inn, but is very drunk, the local is not impressed by heroes who have accomplished

nothing yet, and the adventurer is ultimately rejected in front of another party member.

Side Quest Impossible

One of the party members is approached by a desperate local who asks for help finding a lost relative whose disappearance may have had something to do with the mission that the party is

going on. It is obvious that this is not the case, but the party member may not have the heart to tell the desperate local and may choose to accept the side quest.

The Groupie

One of the adventurers gain the unwanted or slightly disturbing attention of a local. Any

relations would be socially inappropriate for a reason that is up to the players.

Act II: Cracks

Wizards Need Sleep Too

This can be played in two variations. Either the wizard wants everyone to quiet down a bit, so he can get some rest and prepare the right spells for the adventure tomorrow morning; or the wizard

refuses a friendly nod from another party member to moderate her partying and remember to prepare spells without a hangover in the morning.

The Prank

One of the party members has gone to sleep or passed out. Two of the others decide to pull an immature prank. Anything from casting Explosive Runes on his underwear, switching labels on her magic potions, or levitating the bed

500 feet into the air, to classics such as greasing up axe shafts with lard or rubbing itching powder in the wizard's robe. The victim wakes up halfway through.

The Inquisitor

One local is very skeptical of the abilities of the adventurers and do not trust them. The local will question them, until a fight breaks out, or the

party atmosphere is ruined to the point where harder liquor is needed.

Blessing

Let The Priest open with confessing to have lost faith and why. The only ones who listen to the monologue are a passed out local drunk and the almost empty bottle of spirits that The Priest has

done the most damage to. Then let a spirited local approach and insist loudly, so everyone can hear it, that The Priest give the party and the town a blessing.

The Stranger in the Dark Corner

A mysterious figure sits in the darkest corner of the inn. As one of the adventurers passes by, he says: "You know, you all will die ... or worse." Confronted, the stranger reveals herself as a

seasoned adventurer, who lost too many friends – and enemies – to the horrors of the dungeon. She will happily tell many tales about nasty traps and vile creatures lurking below.

The Ghost

The Elf is confronted by a ghost from the past. This can literally be a ghost as in a dead person,

or it can be a living person. It is someone The Elf has wronged or betrayed somehow.

Broken Ego

The Fighter has lost a fight with one of the locals. It was a fair fight, but now The Fighter is licking his metaphorical wounds while another party member tends to the physical wounds. The

Fighter may have doubts about his abilities, or he may plot revenge. The other party member will probably encourage The Fighter's destructive thoughts rather than be the voice of reason.

Back Alley Confessions

One of the characters goes into the alley behind the inn to relieve himself. He meets a stranger who happens to be on the same mission, and the character spontaneously decides to unload

everything onto the stranger – all his dark secrets, doubts, and fears that is. But is joined by another member of the party half way through.

Impotence

One of the adventurers experiences a failure in his abilities. The Thief might trip and fall down the stairs, dislocating a shoulder. The Wizard might have a simple spell fail several times, much to the

mocking from everyone. The Fighter might find that the armor does fit, because of a few extra pounds. The Dwarf might fail to drink a local villager under the table.

Act III: Crash

Intervention

Someone should have a serious talk with the dwarf about his alcohol consumption.

Mistaken Identity II

One of the locals is sure that one of the characters is the child of a local farmer, who also happens to

owe him some money for a cow.

Bad Omen

One of the characters unwittingly does something that the locals interpret as a bad omen. Maybe someone forgets that drinking with your left hand is really bad. The superstition changes the atmosphere in the inn. Locals talk about how they

are going to fail, people who have bought them drinks suddenly no longer wants anything to do with them. One character gets into an argument with the locals about this superstition, and things get even worse.

Into the Well

One of the characters has had too much to drink and ends up throwing up into the well on the

town square in front of the inn. The locals are not impressed.

Who Let the Sheep Out?

A party member has successfully seduced a local or another party member. In search of a haystack

they have let a farmer's sheep out. Villagers are not pleased.

Pitchfork Wedding

One of the characters is caught, getting a little too close with a local. Several townspeople insist on

an impromptu wedding. And a suitable dowry.

Promise Me

(End with this one)

One character confesses his doubts and fears to another and asks her to promise that she will protect him and that they will return safely.

Rise and Shine

(Optional, descriptive)

You wake up, as a bucket of cold water is thrown in your face. The Innkeep does not look happy, and reminds you that you have a job to do. You strap on your adventuring gear and head out of

town, squinting at the terribly bright sun, thinking that it might actually be nice to get into a cool, dark dungeon soon.



The Aftermath

by

William Nichols

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

The Aftermath explores changes in privilege, power and social expectation due to a short-term physical injury. This mobility impairing injury causes long standing effects social effects, and changes relationships. Using the spoon metaphor, the aftermath explores how one injury changes the lives and relationships of everyone involved.

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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.

Inspiration: Every house wife who has never had a bank account. Everyone that can't report crimes for fear of being shot. If I keep writing these I'm either going to sound like a jerk or get angry.

Helpful: How can I help? Find ways to make the injured's life easier. Pay attention to the under privileged before the injured shows up, but then ignore them and pay attention to the injured. Help at every possibility. Find new and interesting ways to help out.

Natural Allies: Of course the injured. Go help them.

Natural Enemies: Who would be your enemy? You help everyone.

Spoon Rule: Anytime you need a spoon, you can get one. That's no problem for you. Sometimes people lose spoons, but you don't know why. Just continue to help people. That's got to help.

Inspiration:

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.

Natural Allies: The injured. The under privileged.

Natural Enemies: The helpful. The harasser.

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.

Natural Allies: Befriend anyone different from you. They are interesting.

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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.

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.
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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.
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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.
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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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Helpful: How can I help? Find ways to make the injured's life easier. Pay attention to the under privileged before the injured shows up, but then ignore them and pay attention to the injured. Help at every possibility. Find new and interesting ways to help out.
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--- third Copy of roles ---

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Artist: Unrecognized *by* Mads Brynnum

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

COMEDY

An RPG sitcom about stardom, fame, and recognition. The game revolves around a group of likeable, but somewhat awful artists and their petty struggles to be more successful, more famous, or just more something than their peers. They usually fail.

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Artist: Unrecognized
- An RPG comedy by Mads Brynnum

3-6 Players – 120 minutes

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About the designer

Mads is a professional stand-up comedian, game designer and – all of a sudden – high school teacher. He's never quite gotten the recognition he obviously deserves.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Artist is a game about stardom, fame, and recognition. But more importantly it's a game about likeable, but somewhat awful people and their petty struggles to be more successful, more famous, or just more *something* than their peers. And of course it's also a game where winning can only happen at the expense of someone else.

The players are artists (painters, playwrights, authors, etc.) that struggle to gain fame from the rabble and recognition from their peers. And rather than having a game master, all players are in control. All players must contribute to frame and create a story. While the game helps you, you are very much required to set scenes, create plot, and to help each other move the story along.

The Setting

The game takes place in modern times in a big city somewhere near you. The only important difference is that in the game world the different types of artists are much closer connected than they are in real life. Painters, performance artists, playwrights, movie makers, and so on all go to the same parties, hang out at the same cafés, work together and so on. And the audiences are huge for all genres. More people go to the theatre than in our world, newspapers write more about art installations or painters, and the audiences also shop around in genres.

The Story

Artist: Unrecognized is very much aiming to be an episode of a sitcom. Every time you play, you have one player be the tragic hero – tragic as in “with a destined fall” rather than as in “something sad happen.” The story of how something failed utterly for him or her will form the backbone of the game, and all players must help set up and resolve the inevitable failure. Meanwhile all the other players also squabble to fulfill stories of their own. And while the tragic hero must always fail – preferably in the most spectacular manner – the other players can actually accomplish something if they're lucky.

2.0 PRACTICAL STUFF

The Game Organizer

One player will be the game organizer (probably you since you're reading the rules.) As the Game Organizer you are not a game master. You do not control the game, and you play an active an equal part in the story. Rather you are the one responsible for explaining the setting and rules, guide the other players through character creation, and so on. You should also be the one keeping track of time; the game really works best if kept to around two hours including character generation.

Playing time and # of Players

You should aim to finish the game within two hours. This is very doable even including character generation. And while you can stretch the length of the game, it really isn't necessary. However, if playing with more than 5 players, you should probably add about 20 minutes of playing time.

Playing In Public

Artist: Unrecognized is not a hardcore game, and you'll not be required to do anything embarrassing or controversial while playing. But the fact that it is a comedy, and because some of the tropes are very recognizable (pun intended), you would most likely get a few eavesdroppers if playing in for instance a hallway at a convention. Don't be afraid to cater to them – a good audience can make comedy much more fun.

The Cards

The game comes with four different types of cards: stat cards, supporting characters, goals, and plots. They are meant as tools for generating story as you play and will be explained later. *Before you can start playing, you'll have to print and cut the cards.*

Starting the Game

When starting the game, do the following. Everything will be described in detail later on, and at the end of the rules you'll also find a cheat sheet to help you:

1. Tell the other players the background and setting. Mention, briefly, the idea of the tragic hero, and then go through the rules for fun guidelines.
2. Explain the concepts of Fame and Recognition.
3. Create characters.
4. Explain the tragic hero (including rules) and the plot. Introduce the plot cards. As a group choose a hero and a plot.
5. Each player – except the hero – now chooses or picks a goal.
6. Explain the playing style and the structure. Agree on the amount of larping you'll do.
7. Start playing.

3.0 RULES, STRUCTURE, & HOW TO

Artist: Unrecognized is a game with very few rules. And in fact, most of the rules does not govern player interaction, conflict resolution, and such, but are more like guidelines for interesting play.

The rules of fun

When playing you should always adhere to the following guidelines:

Failing is fun

Everybody likes a winner – especially one who wins in a way nobody had imagined. But when it comes to comedy, failing is usually more fun. So don't be afraid to fail or lose the game. Allow your character to be the butt of the joke, because, if everybody does so, you'll get your payback later.

Be the setup – not the punchline

This guideline could also be called: don't aim to be funny. Funny happens when you least expect it, so you should make room for the other players to punch in. Say and show what your character thinks and feels, make statements about stuff that's happening, and in general let fun happen rather than chase after it.

Remember you are flawed but likable

Every sitcom character is flawed in some way, and maybe the characters of Artist: Unrecognized is a bit more flawed than they usually are. But remember that they are not evil. They do not, for instance, want their friends to fail *as such*. It's just that they really want to win themselves and sometimes that's easier if you can stand on somebody's head. And sometimes they actually mean well, but still manage to fuck it up. Also, see guideline #1.

Fame and Recognition

Each player has a stats showing his/her Fame and Recognition. Fame is how, well, famous you are among what we'll refer to as the rabble. You know, people who don't really know anything about art, but whose attention you still require. Recognition, on the other hand, is a number that tells what your peers think of you.

At the end of the game, each player has the opportunity to change his/her stats depending on what happened. However, the total amount of both Fame and Recognition is unchangeable. So basically you cannot gain Fame or Recognition without someone losing it.

Fame and Recognition is foremost of all an inspiration for role playing. For instance, if you are interacting with fans or some such, the player with the highest Fame will most likely have the highest status in the given scene. But you should also use it as a tool for describing your own character and how you interact with the others.

For instance a character with High fame and low Recognition might be so because other artists know he's shit, but he always gives people what they want. Or maybe he is really talented, but just a somewhat horrible person. On the other hand a character with high Recognition, but low Fame will most likely be very bitter because he never gets what he deserves. And he might even resent the player with the opposite stats because he (obviously) steals his thunder.

Character Creation

The characters in Artist: Unrecognized do not have to be full fleshed out with lots of backstory. Instead you create quite simple characters and then allow them to be defined by what happens as you play the game.

When creating your character, write the information on a piece of paper. And remember to share information and ask for ideas.

1. Decide what kind of artist you are. Be a writer, a painter, a performance artist, an acrobat, or whatever you like. You don't have to know anything about the kind of artist you are, just as it doesn't matter if you all do different things. Remember: for the purpose of this game we pretend that the worlds of theatre, performance art, screenwriting, etc. are much more connected than in real life.
2. Decide why you're in it – your mission as an artist. Do you want the fame? The recognition? The money? The hot chicks/lads? Do you want to show everybody else how stupid they are? Do you wanna show your parents that you actually can? Or are you – crazy as it may sound – only in it for the sake of art itself? It's up to you, and don't be afraid to be pretentious. Your mission is not to be confused with goals. Goals can be achieved while playing, a mission most likely cannot.
3. Choose a flaw. Every comedy character is inherently flawed and you are no exception. A flaw can be arrogance, lack of social skills, that you're easy to anger, that you're a snob, that you're always brutally honest, or somesuch. Your flaw should be related to how you interact with other people, so don't go for obese, lazy, etc. And remember: the truly funny thing about flawed characters is that they don't every realize their own flaws even though everybody else can see them.
4. Come up with a name (can be a *nomme de guerre*) and decide on a gender.
5. Provide a tiny bit of backstory for your group. Do you live together? Are you old pals? Have you worked on different projects together? Don't spend a lot of time on this, but feel free to introduce common backstories while playing. No matter what your backstory, however, one thing is certain: just as in any sitcom you constantly visit each other, meet up in the café/bar, and so on.
6. Pick or deal out Stat Cards. Each stat card has numbers for Fame and Recognition and a sentence or two to describe what it means. You can either take turns picking one or deal them out randomly.

The Tragic Hero And The Plot

The Hero

Now you have to decide who will be the hero. As mentioned the hero's story is the core storyline that sort of sets the course for the game. For that reason I suggest letting the player who has the most experience being a game master take the role as the hero. Because, while all players have to create and shape the story, the hero is a bit more in control. Do note that you as the game owner does not have to be the hero.

(If you play a campaign, you'll take turns being the hero – more on that later.)

The following three rules applies to the hero and thus to the entire game and should not be broken.

1. The hero is always right. This is the hero's story. If a player does something and the hero believes it happened a bit differently, the hero can ask him or her to change it. Try to do this for comedic effect.
2. The hero has to fail.
3. The hero may be right, but necessarily the way he/she imagines. This means that the other players can and must challenge the hero.

The Plot

When you've agreed on who'll be the hero, you have to decide on a Plot for the game. The plot is an outline or a basic premise of the hero's story, and you can either pick one of the Plot

cards or create your own. The Plot should be created and agreed upon by all players, but the hero has final say.

Goals

After you've decided on the Plot, each player besides the hero chooses a goal for the game. A goal should be something that's relatively easily obtainable within the limits of what is basically a sitcom episode. And why it can be related to your characters' missions, it doesn't have to. You can create your own goal or pick one of the Goal Cards. No matter what, goals are public knowledge since knowing what other players want makes it easier to create interesting and funny storylines.

And remember: The goals are things that can help you create story and intrigue. They are not important in themselves, and ignoring a goal is often better than shoehorning it into a story that really doesn't have room for it. Also, failing is definitely an option.

Style of Play

In Artist: Unrecognized all players are allowed to begin and end scenes and in general use all the tools of a game master. Yes, this also includes playing supporting characters, making flashbacks or –forwards, cutting scenes, and whatever. So basically one of you just begins telling the story. Then, as the other players join in, you gradually begin to dramatize it – meaning that rather than just telling what happened, you start role playing it. You can start scenes in character (“remember when we met in the café and you asked me about the money”) or you can go sort of off screen and do it (“Shouldn't we have a scene where you two discuss the money”). Or you can do both – normally it will be quite obvious when you're talking as your character and when you're yourself as a player.

When it comes to move about, touching, working with your body, and so on, feel free to do whatever you like. The game works perfectly well if you remained seated the entire time, but it can also be played more or less as a LARP. But as always, if you as a player want to be very physical, talk about it before the game begins.

Supporting Characters

The supporting character cards should be placed in the middle of the table. They are meant as an inspiration and do not have to be in the game. There are also a few blank cards if you want to create your own. Of course you can always add characters without giving them a card, but a card can be a nice way of remembering an important supporting character. Remember that any player can play any supporting character.

Scene Length

The game owner should keep track on time and remind players if you should advance to the next act. This is not high drama, so long, lingering scenes are not recommended. Rather you should aim to end scenes when you have something funny or when you've created suspense. And remember: cutting a scene too early is better than cutting it too late. You can always revisit a scene, you cannot get back time spend with a scene that ends up leading nowhere.

Structure

The narrative in Artist: Unrecognized always follow this basic structure:

The final Scene – Beginning – Middle – End – Epilogue

The Final Scene – 5 minutes

The game begins with the hero setting the scene for the event or situation that will end the game. This is where his/her fall will take place, so give a few clues as to what you want and how it can go wrong. A rule of thumb is to add stuff that will make the failure worse. Failing at an art show is one thing, but doing it in front of the man you want to impress or while your rent is on the line adds tension.

You should not role play the Final Scene yet (you'll get to it), but just allow the hero to tell some of it. What should always be left out is the exact nature of the failure.

And then you start from the beginning.

Beginning – 15-25 minutes

The beginning is where you introduce the overall plot and individual goals, but also the possible obstacles in the way. If the final scene is a premiere, for instance, maybe the play isn't finished yet. And if one player wants to propose to her girlfriend, maybe they should have a fight or an affair. Don't be afraid to throw wrenches into other players' machinery – sorting out the problems (or failing to do so) is where a lot of the fun is.

The beginning ends when all players have introduced their goals (including the hero), and when the possible obstacles have been hinted at.

Middle – 30-40 minutes

This is where you flesh out the stories. Maybe you try to overcome an obstacle and fail, or maybe we get the first hint of just why the hero might end up failing.

During the middle you should generally try to up the ante, but also hint at solutions that *just might* work. The middle ends when the hero feels confident that things will most likely work out – even if everybody else can see failure looming.

End – 20-25 minutes

The end is mostly the scene the hero has already hinted at – the final scene, that is. But of course you can play a few short scenes that lead directly into it. This is where we'll find out who manages to fulfill their goals, but also exactly how the hero fails.

Epilogue – 5-10 minutes

Finally each player rounds up his or her story, ending with the tragic hero. When rounding up you can, for instance, talk about how your peers talked about you in the weeks after, or you can sum it up with a small story from a gossip magazine. And then you get to take 1-3 points of either Fame or Recognition from one other player. You should explain why, and if you want to take more than one point, the other players must allow it.

4.0 ON CAMPAIGN PLAY

If you want, you can easily play the game as a campaign. You simply take turns being the tragic hero, but otherwise follow all the normal rules.

When playing a campaign, you should still see each session as a sitcom episode. So try to finish storylines during a single session – unless you occasionally want to do a double episode, of course. However, just as in real sitcoms you can (and really should) develop ongoing storylines and use them to create tension. And whether or not they are actually resolved as some point is rarely as interesting as the dramatic opportunities they create along the way.

5.0 FINAL WORDS

Remember: while the goal of the game is to win, the winning really isn't important. Have fun, don't be a dick.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at brynum@gmail.com

Artist: Unrecognized

The CHEAT SHEET

How to begin:

1. Tell the other players the background and setting. Mention, briefly, the idea of the tragic hero, and then go through the rules for fun guidelines.
2. Explain the concepts of Fame and Recognition.
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5. Each player – except the hero – now chooses or picks a goal.
6. Explain the playing style and the structure. Agree on the amount of larping you'll do.
7. Start playing.

Character Creation

1. What kind of artist are you?
2. Why are you in it?
3. What is your flaw?
4. What is your name and sex?
5. What kind of group are you?
6. Pick or deal out Stat Cards

Structure

The Final Scene – 5 minutes

The hero sets the scene by *telling* some of what happens. This will also be the scene that ends the game. Create suspense, set up for a surprise fall.

Beginning – 15-25 minutes

Present the overall plot and individual goals. Make obstacles for each other.

Middle – 30-40 minutes

Put more at stake, make new obstacles, and flesh out storylines.

End – 20-25 minutes

Revisit the final scene and play it out. Maybe play a few scenes leading into it.

Epilogue – 5-10 minutes

Each player (ending with the hero) tells what happens in the weeks after. Can then steal 1-3 points of either Fame or Recognition from another player – explain why.


Rules of Fun

- Failing is fun
- Be the setup – not the punchline
- You are flawed but likable

<p>PLOT The Proposal</p> <p>The hero wants to propose. Maybe the intended has a hunch, maybe it's a surprise (and somewhat over the top) declaration of love, or maybe it's all just part of a happening.</p> <p>Suggested Scenes</p> <p>An argument with the intended. Will this ruin everything?</p> <p>It comes up that one of the other players once had a thing going with the intended.</p>	<p>PLOT The Premiere</p> <p>The hero's new work is being presented at a big event. Everybody will be there. The press will be there. The rabble also, most likely. But maybe the work is not done yet, maybe it's awful, maybe it's stolen, or maybe something else entirely.</p> <p>Suggested Scenes</p> <p>One of the other players finds out that he/she is part of the work and not in a flattering way.</p> <p>The hero accidentally insults an important reviewer and has to make up for it before the premiere.</p>	<p>PLOT The Award Show</p> <p>The hero is to receive a reward, host the show or somesuch. No matter what he/she has prepared to make something special out of it. Maybe a political statement, a work of art, a public humiliation, or something else. Things won't, of course, play out as planned.</p> <p>Suggested Scenes</p> <p>Working on the acceptance speech or monologue</p> <p>Discussing why someone else was not chosen - one of the other players for instance.</p>
<p>GOAL Impress The Rabble</p> <p>You want to do something that will change how so-called normal people view you and your art. You want to raise your fame, in other words.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>A fan comes up to talk to one of the other players. You try to steal the spotlight.</p>	<p>GOAL Impress Your Peers</p> <p>You want do something that will change the way other artists look at you and your works. Raise your Recognition, in other words.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>One of the surest ways to increase your rep is to diss someone else. Unfortunately he or she (one of the other players) hears it. And now you have to make things up or else ...</p>	<p>GOAL Another One Bites The Dust</p> <p>You want one of the others to fail. Maybe it's revenge, maybe it's so you can help him/her recover and play the role of the hero, or maybe it's something else entirely. You cannot pick the Tragic Hero for this goal.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>Convince your "target" that you can help with his/her goal, but of course with a sinister double cross on your mind.</p>
<p>GOAL In It For The ...</p> <p>You want money. Or a date. Or hot sex. Or maybe just a meeting with an important producer/gallery owner/impresario.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>You manage to set up a date with someone you want to borrow money from, have sex with, or some such (could be another player). The only problem is that he/she has completely misunderstood your intentions.</p>	<p>GOAL Me! Me! Me!</p> <p>You want the upcoming event to be about you. Maybe you want to seize the opportunity to reveal a new work of art, maybe you want to pitch something, or maybe something else. No matter what, you want to be the center of everyone's attention.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>Sick of not getting any attention, you dive into a lie that convince everybody you are the most important. As long as it doesn't backfire.</p>	<p>GOAL In On The Secret</p> <p>One of the other players has a secret and you want in on it. Maybe you're the only one who doesn't know about it, maybe it's not even important, or maybe it really is. But no matter what you most definitely feel that you do need to know it.</p> <p>Suggested Scene</p> <p>Trying to lure a player into telling you the secret, you make a promise you're not sure you can keep.</p>

SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Agent	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Archnemesis	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Parent(s)
SUPPORTING CHARACTER	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Competition	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Reviewer
SUPPORTING CHARACTER	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Fan	SUPPORTING CHARACTER The Ex

<p>STAT - 3 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 2 Recognition: 9</p>	<p>STAT - 3 players The Premiere</p> <p>Fame: 9 Recognition: 2</p>	<p>STAT - 3 players The Award Show</p> <p>Fame: 6 Recognition: 5</p>
<p>STAT - 4 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 2 Recognition: 9</p>	<p>STAT - 4 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 9 Recognition: 2</p>	<p>STAT - 4 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 6 Recognition: 5</p>
<p>STAT - 4 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 7 Recognition: 4</p>	<p>STAT - 5 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 7 Recognition: 4</p>	<p>STAT - 5 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 4 Recognition: 7</p>
<p>STAT - 5 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 2 Recognition: 9</p>	<p>STAT - 5 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 9 Recognition: 2</p>	<p>STAT - 5 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 6 Recognition: 5</p>
<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 5 Recognition: 6</p>	<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 7 Recognition: 4</p>	<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 4 Recognition: 7</p>
<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 2 Recognition: 9</p>	<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 9 Recognition: 2</p>	<p>STAT - 6 players The Proposal</p> <p>Fame: 6 Recognition: 5</p>



The Bear *by* James Ryan

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

DATING, SCIENCE-FICTION, EVERYDAY LIFE, TIME TRAVEL

The Bear divides players into factions: Prisoners, who time-travel to save the world from nuclear war; Camp Police, who monitor and interrogate the Prisoners; and The Dead, citizens of the past who are unaware of their impending doom. Will players learn enough from one another to prevent their fate?

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THE BEAR

by James Ryan

(With special thanks to Sara Williamson,
Golden Cobra Mentor Extraordinaire!)

3-12 Players

They have journeyed back at the cost of great pain and personal sacrifice from a world after the war that ended everything. They seek knowledge of this past. They must know the cause, for to know the cause is to alter their own dismal present. Somewhere here, there are answers. They know this, for they have already discovered some clues, scraps drawn from the mouths of prisoners as they died from the drug. The Bear. Every prisoner spoke of it -- the last words from their dry, blackened lips. Someone here will lead them to it. If they can know The Bear, they will own the future.

DESCRIPTION

The Bear is a freeform role playing game based on the film *La Jetée* by Chris Marker. The game is designed to be played in a public space. Players will either be time travelers from a post-apocalyptic future or citizens of the past who unknowingly face a nuclear holocaust just a few days ahead. Players of characters from the past will invent a piece of knowledge based on one or more key words. This knowledge will relate to some special and intimate detail of their character's life; it will in no way be obviously connected to an impending catastrophic nuclear war. Players of characters from the future are desperate to gain this knowledge, and will attempt to discover it through spying and conversation.

THE GC

Playing *The Bear* requires one player to be a Game Coordinator. This player will take on the role of one of the Camp Police in the game, will make certain decisions, and will explain the game to the players. To play *The Bear*, you will need: 3 to 8 players (including you), player sheets for each player (see the chart), a public location, a designated meetup point at that location, and a means of tracking the time.

Players will belong to one of three factions: Prisoners, Camp Police, or The Dead. The table below shows how many of which type of player sheet to print out for the number of players in your group.

Number of Players	Prisoners	Camp Police	The Dead
3	1	1	1
4	1	2	1
5	2	1	2
6	2	2	2
7	2	3	2
7 (alternate)	3	1	3
8	3	2	3
9	3	3	3
10	4	2	4
11	4	3	4
12	4	4	4

LOCATION

Before play, you'll need to know where you are going to playing and what the parameters are of the play space. You may choose any public space you like in which you can perform the actions of the game. Prisoners and The Dead will be pairing up for conversation. They may want to sit together or they may want to stroll around. You want a place where a couple of people getting to know one another might go to chat. Because the Camp Police will be spying on these couples, and one Police might have to surveil more than one couple, it will be important that couples do not wander outside of the designated location.

The location should allow Camp Police to get close to players without appearing unnatural. Camp Police need to try to overhear the conversations of players, and they need to do so without drawing attention to themselves. A park is not always good in this respect: it allows players to wander, but in some parks at least it will be obvious and awkward if Camp Police get too close. A cafe is better, but it fails in another way: all a Camp Police has to do is sit at the table near a couple to hear everything they say. A museum, however, is a perfect match for these requirements: players can walk freely, and Camp Police can approach players nonchalantly, listening in on their conversations while pretending to pay attention to the museum's collection. A shopping mall is another good location like this. So is a supermarket. Or a flea market. Or an amusement park. Or a county fair. Particularly appropriate would be either a zoo or a museum of natural history with a bear exhibit.

While it would take some additional pre-game planning, you could choose to make use of a route rather than a location, as long as all players travel in the same direction along the route during play. For example, all players could start on a subway platform, ride the train together, and then get off at the same stop to walk around a museum.

Whatever the location, you will need an "meetup point," a point in the location where you will begin the game, and where all players will meet at the end of act one. You will prep for the game and play the second act at the meetup point, so it should have enough space for Camp Police and The Dead to meet as a group and talk without being overheard by the Prisoners, who will be waiting nearby.

As GC, your job is to pick the location (or the route) and the meetup point and explain these clearly to the players when it is time to play.

TIME

The Bear is played in two acts. Each act is timed, and one of the primary tasks of the GC is to make sure that acts end on time. In the first act, pairs of players will be dispersed over the play area, with Camp Police roaming and monitoring them. You may want to arrange ahead of time to have the phone numbers of Camp Police. This way, you can send them all a text at the end of the first act. Without cell phones, you might simply walk through the play area, informing Camp Police and pairings that act one is over. When notifying pairings, Camp Police should simply walk up to them and say: "Now." If they have read their player sheets well, the players will know that The Dead should remain in

place for five to ten minutes while the Prisoner walks silently to the meetup point. In act two, Camp Police speak individually with each Prisoner. GC should make sure no Prisoner speaks longer than their allotted time. When the individual conversations with Prisoners are complete, it will be time to debrief as a group.

PREPPING A GROUP

If you have picked your location and meetup point, have printed out the appropriate number and type of character sheets for your group, and have assembled your players at the location, you are ready to prep the group for play.

Start by a general description of the type of game you are about to play. Players should already know that they are getting themselves into a free form roleplaying game, so it should be enough to remind them that this type of game can sometimes touch on sensitive parts of our psyches. Players may experience strong emotions during play. Please do tell players that if they should feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed at any time during the game, they are free to take a break or excuse themselves from the game. Players should understand that they have your support to do whatever they need to practice appropriate self-care, and all players should understand that the expectation is that they will respect the emotional needs of other players. If someone needs a break, or to excuse themselves, other players should know not to ask for an explanation. Quiet respect is the appropriate response. Further, while this is a dramatic game, players should know that ordinary rules of human interaction should be respected. Players ought to respect the physical space of other players. No player should touch another without their clear consent.

Once you've had the emotional safety talk, proceed by explaining the limits of the play area. Point out the exit point and explain its function. Explain that players will receive character sheets that will place them into one of three types of characters. They should not talk to any other players when they are reading their sheets and should keep their information secret. Tell players that if they have questions, they should raise their hand and you will speak to them privately.

Pass out character sheets and ask players to separate by character type. Give each of The Dead a memory sheet, which will explain their secret memory. Important: *the GC should not read*

memory sheets in advance. This is secret information only for The Dead. Give players time to read their sheets and ask you questions. Don't let The Dead tell you what is on their memory sheets.

Split Prisoners and The Dead into pairs. Let them tell each other their names, but nothing else. Send The Dead into the play area, asking them to separate from each other so that no pair will be too close to the others. Have Prisoners sit still with eyes closed for five to ten minutes. When The Dead are at a fair distance, ask the Prisoners to think about life in the Camp. If you like, you can talk them through some of the details. You might even provide a guided visualization of the harsh realities of Camp life. When you are ready, ask the Prisoners to open their eyes and seek out their friends. Send them one at a time, staggered by about 10 seconds.

ACT I: THE CONVERSATION

The play time for act one is 45 minutes. That is the longest that any character from the future can stay submerged in the chemical state that allows them access to the past. During this act, pairs of players will be having their individual conversations. The Dead will each have a personal secret related to the word "Bear" and one of these other key words: "Chord," "Light," "Solution," "Minute." They will not know that the Prisoner is from the future, or that they are about to die in a nuclear war. The Prisoners will know they are from the future, and that The Dead are aptly named, but they will not know the secret carried by The Dead they are paired with. Each player will attempt to get information from the other during their talk, and each will have reasons to withhold information from the other.

During these conversations, Camp Police will be assigned to monitor the pairs and to spy on them. They will want to discover the secrets of The Dead as well, and will also want to find out if the Prisoners "contaminate" the location by either A) speaking one of the key words or B) telling The Dead that they are from the future. Camp Police will be taking notes and preparing for the interrogation of Prisoners in act two. Over the course of two acts, Camp Police must discover the link between the personal secrets of The Dead and the onset of nuclear war.

While the Prisoners are finding and introducing themselves to The Dead, Camp Police should talk about how to coordinate their surveillance efforts. Once the pairings have had a few minutes to get acquainted, Camp Police should move into the play area.

If there are more Camp Police than pairings, the GC should hang back and watch the game as a whole, collecting information from the other Police, rather than surveilling pairings directly. Alternately, Camp Police could rotate so each pairing has one Camp Police spying on them at a time.

When 45 minutes have passed, Camp Police should approach each pairing, say the word “Now,” and then prepare for act two.

ACT TWO: DYING WORDS

When the Prisoners return, the chemicals that took them to the past now take their lives. Camp Police have only a few precious moments to gain as much information as they can from each Prisoner. As a rule, Prisoners will only be able to speak for five minutes before they join The Dead.

As Prisoners return, they should gather together silently at the meetup point. They should sit together with their eyes closed.

When The Dead arrive, they should group around Camp Police and stand as silent witnesses to the interrogations.

While players are arriving, Camp Police should consult about what they’ve gathered through surveillance and what questions they want to ask of each Prisoner.

Camp Police should pull one Prisoner at a time away from their group to a space just out of earshot of the other Prisoners. During each interrogation, Camp Police should seek to discover the meanings assigned to as many of the key words as they can and the secret memory of each of The Dead. Camp Police should also seek to get Prisoners to confess to any contamination they may be guilty of. Each Camp Police should pay close attention and ask any questions they may have. Your task as Police is to assemble a narrative of what happened during this moment and what connection it might have to the war.

When a Prisoner’s five minutes is up, inform them that they have died and must now join The Dead. They should stand as silent witnesses to further interrogations. Once all interrogations are done, Camp Police should compare notes for ten minutes. Ten minutes is all they have, for the drugs will take their lives too. Their goal is to leave behind directions for other Camp Police who can travel back and stop the war. The other players will stand silently and watch these deliberations. When ten minutes is up, Camp Police, too, join The Dead and can announce their findings to the other players. Were they able

to learn enough that other members of the Camp might alter the past and save the world? Once this announcement is complete, the game is over, and players may debrief the game as a group.

GC RULES OVERVIEW

You Need:

1. A location with a meetup point
2. Three to twelve players, including you
3. A way to tell the time.

Prep:

1. Start at the meetup point
2. Have a safety talk
3. Explain
 - a) the limits of the play space
 - b) that the game is played in two acts and that players should return to the meetup point when act one is over
 - c) that you will hand out sheets that assign them to one of three factions
4. Pass out sheets
5. Give The Dead memory sheets (Don't read these in advance, GC)
6. Give them all time to read and consider their roles
7. Pair up Prisoners with The Dead

Act One:

1. Send out The Dead, asking them to separate in the play space
2. Prisoners wait with eyes closed for 5 minutes, thinking about the Camp
3. Send Prisoners into play, staggering them by 10 seconds
4. Set timer for 45 minutes
5. Consult with other Camp Police, if any
6. Surveil pairings: can you discover
 - a) the meaning of key words: Bear, Chord, Light, Solution, Minute
 - b) if Prisoners contaminate the location by saying key words or speaking of the future
7. When time is up, Camp Police say "Now" to each pairing.

Act Two:

1. Make sure Prisoners group together silently, and that The Dead stand silently with Camp Police.
2. Consult with Camp Police while you wait for The Dead to arrive.
3. Interrogate each Prisoner for exactly 5 minutes. Ask:
 - a) about the meaning of key words
 - b) about the secret memory of The Dead they were paired with
 - c) if they will admit to contaminating the site by admitting they were from the future
 - d) whatever else you think will be helpful
4. Tell each Prisoner they have died and should join The Dead and remain silent
5. After last interrogation, Camp Police have exactly 10 minutes to find a connection between the war and the information they've gathered from Prisoners. You want to know:
 - a) the cause of the war
 - b) what can be done to stop it
6. After 10 minutes, Camp Police die and join The Dead, announcing their findings, even if they have found nothing.
7. The End. Players may now talk freely about their experience of the game.

CHARACTER SHEETS

Print a number of sheets appropriate to the number of players
according to the table on page 2

YOU ARE A PRISONER

You remember the world as it was. You were a child then. You remember real food, real beds. Parents. Playgrounds. School. Then there was the war, and everything ended. They brought you to the caves, and you didn't see the light again. Rat meat and mushrooms. The water is never clean. No one to speak to. You were left alone in the dark with your memories, memories that steadily grow stronger and more elaborate. With each passing year, you live more frequently and more deeply in them. Today the Camp Police come to you with a candle and tell you that you have been picked for a special task. Your memories will now become real, they say. You can go to the past. You can meet someone and speak to them. They will be happy to see you, they say.

They handed you a scrap of paper and a cup of water. This water is dark and thick. It smells worse than normal. The paper has five words on it. One is "Bear." It is written in big red letters. The others are "Chord," "Light," "Solution," and "Minute." They are written smaller and in black. "You must discover what these words mean," they say. "Talk to your friend so that they say these words. We will be watching you. *We need to know The Bear.*"

Something about their tone tells you that you are expendable. They don't need you and would just as soon see you dead. They need only the information.

But you drank the water and now you are here. Really here. Not just in your cell remembering. This is the world before the war. These are the sounds and smells. This is the air and the light. Time travel has made you feel unwell. Your side aches. Your feel a bit dizzy. But to be here is an amazing gift. Everything is so beautiful and sacred to you. The Camp Police will follow you soon, and this makes you nervous.

Your friend is somewhere near. Go speak to your friend. See what you can learn.

HOW TO PLAY

Act One:

You will be paired with another player. That player will be your friend from the happy past. Your job is to talk with them casually. Get to know them. They have a personal memory that involves the word "Bear" and one of the other words on your list (Chord, Light, Solution, and Minute), but you don't know which one. Do not ask them directly about these words, and do not say these words

yourself. Ask your friend questions about their life and let them speak naturally about themselves. The meaning of these words is something personal, so you will want to get to know them well. If your friend asks you about yourself, be careful what you say. The Camp Police will not be happy if you tell the truth. Drop hints. Hope that your friend guesses the secret: that you are from the future.

The Camp Police are following you and listening. Try not to let your friend see you worrying about them, and try not to let them hear the secret of The Bear. You are convinced that their lack of information is the only thing keeping you alive. Once they know The Bear, they won't need you anymore.

Act Two:

When a Camp Police approaches you and says "Now," get up immediately, without another word. Turn your back on The Dead and walk directly to the meetup point. Wait silently at the meetup point with the other prisoners. Close your eyes and keep them closed. Do not speak to The Dead when they arrive. The Camp Police will call you and ask you questions. Answer them honestly or not, as you wish. Follow their instructions when the questioning is done.

YOU ARE THE DEAD

Something is wrong, but you don't know what. Life seems fine. Everything is normal. And something unspeakably bad is about to happen. You're sure of it. You haven't been sleeping because you're up all night thinking about the big terrible unknown thing that is on its way. You feel crazy. You can't tell anyone: *What would they say?* And what if they found out the whole truth? Deep down, you know that, whatever this awful thing is, it's all your fault. The Big Terrible Thing is somehow related to something you've done. Something in your memory.

But now you've met someone. Someone special. It's hard to say exactly why, but you have a feeling that this person will understand you. "Feeling" is too vague a word. You *know* they will understand. Something about them is different from anyone you've ever met. You're sure that the answer to your trouble is in the hands of your new friend. You've both agreed to meet up today to get to know each other better. Somehow you know: if you can understand this person, you will also understand your fate. So enjoy your conversation. Get to know them. This is going to be a good thing. It's the first bit of hope you've felt in a long time.

All the same, this is really the first time you've ever talked to your friend in any depth. You are hopeful, yes, but you feel vulnerable, too. Your new friend wants to know you. But how can you tell if they are trustworthy? You've only just met. Play it safe. Don't let out too much of yourself until you are sure that your feelings are right.

HOW TO PLAY

Act One:

You have been given a memory sheet. Read it. It contains your most important memory. This memory is not the kind of thing you would ever talk about in casual conversation, but it would definitely come up if someone takes the time to get to know you well. When you get really close with someone, they learn about this memory because it is such a big part of who you are.

You will be paired with another player. They are your new friend. Do not tell your friend your memory unless you are able to get to know them well enough to trust them and their motives for getting to know you. See what you can learn about them, and let them get to know you if you feel that they can be trusted.

Act Two:

When a Camp Police player walks up to you and says “Now,” your friend will get up and walk away. Don’t try to talk to them. In fact, ignore them while they walk away. Spend five to ten minutes alone, thinking about your conversation. What have you learned about them? What have you learned about yourself? What questions do you still have?

When you are ready, walk back to the meetup point. Do not speak to the Prisoners. Gather with the rest of The Dead and stand silently near the Game Coordinator and his or her team. Watch what they do and listen to what they say. They will be asking questions of the Prisoners. Think about their questions and what these might mean about your circumstances. What are they trying to learn? Try to piece together everything you have discovered during act one to see if you can determine who you are and where you are. Will a Big Terrible Thing happen? If so what is it? If not, why have you been so distraught? Who were the Prisoners? What were they trying to do? And what about the other players? What was their goal? How much of the puzzle can you solve? Think about these questions as you watch the proceedings in silence.

YOU ARE CAMP POLICE

The experiments have gone remarkably well. Dedication and discipline have paid off. Living underground after the war that wiped human civilization from the face of the earth, you have managed to survive. Not only that, but with only a small band of survivors and very few resources you have torn a doorway into the fabric of time. The drug works perfectly now. Of course, the costs of time travel are high, but these prisoners are expendable. It is the future of the human race that matters, not these sickly creatures in your cave. You are willing to sacrifice your own life, too. You have also taken the drug, so you can travel back to monitor the subjects. Discovering the right information in the past will change everything, and it will be as if this horrid present were only a bad dream. It *is* a dream. That's all it is. And so it doesn't matter who you kill or if you die or how painful it is to wake up from the drug. Once we finally correct the past, this will all go away.

After sending many prisoners back, all of whom eventually died from high dosages of the drug, you have been able to trace the root of the apocalypse back to a single point in time. Somewhere in the space of this hour at this location, there exists the final clue you need to understand the cause the end of the world. What was it? You only have scraps of information. A riddle. The word "Bear" is important, you know that. And these words, too: "Chord," "Light," "Solution," and "Minute." These come up over and over again in the dying words of the prisoners, but what do they mean? Soon, you expect to have the answers. Perhaps this journey back will be the last, and you'll be able to save us, once and for all.

Watch the Prisoners. Make sure they do not spoil the experiment by speaking the keywords themselves or disclosing their identity.

HOW TO PLAY

Act One:

One or more pairs of prisoners and players from the past will be talking and getting to know each other. Your job is to spy on them. You want to learn the meaning of these keywords: Bear, Chord, Light, Solution, Minute. You also want to determine if the Prisoners contaminate the past by letting The Dead know that they are from the future, or by speaking any of the keywords out loud.

Act casually. Don't let the player from the past suspect what you are up to. If possible, remain near enough to hear, but out of sight of the prisoner. If there are more than one Camp Police in the game, you will want to coordinate your efforts.

When act one is over, approach the pairs of players and say the word "Now." The Prisoners will immediately get up and move to the meetup point where they will wait in silence with eyes closed. The Dead will follow shortly after. While you wait for players to arrive, consult with other Camp Police, if any, about the questions you will ask in act two.

Act Two:

When all players have arrived at the meetup point, it is time to interrogate the Prisoners. Bring them over to you, one at a time, and spend exactly five minutes asking them what they have learned about the past. Have they heard any of the keywords? How many? Which ones? What do they mean? Did they contaminate the location by admitting they were from the future or by speaking the keywords aloud? If so, they must confess. What else did they learn that might be of value to your efforts? What connection did The Dead they spoke with have to the end of the world? What secrets did their memories hold?

After five minutes of questions, inform the Prisoner that he or she has died and must join The Dead without speaking to the other Prisoners. When you have interrogated all Prisoners, spend exactly ten minutes synthesising all the information you have gained. Why did the world end? What can be done to prevent it? Have you discovered enough information? You want to leave behind a note for other Camp Police, so that they can save the world. If you cannot do so, your mission will have failed.

When ten minutes are up, you have died. Go and join the dead. Make an announcement about your findings, even if what you have discovered is that you know nothing.

MEMORY SHEETS

GC PRINT THESE BUT ***DO NOT READ***

THERE ARE **FOUR PAGES** FOLLOWING THIS ONE

PRINT SINGLE SIDED

FOLD THEM IN HALF WITHOUT READING

HAND THEM OUT RANDOMLY TO THE DEAD WHEN PREPPING FOR THE GAME

UNUSED MEMORY SHEETS SHOULD BE DESTROYED UNREAD

MEMORY

On the morning of your eighth birthday, your father told you that he was taking you to the zoo. He was a busy man, a scientist who worked for the government, and so spending time with him was a rare opportunity for you. He walked you to the bear exhibit and stood there, staring silently for an hour at the lone brown bear owned by the zoo.

You held his hand. "I want to tell you about my job, but I can't," he said. "So I want you to remember this bear." There was a popping sound like a firecracker and your father crumbled to the ground. You turned and saw a man holding a gun. The man was in the shadows under a tree. He took two steps backward into the light and disappeared. Literally. He walked into the light and dematerialized.

There was a lot of noise and screaming around you. There were sirens, police and an ambulance. Men in uniform took you away. Eventually, they brought you to your mother. She didn't believe you about the man. She said people don't just disappear. "We'll find the person who did this," she said, but no one ever did.

When you spoke again about the man who walked into the light, your mother called you a liar. When you persisted, she became angry. She spoke in her other voice, the mean one. She said someone shot your father because he worked for the government. She told you never to speak of the disappearing man ever again. So you haven't. Not even to your therapists. It has remained your most important secret, a memory that is with you always. It is why you got your tattoos. On your right ankle, you have a tattoo of a bear. On your left ankle, you have a tattoo of the sun.

The bear. The light. These are your personal symbols. They are sacred to you. They remind you of your dad.

MEMORY

As far back as you can remember, your mom has dated a younger guy named Steve. It wasn't exactly a steady relationship. They were off and on throughout your childhood, but your mom never dated anyone else. She often spoke of Steve as if they were still together even when he wasn't around. Steve's appearances were irregular, sporadic. You wouldn't see him for a week, a month, and then suddenly, he'd be there, in the kitchen making dinner. After dinner, he'd disappear, and you wouldn't know when you might see him again. Somehow, these comings and goings didn't seem to bother your mom. You loved Steve. He was kind to you and to your mother. He always seemed genuinely happy to be with you. He was the only father figure you ever had.

Every single time Steve appeared in your life, he promised to teach you to play the guitar. You had an old acoustic that your mom picked up at a yard sale just so Steve could show you how to play. And every time Steve was around, he taught you the same chord, the F chord. It was the first chord of "Hey Jude," he said. He said that every time. "Practice that, and next time I'll teach you the next chord," he said always. One day, after your "lesson," Steve said that he was not going to be able to come back. You'd have to learn the rest of the chords on your own, he said. He gave you a teddy bear. You never saw him again. You slept with that bear every night.

It's been years since you've lived at home. Your mom's health has been not too good. You recently had to transition her into an assisted living facility. She's been forgetting things. When you last visited her, a man walked out of her room, saw you, and then hurried away. You had to do a double take: He looked exactly like Steve. It couldn't have been Steve. The man you saw in the hallway was still very young, and Steve must be a lot older by now. But when you talked to your mother, she insisted that she had just spent the last hour with Steve. On your mother's bedside was a card addressed to you. Inside were the chords and lyrics to "Hey Jude."

You still have the bear he gave you, and you hold it when you are lonely. You still own that guitar, and still only know one chord.

The bear. The chord. These are deeply important touchstones for you. They symbolize "family" to you.

MEMORY

Aunt Patty was a bit of an eccentric. She was some kind of math wizard with a government job that he couldn't talk about. But when she came over for dinner, she would speak at length about all kinds of weird things: unlocking the secrets of human consciousness, clairvoyance, telepathy, wormholes, mysticism -- all kinds of things that didn't seem to have too much to do with math.

When the Rubix cube first came out, Aunt Patty gave you one for your birthday. It shouldn't be too hard, she said, and when you struggled to solve it, she promised to come up with an algorithm to help you.

One day she burst in the front door, unannounced, and said "I have it! I have the solution!" You thought she meant your Rubix cube algorithm, but apparently she was talking about something that involved her job. She and her dad sat at the dinner table all that afternoon and late into the night talking about things you didn't understand. The word "consciousness" came up a lot. You heard Aunt Patty say: "It's all inside the consciousness! It's memory! That's the key!"

After that day, Aunt Patty acted a lot more nervous when she came over. Always checking the blinds and looking around the house for "bugs," which didn't mean cockroaches. She thought someone was always listening to her. She seemed scared and sad all the time.

The last time you saw Aunt Patty, she gave you a ceramic bear and said, "I love you kiddo. The solution is within." It was another year before you realized the bear was a piggy bank with a rubber stopper in the bottom. You removed the stopper and found a scrap of paper rolled up within. The top half of the paper had five words on it: Bear, Light, Chord, Solution, Minute. The bottom half had the algorithm you needed to solve your Rubix cube. Odd, you thought, two of the words on that top sheet matched Aunt Patty's gift: Bear and Solution. The other words didn't quite make sense. You tore off the bottom half of the paper and got out your Rubix. You aren't sure what happened to the top half.

You still have the bear and the solution. They are important to you. They remind you of your favorite crazy aunt and of a mystery you never solved: Who was she afraid of?

MEMORY

You had a good friend who was abducted in front of a supermarket a couple years back. You were there. You saw it happen. Tina was her name, and she was a physics wiz with an interest in neurology. There were, like, twelve different colleges recruiting her because her science fair project was

a big deal. It won a national award and got her face on the cover of Time magazine. Something about human memory and Einstein's theories about spacetime or whatever. So she was famous. Like nerd famous. But when you guys hung out, it was just fun. You went to the market to get a brownie mix. You were going to bake brownies and watch old movies.

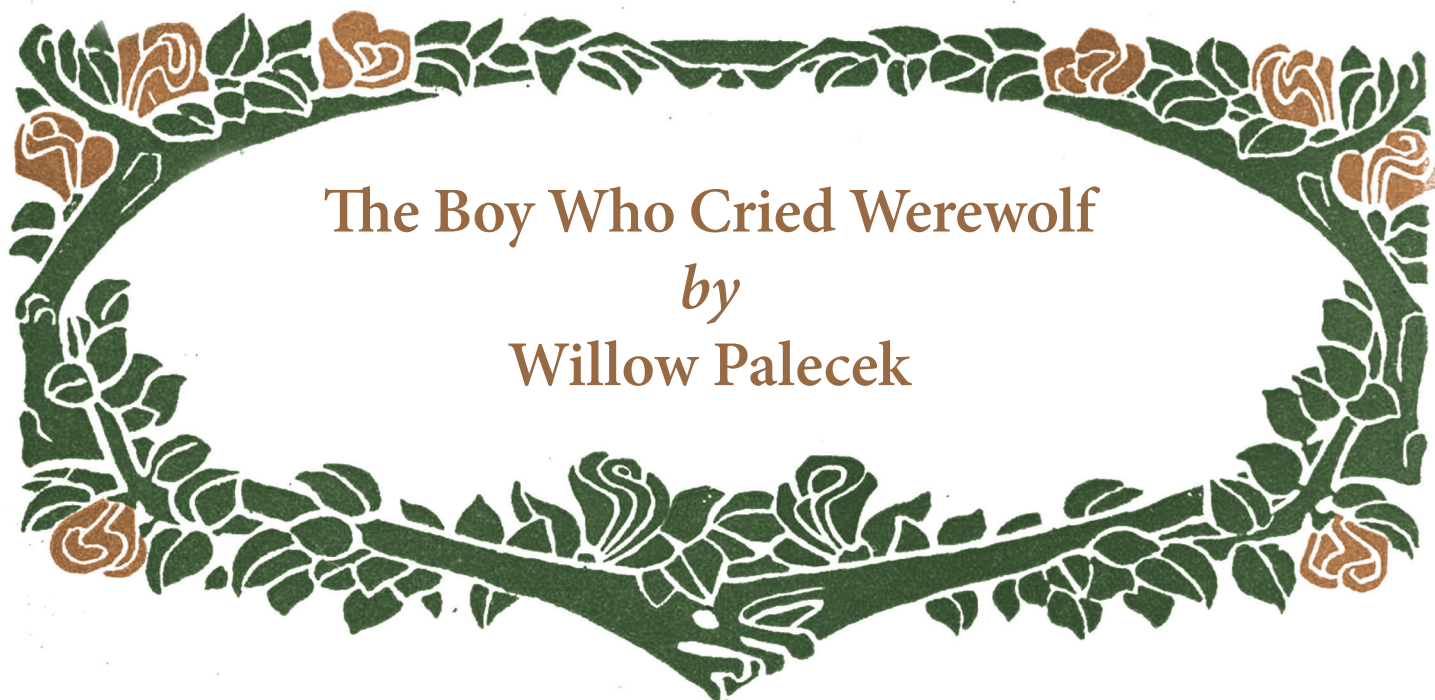
What happened next, though, was really weird. It must have been a glare off a car window or something? But you could swear that one second you were looking at the door of the grocery store, and the next second there was a guy standing there. He didn't walk there. He didn't come out through the door. He was just suddenly there. Without a sound or anything. Like he just teleported in. His breath smelled really bad, but Tina seemed to know him. Maybe he was a college recruiter?

"Wait here a minute," she said, and she handed you a quarter. Then she went with him around the corner of the store.

There was one of those kiddie rides in front of the store. It was a bear saddled like a horse. The bear was all angry and growling. Seemed pretty cool. The quarter Tina gave you was an Alaska quarter, the one with the picture of the grizzly bear on it, and that kind of weirded you out. What were the odds that she would give you a *bear* quarter for a *bear* ride? Maybe that was her telling a joke, but Tina wasn't usually very funny.

Then you heard the squeal of tires and saw the man driving away with Tina. She seemed calm enough. Maybe she was going to talk to more college people? But then a lady came out of the supermarket and said "That's my car!" Tina never came home after that. The police never found her. No one ever found the man even though you described him perfectly. They only found the lady's car the next day back in the parking lot right where she had parked it.

The bear. The minute. You keep the quarter in your pocket all the time. The phrase "wait a minute" is hard for you to hear. The bear is always with you. You feel like you've been waiting that same minute your whole life.



The Boy Who Cried Werewolf

by

Willow Palecek

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, PARTY GAME

COMEDY, FANTASY, RELATIONSHIPS, HORROR, POLITICS, PARTY GAME

The Boy Who Cried Werewolf is a game about a village in the state of crisis, and the villagers willing to do anything to make that crisis go away... and perhaps use it to their advantage. It's about taking a situation that's familiar and digging deeper, turning it on its head.

You've probably heard of the popular game Werewolf. What happens if there is no Werewolf, only bad luck and bastards?

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<https://www.dropbox.com/s/p8ulys3jgtxdt2l/boywhocriedwerewolf.pdf?dl=0>



THE BOY WHO CRIED WEREWOLF

A Game of Social Backstabbing for 3 to 12 Players

By Willow Palecek

The village of Beverdale has long rested at the edges of the Kingdom, a sleepy peaceful village untouched by the plagues and horrors beyond... until now. Sheppard Goddard's body has been found, horribly mauled by some beast unfathomable to the likes of man. Goddard's son testifies he saw the fell beast, a wolf that walked on two legs like a man, its teeth dripping blood and gore in the full moonlight. The town is abuzz with the news, and it is clear: a werewolf walks amongst you. The town elders must come together, use their wisdom to determine who the skinchanger is amongst their ranks, and mete out justice.

There is just one problem. There is no werewolf. Only a simple hungry wolf, and human folly.

Introduction

The Boy Who Cried Werewolf is a game about a village in the state of crisis, and the villagers willing to do anything to make that crisis go away... and perhaps use it to their advantage. It's about taking a situation that's familiar and digging deeper, turning it on its head.

You've probably heard of the popular game Werewolf. What happens if there is no Werewolf, only bad luck and bastards?

To play, you'll need 3 to 12 people, this document (especially the handouts), a comfortable enough place to play, and an hour or two.

Introducing the Game

If you're the one explaining the game, read aloud that paragraph in italics to the group, then explain that we'll all be playing villagers who are trying to find the werewolf in our midst, only there isn't one, so the poor person we decide to lynch is going to be determined by the petty grudges harbored in the village. We've got to lynch somebody, to prove we've dealt with the werewolf menace.

At this point, let people pick characters. You can spread the handouts out or read them off.

If you're playing with just three players, use these characters: Mayor Elbert, Reverend Bartlett, and Captain Atwood. It's helpful if the person playing Mayor Elbert is familiar with the rules.

If you've got four to six players, make sure those characters are assigned first, then everyone else can pick from the following: Midwife Tully, Brewer Marlow, and Farmer Hawthorne.

If you've got an even bigger group, your players can choose from the following: Reeve Castler, Wanderer, "The Red Hammer", The Kid, No-Good Elbert, Miss Marlow, and Hunter Goodman. Again, you want to make sure the Mayor, Reverend, Captain, Midwife, Brewer, and Farmer are all in the game.

If you've played multiple times, you can try different mixes of characters. Who knows what might

happen?

Special Abilities

Each character has a special ability that gives them some bonus or changes the way the game is played. You'll want to think about your unique special ability for how you can get the most out of it. Optionally, you can choose to play without special abilities, especially if you have a smaller group.

A Note on Genders

Any townsfolk can be male or female. Just adapt the gender of the character to be the gender of the player.

The Town Council

Everyone should introduce themselves (both in-character, and out-of-character, if you're playing with strangers), starting with the Mayor. Tell everyone else anything you want them to know about you, and feel free to elaborate on your character's backstory. You can (and should!) keep your character's secret thoughts and opinions to yourself at this point, but if there's something about you that would be a part of public record, let everyone know.

Discussion

Most of the time, you'll probably be talking in-character about what happened, what needs to be done, and what suspicions you have about people. This is a simple conversation between people in the village. Eventually (and depending on your group, this might not take that long), someone is going to formally propose lynching another member of the village, and that's when we need the rules for Accusations.

Accusations

To formally accuse someone else of being a werewolf (or really any hanging crime), raise your hand, point at them, and say, "I accuse So-and-So!" At least one other person must second the nomination, by raising their hand, and saying, "Second." If two or more people want to accuse people at the same time, the Mayor determines who made their accusation first.

During the Accusation, each player gets a chance to speak their mind, starting with the Accuser, anyone who seconded the motion, then the other townsfolk, and finally the Accused. The Mayor should make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Technically, under village rules, everyone only gets one chance to speak, but it's up to the Mayor to how they enforce that.

After everyone's had a turn to speak their mind, the Mayor will call for everyone to vote. They will call for a show of hands of all in favor of hanging the Accused, and then for a show of hands for all in favor of not hanging the Accused. Townsfolk may abstain from the voting.

A simple majority of those voting is enough to hang the accused. When you are hung, you should stand up and give a short, dramatic speech, telling everyone else in the village exactly what you think of them.

If the accusation does not have a simple majority of votes, or an unbroken tie, the accused is determined innocent, and remains free. Go back to simple discussion, until someone wants to make another accusation.

The same person cannot make two accusations in a row, and the same person cannot be accused twice in a row.

What Happens Next?

Once someone is accused and killed, stop to talk out of character about whether or not the game should continue. Has the village seen enough trouble, or are things still simmering and getting worse? Are you out of time?

If you decide to end the game, then there are no more werewolf attacks, and everyone in the village can assume they have solved the problem. You might do a debriefing and talk about your experiences playing the game.

If you decide to continue, there is another wolf attack, killing an animal or maybe some unnamed non-player character. The game must continue, while the search for the real werewolf continues!

This is not a vote. Decide by group consensus.

Restless Ghosts

If your character is killed, you get to play a Restless Ghost. A Restless Ghost is not necessarily the ghost of your character (though it might be), it is a spirit that wants to cause chaos and dissention in the village. You may not sit down if you are a Restless Ghost, you must stand, wandering amongst the villagers, whispering to them.

Whisper things that will make them hate themselves, and hate the other villagers. Tell lies. Tell truths. Get them to turn on each other. Because soon they'll be dead, and they'll be restless too.

Choosings

One of the Village rituals is that of a Choosing. Any member of the village may call for a Choosing, which is an election to choose the Mayor. To do so, they must raise their hand, say "I call for a Choosing, and I nominate So-and-So." So-and-So may be yourself, or another player, but it can't be the person who is already the mayor, and it can't be the Kid, the Red Hammer, or Reeve Castler. (The kid is too young, the others are outsiders.)

Someone other than the nominated target needs to second the nomination. Also, the nominated target needs to agree, otherwise go back to discussion.

The Mayor and the Nominee will both make a short speech about why they should be Mayor. Unlike an Accusation, they are the only two who get a turn to talk. Try to get your support before you call for a Choosing.

The current Mayor will call for a show of hands- those in favor of the Nominee, and those in favor of the current Mayor. A simple majority for the Nominee makes them the new Mayor, with all the

privileges and powers it bestows. A simple majority for the Mayor, or an unbroken tie, allows them to stay the Mayor.

There can only be one Choosing for each 'day' of play. Until there is another successful accusation and another “werewolf attack,” another Choosing vote cannot be held.

Getting Arrested

The Captain can arrest a single player. The arrested player cannot vote, or use their special abilities. For Young Marlow and No-Good Elbert, their abilities trigger at the start of the game, so this doesn't turn off anything already generated by their abilities. The Red Hammer can use her ability “in response” to being put in jail, but once she agrees to be put in jail, she can't.

If the Mayor is put in jail, they stop being the Mayor. The former Mayor chooses a different player to take over as the Mayor. They don't have to consult with anyone, even that person. If the village isn't happy with their choice, it might be a good time to hold a new Choosing.

Other Stuff that Might Happen

This is a roleplaying game, not a strategy party card game, so if you and the other players want to make up other stuff, that goes outside the context of these rules do it!

One exception is violence. You can say that your character is trying to use force to get another character to do something, but unless you're the Captain, Red Hammer, or the Hunter, the best you can do is have you and your target rough each other up. You want to kill another person? Get the mob.

Even More Players

If you decide to play with more than twelve players, some people will have to be Villagers. They don't get a character sheet or special ability. They will want to come up with a name and profession.

Villagers will have to work a little harder to get themselves linked to the story and figure out who they like and who they hate, but if there's enough of them, nobody knows which way the mob is likely to vote on a given accusation.

I'd recommend letting making sure new players get a named character handout, so they can get additional spotlight and attention.

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MAYOR ELBERT

There's been Elberts in Beverdale, going back generations. You're a proud family, with proud holdings. More often than not, an Elbert's been Mayor, and you owe it to your forefathers and foremothers to see that things go smoothly. Beverdale folk prefer simple, direct solutions. Find the werewolf, string them up, problem solved.

Do this right, your ancestors will be pleased and the townsfolk will praise you for your judgement and leadership. Foul this up, and next thing you know, the Hawthornes will be running things around here.

Special Ability: Pillar of the Community: Due to your wisdom and clout, you break all tied votes. Additionally, you start the game with the Mayor title, allowing you to moderate debate.

Reverend Bartlett: Sure, everyone praises the Light and pays their tithe, but no one is that holy. Anyone that fully committed to the Light has to be hiding something. Could the good Reverend be seeking redemption for sins too terrible to contemplate? Would things be easier around here if you didn't have that Codex Thumper undermining your secular authority?

Captain Atwood: Atwood is a good soldier, and a good follower. If anyone can catch this beast, it's the Captain.

Farmer Hawthorne: Ever since Gull Creek went dry, Farmer Hawthorne's been trying to plant on land that's rightfully yours. You need a careful touch on this, make sure you're not seen as trying to bully him out of his land, but this defiance cannot be tolerated.

Brewer Marlow: A loyal citizen, who makes the best ale in all the country, and you've had your share of ales. And the taxes on it- why, that's just the plum in the cake.

Midwife Tully: The witchwife is more like it. Your family was expecting its newest addition not too many months ago, and Tully presided over the birth, as she's done so many before. This time, she hexed the child, and it was stillborn. You're not a grandparent yet, and it's the witch-woman's fault.

Reeve Castler: You agree, in principle, that the King needs to get his due, however, you're concerned that Castler might not understand some of the liberties you've been taking with your tax collection. Best to keep the Reeve distracted with talk of the werewolf and make sure the topic of tax monies doesn't really come up.

The Red Hammer: An outsider, strange and dangerous. The Hammer surely has what it takes to kill the werewolf, but it sure is strange the timing of his arrival.

No-Good Elbert: Your younger sibling, always drinking and dicing away your money. An Elbert's and Elbert, but it would be convenient if No-Good were out of the way.

Young Marlow: The heir to the Marlow brewery. You should marry her to one of your children.

Hunter Goodman: You don't recall seeing Hunter Goodman at any of the recent Choosings.

The Kid: Goddard's kid is a nuisance at the best of times. You'd keep him away, but he's the only witness you have to this thing. You'd also better keep an eye out to make sure Hawthorne doesn't try to steal any of the Goddard land.

REVEREND BARTLETT

Sin has overtaken Beverdale, and we must look to the Codex, and to the Light! This Beast; though it surely a manifestation of the Dark, is sent here by the Light to cleanse us, to teach us the price of our Sins! The killing surely will not stop until we root out all Heresy and Corruption, and return our good village to harmony with the Teachings of the Faith.

You are just a simple village priest, educated by the Church of the Light in the ways of the Faith. You did not think yourself ready for this Burden, but the Light is testing you, and you have been called upon to Witness and Deliver your flock.

Special Ability: Protection of the Light: Once a player is killed and becomes a Restless Spirit, you can see who is tormented by Spirits, and command all Spirits to leave a specific person (other than yourself) alone. Spirits cannot talk to this person until you use this ability on a different person.

Mayor Elbert: Give Unto the Light, that Which is the Lights, Give Unto the King that Which is the King's, so sayeth the Codex. Elbert is a just mayor and a devoted churchgoer, but he will need your guidance during this crisis.

Captain Atwood: A wicked and cruel man, shaped by the barbarism of the wars he has fought. A gambler and a lech, for the Captain to have risen so high is an insult to the Light. The Unjust Mighty must Fall, so sayeth the Codex.

Midwife Tully: A more open heretic there never was. Tully cavorts with dark powers, denies the essential Truth of the Light, and hexes honest citizens. Thou Shall Not Suffer a Witch to Live, so sayeth the Codex.

Brewer Marlow: The Body is a Temple, so sayeth the Codex, and Marlow's brew poisons the body, befuddles the mind, and invites Darkness into the world. You have long preached Temperance to your citizens, but perhaps the Light requires a more active hand from you.

Farmer Hawthorne: A devoted churchgoer, and friend to the Light.

Reeve Castler: Castler is no member of your flock. The Reeve is to be obeyed, but not to be trusted.

The Red Hammer: The Red Hammer is an outsider and heathen. The community will not find salvation from without.

No-Good Elbert: A drunkard, a wretch, and a sinner, living proof of what happens when a great man poisons his body with drink.

Young Marlow: The heir to the foul brewery. Young Marlow wanted you to marry her to Captain Atwood in secret. You refused, and felt you had to tell Brewer Marlow.

Hunter Goodman: Hunter Goodman is a lost sheep who needs to be brought back to the flock, and to prove his worth to the community.

The Kid: Wisdom comes from the Mouth of Babes, so sayeth the Codex. Follow the wisdom of an innocent, and Beverdale will be saved.

CAPTAIN ATWOOD

War changes a man. From Beverdale, you were one of twenty chosen to go fight for the King, and the only one to come back. You know ways to kill a man, you've seen horrors you can't describe. All you want is to live in peace, to dice, to hunt, to drink, and to spend time with fair Young Marlow. But now, this beast is on the loose, and you may be the only one who can stop it.

Special Ability: Captain of the Militia: You have the power to detain a single person and put them in jail. While someone is in jail, they cannot vote and cannot use their special ability. (You might want to designate an area as jail, where you can put that person. They can still talk, probably begging for their release.) You may release them at your option.

Mayor Elbert: Elbert is a fat old hoarder who doesn't know the first thing about how the real world works. He pays you extra to keep you quiet, but he's been skimming off the tax money. A pack of lies, that one is.

Reverend Bartlett: The Reverend is your way to salvation, to grace with the Light.

Brewer Marlow: Marlow makes a fine ale and has a fine daughter, but the man despises you and wants to deny you both. If he were out of the way, though.

Midwife Tully: That one, Tully would make a fine Mayor. It's a far better thing to be saving lives than ending them. And maybe Tully'll whip up a good luck charm for you, to make the dice turn your way?

Farmer Hawthorne: Hawthorne should have fought in the war, but bought his way out of it. Hawthorne and Elbert are squabbling about some irrelevant patch of land. He wants to be mayor, but you don't see how he's any different from Elbert.

Reeve Castler: You're sure the Reeve would be interested to know what Elbert's been doing with all the tax money. On the other hand, it was someone just like Castler who pulled you out of the village to fight and die for the King.

The Red Hammer: You've heard the tales; the Red Hammer is a fury on the battlefield. You sure hope the wanderer is on your side, because if not, things might get bloody.

No-Good Elbert: Your best drinking partner, and a terrible gambler. No-Good Elbert owes you money. He's good for it. Eventually.

Young Marlow: Your beloved fiancé, but Brewer Marlow will never agree to it. If only you could be happily wed, your life would be bliss.

Hunter Goodman: You don't know what strings that bastard pulled, but it should have been him going off to war, not you.

The Kid: You'd have a lot easier time figuring this out if that kid would just shut the hell up.

FARMER HAWTHORNE

Hawthornes just about founded Beverdale, didn't you know? Used to be a time when the Hawthornes were prosperous and had more land than anyone else. Those Elberts have been picking away at Hawthorne holdings for generations. You've half a mind to put your name in for Mayor next choosing, and if you can show Elbert up, you've got a good chance of souring the rest of the village against him.

Special Ability: Loudmouth: Whenever you Accuse someone, you do not need another person to Second your Accusation. If you and another person want to make an Accusation at the same time, you get priority.

Mayor Elbert: When Gull Creek went dry, the Mayor claimed some lands that were yours were now his, saying the old borders didn't apply now that the Creek was gone. That's your best turnip patch, and you'll be damned if the Elberts get that land.

Reverend Bartlett: You're a hard worker, spending your days tilling the land. If you've made a good life for yourself and your family, it's because you've earned it. The Reverend talks of tithes and glory to the Light, but Barlett's never done an honest day's work.

Captain Atwood: Atwood's decent folk, a soldier, and a patriot. Just be careful playing against him at dice or cards- winning, he gloats, and losing, he's a mean drunk.

Midwife Tully: Tully is wise past her years, and has keen insight. If anyone can figure out who the werewolf is, it's her.

Brewer Marlow: Marlow still owes you money for grain you gave when the Brewery was in trouble. Marlow plays it off like it was long ago, but there wouldn't be a Marlow Brewery if it wasn't for you.

Reeve Castler: You've already turned to Castler for help in your dispute with Elbert, and the Reeve is unwilling to help. You'll show him what Beverdalers think of meddling outsiders.

The Red Hammer: We all know that the Red Hammer is an outsider and dangerous. Does the wanderer expect us to believe its a coincidence that there's a werewolf attack the one night they spend in town?

No-Good Elbert: One Elbert's just as bad as another, it's just that everyone realizes how rotten this one is.

Young Marlow: If you could marry one of your family to Young Marlow, you'd eclipse the Elbert family.

Hunter Goodman: If you're going to unseat Elbert as mayor, you're going to need every vote you can get. Goodman is on the edge, maybe he can be courted?

The Kid: Goddard was a friend. It's up to you and your family to take in the kid, and make sure nothing happens to him. And maybe you can take care of the Goddard farm until he comes of age.

MIDWIFE TULLY

You're the village midwife, tending to births, and practicing what folk medicine you know. Your ways are the old ways, the ways of Mother Sun and Father Earth. You know which herbs will ease a birth, what balm will mend a wound, and how to make a charm to ward off evil. And evil has come to Beverdale.

Special Ability: Contact Spirits: Once a player is eliminated and replaced with a Restless Spirit, you can see, hear, and communicate with Spirits. How they react is up to them.

Mayor Elbert: You regret that you couldn't save the Mayor's grandchild; the babe was stillborn. You owe the Mayor a debt to erase the stain of your failure.

Reverend Bartlett: Bartlett is a priest of the new ways, a hypocrite, and a wicked man. Bartlett takes comfort in words, but does not match them with good deeds. The Reverend will poison the town against you, given the chance.

Captain Atwood: This one is a brute, only thinking of his next meal and his next drink. The Captain does not understand your ways, and makes light of them.

Brewer Marlow: Who doesn't enjoy a fine drink now and again? The Brewer makes a good spirit, and Marlow's family makes for good company. If only the head of the house were more outgoing.

Farmer Hawthorne: Hawthorne is all talk, bringing up the glory days of Hawthornes past. The Farmer is prosperous, but Hawthorne doesn't have what it takes to be Mayor.

Reeve Castler: Castler is here no doubt to spread the light civilization by taking food out of poor mouths and coins out of poor pockets.

The Red Hammer: You see a great destiny surrounding the Red Hammer, but also sorrow.

No-Good Elbert: No-Good comes crying to you once in a while for a hangover remedy when she's drunk to much. Sometimes she deserves it; sometimes you let her wait it out.

Young Marlow: Young Marlow is blessed by beauty and fortune, but there's a dark spot on this one's soul.

Hunter Goodman: One of the few townsfolk who like you, still remembers the Old Ways. The Hunter may live on the edges of town, but Goodman is no outsider.

The Kid: You helped birth this child, and it was a long and hard birth. A strong willed child, who is fated for a great future.

BREWER MARLOW

Everyone knows that it's Marlow Brewery and your signature ales that put Beverdale on the map. What a fine ale it is too! But you've got no time to think on that now, for there's a werewolf on the loose, and it threatens everyone, especially you and your family. This could ruin Beverdale's reputation forever.

Special Ability: Active Spouse: You have brought your husband or wife along to the meeting, who votes they way you do, giving you an extra vote. Raise both hands when you vote. However, your spouse will never vote to kill Young Marlow, and always will cast a vote to save them.

Mayor Elbert: If it weren't for Elbert's tariffs, you'd be a much wealthier man, free to experiment with new brews and ales. Because of the Mayor, you've got to keep making the same classic family recipe.

Reverend Bartlett: A teetotaler and temperance campaigner, but you don't let that bother you none. To each their own. It was Bartlett who told you Young Marlow wanted to elope with Captain Atwood.

Captain Atwood: Captain Atwood has dishonored your pride and joy, Young Marlow, your heir and apprentice. The man should hang, yet he continues to hold a position of power in the village.

Midwife Tully: This year's batch is spoiling, and you'd swear you saw Tully making hex signs at your stockpile. You've done nothing to the Midwife, why would she try to ruin you?

Farmer Hawthorne: You've got half a mind to support Hawthorne for Mayor when the next Choosing comes up. The farmer did you a good turn long ago when the brewery was in a tight spot. Hawthorne is the one to be calling the shots.

Reeve Castler: With the Mayor on one side and the Reeve on the other, these taxes are squeezing you out of any profit you've got left. How's someone supposed to raise a family and run a business?

The Red Hammer: You've never seen someone with such a thirst! A supernatural thirst, even. A lycanthropic thirst?

No-Good Elbert: A few weeks ago, you caught Elbert breaking into the Brewery, trying to steal some beer. Since then, you've cut No-Good off. It'd be pathetic, if it didn't make you so damn mad.

Young Marlow: Your child, your heir, who thinks they have all the answers. Don't they understand you know what's best for them? You'll have no more talk about this marriage to Captain Atwood.

Hunter Goodman: Goodman is a moonshiner, which you don't care for- he should be drinking your brew! The man's pretty suspicious, living in that little shack in the woods.

The Kid: It's time for solutions, not to be listening to the ravings of some kid who's clearly in shock. Let the kid have a drink, so the grownups can think.

REEVE CASTLER

You are not from Beverdale; you are a duly appointed agent of the King, here to collect his Tax and perform any necessary legal duties. As the representative of the Crown, it is important for you to be present at these proceedings. The prospect of a werewolf, this far inside the Kingdom's borders, is a truly terrible thought, and the menace must be dealt with quickly.

Special Ability; Agent of the Crown: You are somewhat protected by your position. Any vote to kill you requires a two-thirds majority. This ability is active even if you are in jail.

Mayor Elbert: All of these village mayors pocket tax coin and think they're smooth doing it. Elbert is hiding something, the question is how much he owes the King and how worthwhile it is going after him for it.

Reverend Bartlett: The worst thing the King ever did was allow churches to be tax exempt.

Captain Atwood: A distinguished patriot and soldier, loyal to the crown.

Midwife Tully: Something spooky about that one. You're pretty sure she gave you a hex-eye when you came into town.

Brewer Marlow: Even in the capitol, Marlow beer is sought after. It would be a boon if you could get a keg for your own use.

Farmer Hawthorne: Hawthorne came to you with some land claim: he has the rights to lands adjacent to Fox Creek, but it's not your problem that the Fox Creek dried up. Technically, the land reverts to the Elbert family, though it is a bit of a legal grey area.

The Red Hammer: Wandering adventurers are walking nightmares for bureaucrats. They don't play by anyone's rules but their own, and they rarely report all the treasures they collect. The Red Hammer's been an asset to the crown... for now.

No-Good Elbert: The village drunk and idiot, so far as you're aware.

Young Marlow: Just the right age to go off and serve in the King's armies.

Hunter Goodman: Does the Hunter stay in village land, or is this Hunter a Poacher? There are woods not far from here that are the King's, and to hunt there is a crime.

The Kid: None of your concern. His family's land, you need to make sure the King gets his due.

THE RED HAMMER

You are a legend on the battlefield, where you and your weapon are one. Men tell tales of how you held the Narrow Pass, alone, against hundreds.

You were just passing through and didn't intend to stay in Beverdale more than a night, but now that there is a werewolf on the loose, that sounds like an adventure worthy of your skills and talents. When you find out who the beast is, you will swing your hammer and it will drink their blood.

Special Ability: Cut a Bloody Swath: If things become unsalvageable in Beverdale, you can make your way out of the town by force. You remove yourself from the game, and choose up to two people who are in your way that you kill. (You still get to play a Restless Spirit, even though the Red Hammer has left and is alive.)

You can use this ability when you are being Accused, or if the Captain attempts to arrest you. If you allow yourself to be arrested, you cannot use this ability. If the town successfully votes to kill you, it is too late you use this ability.

Mayor Elbert: You don't care for authority unless it comes from might and deed. This Mayor is fat and soft, a peacetime leader.

Reverend Bartlett: You've never been one for organized religions. Bartlett is either an empty shell, or something more dangerous- a true believer.

Captain Atwood: With command of the whole militia, the Captain is probably the only person here who can really threaten you. Best to stay on the right side of the law.

Midwife Tully: You've seen enough to know to trust the intuitions of people like Tully.

Brewer Marlow: The Marlow family does make a mighty fine brew. It would be a shame if you had to put them to the sword.

Farmer Hawthorne: You've heard there's some feud between the Elberts and the Hawthornes, but you don't quite have all the details.

Reeve Castler: Nobody cares for tax collectors, but if you help out Castler, the Reeve might be able to repay the favor.

No-Good Elbert: You spent last night in Elbert's company, having a few drinks and sharing tales of adventure. This one's not the werewolf, that's for sure.

Young Marlow: This one seems like the village beauty. A real eye catcher.

Hunter Goodman: A harmless old coot.

The Kid: You don't like to admit it, but you've got a bit of a soft spot for kids, and this poor kid has been through a lot.

NO-GOOD ELBERT

You and your sibling, the Mayor Elbert, you've never exactly been close. He was the firstborn, with all the privileges of that, and you've grown up in his shadow, expected to serve. You'll put in a hand now and again, but you don't see why you should labor for a farm that isn't yours, for a sibling who gives no gratitude. You'd rather spend your nights drunk out of your mind, and gamble away your family's money.

The idea of a werewolf is sobering, even to you.

Special Ability: Blackmail: You have dirt on someone. At the start of the game, choose someone, and pass them a note, telling them what they did, and what proof you have. How they react is up to them.

Mayor Elbert: The source of your money, and the source of your woes.

Reverend Bartlett: Bartlett means well, but the message grows tiring.

Captain Atwood: Your best drinking companion. You should know better than to play cards against the Captain. You still owe Atwood some money.

Midwife Tully: Tully makes a great hangover remedy, but sometimes shares it and sometimes doesn't.

Brewer Marlow: Marlow makes the best beer anywhere, so of course you had to sneak in to the brewery to see if you could get your hands on the fresh stuff. Marlow caught you, and now you can't get your favorite drink.

Farmer Hawthorne: The Hawthornes can all go burn, for all you care. You might not have a lot of pride, but you're still an Elbert, and the Hawthornes are always trying to pull one over on the Elberts.

Reeve Castler: A rude, self-important outsider, condescending to the likes of you.

The Red Hammer: The Red Hammer came through town last night, so you showed the wanderer a place to bunk and the two of you had a grand time, getting drunk, and you listening to the Hammer's stories.

Young Marlow: The Young Marlow is your lifeline; a friendly youth, willing to help out a poor soul and sneak you some bottles of fine Marlow Brew.

Hunter Goodman: The Hunter has it figured out. He lives his own life, doing as he pleases. No one tells Goodman what to do.

The Kid: You feel pretty bad for the kid. You've always had a soft spot for kids, cheering them up with a prank or a story. Plus the kid helps when you need an extra pair of hands, like that time you broke into the brewery.

YOUNG MARLOW

Your parents are the town's brewers, and you are apprenticed to their craft. It is a fine trade, but you have bigger dreams. You want to see the world beyond the village, to be free to live the life you choose.

This crisis is a chance for you to prove to your parents that you are ready to make your own decisions in life.

Special Ability: Youthful Beauty: You are a handsome youth of marriageable age. At the start of the game, choose someone, and pass them a note, telling them that they are smitten with you, and must vote to save you. Don't choose Captain Atwood (who already loves you) or Brewer Marlow (because that would be weird.)

Mayor Elbert: You don't see what job the Mayor does, other than sit around and get rich off of other people's work.

Reverend Bartlett: You casually asked Reverend Bartlett about marrying the Captain, and Bartlett refused. Someone needs to show that holier-than-thou

Captain Atwood: Captain Atwood has recently proposed marriage to you. You are deeply in love with the Captain, and ready to run away and get married.

Midwife Tully: You've heard that Tully is a woods witch or warlock or something. If Bartlett won't perform a marriage ceremony for you, maybe Midwife Tully will.

Brewer Marlow: Your overly controlling parent, who doesn't understand you're not a child anymore. Maybe if he was Mayor, he'd spend more time worrying about everyone else, and less time worrying about you.

Farmer Hawthorne: Your parents downplay it, but you know your family owes the Hawthornes money. Quite a bit, actually.

Reeve Castler: You don't bear Castler any ill will, but a tax collector makes great target for community hatred.

The Red Hammer: Dangerous, mysterious, and outsider and wanderer. What's not to like?

No-Good Elbert: Your parents have cut No-Good Elbert off, so he depends on you for drink. Keep it coming and he'll do what you want.

Hunter Goodman: A failure, going insane in the woods. And the most likely person to be a werewolf, if you think about.

The Kid: Now that you're an adult, you don't need some little kid following you around anymore. You used to friends, but only because your parents made you.

HUNTER GOODMAN

You live a simple life in your shack in the woods, hunting and trapping. You don't normally come in to town much, just to bring in pelts you find, but rumors of a werewolf have reached you, and that's something for concern. You've hunted all sorts of beasts before, and tracking down a werewolf would be the glory of your life.

Special Ability: Murder: Once during the game, you may murder another player, burying your axe in their skull, in full view of everyone. You can even do this after a successful vote to kill you. (The vote still succeeds.) How the rest of the town responds is up to them.

Mayor Elbert: You haven't turned out to the last few Choosings. Too much ruckus, and one Mayor is as good as another.

Reverend Bartlett: Your ways are the Old Ways, not the way of the Light. You don't care for that fancy way of speaking anyway.

Captain Atwood: You should have been the one to go off to war, not that pack of kids, but they said you were too old.

Midwife Tully: When you want to practice the Old Ways, the Midwife is there for you.

Brewer Marlow: Who needs that overpriced crap when you've got your own still?

Farmer Hawthorne: Another man who owns land and thinks it makes him better than everyone else.

Reeve Castler: Why should you pay taxes for some King you've never seen? The Reeve will stay away from your shack if he knows what's good for him.

The Red Hammer: You know how to deal with this type.

No-Good Elbert: If you had been born an Elbert or a Hawthorne, you probably would have ended up like this one.

Young Marlow: Another young kid looking to inherit land and wealth they didn't earn.

The Kid: You don't much care for children. The only use you have for this kid is if it can lead you to the werewolf.

THE KID

You saw it, you saw it! It was seven, eight feet tall, and walked on legs like a man but had a head like a wolf, with eyes that glowed red in the moonlight, and a massive jaw that dripped blood. Its hands had claws like knives, and it tore your poor dad apart, and fed like a pig at the slop bucket! Now you're seeing werewolves behind every shadow.

Special Ability: Werewolf Hysteria: You're too young to vote; you just get to sit in, point fingers, and insist that there's a werewolf about. Between rounds, instead of determining by group consensus over whether to continue the game, you may insist, in-character, that the werewolf is still out there, forcing the game to continue.

Mayor Elbert: What if the Mayor made a deal with a werewolf to become a werewolf, and now he's a werewolf and the Mayor?

Reverend Bartlett: Loud and scary. Probably not a werewolf. Probably.

Captain Atwood: The Captain will protect you from the werewolves... unless the Captain is a werewolf! Why hasn't the Captain caught the werewolf yet?

Midwife Tully: Strange spooky lady. Some people think she's a witch. Can witches also be werewolves?

Brewer Marlow: The Marlows make beer. What if beer turns people into werewolves?

Farmer Hawthorne: Hawthorne was friends with your pa... so does that make him more likely to be a werewolf, or less?

Reeve Castler: A stranger, and you heard your dad was complaining about the Reeve coming to town the day before he died... what is he up to?

The Red Hammer: Whoa, the Red Hammer is a famous hero, sure to save the village!

No-Good Elbert: This Elbert is funny. He always knows a good story and a good joke! Like that time you helped him sneak into the Brewery. And then you peed in the brewing vats! But you didn't tell No-Good Elbert that last part.

Young Marlow: You used to be friends, and now Young Marlow doesn't want to have anything to do with you. Is it because he's a werewolf?

Hunter Goodman: The weird stinky hermit who lives out in the woods. And look at all that hair! He's a werewolf for sure.



Café Incognito

by

Mo Holkar

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, PERVASIVE (INTERMIXED WITH ACTIVITY BY NON-PARTICIPANTS)

COMEDY, ESPIONAGE, NON-NARRATIVE, PUZZLE

Café Incognito: that busy, bustling hub where the secret agents of four rival countries mingle and meet. Can you keep your head, and keep your identity secret, while puzzling out the loyalties of your fellows? A yarn-spinning whirlwind of allies, enemies, truth, lies, gossip and garbled code-phrases.

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<http://blog.ukg.co.uk>



Café Incognito

A freeform for 3-8 players and a facilitator, lasting 90 minutes.

Written for the *Golden Cobra Challenge*, October 2014, by **Mo Holkar**.

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Design notes

In addition to the requirements in the contest spec, I wanted to create a game that:

- was immediate and accessible for people who aren't experienced 'live' gamers;
- could be joined partway through by interested spectators;
- included an in-game alibi for unfamiliarity and awkwardness in character play;
- would be easily supplementable, to allow replay without loss of enjoyment.

Contents

- This intro page (1p)
- Facilitator's guide (3pp)
- Name badges (1p)
- Gossip slips (1p)
- Cover identity sheets (8pp)
- Secret agent sheets (8pp)

Facilitator's guide

Café Incognito is a game for 3–8 players who take the roles of undercover secret agents. Their aim is, while interacting unsuspiciously with one another under their cover identities, to establish which of the other agents present are their enemies and which their allies.

You will need

Apart from the contents of this document:

- scissors or something else to cut the *Name badges* and *Gossip slips* out;
- pens and paper;
- a small bell, or other such noise-making device.

Setting up Café Incognito (15 minutes)

Give each player one of the *Cover identity sheets*, chosen at random. It doesn't have to be of the same gender, appearance, etc, as the player: explain to them that they are in disguise as this person. If they really don't like the cover identity you've given them, you can change it for a different one: that won't affect the game.

Then, give each player one of the *Secret agent sheets*. Which ones you use will depend on how many players you have. Choose them as follows:

3 players	Any three of the first four <i>Secret agent sheets</i> , at random
4 players	The first four <i>Secret agent sheets</i>
5 players	The first four <i>Secret agent sheets</i> , plus one other at random
6 players	The first four <i>Secret agent sheets</i> , plus two others at random
7 players	The first four <i>Secret agent sheets</i> , plus three others at random
8 players	All eight <i>Secret agent sheets</i>

You can start the game with any number of players from 3 to 8. If you have less than 8, and other people (passers-by, spectators, latecomers) wish to join the game while it's in progress, they can do so: just issue them one of the remaining *Cover identity sheets* and one of the remaining *Secret agent sheets*.

Give the players a few minutes to read their sheets, and ask if they have any questions. Take questions privately (in case they relate to secret matter!) but announce the answers publicly if it's something the other players will benefit from hearing.

FAQ

Things that players might ask you include:

- *Am I allowed to show my sheets to another player?*
No, they are not. Especially not their *Secret agent sheet*.

~ **Café Incognito** © Mo Holkar 2014 ~

- *On my Cover identity sheet it doesn't give any details about these things my character's supposed to know about, or to have done: or how old they are, or whatever.*
They should just invent details as required. Remember, they aren't actually that person, they are only pretending to be them – so if what they invent turns out to be unconvincing or inconsistent, that's perfectly OK.
- *Can we only talk to one other player at a time?*
They can talk in one-on-ones at some points, in larger groups at other points, as they wish: moving about and reforming conversations as feels natural.
- *It says something here about Gossip slips – what are they?*
You will explain *Gossip slips* to the players just before the game starts.
- *Do I have to say my code phrase exactly as it is?*
If they don't, it'll be more difficult for their allies to recognize them.
- *Once I think I've recognized an ally, can I show them my sheets then?*
No, they still can't do that. They can say "So, 'the sidewinder sleeps tonight', eh? – how fortunate, I'm an agent of San Rico, we're allies!" but it's still up to the other person whether or not to believe them. They are not allowed to 'prove' their true secret identity until after the end of the game.
- *So you mean we could lie to people and say we're an agent of San Rico when we aren't really?*
Absolutely! That is very much part of the game.

Name badges

Then, give each player the *Name badge* that matches their cover identity, and tell them to put the badges on so they can be clearly read.

Gossip slips

Indicate to the players the collection of *Gossip slips*, which you should keep face down. If you want to fold them and put them into a container of some sort, that's great, but just having them out on a table (or in your pocket, if you have no table) is fine. Tell the players that if at any time during the game they're stuck for a topic of conversation, they can come to you and draw a random *Gossip slip*. This will contain an interesting fact or rumour which they can then discuss with other players as a matter of current gossip in the café.

Starting Café Incognito

Gather the players back together in as quiet a corner as you can find, and get them to close their eyes. Read out the following:

"Café Incognito: that bustling, busy hub where friends and enemies meet. You are here today, as so often before. Your mission is before you, and your cover identity is by now familiar to you. The rewards for your country are great, if you succeed: but if you fail, the risks are terrible.

"Take slow, deep breaths, and feel the real world drifting away. Imagine the sounds and the smells of the café building around you. When you hear the sound of the bell, you will open your eyes, and you will be a secret agent in Café Incognito."

Then start the game by ringing your bell, or other such noise.

At first, the players may be shy or wary, and avoid each other. This is OK – don't worry about it. If it gets to ten minutes or so and still they're avoiding each other, then approach one of them and suggest that they act on the *Tips for beginners* noted on their *Cover identity sheet*.

During *Café Incognito* (60 minutes)

If anyone comes up to you and wants to join in the game, that's fine (unless you've already got 8 players). Give them a *Cover identity sheet* (at random) and one of the remaining *Secret agent sheets* (as per the table above); and give them the same briefing that you gave the original players, and their *Name badge*. Then tell them to go and introduce themselves (in their cover identity, of course) to the other players.

The players may come up to you with more questions. Again, listen to them privately, but announce the answers publicly if it's appropriate.

Finishing *Café Incognito* (15 minutes)

Ring the bell again, and once you've got everyone's attention, read the following:

“Deep night descends around Café Incognito, and the servers start to stack chairs on tables. The secret agents, their missions completed, can relax... slightly... as they prepare to return to their respective services. In Bordavia, Nuevo Theodoros, San Rico and Sylduria, spy controllers are awaiting their reports.”

Gather all the players together in a rough circle (it's fine if spectators or passers-by want to sit in, but try to keep them from interrupting the players' discussion too much).

Ask them to secretly write down, on the back of their *Cover identity sheet*, which of the four countries they think that each of the other players secretly serves. If there are any that they haven't managed to deduce or identify, they should feel free to guess.

Then once everyone's finished writing, ask the players in turn to reveal their true loyalty, as shown on their *Secret agent sheet*.

Marks

This is not intended to be a competitive game, but if players want to award themselves marks for their espionage skills, it should be as follows:

- **+1** for each other player whose country you identified correctly;
- **+1** for each other player who is from your allied country and who identified your own country correctly;
- **–2** for each other player who is from your enemy country and who identified your own country correctly.

Roundup and envoi

Once the recriminations and gloating have died away, ask each player in turn to say a sentence or two about their experience of the game.

Then thank them, and declare the game finished.

Name badges

Colonel Juan Oloroso	Max the Beggar
Magdalena Pozarova	Professor Trésor
Harvey Walters	Elena Guti
Doctor Chillington	La Stupenda

Gossip slips

President Herrero of San Rico has taken a new secret lover.	The Bordavian constitution document is a clumsy forgery.
The best player of Red Star Bordavia is considering signing for Spartak Sylduria in the new season.	There is a secret tunnel under the border connecting San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros, used by smugglers of illicit music.
The owls are not what they seem.	A giant albino crocodile was sighted in the Grand Syldurian Canal last week.
A satanic cult operates in downtown Nuevo Theodoros.	Bordavian scientists have found that petting a dog twice per day can greatly extend longevity.
San Rico's cathedral is sited on an ancient native burial ground.	The King of Sylduria was exchanged, as a child, with his identical twin.
Nuevo Theodorans are getting rich publishing 'street' translations of existentialist Bordavian poetry.	The host of a popular San Rican cookery show is under suspicion of poisoning the country's prime minister.
Sylduria has issued every household with 'how to survive a nuclear attack' instructions.	There's a million-escudo prize on offer for the first person to plant the Nuevo Theodoran flag on the Moon.
The University of Bordavia has opened a Department of Media and Propaganda Studies.	'San Rico's Got Talent' is to be cancelled, due to extremely mediocre viewing figures (and contestants).

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Colonel Juan Oloroso

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Colonel Juan Oloroso, an officer in the San Rican army.

Colonel Juan Oloroso:

- Is corrupt, boastful and brave
- Is an alcoholic
- Enjoys hunting
- Has been married three times, each unsuccessfully
- Was wounded in the leg at the siege of El Rocío

In the guise of Colonel Oloroso, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "Señora, you are a very attractive woman. But I see a sadness in your eyes. Would you like to tell this old soldier about your woes?"

Or, to someone else *perhaps*:

- "Are you fond of the hunt? Let me tell you of the time I tracked a fine boar, a monster he was, through the swamps of Starý Most..." [*and invent the details of the hunt, to excite your listener*]

Or:

- "You have been regarding me most closely, señor. Is it possible you are a fighting man, who has heard of the bravery of Colonel Juan Oloroso?"

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Max the Beggar

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Max the Beggar, a homeless Bordavian panhandler.

Max the Beggar:

- Is friendly, inquisitive, and cowardly
- Has a variety of permanent itches
- Is always hungry
- Used to have a pet dog, named Snuffles, who went missing
- Remembers nothing of his early childhood, apart from the smell of peaches

In the guise of Max the Beggar, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "May I ask, have you seen a small dog, answering to the name of Snuffles? He disappeared some time ago. You look like a kind person who loves dogs."

Or, to someone else *perhaps*:

- "Sir, I am very hungry, and also very well-informed. Will you perhaps buy me some food, in exchange for some useful information?" *[and invent the answers to any questions they may ask you]*

Or:

- "I saw you looking at me fondly, madam. Did you perhaps lose your son, many years ago? Do you fear what may have become of him, out on the streets?"

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Magdalena Pozarova

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Magdalena Pozarova, a Syldurian business executive [*you can decide what line of business, as you prefer*].

Magdalena Pozarova:

- Is brisk, polite and decisive
- Always tries to put other people at their ease
- Is exploring her sexuality
- Used to play a lot of poker, but stopped, fearing addiction
- Enjoys tending her small rooftop garden

In the guise of Magdalena Pozarova, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "How do you do? My name is Magdalena Pozarova. Do you have any interest in my line of business?" [*and invent details of the business that you'd like to talk about*]

Or, to someone else *perhaps*:

- "Are you fond of playing at cards? I used to be, myself. But it's terribly dangerous, you know! One can become a slave to the card-table..."

Or:

- "I have felt your eye on me from across the café. Is there something you would like to ask me? I cannot promise I will answer favourably, but there can be no harm in trying."

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Professor Trésor

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Professor Trésor, of the University of Nuevo Theodoros [*you can decide what subject, as you prefer*].

Professor Trésor:

- Is thoughtful, slow to speak, and generally right
- Is accustomed to being treated with respect
- Plays the piano for relaxation, but not very well
- Has three small grandchildren
- Was, many years ago, a student protester caught up in a major riot

In the guise of Professor Trésor, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "Which country do you hail from, my friend? Ah! Then I suppose you will take Von Lempicke's side in the recent academic dispute at the University there?" [*you can invent for yourself what the dispute was about*]

Or, to someone else perhaps:

- "You seem lonely, if I may be so bold as to remark. Do you have children, or grandchildren perhaps? What a blessing, but also a trial, they can be."

Or:

- "I've seen you looking at me – yes, it is I, Professor Trésor. No doubt you attended some of my lectures?"

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Harvey Walters

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Harvey Walters, a Syldurian private investigator.

Harvey Walters:

- Is nervous, jittery, and suspicious
- Is often mistaken for his identical twin
- Believes that humanity is under threat from powerful, inimical alien monsters
- Has lost a number of friends to death or insanity while on investigations
- Has a lengthy casebook of inexplicable occurrences and mysteries

In the guise of Harvey Walters, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "Madam, I'd like to ask you a few questions, if I may? What do you know about the Bermuda Triangle?"

Or, to someone else perhaps:

- "Have you ever been out in the jungle? There are some mighty queer folk living there..." [*and invent the details of their oddities, to chill your listener*]

Or:

- "I've seen you staring at me – don't pretend you weren't! Is it me you're looking for, Harvey Walters – or maybe my twin, Walter Harveys? He looks just like me, but he's purest evil."

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Elena Guti

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Elena Guti, a reporter for the Syldurian national TV station.

Elena Guti:

- Is dogged, argumentative and often unsympathetic
- Feels she's not given enough respect by producers at the station
- Loves old horror movies
- Is an extremely good cook
- Considered becoming a nun, before losing her faith aged 14

In the guise of Elena Guti, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "Sir, I'd like to interview you for the television – you have a great face for the screen. Would you like to tell me a little about yourself?"

Or, to someone else perhaps:

- "The food at this café really is the limit. Have they never heard of kneading? I could do ten times better. Are you interested in cooking, yourself?"

Or:

- "I hope you don't mind, but I had the feeling you were looking at me. Is it that obvious? Yes, I have lost my faith. It was some years ago now: there's no point reproaching me. It's not coming back."

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

Doctor Chillington

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as Doctor Chillington, a Bordavian medical professional [*you can decide what speciality, as you prefer*].

Doctor Chillington:

- Is calm, reassuring and rather charming
- Is an adrenaline junkie
- Volunteers at the local homeless shelter
- Would very much like to have started a family, but work has been too demanding
- Once shot dead a burglar who'd broken into the house at night

In the guise of Doctor Chillington, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "Sir, you may be feeling a little unwell at the moment – am I right? It's nothing to worry about – a lot of people of your age suffer similarly." [*and invent the details of a disease or condition that seems appropriate*]

Or, to someone else perhaps:

- "Have you ever been free-diving? It's amazing – there are these cliffs not far from here. One time I was there with some locals and" [*and invent the details, to excite your listener*]

Or:

- "Were you trying to catch my eye? It's OK, no need to be embarrassed. I've seen you at the homeless shelter, haven't I? Well, you've certainly scrubbed up nicely, today."

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

COVER IDENTITY SHEET

La Stupenda

Café Incognito is a select establishment, located in the dusty border town where four rival countries join. Here, secret agents of Bordavia, Sylduria, San Rico and Nuevo Theodoros meet, mingle, plot and scheme: each seeking to advance their country's interests at the expense of its rivals. Invariably, they operate in disguise... thus is the way of the secret agent!

You are such an agent, and are here today in disguise as La Stupenda, a celebrated San Rican singer *[you can decide what type of music, as you prefer]*.

La Stupenda:

- Is proud, high-spirited and perhaps a little vain
- Easily takes offence
- Collects miniature china dogs
- Wishes she could sometimes sing other styles of music
- Is secretly married to her long-time manager

In the guise of La Stupenda, you must negotiate the next hour, while completing your mission. You can't risk letting the cover slip: other than, perhaps, to another agent that you know you can trust. At all costs, don't get exposed by your enemies!

Tips for beginners

If you're new to this kind of game, you may be wondering how to get started. The trick is to begin some conversations with the other players, speaking as though you were your cover identity. Any details about them, or stories about their life, that aren't listed above, you can just invent as required. So, for example, you might approach another player and say something like:

- "My dear, you simply cannot imagine the pressure I am under. To perform! – every night! – never fail! – never let people down! Can you even imagine what that's like?"

Or, to someone else *perhaps*:

- "What is your favourite kind of music? Hah! I have, if I may say, a remarkable talent in that direction. But my manager will never let me perform it... it would destroy my image, apparently!"

Or:

- "I've felt your eye on me – no need to be shy, we all have desires. And I find you very interesting, myself. But, alas, my heart is affixed elsewhere. Don't tell that to anyone!"

Gossip slips

If at any time you'd like some ideas for more things to talk about, go to the facilitator and ask for a draw from the *Gossip slips*. They're full of fun topics!

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'Agent Z', of Bordavia

You are Agent Z, the most experienced fieldworker in the Bordavian Secret Service. Your ingenuity and bravery have saved your country on countless occasions... not that you've ever got any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Bordavia!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **San Rico** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **Sylduria** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a San Rican agent, not that you really care;
- who is a Syldurian agent, and thus a threat.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Bordavian or Nuevo Theodoran agents; and avoid being recognized by Syldurian agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Bordavian code phrase is **"It was the biggest carp I've ever seen, and made a wonderful dinner!"** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Nuevo Theodoran agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with foreign travel**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Sylduria. Theirs is, apparently, **about a frustrating disappointment**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'The Cat', of Nuevo Theodoros

You are The Cat, the most experienced fieldworker in the Nuevo Theodoran Secret Service. Your ingenuity and bravery have saved your country on countless occasions... not that you've ever got any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Nuevo Theodoros!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **San Rico** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **Sylduria** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a San Rican agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a Syldurian agent, not that you really care.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Nuevo Theodoran or Bordavian agents; and avoid being recognized by San Rican agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Nuevo Theodoran code phrase is “**She came by unexpectedly while I was overseas, so I missed her.**” If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Bordavian agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with fish.**
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in San Rico. Theirs is, apparently, **about an impolite encounter.**

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'0008', of San Rico

You are 0008, the most experienced fieldworker in the San Rican Secret Service. Your ingenuity and bravery have saved your country on countless occasions... not that you've ever got any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve San Rico!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **San Rico** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **Sylduria** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, not that you really care;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a San Rican agent, if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a Syldurian agent, and thus an ally.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by San Rican or Syldurian agents; and avoid being recognized by Nuevo Theodoran agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own San Rican code phrase is **"I was under Professor Blaskewitz, who was the rudest person I've ever met."** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Syldurian agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with a delivery**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Nuevo Theodoros. Theirs is, apparently, **about a surprise visitation**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'Wildebeest', of Sylduria

You are Wildebeest, the most experienced fieldworker in the Syldurian Secret Service. Your ingenuity and bravery have saved your country on countless occasions... not that you've ever got any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Sylduria!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **San Rico** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **Sylduria** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, not that you really care;
- who is a San Rican agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a Syldurian agent, if there is another one as well as yourself.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Syldurian or San Rican agents; and avoid being recognized by Bordavian agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Syldurian code phrase is **"I waited in all day for it to arrive, and then it turned out to be broken."** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the San Rican agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with academic study**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Bordavia. Theirs is, apparently, **about an exaggerated achievement**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'Mask #23', of Bordavia

You are Mask #23, , a new and enthusiastic fieldworker in the Bordavian Secret Service. You hope to serve your country with distinction... not that you expect any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Bordavia!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **San Rico** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **Sylduria** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a San Rican agent, not that you really care;
- who is a Syldurian agent, and thus a threat.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Bordavian or Nuevo Theodoran agents; and avoid being recognized by Syldurian agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Bordavian code phrase is **"It was the biggest carp I've ever seen, and made a wonderful dinner!"** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Nuevo Theodoran agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with foreign travel**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Sylduria. Theirs is, apparently, **about a frustrating disappointment**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'Hexxen', of Nuevo Theodoros

You are Hexxen, a new and enthusiastic fieldworker in the Nuevo Theodoran Secret Service. You hope to serve your country with distinction... not that you expect any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Nuevo Theodoros!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **San Rico** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **Sylduria** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a San Rican agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a Syldurian agent, not that you really care.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Nuevo Theodoran or Bordavian agents; and avoid being recognized by San Rican agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Nuevo Theodoran code phrase is “**She came by unexpectedly while I was overseas, so I missed her.**” If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Bordavian agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with fish.**
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in San Rico. Theirs is, apparently, **about an impolite encounter.**

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'The Plumber', of San Rico

You are The Plumber, a new and enthusiastic fieldworker in the San Rican Secret Service. You hope to serve your country with distinction... not that you expect any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve San Rico!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **San Rico** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.
- **Sylduria** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, not that you really care;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a San Rican agent if there is another one as well as yourself;
- who is a Syldurian agent, and thus an ally.

And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by San Rican or Syldurian agents; and avoid being recognized by Nuevo Theodoran agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own San Rican code phrase is **"I was under Professor Blaskewitz, who was the rudest person I've ever met."** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the Syldurian agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with a delivery**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Nuevo Theodoros. Theirs is, apparently, **about a surprise visitation**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.

SECRET AGENT SHEET

'Catweazle', of Sylduria

You are Catweazle, a new and enthusiastic fieldworker in the Syldurian Secret Service. You hope to serve your country with distinction... not that you expect any credit for it. But you don't mind that – you exist only to serve Sylduria!

International affairs

- **Bordavia** – the hated and despised enemy. They do everything they can to attack and undermine you.
- **Nuevo Theodoros** – neutrals. They care little about you, and you care little about them.
- **San Rico** – your allies. They can be trusted and relied upon.
- **Sylduria** – your country, the blessed land of your blood. You love it beyond measure.

Your mission

You've been briefed that there are both enemy and allied agents here at *Café Incognito* today – probably in disguise, under cover identities (as, of course, are you). Your task is to identify them. You need to find out:

- who is a Bordavian agent, and thus a threat;
- who is a Nuevo Theodoran agent, not that you really care;
- who is a San Rican agent, and thus an ally;
- who is a Syldurian agent, if there is another one as well as yourself.

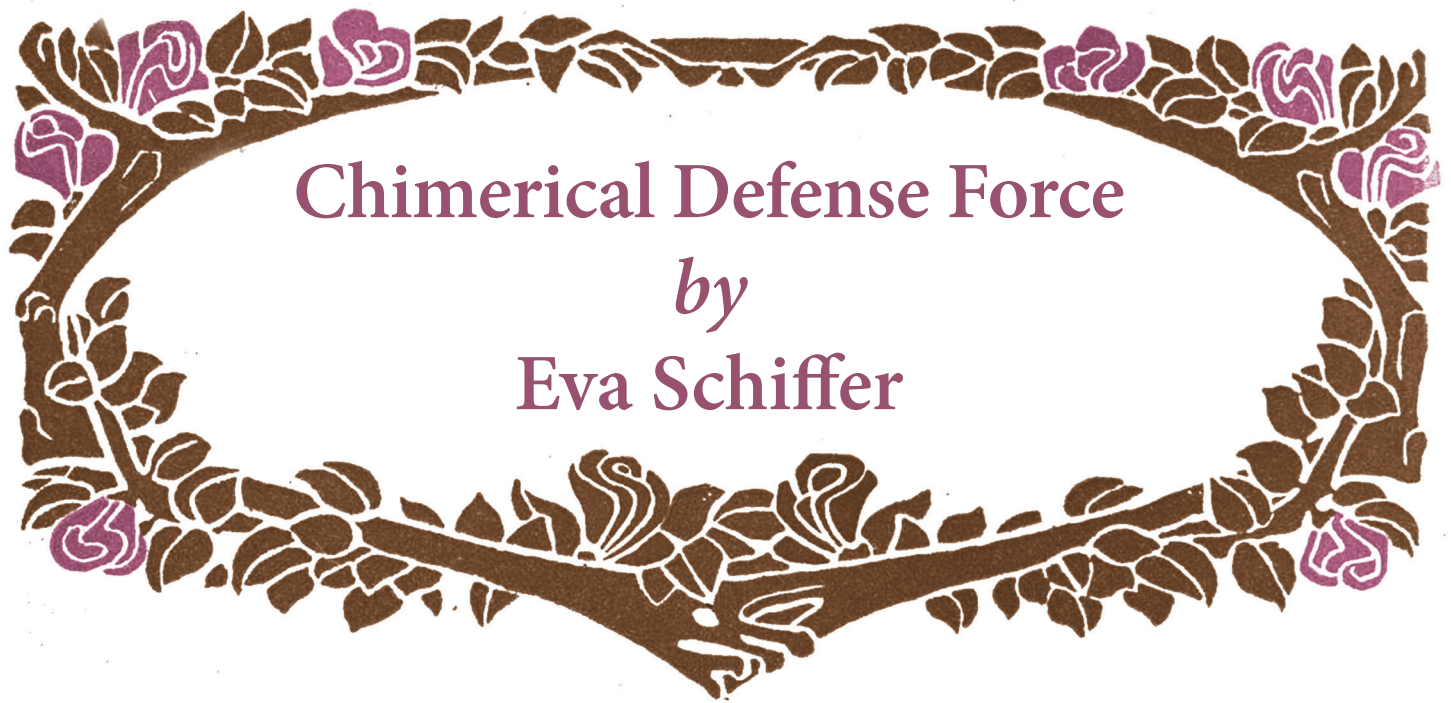
And you also need to be recognized, yourself, by Syldurian or San Rican agents; and avoid being recognized by Bordavian agents.

Code phrases

You can recognize other agents, and identify yourself cautiously to them, by the use of code phrases.

- Your own Syldurian code phrase is **"I waited in all day for it to arrive, and then it turned out to be broken."** If you can work this phrase into a conversation with another agent, if they are your ally, they should be able to (subtly) recognize you.
- You're supposed to know the San Rican agents' code phrase, but with the charming inefficiency all too familiar in your secret service, you only have a rough idea. You know that it's **something to do with academic study**.
- Thankfully, you also have a little information about the code phrase of your enemies in Bordavia. Theirs is, apparently, **about an exaggerated achievement**.

At the end of the game, you will be asked to say which country you think each of the other agents works for.



Chimerical Defense Force

by

Eva Schiffer

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, TABLETOP ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE

COMEDY, FANTASY, EVERYDAY LIFE, MYTH

Chimerical Defense Force is a game for 3 to 6 players who take on the roles of chimerical monsters planning the defense of their dungeon home against adventurers.

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What is this?

Chimerical Defense Force is a game for 3 to 6 players who take on the roles of chimerical monsters planning the defense of their dungeon home against adventurers. The focus of the game is on interpersonal interaction and what it's like to be a chimera made of several creatures.

All player character chimera are adult and of at least human level intelligence.

How to Play

Each player should take a character sheet at random. The sheets are all slightly different but it doesn't matter which one you end up with.

Shuffle the deck of creatures. Each player should draw five cards from the deck and then select two or three of those cards to represent the different animal aspects of their creature. If you select only two cards your third aspect is that you are partly human.

Fill out your character sheet. Be sure to fill in all sections except for the "What I think of the other chimera" section, make all the listed choices, and draw a picture of yourself (even if you are terrible at drawing, a stick figure will do).

Go around the table and introduce yourself. Be sure to mention your name, describe what you look like, explain your special ability, and give any details of your personality you are comfortable sharing. Show the other players your picture so they know what you look like.

Fill in the "What I think of the other chimera" section, filling one statement with the name of each of the other chimera. Discuss what you are writing for a PC with their player so they know what you think of them in-character. Allow players to veto the statement you choose for them if they aren't comfortable with it. You have more statements than there are other chimera so you will be leaving some of them blank. Feel free to write statements from scratch if you think of something you like better than the pre-written statements on your sheet.

Select a dungeon map. You can do this randomly or if the players all agree you can just pick one. Be sure to select one of the maps that is appropriate for the number of players at the table.

Shuffle the treasure deck and draw a number of cards equal to the number of players. If any of the treasures require more detail, have the appropriate player describe them now.

Shuffle the allies and traps deck and draw a number of cards equal to the number of players. If any of the allies or traps require more detail, have the appropriate player describe them now.

Place the dungeon map, treasure cards you drew, and allies / traps cards you drew face up on the table between all of the players. Have one player read the description that goes with the dungeon map aloud.

Spend forty five minutes planning how to defend your dungeon in-character. Be sure to complicate the discussion with as much of your personality and personal relationships as you can. The point of this time is to have fun interacting with the other chimera and making messy drama (there is no mechanism to test your defense plans, no matter how good or terrible they are).

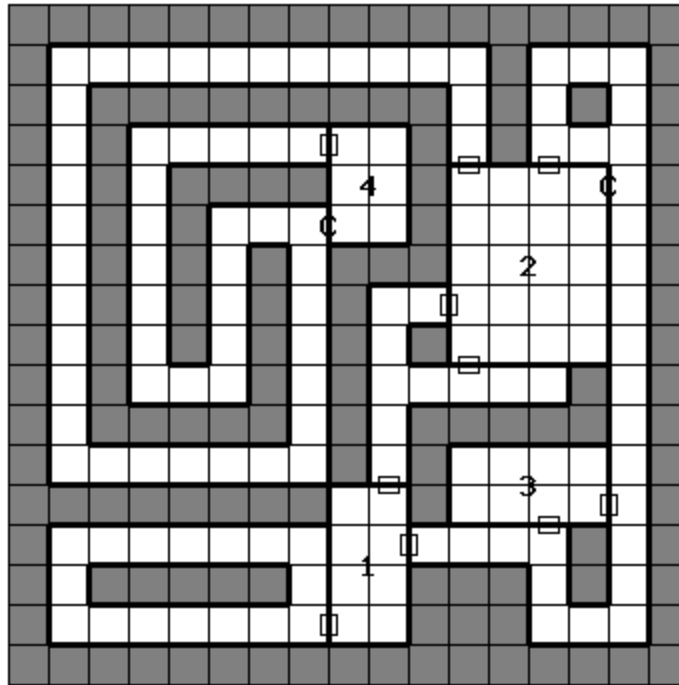
During your in-character time some players may want to flesh out world details not listed on the cards or dungeon map. If someone declares something about the world and it doesn't contradict the facts that has already been established (ie. stuff written on your sheet, what the cards and dungeon map explicitly say, world details players have already brought up, etc.), just go with it. Feel free to add to other player's world detail statements or ask other players questions about the world (preferably in-character) if you want more detail.

Wrapping Up

Go around in a circle and narrate one thing that happens to your chimera when the adventurers come as a closing to the game. Spend an additional five to ten minutes discussing out-of-character what you enjoyed most about the game or what frustrated you.

Tunnels of the Vanishing Army

Suitable for 3 to 4 players



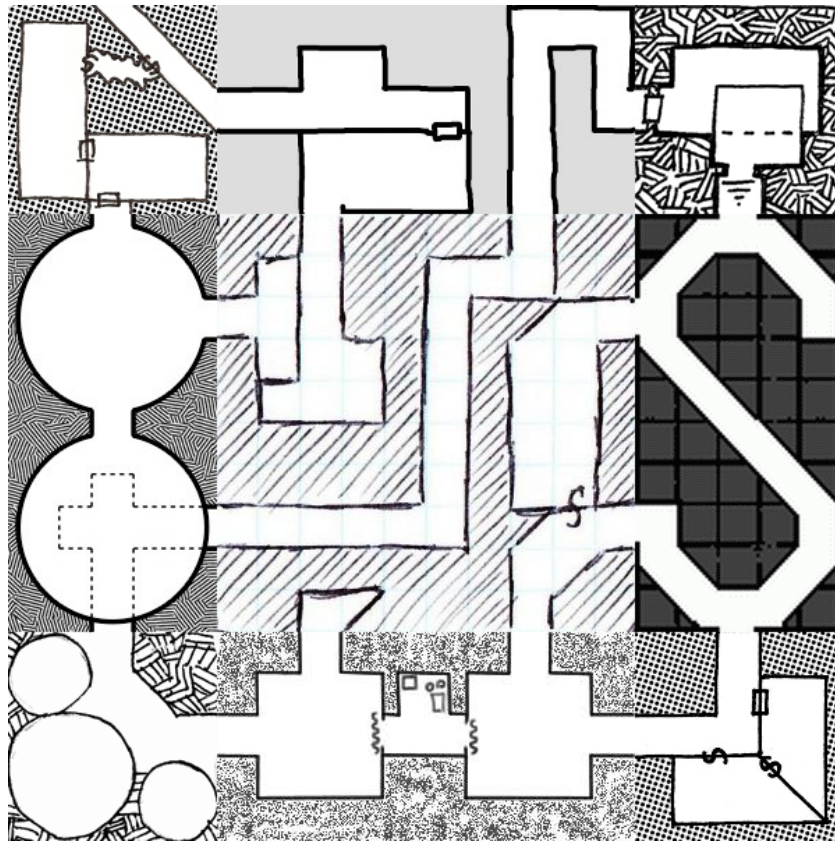
This small dungeon was once the home to a great mystery. It is the remains of a fortress high in a mountain pass and about 400 years ago a great assaulting army simply vanished while trying to storm these halls.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. Treasures can be stored in any of the numbered rooms. You know about all the concealed doors in the dungeon (they may escape casual notice, but won't deter serious searchers). The only entrance to the fortress ruins is by a door located on the east wall of the south east most square. This door was damaged in the assault many years ago and while it can be closed and barred it will no longer stand up to a determined group.

In recent weeks a traveling dwarven merchant, who often sells you equipment and food, brought you word that a party of adventurers is setting out from the nearest human village to clear out the ruins and take your treasure. The merchant estimated that the adventurers are only a day behind her and are a party of four, including two fighters, a cleric, and a mage. She was unsure who told the party about your home or why they are seeking your treasures.

The Mocking Maze

Suitable for 3 to 5 players



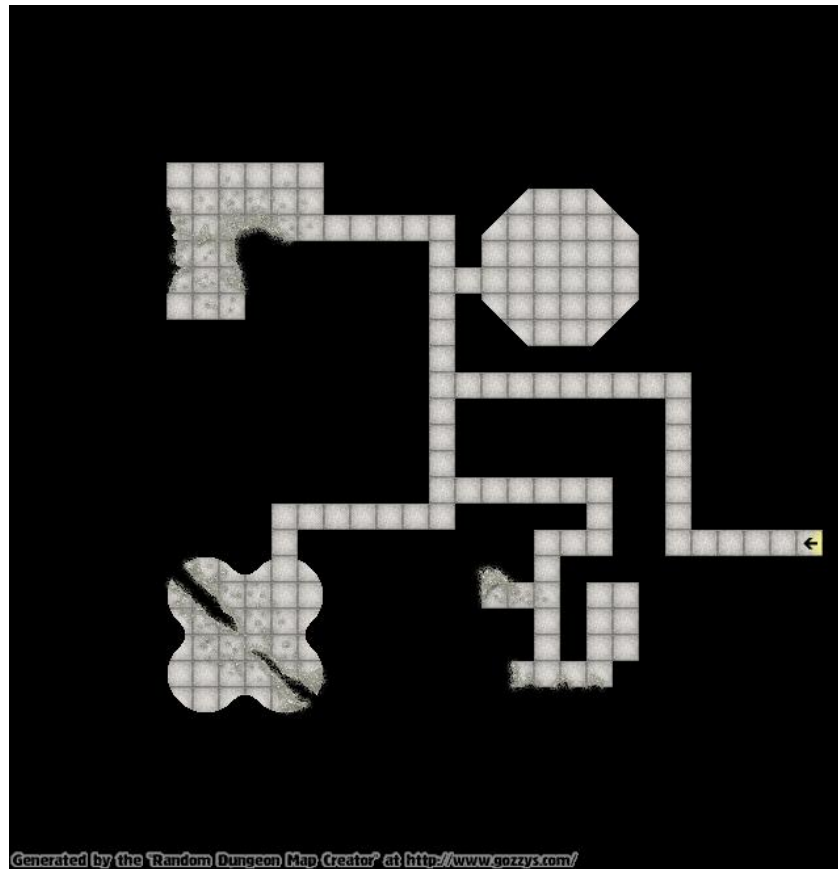
These smoothly quarried halls were once the home of a robust dwarven tribe that disappeared many hundreds of years ago. The dungeon's name comes however from when it was inhabited by a particularly cruel minotaur about 40 years ago. He attempted to raise an army to take over a nearby city-state and delighted in murdering groups of adventurers who stumbled into his territory. Eventually the city hired a party of powerful heroes who dutifully wiped out the minotaur and his allies.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. You know about all the secret doors in the dungeon (marked with S's) and while it is possible for an outsider to find them, it will take more than a casual search. The only entrance to the maze is the tunnel on the north side of the north west-most edge of your map. The entryway is a simple stone arch opening in the side of a cliff-face.

Yesterday a nearby friendly goblin tribe that lives in the surrounding forest warned you that a party of adventurers is headed for your home. One of the goblins overheard them discussing how they intend to take your most precious treasure before she fled to warn the tribe. The goblins are sympathetic to your plight, but intend to leave the area, so they won't be any help in defending your home.

Cells of the Phantom Oracle

Suitable for 3 players



This dungeon was once the home of a small oracular sect that was much beloved of the kingdom's previous king. He used to regularly travel two weeks from his capital to this stronghold in the nearby mountains to consult the oracles every summer. When his daughter took the throne 10 years ago she consulted the oracles only once, and whatever they told her so upset her that she ordered them all put to death for treason and their fortress burned.

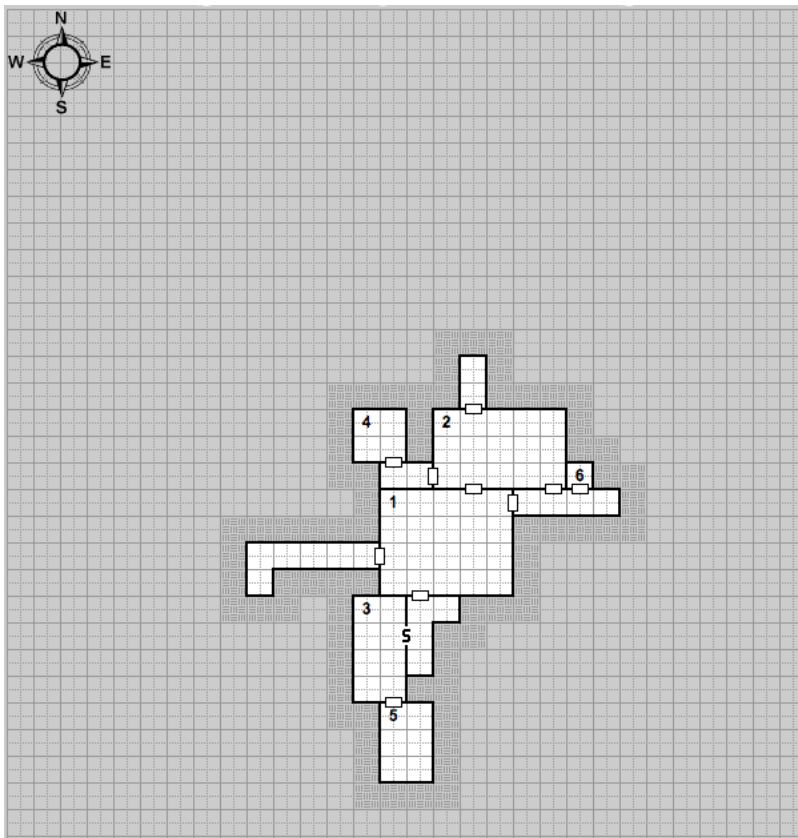
Much of the fortress is stone however and survived the ensuing slaughter. Some of the younger and more impressionable chimera who have lived here still claim to see the ghosts of the murdered oracles on occasion, although they appear to be harmless. The only entrance to the dungeon is located at the arrow on the eastmost corridor. The wooden doors that close it are rotten and charred and will not stand up to a determined assault.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. You have cleared out the worst of the rubble and rebuild the burned roof sections so that the area is relatively habitable.

Last night one of your scouts, who forages in the nearby mountains returned with the news that a small force of imperial guard (about 5 or 6 individuals) was headed for your home with the intention of burning it back down again and killing all of you. It is unclear whether they were sent by the queen or are acting on their own initiative.

Caverns of the Mythic Jungle

Suitable for 4 to 5 players



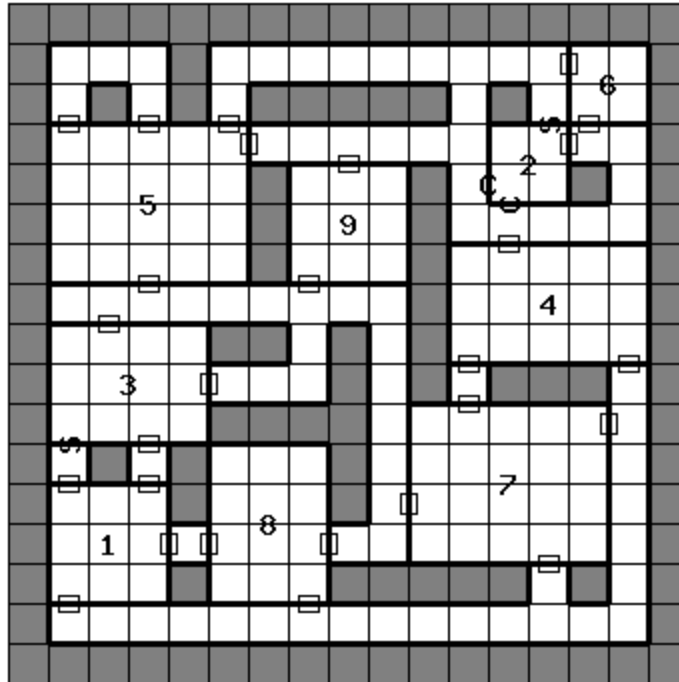
This dungeon is slightly misnamed, in that it is a series of carven tunnels, not caverns, but it is located in the Mythic Jungle more than a month's travel from the nearest city. The tunnels were originally carved by a group of human settlers trying to form the beginnings of a city. The settlers quickly died out due to the hostility of the surrounding flora and fauna.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. Treasures can be stored in any of the numbered rooms. The entrance to your home is a door on the far west of the westmost corridor. The door can be barred, but it is unlikely to stand up to a determined assault.

Two days ago a local group of halfings (who generally hunt and scout on the backs of their domesticated pterosaurs) warned you that a part of adventurers is hacking their way through the jungle, bee-lining for your home. The party has at least five members, including a wizard and cleric. They were unsure why the party was headed for your home, but they seemed very hostile to the natives, even shooting down and killing one of the non-violent scouting party members.

The Sanguine Vault

Suitable for 4 to 6 players



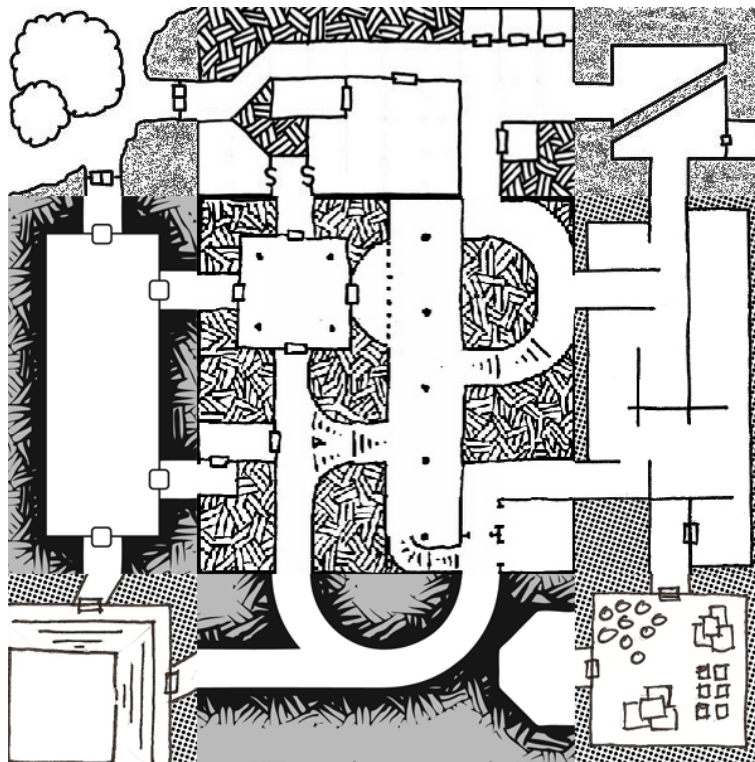
This dungeon was once the home of a great vampire lord. It consists of the various basements and tunnels that once ran under the lord's manner, which is now a pile of rubble. The vampire lord ruled over the surrounding countryside about 80 years ago, preying on the nearby human populations. He was eventually killed by a group of chimera he had enslaved.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. Treasures can be stored in any of the numbered rooms. You know about all the concealed doors in the dungeon, marked with C's (they may escape casual notice, but won't deter serious searchers), and the secret doors, marked with S's (these are harder to find, but can be spotted by a determined searcher). The entrance to your home is a series of stone stairs located in the center of room 9.

Most of the local peasant villages are sympathetic to your community (since your ancestors freed them from the vampire's rule) and are willing to trade with you. This morning a young peasant girl arrived at your doorstep to warn you that a group of adventurers is passing through her village, intent on killing you and looting your home. The villagers delayed the party by offering them a night of free drink, but she thinks it is only a matter of hours before they arrive here.

Chambers of the Mad Hound

Suitable for 5 to 6 players



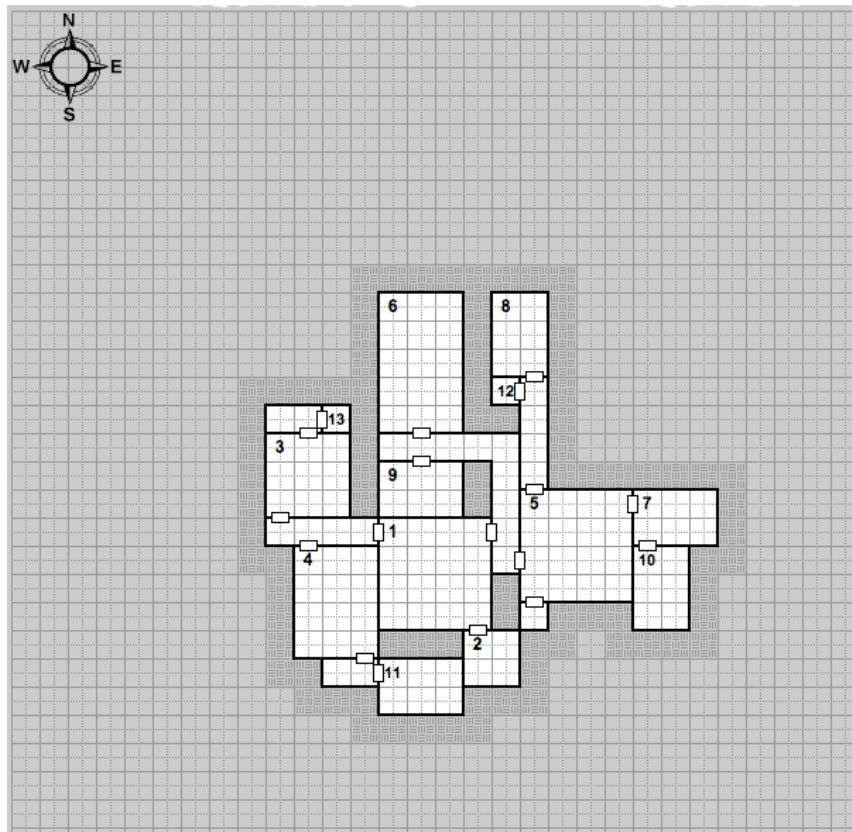
These winding dungeon halls used to be inhabited by a pack of rather vicious werewolves. They raided the surrounding farms, and eventually contracted rabies from the dog population. One by one they died off until the chambers were left empty.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. The entryway to your home is the set of two wooden doors in the northwest-most part of the dungeon. In front of the entry is a large oak that somewhat screens the doors from view. The doors can be barred but are not intended to keep out much other than roving animals and the worst of the weather.

Last night one of the PC chimera (whoever volunteers first!) was out hunting wild game when they ran across the camp of a party of adventurers nearby. The party is made up of five fighters and a cleric. Your hunter was able to eavesdrop on the adventurers' fireside conversation and learned that they are coming to clean out the caverns for a mysterious benefactor in a nearby city. They didn't discuss why the benefactor wanted the caverns cleared out, but it certainly sounded like that would include killing all of you!

The Crescent Moon Crypt

Suitable for 5 to 6 players



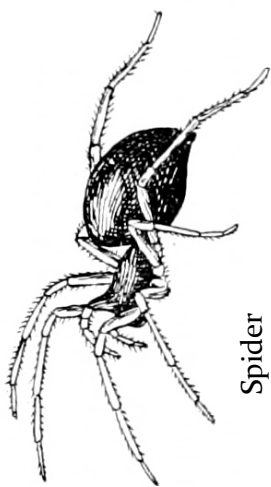
Once an isolated temple to an elven moon goddess, this dungeon was slowly converted to a crypt as the sect began to die out. When the last of the acolytes died off the temple was maintained for several centuries as a place of pilgrimage until the religion itself fell completely out of favor with the nearby elven communities. The temple was abandoned and all but forgotten where it sits on the edge of a vast desert.

More recently the dungeon has become the home of your chimera and their allies. The entrance to the crypt is a set of large double doors in the center of the north wall of room 6. These doors can be locked and barred, but are not intended to stop a determined assault.

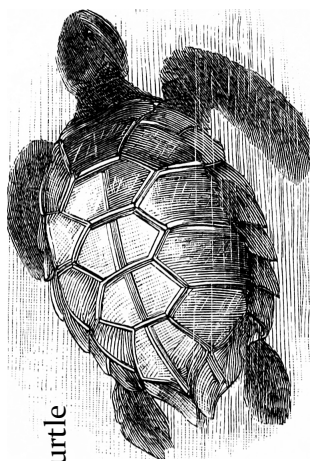
Three days ago you received a magical sending from a group of chimera living in the sewers of a nearby city. They warned that an expedition was setting out from the city to “reclaim and cleanse” the temple. Apparently there has been a resurgence in the faith of the moon goddess and this has prompted the church’s desire to retake this “holy” spot. The chimera weren’t sure of the exact numbers, but they believe a party of clerics and at least two paladins is headed your way.



Raccoon



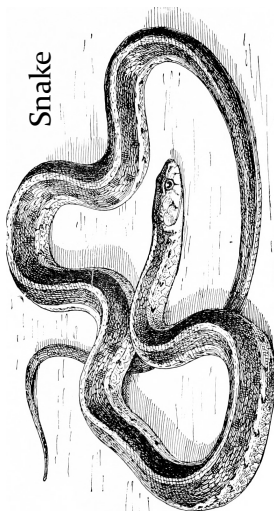
Spider



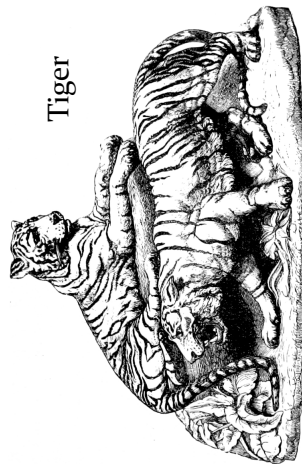
Turtle



Rabbit



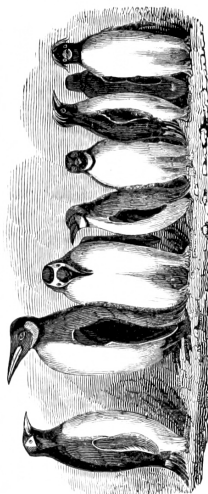
Snake



Tiger



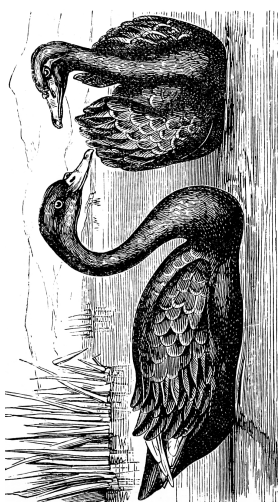
Wolf



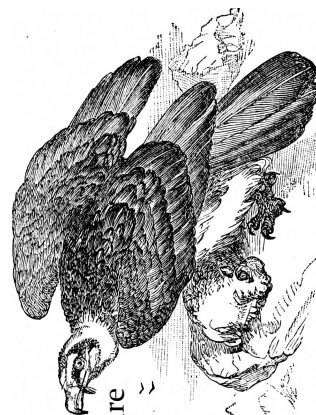
Penguin



Skunk



Swan



Vulture



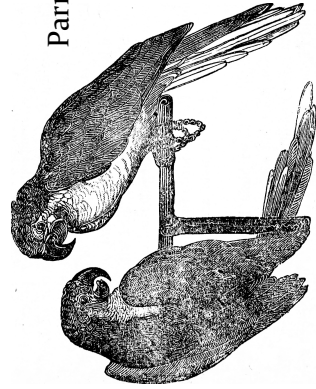
Goat



Lion



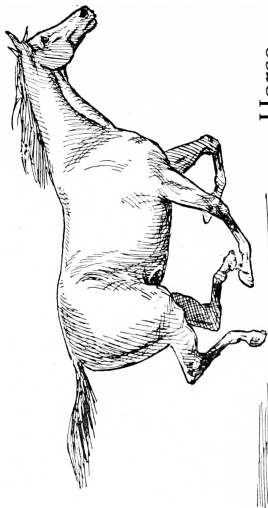
Ostrich



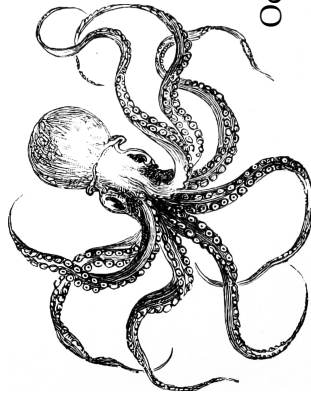
Parrot



Fox



Horse



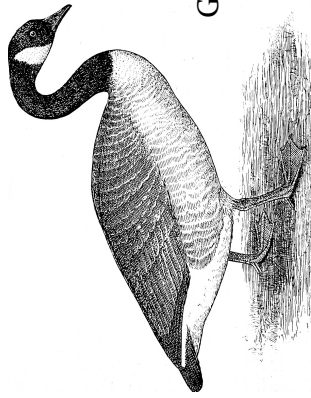
Octopus



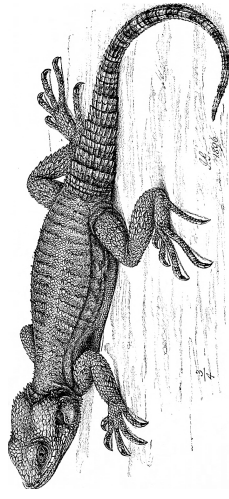
Owl



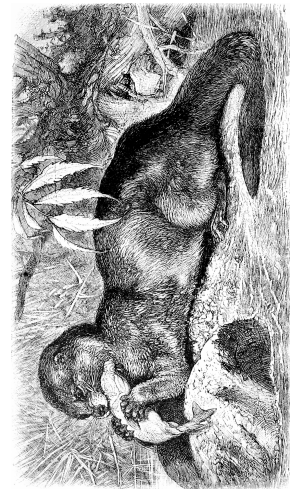
Elephant



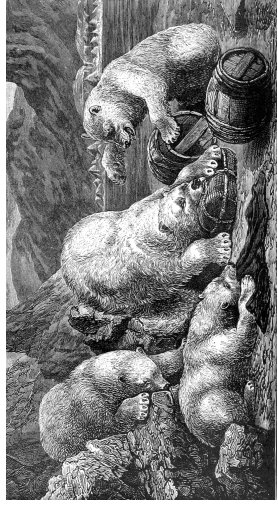
Goose



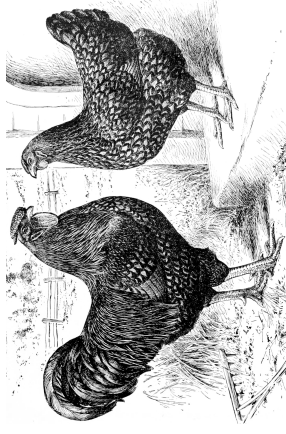
Lizard



Otter



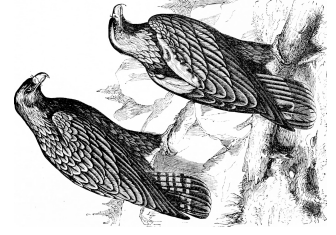
Bear



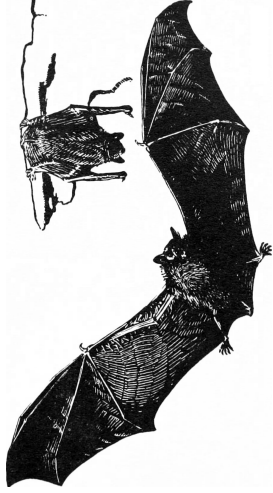
Chicken / Rooster



Dog



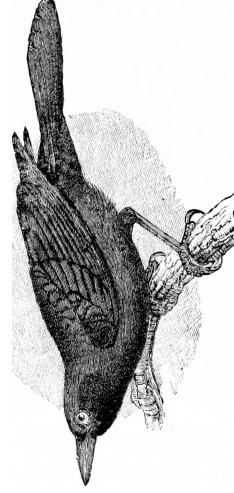
Eagle



Bat



Cat



Crow



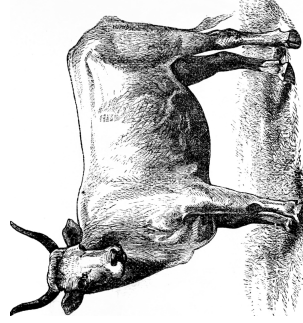
Duck



Alligator



Boar



Cow / Bull



Dove

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Brial, Acheu, Ashtas, Candmor, Asula, Cefot, Ageit, Donin, Athldra, Berros, Dewine, Drost, Blaki, Cirith, Aegrim, Briger

(Or Choose a name starting with A, B, C, or D.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Cheerful, Inventive, or Thoughtful (Choose one)

I am also: Boastful, Gullible, or Ruthless (Choose one)

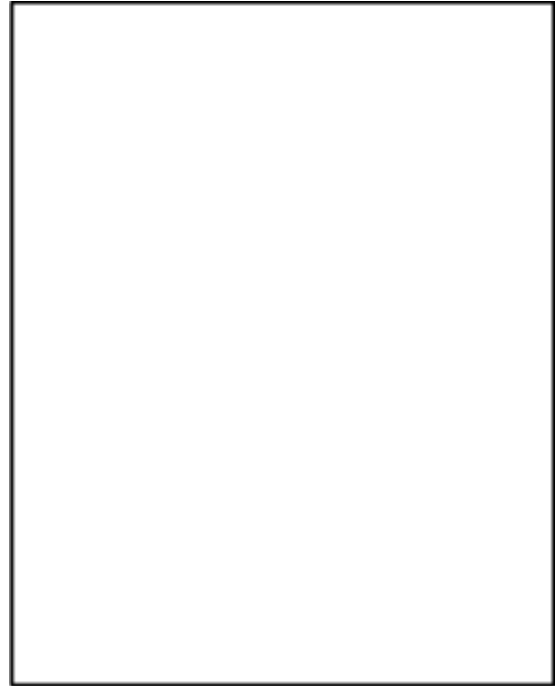
I try to be: Broadminded, Forgiving, or Organized (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

_____ and I worship the same god / goddess, although we may not interpret every part of the doctrine the same.

_____ is very powerful, but has never used their strengths to their best advantage. I will help them realize their full potential.

_____ is wise beyond their years.

I nearly killed _____ by accident... I swear! (You and the other player should agree on how this happened and why they didn't die at the time.)

_____ and I grew up in the same town / dungeon.

_____ doesn't know it but I already know their darkest secret. (The other player should decide now what their darkest secret is and tell you.)

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Emshi, Endris, Garbest, Hes, Gesul, Ghoin, Farnoc, Finca, Eytes, Halven, Fowlenn, Gwynn, Godil, Fanil, Feyne, Hruthin
(Or Choose a name starting with E, F, G, or H.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Curious, Diplomatic, or Modest (Choose one)

I am also: Aggressive, Flirtatious, or Nervous (Choose one)

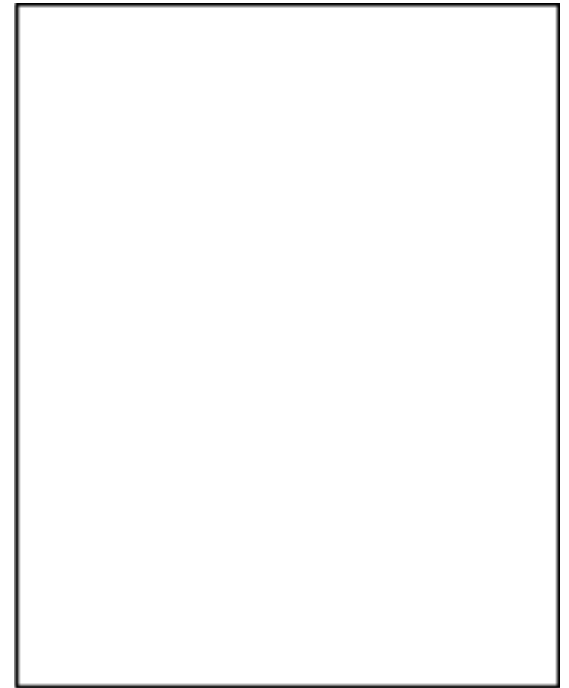
I try to be: Adaptable, Decisive, or Selfless (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

_____ is constantly itching to take on more responsibilities and have more authority. I don't think they're ready for it.

_____ is a chimera of their word. I can trust them to do as they say they will.

_____ has been around for a long time. I have much to learn from their experience and wisdom.

I don't think _____ is quite as powerful as they appear. I will be careful about whether I trust all their claims about themselves.

_____ thinks everyone is beneath them. I don't see how they can properly gauge our strengths and weaknesses with that attitude.

_____ and I were raised together as siblings.

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Itlad, Jator, Iemo, Loim, Kimusk, Idele, Loust, Kimon, Illet, Jaspar, Ivrel, Kines, Leifiel, Lestarn, Kimmius, Lugoth

(Or Choose a name starting with I, J, K, or L.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Cooperative, Forgiving, or Practical (Choose one)

I am also: Arrogant, Cynical, or Vain (Choose one)

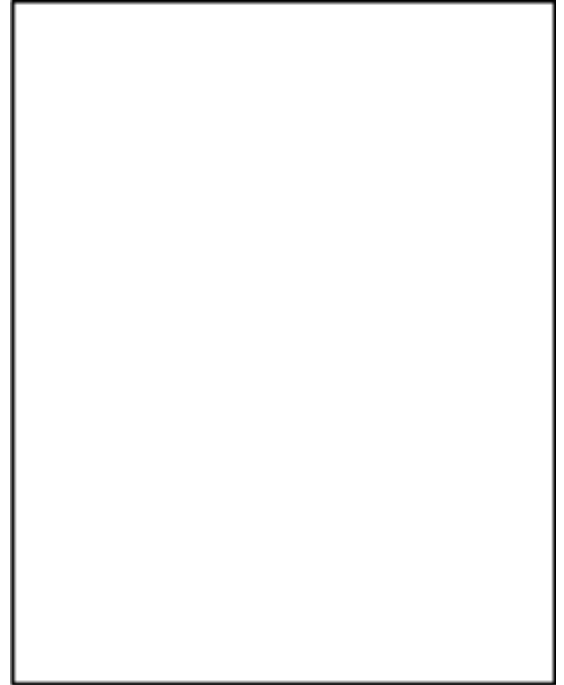
I try to be: Efficient, Humble, or Trustworthy (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

I worry that _____ may have an irrational hatred of _____. How can we work together if they are being driven by prejudice?

_____ shouldn't be in charge. They think they're great at the job, but I think we need some new blood around here.

_____ owes me their life and I won't let them forget it. (The two players should work together now to agree on the story of why you believe this to be true.)

_____ is a cunning but a terrible fighter. I'm willing to consider their plans, but they aren't going to be a lot of help in an actual conflict.

_____ is courageous in the face of danger. I know they will fight to protect all of us.

_____ has never respected my skills as I deserve. I'll prove to them once and for all that I am their equal.

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Nait, Ovore, Ordra, Ondel, Nystia, Nusol, Morix, Prason, Meluen, Meannon, Muire, Mincy, Orcham, Neane, Norrey, Melia

(Or Choose a name starting with M, N, O, or P.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Candid, Enthusiastic, or Wise (Choose one)

I am also: Compulsive, Moody, or Patronizing (Choose one)

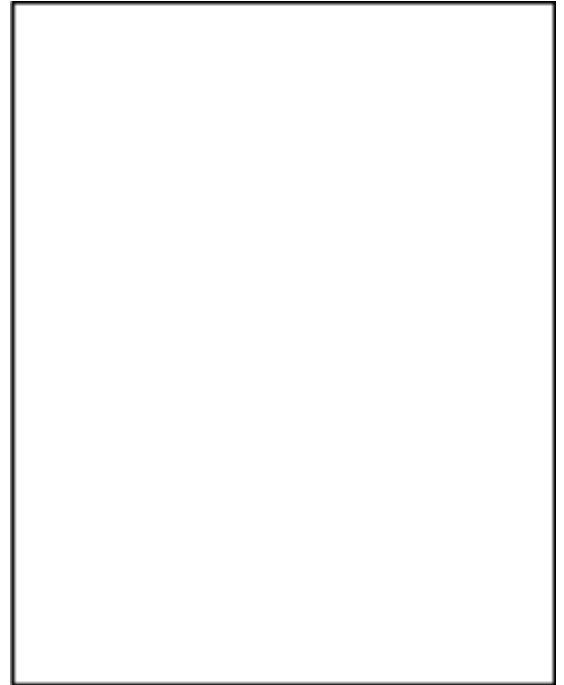
I try to be: Caring, Focused, or Truthful (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

_____ and I have been friends these many years. We sometimes disagree but I will always stand at their back in a fight.

_____ doesn't understand the ways of the humanoids as well as I do. I will do my best to teach and guide them.

_____ 's race and mine are often at odds.

_____ has no sense of self preservation. I'd better not let them out of my sight.

_____ share a dark and ominous secret that binds us together. (The two players should work together to define the secret now.)

Against my protests, my family invited _____ to be an honorary member.

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Tasll, Syc, Riton, Toretale, Ran'kin, TherriI, Ranet, Quesold, Radiss, Tayl, Rodbern, Smoirt, Rispbel, Sen, Ryser, Sopera
(Or Choose a name starting with Q, R, S, or T.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Candid, Enthusiastic, or Wise (Choose one)

I am also: Compulsive, Moody, or Patronizing (Choose one)

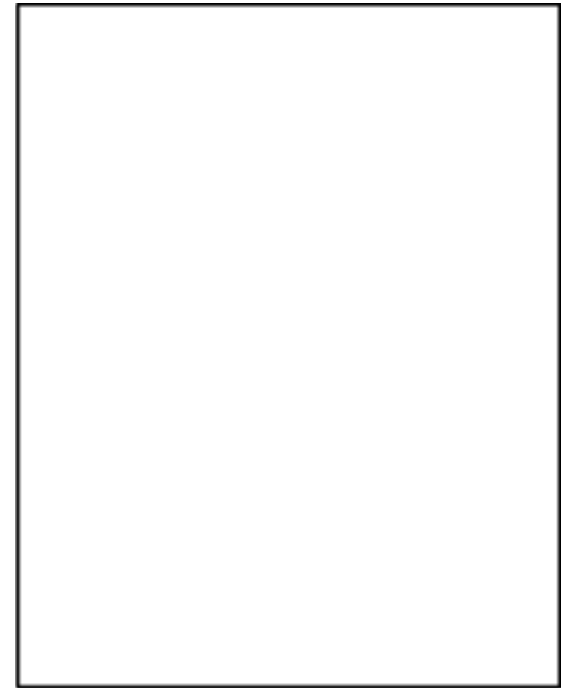
I try to be: Caring, Focused, or Truthful (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

_____ and I have faced adventurers before. I'm sure we can make it through this if we stick together.

_____ is barely a newborn pup when it comes to survival in this dangerous world. I will train and guide them to the best of my ability.

_____ 's "special power" is pretty useless. I find it hard to imagine it will be good for anything in the coming conflict.

Wherever _____ is there is trouble. They are competent but I am reluctant to let them handle anything I care about unsupervised.

_____ 's knowledge mostly comes from books.

_____ has talked more than one group of allies into helping us.

Name: _____

Suggested Names: Vesan, Uskmor, Yolife, Verrise, Wareld, Yerd, Verat, Veighnal, Xenis, Venorie, Wavelin, Uthorog, Zenneila, Woodel, Zenzell, Wurmith

(Or Choose a name starting with U, V, W, X, Y, or Z.)

I am a chimera made up of a _____, a _____, and a _____.

I am: Competitive, Helpful, or Patient (Choose one)

I am also: Cowardly, Grumpy, or Tactless (Choose one)

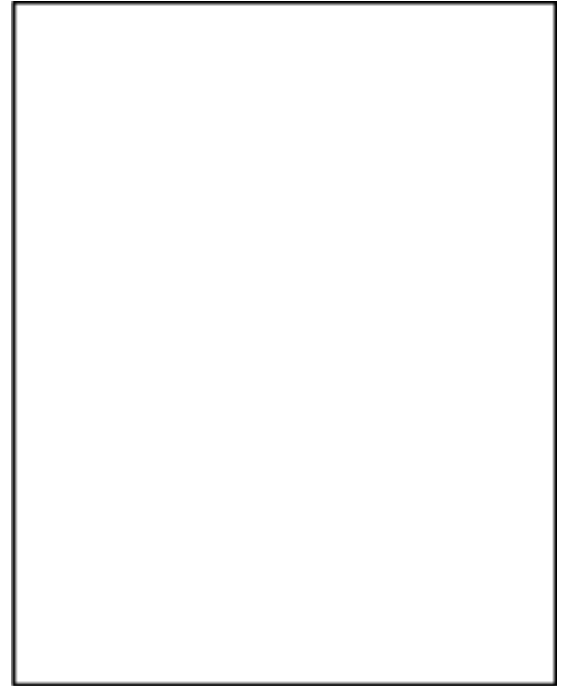
I try to be: Disciplined, Enthusiastic, or Methodical (Choose one)

Select an origin (Choose one) :

- ☐ A wizard created me / my kind.
- ☐ I'm a naturally occurring fantasy creature.
- ☐ I'm a human who is cursed.
- ☐ I'm from the plane of _____.
- ☐ The god of _____ created me / my kind.

Because of my chimerical nature I have the special ability to:

The most frustrating thing about being a chimera is:



Draw a picture of yourself.

I wish my body was:

What I think of the other chimera (fill in one for each PC) :

_____ and I have faced adventurers before. I'm sure we can make it through this if we stick together.

_____ is barely a newborn pup when it comes to survival in this dangerous world. I will train and guide them to the best of my ability.

_____’s “special power” is pretty useless. I find it hard to imagine it will be good for anything in the coming conflict.

Wherever _____ is there is trouble. They are competent but I am reluctant to let them handle anything I care about unsupervised.

_____’s knowledge mostly comes from books.

_____ has talked more than one group of allies into helping us.

Traps / Allies

Lock with poison
needle trap (can go
on a door or a chest)

Traps / Allies

A giant spider that
is the pet of the PC
whose player last
went to a gym

Traps / Allies

A small force (5) of
chimera of the type
of the PC whose
player has the
longest hair

Traps / Allies

A pack of dire rats
raised by the PC
with the longest
name

Traps / Allies

Electrified floor trap
(20 ft square)

Traps / Allies

A small pack (5) of
dire wolves,
domesticated by
the PCs

Traps / Allies

A young black
dragon who is
friendly with
the PCs

Traps / Allies

Scything blade trap
(10 ft wide)

Traps / Allies

Ice trap (makes 20
ft square of slippery
ice on the floor)

Traps / Allies

A small tribe of
kobolds (10) who
are friendly with
the PCs

Traps / Allies

A colony of
territorial fiendish
centipedes that can
be herded into a
different part of the
dungeon but are not
friendly with the
PCs (30 ft square
territory)

Traps / Allies

A deep pit trap
(10 ft square,
50 ft deep)

Treasure

A five foot tall golden statue of a god or goddess venerated by one of the PCs.

Treasure

A horde of treasure worth about 10,000 gp belonging to the PC of the player who most recently payed for something using cash.

Treasure

An armory containing several dozen mundane weapons and one or two magic weapons. The player with the darkest hair will describe the magic weapon(s).

Treasure

A bag of gems worth about 2,000 gp concealed in furniture or bedding.

Treasure

Spell books and components making up a mage's private study.

Treasure

A set of ornate jewelry worth about 5,000 gp owned by the PC of the player who most recently ate candy.

Treasure

A set of fine serving crystal and silver worth about 3,000 gp owned by the PC of the oldest player.

Treasure

A nursery for baby chimera of the type of the PC whose name comes last alphabetically.

(Note: These do not need to be the PC's children.)

Treasure

A store of relatively non-perishable food (grains, dried meats, etc.) that is large enough to feed all the dungeon's inhabitants through winter.

Treasure

A portal to another plane set with gold and gems (preferably the home plane of a PC if any of the PCs are not from this plane).

Treasure

A room-sized, ornate, working orrery set with gold and gems.

Treasure

Gilded frescos describing the origin of the race of the PC whose player most recently ate a vegetable.

Treasure

A set of religious masks carved from precious stones worth about 10,000 gp.

Treasure

A crypt containing the ancestors of the PC whose name comes first alphabetically.

Treasure

A high level magic item usable only by humanoids. The player of the PC with the fewest letters in their name will describe this item.

Treasure

A named magical weapon of legend that was used by chimera to slay an evil humanoid emperor. The player who is the shortest will name the weapon and describe it.

Treasure

A two foot wide crystal orb that allows any PC to scry over long distances or view other places at times in the past (including inside the dungeon).

Treasure

A set of tapestries expertly woven with silver and gold, depicting the greatest hero of the PC played by the tallest player.

Traps / Allies

Pit trap with spikes
(10 ft square)

Traps / Allies

Small tribe of gnomes (10) who are friendly with the PCs

Traps / Allies

Five ghosts controlled magically by the PC of the player who last wore a hat.

Traps / Allies

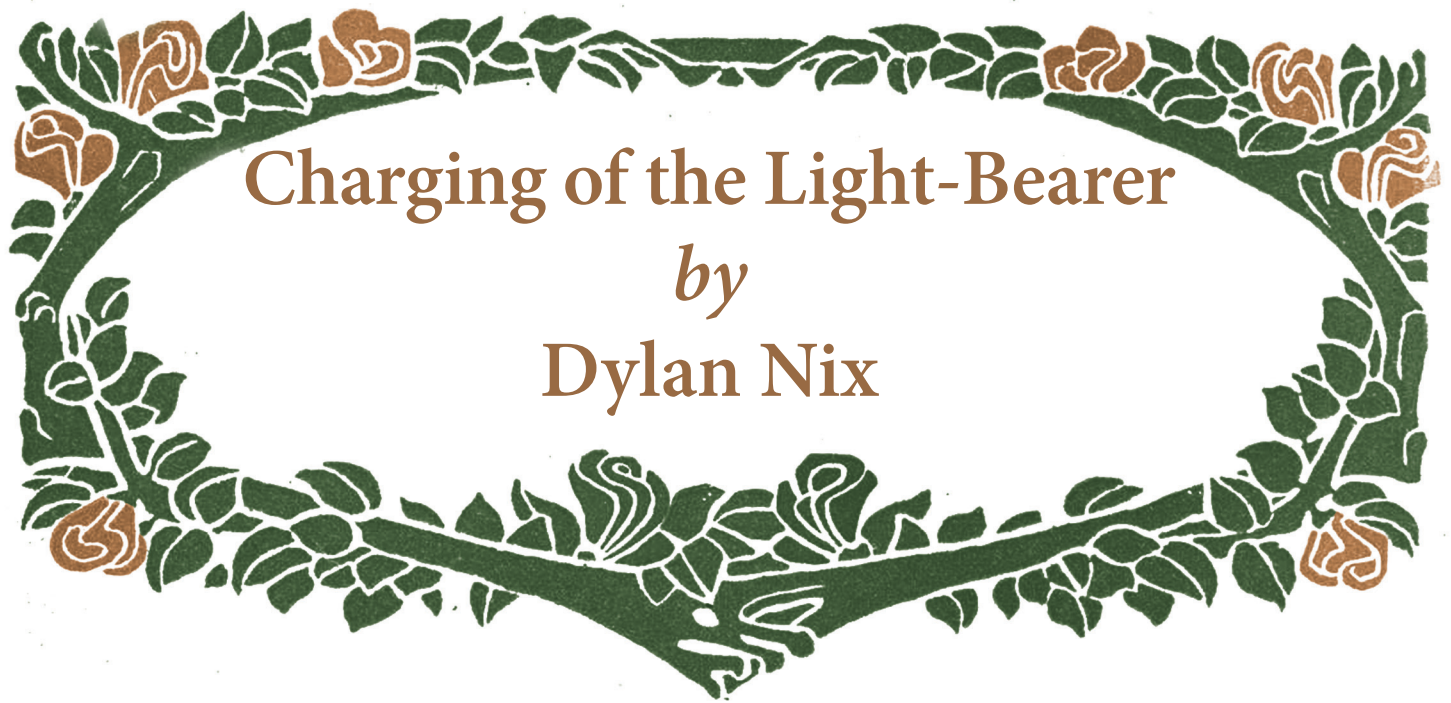
Poison dart trap
(range of 20 ft)

Traps / Allies

A friendly mimic

Traps / Allies

Fire spray trap
(10 ft cone)



Charging of the Light-Bearer *by* Dylan Nix

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

SERIOUS, MYTH, RITUAL

Charging of the Light-Bearer is a game of onerous solutions. As elders you are one, but one of you must stand out. None want the blessing of being the new light-bearer, but one must take up the call. Will it be you?

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<http://yepnix.com>



Charging of the Light-Bearer

a Game of Onerous Solutions by Dylan Nix

Introduction

Elders gather in their sanctum seeking to choose a new Light-Bearer, the figurehead of the order, from amongst themselves. It is a thankless position, as the Light-Bearer must flush out the darkness amongst the people. It is a dangerous position, as the people often balk and become angry at the presence of the Light. It is a permanent position, as the new Light-Bearer is only chosen after the death of the previous one.

Set-up

Each elder chooses a name and a domain (Laughter, Secrets, Rivers, Winter, etc.); the domain may not be Light, of course — that is the domain of the Light-Bearer. These are written on index cards for reference during the rounds. Finally, all participants arrange themselves in a circle, starting with the eldest, in descending age order around to the left.

Rules for Play

Play begins with the chosen elder (starting with the eldest) initiating a hum. Each round is preceded by a communal humming at various pitches. If one cannot or wishes not to hum, they may provide drum beats or interpretive movement. The chosen elder indicates the beginning and end of the humming with a raising and lowering motion, respectively, which the group follows with a raising or lowering of their volume.

Then the chosen elder decides whether the round will be a Proposal round or a Rejection round. Proposal rounds are those in which each elder provides a reason why the elder to their right would be the perfect Light-Bearer. Rejection rounds are those in which each elder provides a reason why they themselves would not be a good fit for Light-Bearer. Use what you know about each elder and yourself to provide justification.

Each elder can only take one minute at most explaining themselves, and they may not repeat nor contradict reasoning given. Play passes to the left regardless of the kind of round. At the end of the round, each elder votes simultaneously for which of the group should be Light-Bearer. The elder with the fewest votes is not to bear the Light this time and removes themselves from the circle. Ties for lowest amount of votes are settled in a similar fashion, except that votes are limited to the tied elders. Play continues in this manner, with the designation of chosen elder rotating to the left each round, until two elders remain.

Endgame

When only two elders remain, Fate must decide amongst the pair who will bear the Light to the people. Each makes a short prayer (one minute at the most) to the Fates (controlled by any players no longer in the running for Light-Bearer). Each player closes their eyes, and the Fates indicate by touch or other sign the one destined for the Torch. The Elder with the most indications laid upon them will be the Light-Bearer and so carries the heavy burden with them until their death. If the Fates cannot decide, use the rules for two players to break the tie.

Rules for Two Players

When there are only two elders in attendance, they must let their abilities decide who shall bear the light. They begin by humming communally as in the rounds above. Looking to their domain, each in turn utters a sentence invoking their power, countering the effects of the other. If one is speechless, without device on how to undo the designs of the other, they must become Light-Bearer.

Charging of the Light-Bearer

a Game of Onerous Solutions by Dylan Nix

Play Advice

Charging of the Light-Bearer is a game that rests largely on the interactions and intersections of the group's creativity while pitting the members of the group against one another. There is some variety in play with the Proposal and Rejection rounds, but the grist for the mill is in the domains and character facts established through play. There is also great value in the limiting of speech, both in terms of time and in terms of content (i.e., just about the elder next to you or your own elder).

The rules themselves briefly touch on this topic, but I repeat it here: when in doubt, look to what has been established in character creation and previous rounds, if there have been any. The most obvious answer is probably the right one, as it may not be so obvious to others. This is not a new thought, but it turns out to be helpful in this situation.

The rules for only two players are, admittedly, seemingly disjunctive from the rest of the game text, but I believe it rests on the same principles: creative collaboration in the midst of player-versus-player action. Lengthy tête-à-têtes between the two powers provide tense play and satisfying conclusions. Don't feel like you have to make it last forever, however. Only go so far as your creativity will stretch, and then perhaps strike up another session with different domains.

Feedback is invaluable to me. If something is amiss, constrictive to play, or even if everything went well, please let me know by sending me an email at: yepnix@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my spouse Lindsay Nix for her support and input.

Thanks to Faye Tyson, Ryan Ekhoﬀ, and Rob Kukuchka for their time and most valuable feedback.

Thanks to the Golden Cobra Committee for providing inspiration for another one of these games to spring forth from my brain.

Thanks to you who take it upon yourselves to risk the burdensome task of being the Light-Bearer.



Conse|cution *by* Jonas Richter

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

SERIOUS, SURVIVAL, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

Conse|cution is a short, freeform game about persecution and some of its consequences. You play a short story about a family who hides from persecution and flees into exile with the aid of several helpers. The game focuses on the strains endured and the small community forged.

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<https://rpggeek.com/rpg/26284/consecution>



Conse|cution

by Jonas Richter

About

Conse|cution is a short, freeform game about persecution and some of its consequences. You can play it in 45-120 minutes with a handful of people.

In Conse|cution, we play a short story about a family who hides from persecution and flees into exile with the aid of several helpers. We will focus on the strains endured and the small community forged.

The game is deliberately not committed to a fixed setting. There are many types of persecution, for instance ethnic, religious, or political, and they are not restricted to a particular era or part of the world. Decide together on the form of persecution and the era in which the story plays, e.g. contemporary ethnic persecution. Fill in details if you like, but you can also play with abstracts - an undefined ethnic background, and unnamed countries of origin and destination. No need to pick exotic names - most names are usually considered common in their community, after all.

First we'll create the family and initial supporting characters as well as basic. Then we'll play the story. The story is divided in three phases: **Hiding**, **Traveling**, and **Arriving**. Each phase should have at least one scene, but of course you can decide together to add more scenes. Before the third phase starts, we will repeat a scene from the first and second phase.

Characters

At least half of you plays family members, the others play supporter and potential allies. Let's call them **family** and **support**. Family players will stick to their role throughout the story, support players will most likely take on different roles for each phase. Choose new roles as needed during the play.

Family: Pick generations and relations (e.g. parent, child, grandparent, aunt) and names for you. You may choose further details as you like (e.g. personality traits, behavior toward other family members). The persons you portray are the ones who leave home. Other members of your family may not be able or willing to leave, or have already left. You don't have to "fill empty spots" in the family when picking characters.

Questions that might help you explore your character: How do you cope? Your experiences change you, how do you react to that?

Support: Friends, acquaintances, more or less supportive strangers, humanitarian shelter personnel... Support can come in many shapes, perhaps even involuntarily. Go with characters that feel obvious and plain to you. Within each of the three phases, support characters will usually know each other, perhaps forming their own family.

Questions that might help you explore your character: What do you risk by helping the family? Why do you risk it?

Scenes

To help you have focused scenes, choose some details for each: Support players decide where a scene takes place, and what need the family is primarily concerned with in this scene. Family players pick a question or impression that is on the mind of (some of) the family members.

While the need and location explicitly impact the scene (although you don't necessarily have to resolve how the need is satisfied), the family's question or impression only has to be stated before the scene starts. It may or may not be brought up expressly in the scene.

A few examples are below:

Needs

Food
Shelter
Courage
Medical care
Money
Documents
Clothes
Company
...

Locations

1. Hiding: a colleague's home, a neighbor's basement, a distant relative's house, ...
2. Traveling: refugee camp, on a train, at a random house, some bureau/ administrative office, a shop, ...
3. Arriving: on the street, some bureau/ administrative office, a train station, the new home, ...

Questions

Are we willing to leave for good?
How low are we willing to sink?
Is it okay to steal from the rich?
Are we willing to adapt?
What will remain of our identity?
...

Impressions

Being a stranger/ lonely
Feeling guilt/ shame
Being bitter/ insecure
Feeling separated/ lost
...

Have clear idea of your character's impulse going into the scene, and show it to your fellow players. Work with and build on what the others bring into the story.

Humming

After character creation, form a circle and put your hands on the lower back of the persons to your left and right, and hum a chord together. It need not be a perfect major 7 or anything. Move your voice around a bit, humming higher and lower notes. Listen to each other, feel the vibrations with your hands and fingers, and hear how individual notes go together. Don't judge, just listen and experiment with your sound. You may want to stick your heads together for this, and if you feel comfortable, close your eyes. Take breath as you need.

Ready?

1. Hiding

The family members have gone into hiding. Someone has provided them with a place to stay that seems to be safe for the moment. You are struggling with the realization that you will leave your home for good, hoping that you don't have to.

The family players decide when to end this phase and move to the next.

2. Traveling

Scenes in this phase shine spotlights on the difficult journey. You are betwixt and between, uprooted, drifting. Looking after your needs is hard, and you have to rely on the help of strangers to get by.

Support and family players decide together when to end this phase and begin the interlude.

Interlude: Replay

At this point in our story, we take a moment to remember and reflect. To that end, we will play two scenes from phase 1 and 2 again. Play will be slightly modified, so don't worry about getting every detail right. We are not doing an exam, but sharing and exploring our memories from a new angle.

For each scene, pick one of the two following modes. You can replay both scenes in the same mode, or switch:

- + **sense-deprived:** All of you cover one/ both ears; close one/ both eyes; or don't touch anything or anybody during the scene.
- + **wordless:** Don't speak. Instead, use only "ah" to express what you communicated in the first version of this scene. This can of course be a long, drawn aaaaaahhhhhh with varying tones. Just do your best to express yourself with this restriction. Don't resort to pantomime.

3. Arriving

Although in real life, the toils and struggles of refugees often continue, in the third phase of this game we will bring some of the loose ends to a satisfactory conclusion.

Humming

After your final scene, form a circle and hum a chord again, just like at the start.

Once you've finished humming, look into each others eyes and slowly break the circle.

You're welcome.

Quickstart: Characters

At least half of you should play family members. Below are some tools for quickly assembling a handful of characters. Pick a name, a role in the family, one detail about yourself, and one detail about your relationship with another family member.

Names: Sara, David, Casey, Alex, Chris, Sam, Danny, Terry, Mark, Alison, ...

Family roles: parent, grandparent, child (may be a young adult, of course), sibling of a parent, daughter in law, ... *(No need to go for balance. Create a group of a grandmother and four teenage grandsons, an all female family cast, or whatever strikes you as a good idea.)*

Support roles: long-time friend, acquaintance, another refugee, shop owner, social worker, ... *(It might be a good idea for second support roles in the same scene to fit with the first, e.g. spouse if the friend, colleague of the social worker etc., so that they naturally form a team.)*

Details about yourself: self-conscious, athletic, likes movies, great cook, conservative, assertive, rational, ...

Details about your relationship with another family member (not necessarily mutual): trust X with anything, tired of X's behavior, holds an (irrational?) grudge, admires X, quietly thinks she/he knows better than X, ...

Quickstart: Suggestions for a short game of six scenes:

Hiding:

- a) Location: In a friends basement. Need: Shelter. Impression: Guilt.
- b) Location: In a friends basement. Need: Money. Question: Are we willing to leave for good?

Traveling:

- c) Location: Some administrative office. Need: Documents. Impression: Being lost.
- d) Location: An apothecary. Need: Medical care. Impression: Bitterness
- e) Location: A shop. Need: Money/ Food. Question: Are we turning into thieves?

Interlude: Replay – pick one scene from the first and another one from the second phase, e.g. scenes b and d, and play them again. For each replay, choose one of the two modes (sense-deprived or wordless).

Arriving:

- f) Location: A small flat, your new home. Need: Jobs. Question: Who are we now?

Disclaimer

As somebody who has never experienced persecution and never had to relocate under cruel conditions, I obviously cannot speak with authority on these subjects. Humbled by the difficulties many humans have gone through, I at least want to acknowledge them, marginalized as they often are. Conse|cution builds on the very basic human experience of needing help and community. It aims to provide a safe space for collectively retracing and approaching parts of the experience of forced migration.

Conse|cution was written by Jonas Richter for the Golden Cobra challenge (freeform game design) in October 2014. Thanks to Emily Care Boss for helpful feedback on a first draft. All remaining deficiencies are of course entirely my own fault.

<http://www.goldencobra.org/>



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Contact *by* Jay Treat

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

COMEDY, NON-NARRATIVE, RELATIONSHIPS

Contact is a silly party game that tackles some serious issues. Partner with everyone, find new ways to make physical contact, act out unpredictable quirks, and try to guess your friends' quirks.

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<p>Contact</p> <p>Contact is a 30 minute social game for 4-16 friendly players. It focuses on physical contact between participants; testing imagination, communication, and intuition—An ice breaker meant to challenge social boundaries.</p> <p>Contents</p> <p>A black player marker</p> <p>A white partner marker</p> <p>18 cards with 2 quirks each</p>	<p>Gameplay</p> <p>Players gather in a circle and take turns interacting with new partners. Each pair finds a way to make physical contact that hasn't already been done during the game. (Once you and I have shaken hands, no one else can.) If a pair repeats a touch that's already been done, tell them to find a new way to touch. They can try any number of times. If they succeed, they each earn 1 point.</p>	<p>Give one player the black player marker, and a player across from her the white partner marker. Both markers pass to the left each turn. If a player gets the white partner marker but has already partnered with the current player, she passes it to the left again.</p> <p>Consent is vital, in this game and in all situations. If a player acts without consent and makes her partner uncomfortable, that player is eliminated from the game. If</p>
<p>1</p> <p>9</p> <p>Designed by Jay Treat 2014 Thanks to Antol, Adam, Noah & Rich and to the coordinators & participants of the Golden Cobra Challenge.</p> <p>Please leave feedback and find updates here: http://tinyurl.com/ContactGame</p>	<p>2</p> <p>5</p> <p>Quirks (Recommended) Give each player a quirk card at the start of the game. Each card has two quirks to choose from. Do as your quirk specifies while you are partnered. If a player is uncomfortable with the quirk they receive, he takes a new one.</p> <p>Guessing (Optional) Players try to guess what others' quirks are. You can guess once per turn. If you're correct, score a point. If two players guess the same quirk</p>	<p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>with the most points win. The players take turns alternating with partners every time each of us chooses a new quirk to play around the markers and the players, or fewer players, or even just one. For a game everyone has partnered once with every player. Game End The game ends when everyone has partnered with every player.</p> <p>their behavior was in violation of the event's protocol, or against the law, further action may be called for.</p>
<p><i>Cut these markers out—or use something more tangible (Friendship bracelets would be awesome, nerf balls would be fun). Trim and fold the rules down to card-size.</i></p>	<p>Make contact with your partner in a new way. Remember your quirk. Pass this to the left afterward.</p> <p>Player</p> <p>The game ends when everyone has partnered with everyone else once. Twice with 6 or fewer players.</p>	<p>Make contact with your partner in a new way. Remember your quirk. Pass this to the left afterward.</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Pass this to the left if you've already partnered with the current player.</p>

<p>Repeat your touch two more times.</p> <p>Use the word 'love'.</p>	<p>Touching with your hands doesn't count.</p> <p>Move like a cat.</p>	<p>Move like a primate.</p> <p>Thank your partner.</p>
<p>Watch your partner's eyes.</p> <p>Avoid eye contact.</p>	<p>Touching your partner's hands doesn't count.</p> <p>Lie.</p>	<p>Touch for three seconds.</p> <p>Touch as briefly as possible.</p>
<p>Touch only your partner's clothing.</p> <p>Complement your partner.</p>	<p>Make pleased sounds while touching.</p> <p>Move like a dog.</p>	<p>Get on your knees for your turn.</p> <p>Apologize.</p>

<p>Remove an article of clothing.</p> <p>Move like a cat.</p>	<p>Make animal sounds.</p> <p>Don't use your arms.</p>	<p>Speak, and in an accent.</p> <p>Don't speak. (except to guess)</p>
<p>Act like a zombie.</p> <p>Close your eyes.</p>	<p>Wait for your partner to initiate contact.</p> <p>Profess your affection.</p>	<p>Don't use your arms.</p> <p>Laugh.</p>
<p>Give your partner a nickname.</p> <p>Request to be called something specific.</p>	<p>Ask a question before touching.</p> <p>Growl.</p>	<p>Beg.</p> <p>Dance.</p>



Conventioneering *by* Thomas Gallecier

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

COMEDY, EVERYDAY LIFE, META

Conventioneering is a satirical pick-up-and-play freeform game in which 2 to 8 players take on the role of strangers discussing various topics while waiting in line to an event, or unwinding in the lobby of their hotel after a long day at the con.

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Con·ven·tion·eer·ing

A freeform game of impromptu conversations with strangers

Introduction

Conventioneering is a satirical pick-up-and-play freeform game in which 2 to 8 players take on the role of strangers discussing various topics while waiting in line to an event, or unwinding in the lobby of their hotel after a long day at the con.

It was created by Thomas Gallecier for the **Golden Cobra Challenge** between October 1st - 30th, 2014. You can learn more about this game design contest and freeform games here: <http://www.goldencobra.org/>

Overview

At the start of the game, players create the **convention** their characters are attending by filling the **program**. Then, each player grabs a **badge** and creates their character. Finally, players engage in different conversations in which they talk and act as their characters in order to earn points. At the end, the player(s) with the most points win.

Preparation

In order to play, you will need to have read the rules.

You will also need to print a **Program** sheet, the **Reference** sheet, and enough **badges** to accommodate all the players (print a few extra just in case, players can create new characters during the game). You will find the **program**, **badges** and **reference** sheet at the end of this document.

Make sure you have **pens** or **pencils** handy too. One for each player, if possible, as players will need to keep track of their score on the back of their badge.

Find a location

Find a place that is quiet and comfortable enough to accommodate all the players and get situated.

For example: your living room, a cozy area in a hotel lobby, your local game store, a coffee shop or a Noodles & Company or a Steak 'n Shake restaurant near you.

Note: It is highly encouraged to play this game in public as long as all participants are comfortable doing so.

Grab a few props: a smartphone, a cup of coffee, couch pillows, a magazine, business cards, a pen and a notepad, your favorite card game, a comic book, a fake mustache, a pair of sunglasses, make-up, a hat, etc.

How to play

1-Convention Creation

Players, gather 'round.

Together, take a moment to talk about what kind of convention your characters are attending.

- **Where** is it happening?
- **When** is it happening?
- What kind of **things** can you find there?
- What kind of **people** go to this convention?

You might decide to play as attendees at an existing convention in the past or future (Comic Con 1998, Gen Con 2022), or maybe you simply want to pretend that you are at a convention that is happening right now but 500 miles away? Or maybe you want to create a completely fictional convention? It is up to you.

Note: It does not have to be a gaming convention either. There are plenty of conventions out there. It is best if you pick a topic that everybody is familiar with.

Discuss, and fill in all the information on the **program**.

Name: this is the name of your convention. If it's a fictional one, try _____Con, or _____Expo. It seems to be a popular choice. Come up with a cool sounding name.

Time: this is when your convention happens. Write down the year at least. You don't have to be too specific.

Place: this is where your convention happens: a city, a specific convention center, etc.

The Buzz: this is a list of the cool things that everybody is talking about at the convention. Did something just get announced? or released? What is getting people excited? What is the *hotness*?

The elements on the Buzz list will be used as topics by the players to start a conversation, spur an argument, find commonalities between characters, etc. The game ends once 5 topics have been discussed.

Note: For a shorter game, you can agree to end the game after 3 topics have been discussed.

Create and write down **6 topics**. New topics can arise during the game, in which case you will add them to the program. When a topic is discussed, add a checkmark next to it on the sheet to keep track of what topics have already been discussed.

Define your **location** (i.e. where the players are playing this game) in relation to the convention. Is it a lounge area inside the convention center? a hotel lobby right next door? a hallway? a café? etc.

2- Character Creation

Give a **badge** to each player. Each player grabs a pen and fills in the information on their **badge**. The characters must remain secret until the discussion starts.

Front of the badge:

Convention: the name of the convention you are attending.

Name: your character's name.

Back of the badge:

Home: where your character comes from, nationality, etc.

Age: your character's age.

Occupation: you may add your character's job here if you want.

Contributions: this is where you keep track of your score, by adding a checkmark in the proper box.

The **Contributions** are also listed on the reference sheet. The contributions with a * can only be fulfilled once (see **3- Discussion** for more details about the different contributions).

Take a minute or two to picture your character, think about what they like or dislike, what type of personality they have, where they come from and how they got here. Close your eyes if you think it helps you.

3- Discussion

Now you are ready to impersonate your character, meet strangers and contribute to the discussion.

If this is your first game, remember to:

- **Be attentive:** listen to what people are saying, be flexible, let everybody talk.
- **Be proactive:** initiate conversations, come up with elements, stories, anecdotes, characters that the other players can reuse or react to.
- **Be reactive:** reincorporate any element the other players have mentioned, make things up if you don't know the answer.
- **Help others shine:** ask questions, let them be in the spotlight for a moment, don't be a d*ck unless you're playing one.
- **Always act in character:** no out-of-character talk is allowed but you can take a break or pause the game (cf. **4- Breaks & Pauses**)

Act out the discussion with the other players as you think it would happen. If multiple conversations occur at the same time, that's okay. If people decide to play a card game while talking and getting to know each other that's alright too.

Remember that contributing to the discussion is how you earn points. Every time you contribute, add a checkmark on the back of your badge.

There are the main ways you can contribute to the discussion:

- **Introducing yourself:** There is no right or wrong way to do this. You might want to sit back for a moment and wait for the perfect opportunity, or you might want to jump in right away. It is up to you... unless somebody asks you who you are.

- **Mentioning something you like:** Talk about something you saw at the convention that you really liked. Use the elements listed on the program as inspiration. Your character is defined by the things he or she likes. See how others respond to what you say.
- **Mentioning something you dislike:** Talk about something you saw at the convention that you hated. See how others respond. Use the elements listed on the program as inspiration. Your character is also defined by the things he or she does not like. See how others respond to what you say.
- **Agreeing with another character:** Agree with what another character said and add something meaningful to the discussion (your own opinion, a related anecdote, introduce a new element, etc). See how others respond to what you say.
- **Becoming the Devil's Advocate:** Disagree with something another character just said. You can truly disagree with what they said because of what your character believes, or you might just want to start a lively argument about things you care about.
- **Mentioning somebody you have met recently:** Talk about somebody you have met at the convention. Describe how it happened and how this encounter changed you. See how others respond to what you say.
- **Inquiring about something you don't know about:** Maybe you did not understand what somebody said, maybe you do not know what they are talking about. Ask them to explain to you what they mean. Listen to what they say.
- **Asking a character about something personal:** You can talk and argue about the things you love, hate and the things you have seen at the convention, but sometimes you might want to know more about a specific character. Ask them what you want and listen to what they have to say.
- **Retiring a character:** Whether or not you have already collected any points, you can choose to retire your character. Get up and bid everybody goodbye.

You can choose to retire a character because:

- you are tired of playing the same character
- you want to try something different, something more interesting.
- you are tired of playing this game

Note: If you retire your character, you are out of the game unless you create a new character to re-enter the discussion (cf. **Bringing a new character**). You do not have to do this right away: you can take a short break first if you want.

*Note: After you retire a character, keep your **badge** nearby; you will need it to count your points at the end of the game.*

- **Bringing in a new character:** After you retire a character, grab a new **badge** and join the discussion as someone else. Maybe this time, your character is related to another player's character, or maybe he or she is somebody that was mentioned previously during the discussion.

Note: Keep your characters' badges even after they retire. You will need the badges at the end to calculate your final score.

4- Breaks & Pauses

Players can get up and leave the location at any moment to **take a break**: go to the bathroom; get a cup of coffee, answer a phone call, etc. In this case, just excuse yourself to the rest of the group. You do not have to stay in-character until you come back to the game location.

At any point, a player can clap twice to **pause the game**. When the game is paused, the discussion stops for a moment.

A player may pause the game to:

- ask a question regarding the rules.
- make a suggestion to keep the discussion on track, to get things moving.
- discuss and resolve an inconsistency that emerged during the discussion.
- ask the other players if they want to take a collective break or end the game prematurely.

Otherwise, act in-character or **take a break**.

5- End Game

Once 5 topics have been discussed. The endgame begins.

Players wrap up the game by retiring their current characters one by one.

Then, the game ends and players calculate their scores.

Note: Any player who left the game prematurely does not score points.

Players count the points they collected for every contribution they made:

- +2 for introducing yourself**
- +1 for mentioning something you like/dislike**
- +1 for agreeing with another character**
- +2 for becoming the Devil's Advocate**
- +1 for mentioning somebody you have met recently**
- +2 for inquiring about something you don't know**
- +2 for asking a character about something personal**

Finally, each player awards **+3** points to the player of their choice. Alternatively, a player may split those 3 points between two or three players.

Score are revealed and the player (or players) with the most points wins at *conventionneering*. Congratulations!

6- Variants & Other experiments

Timer: Set a timer to time the discussion. At the end of the Timer, characters are retired and the game ends.

Bowl of chips: Fill a bowl with potato chips. Eat a potato chip every time you contribute to the discussion. Play until the bowl of chips is empty or until all the players are full.

Study: Maybe you and your group of players have a very precise idea of what you want to do. In this case, you can plan the game well in advance and research your topic, prepare props (fake mustaches are always important!), food, costumes, names, etc.

Hack: Why not play as French impressionists in a parisian café in 1876? or poets in a fashionable London drawing-room in 1815? Or as aliens of different races on a distant planet attending a Trekkie convention? or as anthropomorphic animals? You decide. This might require some planning and some research (cf. **Study**).

Friendship is Magic: Do not play for points instead your character's goal is to find a best friend among the other characters. The game ends once everybody has found a best friend. Everybody wins.

So Meta: Play this game at an actual convention.

Legacy: Play several games. Keep the same cast of characters that go to the same convention year after year. What happens?

Special Thanks & Credits

Conventioneering was written by Thomas Gallecier.

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Find me on Twitter: **@tabletopthomas**

Find me on Google+: **+ThomasG1**

Special thanks go to: Natalie & Tweezer, Grégory Pogorzelski, Jérôme Larré, Eric Nieudan, Cédric Ferrand, Alex Mayo, Carl Niclas, Matt Evans (Board Game Replay), David Cook, GenCant, Cards Against Humanity, the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown, Brent Newhall, Jared Sorensen, Epidiah Ravachol, Matthijs Holter, Whitney “Strix” Beltrán, Emily Care Boss, Jason Morningstar, Evan Torner, and the many strangers I have yet to meet.

Longue vie à la 2CVform !

Appendix: Program sheet, Badges (x2), Reference sheet.

CONVENTION PROGRAM

Name:

Time: _____ Place: _____

The Buzz (topics):

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Notes:

HOMES: _____ AGE: _____ OCCUPATION: _____ CONTRIBUTIONS: > introducing yourself * <input type="checkbox"/> > mentioning something you like/dislike <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> > agreeing with another character <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> > becoming the Devil's Advocate * <input type="checkbox"/> > mentioning somebody you have met recently <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> > inquiring about something you don't know <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> > asking a character about something personal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NAME: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ COUNTRY: _____ CONVENTION: _____

[illegible]

convention

name

[illegible]

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Introducing yourself

scored the first time you introduce yourself

Mentioning something you like or dislike

Agreeing with another character

Becoming the Devil's Advocate

scored the first time you disagree with somebody strongly

Mentioning somebody you have met recently

Inquiring about something you don't know about

Asking a character about something personal

SPECIAL RULES:

Take a break

at any time, but come back

Pause the game

clap twice to suspend the game

Retiring a character

say goodbye and leave at any time

Bringing in a new character

come back as a new character (new badge)



Deal *by* Matthijs Holter

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, TABLETOP ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE

SERIOUS, RELATIONSHIPS

In this game, love doesn't exist. Good luck with your relationship.

©2014 Matthijs Holter

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<http://norwegianstyle.wordpress.com/>



deal

- 1. it is possible there is love. let us pretend there is. but not in this game.
- 2. you still need love. or money. or something else. you need.

characters

your character wants something. they are driven by it.
they might admit it to themselves.
they might not.

you will play with one other person.

their character also wants something.
you have it.

examples

you want love, to be loved. you work hard and make money.
they want money. they can fake love.

you want to be good. you can provide a house, stability.
they want safety. they can fake that you're a good person.

the lie

you never, ever, ever say out loud what you want. you never, ever, ever say out loud what you provide.
neither do they.

the scenes

- 1. you meet. you talk about whatever, do whatever.
underneath it all, the animals inside you sense that the other can provide what you want.
keep on talking about whatever.
do whatever.

- 2. you are apart.
the need.
you have found someone who can provide.

- 3. you meet again, and again.
let's see some short scenes. montage. just sentences, vignettes.

- 4. now what?
how long do you keep it up?
let's see some more scenes.
and more.
and more.

- 5. did you say it out loud?
did you mention it?
what happened?
what happens now?

- 6. can you live with each other, and with yourself?
this might be a happy ending.
or a redemption.
or splitting up.

- 7. epilogue
fun! will you fall into the same pattern?
will you break free?
who the hell are you, really?
when you're alone.



Do It For the Music

by

David Berg

TABLETOP ROLE PLAY, LARP IS NEVER MANDATORY, BUT WILL BE PRESENT TO TASTE.

COMEDY, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

As a member of a new improv-heavy jazz-rock band, can you achieve your personal musical vision, while helping your band cohere into a successful or even hot act? Get ready for band meetings, secret votes, and playing out performances using unique narrative techniques.

©2014 David Berg

<http://shrikedesign.com/>



A FREEFORM RPG

DO

IT

BY
DAVID

BERG 14

FOR

the

MUSIC

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Can play with any number you might want in a jazz-rock band. 3-5 is the norm, but 2 and 10 are also doable.

PLAY LENGTH

Variable. With a small group, if your band instantly coheres, or instantly falls apart, and you play your shows in summary fashion, you could do this in under an hour. With a large group, detailed coverage of each show, and alternating flops and successes, play could take 4 hours. For 4 players cohering quickly but not instantly, alternating summary and thorough show coverage, I'd guess 2 hours.

MATERIALS

One copy of these rules (though giving one copy to every player isn't a bad idea).

One Show List.

One double-sided Character Sheet per player.

Hand the players their materials in CD jewel cases if you want to be extra cool.

You're all in a band, that's already been formed with certain agreements & parameters:

You're all fans of some sorts of rock & jazz to some degree or another, and you've concluded that, while there's no room in your local music scene for another rock band, or another jazz band, the clubs are eager to showcase a jazz-rock hybrid (yes, this is fantasy). You've formed this band with the express purpose of filling that niche; you're all on the same page as far as that very vague musical goal.

You'll play shows of all original material which is still in the works. There will be lots of improv in each performance, as players are moved by the inspiration of the moment. This band thrives less on rehearsed precision and more on spontaneity.

Within that, there will be disagreements, good shows and bad shows. We'll see what "rock" and "jazz" mean to each of you.

We'll play to see if the characters can achieve their personal musical visions, and at the same time, if the band can stay together and forge a sound that will carry them forward.

Hand out the double-sided Character Sheets!

characters

STRIKES AGAINST

Write the name of the player to your left in the “Strikes Against” blank on the back at the bottom. This has nothing to do with your character, it’s just a bookkeeping matter: you are in charge of tracking the Strikes against them, as the person on your right is for you. “Left” and “right” are just a convenient way to divvy this up; there’s no need to worry about actual position at any point in play.

You can roleplay anything you like with the character whose Strikes you are tracking, but you are not allowed to actually show them your sheet with their official tally.

RULES

If players want to know the rules before creating their characters, briefly go over Goals, Flops, 3 Strikes, and the three Endings. Most of this info can be found on the Show Results and last two Scene pages.

DREAM BAND

See the back of your sheet. Everyone secretly fill in the blanks with the band you most want to emulate, plus a band you'd like to inflect their sound with. This is your Dream jazz-rock band.

Your band in the game has agreed, after much early bickering, that no one member's vision is as important as finding a way to cohere together, so none of you know for sure what the others most want to sound like. You might have mentioned your favorite band early on, but by now everyone's forgotten, and they care only how you play.

If you help form a successful band that sounds decently close to your Dream Band, you win the game. Obviously this is subjective.

INSTRUMENTS

Now divvy up the Instruments on the front of the sheet. The order they're listed in will become the picking order for Attributes. Drummer picks first, dancer picks last, etc.

Circle your instrument, and use check marks for others' instruments.

ATTRIBUTES

Go through Attributes in turns, circling the ones you pick and crossing out the ones others pick, until everyone feels done with the list. Three is a good rule of thumb. These will differentiate everyone; you're more a band of misfits than a band of clones. The listed Attributes are just inspiration; feel free to invent your own.

MORE ABOUT ME

On the back of the sheet, add on any additional color you like to flesh out your character, as you see fit – Just don't make a long list of reasons why you're an effective performer; that's what the lists on the sheet are for.

PRIVATELY, AFTER SHOWS

Then make up one activity you tend to do after shows which takes you away from the rest of the band for at least a few minutes. This can be meaningful if you want, but completely mundane is fine. Write it down, and also tell the person tracking your Strikes to write it down.

Characters are done; share everything aloud except for your Dream Band.

scenes

The order of scenes is Pre-Show -> Show -> Post-Show, repeating until play ends. Nothing can change this order, though One-On-One or Sit-Down scenes can interrupt. Start the game with a Show scene.

SHOW SCENE

Begin with this. Narrate and riff off each other. Have fun! Act, sing, air guitar, just describe, whatever. Go over the Narration Techniques page for ideas. Strive to have the conversation resemble an improv jam, with everyone active and responding quickly to everyone else. When apt, rope in your Attributes to add convincing power to why you're good at what you're doing. Your goal is to play how you want and inspire others to want to fit in with you, rather than just wishing you'd fit in with them.

FIRST POST-SHOW SCENE

In turn, each player cites the private post-show thing their assigned trackee does, says, "While they do that, I say to the rest of you," and then initiates a conversation about how that character performed. These post-show conversations will have more purpose in

subsequent scenes, but for now, just develop the characters. Always let your Dream Band be your guide. When making any judgments on anyone else's performance, that's your #2 touchstone. #1 is the band Goal for the show, which we'll get to next.

A different player should go first after each show.

PRE-SHOW SCENE

Sometime before the next gig -- maybe at rehearsal, maybe at coffee, maybe shortly after last show, maybe right before next show -- the band must vote on how their sound needs to change relative to the previous show. Feel free to roleplay as much or as little as you want, but there's one key decision that needs to be made: what's the band Goal for the next show -- more Rock or more Jazz?

In case of a tie vote:

- For the first vote, Rock wins.
- For subsequent votes, the Goal stays the same if the last show was a Success, and changes if the last show was a Flop.

If you're not playing out the next Show right away, and might forget, note the Goal in pencil somewhere public, like on the Show List.

SUBSEQUENT POST-SHOW SCENE

When you have a private conversation about another band member, always vote on whether they succeeded in abiding by the band Goal. Did they contribute to the band playing with more Rock / Jazz (whichever the Goal specifies) than it did in the previous show? If not, they earn one Strike. Vote thumbs up / thumbs down, majority wins; a tie means yes, they earned a Strike.

Whoever's responsible for tracking that, make a mark on your sheet and in the appropriate box on the Show List.

If the character doesn't earn a Strike, someone can opine that their playing was Exceptional. This is not subject to a vote unless someone ardently disagrees, in which case majority wins; tie means yes, it was Exceptional.

The player who brought it up then makes a mark in the appropriate box on the Show List.

Then invite the absent member back, and vote on the next person.

Yes, the first votee will see their marks on the show list. Oh well. That's why a different person starts the Post-Show Scene each time.

When done with everyone, see the Show Results page!

ONE-ON-ONE SCENE

After the first Pre-Show Scene ends, any player who wants more fictional traction may request that someone play a short on-on-one scene with them, to develop the characters and their relationships and any musical tastes and desires that don't come up in the regular scenes.

The requested someone always has the option to decline.

You can have as many requests and One-On-One Scenes as you want, until someone requests a Show, Pre-Show, or Post-Show Scene. When that happens, no more One-On-Ones until after the next scene.

SIT-DOWN SCENE

This is a band meeting, and occurs when a player gets a third Strike.

The band's rule is "three Strikes and you're out". At this point, the player with three Strikes must choose whether to leave the band, or change. If they leave, narrate however you want, and reveal your Dream Band however you want. It's your scene! Just don't kill anybody. If they change, reveal your Dream Band to everyone at the meeting and obey their instruction to abandon it. You can no longer win the game, but you can still help the band succeed.

show results

Once all band members have been voted on, look at the Aided Goal and Exceptional columns for that show.

FATE OF THE SHOW

If more than one third of the musicians earned Strikes, the show did not cohere, and it was a Flop. Otherwise, a Success.

If the show was not a Flop, and at least one third of the musicians earned Exceptional marks, the show was Hot.

FATE OF THE BAND

3 straight Flops = no one will book this band again. It's over.

3 straight Successes = your band has established its sound and will survive on that. You've got a decent run in you and you won't go broke in the process.

3 straight Hot shows = your band has established its sound and will thrive on that. Your visions of success come true!

narration techniques

ZOOM OUT - with some orienting intro like “after the chorus” or “after the applause ends”, begin describing your playing for entire songs or sequences of songs in summary fashion

ZOOM IN - with some orienting intro like “after that song” or “after the chorus”, begin describing or acting out a specific part that you’re playing

HANG BACK - pantomime holding your instrument ready, waiting

CUE - make eye contact and nod to someone who’s hanging back, thus cueing them to start playing

HEY - signal everyone that you’re about to do a count

COUNT - count “1,2,3,4” (or “1,2,3” for a waltz) aloud in the middle of a song to cue people who are already playing to change to a new part after “4”

BACKGROUND - can do the next 3 while other people are talking or soloing.

AIR - air guitar, air drums, etc. move your arms to indicate the rhythm, tempo, and attitude of your playing

RHYTHM - tap or drum on yourself or a convenient object, or quietly make consonant sounds with your mouth, to indicate the rhythm and tempo of your playing

SING - do your best vocal impression of your instrument

show list

AIDED GOAL EXCEPTIONAL

show #1			flop	success	hot
show #2			flop	success	hot
show #3			flop	success	hot
show #4			flop	success	hot
show #5			flop	success	hot
show #6			flop	success	hot
show #7			flop	success	hot
show #8			flop	success	hot
show #9			flop	success	hot

character FRONT

INSTRUMENT

drums (sticks)
drums (hands)
lead vocals
bass
marimba
xylophone
keyboards
trombone
saxophone
trumpet
clarinet
flute
oboe
violin/fiddle
mandolin
accordion
concertina
acoustic guitar
electric guitar
harmonica
theremin
dancing

ATTRIBUTES

Playing:

lightning-fast fingers
can change styles on a dime
master of effects pedals
powerful lungs
perfect breath control
monstrous strength
piercing shriek
booming growl
rhythmic precision
pitch precision
schooled in many styles
improv mastery
keen listening to bandmates
funk
soul

-
-

Showmanship:

epic hair
huge / tiny

crazy piercings
immaculate suit
shredded jeans
polished dancer
hyper athleticism
mastery of striking poses
pimped-out instrument
hot body
tattoos
trampoline
acetylene torch

-
-

Equipment:

beautiful tone
abrasive tone
giant full sound
fuzz box
talk box
echo mic
venerated instrument

character BACK

MY DREAM is to play in a band that sounds like _____
REAL-WORLD BAND

with a little bit of _____ .
REAL-WORLD BAND

(Make sure this includes both rock and jazz!)

MORE ABOUT ME:

PRIVATELY, AFTER SHOWS I:

STRIKES AGAINST _____ :

AFTER SHOWS THEY:



Don's Secret *by* Guilherme DR

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

SERIOUS, COMEDY, RELATIONSHIPS, MAFIA

Don has a secret, a terrible secret. By the end of this meeting the secret will change everything, that is, unless you do something about it. You all had a week to prepare, was it enough?
A game about defining characters while overcoming challenges in less than an hour.

©2014 Guilherme DR

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<http://guilhermedr.carbonmade.com/>





The Don has a secret, a terrible secret. By the end of this meeting the secret will change everything, that is, unless you do something about it. You all had a week to prepare, was it enough?

Don's Secret

A game made for the Golden Cobra Challenge 2014

by **Guilherme DR**

Intro:

An offer you can't refuse

Don's secret is a game about the past defining the future. In it, players are in a meeting with the Don (the Mafia's boss) talking about and describing events that occurred last week.

As you might have guessed, this somewhat limits the experience (for instance, no one in the room will die in past scenes), but can also bring some nice twists to the plot ("so you thought I died when you shoot me, well, it turns out I was wearing a bullet proof suit all along").

The game works by players asking each other questions about the past week, and using points to better define and improve their characters, so they can beat the challenges presented. Neat uh?

It's not a game about wining, but a game about telling an interesting story. Maybe your character doing something stupid will be fun to watch, maybe the Don will help players defeat him, maybe some players will form groups and fight each other, maybe... well, anything really. Make it memorable.

To play it, you will need:

- 3 to 8 players.
- Paper, pieces of it anyway.
- Something to write.
- Little bags, or something to randomly draw pieces of paper from.
- A timer, for time.
- Last case scenario, a coin.

With it, you will make:

- Four piles of pieces of paper, a Job, an Element, a Scenario and Day pile.
- Notes about characters.
- A big piece of paper holding the Secret somewhere.

Let's get started then.

Terminology:

Word is Gold

Element:

An Element is something or someone that can be used, handled or given. It has a purpose to the story, and might enable Characters to do certain things (a gun to shoot, someone sexy to seduce, money buys and a ticket gives access, etc.). Things and assets are Elements.

Examples: Gun, Bodyguard, Informant, Policeman, Locked Door, Coffin, Car, Suit, Bullet Proof Vest.

Quality:

A Quality is something that defines a character, for good or bad or both. It represents a skill and mindset, a way of operating and limits that the character has. A good advice is making them as specific as possible, to avoid problems with the Don.

Examples: Brute, Coward, Paranoid, Charming, Fast Fingers, Strong, Networked, Cripple, Seductive, Unstable, Kung-Fu Master.

Job:

Jobs are single words that describe what the character usually does in his, Mafia or not, environment. They should be as descriptive as possible, and work exactly as Qualities, except that characters start the game with a job and they are known by all characters.

Examples: Driver, Hitman, Actor, Cooker, Butcher, Cleaner, Speaksman, Accountant, Comedian, Drunk.

Scenario:

A place / environment where something happens. Specifics about the place might or not be included.

Examples: An office, a dirty warehouse, the dark woods, a Chinese restaurant, a luxurious hotel room, train rails, inside a car.

Scene:

A moment in time, where characters interact and things happen. In this game usually it is a memory of the past, but the meeting itself might be considered a Scene.

Questioner:

The one that started the Scene. He guides it, by describing the environment, characters and events, as well as presenting and resolving conflict.

Respondent:

The protagonist of a Scene. The questioner must focus the events of a Scene around the Respondent, unless of course the Respondent changes.

Action Points:

Points that a players must spend to execute certain actions. Free actions are actions that don't spend APs.

Getting the game ready:

We can build on that. For their sake, let's try.

First we need to define who is going to be the **Don**. He will be the Player defining the *Secret*, and thus setting the tune for the whole story. You can do this by any means you like, just keep in mind this guy will have a huge impact in the story told.

Let's split the pre-game in 2 jobs, Don's and everybody's else:

Don's job:

The Don needs to define the *Secret* and write it down on a piece of paper. No one except Don will know the *Secret*, but everyone must be able to see the paper. The *Secret* needs to be something huge, but not necessarily something bad. In fact, it can even be something funny. Some examples:

- The Don is retiring, and whoever brings him his old father's clock will be the next Don.
- The Don is ratting on everyone, and the meeting is being recorded.
- The Don decided it's time to forget about this whole Mafia thing, and open an Ice Cream business. Who can come up with the best flavor? All according to Don, of course.

A good *Secret* represents a big change and gives players some objective to pursue (to avoid / ride the change). It also needs an *Element* / *Quality* with which players can avoid/defeat/use the *Secret*, and in this case the *Secret* functions as a *Challenge* (more about *Challenges*, *Elements* and *Qualities* in *Terms* and *Defining a Challenge* chapters). In the first *Secret* example the father's clock was this winning element.

The second pre-game job of the Don is to define 3 special *Challenges*, called *Leads*. These *Challenges* will effectively work as case leads and solving them will bring the players closer to acknowledging the *Secret*. Solving only 1 *Lead* should not be enough to fully understand the *Secret*, 2 should enable players to understand and prepare for it, and 3 should give them an effective advantage. Of course, you can't know which *Leads* will be solved, or in which order, so plan and adapt accordingly.

It's not mandatory to write down or precisely define the Leads right away, but for each *Lead* a new *Element* *must* be defined and added to the Element Pile. This *Element* must somehow be marked as special, so the player that picks it must recognize it as part of a Lead (a simple way to do this is to write these elements in red). Some Lead examples:

- An old clock-maker, who knows the importance of the clock for the Don.
- Some old transaction record between the Don and the police.
- One Italian Chef closes his restaurant and starts trying out strange receipts.

Other player's job:

The players will build the game's paper piles.

Each player must create and add an *Element*, a *Job* and a *Scenario* to their respective piles. The Days pile will have a paper piece for each day of the week(Monday, Tuesday,..., Sunday).

All players must randomly pick a Job from the *Job* pile and announce it to everybody. The game then starts.

Starting the game:

You gotta make the money first.

To start the game, the Don takes the timer, sets it to 1 hour, and starts it. By the end of the hour, the meeting will be over and the *Secret* and its consequences revealed.

Following that, the Don asks a free question about last week to anyone, and in consequence starts a Scene.

Every player starts the game with 3 Action Points, which can be used to:

Ask a question / Start a Scene:

Effectively the same thing. The player picks a random Day from the pile, and asks a question about it to another player except the Don (the Don answers to no one), thus becoming the Questioner for the next Scene. The question can be very simple (something like "How was your Sunday?") or incur some details that will necessarily be included in the answer ("I heard you and Player B were collecting *taxes* last Thursday, tell me more").

The Respondent (the player answering) randomly picks a Scenario from the pile, and starts a describing the Scene using it. It can be a simple description ("Well, Sunday I was walking through the beach") or he can add other characters and flavor ("Me and Player B were in the basement, all we could hear was silence and we knew something was wrong"). *The Don can't be included in a Scene by another player.*

The Questioner will randomly pick an Element from the pile, and pass it along to the Don. This Element must be included in the Scene by the Questioner, and the Don will use it to create a Challenge.

From this point until the Scene ends, the Questioner controls and leads it. He will describe and present events, control characters other than the players and resolve situations. If it's unclear how a situation should play out, or if players disagree, the Don's words are final. More on it in *Making a Scene*.

Anything taken from any pile is not returned to it unless the pile is empty. If that happens, the pile is renewed fully with all the previous paper pieces.

End a Scene:

Players *in* a Scene can use an Action Point to end it, usually saying something like “this isn’t really important, let’s move on”.

Add a Quality/ Element:

Any player can use an Action Point to add a new Quality / Element to any Player except the Don. Qualities are permanent, and can’t go against any other Qualities the character already has. For instance, a character can’t be Brave and Coward at the same time. Elements can be added to a Character or a Scene, as long as they make sense. This can only be done during a Scene.

Negate a Quality/Element:

Any player can negate a Quality or Element of any player in I Scene by using an Action Point. “You are a Coward, but this time you won’t run away”. “So I guess your gun is not working properly today, uh?”.

Include himself in the Scene:

Only if it makes sense for the narrative.

Take over a Scene:

Any player NOT in a Scene can take over the Questioner role for a moment. This is usually done by saying “Excuse me, I think that” and describing what happened.

Take an action during the meeting:

It's one way of ending a Scene. This can be anything, from making a loud noise while drinking one's coffee or slapping someone. We are brought back to the present and the past Scene ends. Players can use any Qualities or Elements they acquired during the Scenes. In case of conflict or doubt, Don's words are final.

Continue a Scene:

Any Scene that still has a Challenge can be restarted, and this doesn't count as a new Scene. This can be done by the original Questioner ("AS I was saying...") or by any other player ("But please, continue your story").

To Sum it up, ways of spending APs:

- Start a Scene;
- End a Scene;
- Add a Quality/ Element;
- Negate a Quality;
- Include himself in the Scene;
- Take over a Scene;
- Take an action during the meeting;
- Continue a Scene;

Making a Scene:

A smile and a gun will take you farther.

At the beginning of every Scene, the Don gets 3 Action points.

Scenes are what move the story. They must revolve around the Respondent, and it's the Questioner job to make it interesting.

Players in a Scene always role-play they characters. Other players can still interact using APs.

Respondents and Questioners can change who the actual Respondent in the current Scene is. This is usually done by asking the new Respondent things like "So, what do you think we should do now?". This is a free action.

Scenes can spawn other scenes, especially when characters decide to split. This is done by asking the other player "So, what were you doing then?". That counts as a new Scene, requires an AP but doesn't require random draws from the piles. A new Challenge needs to be created using the same Element.

Qualities and Elements can only be added during Scenes.

There are 3 ways of ending a Scene: Being a character in Scene and using an AP to end it, doing something during the meeting or completing a Challenge.

If players succeed in a Challenge, every player in Scene and the Questioner gets an extra AP, and the most active player in the Challenge get 2 APs. If they fail the Don gets and extra AP.

Defining a Challenge:

Say hello to my little friend!

A challenge is simple a conflict situation where players might succeed or fail, getting rewards and moving the plot forwards through it. It's the Don's job to define its general lines after receiving an *Element* from the *Questioner*, and return it to the *Questioner* so he can include it in the *Scene*.

To define a *Challenge*, the Don must write down using single words:

Win:	<i>Qualities</i> and <i>Elements</i> necessary to win.
Lose:	<i>Qualities</i> and <i>Elements</i> that players shouldn't use.
Reward:	<i>Qualities</i> , <i>Elements</i> , information or anything players will get.

He can also add sentences and guidelines to help the *Questioner* to include the challenge in the *Scene*, but the *Questioner* is not obliged to follow them. The *Questioner* must follow the Win, Lose and Reward definitions.

An example of a **Bouncer Challenge** general lines:

Win:	Charm, Money.
Lose:	Strength, Intimidation.
Reward:	Access to club, info

If players try to force the Bouncer, they might win but won't get into the Club.

In this Challenge, characters might gain access to the club through having and using the Quality Charm or the Element Money, and if they use Strength or Intimidation they will lose it. Everything else is up to the interpretation of the *Questioner* and/or the Don.

There is one special situation where the challenge is a *Lead*. In this case, the *Questioner* must give control of the *Scene* to the Don as soon as the players deal with the Challenge. This counts as a free action, and must happen because the Don is the only one that truly knows what the *Lead* is about.

Don's Role:

I always tell the truth. Even when I lie.

It might appear that the Don is fighting against the other players. That's not the case. His job is to provide conflict and mystery, but *winning* is merely telling a good story.

For most part of the game, he will have more APs than the others. This puts him in the best position to add interesting "qualities" that define characters, and start or take over scenes. Indeed, he is the Questioner of the first Scene, and every time the Don starts a new Scene he will have even more APs than before.

He is also the final Judge of anything. If things get really messy and he wants to save face, using a coin is a good option. Or just man/woman up, you ARE the Don after all.

The best Dons are the ones that guide, help and add flavor to the story, but don't control it too much. As the only player that knows what the Secret is, he is the only one who can guide players to it.

Conclusion:

All right ramblers, let's get rambling!

The meeting ends when 1 hour has passed, players (except the Don) have no APs left or something drastic happens. Either way, the Secret and its consequences are revealed, and players deal with those the best way they can.

The End.



Dream Bear *by* Emily Care Boss

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

EVERYDAY LIFE, SURREAL, METAPHYSICAL

A group of people come together to talk about and play out their dreams. Each person in the group is having recurrent dreams that involve a bear. Play this brief, live-action, freeform game in two hours or less. For three to six players.

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www.blackgreengames.com



Dream Bear

*My soul, my soul, where are you? Do you hear me? I speak, I call you—are you there?
I have returned, I am here again. I have shaken the dust of all the lands from my feet,
and I have come to you, I am with you. After long years of long wandering, I have come to you again....*
-- C.G.Jung, Black Book Journal, 12 November 1913

Welcome to the Dream Workshop

You are about to embark on a journey of shared discovery. Exploring your dreams with a group of strangers, connected by curiosity about the wisdom of dreams, and by the shared image of a Bear which appears in each of our dreams.

Remember:

- All shared in the Dream Workshop is confidential. The work here is a sacred trust.
- All said in the Dream Workshop happens in a time outside of time.
- No shame, and no fear is offered or put upon you for what you say or feel or do.
- Respect yourself and others. If anyone says "Stop", be still and silent, immediately. Wait until the work resumes.

We each travel through life. Through dreams we seek to find clues about what our journey means. To better navigate the waypoints of our emotions. Through dark nights of the soul and blinding mid-days of the mind.

The Work

You form a dream working-group. Each person in the group is seeking greater awareness of their own psyche. Each of us has followed our dreams and found help and meaning in their images. We help one another see the symbols from new directions. We share our dreams, enact them and reflect deeply together.

Pass out 2 Dreams and 3 Problems per person. Choose one of each to keep. Use the Bear cards during Dream Play.

Option: Lay problems face-up. Players remove any they find problematic. Pass out 2 instead.

The Bear

This group of dreamers have been visited by the recurring and powerful image of a Bear. The Bear means something different and unique in each dream. We come together to work together to learn about what our own Bear means. And by seeing what form the Bear takes in each other's nightly visions and daily reflections.

Session

At the start of the session everyone introduces themselves to the group and describes their recurring dream. We may use a 2 minute timer to keep the sharing time equitable and brief.

We describe the Bear. Also, we share what issue is troubling us, what we think the dream relates to in our daily life.

During the Session, we enact our dreams and then talk about them. When all group members' dreams have been enacted, the session ends.

At the end of the Session, we thank the Bear and each other, and take home some new things to think about in our life.

What is Needed

To do this work, you need 3 to 6 dreamers. A table and chairs at which to sit and talk. An area, clear and open, in which to act out the dreams. Paper and pencils for notes and to share information about the dreams. Cut out and assemble the deck of cards found with these instructions. Optionally, you may use a two-minute timer.

Dream Play

To enact a dream...

The Dreamer:

- Casts group members as people, animals, objects or other entities in the dream
- Directs the group to take actions, interact and play out the events of the dream

The Group:

- Take roles as given by the dreamer
- Listen for the Dreamer's directions and act on them
- Interacts with the other group members
- Does not speak, but make noises as appropriate
- One member plays the Bear
- If the Dreamer is present in the dream, one member plays the Dreamer

The Bear:

- The Bear will do something out of the control of the Dreamer
- When the Dreamer comes to the end of what they described of the dream, draw a card (or cards) from the Bear deck. This is what the Dreamer had forgotten.
- If there is no Helper, the Dreamer draws one card and hands it to the Bear without looking at it
- If there is an outside Helper, they draw three cards and choose one to use. They direct the Bear

For example, Akhila is the Dreamer. She describes the following dream:

I am driving a car down a country road. The car is made of candy, and the steering wheel is sticky in my hands. A bear is sitting next to me in the car. It is eating the roof, which is made out of licorice. I come to an intersection and want to turn right but the Bear stops me."

Akhila casts Marisol as "Akhila" in the dream, Deborah plays the car, Kayefi plays the candy steering wheel, and Chanming plays the Bear.

Akhila directs: "Marisol, you open the car door and get inside." (Deborah stands in front of Marisol with arms

rounded to represent the door. Marisol "opens" her up and steps inside. Deborah crouches down to be the front of the car. Kayefi stands between them, offering his hands as the steering wheel.)

Akhila directs: "I start to drive, and my hands stick to the steering wheel. I'm not sure I can drive" (Marisol pretends to drive. Kayefi grabs her hands, being the sticky steering wheel. Marisol makes engine noises and swerves around out of control. Kayefi and Marisol buck around in response)

Akhila directs: "I see the Bear sitting beside me. It starts to eat the roof, which I can now see is made of licorice." (Chanming "gets into" the car, and pretends to greedily eat the roof, Kayefi acts frightened and strains to get away from the Bear)

Akhila directs: "I see a turn in the road, and start to turn the car right"

The Bear Card: Akhila draws a card from the Bear deck and, without looking at it, hands it to Chanming who is playing the Bear. The card drawn said "The Bear is frightened and needs comforting" (Chanming roars in terror when Marisol goes to turn the steering wheel to the right. The Bear flails until Marisol turns and comforts Chanming.)

Talking about the Dream

After the Bear card is drawn, and is played out, the dream ends.

The group moves to the table, and talks about how the events of the dream may relate to the problems the Dreamer is having in their daily life. Talk about how the dream felt and ask questions. The Dreamer may ask to act out parts of the dream again.

For example: Akhila tells the group that she is afraid of losing her job, due to layoffs at her company.

Marisol: "When I was driving, I felt like I was out of control. Do you feel overwhelmed at work?"

Akhila: "Yes, and I feel as though I'm not sure what I'm doing."

Kayefi: "The Bear got loud and made trouble, but only because it was scared."

Deborah: "But it was doing damage earlier, by eating the car. And why candy? Is there something at your job that feels too much of a treat, Akhila?"

Akhila: "The stickiness I understand, but the candy part...? Can I try that?" (Kayefi pretends to be the steering wheel again, with Akhila driving this time.)

Helpers

There is a role for people who are not part of the Dream Working-Group to play. They may observe the enacted dreams. This play is out of context and can be both humorous and thought-provoking for independent observers.

Please let them know they are watching people work with their dreams, and ask them not to ask any questions about what the dream “means” or issues of confidence that the dreamer may have shared with the group.

Helpers who wish to be involved can be asked to play the role of the Bear in the dream. To do so:

- Have them watch and listen from the start of the dream play
- They draw three cards from the Bear deck.
- Observe the dream and when appropriate choose one Bear card that they feel relates to the events of the dream
- Direct the player of the Bear to take the action on the card chosen

After play of the dream ends, remove the Bear card that was used and shuffle the other two back into the Bear deck.

If there is no outside Helper, the player of the Bear randomly pulls a card from the deck and follows the direction given by the card.

Ending the Session

At the end of the Session, we thank each other, and the Bear.

- Going around, each dreamer thanks the person to the left of them for something they said or did during the session that was memorable or particularly helpful.
- Each person says something they learned from the Bear, in their own dream or someone else's.

DREAM BEAR by Emily Care Boss
blackgreengames.com

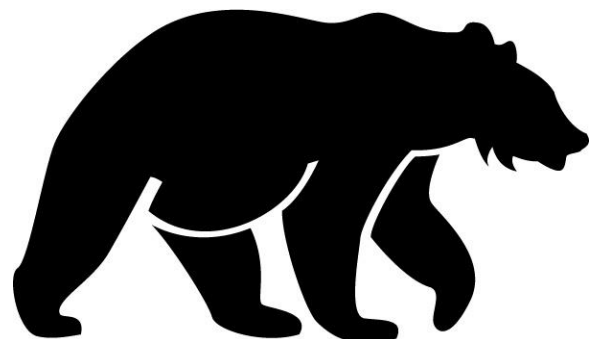
Illustration from Vector Portals
www.freevectors.net

Problem weeding rule inspired by Lizzie Stark's *In Residency*.

For the **Golden Cobra** Challenge
October 2014
goldencobra.org

Not entered for judging.

Thanks to
CGJ, KKB, LGB, CCK, SLB and WB.



<p>Bear</p> <p>Attacks and strikes wildly, lashing out at the Dreamer and anything nearby</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Whimpers and hides, terrified trying to get away</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Reaches out for love and affection</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Roars angrily and pursues</p>
<p>Bear</p> <p>Playfully brings the Dreamer or others into a joyful dance</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Gives a cry full of sorrow and loss, then mournfully walks away</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Beckons the Dreamer or others to follow and takes some secret way</p>	<p>Bear</p> <p>Begins to fly and takes the Dreamer or others with it into the sky</p>
<p>Dream</p> <p>Driving a car made out of candy, the candy-cane steering wheel sticks to the Dreamer's hands. The Bear is in the car and eats the licorice roof. The road comes to a turn to the right. The Dreamer tries to steer but the Bear intervenes.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>Swimming beneath the ocean, the Dreamer finds their equipment from work in a treasure chest in a sunken ship shaped like a Bear. Drowned children start singing, and the Bear-ship wakes...</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>A bright blue sun rises in a golden sky. Birds fly around the Dreamer, and a great Bear takes them across the fields on its back. In the distance the Dreamer can see a burning building. It is the Dreamer's childhood home.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>The Dreamer is opening bills in their home. In a mirror, the Dreamer sees their reflection as a Bear. The letter opener slips and they slice a great cut up their arm. The blood flows, and the Bear steps out of the mirror...</p>
<p>Dream</p> <p>A dark night is full of stars. The Dreamer looks through a telescope. Seven stars make the constellation of the Great Bear. The stars move and the Dreamer is propelled through space to the feet of a giant Bear at the dawn of Time.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>The Dreamer is a child, playing ball with their brother and a Bear cub. Their Mother comes to the door and talks to them, but the words fly out her mouth as bats and dead leaves. The Bear grow larger and larger and the brother disappears.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>The Dreamer wakes in a tent pitched on a snowy mountain. Their lover is making a fire and a Bear lumbers toward them. It steps into the fire, which engulfs it and lights the sky on fire. The stars begin to fall.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>Children start a multi-colored top spinning. Voices sing from a doorway beyond. Shadow from the doorway turns into a Bear. The children run away from the Bear, screaming in fear.</p>
<p>Dream</p> <p>A party is raging and people are dancing. A Bear is painfully chained to the leg of a massive table. The Dreamer tries to release it, but others laugh and pull them away.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>A child and a Bear tumble together down a hill. They come to the stump of a tree and a giant mushroom unfurls itself from it. The child and the Bear see tiny people on the mushroom. They are crying and shivering.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>A plane lands on a runway. The Bear walks down the steps, and a man with a flashlight starts blowing his whistle. People come from everywhere and start tearing at the Bear.</p>	<p>Dream</p> <p>A cat purrs and plays on a Bear rug on a hearth before a fire. The Bear gets up and the cat turns into the Dreamer as a teen-ager. The Bear keeps growing and pushes the Dreamer closer and closer to the ceiling the ceiling of the room.</p>

<p>Problem</p> <p>I am waking up in the middle of the night, worrying about my job being cut at the newspaper.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Intense headaches that hit when I get stressed out about work.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Grieving the death of my father, from whom I was estranged.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Writers block is keeping me from being able to finish the memoir of my time spent in China. Deadline is looming.</p>
<p>Problem</p> <p>Arguing with my Mother, who I feel looks down at me for becoming a painter.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Being hit on by my senior partner at my law firm. I'm afraid to rock the boat and speak up about it.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Have never had a relationship go longer than 6 months. I'm anxious and afraid I'll never find love.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Failing my classes at college and think I should drop out of my engineering program.</p>
<p>Problem</p> <p>Drinking too much since my partner broke off our engagement.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Getting used to my gender-reassignment and feeling anxious about seeing my family over the holidays.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Want to quit my job and start my own video game start-up business. Worrying about it all the time.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Have fallen in love with my best friend's wife. Am afraid of ruining my friendships.</p>
<p>Problem</p> <p>Am spending too much time and money playing a browser game called Twinkle Wars.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>My partner and I are trying to have a child, but it's been over a year and nothing yet.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Working at a department store. Feeling lost and wonder if I can do better.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>My child is being bullied at school. Trying to decide whether to move to another district.</p>
<p>Problem</p> <p>Got a cut in my hours at the grocery store. Starting to rack up debt.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Going to introduce my parents to my partner, but they never like anyone I bring home.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Getting burnt out, though I believe in work I do at the homeless shelter.</p>	<p>Problem</p> <p>Having extreme anxiety since I almost got into a car accident.</p>



Futures/Past *by* Will Emigh

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, TABLETOP ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, COMEDY, AMNESIA, SCIENCE-FICTION, RELATIONSHIPS

A brief sci-fi game about a crew trying to stop an assassination while slowly regaining their memories. Gameplay is fast and story-based, shifting between the present (peace negotiations) and the past (memories).

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www.studiocypher.com



FUTURES / PAST



Credit: NASA/GSFC/SDO

A quick sci-fi RPG about how our memories shape us

A game by Will Emigh

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MATERIALS

Before you begin, you'll need:

- 1.5-2 hours (including 15-30 minutes of preparation)
- 3-8 players (no experience necessary)
- Index cards (or slips of paper)
- Pencils or pens
- These rules

SETTING

Welcome to the far-flung future. Four of you—a Captain, a Negotiator, a Science Officer, and a Security Officer—are on a secret but vital mission to negotiate peace with a hostile alien race. However, moments before entering the target system, your Science Officer realizes that you have all been infected with a virus that shares and shuffles memories. You're pretty sure who you are, but you now share memories that belong to the rest of the crew — including one planning an assassination!

Tonally, this game is set up like a Star Trek episode. Bad things may happen, but they're generally not permanent and they get resolved by the end. If your group wants something different, decide that now. For example, you can make it sillier (like Galaxy Quest), darker (Firefly), or very dark (Battlestar Galactica). The tone may change some over the course of the game as well, so treat this as a general guideline rather than a concrete rule.

OVERVIEW

In this game, you are primarily the ill-fated, memory-addled crew attempting to secure a lasting peace. This takes place over three roughly-defined scenes (landing, meeting the aliens, and negotiating) book-ended by an introduction and a debriefing. During all sections of the game, you will play your primary character by describing what they're doing or acting it out. You may also take on secondary roles to flesh out the other humans and aliens you encounter.

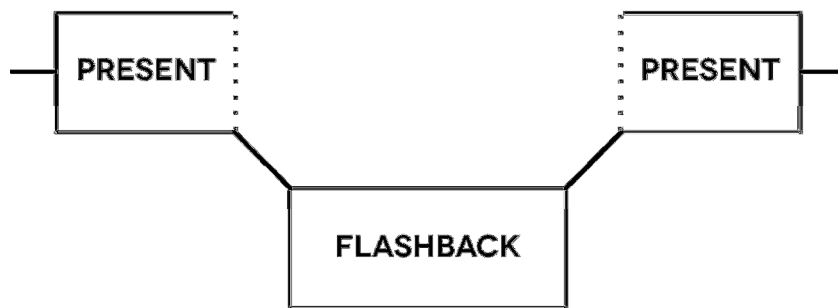
You are all well-trained (or lucky!) spacefarers, so you will succeed at anything you put your mind to (unless you decide it would be better to dramatically fail). However, to accomplish something difficult, you must trigger a flashback which will give your character the motivation or knowledge necessary to succeed.

In the third scene (negotiating), one of the crew is revealed as an assassin. Once you've resolved this attempt, whatever it is, each member of the crew will have to defend their actions to their superior officers.

TECHNIQUES

If you're not familiar with freeform RPG techniques, take a few minutes now to practice the following. Choose some familiar fictional characters and a setting and try each of these to make sure you understand how they work in practice.

1. **Flashback** – During a scene, one player triggers a flashback by stopping the action and announcing their intent. At this point, *someone else* should take up the role of the younger version of that character and begin another scene set in the past. When the triggering player feels like the flashback has given them what they need in the original scene, they stop the flashback and return to the present scene. If they like, they can narrate a cut (ex: "After days of preparation, I was able to put my plan into motion...").



To make it easier to keep track of who's in the present and who's in the past, have present players sit and past players stand or have one area designated for the present and another for the past. The player who triggered the flashback *can* participate in the flashback as long as they portray a different character. No player should ever play both the past and present versions of a single character.

2. **Internal Monologue** – An internal monologue can be a good way to let other players know what your character is thinking. As with a normal monologue, speak directly with your character's voice. To indicate that this is an *internal* monologue (and the other *characters* won't hear this), put two fingers to the side of your head as if you were speaking telepathically.
3. **Hotseat** – When a player chooses to use this technique, they announce it and sit down where everyone can see them. Everyone else takes turns asking questions about the character. These questions may be related to the character's motivation, plans, past actions, or anything else. When nobody has any more questions, the hotseat is over and the previous scene can continue. Remember that although the *players* know this information, your *characters* don't.
4. **Bird in Ear** – When players are struggling with a scene, a non-active player may whisper a suggestion into an active player's ear (ex: "Maybe you're angry that he's challenging your authority"). They don't have to accept the suggestion, but it may kick start their creativity.

The hotseat and internal monologue in particular are good techniques to help create dramatic irony or foreshadowing, since the players will know much more about the character's motivations than their characters do.

LET'S PLAY!

Now that you know the techniques, you're ready to get started. Make sure that everyone has a writing utensil and some blank index cards.

MEMORIES

An alien virus has muddled your mind, so you now have a pool of memories that everyone vaguely remembers. During the game, these memories will burst forth, triggering flashbacks and enhancing your characters. At this point, your group is going to create these memories and flesh out the world that your characters inhabit.

1. Using one index card per memory, write down a possible memory for a person in your world, tied to a strong emotion (jealousy, love, pride, anger, fear, etc.). Keep it vague enough that it could apply to any of the characters. One sentence should be plenty. For example, "feeling a blade slip between my shoulders during a barroom brawl" or "as a child, seeing a ship take off from the surface of my home planet".
2. Continue writing memories until the group has about 16. If you're on a roll, more is fine. It doesn't matter if some people write more memories than others. Not all of the memories will appear during the game, so it's okay if they don't all mesh thematically.
3. Take turns reading your memories out loud and then placing them face-up in the center. You should end up with a big pile of face-up memories. You'll be using these later.
4. Write "Planning an assassination attempt to take place during the negotiation" on an index card and add it to the pile in the middle. This is the Assassination Memory will be used in scene 3, An Assassination Attempt.

If you run low on memories during the game, take a break between scenes to add more.

INTRODUCTION (CHARACTER CREATION)

Now that you have a shared pool of memories, it's time to begin fleshing out your characters. There are four crew members on the ship: the **Captain**, the **Negotiator**, the **Security Officer**, and the **Science Officer**. With fewer than four players, the extra crew member can be played by anyone as appropriate. With more than four, some players will have characters exclusively in the present and some exclusively in the past. Any player, past or present, who isn't already active in a scene can play third-party roles like any aliens that you encounter or crew roles that haven't been assigned.

1. Decide who will be playing in the present and who will be playing in the past. You should have at least 3 players in the present.
2. Write down a young version of each role (Past Captain, Past Negotiator, Past Security Officer, Past Science Officer) on a different index card. Let the past players (if any) choose one each to be their primary character. If there are other past characters left over, that's okay. Anyone who isn't actively participating in a scene can play them by holding the card up in front of them.

3. Now, write each present-day role (Captain, Negotiator, Security Officer, Science Officer) onto their own index cards.
4. If you only have 3 players in the present, set aside the Science Officer card. Then, shuffle the remaining roles cards and hand one, face-down, to each present player. This will NOT be your primary role, but you should look at the card. During the next section, you'll be using your card to assign that role to someone else.

Setting the Scene

To start the introductory scene, the player with the most roleplaying experience should begin by describing the setting and starting to act in character. They are the Scene Leader for the Introduction. The other present-day players should enter when it makes sense.

When the game begins, the crew is on the ship in whatever passes for the medical bay. Everyone vaguely remembers everything in the memory pile as if it happened to them, but they also have a sense of their "true" identity. At least one of the characters recognizes these as the symptoms of an alien virus that shares and scrambles memories and may wish to share that information with the group.

At the beginning of the scene, each present-day player has a role card in front of them. When another character exhibits the traits of the role on your card (in your opinion), hand them the card, face-up. This is now their role for the game and everyone knows it. As soon as the last role is assigned (or if someone is left with their own hidden role), begin the first scene, A Hostile Welcome, immediately!

Reminder: as you play, you want to find someone to take your role card. Once the last role card is assigned (or someone is left with their own role), immediately interrupt the action to begin the first scene.

THE SCENES

The three scenes below provide the structure for your negotiation attempt. Each scene has an assigned Scene Leader. The player with that role begins the scene by describing the setting and any intermediate action between it and the previous scene.

Example:

After defeating the guardian at the bottom of the mountain, we climbed a steep staircase for what seemed like hours. Suddenly, a valley opened out in front of us with a pagoda in the center. This is obviously the arranged rendezvous.

Each scene has a main conflict, but the Scene Leader is in charge of making sure that the crew completes at least two major challenges (that may or may not be connected) while facing that conflict. They can do this by introducing new characters ("a gruff alien appears and demands to know what you're doing with his cattle!"), providing a twist ("the cavern that you're in begins to move; it's alive!"), or anything else that seems difficult. Often, players will introduce their own challenges, making the Scene Leader's job easier!

Finally, the scene leader makes sure that flashbacks are triggered whenever a player wants to accomplish something difficult (control their emotions, figure out how to keep the engine from going critical, convince an alien of your good intentions, defeat a wild beast in hand-to-hand-combat, etc.). When a scene leader identifies an action as difficult, the player attempting the action must trigger a flashback by following the instructions in the next section.

If the scene leader is actively involved in the scene, they may miss a difficult action, in which case anyone else can bring it up by saying something like “That sounds like a flashback!” to remind them.

Begin play by having the Captain narrate the setup for A Hostile Welcome and roleplay together until someone wants to attempt something difficult. At that point, refer to the Flashbacks section for resolution.

Example:

As we begin arguing about whose fault this is, the proximity alert sounds and we scramble to the bridge. Once there, we discover that an unknown alien is hailing us. I put the alien on the main screen. “Hail, fellow traveler! I am the Captain of the spacecraft Dauntless.” The alien replies, “I do not care who you are. Leave, at once!”

This sets up the conflict. At this point, one of the other players (past players first, if you have any) will roleplay the alien and the present players will continue to roleplay their characters as they engage with the scene.

The following scenes should be played in order, moving from one to the other as each conflict is resolved in some fashion. Once the third scene is complete, jump to the Tribunal section to end the game.

1. A Hostile Welcome

Scene Leader: Captain

Conflict: Can’t land on the planet (ex: military blockade, solar flares make landing impossible, a religious festival prevents landing, a medical quarantine)

As soon as the last role is assigned, you are hailed by aliens.

2. A Perilous Journey

Scene Leader: Security Officer

Conflict: Difficulty getting to the rendezvous point (ex: bad weather, wildlife attacks, alien sabotage)

You are on the planet, but not yet to the designated rendezvous point

3. An Assassination Attempt

Scene Leader: Negotiator

Conflict: The aliens refuse to negotiate

Negotiations are going well until... one of your crew attempts an assassination! **One player MUST trigger the assassination memory during this scene.**

FLASHBACKS

By triggering a flashback, your character is guaranteed to gain the motivation or knowledge needed to accomplish whatever they're attempting. Once you've used a flashback, you can convince anyone of anything, perform incredible feats of derring-do, or immediately solve impossible technical problems.

To indicate that you are attempting something difficult (or if someone else says that what you're doing seems difficult), say that you're triggering a flashback and pick up the set of memories that you created at the beginning of the game. Choose one that seems relevant and read it to the group. If nobody adopted the past version of your character at the beginning of the game, assign someone else (a past player, if you have any) to be the past version of your character. They also set the scene as if they were a Scene Leader. This scene may not have a direct conflict, nor can you trigger additional Flashbacks, but introduce new characters as needed.

The triggering player can roleplay these characters, just not the past version of their own character.

Example: The characters are described by their roles, with the player names in parentheses.

1. The Captain (Andy) is speaking to an unknown presence (Betsy). Andy wants to figure out where the voice is coming from, so he stops speaking and picks up a memory of his choice from the pile.
2. Andy reads that memory to the rest of the group: "Getting lost while hunting with my father."
3. Since nobody chose Past Captain as their primary character, Andy chooses Chelsea to play the Past Captain.
4. Chelsea begins by talking to her father (Andy steps in to take this role). The two speak for a while before the father leaves the Past Captain. An alien appears (Betsy decides to play this alien as well) who helps the Past Captain find his father.
5. This seems like a good stopping point, so Andy indicates that the flashback is over.

Andy isn't allowed to play the Past Captain, since he's playing the Captain, but everyone else can choose which role they'd like to play, excluding any primary characters assigned at the beginning of the game. Each flashback should be self-contained, so you shouldn't need to have another flashback to resolve any challenges (this isn't Inception!).

Once the triggering player is satisfied and ends the flashback, focus returns to the present where they narrate how much time has passed. Often, the flashback will be instantaneous, but sometimes you'll want to expand the length of a scene (ex: "The next morning, when I woke up, I had a new plan...").

Examples:

I remember a trick my father showed me to see hidden things.

Aliens killed my parents. There's no way I'm going to give in now!

Let me talk to them. I was raised in their culture.

When playing a scene in the past, remember to indicate that it's not in the present by standing up or moving to the designated "flashback" area. After finishing a flashback, keep the memory card next to your role card so that you can refer to it later if necessary.

Also, remember that you've all been infected with an alien virus so your memories are unreliable. If the past needs to change for your story to make sense, do it! You may even realize as you play that you're not who you think you are...

The Assassination Memory

The flashback associated with the assassination memory is a little different from the others:

1. This memory is played out as a hotseat, where the other players (past and present) ask the assassin questions.
2. Upon returning to the present, the assassin gives a monologue (internal or external based on their preferences) before taking any action.
3. The assassination is not guaranteed to succeed, although the assassin *is* guaranteed to be able to set their plan into motion.

Do not pick the assassination memory until scene 3: An Assassination Attempt!

This means that you don't know for sure who the assassin will be until sometime in the 3rd scene. The assassin may trigger the memory immediately before they attempt the assassination or earlier in preparation for it, but it must be triggered in the 3rd scene.

Remember, your *characters* won't inherently know what's said in an internal monologue or during the hotseat, although they might remember pieces based on the shared memory of planning the assassination.

THE TRIBUNAL

This is the final scene of the game. In the aftermath of the assassination attempt, your crew has to explain themselves to a higher power. Starting with the Captain, each of the four crew members takes 1-2 minutes to narrate a "captain's log." In general, treat this as a monologue, although it may make sense for other characters to participate as well.

During the log, briefly summarize how your character felt about the mission as a whole and then narrate what happened to you after the assassination attempt. Think about the memories in front of you; those will generally map to the most important story moments for your character.

Once everyone has given their statement, the tribunal begins. Every player (including past players) acts as the tribunal and asks **one** crew member an open-ended but pointed question.

Examples:

After you escaped the assassination attempt, why did you join the rebels?

What did you do after your demotion?

QUICK REFERENCE

Memories

Everyone writes down memories that they think people in the future might have, one per index card. Once you have at least 16, everyone reads them out and puts them face-up in an easily-accessible pile.

SCENES	Introduction	Scene Leader: the most experienced roleplayer
	Your characters begin the game with the realization that some of their memories are shared and uncertain. Everyone has a role card hidden in front of them. During this scene, they give their role card to someone who is exemplifying that role. Once all role cards have been assigned (or the last player is left with their own role card), immediately begin the first main scene.	
	There are no flashbacks in this scene.	
	1. A Hostile Welcome	Scene Leader: Captain
	Conflict: Can't land on the planet	
	2. A Perilous Journey	Scene Leader: Security Officer
	Conflict: Difficulty getting to the rendezvous point	
	3. An Assassination Attempt	Scene Leader: Negotiator
	Conflict: The aliens refuse to negotiate	

Flashbacks

Trigger a flashback by announcing your intention to try something difficult. Choose one of the unused memories and trigger a flashback where someone else plays the younger version of your character. When the flashback seems complete, return to the main scene and narrate the amount of time that's passed as well as the result of the difficult action that you attempted.


The Assassination Memory

This must be triggered in scene 3. When it is, the assassin participates in a hotseat and then gives a monologue (internal or external). This plan is set into motion but may fail.

The Tribunal

Starting with the Captain, each crew member narrates 1-2 minutes about their experience and what happened after the last scene was resolved.

Then, each player (past and present) takes on the role of the tribunal and asks one crew member an open-ended but pointed question.



Gabardine *by* Jonathan G. Cook

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE, PERVASIVE (INTERMIXED WITH ACTIVITY BY NON-PARTICIPANTS)

SERIOUS, COMEDY, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

A (mostly) failed attempt at formalizing the game of people-watching as a hack of The Quiet Year.

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Gabardine: A Game for One to Six Assholes at a Party
by Jonathan G Cook

Acknowledgements

This game owes a great deal to other people. First, Avery McDaldno. The main mechanic of the game is stolen from his brilliant map-making game, The Quiet Year, where it works much better. It would be fair to call this game a hack of The Quiet Year, that is how much it owes that game. Second, and similarly, Ben Robbins. The *Light* version of the game steals a lot of ideas and advice from his equally brilliant Microscope. As these are my two favorite games at the moment, this is probably not surprising. Gabardine, for better or worse, would not exist without those two predecessors (and the whole gaming tradition they are a part of, of course).

Also thanks to Tiffany Parrott and Ronald Russ for their suggestions and advice on an earlier draft, and thanks to the encouragement of Elizabeth Delaere, Emily Owens, Mark Ulissi, and everyone from the Mercurial Society and my incredible family. Y'all are awesome.

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(Shh, don't tell anyone, but there are two super-secret bonus playsets on pages 29 and 33, respectively.)

Introduction

This is a game about imagining the lives of other people: specifically, the other people who are surrounding us, wherever we are. The text of this game presumes we are at a party, but we might be at a restaurant or a board game convention or a conference on Cold Fusion. It doesn't matter, they are them and we are us. Or maybe we are just you. But probably me, too.

The way this game works is that you draw a card from a specially prepared deck and use it to look up a question on a list (the list is called a playset). You then look around at "them," and you answer the question as best you can. Maybe one of our fellow assholes will add a detail or two. Eventually we will have made a few little stories about the strangers around us, and then the game will push you into their stories and it will all dissolve into a puff of smoke.

Because you can't be an asshole forever.

To play this game, you'll need a deck of cards. You'll need at least one person who has read the rules all the way through, and between zero and five other people. And you'll need a copy of a playset. This game comes with a couple different sample playsets for you to print out. Either the person who convinces everyone else to play should choose the playset, or the group as a whole should decide. There is a little discussion at the end about how to write your own playset, as well as a couple alternate rules and ways to play.

How to Play

Before play begins, separate your cards into four different decks by suit. Take out the jokers, if there are any. Shuffle those four smaller decks, and lay them somewhere face-down, side-by-side, in this order: Diamonds, Spades, Clubs, Hearts.

If some of you don't know how to play, someone who does should say something like this:

"This is a game about imagining we know what the fuck is going on with all these assholes." (Here you might gesture at all the fuckers surrounding you, if you can do it without drawing attention.) "We will take turns drawing cards from this deck, looking up the questions that correspond with that card and then look around and answer the question out loud. Each turn should take one or two minutes. At the end of the turn we put our card on the discard pile.

"You can, and should, try to add a little humanizing detail to other asshole's answers when they have finished talking. If you do it at least once but no more than twice in a go-round, you can draw two cards and pick the one you like best on your next turn. Put the one you don't pick on the bottom of the deck.

"We'll go around twice for each deck, so that we will each answer two questions from the suit of Diamonds, two from Clubs, and so on.

"The questions from Hearts aren't really questions, but challenges. We will each draw two immediately and pick the one we like best. You have to do that one, but you can do both. Once we understand our challenges we disperse to do them. Maybe later we'll talk about what happened. After the party."

That's all the rules, really. You could probably tighten it up a bit.

Oh, and if you're the only one playing: draw four cards instead of two from Diamonds, Clubs and Spades. And maybe keep your answers to yourself.

Advice

Don't be too loud or obvious. We aren't bullies and we aren't the popular kids, passing down judgment from on high. We are the assholes hanging out by the stairs, or hiding in the kitchen, pretending that we belong. You don't think you really do, though. Maybe with the assholes you're playing the game with, kind of. But you don't belong at this party.

You are, however, actually curious. What are these people like? What's their real story? How do they move so effortlessly from one room to another, or if they don't, why not?

Don't rely on stereotypes, or cheap and easy inversions of those stereotypes (tropes and cliches are probably okay, tho). Look deeper. Watch their eyes, the way they move their hands, their shoulders, their feet. Who they laugh with, who they laugh at, who they move close to, who they avoid. Don't only look at people you would like to have sex with. Don't only look at people you wouldn't. Don't think about having sex with these people at all. Don't stare. Stop.

Always remember that they might be looking back at you. Be careful, lest her bowtie is really a camera.

Most of the heart challenges ask you to go and interact with "them." Be alert to their body language and their actual language, as well as the context. This is a part of the game that might not work so well at a restaurant, for example. People might have lots of different reasons for not wanting to interact with you. Don't take it personal, and respect their desires, okay?

At the same time, don't let fear keep you from reaching out. Be gentle and kind- yes, but be brave too. You should probably say something like that previous paragraph when you're explaining the rules, come to think of it.

Another thing: it's perfectly legal, even recommended to enlist one of your fellow assholes to help you complete your heart challenge. Two or three people can paradoxically be less scary or intimidating than just one, and the challenges that require you to act out a conversation or a scene are assuming you have someone help. Though, if you're by yourself, you can always have a pretend phone conversation.



Playsets

Here are a few playsets. They are provisionally titled "Eleanor Rigby," "More and Less Than Human" (which is about monsters), and "A Tryst In The Greenery" (which is about spies and conspiracies). Print one out to play with. They follow a pretty simple formula, so when you're ready, read the sections about how to write your own, or even better, how to come up with one on the fly with your asshole friends.

Eleanor Rigby



Diamonds

Everyone is only stardust, sure, but that doesn't mean they aren't special. Give them names, give them lives. Imagine what it's like to be them.

Ace- Find the loneliest person in the room. What is their name? Where do they come from?

Two- Find a professional. What is their name? What is their job? Are they good or bad at it?

Three- Find someone who has a difficult relationship with a family member. What is their name? Why is the relationship difficult?

Four- Find someone who is not supposed to be here. What is their name? Where should they be and/or why not here?

Five- Find someone who is waiting. What is their name? What are they waiting for?

Six- Find someone who wants to leave. What is their name? Why can't they just go?

Seven- Find two people with a strained or problematic relationship. What are their names? What happened between them?

Eight- Find someone who seems to belong here. What is their name? What is their secret ambition?

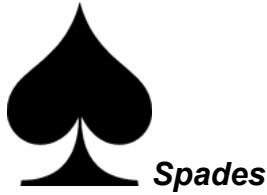
Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack- Find someone who is silently judging the people they are with. What is their name? What do they think about their companions? Are they wrong?

Queen- Find someone who everyone respects. What is their name? What do they wish everyone else would do or know?

King- Find someone who is no longer welcome. What is their name? Who did they betray?



Dig a little deeper. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace- The loneliest one is working up their nerve to talk to someone. Who, and what is the conversation they are imagining?

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who do they wish was here?

Four- One of them seems happy. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems sad. What do they miss?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they have it?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack- One of them has had just about enough. What would push them over the edge, and what would they do?

Queen- One of them is guilty. What did they do, and how do they hope to fix it?

King- One of them knows a secret and is dying to let it out. Who is revealing it going to hurt the worst?



Clubs

When the chips are down, what's gonna happen? How do their stories end?

Ace- Where are they going to go after they leave?

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack- What is gonna come back to haunt them?

Queen- Who is going to come to their rescue?

King- Who is never going to be able to say the thing they need to say?



Hearts

You can fall in love easier with an imagined someone than a real person, but you can only actually love someone who is flesh and blood and snot and arrogance and foolishness and resentment.

Ace- Talk to someone who seems out of place or uncomfortable. Without being pushy or patronizing, try to make them feel safe and interesting.

Two- Take on roles implied but not assigned to any of them. Have a conversation where "interested" parties could overhear you.

Three- Do something dumb or silly that you think might make a "sad" person smile.

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of them. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they could overhear you.

Jack- Talk to one of them that you think won't like you. Try to make them laugh.

Queen- Give someone you don't know a gift of some sort.

King- Tell someone you don't know a secret, and without being weird or pushy, try to get them to tell you one, too. If they do, keep it.

More and Less Than Human



Diamonds

All humans are basically alike, but every monster is monstrous in its own particular fashion.

Ace- Find the vampire. What is their name? How old are they? Why are they here?

Two- Find a monster hunter. What is their name? What are they hunting? Are they good or bad at it?

Three- Find someone who has a difficult relationship with a family member. What is their name? Why is the relationship difficult?

Four- Find someone who is not allowed to be here. What is their name? Where should they be and/or why not here?

Five- Find someone who is biding their time. What is their name? What are they waiting for?

Six- Find someone who wants to escape. What is their name? Why can't they just go?

Seven- Find two people with a strained or problematic past. What are their names? What is their shared trauma?

Eight- Find someone who seems to belong here. What is their name? What is their secret ambition?

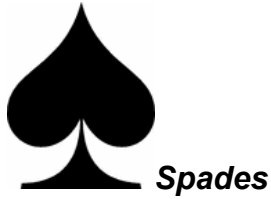
Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack- Find the were-creature. What is their name? What is their bestial form? How did they become what they are?

Queen- Find the magic-user. What is their name? How did they acquire their powers? What is their aim?

King- Find the ghost. What is their name? Who are they haunting? What unfinished business do they have?



Uncover what's buried. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace- Who does the vampire want?

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who do they wish was here?

Four- One of them seems happy. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems sad. What do they miss?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they have it?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack- Who is attracted to the Beast?

Queen- What sort of a deal are they contemplating, and with who?

King- Why can't they help the ghost move on?



Clubs

Pitchforks and flames.

Ace- How can they break the pattern?

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack- How can they reconcile the two parts of themselves?

Queen- What will it cost?

King- How will it finally get fixed?



Hearts

They're only human, after all.

Ace- Confess an addiction, and try to get one of them to confess theirs.

Two- Make yourself a perfect victim. Have a conversation where "interested" parties could overhear you.

Three- Do something dumb or silly that you think might make a "serious" person smile.

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of the monsters. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they could overhear you.

Jack- Do something you want to do, but would normally be too embarrassed to try.

Queen- Ask someone you don't know to do you a favor.

King- Forgive someone who has wronged you, and tell someone about it.

A Tryst In The Greenery



Diamonds

Who are the people who are keeping the secrets?

Ace- Find someone with a license to kill. What is their name? Who should be afraid of them?

Two- Find someone with a responsibility. What is their name? What is their responsibility? Who or what is trying to get them to not keep it?

Three- Find someone who has a difficult relationship with a family member. What is their name? Why is the relationship difficult?

Four- Find someone who is pretending to be someone they are not. What is their real and fake names? Who are they trying to fool?

Five- Find someone who is waiting. What is their name? What are they waiting for?

Six- Find someone who is here under duress. What is their name? Why can't they just go?

Seven- Find two people with a strained history. What are their names? Which one of them screwed up?

Eight- Find someone who seems to belong here. What is their name? What is their secret ambition?

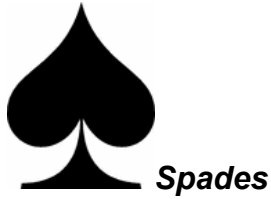
Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack- Find the person with the most power. What is their name? What form does their power take, and what are its limitations?

Queen- Find the person with the most to lose. What is their name? What should they be on the look out for?

King- Find the person who knows the most about what's really happening. What is their name? What developments are they keeping an eye on?



Once you've stolen the microfilm, you need to find a microfilm reader. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace- What could make them kill, right here, right now? Who is in the most danger?

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who is preying on them?

Four- One of them seems happy. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems sad. What do they miss?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is the most scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they convince them?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack- What isn't going according to plan?

Queen- Whose plan is working perfectly?

King- Who just put it all together?



Clubs

Escape, or the gulag?

Ace- Who is going to die that shouldn't?

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack- What will they do when they lose everything?

Queen- How can they avoid the danger?

King- What important thing did they miss?



Hearts

Say hello to Valerie Plame.

Ace- Talk about something that makes you angry with someone you don't know, but keep your temper.

Two- Make up a secret their pretend selves would want to know. Talk about it where "they" could overhear you.

Three- Do something dumb or silly that you think might make a "serious" person smile.

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of them. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they or their enemies could overhear you.

Jack- Tell a secret to a stranger, and without being obnoxious, try to get them to tell you one.

Queen- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Try to find out something about them that surprises you.

King- Engage at least two of them in conversation, and introduce them (either to each other or to someone else you know and think they might like).

Alternate Rules Suggestion # 1- Gabardine Light

So we are at a party with at least a couple other assholes and we want to play Gabardine, but we don't have a deck of cards, or a playset? Here's a procedure to see us through.

Choose a start player. They will pick out somebody, signify who they have picked out through subtle gestures or description and ask the player to their left: "What's their name?"

Player to the left answers and asks the player to *their* left a follow-up question, something like "What's their job?" or "Why do they hate their brother?". Any of the questions you might have seen in a Diamond oracle would work, but feel free to introduce new elements in your question, to ask extremely leading questions, or to try to stump the next player.

One good strategy is to introduce contrasts, paradoxes, or complexities. A good question format is "Why [this] despite [that]?" Frex, "Why is she so afraid since she acquired the gem of invulnerability?," "Why does he still want to be a librarian despite the fact he spends his weekends burning books?," or "Why is he so happy since his husband left, his dog died and he got fired from his job?"

When there are no more players to the left, the question is posed to the start player. If, after answering, they are interested in asking more questions, they can pose a follow-up question to the player on their left, and the whole thing can go around once more, ending on the start player. The player to their left then becomes the new start player and the process begins anew.

Every player should be the start player at least once. Every one of "them" who gets a second round of questions (at the start player's discretion) must be linked to one or more of the previous subjects. That means at some point during a second round, someone is required to ask something like "Why did they break up with the librarian?" or "Who are they blackmailing?" or "What do they think about Flannel Guy?" You want to create a web of relationships and connections between "them."

When every player has been the start player one or two times (decide before you begin the game), then each of us will ask a crisis question to the player on their right, starting with the last player to be "Start" and ending with the original "Start" player.

Crisis questions look like the kinds of questions in the Clubs oracles, and are about how "their" stories should or could end. Things like "What are they gonna do when the wolf comes home?" or "Will they be able to give up the thing they love?" or "What is gonna change their clothes?"

After the crisis questions are answered, then go talk to some of them. Find out ways they are and aren't like the stories you made up, and then find out what's really cool about them. Enjoy the party.

Alternate Rules Suggestions #2- Four Feathering Out of Heart Challenges

There are definitely times and places where Heart challenges won't really work. If we're laughing on the bus, playing games with the faces, it's probably not socially acceptable for us to disperse and strike up conversations with the other riders. And for some players coping with certain kinds of social anxieties, Heart challenges are simply not gonna be fun or edifying, but merely an exercise in frustration. So here are some options:

First, the Darwinian option: Only assholes who complete a heart challenge have won Gabardine. Everyone else loses. But who cares? It's just a game.

Next, the Substitution option: Anyone who doesn't complete a Heart challenge is expected to complete a good deed in the next week. Good deeds might be baking some cookies for your coworkers, helping a buddy move their couch, volunteering at a soup kitchen for a couple hours, giving a stranger an unexpected gift, or politely telling someone who is talking in a theater to shut up.

Finally, the civilized option: Just agree, as a group, that we get the fucking point of the exercise and are adults and we don't actually have to go through with it to understand that people are richer and more interesting and complex and awful and real than the stories we come up with. Cowards.

How to Write or Improvise Your Own Playset

If you wasted the time to read all of the playsets from before, you may have noticed a pattern. The deuce through ten of each suit stay basically consistent from set to set, with only the face cards changing to suit the premise of the set, and maybe a few detail questions added to the numerical cards.

This makes it easy to write your own. Just take the Default playset provided below, fill in the blank spaces, and maybe add some details to a few of the others.

You could even start the game by passing around the blank oracles, taking turns filling in the blanks or altering the numerical questions, until everything is filled out and everyone is satisfied.

Questions should have enough specifics to give the answerer something to riff on, but be open enough to apply to a wide variety of people and be interpreted in many different ways. They should not proscribe answers. Rule of Thumb: *Who* and *What* and *Where* and *When* are best in Diamonds, *Why* is best in Spades, *Why* and *How* are best in Clubs. Remember that Heart challenges are not meant to embarrass or humiliate (either the asshole doing it or "them"), but are all about the fiction (and fictional themes) intersecting with reality and either making friends, being kind, or sating curiosity.

Default Playset



Diamonds

I need names, people! Also problems, pasts, secrets, desires!

Ace-

Two- Find a professional. What is their name? What is their job? Are they good or bad at it?

Three- Find someone who has a difficult relationship with a family member. What is their name? Why is the relationship difficult?

Four- Find someone who is not supposed to be here. What is their name? Where should they be and/or why not here?

Five- Find someone who is waiting. What is their name? What are they waiting for?

Six- Find someone who wants to leave. What is their name? Why can't they just go?

Seven- Find two people with a strained or problematic relationship. What are their names? What happened between them?

Eight- Find someone who seems to belong here. What is their name? What is their secret ambition?

Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack-

Queen-

King-



Spades

Dig a little deeper. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace-

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who do they wish was here?

Four- One of them seems happy. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems sad. What do they miss?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they have it?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack-

Queen-

King-



Clubs

Move rapidly to crisis. How do the stories end?

Ace-

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack-

Queen-

King-



Hearts

The difference between a cow and a bean is a bean can begin an adventure!

Ace-

Two- Take on roles implied but not assigned to any of them. Have a conversation where "interested" parties could overhear you.

Three- Do something dumb or silly that you think might make a "sad" person smile.

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of them. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they could overhear you.

Jack-

Queen-

King-

A Brief Example of Play

Andy, Sam, and Kris are at a big party. They don't know many people there and are mostly hanging by themselves on a couch in a corner. Kris remembers that she has Gabardine with her, and suggests they play. Andy and Sam are up for it, and Kris explains the rules. They decide to play the Eleanor Rigby playset.

Since she knows the game the best, Kris decides to go first.

Kris draws the Five of Diamonds. She looks around and sees a guy with a mohawk who glances anxiously down at his cell phone every couple minutes. She nods slightly in his direction and the others glance (making an effort not to stare).

K: His name is Charles Finney the Third. He is expecting a telephone call from his father's business partner. His dad is a successful manufacturer, who everyone calls Junior. He manufactures, um, a couple parts that are used in most modern washing machines. His dad wanted him to go into the family business, but he wants to be, uh....

Sam notices Kris is having trouble and makes a suggestion.

S: A sculptor?

K: Yes, exactly. He makes huge conceptual works like Christo. His dad is refusing to fund his planned major debut, a gigantic one-way mirror along an old section of the Berlin Wall. Junior's unscrupulous business partner, Jill Sucrose, heard about it and offered to bankroll the project if Charles would exercise his voting rights on the shares that his Dad put in his name partly as a tax dodge and partly as incentive to get involved in the business. Jill is working with Maytag to do a hostile takeover. He signed over his proxy vote to her, and he's waiting to find out what happened at the board meeting when Junior finds out.

A: Ha, awesome. Also, Jill is having an affair with Junior's third wife. Charles just found out, and isn't sure what to do about it.

K: Damn. Yeah. That Jill, shoo.

Because Andy offered that detail and Kris accepted it, she will be able to draw two cards on her next turn and choose the one she likes best.

It's Sam's turn next. He draws the King of Diamonds. He looks around and sees an older lady who is dominating a conversation with three other people.

S: The lady over there, with the red jacket. Her name is Maria Century. She is an art dealer, and she got famous for working with an artist named Franklin Charm. Her dedicated advocacy for his work propelled him to fame and made them both a lot of money. She's now something

of a gate-keeper in the gallery world, a taste-maker. But Franklin got addicted to heroin, and was busted a couple days ago by the police. Everyone knows it was Maria who informed on him. What they don't know is that she's been pleading with him to get help for months, that she knows he owes some money to some dangerous people, that this was the only way she could see to get him safe. As safe as she could manage, anyway. She loves him like a son, she is genuinely moved by his genius. But it's soured a lot of artists on her. Tonight, she can feel the mood in the room, she can feel her power slipping. A lot of the top guys in here are snubbing her, and the up-and-comers aren't sucking up to her as hard as they usually would.

K: Poor Maria. I think she has some of the new stuff that Frank was working on before he got busted, that he's asked her to show it to raise money for him. She knows it's his best work, but she has misgivings about appearing to profit from his incarceration and about how he'll spend the money if he gets out.

A: Yeah, and she is talking to Charles over there about putting on his first showing, but only if he gets the funding from his Dad or whoever. But Charles is being courted by some other players.

S: Poor Maria.

Kris and Andy both will get to draw two cards on their next turns, but Andy doesn't get to draw a third. And if there was another player before her and Andy added a detail after their story, she would void her right to draw that second card, because you can only add details twice per round.

It's now Andy's turn. She draws the Ten of Diamonds and the Ace of Diamonds. She sees a woman in her late thirties, talking with a younger man who appears to be her husband over by the finger food, and decides the Ten would be fun. She places the Ace on the bottom of the deck.

A: The hungry couple. Kris, will you be the guy?

K: Sure. "Why did we come to this party again, Amelia?"

A: "Oh, Bernard. The food is excellent. Just have a good time."

K: *(noticing "Bernard" gesturing to a bald man with glasses)* "Wait, Terry is here? Your old agent? Is that why you insisted we come see all these tedious people? I thought you said you were done with acting."

A: "God, Bernie, you're so paranoid. I had no idea that Terrence was going to come to this. But, listen, the business is taking off, you could afford to hire a real accountant now. And I heard that there is this hip new soap opera that's gonna be filming in town, it's about like, betrayal in the age of social media, all very up-to-date modern of-the-now stuff."

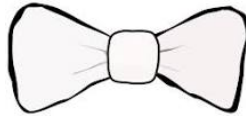
K: "Yeah, clearly I'm being paranoid about this. Whatever, I'm sure they want to hire a 39-year-old for the part of some pretty kid getting catfished."

A: *(gasps, pauses)* "You're a real asshole, Bernie."

S: Yeesh. I hope Bernie's not normally like that. I think he's just under a lot of stress. Oh! He just found out that Maytag is passing on his new washing machine control system, because they're buying their old supplier.

A: Awesome. That's why he's being all sulky and weird, he hasn't had the guts to tell Amelia yet.

It's now Kris' turn again. They will each draw one more card from Diamonds before moving on to spades, clubs and hearts.



Author's Notes

You probably've already played a version of this game before, if you've ever even once sat and watched people. Formalizing the rules of this almost universal game was partly inspired by misremembering the movie Wonder Boys. The title was inspired by the song "America" by Paul Simon. As stated in the acknowledgements, most of the mechanics are stolen from Avery McDaldno's amazing The Quiet Year or Ben Robbin's magnificent Microscope.

I don't know of any other formalized rules working in this space. I say this not as a claim of originality, but a plea of ignorance. If you know of other, similar games, please let me know about them.

There are a few easy ways to make the game better, probably. The most obvious is custom decks, so you don't have to refer back to the playsets. Ideally the cards could be modified with dry-erase markers, so you could make a default deck with blank face cards.

I haven't done nearly enough playtesting to know if this set of questions is really a good one. I'm worried there is too much overlap, or not enough. Trying out different questions is where I'd focus initial development if I took it any further. Maybe doing a choice of questions for most cards, Quiet Year-style.

I doubt there are a lot of conceivable contexts for actually playing this game with other people. I have found myself in at least a few situations and groups where I could imagine playing, but I wouldn't generally have the game at hand. I'm also not sure it really works for groups as big as six. Two or three is probably more comfortable, less attention-grabbing.

I don't think the game fits comfortably in the Freeform tradition as described in the rules of the Golden Cobra contest, mostly because of the lack of a strong starting situation, which typifies many of the designs in the tradition. I was obviously inspired by the competition and it meets the technical requirements. But I wouldn't blame the judges for disqualifying it on those grounds.

I have a few squicky feelings, worries even, about the game, as unlikely as it is to be played. Does it encourage voyeurism, distance, assholery, and projection? Probably. Hopefully, it also promotes empathy, imagination, kindness, and interaction. I guess it's mostly up to you now. Play responsibly, by which I mean: with love.

<3 -J

contact me at [amphigorist at gmail dot com](mailto:amphigorist@gmail.com) ***Dr. Light's Solution***



Diamonds

This is an after-party to a scientific conference, where Dr. Light has just announced a major scientific breakthrough. Find out what it is and how it affects the attendees.

Ace- Find Dr. Light. Why is he or she so frightened and depressed on this, their eve of triumph?

Two- Find a talented young scientist. What is their name? What have they been working on? How does the announcement affect them?

Three- Find someone who is related to Dr. Light. What is their name? Why is the relationship difficult?

Four- Find a journalist who is covering the announcement. What is their name? What big unanswered question are they snooping for the answer to?

Five- Find someone who is waiting. What is their name? What are they waiting for?

Six- Find Dr. Light's lab assistant. What is their name? Why don't they want to be here?

Seven- Find two people with a difficult or strained relationship. What are their names? What happened between them?

Eight- Find the person who organized this event. What is their name? What is their secret ambition?

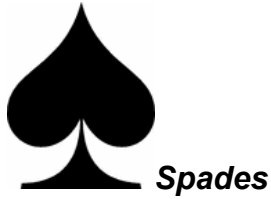
Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack- Find someone who is skeptical of Dr. Light's findings. What is their name? What do they suspect? Are they right or wrong?

Queen- Find someone who is going to benefit in a big way from this breakthrough. What is their name? How are they hoping to benefit? What are they worried about?

King- Find Dr. Light's lover. What is their name? What secret are they contemplating telling?



Mixed feelings all around. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace- Who loses the most from this announcement?

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who do they wish was here?

Four- One of them seems especially satisfied. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems confused. What do they see that no-one else is seeing?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they have it?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack- Who cares the most about Dr. Light and why?

Queen- Who hates Dr. Light the most and why?

King- Who does Dr. Light care about the most and why?



Clubs

The Solution Revealed. How do the stories end?

Ace- What problem does Dr. Light believe he has the solution to? How is it different from the problem he actually has the solution to?

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack- Where and with who is Dr. Light going to end up?

Queen- Why won't this announcement be remembered in ten years?

King- Why will this announcement be remembered in ten years?



Hearts

Be the change you want to see in the world!

Ace- Have a conversation about technology with strangers. Find at least one person who is more optimistic about the future than you, and another who is less.

Two- Have a conversation about Dr. Light's research where "Dr. Light" could overhear you.

Three- Try to be the center of attention, just for a minute.

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of them. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they could overhear you.

Jack- Make a speech or a toast.

Queen- Find out something about a stranger that is worthy of congratulations, and congratulate them.

King- Find out someone's secret ambition and urge them to do it. Help them if you can.

One Bear, One Chord, One Minute



Diamonds

The Bear is coming, and soon. When he arrives, if the savage beast isn't soothed quickly, everyone is gonna pay the price.

Ace- Find the person who has the most to fear from the Bear. What is their name? Why should they be afraid?

Two- Find a musician. What is their name? What do they play? Are they good or bad at it?

Three- Find someone who has interacted with the Bear before. What is their name? What happened that time?

Four- Find someone who is not supposed to be here. What is their name? Where should they be and/or why not here?

Five- Find someone who is waiting for the Bear. What is their name? What are they hoping will happen?

Six- Find someone who wants to leave. What is their name? Why can't they just go?

Seven- Find two people with a strained or problematic relationship. What are their names? What happened between them?

Eight- Find someone who doesn't know the bear is coming. What is their name? Where will they run to?

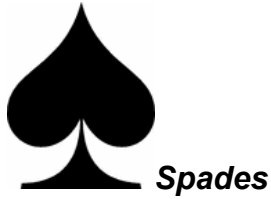
Nine- Find a couple. What are their names? How long have they been together? How did they meet? What is their relationship like?

Ten- Find two people in conversation out of earshot. You and one of the assholes next to you re-imagine their conversation. Give each other names and spell out the nature of your relationship.

Jack- Find someone who could fight the Bear, if need be. What is their name? Why don't they want to?

Queen- Find someone who only wants to protect the Bear. What is their name? Why do they care?

King- Find the person most responsible for the Bear's imminent arrival. What is their name?



The minutes bind them as doom approaches in ursine form. Wherever you can, apply these questions to the Diamonds you named, bringing in others as needed.

Ace- One of them knows exactly what to do. Why will it be hard for them?

Two- One or more of them is having a conversation. You and as many others as there are- what are they saying?

Three- One of them seems lonely. Who do they wish was here?

Four- One of them seems happy. What are they trying to hide?

Five- One of them seems sad. What do they miss?

Six- Which two are secretly in love?

Seven- Which two despise each other?

Eight- Which of them is not scared? Why?

Nine- Which one of them wants something from which other one? Why can't they have it?

Ten- One of them is thinking very differently from how they are acting. Narrate their internal monologue.

Jack- Which of them is most likely to do the right thing for the wrong reasons?

Queen- Which of them is most likely to do the wrong thing for the right reasons?

King- What song could stop the Bear in his tracks?



Clubs

Mauling Time.

Ace- Who will the Bear kill before he can be stopped?

Two- Who could get what they want easier than they think?

Three- What are the unexpected consequences of their plan?

Four- Who is gonna get hurt?

Five- Who is gonna hurt someone else?

Six- Who deserves better than what they'll get?

Seven- Who deserves worse than what they'll get?

Eight- Who is gonna get exactly what they deserve?

Nine- What is coming that no-one is expecting?

Ten- Who's gonna change their mind?

Jack- Who is gonna step up?

Queen- How will the Bear get stopped for good?

King- What will happen to the Bear afterwards?



Hearts

Grin and Bear It!

Ace- Think about the person you would be least happy to see arrive here. Tell one of "them" a memory about that person, preferably a story that shows that person's good side.

Two- Drop the Bear's name in conversation with some of them. If questioned or challenged, raise your eyebrows and say nothing.

Three- Sing a kid's song where "they" can hear you. Preferably "The Bear In Tennis Shoes" or "The Ballad of Davy Crockett." Maybe "The Humphrey Hop" or "The Bear Necessities."

Four- Engage at least two of them in conversation. Find out at least two facts that contradict the stories you made up about them.

Five- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something that they have in common with the person you pretended they were.

Six- Tell one of them a story from the game, in any context that's comfortable to you.

Seven- Confess to at least one of them about the game you played.

Eight- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out two things you have in common with them.

Nine- Engage at least one of them in conversation. Find out something about them that you admire or envy.

Ten- Take on the roles of one or more of them. Without mocking or doing an impression, have a conversation as "them" where they could overhear you.

Jack- Ask a couple of "them" if they've ever been in a fight, and what happened.

Queen- Without being obnoxious, try to get one of "them" to sing, either to you or with you.

King- Find the best hiding place here, and hide there for at least five minutes without being found.



Glitch Iteration

by

Jackson Tegu

**LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE), PERVERSIVE
(INTERMIXED WITH ACTIVITY BY NON-PARTICIPANTS), BOARD GAME**

AMNESIA, SCIENCE-FICTION, NON-NARRATIVE, SURREAL, METAPHYSICAL

Every player portrays iterations of someone named Uri, incorrectly loaded into an artificial world: a “Reallike” of the historical period 2014 or thereabouts. The game features cards describing shards of Uri’s memory or questions to pursue, and also features concern about whether or not you, personally, are the real Uri - or if you’re a glitch - or if you’re a virus.

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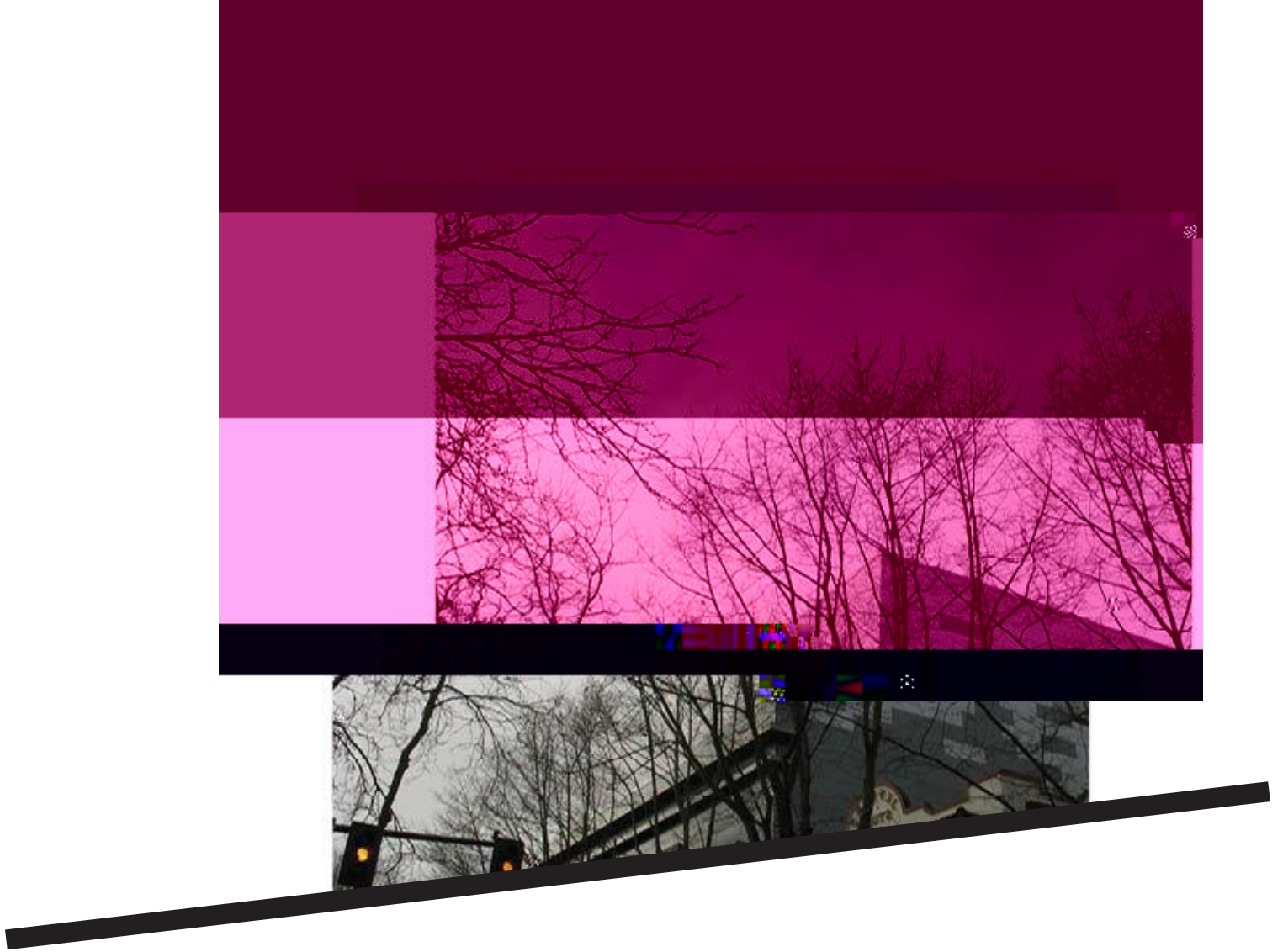
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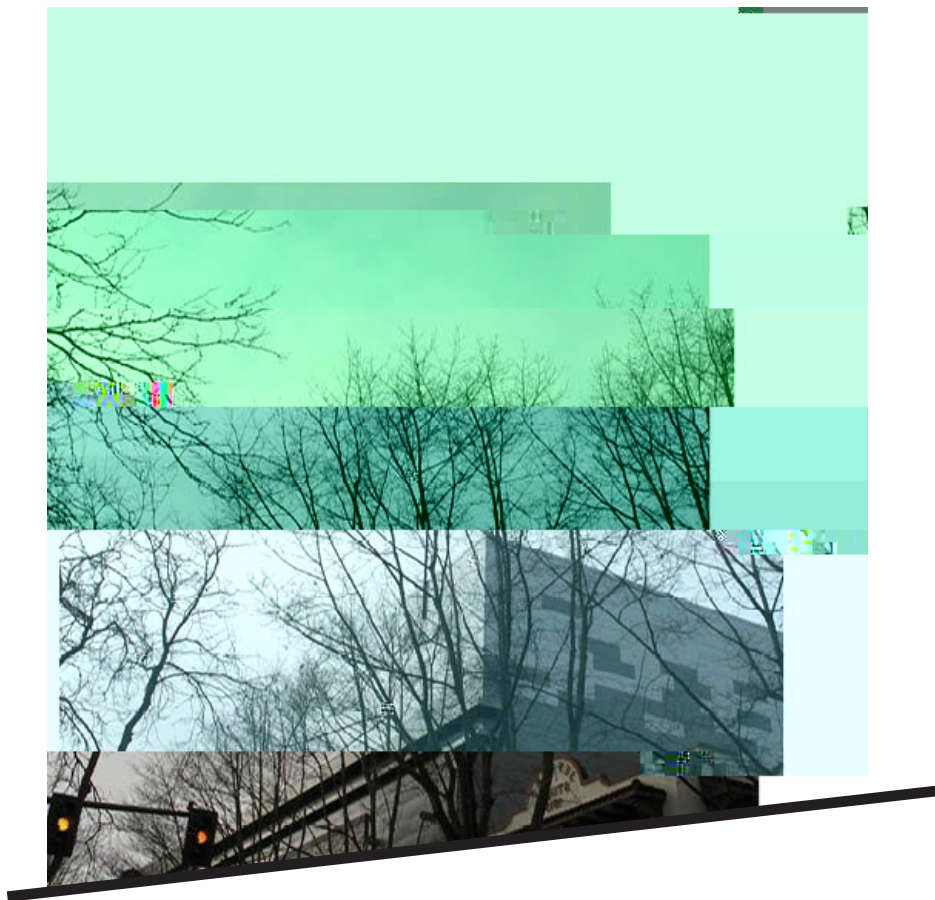




Glitch



Glitch Iteration



Glitch Iteration

Manual
Rules
and
Organizer

Version: 1.4

Release Date: December 201X

Author: Jackson Tegu

What the Golden Cobra judges said

A meditation on memory and identity that cleverly taps into our emotions to make our experience of the world the playing field. A reflective amnesia game that foregrounds the quiet exploration of self.

Glitch Iteration immediately starts building a world before any of the characters can figure out who they are or what's going on. Actually, that's kind of the point. This is not so much a game, as a game coupled with a whole new worldview for public spaces. It does what freeform does best: transform our bodies in spaces into things of anxiety and wonder.

Glitch Iteration not just embraces the contest challenge of "must be playable in public" but transforms public space into a weird wonderland where every stranger, and every contour in the landscape, is suddenly part of your collaborative machine-ghost. It's elegant and beautiful. Underneath its sci-fi trappings it is a game about memory and loss and ethics and, possibly, regret.

Jackson Tegu's game flattened us all with its ability to so elegantly tackle the issues of identity and meaning while harnessing a public space for play. Technological, transhuman, and boggling in its layers, the game is beautiful and vivid and like nothing we've ever seen before.

Welcome Reader

This is a moving-around game.

Every player portrays iterations of someone named Uri, incorrectly loaded into an artificial world. Not pieces, but incomplete copies. Are you a glitch? Are you a virus? Can you be the real Uri even though you don't feel real?

The game seeks to help you explore identity and doubt, and to help you re-contextualize the world around you. It's not an investigation game so much as an introspection game.

It's for 4-8 players who have a beautiful space to move around in, best with additional foot traffic.

Written for the Golden Cobra Challenge, it won in the category of Cleverest Design.



Table of Contents

3 pages:
Covers.

34 pages:
Preparation section, for the Organizer.
Loading section (3 warm-ups).
Glitch Iteration read-together rules.

4 pages:
Cards to cut out.

Organizer

Hello, Organizer.

You're going to make this game happen. If you're not someone who's going to make this game happen, then you're not the Organizer. It's still ok if you read this, though. It's mostly about responsibility.

Organizer! You probably want to know who you are. You're the person who does a ton of work creating props, inviting players, selecting a location, and prepping the warm-ups. After all that, you play Glitch Iteration along with the other people you invited, because Glitch Iteration has no facilitator role.

Since that's true, here's two quick other things to consider:

- Your interpretation of the rules is not more valid than any other player's. There are quite a few rules, and sometimes players will miss some of them and make up things to fill the gap. The rules don't change just because their memories are faulty, but the interaction of particular rules is wide open. The goal here is to be surprised at how the rules interact. If you take this as an opportunity to grandstand your combo-chaining ability, Organizer, I will find you.
- Your experience playing the game might be less fun if you read all the cards before you play because you won't be dropped into the information the same way the other players will.

Just lookin' out for ya.

So, Glitch Iteration is for 4-8 players who have a beautiful space to move around in, best with additional foot traffic.

I think if you're pressed you can potentially go as low as 2 players and as high as 10. Or 1 player and 13, or none and 20 if you're going to be all outside-the-box about it.

Something that's absolutely essential, though, is a beautiful place to play. This game has a big Now-I'm-Going-To-Look-Around component to it, and ignoring the beautiful location requirement would be akin to assuming it'll have the same effect to just choose random numbers instead of rolling dice.

Your ideal spot would have inspiring architecture with large rooms, access to the outdoors, be it streets or gardens or what-have-you, and a near-constant trickle of passersby for the players to comment on and interpret into their collaborative machine-ghost. As discussed under props, a bench or couch that technically seats 3 is also a boon, but not required. And have it be somewhere you won't cause trouble, ok? Please talk to the proprietors if that's appropriate.

It might make more sense for you to skip the preparations section for now and go read the rules themselves so you know what the stuff actually does in the game, but it's your call. You go where you please.

And wow, when you're ready to learn about how to prep the props you can go ahead and turn the page.

Preparation

Hey again Organizer!

You are super lucky because there is a figurative ton of props to make and stuff to gather. Here's a quick list:

- This rule book.
- 1 Character sheet per player.
- 1 Pen or pencil per player.
- The 33 cards.
- "Markers."
- Phone.
- Keys (nothing).
- Pieces for Spire.
- Board for Spire.
- Table for Spire.
- Chairs for Spire.
- Bench or couch. (Respite chairs?)
- Pixelated icons.

Books.

Print out the half-sized pages to use as a book. I used the booklet printing function available on some pdf readers.

Character sheets.

Two half-sized sheets that say "character sheet" between them. They're in here. You can find them. It's important that everyone have a rules overview, which is the right half of that two-sheet combo.

Pens and pencils.

Just like you remember. What a wonderful modern tool.

The Cards.

At the end of Glitch Iteration are four pages of cards. Cut them out. I used card collectible card game sleeves with playing cards to keep them rigid. I con

Markers.

Markers need to be something that can be attached to the wrist or the sleeve, and then later be attached to the collar and put on the ground. I used 1" fashion pins, ignoring the fact that they all look different and say different things on them. I considered using masking tape, stickers, and colorful rubber bands with a safety pin on them for collar attaching.

Phone.

A tall obelisk that multiple people can put their hands on at once. I used a microphone stand with the top hardware removed. I considered using a mop handle in a bucket or an extant metal pole such as a parking sign.

Keys.

Though treated as a prop in the game, there's actually no physical representation for them. Listed here to reassure you that you're not forgetting anything.

Spire

A board game with three types of components:

- 1 chess board.
- 4 square pieces, equal to 2 chess-spaces on a side.
(So, for a board where each space is 2"x 2", the square Spire pieces are each 4"x 4".)

The square pieces are dark colored on both sides.

- 16 round pieces, sized to fit comfortably in one space.
(For the above board, the round Spire pieces should be 1.5" diameter.)

The round pieces are colored differently on each side. I used yellow with a single large dot on one side, and red with a large X on the other side.

Spire's table.

A table to put Spire on, or perhaps a box. I used a folding t.v.-tray table. I considered using a wooden plinth and a stack of milk crates.

Spire's chairs.

Since Glitch Iteration has a particular mechanic which is triggered by sitting down, it also benefits from having some social play around that. There is a limited number of places to sit, central to play, and Spire controls the chairs. The two chairs must flank the Spire game. Eventually people may move them, and then Glitch Iteration suffers a little. I used folding chairs, or whatever was at hand.

A bench or couch.

If there's something else to sit on, let it be this. You want to avoid a circle of chairs, people sitting and not exploring their environment. A bench or couch provides three places to sit - but if more than two people sit down, a conversation with all three participants is very difficult because of sight-lines and exclusion. This works very well for Glitch Iteration's purposes.

Respite chairs.

If one or more of your players would be uncomfortable without a place designated for them to sit should they choose, goodness sakes provide one, Organizer, you know how to do this stuff. If some folks bring their own wheeled chairs then they get to do all sorts of fun things with the Glitch Iteration mechanics.

Pixelated icon.

If there are things in your environment that you don't want the players to interact with - perhaps a door into an off-limits area, a pile of coats - then putting this symbol on it indicates that it's pixelated and can't be touched. Players may agonize, if they wish, over why this detail of the environment failed to load. I used a hastily scribbled note of several squares overlapping. I considered using real genuine pixelated squares printed off of a home computer.



Load

ding

Starting on the next page: Organizer, read the Welcome Players section aloud and then lead each of the three warm-up activities.

Welcome Players

You're now at the load screen. Welcome. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for coming, and to clarify a few things.

This is a moving-around game.

It's appropriate to take cues from the other players, from your emotional experience of playing, and from your environment.

While playing, say what's apparent to you, or say nothing and keep your thoughts private, or say and do whatever feels truest in the moment.

If something starts to ruin your fun, tell the people near you. The offending behavior will be stopped or the offending idea will be taken out of the fiction, no questions asked, even if it's something as small as a name. Imaginations can be powerful and your feelings are important here.

You might find pixelated icons in the game space. These designate areas or objects that haven't loaded correctly, which is to say, things that are off-limits. A door with a pixelated icon, for example, could be commented upon, but not touched or passed through. All details of the world without pixelated icons can be freely respectfully interacted with.

And to those who play lots of story games, I wanted to address a habit of free creation: many story games depend on their players to constantly be building off of one another's creations, to always respond with a "Yes,

And..." to make the world richer or more detailed. In this game, you may be stepping on others' toes if you do that, so take care not to.

Finally, I wanted to provide you with an organizer, to ease you into the game and facilitate some warm-ups.

The organizer will now wave to you to indicate which of you it is.

Wave to them.


After the game itself begins, the organizer will be a player like any of you, and its interpretation of the rules will be no more valid than yours.

Let's do some warm-ups!

I Don't Know

Read this paragraph aloud.

Since the game we'll soon play deals with gaps of memory and an unanswerable question, this first warm-up is to practice voicing a lack of knowledge about something. For the warm-up we'll use pieces of information that we each are very familiar with, yet we'll answer "I don't know."



Don't read this section aloud.

Have the group go around the circle saying their preferred name and preferred pronoun. Tell them to listen to one another and remember. Once everyone's spoken, take turns repeating the following little script while introducing one another. You'll go around the circle, everyone taking each role.

I'll teach you in terribly awkward text. You'll teach the group by indicating people, and it'll be much easier. Here's the script:

A_: B_, this is C_.

B_ (to C_): What's your name?

C_: I don't know.

Organizer, you start off as A_. Turn to the person on your left and say their name. That's B_. Then say, "this is..." and indicate the person on their left (who's second on your left) and say that person's name. That's C_.

Instruct B_ to ask C_, "What's your name?" as if for clarification. It doesn't have to be those exact words, but the goal isn't to be creative here. The goal is to set up C_ for practice.

Instruct C_ to respond, "I don't know." And you can tell them all not to ham it up. Try and feel it. You're practicing.

Now B_ becomes A_, and you go around the circle until each player has spoken in each role.

Go around the circle now, practicing the script.

Finished?

Go around the opposite way using this second script, filling in the Cp_ blank with the preferred pronoun that C_ said at the start of this warm-up.

A_: B_, C_ prefers the pronoun Cp_.

B_ (to C_): What pronoun do you use?

C_: I don't know.

Once everyone's had a chance to speak in all three roles, move on to the next warm-up!

Regrets

Read this section aloud.

This a warm-up about Uri's regrets. It's a character creation exercise to build the character we all share.

Uri's job involves passing across many topics over the course of a day. Uri is often preoccupied with regrets while working. We'll weave ideas together to get a glimpse of who Uri is.

There are many things that Uri regrets not doing.

To begin, everyone privately make up a something that Uri regrets having never done, or choose one of the examples:

Having Kids, Traveling, Pursuing Art, Pursuing Knowledge.

Whatever you choose, let it be very broad, something that's been true for humans of most cultures for centuries and will believably be around for centuries to come. It's ok if you want to make one of those examples a little more specific, but don't include any techno-babble. Decide on this regret now. It's fine if some players have the same regret. It's very important that it's something Uri regrets not doing instead of something that Uri regrets doing.

Privately select your regrets now.

So now I'll say a topic that Uri comes across at work, something very broad and only one word, for example:

Licensing. War. Neighborhoods. Nutrition.

And now you on my left will, in one sentence, swerve that topic towards the regret you chose, revealing it.

For example, if I said, "Licensing," you might say, "I'll never get to teach my kid to drive, I should've had kids."

Or if I said, "Railways," you might say, "The dining cars served such feasts, I wish I'd learned to cook."

It's ok if the connection is a bit tenuous.

Go around the circle, everyone speaking in both roles.

Finished?



Don't read this section aloud.

Go around again the same direction, saying new topics as before, but this time the player can swerve the sentence to any regret they can remember from the round previous. It's ok to use your own again.

Not Real

Read this aloud.

For this warm-up you'll stand still and listen. This exercise will help you get into character. You'll close your eyes and listen to a voice, and there won't be any sudden or loud noises and no one will touch you. Arrange yourselves in front of me so that you can hear my voice, and I need a volunteer who likes to read.

Choose a volunteer, show them to begin reading here.

Volunteer, read both of these pages aloud.

Close your eyes, listen to my voice, let it guide you.

Begin to imagine a warm hallway, comfortable and wide, stretching far before you. The carpet is thick and red, and there are many dark brown doors on each side, each fitted with handsome brass knobs. Now begin to walk along the hallway, and feel the soft cushion of the thick carpet under your feet.

Select a door, and feel the warm brass in your palm as you easily swing the door open and walk inside.

Now you aren't in the hallway anymore. You're in an institutional-feeling washroom. There is blue-white Winter daylight coming in through a high, thin window. The tiles are blue as well, and so very cold. You don't have shoes on, the tiles are ice against your feet. Where are your shoes? You don't know. You don't have them.

Suddenly, you see your shoes. They are in one of the sinks. The sink has a tall, gray mirror over it. You walk over to the sink, your toes curling on the cold, cold tiles. You stand at the sink. You see your reflection in the mirror. You look sad.

You look your reflection in the eye. And it looks you in the eye. And then your reflection breaks eye contact. Your reflection looks at your body. It looks sad. It looks at your hands. You can see your reflection's hands. They look strong. Your reflection reaches one of its strong hands towards the mirror, and through it, and down to the sink in front of you, and it takes hold of both of your shoes in that same strong hand.

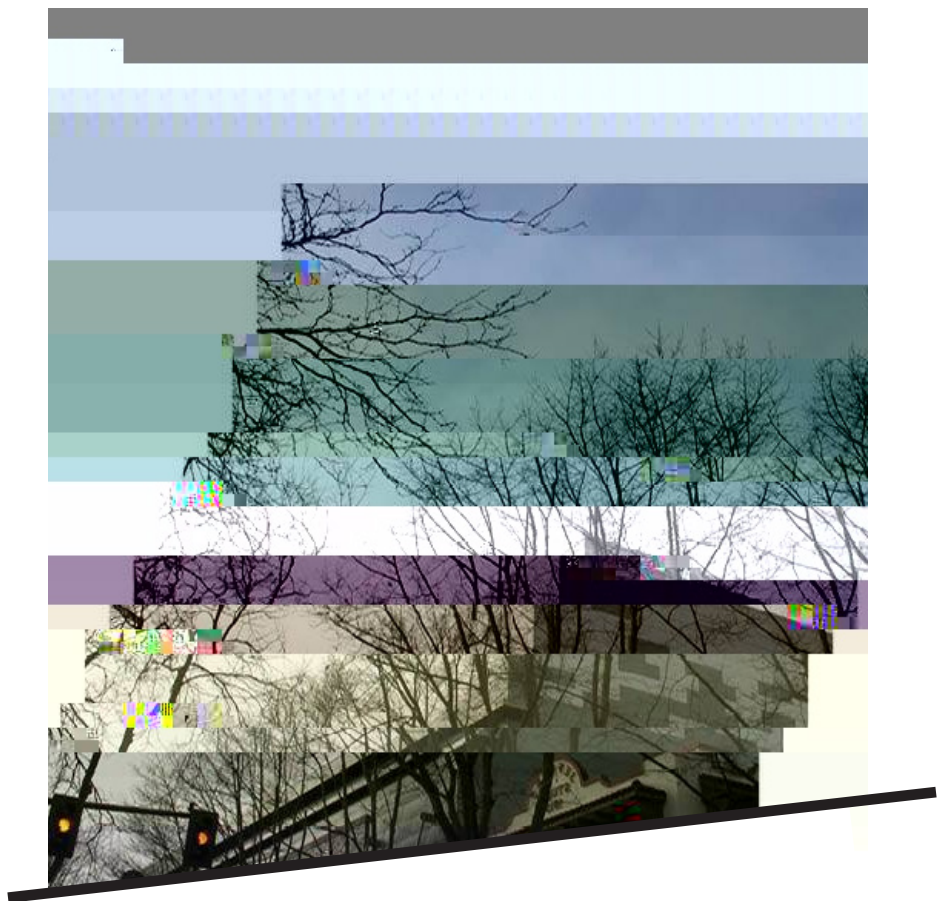
Your reflection takes your shoes. You can see your reflection walk away from the mirror. You lean towards the cold, grey mirror. Through the mirror, you can see your reflection walking to the reflection of the door. Now keep your eyes closed and wait.

Read this quietly to yourself.

Look at you, performing tasks like a good little program! But you're not a real program, are you? You're not real at all. You were created when a machine made a mistake and didn't notice. A lag-born digital artifact, a load-error duplicate in a random disassemblage. Oh, little coincidence. Where will you go from here?

Read this aloud, then turn the page.

Thank you for participating in this warm-up, you may open your eyes.



Glito
Itera

Read this aloud.

Starting on the next page, pass around and read the rules aloud. Participation is optional. Stop at the bottom of a page or at the line across and hand it on.

Dots indicate rules that may be on the reference sheet.

ch.
tion

201X

You were loading into this Reallike of twenny exteen (201X). You love this one. Millions of people are playing at romance or normalcy in here; it's kept pristine by the lockout on Command Line and Editor utilities. Look around - this is probably not what twenny exteen historically looked like, but it's what Reallike devs assembled from decades worth of period videos and doesn't it almost feel as if you were there.

This is easily your most visited Reallike, but the fine details of how it's populated today get lost as background noise. Instead of walking directly to the apartment, you've got a load error to deal with. In fact, you've got a set of them. In fact, you might just be one yourself.

[•]

Every player portrays an iteration of someone named Uri, incorrectly loaded into an artificial world. Uri has never wanted to see anybody fail. A little bit anti-social, always voted most likely to be asked "what's wrong?" when there's actually nothing in particular wrong.

Of course you each look different because every load retriggers the Reallike to run an algorithm on what people looked like in twenny exteen to make sure there aren't fleets of people here with identical faces or shoulder widths or whatever. Even with the number of times you've come here you've never bought a SaveFace package, because Asterisk has never really cared – or noticed? – what you look like.

Copies

Sometimes loadings get corrupted or dovetailed. While you clearly remember what you look like (not much like any of these era-correct bodies, to be honest) and details of your habits and so forth, some parts of your memory are currently inaccessible. Pain in the ass but there are literally hundreds of reasons why that might be true, but still you worry.

Maybe you're a sleeper virus for whoever dovetailed the loading. If that's the case, and you go to the apartment and see Asterisk, maybe your pin gets pulled and you melt Asterisk and the whole apartment into a mess of nonsense bytes.

Asterisk is so sweet. People give you a hard time for having a romance with a non-sentient A.I. but you and Asterisk have a very special bond.

So maybe you should just eject from this Reallike. If you do, and you're the real Uri, great. You'll be sure of yourself for once. If you're not the real Uri, though, when you eject you stop existing. Maybe that's not so bad. Maybe that makes things more straightforward for the big picture, maybe it even protects someone you care very much about. Not that they or anyone will notice.

Bodies

[•]

You and Asterisk have exalted in the fluid nature of body options in this Reallike, and Asterisk takes on the most culturally appropriate pronoun of the body being worn at the time. You remember sometimes doing the same.


Any pronoun that you refer to Asterisk or Uri as is correct.

Characters

[•]

Play until each player decides whether to eject or not.

Everyone gets a marker, which begins play on your sleeve. If you eject, you'll take the marker from your sleeve and put it on the ground at your ejections site. If you decide not to eject, you'll take the marker from your sleeve and put it on your collar.



[•]

To make your iteration, first, doubt that you are the real Uri. Feel that doubt seep into you.

Already you know that Uri has never wanted to see anybody fail, and that Uri is a little bit anti-social, and that Uri might be asked "what's wrong?" when there's nothing in particular wrong.

When you get your sheet, write down the regret you spoke earlier and other regrets you remember from the warm-up activity.

If you want to read along on the overview section on the character sheet, you're welcome to.

Now it's time to hand out the character sheets and write on them.


Memories

The drill taught to children and shown in Big Service ad campaigns teaches that when trying to determine which is the instigating individual among a disassemblage, the group of you should compare specific memories.

Now it's time to get out the cards.

[•]

Draw 3 cards. Each has something to consider at the top, and then a memory at the bottom.



[•]

Don't "play" or announce your cards. Just be true to them as you portray and remember.

Every time you answer the consideration question or questions for yourself, revisit it and reconsider. There aren't answers to your considerations on the other players' cards.

The cards give permission to create different parts of the shared world, seen through the lens of memories. If other players are talking about any part of a memory that you have, build it together.

Confuse

[•]

If you don't have a card that talks about a memory of something, you don't have that memory. Don't confuse yourself - you can't make up new things for memories you don't have cards for and start thinking that you remember them. You don't.

And it's fine to bluff or lie if for some reason that serves you, but keep in your mind the line of what your character "really knows" and what they're making up, and be aware of the havoc you may be causing for other players.

Chairs

[•]

When standing, act as your character acts and speak their words.

[•]

When seated in character, act as they act and speak their words.

[•]

When you're seated while your character is not, describe the meaning behind your character's words instead of speaking the words themselves, and describe whatever bold actions they take instead of acting them yourself.

Agency

[•]

When you act, your actions always succeed immediately. Use this as it suits your desire for the shape of the narrative.

[•]

Any two characters may undo the effects of something that a character does. All remember the occurrence, its effects have simply been undone.

To instigate this, one player says, "Un-"

Another player completes the function by saying "-Do."

[•]

To preserve the beauty of this Reallike, users aren't able to access Command Line or Editor utilities. This means that you can't edit the environment that you're in.


Details

[•]

Believe your senses, where appropriate. Question them where appropriate. Ignore the glitched stimuli where appropriate.

[•]

The Keys open the street and apartment doors to the apartment where Asterisk is. It's unclear why they spawned onto the ground. Also, they're glitching terribly, contingently invisible and completely unfeeleable. The Keys can only be seen by players 10 feet away or further. The Keys can not be detected via touch.



[•]

The Phone is a thin obelisk that connects the caller to the known unique I.D. of the person you're calling. To use it, touch it. When you touch it, if the person you're calling is available, you will hear their voice in your mind. They won't be able to hear your thoughts, though, you must speak aloud to be heard.

[•]

Spire is a board game that you and Asterisk have spent many hours enjoying together. Asterisk is much better at it than you are, but that's part of the fun. The rules are fairly simple, if you can remember them.

Ending

[•]


Remove the marker from your sleeve and put it on the ground. This is the place you ejected at. You no longer have a body, you cannot be seen, you are gone.

[•]

If someone makes eye contact with you after you've ejected, you can speak one sentence aloud - something repeated verbatim from earlier in the game. If you seek eye contact, do so very unobtrusively.

[•]

If you don't have a body, don't sit in one of the chairs. At your option, stand near whomever you expect will next eject.



[•]

Move your marker from your sleeve to your collar to indicate that you won't be ejecting during the game. You can't go back on this decision.

Believe your senses, where appropriate. Question them where appropriate. Ignore the glitched stimuli where appropriate.

Now it's time to play. Find the comforting thing in your environment as directed on your character sheet. Don't take a break first. Begin right now, and take care of everything else once you've begun playing.

Iteration

chara
she

To make your iteration

[•] doubt that you are the real Uri.

[•] Feel that doubt seep into you.

Already you know that

[•] Uri has never wanted to see anybody fail, and that

[•] Uri is a little bit anti-social, and that

[•] Uri might be asked “what’s wrong?” when there’s nothing in particular wrong.

Write down the

[•] regret you spoke earlier and

[•] other regrets you remember from the warm-up activity:

Then

[•] find something comforting in your environment, near or far. When you begin play, you will face it, and gaze at it. Choose something that not more than one other player has chosen.

[•] Each of you are an iteration of Uri.

[•] Play until each of you chooses whether to eject or stay.

[•] Cards give you something to consider and a memory. Every time you answer the consideration, return again to reconsider. If other players are talking about part of your memory, build it together.

[•] Don't "play" or announce your cards, just be true to them as you portray and remember.

[•] Don't confuse yourself - you can't make up new things for memories you don't have cards for and start thinking that you remember them. You don't.

[•] When standing, act as your character acts and speak their words.

[•] When seated in character, act as they act and speak their words.

[•] When you're seated while your character is not, describe the meaning behind your character's words instead of speaking the words themselves, and describe whatever bold actions they take instead of acting them yourself.

[•] Actions always succeed immediately. Use this as it suits your desire for the shape of the narrative.

[•] Two characters may undo the effects of an action. The memory of it remains. Instigating player: "Un-" Seconding player: "-Do."

[•] There is a lockout on Dialog Editors and Command Line utilities.

[•] If you decide to stay, move your marker to your collar. This can't be undone.

[•] If you eject, put your marker on the ground. This can't be undone. You become gone, silent, unseen, bodiless.

[•] If someone makes eye contact with you while you're bodiless, you can repeat one sentence verbatim from earlier in the game.

[•] When bodiless, don't sit on the chairs. At your option, stand near whomever you expect will next eject.

[•] Believe your senses where appropriate. Question them where appropriate. Ignore the glitched stimuli where appropriate.

[•] The Keys are to the building and apartment where Asterisk is. They can only be seen from 10 ft away and can't be detected by touch.

[•] Touch the Phone to have the person w/ unique I.D. you're calling speak into your mind. Speak aloud to be heard by them.

[•] The rules to Spire are fairly simple if you can remember them.

Glitch Iteration version 1.4

By Jackson Tegu, October-December 201X.

Is this the most recent version?

Find out: photographsoflightning.com



Glitch Iteration was made for the Golden Cobra Challenge, and won in the category of Cleverest Design. This polished version would not have been possible without the assistance of my amazing patrons. If you'd like to see more games like this, consider becoming my patron. It's how I pay the bills! patreon.com/jacksontegu



Goals: explore analog glitching via ambiguity and by incorporating witnessed player interpretations into later versions, build a multi-person live game featuring introspectivity, create some space for doubt.

Begun at the home of ESBG et al, Oakland, America.
Playtested at Metatopia, The Language House, the streets adjacent to The Capitol Theatre, and Cryptatropa. Playtested by: David Redcorn, Moon Rainbow, Caroline Gibson Hobbs, Gary Montgomery, Veles Svitlychny, Framboise, Marc Hobbs, Robert Bruce, Ross Cowman, Seanny Canning, Max Hervieux, Orion Canning, Felice Kuan, Matt Weber, and Jason Morningstar, among others and ignoring copies.
Completed at The Engine Room, Olympia, America.

Fonts

Body is Ubuntu by Dalton Maag Ltd.

Title is AUDimat by Jack Usine.

Photographs by Jackson, modified at Georg Fischer's glitch experiment: snorpey.github.io/jpg-glitch/

Thanks to
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Human-Games Relations at Queerness and Games 2014,
Daniel Wood's My Daughter, the Queen of France,
Jonathan Walton's Looks Down At The Gathering Dark
as appeared in Planarch Codex: The Calvino Cycle or, If
on a Wintry Plane a Freebooter, and also Restless,
Terry Romero and John Stavropolous's M vs M,
Avery Mcdaldno for too many reasons to list,
Sara Williamson's Shelter and Group Date,
Jason Morningstar's RPCV and The Climb,
Tomas HV Mørkrid's Stoke-Birmingham 0-0,
Gustav Nilsson's essay Your Character Is Not Your Own
as appeared in States Of Play,
Erlend Eidsem Hansen's account in Nordic Larp of
Trenne byar, organized by Aigars Grins, Gabriel Walldén,
Christian Angerbjörn, Alexander Graff, Christopher
Sandberg, Gabriel Sandberg, Joakim Forestry and
Martin Ericsson,
cyberpunk worlds such as those in Neuromancer, Snow
Crash, Second Life, Skyrim, and this one,
and Sean Nittner & Karen Twelves, without whom I
wouldn't have been in Oakland in the first place.

Cards

[•]

Here are the 33 cards for Glitch Iteration

What is the world of this
Reallike trying to tell you
right now?



You remember what was
different about this place
when you and Asterisk were
last here.

What do you think might
comfort Uri at a time like
this?



You remember what was
different about this place
when you and Asterisk were
last here.

What facial expression feels
the most natural? Which
other iterations wear a
similar expression?



You remember what was
different about this place
when you and Asterisk were
last here.

When you make a mistake,
ask yourself - is this a
mistake Uri would make?



You remember the story
that you and Asterisk were
talking about when you
were last here.

Which iteration do you feel
sorriest for?



You remember the story
that you and Asterisk were
talking about when you
were last here.

Why is it so hard to
remember what makes you
care so much for Asterisk?



You remember the story
that you and Asterisk were
talking about when you
were last here.

What are you meant to do if you're a sleeper virus? Are you doing it right now?



You remember the bird call, and the glow of the clock as it counted up the morning.

What do you want to reassure yourself of?



You remember reading cursive handwriting, "a bright morning, forever," and the play of light through the glass.

Would it be a relief to accept your fate? What's your fate?



You remember rain as far as you could see, and someone turning to you and saying, "It's three," and the glass was fogged.

How is Uri not virus-like?



You remember being on a bridge, and how there was a bird almost close enough to touch, and that the leaves were raining down.

How is it that you don't see what other iterations see, or don't hear what other iterations hear?



You remember the word written in cursive, "forget," and how they reached across the table to put their finger on the last three letters.

Do the things you imagine feel real? Do you think they exist somewhere?



You remember how the birds settled, perched in groups of threes, and the feeling that something was taking forever.

What if Uri knows you're not the real one and just isn't saying?



You remember feeling as if both of you were lining up your troops, wheeling your artillery into position across the battlefield between you.

What or who did you name Asterisk after?



You remember hearing the clock, and how the leaves had all fallen, and how the stairs were so beautiful when the light was like that.

How many real Uris can there be?



You remember going over a bridge, and that you glanced at the clock, and how the wind was thrashing in the trees.

What do you want Uri to remember of this experience?

You remember the sound of the rain, and that happy voice asking, "Do you know why they're called leaves?" And you saying, "They leave the trees."

What is the right thing to do in this situation? What's the safe thing to do?

You remember the familiar shape of the trees and how the rain had been falling gently forever.

Are you mistaking your programming for independent thought?

You remember they were explaining a metaphor that involves delivering multiple types of information simultaneously on the same line.

What do you want to remind yourself to do?

You remember those careful footsteps, crossing the bridge with you, up the stairs in the morning when the light was still unsure.

What do you hope your last memory is?

You remember the cigarette, abandoned; how the end grew long and dropped off and the pattern it made when it landed.

What do you imagine Uri cared about in childhood? Do you care about those things now?

You remember that familiar voice, "Did you notice how many threes there are?" and how the glass was cold to the touch, and how you wanted to sit on the stairs.

Would a sleeper virus feel hungry? What makes it possible you're a sleeper virus?

You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces move on the board.

Can an error feel too cold or too warm? Why is it likely you're an error?

You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces move on the board.

If this is your last time here, what do you want to do for old time's sake?

You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces move on the board.

What about Uri do you not want to face? What are you too shy to ask yourself?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces interact with other pieces around them.

What's comforting about the thing you find comforting? Who made it comforting?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces interact with other pieces around them.

Is there anything that you want to damage? Why do you think that is?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces interact with other pieces around them.

Which iteration is watching you especially?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember what the players are trying to accomplish in the game.

Do the other iterations sometimes do what you want for no reason? What does that mean about you?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember what the players are trying to accomplish in the game.

What doesn't work for you that seems to work for the other iterations?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember what the players are trying to accomplish in the game.

What does failure sound like? What does giving up sound like? What does not existing sound like?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces are set up on the board before the game begins.

Do you think anything comes through and "cleans up" errors?




You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces are set up on the board before the game begins.

Does repeating yourself make you feel better, or worse?



You remember a little about the game Spire - you remember how the pieces are set up on the board before the game begins.



Group Date *by* Sara Williamson

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

COMEDY, DATING, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

Group Date is a game about disparate (and, at times, discordant) personalities looking for love. A quick personality quiz sorts the players into teams, who then play out a series of three short dates-- with a twist. Group Date is meant to be a quick, accessible and lighthearted freeform larp.

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GROUP DATE

a freeform game about dating, by Sara Williamson

Congratulations! It's a Match! In *Group Date*, you will play two people going on their first three dates after being matched with one another on a popular dating website. You don't know too much about each other yet, but the algorithm says you're 98% compatible! What could go wrong?

Group Date is a game for 4-9 people, that takes about two hours to play, including time for setting up and a short debrief. It requires one or two facilitators, depending on if you have an odd- or even-numbered group. The game consists of two warm-up activities, five scenes, and a short debrief afterwards for players to swap stories, share their reactions, and ease out of character.

FACILITATING + PREP

Depending on the number of people gathered to play, *Group Date* requires one or two facilitators. If you have an odd number of people, one person will facilitate and have a modified player role instead of playing as one of the two characters. If you have an even number of people, two people will facilitate, with each facilitator also playing a character in one of the two player teams.

It's the facilitator's job to read the text of the game in advance, gather a few simple materials, explain the different activities and scenes, and keep track of time. In terms of materials, you will need:

- printed name tags and handouts
- tape or badge holders (skip this if you can print the name tags on fancy adhesive labels)
- pens and markers
- a cell phone or watch to keep track of time

And the scene schedule, for reference:

30 min	warm-up & char gen
10 min	date 1
15 min	team meeting 1
15 min	date 2
20 min	team meeting 2
20 min	date 3 (dtr)
10 min	debrief

It may happen that you plan on facilitating either by yourself or with a partner, but end up with a different number of people than you anticipated. If this happens, never fear! It's fine for someone to co-facilitate without having read everything in advance; just have them use the cheat sheet (provided in the handouts at the end) and help keep

track of time. Co-facilitating is a great way for people new to facilitating freeform games to try it out!

It's also fine if one of the facilitators decides to just play after having read the text of the game; there aren't any spoilers.

SETTING UP

Once everyone is gathered, explain the general premise of the game by reading the very first paragraph of the text (starting with "Congratulations!") out loud. Then, give them a brief overview of the game's structure.

Once this is done, but before the warm-up activities start, it's important to say something about player safety. The default safety mechanism for this game is **The Door Is Always Open**. Though this isn't meant to be an emotionally intense game, the players should feel comfortable stepping out or leaving entirely for any reason; perhaps something comes up in play that makes them uncomfortable, perhaps they're feeling sick or tired, or maybe they just need to use the restroom or get a drink of water. The players should know that leaving won't break the game or ruin anyone's experience. They should feel free to leave at any time, or ask to speak to you/your co-facilitator in private if they have any questions.

After the safety talk there are two quick warm-up activities: **Date Story** and **Personality Quiz**. These activities will help people get into the right creative

mood for the game, and help with the character creation process.

DATE STORY

For **Date Story**, gather the players in a circle and have them to think about a short dating-related anecdote. It can be something from their own lives, or something from a book, movie, television show, etc. These will likely tend towards the "funny disaster" genre of dating stories, but they don't have to. Once they've had a few minutes to think, explain that they will be working together to combine their anecdotes into one story, with each person adding an element before passing to the person on their right. Let them know that you, as the facilitator, will help move them along by saying "Great—next!" when it is the next person's turn to speak. If someone's turn comes up and they're not ready, they can say "Pass!"

Give it a try and start out slowly, but as the players become more comfortable, say "Great—next!" more quickly to move them along at a faster pace. It's okay if someone gets flustered; just give them some time to recover or pass.

PERSONALITY QUIZ

For the next warm up, **Personality Quiz**, distribute copies of the VERY SCIENTIFIC DATING PERSONALITY QUIZ handout; you will need one copy for each player. Give them slightly over thirty seconds to fill it out, then instruct them to form a line. One end of the line represents **Order**, and the most organized, punctual,

orderly players should go there. The other end of the line represents **Chaos**, where the spontaneous, messy and chaotic players should be. Players in the middle get to be in the middle: have them look at each others' quizzes to help them line up. Once they're happy with their positions in line, divide the line in half, with an even number of players on each side: these will be the two teams.

CHARACTER CREATION

Now that the players are divided into Team Order and Team Chaos, they will split up and collaboratively create a shared character, one for each team. From this point on, you should make sure that there is either one facilitator in each group, if playing with two co-facilitators, or that the single facilitator goes back and forth between the two groups to check in on them periodically, if you're playing with one.

Pass out the appropriate character sheets for the Order and Chaos groups and have them fill them out; you only need one sheet per team. Have them do this quickly: the first suggestion in each category wins, unless someone else in the group objects.

THE FOUR FACETS

Now that each group has a character, each player will need to pick one of the **Four Facets**, a single component of their characters' personality and one of the driving forces motivating them to go out on these dates. The four facets are

Lust, Optimism, Empathy and Doubt. Have the players take turns reading the following descriptions out loud—they are also printed at the bottom of their character sheets:

Lust: At your best, you're full of passion, energy and life. At your worst, you're temperamental and short-sighted. You consider yourself a lot of fun. After all, where would humanity be without you?

Optimism: At your best, your sunny personality lifts other people up. At your worst, you are insufferable, dismissing the pain of others by telling them to just stay positive. You consider yourself essential to the dates' success, and will make sure the voice of optimism is heard.

Empathy: At your best, you are an excellent listener who shows genuine compassion for those around you. At your worst, you seem to feed on others' suffering, and are easily affected by the moods of others. You consider yourself the wisest when it comes to matters of the heart, and surely no relationship without you can ever last.

Doubt: At your best, you are analytical and introspective, able to reflect critically on yourself and the situations you find yourself in. At your worst, you excel at finding fault, undermining your own confidence and criticizing others. You consider yourself a realist, and will make sure the others don't get lost in the clouds.

After the four facet descriptions have been read out loud, have each player pick one they would like to play. At this stage, each player on a team should have their own character facet; players will have the opportunity to switch later on. Pass out the name tags, and have them write their shared character name and their individual facets on the appropriate Order and Chaos name tags.

Now it is time for the game to begin! The game will follow the pattern of one date scene followed by one team meeting scene, until there have been three dates and two meetings. In all of the scenes, players should try to embody both their character personality (Order or Chaos) and their facet.

DATE SCENES

In the first date scene, players will start out in a large group and mingle before pairing off with someone from the opposing team for a one-on-one conversation. This scene is the couple's first date. If you're playing in a public space, such as a park, bar, or museum, the date should be set exactly where you already are. If the place where you're playing is wildly inappropriate for a first date—such as a gaming convention—you have two options. One use the improv rule **Yes, And** to quickly agree on the fictional location mid-scene. The other is to just run with it. Maybe it will be fun!

Note: it's important on date scenes that the players on the same team don't talk to each other; that's what the team

meeting scenes are for. Let them know this before the first scene starts.

As a facilitator, keep track of time and end the first date scene after precisely 10 minutes. You can use a noise signal for this if it won't bother the non-playing people that may be around you, but if you're in public it's probably better to just raise your hand and have the other players do the same.

The second date scene is just like the first, but lasts a bit longer, at 15 minutes.

The third date scene lasts for 20 minutes, and takes a different form: instead of starting in a group and then splitting up, players will stay in one large group and **Define The Relationship**. This is where the characters will have the conversation to determine if they should stop seeing each other or get serious. Three dates would be way too soon for this conversation in real life, but that's okay—this is just a game! To define the relationship, the players stand with their team mates, facing members of the opposing team. Players will take turns speaking, with one player from a team making one statement, then letting one player from the other team respond. Team-mates don't have to do this in a specific order, but they should make sure that every player has a chance to speak.

MEETING SCENES

In the meeting scenes, players on the same team will talk in a group amongst themselves to discuss how the date went, as well as plan the next one.

Players should still be in character as their personality facets—think of it as one person with a lot of conflicting viewpoints arguing with themselves. In meeting scenes, the players have the opportunity to switch personality facets. This can either be done voluntarily, or, in teams where it is possible, a majority vote to force someone to switch. In a team with four players, for example, three of them might say, “I think Doubt is being very unhelpful here—I think they should switch to Lust.” Duplication is intended! In this way, the character’s overall personality can shift, and on the second date the facets that show up are Empathy, Optimism, Lust and... Lust!

Switching facets is restricted only by the time available for the meetings. The first meeting lasts for 15 minutes, and the second meeting lasts for 20 minutes. Again, the facilitator(s) will keep track of time and call for a scene to end.

In the second meeting scene, the players will have to decide how they would like to define the relationship before they go into the third date.

DEBRIEF

After the game is over, gather everyone around to briefly discuss how it went. Hopefully everyone had fun, but whether they did or not, give everyone a chance to speak. If possible, it might be nice to go someplace a little more quiet or private for the debrief.

And that’s it! Thanks for playing!

THOUGHTS + CREDITS

Group Date was written by Sara Williamson for the Golden Cobra competition in 2014, and was lightly playtested (pre-Cobra-submission) by James Greenan. Thanks, James!

Sara is also indebted to Dahlia Lithwick for her 2012 article for *Slate* entitled “Chaos Theory: A Unified Theory of Muppet Types.”

This edition of *Group Date* has been lightly edited for inclusion in the Golden Cobra anthology. As a result of being selected as a Golden Cobra winner, for Most Convention-Ready, many more people have gotten the chance to play. Thank you, also, to:

everyone who played it at Metatopia 2014

James Stuart, for co-facilitating the Metatopia run, and always pushing me to make more and better things

all of the Golden Cobra judges

and Jackson Tegu, his co-facilitator and players in the December 2014 run

all of whom have provided invaluable feedback (that will very likely make it into the next version). I am incredibly humbled and honored by the response to this game. <3

If you play this game, I would love to hear how it went! You can find me on twitter: @iamtheonlysara

VERY SCIENTIFIC DATING PERSONALITY QUIZ

1. Eating cookies in bed:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
YAY! NO!

2. Being late for things:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Always Never

3. Your desk is...

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Neat Messy

4. Choose a Muppet:

☐ Bert
☐ Ernie

5. Choose a class:

☐ Rogue
☐ Paladin

6. Draw a shape:

FACILITATOR CHEAT SHEET

Before the game:

- Read the game text
- Pick a location to play
- Print handouts—eight copies of the Personality Quiz, one copy of this page, one copy of each of the character sheets, and one copy of the name tags (optionally on adhesive labels of some kind)
- Gather the rest of the materials: pens, markers, tape or badge holders if not using adhesive name tags, and a cell phone or watch to keep track of time

During the game:

- Let the players know **The Door Is Always Open**
- Run two warm-ups: **Date Story** and **Personality Quiz**
- Guide the players through character creation, including picking one of four facets, **Lust, Optimism, Empathy** and **Doubt**
- Refer to this schedule:

30 min	warm-up & char gen
10 min	date 1
15 min	team meeting 1
15 min	date 2
20 min	team meeting 2
20 min	date 3 (dtr)
10 min	debrief

After the game:

- Spend 10 minutes debriefing, making sure everyone has a chance to be heard

ORDER

Name:

Gender:

Occupation:

Emotional Baggage:

Lust: At your best, you're full of passion, energy and life. At your worst, you're temperamental and short-sighted. You consider yourself a lot of fun. After all, where would humanity be without you?

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CHAOS

Name:

Gender:

Occupation:

Emotional Baggage:

Lust: At your best, you're full of passion, energy and life. At your worst, you're temperamental and short-sighted. You consider yourself a lot of fun. After all, where would humanity be without you?

Optimism: At your best, your sunny personality lifts other people up. At your worst, you are insufferable, dismissing the pain of others by telling them to just stay positive. You consider yourself essential to the dates' success, and will make sure the voice of optimism is heard.

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ORDER

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CHAOS

CHAOS

CHAOS

CHAOS



Hard Days *by* Jonny Garcia

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, SURVIVAL, ZOMBIE

This larp is set in the future, where humanity almost vanishes from Earth. A terrible zombie epidemic killed 90% of the Earth's population and the few who managed to survive are struggling to keep going. Although this larp has a grounding in a zombies and survivors scenario, the goal is to create high-pressure situations and force the characters to make tough decisions, which include other characters' lives.

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HARD DAYS

*a social game by Jonny Garcia
november 2014*

HARD DAYS

By Jonny Garcia

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Theme: Fiction, post-apocalypse

Total duration: 120 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Minimum number of players: 4

Maximum number of players: 7

Organizers: 2

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The Setting

This larp is set in the future, where humanity almost vanishes from Earth. A terrible zombie epidemic killed 90% of the Earth's population and the few who managed to survive are struggling to keep going. Although this larp has a grounding in a zombies and survivors scenario, the goal is to create high-pressure situations and force the characters to make tough decisions, which include other characters' lives.

Hard Days is suitable for 4 to 7 players; two organizers are necessary. There are two groups in this larp: The Family and The Survivors. The Family is a group of three people: The Protector, The Future, and The Realist. The Protector and The Future are a couple and The Realist is The Future's sibling. The Survivors are a group of four people: The Strong, The Freshman, The Hope, and The Survivor. They are people who try to create a community to have a better life.

In developing this game, I created a few questions that guided me during the design process. My goal in playing this game is to figure out the answers to these questions.

- How are the two groups going to interact with each other? Are they going to be passive or violent? Are they going to be animals or humans?
- Is it worthwhile to have a baby in a world where no future can be assured?
- How hard is it to make decisions?
- How will the players handle the supplies, especially the food?
- How do we deal with the fact that we are going to die, especially if it is imminent?

The Game

This game needs at least four, maximum seven, players plus two organizers, and takes 2 hours to complete, including 30 minutes of preparation and 90 minutes in game. You don't need a special space for Hard Days, but you will need to use a place where you can split up the players in two groups. It is best if the spaces are separate and the two groups don't have any interactions. Before the game starts, each group has to make some decisions about the backstory. During the game the two groups are going to meet each other, and this is the big event of this game. In the last 20 minutes The Future, who is pregnant, is going to deliver the baby. This is the second major event of the game. Hard Days has some basic combat mechanics, but the goal for this game is to put the players on the spot and forces them to make tough calls. The guns are used to create a pressured mood. From step one to five the players have thirty minutes, followed ninety minutes to play the game (step six). When the players are ready, read the introduction letter to them.

Introduction Letter

I don't know how, but it happened. It was maybe 3 or 4 years ago... we don't know anymore because we lost track of time... we just know it was long time ago. After the end, everyday have been a journey through surviving. A week looks like a month, a month like a year... The only things that last from the old times are few survivors and zombies... hundreds of them... not hundreds, thousands... Most of the population turned into zombies, but humans killed the others that survived. People got crazy and scared, and I realise that fear is the most powerful emotion that we can have. Fear keeps us alive and fighting for another day. These days find food is very hard, and survive are very difficulty. It isn't like any zombie movie that I watched...

First Step: Mechanics

Once everybody is ready, explain the game mechanics.

Places

In the first half of the game there are two play areas. The first and primary one will be The Family Group's residence and the second is the journey of The Survivor Group. At 45 minutes, about halfway through the game, the two groups are going to meet each other. You should tell them this.

Weapons

There are two kinds of weapons: knives and a gun. Both are mortal: if someone gets stabbed/cut or shot they are going to die, but they can be saved with a first-aid kit. If you die, you are out of the game. The difference between weapons is the range and time before death. A knife wound takes longer to kill someone; it is the player's call when they are going to die but they ***MUST die!!!*** On the other hand, a gunshot will put the person down immediately, and if they don't get help in 5 minutes they will die.

To use a knife as a weapon you just need to ***gently*** touch someone with the tip, which will represent a stab. To cut someone you just have to ***gently*** slash the knife, and this is enough to kill someone. Again, this game is not about combat but instead making hard decisions and killing someone is one of these. There is no struggling, if you fight with someone who has a knife, you are going to die. You can ***finish someones experience*** during the game. If you kill them, that person is out of the game. ***This is not an easy decision to make.***

The only way to kill a zombie is shooting at it.

Zombies

If a zombie touches someone, even a simple tap, that person infected and they will turn into a zombie shortly. The exact moment to turn is the player's call, ***and they should use it to create an interesting moment.***

Healing

Someone who possesses a first-aid kit can heal a wounded person. The first-aid kit is a bandage, to use it the bandage has to be wrapped around the wound. Knife wounds should be cured by no longer than 10 minutes after the injury. A gunshot wound has to be healed in less than 5 minutes.

If you are healed, it doesn't mean that you have been magically restored to your full health. You are not going to die, but you still are in pain, so **role play it**. You can limp or pretend you can't move your arm; whatever you chose **makes it real and visual**. Unfortunately there **isn't** anything that can be done to cure an infected person.

Starving

Some people at beginning of the game will be starving. This has no effect in terms of mechanics, but **has effect in the game's fiction**. Eating is a basic need for human beings, and be **starving is a terrible feeling that can make people do crazy things**.

You can show signs of tiredness, headaches, dizziness, and weakness during the game. Interpret this behaviour as an *opportunity to develop relationships with other players*. **If you are starving, role play it!**

Second Step: Set up the groups

At the beginning of the game the organizers should split the players into two groups: The Family and The Survivors. The only restriction regarding gender is related to The Family group which has a couple, man and woman, where the woman is pregnant. The characters don't have names, they just have a title representing their significance in the game but feel free to give real names for the characters. I advise you to use nametags because it facilitates the immersion as players will call each other by their characters' name instead of the player's names. As soon as the groups split up, they should move to their respective game sites.

Third Step: Introduction

Once each group gets to their respective sites, you should hand out the letters below:

The Family Letter

The last months have been very hard as The Future can't travel anymore; she is extremely pregnant (fuck!). The Protector has been doing his best to get supplies, food, and make sure everybody is safe! Very soon the baby will arrive in this crap world, and I always wonder what will happen. The Protector has also been paranoid about everything, maybe the idea of having a kid is freaking him out. The Realist always thinks about the worst scenarios, but deep inside of each of us we know that he isn't totally wrong, we just don't want to see it, it is very hard to live without hope!

The Survivors Letter

In the beginning it looked like a new start. We had found hope in this community, but life, especially now, always put us down. We used to be about 25 souls trying to survive as best as we could, but last night our common fear struck us, and it didn't end well! During the night our camp was attacked by hundreds of zombies... we have no idea where they came from, but there they were! Very few of us survived. The Strong who always kept us alive; The Freshman who is the newest member of our community; The Hope who keeps us sane and believing in a possible better future; The Survivor who is sometimes our saviour and at others our worst nightmare.

*At some point in the game your group is going to meet the other group. When it is time, you should move to the other groups place, but **don't rush**, you have time. Remember that this is a new territory and none of you have been there before; the other group knows their territory very well. **They are strangers**, and you don't know anything about the people out there. **In these days people can be crazy.***

Forth Step: Characters

After each group reads their letter, they have to decide which characters they are going to play. First read the introduction about each character, and let the players decide who is going to play whom. Once they have decided, hand out the characters sheet, which can be found in the Hand Outs section. Some of the characters are required in this game, as identified below.

Characters' Introduction:

The Family Group

The Protector (required)

You have been keeping this family safe since the beginning of the apocalypse, but you are very tired and losing hope. Very soon you will be the father of a little baby, are you ready?

The Future (required)

You are the future of humankind because you are pregnant. Human beings have almost vanished, but you have the gift of life, soon you will be a mother! How is your baby going to survive in this terrible world?

The Realist

You are The Future's young sibling and the only thing that you can think that this world is a piece of shit and there isn't hope. Sooner or later all of us will be a zombie or dead, but your sister will have a baby. How can she do this to an innocent child?

The Survivor Group

The Strong

Since you and The Hope got together and kept adding new people to try to build a community, you have been the one who keeps these people alive and safe! But, what's going to happen when you are gone?

The Freshman

You have been alone in this world for a long time and somehow you had managed to survive by yourself. In the last couple of weeks you started to live with this "community". At least that is what *they* called it.

The Hope (required)

Human beings need just one thing to keep going: HOPE. That is the only thing everybody needs. We need hope to believe in a better world, to believe in a possible future, to not kill each other. Without it, we aren't human.

The Survivor (required)

The world is what it is, and it is not going to change for the better; it is only going to get worse! You do whatever is necessary to keep *yourself* out of trouble and alive, even when you have to do something *not very nice*.

Fifth step: Fiction Decisions

Before the game begins each group has to describe their world. Bear in mind the players should talk about each question and answer it in character. This step makes the players start to think as their characters and begin their social interaction. ***This is a very important step.***

Family Group:

- Where do you live? What does it look like?
- What is your approach when you meet strangers?
- What has been disturbing the relationship between the couple and why?
- What will be the baby's name?

Survivor Group:

- Where were you when the camp was attacked? (You were all separated).
- How did you manage to escape?
- What has happened to the group that is somewhat related to The Hope and his/her spirit of believing?
- Who is the leader of the group? Why?
- What is the next step after what happened?

Each group starts with few supplies following the list below:

The Family Group

- A gun with 2 bullets
- One first-aid kit

The Survivor Group

- Two knives
- One food supply

If a group doesn't start with a food supply, they will be considered starving, ***role play it!***

Sixth step: Let's Play It

The game will last for 90 minutes and ends when the new baby is born. The organizers have to inform The Future's player in the last 20 minutes of play that the baby that is ready to come to the world.

Before the game begins, hand out the letters below. The props should be placed in their respective scenarios. For the Survivor Group spread out everything they have, so they can find it on the ground as if they searched the campsite and found it.

During the game the two groups are going to meet each other, 30-45 minutes after the beginning. The Survivors Group are going to discover the Family Group's place. The outcome of this meeting is the reason for playing. They could be violently fighting each other, or one group kills the other one, or they even can make an agreement and live together. Lets play to figure it out.

Family Group Starting Message

Another day, another opportunity for suffering. The Future woke up with terrible pain and contractions. The Protector is very worried about his wife's health. The Realist believes that this is just a normal day in this abnormal world.

Survivor Group Starting Message

It is almost sunrise, and a few hours have passed since the attack. During the past few hours you have been hiding, avoiding the zombies, and trying to stay alive. Maybe now it is safe to go looking for the others who might have survived the attack and find some supplies. Everyone is separated and doesn't know who is alive.

Staff Notes

Scenario

This game is designed to be run in two different places, where each group will start. Because there are two different places, and the groups shouldn't interact with each other before they meet, two organizers are necessary. Each one should watch a group.

This game doesn't require any scenery, but if you can, try to make the Family's place look like a house. You can put some symbolic objects such as tables, chairs, pillows, cutlery, and etc.

Props

This game requires some props.

- A toy weapon that can really shoot, but with limited number of ammunition. Something similar to a Nerf.
- 2 ammunition for the gun.
- 2 knives. Use something hard that can be used to pretend to cut or stab someone. Since the goal of the game is about hard decisions, do not encourage players to kill each other by providing something that looks like a real knife.
- 1 piece of food to be the food supply. A chocolate bar is suitable.
- 1 bandage to be the first-aid kit. To use the bandage someone has to wrap it around the wound.
- A doll to be the new baby.

Dynamics

The staff should be aware of the time as in the last twenty minutes The Future's player should be told it is time to have the baby. If The Future is starving (doesn't eat any food supply) when the baby comes, the baby will be dead, *deal with it*.

Handouts

Characters' Introduction

The Family Group

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The Survivor Group

The Strong

Since you and The Hope got together and kept adding new people to try to build a community, you have been the one who keeps these people alive and safe! But, what's going to happen when you are gone?

The Freshman

You have been alone in this world for a long time and somehow you had managed to survive by yourself. In the last couple of weeks you started to live with this "community". At least that is what *they* called it.

The Hope (required)

Human beings need just one thing to keep going: HOPE. That is the only thing everybody needs. We need hope to believe in a better world, to believe in a possible future, to not kill each other. Without it, we aren't human.

The Survivor (required)

The world is what it is, and it is not going to change for the better; it is only going to get worse! You do whatever is necessary to keep *yourself* out of trouble and alive, even when you have to do something *not very nice*.

Characters' Sheet

The Protector (required)

You are responsible for keeping this family alive! The last few months have been very difficult. Your partner, The Future, is nine months pregnant and the baby will arrive at any moment. Since she is pregnant and not in good health, you have been living in the same place for the last 3 months. Getting food and supplies are very challenging tasks. You have looted everything around your site and every time you have to go scavenge you have to journey great distances, sometimes this takes multiple days. This little baby could be the future or your family's death sentence; the baby is your strength and your weakness; your baby is a blessing and a curse. You have come this far, and you are not going to give up hope. Nothing will stop you protecting those you love!

You also live with your wife's sibling who doesn't help you keep your spirits up. He/she always says unhelpful things about how our world is a big piece of shit. Sometimes you wish he/she just shut up.

Questions

- Is it really worthwhile to have a kid in this terrible world?
- How is your relationship with your wife?
- What do you really think about your wife's sibling?

The Future (required)

You are a woman who bears the future, a baby, a new soul for this old and terrible world. You don't know if it was good to get pregnant in this shit world but now the only thing that you can think about is the future! In the past few months you have been sick due to not having enough food, and you and The Protector, your husband have settle down in one place. You are not able to do more than walk — anything other than that could kill the baby. You also share the same home with your young sibling, who always focuses on the worst possible scenarios. During the larp try to role-play your sickness, showing signs of tiredness, starvation, headaches, etc.

In the last 20 minutes of the game you will be told that the baby is coming. ***You have to role play it!***

Questions

- What is it like to be a mother in this world that has no future?
- How is your relationship with your husband?
- How is your relationship with your sibling?

The Realist

You live day by day and you know that tomorrow you will be dead no matter what you do. Today that is how the world is and it will kill you sooner than you can imagine. You share a home with your sister, The Future, who is pregnant and the baby could arrive at any moment. You also live with her husband, The Protector. You see his value in keeping the family alive and safe but are frustrated that he always wants things to go his way.

Questions

- What do you think about having a kid in this world, where you can barely find food?
- What has your brother-in-law, The Protector, done/said to you that you will never forget?
- How is your relationship with your sister?
- What is your particular opinion about strangers?

The Strong

You and The Hope were the first ones to get people together to try to build a community and try to create a better life. You always had been in charge of scavenges to find food and supplies, in other words, you always kept those people alive, until yesterday. Those people were your people and now they are gone. Last night your camp was attacked by hundreds of zombies, and you did your best to save people, but you were bitten in the effort. You know very soon you will turn into a zombie, but nobody else knows about it. When you are gone there will be no one else to keep your people out of trouble.

You were bitten last night, and ***you have to role-play it***; during the game pretend you are sick. You ***have to*** turn into a zombie during the game; when it is going to happen is your call! As a player, use this element to create an interesting situation during the game. As zombie, ***you walk slow and make strange noises***, and your **thinking is impaired. If you are killed during the game**, you automatically turn into a zombie. Maybe you can lie down for a while, then turn into a zombie. The only way to kill a zombie is using a gun. If you are killed as a zombie, you are out of the game.

Questions

- What you are going to do about the bite? Are you going to tell anyone? Or, are you going to keep it as a secret? Are you going to jeopardise everyone's safety? Or you will be a nice guy and die alone?
- How did you get bitten?
- What is going to happen to your people when you're not there anymore to protect them?
- Who is the person you trust the most? Why?
- Who is the person you trust the least? Why?

The Freshman

Before you met the group, you had been alone in the world, and you know pretty much how to survive by yourself. You have been with those people for about three weeks. You notice that this group has a strong feeling of family but not everybody includes you in this feeling.

Questions

- Why won't the group fully integrate you yet?
- How did you meet these people?
- Why did you decide to be with them?
- Who is the person that you like most? Why?

The Hope (required)

You and The Strong knew each other long before the apocalypse. Since the world as you knew it ended, you two have been together and trying to create a community. This was originally your idea and it worked for longer than you expected. Just when you really started to hope for a better world, the camp was destroyed. You still have hope, because you have nothing else. You truly believe that human beings shouldn't be alone. People can be better than what they seem. You always believe in the greater good. Maybe everything is just another Gods plan, who knows?

Questions

- What do you think about The Freshman?
- What do you think about The Strong?
- What do you think about The Survivor?
- What bothers you most about The Strong?

The Survivor (required)

The world will not get better and if we don't stay sharp, we will be dead very soon or even worse than that. Today, history doesn't matter. There are no reputations or good will. Today is only surviving and when it comes down to it, you will do whatever it takes to survive.

Questions

- What is the most terrible thing you have done in order to survive?
- Why do you keep going? Wouldn't it be easier to just die and find some peace?
- Who is the person that you don't like? Why?

Introduction Letter

I don't know how, but it happened. It was maybe 3 or 4 years ago... we don't know anymore because we lost track of time... we just know it was long time ago. After the end, everyday have been a journey through surviving. A week looks like a month, a month like a year... The only things that last from the old times are few survivors and zombies... hundreds of them... not hundreds, thousands... Most of the population turned into zombies, but humans killed the others that survived. People got crazy and scared, and I realise that fear is the most powerful emotion that we can have. Fear keeps us alive and fighting for another day. These days find food is very hard, and survive are very difficulty. It isn't like any zombie movie that I watched...

The Family Letter

The last months have been very hard as The Future can't travel anymore; she is extremely pregnant (fuck!). The Protector has been doing his best to get supplies, food, and make sure everybody is safe! Very soon the baby will arrive in this crap world, and I always wonder what will happen. The Protector has also been paranoid about everything, maybe the idea of having a kid is freaking him out. The Realist always thinks about the worst scenarios, but deep inside of each of us we know that he isn't totally wrong, we just don't want to see it, it is very hard to live without hope!

The Survivors Letter

In the beginning it looked like a new start. We had found hope in this community, but life, especially now, always put us down. We used to be about 25 souls trying to survive as best as we could, but last night our common fear struck us, and it didn't end well! During the night our camp was attacked by hundreds of zombies... we have no idea where they came from, but there they were! Very few of us survived. The Strong who always kept us alive; The Freshman who is the newest member of our community; The Hope who keeps us sane and believing in a possible better future; The Survivor who is sometimes our saviour and at others our worst nightmare.

*At some point in the game your group is going to meet the other group. When it is time, you should move to the other groups place, but **don't rush**, you have time. Remember that this is a new territory and none of you have been there before; the other group knows their territory very well. **They are strangers**, and you don't know anything about the people out there. **In these days people can be crazy.***

Fiction Decisions

Family Group:

- Where do you live? What does it look like?
- What is your approach when you meet strangers?
- What has been disturbing the relationship between the couple and why?
- What will be the baby's name?

Survivor Group:

- Where were you when the camp was attacked? (You were all separated).
- How did you manage to escape?
- What has happened to the group that is somewhat related to The Hope and his/her spirit of believing?
- Who is the leader of the group? Why?
- What is the next step after what happened?

Starting Message

Family Group Starting Message

Another day, another opportunity for suffering. The Future woke up with terrible pain and contractions. The Protector is very worried about his wife's health. The Realist believes that this is just a normal day in this abnormal world.

Survivor Group Starting Message

It is almost sunrise, and a few hours have passed since the attack. During the past few hours you have been hiding, avoiding the zombies, and trying to stay alive. Maybe now it is safe to go looking for the others who might have survived the attack and find some supplies. Everyone is separated and doesn't know who is alive.



HERE LIES _____

by

Tracy Barnett

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

SERIOUS, RELATIONSHIPS

A group-created eulogy for a made-up person that results in a tangible artifact to represent that person.

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HERE LIES _____

(a freeform game for three to ??? people in 30-60 minutes. written by tracy barnett, edited by jeremy morgan)
Everything needed for play is included, save for the utensils needed to create The Artifact. For the Artifact, you will need additional paper and writing or drawing utensils.

Read all of the text below, out loud to the group, prior to play.

We are gathered to commemorate a life.

You were a friend, enemy, acquaintance, lover, sibling, child, or parent, to the Eulogized, and today, all gathered with sing their life to all who have ears to hear.

One of you is the Recorder and will transcribe the Eulogy. The Recorder can transcribe however they wish; using words, by drawing, by writing a melody, etc. Whatever the means of transcription, the Recorder will have an Artifact to present at the end of play, a memorial to the Eulogized.

The rest of the group are Speakers, giving words that will be used to build the Eulogy and create the Artifact.

The Eulogy will be built in rounds.

First, single words:

The Speakers will speak single words to describe the Eulogized. Four words must be spoken, regardless of the size of the group.

Following single words, sentences:

The Speakers will make statements about the Eulogized. Four statements must be spoken, regardless of the size of the group.

Following sentences, paragraphs:

The Speakers will make extended statements about the Eulogized, building on what was established by the previous rounds. Four extended statements must be made, regardless of the size of the group.

Following paragraphs, silence:

The Speakers will remain silent, absorbing what was said and what was not said. The silence will last no less than 5 minutes.

Following silence, presentation:

The Recorder will present the Artifact, the lasting record of the life of the Eulogized. The Speakers and the Recorder will observe, comment, and when appropriate, go their separate ways, back to the lives they themselves live.

Suggestions for play:

- This is an emotional game. Be sensitive to the nature of the topic
- If there are topics that the group is not comfortable with, discuss them, then do not bring them into play. Be respectful.
- The Artifact can be of any form the Recorder wishes. Input from the group is encouraged.
- The duties of the Recorder can rotate as the group sees fit.
- Listen, collaborate, encourage, and support each other. This is a shared experience.



Hibernation Agents *by* Orion Canning

TABLETOP ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, AMNESIA, SCIENCE-FICTION, SURVIVAL, MILITARY / WARFARE, ESPIONAGE, RELATIONSHIPS, SURREAL

Hibernation Agents is a game for 3 to 6 players about capable agents awakening after hundreds of years into a strange world. Inspired by the comic series Prophet, it tells cinematic sci-fi stories of not quite heroes navigating surreal alien landscapes with only their instincts and wit to guide them.

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<https://www.youtube.com/user/hoodoo2060/> , <http://orioncanning.blogspot.com/>



HIBERNATION AGENTS

***ORION
CANNING***

Hibernation Agents by Orion Canning

Written October 2014 for the Golden Cobra Challenge

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I borrowed the following art without asking from
deviantart artists:

ALIEN THING by SirenD, The Elemental Diya by
Shimmering-Sword, mountain by weremoon, and Free texture -
Blood Splatter by smileys-4-eva

P.S.

If you like this game, hate it, played it, want to write about it, just read it, or have any other sort of questions or comments, I would love to hear from you. You can email me at OrionCanning at gmail dot com. Thanks!

Introduction

This is a freeform story game for 3-6 players. It can be played for as long as you like, for as many sessions as you want to play. A single session could look like just introducing your characters, or watching them interact for a while, or playing out the conclusion of one or more of their missions. Figure out with your group how long you want to play and what you hope to get out of the game.

The materials you need to play are: These rules, paper to write on (print out the character sheets if you want), pens or pencils, a six sided dice, and tokens (as many as there are players)

You'll be playing a bunch of characters in a sci fi space setting. Your characters can be anywhere from more or less human to completely alien, and are also on some sort of mission. The game can have a pulp fiction sci-fi style, or be a much more surreal and strange journey in a distant future, sort of like Conan or the Grey Mouser in space.

Play style

In this game, the story is intended to be told in a certain style. Table talk and out of character conversations should be kept to a minimum. Describe things visually, including our perspective, as if describing a scene from a movie, or a photograph. What you describe is like what is inside the frame of a movie screen, things outside of the frame are "off screen". Keep exposition to a minimum; generally if you can tell us about something by showing us instead, do that. Don't spend a lot of time explaining what's happening "off screen" or trying to fill in all of the gaps in our knowledge of the world. This way much of the world is ambiguous and exists only as a mystery for us to explore. But do use omniscient narration now and then to tell an interesting and evocative bit of information.

In addition, in this game you pick from a list of moves, and the move you pick determines what you can talk about in the fiction. You should keep this relatively brief. Imagine the length of a paragraph, 3-5 sentences or so, or even less than that, that's about what you should aim for. Whenever you interact with the mechanics of a move, you show how that happens in the fiction.

For example if I wanted to talk about the birthing pits of my character's native planet, I should not simply say, "On the planet my character comes from, there are huge pits tended by a subclass of lizard creatures. The pits are concave and warmest at the bottom, thus the eggs are constantly circulated in a massive pile. We all remember our time inside the eggs, and the comforting sound of the shell's of our brethren scraping together as the heat ebbed and flowed."

You should instead show that "on screen" somehow. For example, "We see my character's scaled face, relaxed, bathed in the glow of her bio pod as she sleeps. The light slowly ebbs from blue to red and back again. We slowly zoom in on her eyelid. Then we see her dream. We are inside an eggshell, warm and white, floating in clear fluid. A red light passes over the shell as we hear soft scraping sounds sliding against the outside, along with circular shadows moving past. As the red light shining through the shell fades to blue, we curl up tighter, and shiver slightly. Back in the real world, we see her smile."

It can be okay to use a small amount of exposition. You could add at the end of the above paragraph, "She feels happy and safe, happy that it didn't get too warm, and happy that the warmth will soon return before it gets too cold. In her dream she will imagine her birth mother placing the first crack in her shell, even though that was never meant to be." Or to be more minimal, you might only say, "We see my character's face, relaxed as her bio pod slowly ebbs green and red light across her eyelids. She dreams of her time living inside a shell in the birthing pits, and smiles."

Also, use techno-babble. It's okay to talk about things like "birthing pits" or "bio pods" without defining them right away, that thing will float in our imaginations, something we can describe later on, or continue to wonder about. Sometimes the meaning of what we describe will be unclear, and leave room for ambiguity and mystery. Keep these mysteries in mind, and slowly build on some, while others are left unknown. (For technobabble inspiration, try <http://eng.ussmatrix.org/generator.html>.)

If you ever feel confused or uncomfortable however, please do feel free to talk out of character. You can always stop the game and talk about what's happening if you need to.

One tool for making it easier to deal with something that's making you uncomfortable in the game is an X-Card. Draw a large X on a piece of paper and place it in the middle of the table. Anytime you are feeling uncomfortable with the material, simply reach out and touch the X-card to signal for the game to stop. You can also signal by making an x with your finger and arms, by saying "X" out loud, or using another agreed upon term or signal that works best for your group (our group uses the term "veil", as in, "I want to veil that.") The thing you are x-ing out could be anything, the name of an ex, spiders, child abuse, a cartoon rabbit. Anything that's spoiling your fun.

From this point you may need to clarify what exactly was making you uncomfortable, but no one should question why or ask you to give a reason that you don't want that thing in the game, they should accept and support removing that thing from the fiction. You might also need to discuss whether it's okay for that thing to happen in the fiction, but without any description of it, perhaps fading to black or cutting past it (with a sex scene or violence, for example). Or maybe you would rather that thing didn't happen in the fiction at all, and don't want it to happen again for the rest of the story. Again, everyone should go with your decision, no questions asked.

THE AWAKENING

The first part of the game is called **The Awakening**. Each player takes a turn playing an **Awakening Scene** about their character. When it's your turn you become the **Focus Player**. You will create and play as an **Agent** over the course of the Awakening Scene. When you are playing your agent you are called an **Active Agent**.

During your scene you will make the following moves:

- Show your Agent
- Name your Agent
- Show what awakening looks like
- Show what being on a mission looks like
- Take inventory of your kit

The other players who are not controlling their Agent's are simply called **Players**. They will:

- Describe the alien landscape
- Introduce a contact
- Show a Contact
- Introduce and resolve conflict

When you're the Active Agent take all the tokens. When you make a move, do that thing and spend a token, giving it to another player. They may now spend that token to make a move. When other players make a move, they give their token back to you, the Active Agent. If you want a particular player to respond to your move, you should give them the token. You can make moves in any order.

If you are the Active Agent, once each move has been used at least once, each player has made a move, and you feel the scene is ready to come to a close, you may make a move and then place your token in the center of the play space instead of giving it to another player. Once you do so the other players may also place tokens there after making a move, if they wish. When all the tokens are placed in the center, the scene ends. Keep passing tokens and making moves until that point.

ACTIVE AGENT MOVES

Show your Agent

Tell us visually what their body and clothing look like. You may wish to include other senses, like scent and touch. How does their body shape their interaction with the world? How do they move around? How do they perceive the world? Show how they eat (or acquire energy and resources), heal wounds, sleep, reproduce, or any other pertinent biological processes.

Show what your character's personality is like by showing how they respond to other characters and conflicts in their environment. Sometimes, narrate their thoughts, but mostly show us what they are like through their words and actions. When they talk to someone, tell us what they say, or even act it out, speaking as them, showing us their facial expressions.

No need to do all these things at once. Each time you use this move, you can focus on one detail, then we'll find out more as we go. But we should get a good general idea of your character before the awakening scene is over.

Name your Agent

You will want to give your character a name at some point during the awakening scene. Show us your name somehow, by having someone say it, or having it written somewhere, or narrating your character remembering it. Write down the name on your character sheet.

Take inventory of your kit

This move will probably be used relatively early on and can only be used once, until you take on a new mission. When you first use it, each other player will take a turn writing down the name of something in your kit on your character sheet. When they are done, write down one last item. Then read the list aloud, and describe how your character acquires them, takes inventory, or is carrying them around. In addition to objects carried with you,

your kit might include useful genetic or cybernetic modifications to your body that will be useful on your mission or the particular planet you are on. It could even be a specific skill or area of knowledge that you were trained in.

We don't need to know what these things are or what they are used for right away, but we know that they are useful tools that will become important for your mission later on. In fact, it's usually better if the names are both evocative and open to interpretation.

Show what awakening looks like

Your character is just now awakening to action. It could be that they have been held in some form of suspended animation, torpor, or hibernation. Perhaps they have been on a very long space voyage, maybe they are a manufactured creature that has just been reactivated or brought to life for the first time.

Maybe the awakening is more of a spiritual or philosophical one, after being blind to what's been happening in the universe for a long time, their own moral outrage or a sudden enlightenment is what spurs them to action. Whatever you decide, they have been oblivious or asleep for a long enough time that the world they wake to is quite alien. There are certainly traces of the old world you remember, but imagine that hundreds or even thousands of years have passed. This will allow you to be surprised by what other players introduce.

Show what being on a mission looks like

Your character is on a mission. It could be a mission they have decided for themselves, or it could be a mission given to them by a larger group or organization. Maybe an intelligent supercomputer, a remnant of an old planetary nation, has reactivated, and awakened you to be its agent in the physical world. Perhaps you were trained for this mission long ago and have been waiting many years to begin, or you might have been given a new and immediate task. Maybe the mission is programmed into your memory banks, or maybe you are called

to an emperor's throne room where the mission is read to you from a scroll. Show us what being on a mission is like for your character.

After you use this move the first time, write "Mission" on a piece of paper. Under that write Success, and draw 5 empty circles next to it, and under that write Failure with 5 more empty circles. Keep this piece of paper nearby you, but where the other players can see it. When you show what the goal of the mission is, write it down. Whenever you resolve a conflict directly related to the success of your mission, on a success fill in one of the success circles for your mission. On a failure fill in one of the failure circles. On a partial success fill in neither.

If you fill in all five success circles, you get to show how the mission succeeds. After the scene you are allowed to say what the consequences and rewards of succeeding at your mission are. If you fill in all the failure circles, you fail the mission. At the end of the scene the other players can decide what the consequences of failure are. Don't go too far into it, suggest some things and then show them in more detail later in a scene. After you succeed or fail at a mission, you can take on a new mission anytime. Also, if you succeed at a mission, after you take on a new mission you can use the *take inventory of your kit* move again.

At any point later on, you may use this move to change your mission. Do this when your character no longer desires to complete their old mission. Their new mission can be to actively oppose the success of their old mission, or a different mission entirely. They might be persuaded to do so by other characters or have their own motivations. Get rid of your old mission and lose any progress you made, writing out a new mission sheet if you need to. When you show the goal of your new mission, write it down.

MOVES FOR OTHER PLAYERS

Show the alien landscape

Use this move to show the Active Agent their surroundings. You may not show the Active Agent's character (that's their move), but you can say anything about the world around them, which includes introducing other minor creatures and characters. If you introduce something that can be a hazard here, it is either not an immediate danger, or the Active Player's character is capable of easily overcoming it. If characters are introduced, you may also describe them and tell us what they say.

Introduce a Contact

When you use this move, introduce a character who is important to the Active Agent's mission, or choose an already introduced minor character who is not already a contact. Show what the contact looks like and their name, and write the name down on a piece of paper.

Decide whether the Contact is a Support, Resource, or Opponent. This is called their **Standing**. This does not define their relationship with the Active Agent, but their relationship to the Active Agent's mission. A **Support** is sympathetic to the goal of the mission and either seeks to support the Active Player or could be easily convinced to do so. A **Resource** has something useful for the success of the mission, whether it's an object, information, status, privilege, or a helpful skill, but is otherwise indifferent towards the mission, and so other means must be used to gain the aid of them or their resource. An **Opponent** is actively opposed to the success of the mission, and will do everything in their power to prevent it from succeeding, or at least do their best. Write down whichever one you decided on the paper with the contact's name.

Show a Contact

Once a Contact is introduced, use this move to show what a contact says and does, or show other new details about them. It is mostly the same as the Show your Agent action, except it's for a contact.

You may establish their Relationship with another Agent if both players agree to the relationship. This looks like one player showing how their Contact's words or actions suggest that type of relationship, and then the Active Agent confirming or denying that suggestion with their own actions. It can also happen if the Active Agent suggests a Relationship with their actions, and then someone uses this move to confirm it. You can choose between Friend, Enemy, or Lover.

A Friend notices the Agent's positive qualities, seeks positive interactions with the Agent, and enjoys spending time with them. A Friend may attempt to assist the Agent, but will expect the Agent to return the favor somehow.

An Enemy dislikes the Agent and focuses on their Negative qualities, wishes them harm, and detests spending time with them. An Enemy might actively seek the Agent's harm if they believe they have the upper hand.

A Lover probably acts much like a friend does, but not necessarily. A lover can act like a friend or an enemy, and can switch between acting like a friend at one time and an enemy at another as often as you like. A Lover actively pursues romance and/or pleasurable sexual encounters with the Agent.

If a relationship is confirmed write down the name of the Agent and the relationship on the Contact's piece of paper. If a new relationship is later confirmed between these characters, cross out the old relationship and write down the new one underneath. The Agent should also write down the relationship on their character sheet.

Introduce and resolve conflict

Use this move to introduce a conflict that stands in the way of the goals of the Active Agent's character. You may use this move to introduce a new situation, or when it seems that an existing situation has become a conflict. Show the stakes and nature of the conflict, then ask the Active Agent what they do. If an Active Agent is shown doing something, and no one creates a conflict in response, the Active Agent succeeds.

After the Active Agent describes how they will respond, they will ask one of the other players what failure looks like. That player answers, then the Active Agent asks another player what success looks like. That player tells them, then the Active Player rolls a D6. On a 2 or less, it's a failure, and they show what happens based on what the other player said failure would look like. On a 5 or higher, it's a success, and they show what happens based on what success was said to look like. On a 3 or 4, it's a partial success, and the Active Agent uses elements from both answers to figure out what happens and describe it.

If a Contact or another Agent is involved in a conflict, they can attempt to affect the outcome. If they are a friend of the Active Agent they can assist and give them a +1 to their roll. An enemy can interfere with the action and subtract 1 from the roll. A lover can do either.

In addition if the conflict is directly related to the success of the Active Agent's mission, a contact or Agent can assist or oppose the Active Agent regardless of their Relationship, depending on their Standing with the Active Agent. If their Standing is Support, they can assist and add +1 to the Active Agent's roll; if they are an Opponent, they can interfere and subtract 1; and an asset can do either. The player who last showed or introduced the contact should say what the contact does, and show how they do it.

Contacts can be killed as the result of a conflict. A conflict can also result in giving an Agent a Tag, written on their character sheet. A Tag is a word or phrase that represents something about the Agent's condition in the fiction. Negative Tags are called Debilities, and Positive Tags are called Advantages. If one or more Debilities are relevant to an Agent's actions in a conflict, they get -1 to their roll. If One or more Advantages are relevant, the Agent gets +1.

Debilities can only be given as a result of a failed conflict, Advantages can only be gained from success, only a single Tag should be given after any conflict, and Tags should not be given in addition to a character dying. Also, instead of giving a Tag, a failed conflict can instead remove a single Advantage, and a successful conflict can remove one Debility. After a partial success, an Agent can remove a positive tag in exchange for a different positive tag they decide, or exchange a negative tag for a different negative tag. An Agent taking an action that would fictionally remove a Debility is a good focus for a conflict.

If an Agent has 4 or more Debilities, they can be killed as the result of a conflict. The player saying what success or failure looks like should also say if death of a Contact or Agent, or a Tag is part of the outcome. A player whose Agent dies should play another Awakening Scene the next time they are the Focus Player to make a new Agent. It's also perfectly fine to have your dead agent regenerate, be reborn, or otherwise return from the dead somehow if you like. Perhaps we only thought they were dead.

Finally, an agent can spend an item from their Kit to automatically succeed at any point during a conflict. When you do that, show how you use the item to succeed and what success looks like.

AFTER THE AWAKENING

After each player has taken a turn playing out an Awakening Scene, play continues in much the same fashion. Players continue taking turns being the Focus Player. The Focus Player will play their Agent in the scene and thus be an Active Agent.

They can also choose other players to be Active Agents in the scene with them, as long as at least one player is not an Active Agent. Active Agents can suggest and agree on relationships with each other during scenes, and can decide on their Status or change their Status with another Agent at any time. It's possible that your Agents knew each other before their hibernation, or you could be meeting for the first time.

Active Agents can now use the following moves:

- Show your Agent.
- Describe the alien landscape
- Show what being on a mission looks like

Other players can:

- Describe the alien landscape
- Introduce a contact
- Show a Contact
- Introduce and resolve conflict

At the beginning of each turn, after Active Agents are chosen, take all the tokens and divide them as evenly as possible among the other players. Any of the Active Players can spend a token to the middle of the play space after any move, which lets any of the other players do so as well. As before, when all tokens are placed in the middle of the play space, the scene ends.

Play until you find the resolution you are searching for, whether that means completing all of your missions, finding love and friendship, or defeating your enemies. Sometimes, end the game with a final question unanswered, left as a mystery.

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION

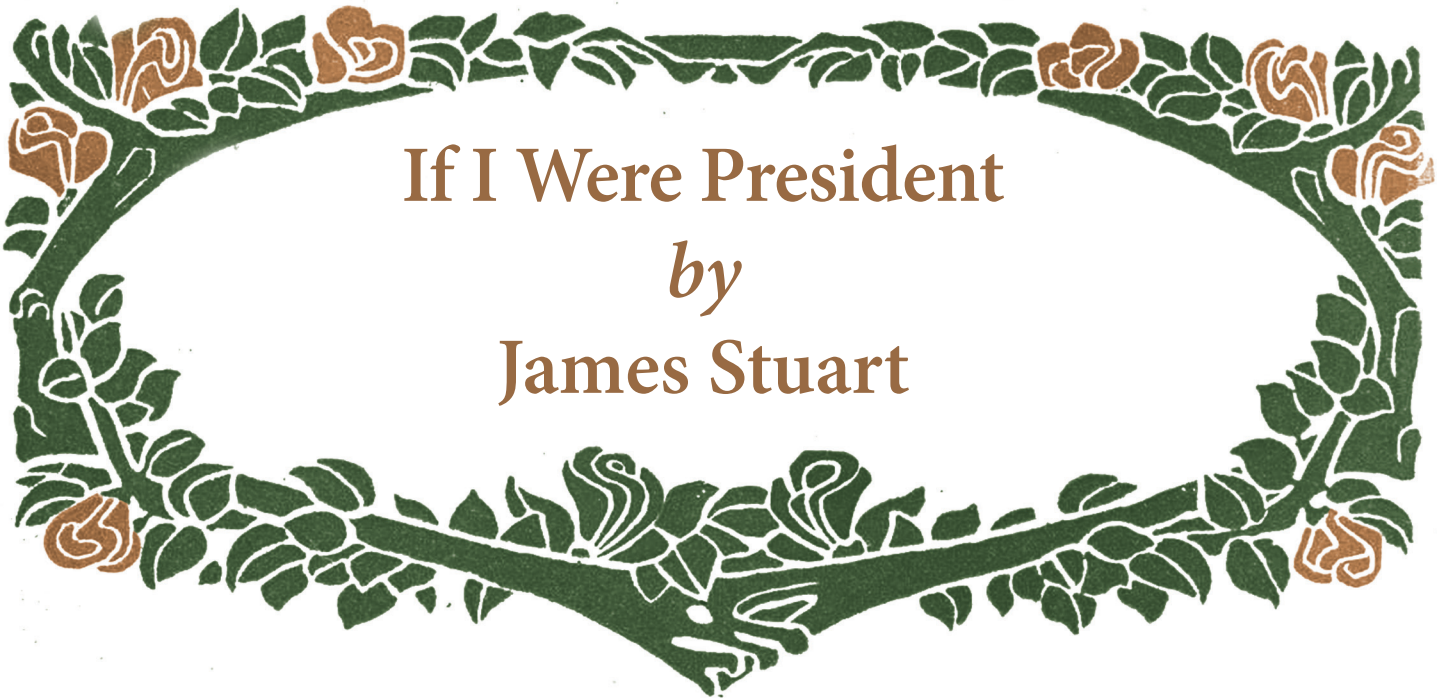
[illegible][illegible]

KIT

[illegible]

You awaken to an alien world. Everything is strange and unfamiliar, but there's something about this place... Remember your training, your purpose. What is your purpose? No matter, there is work to be done. You are ready. You can do this.

Hibernation Agents is a game for 3 to 6 players about highly capable agents awakening after hundreds or thousands of years into a strange and unknown world. They will have to form relationships with alien creatures and other agents to complete their mission, and use the powerful and specialized tools given to them to survive. But in this strange and complex, often political world, betrayal is common. You may have to decide what is more important, your mission, or your friends. After spending so long in hibernation, how can you be sure what to believe in?



If I Were President *by* James Stuart

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

COMEDY, SCIENCE-FICTION, SURREAL

The year is 20XX. The presidential debate is at hand: do you support rights for sentient toasters? How about time travel research in order to save endangered species? Play presidential candidates, media handlers, and just hard-working citizens deciding whether to blow up the moon to stimulate the economy.

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IF I WERE PRESIDENT - 22XX HYPER EDITION

WHAT IS THIS?

We will play a presidential debate in the near future. Some of us will be candidates, some of us reporters, some of us just normal people with questions to ask of the big shots.

The candidates will big make big speeches, and snipe at each other while tackling issues like genetic selection, drones, and subliminal corporate ads for kids.

A president will be elected, and then we'll flash forward twenty years. We'll do it again, and again, and again, envisioning a weirder and wilder future, until there's no more Republicans and Democrats, just robot toasters agitating for rights, while candidates debate whether blowing up the moon would be good for the economy.

HOW DO I PLAY?

Gather 3-10 people in a place where you can give loud speeches and be silly for one to two hours. Print out these rules, and a set of the role cards.

Read aloud "What Is This?" then continue on to...

SAFETY FIRST

The door is always open in this game. You're here to have fun, and to help other people have fun. If at any point you're not having fun, feel free to leave. You don't need to explain why, and you can come back or not, your call. No one will judge you for it.

Similarly, politicians say stupid things sometimes. If what somebody's saying is awkward or offensive, don't let this ruin the game. If somebody says "Rubbish!" then change what you're speaking about, instantly. If somebody says "Cut!" then we all stop playing and take a breather.

TONE CHECK

Then say:

The tone of this game is a delicate balance: we're going for a mix of surrealist politics, utopic visions, and satire. Play each and every character as sincere (or weasel-mouthed) as they deserve. If you stop believing that your sentient toaster really deserves rights and start cracking bread puns, then it'll all fall apart.

More importantly, this game depends on earnest hope for the future. So I want everybody to close their eyes, and think of what you might hope the future holds. Does it mean living forever? Does it mean uploading your brain to the internet? Is it flying cars, or moddable bodies, talking animals, alien contact, or never having to sleep?

(wait a few seconds)

Now, what are you afraid might happen? Are you worried the world will plunge into war? That we'll run out of food? That people will just only interact with their phones and never talk? Take a few moments, and think about what you might dread about the future.

(wait a few seconds)

Now think for a moment of all the political debates you've watched, all the speeches you heard. Imagine that thrilling technology, those scary new vistas, and think of it being processed down into 15-second soundbites, into focus groups, into pre-rehearsed zingers.

(wait a few seconds)

Now open your eyes, and let's get ready for our first debate, ten years into the future.

Y'ALL GOT ISSUES

Before the first debate, figure out two important issues that are going to be key to this debate. Use the list of ideas on the last page to help suggest things. Try to keep the changes to our society modest at first, before exploding in the future.

Make it clear that anybody can veto any issue. When you have two issues that people are excited about, talk about them for a minute (but only a minute, keep it moving). If it's new technology, what does it look like? If it's changes in how society works, who likes this change, who's afraid of it?

When you've got the barest of grasps on the issues and facts at hand, just like all the politicians, you're ready to start.

LET'S GET READY TO...

Everybody should pick roles now. If this is the first debate, you should be the Moderator. There should be at least two Candidates, and a Moderator, but beyond that, it's up to you.

The Moderator's card gives all the instructions on how to start. If people not involved in the game walk up, or seem curious, let them join the fun! Give them a "What's This?" card, and then one of the unused Audience cards.

As the Moderator, pay attention to making sure everybody gets time to shine, and most of all, keep things moving.

Once things are winding down, the Moderator calls for closing statements, and you're done.

THE BIG PARTY

Everybody in the Audience now casts their vote for who wins. Moderator breaks ties.

The winner gives her victory speech, and lays out what they're going to do about those two issues once in office.

THE NEXT MORNING

Everybody else now creates one scene that takes place during that president's term, addressing one of those policies and some complications.

Examples:

- A news reporter reporting on the unexpected consequences of one of the policies. Go to a live interview with somebody affected.
- The other policy passes, but only after some compromises. Report on what those compromises are. Interview the President and the opposition.

A BRIGHT TOMORROW

Move the game 10-50 years into the future. Whoever was President probably isn't going to be running this time, unless they've instituted a dictatorship, or it's their cloned descendant, or unless they were a robot all along, which when you add all of those odds together, is pretty likely.

Come up with new issues, build off what's already happened, and go for another debate.

After you've done a few of these, see if the game's done. If you're out of steam or want to end on a high note or you just got places to be, then end it right there. Congratulations! You're experts on the future. May your consulting fees be ever large.

IF I WERE PRESIDENT – *THE FUTURE*

TRACKING CHIPS FOR KIDS

CORPORATE-RUN KINDERGARTEN

“DESIGNER” BABIES

DEBT REFORMATION CAMPS

AI DOCTORS IN HOSPITALS

LEGALIZING ALL DRUGS

BRAIN-BASED INTERNET JACKS

REPLACING LITERATURE WITH PRO-GRAMMING

ERADICATING THE “DARK” INTERNET

NATIONAL INTERNET IDENTITIES

SELF-DRIVING CARS

BANNING MOON TOURISM

ONE DOLLAR, ONE VOTE

LAW ENFORCEMENT ROBOTS

MOON COLONIES

RIGHTS FOR SPEECH-ENABLED PETS

CLONING TECHNOLOGY

NEOCORP CITIES

ANIMAL SPLICING

MEMORY TRANSPLANTS

INDEPENDENCE FOR MARS COLONY

MARRIAGE FOR ROBOT SURROGATES

REPLACEMENT OF ENGLISH WITH EVU
(ENHANCED VOCAL UTTERANCES)

RETIREMENT AT AGE 30

RESPONDING TO FIRST ALIEN CONTACT

RECONSTITUTING ANTARCTICA WITH
SYNTHETIC ICE

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THAT ASTEROID?

COLONIZATION TO ALPHA CENTAURI

FORCED IMMORTALITY TREATMENTS

ANTI-VIOLENCE BEHAVIOR CHIPS

HIVEMINDS

ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT

MANDATORY POPULATION GROWTH

BANNING OF ‘PLEASURE’ FOR GREATER
PRODUCTIVITY

LIFTING THE BAN ON SELF-REPLICAT-
ING NANOTECH

RIGHTS FOR ALL ELECTRICAL APPLI-
ANCES

QUICK-SWITCH IDENTITIES

RESEARCH INTO TIME-TRAVEL FOR
SAVING EXTINCT SPECIES

THE TWO HOUR WORK-WEEK

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS IS A PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE
...IN THE FUTURE.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!
YOU TOO CAN MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

GROUND RULES:

CLAP/CHEER/HISS, BUT DON'T INTERRUPT
OTHERS.

WAIT FOR THE MODERATOR TO CALL ON YOU
IF SOMEBODY SAYS "RUBBISH", THAT MEANS
CHANGE TOPICS, IMMEDIATELY.

IF SOMEBODY SAYS "CUT", STOP PLAYING
TRY AND STICK TO THE "ISSUES"
DON'T BE A JERK.

AUDIENCE - THE STORYTELLER

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WITH A STORY
- THAT STORY'S VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU
- THAT STORY HAS TO DEAL WITH ONE OF THE ISSUES, AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY
- THAT STORY'S NOT GOING TO BE RUSHED
- DIRECT THE STORY TO A CANDIDATE IN PARTICULAR, BUT DON'T ASK A QUESTION UNLESS YOU'RE FORCED TO
- MAKE THE MODERATOR AND CANDIDATES MILDLY ANNOYED, BUT DON'T DERAIL THE GAME

AUDIENCE - THE TRAGIC

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WHO TRAVELLED FAR TO BE HERE
- GOING TO BE HEARD
- SOMEONE WITH A TERRIBLE THING THAT HAPPENED TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVED BECAUSE OF ONE OF THE ISSUES
- DEMANDING THAT THIS NOT HAPPEN AGAIN
- SURE THAT PROMISES ARE THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS
- SOMEONE WHO WANTS RESPECT AND DIGINTY

AUDIENCE - THE NORMAL

YOU ARE:

- JUST A NORMAL PERSON/ROBOT/SENTIENT NANOMASS
- SOMEONE WITH NORMAL PROBLEMS
- SOMEONE WHO'S GOING TO VOTE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO HELP YOU
- JUST GOING TO LET THEM KNOW YOUR DEAL, ASK A QUESTION ABOUT HOW THEY'RE GOING TO HELP YOU
- NOT GOING TO LET THEM GO BACK ON BIG IDEAS, ON CAMPAIGN PLATITUDES.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS IS A PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE
...IN THE FUTURE.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS! YOU TOO CAN MAKE
YOUR VOICE HEARD

GROUND RULES:

CLAP/CHEER/HISS, BUT DON'T INTERRUPT
OTHERS.

WAIT FOR THE MODERATOR TO CALL ON YOU
IF SOMEBODY SAYS "RUBBISH", THAT MEANS
CHANGE TOPICS, IMMEDIATELY.

IF SOMEBODY SAYS "CUT", STOP PLAYING
TRY AND STICK TO THE "ISSUES"
DON'T BE A JERK.

AUDIENCE - THE GOTCHA

YOU ARE:

- CLEVER, OH SO SO CLEVER
- CYNICAL, OH SO CYNICAL
- GOT A REALLY SIMPLE QUESTION FOR ONE OF THE CANDIDATES ON ONE OF THE ISSUES
- BUT WHEN THEY ANSWER IT, THEY CLEARLY HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF YOUR FOLLOWUP!
- ARE YOU SMARTER BECAUSE OF YOUR DEGREES? OR MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT WISDOM THESE STUFFED SUITS CAN'T MATCH

AUDIENCE - JUST HAPPY TO BE HERE

YOU ARE:

- EXCITED
- REALLY EXCITED
- SOMEONE WHO MAYBE HAS A CRUSH ON ONE OF THE CANDIDATES
- GOING TO BE ON TV!!!!111!!
- OH GOD YOU HAD A REALLY GOOD QUESTION WHAT WAS IT WHAT WAS IT THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING I'M ON TV AND NOW I'M JUST GOING TO DISAPPEAR FOREVER
- GOING TO MAYBE JUST ASK SOMETHING REALLY PERSONAL <3

AUDIENCE - THE SIMPLE

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS THINGS ARE SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD
- GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE WHO KNOWS HOW TO GET STUFF DONE
- THE KIND OF PERSON WHO LETS PEOPLE KNOW HOW SALT OF THE EARTH YOU ARE
- SURE THAT THERE OUGHTA BE SIMPLE ANSWERS TO THE BIG PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD.

AUDIENCE - THE IDEALISTIC

YOU ARE:

- A BELIEVER IN THE FUTURE
- SOMEONE WHO WANTS IT FASTER
- WORRIED THAT POLITICIANS ARE GOING TO GET IN THE WAY
- MAYBE SOMEONE WHO JUST WANTS THE POLITICIANS TO PROVE THEY'RE COOL AND DOWN WITH IT
- MAYBE SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO LET THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE KNOW THAT THE REVOLUTION IS COMING, AND THE OLD FOLKS ARE FIRST AGAINST THE WALL

CANDIDATE - THE INCUMBENT

YOU ARE:

- IN CHARGE
- ARE THE ONLY ONE WITH THE EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO MAKE THINGS HAPPENING
- READY TO PIN THE BLAME ON OTHERS
- GOING TO FIX ANYTHING BAD THAT'S HAPPENING
- VICIOUS WHEN CORNED
- SO KIND AS TO LET THESE OTHER, LESSER POLITICIANS SHARE THE STAGE WITH YOU

CANDIDATE - THE SMILER

YOU ARE:

- LEADING IN ALL THE POLLS
- SOMEONE WHO KNOWS EXACTLY HOW TO KISS A BABY.
- REALLY WELL PREPARED FOR THIS DEBATE, BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN TRAINING TWELVE HOURS A DAY FOR THE LAST WEEK
- CERTAIN THAT THIS IS YOUR TIME
- SOMEONE WHO NEVER LETS THAT SMILE CRACK, NO MATTER THE SITUATION
- A CIPHER AS FAR AS WHAT YOU'D ACTUALLY DO WHEN IN OFFICE

CANDIDATE - THE REBEL

YOU ARE:

- SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BRING THE WHOLE SYSTEM DOWN
- SOMEONE WHO SEES ALL THE CORRUPTION IN WASHINGTON
- SOMEONE WHO IS AN INSPIRING SPEAKER, PHOTOGENIC, AND WITH A DEVOTED FOLLOWING
- AIMING TO TAKE DOWN THE OTHER CANDIDATES AND MAKE THEM LOOK EMBARRASSED AT ALL COSTS
- MAYBE JUST RIDING THE FAME AND ATTENTION OF THIS DOOMED CAMPAIGN

MODERATOR - THE DIGNIFIED

YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE THIS FAIR, RESPECTFUL, DIGNIFIED, AND EDUCATIONAL.

YOU HAVE AN IMPOSSIBLE JOB.

SCHEDULE: OPENING STATEMENTS, CALL ON AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO ASK QUESTIONS, CLOSING STATEMENTS

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS IF THE AUDIENCE IS LAGGING.

KEEP THINGS BRISK, AND FUN

MOVE ON FROM ICKY TOPICS QUICKLY.

GIVE OUT "WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?" CARDS TO PEOPLE WHO WANDER BY.

MODERATOR - THE FRESH TALENT

YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT POLITICS, BUT THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU GREAT.

YOUR JOB IS TO LOOK GREAT AND BE COOL

SCHEDULE: OPENING STATEMENTS, CALL ON AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO ASK QUESTIONS, CLOSING STATEMENTS

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS IF THE AUDIENCE IS LAGGING.

KEEP THINGS BRISK, AND FUN

MOVE ON FROM ICKY TOPICS QUICKLY.

GIVE OUT "WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?" CARDS TO PEOPLE WHO WANDER BY.

CANDIDATE - THE BUSINESSMAN

YOU ARE:

- RICH
- MULTIPLE SWIMMING POOLS FULL OF MONEY RICH
- BUT FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS WHERE YOU HAD A (SOMEWHAT) LOWER NUMBER OF SWIMMING POOLS
- AND OBVIOUSLY, THAT MEANS YOU'RE IDEALLY QUALIFIED TO RUN THE COUNTRY
- TOTALLY GOING TO HELP EVERYBODY ELSE BECOME RICH AND PROSPEROUS
- GOING TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE WHEN YOU SAY THAT.

CANDIDATE - THE FRINGE

YOU ARE:

- SOMEONE WHO'S FIGURED IT OUT
- IT'S REALLY SIMPLE: EVERYTHING WOULD WORK OUT IF WE JUST DID...
- SOMEONE WITH LOTS OF QUAIN AND MADE-UP PHRASES FOR WHAT THE PROBLEMS ARE WITH THE GOVERNMENT
- SURE THAT IT'S THE MEDIA AND THE GOVERNMENT AND EVERYBODY OUT TO GET TO YOU
- JUST WAITING FOR UTOPIA IT'S COMING IT'S COMING FOR YOU



Imagine
by
Rickard Elimää

VIGNETTE PLAY

EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, NON-CONFLICT BASED COLLABORATION

Are you a person who daydreams about what other people are like?

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<http://www.urverkspel.com/vara-spel/oevriga-projekt>



Imagine

A man is sitting on a bench. Daylight. People are passing by in the park. The exciting coo from the pigeons when they find bread crumbs on the ground.

A family dinner. The aroma of meatloaf. A game show is on the television. Two children. Two women. The wallpaper is typical for the 1970s.

Take the time and watch someone on the street. Who is that person? Where is she going? What happened in that person's past that shaped who she is today? How is she like when she's talking to her friends? Is there a special moment waiting that will turn her life around? What will she do when she will come of old age?

I remember when I did that, trying to come up with answers about someone I didn't know, and I got that tingling sensation in my gut as if I was riding a roller coaster. The same feeling I got the nights when I lay back in a field, watched the night sky and wondered how vast the universe really was.

This is what *Imagine* will do to us. We're going to follow several modern, fictive people and give them depth by both exploring their memories and to see their hopes and wishes come true.

Time and space will disappear as we become immersed in this fiction together. By sharing and contributing to the fiction we will build a fellowship as we create a collective memory.

The rest of the text will show how to tell a collaborative story to accomplish this.

KNOWING ONE ANOTHER

Start by presenting your name and then pick one line below and read it out loud. Pass the list around and let everybody do the same thing. Enforce these things in play!

"I promise to ..."

"... be open to learn how to appreciate this game."

"... leave a blank mind of where we're going."

"... keep the world ordinary and peaceful."

"... support the other participants and their ideas."

"... ask and discuss if I'm unsure of anything."

A mundane world.

A peaceful place.

Telling instead of acting.

We do this together.

Break the routines!

A story emerges.

No conflict!

We tell to find out.

No pressure. Relax!

Be aware of each other.

We're all unique. Nourish that.

Tell the first thing that springs into mind.

If you draw a blank, lean back.

THE OVERALL ROUTINE

A typical session consists of three situations.

- The first situation introduces a person or a group and what they are doing at the moment. We will deepen the situation by exploring their memories and hopes.
- The second situation does the same thing.
- The third situation is created by putting the people and their hopes from the two previous situations in the same activity. How do they relate to each other?

If we want to play a longer session, use the people and the hopes in the third situation, add a new second situation (fourth in the chart to the right) and then a third (fifth) that merges some of the previously established people and hopes. Repeat this routine up until we think that we can't add any more situations, when a participant needs to leave, or when we feel that the craving for knowing more of the fiction is filled. *Then the game ends.*

BREAK THE ROUTINES

Note how each descriptor below differs from the other:

The aroma of meatloaf. A game show is on the television. Two children.

Smell; sound; people. By constantly shifting between describing different elements, you will keep up interest of what is to come. You could assume different styles of narration, like hard-boiled noir or describing through emotions, or you could alter cadence by varying the length of the descriptors.

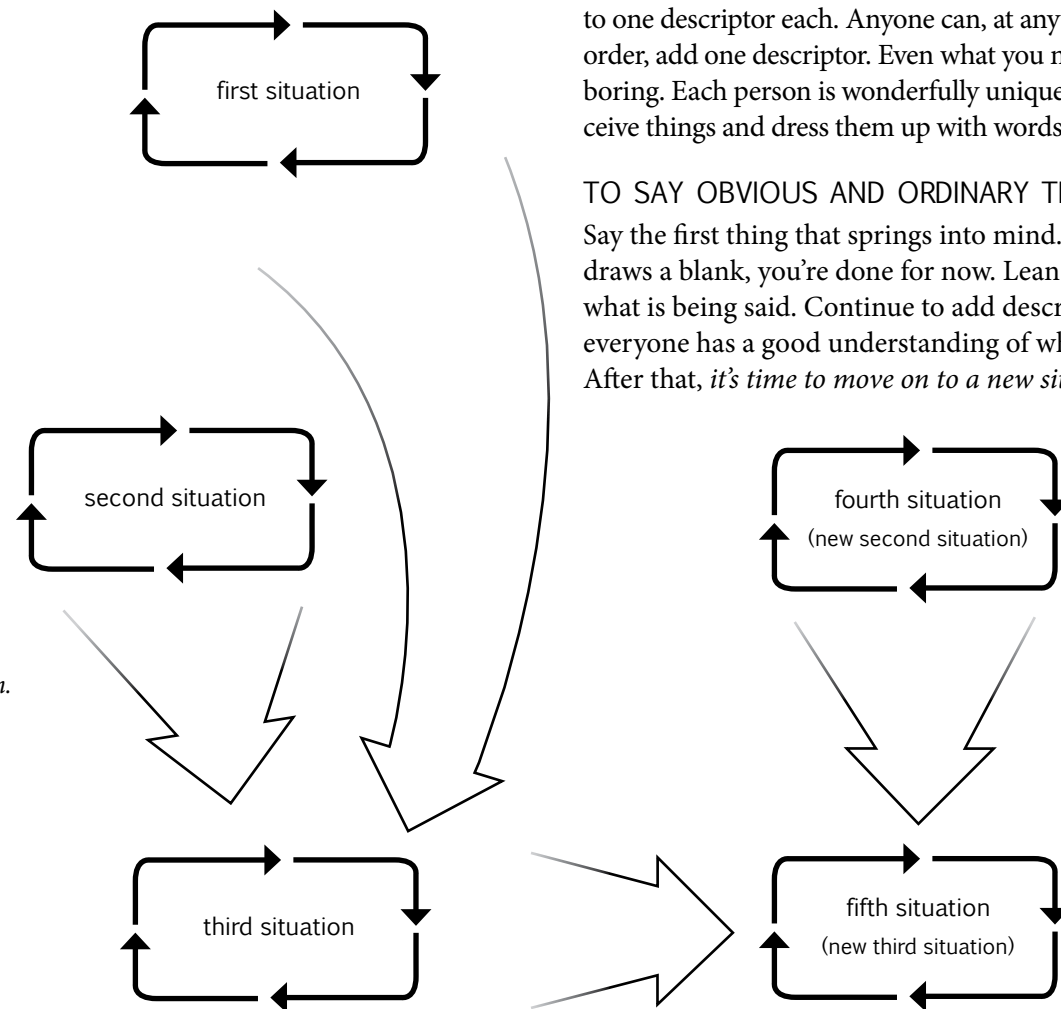
As soon as you notice that the descriptions aren't broadening the situation but instead deepening what has already been established, you have formed a routine. Break it! Describe something else, as long as it's in the same place during the same time. It doesn't even have to be relevant.

TAKE TURNS

Help yourself breaking the routines by limiting yourselves to one descriptor each. Anyone can, at any time and in any order, add one descriptor. Even what you might think of as boring. Each person is wonderfully unique in how we perceive things and dress them up with words. Cherish that!

TO SAY OBVIOUS AND ORDINARY THINGS

Say the first thing that springs into mind. If your mind draws a blank, you're done for now. Lean back and listen what is being said. Continue to add descriptors until everyone has a good understanding of what is going on. After that, *it's time to move on to a new situations.*



keep on building like these last two situations to achieve longer games

THE PRESENT TIMELINE

Play time: 1-5 minutes

A situation always starts in the PRESENT TIME. When is not important but it might be established. Make a fist to acknowledge that we're in the PRESENT TIME and encourage everybody to do the same thing to make it clearer.

Start with establishing one or more persons that are doing an activity. Then take turns to add more and more descriptors to it. The first page has two examples of what it can sound like. We may play out a dialogue between the characters in this timeline. During the course of the game, we will return to the PRESENT TIME to give it an update or move it towards the characters' HOPES.

LEAN FORWARD TO SHOW INTEREST

Everyone who wants to participate leans forward. If anyone feels that they don't have any more to contribute with to the current timeline, that person should lean backwards. When all but one leans backwards, *then it's time to move to another timeline.*

PLAY TO SEE WHERE EVERYTHING LEADS

When the flow of the descriptors fade and only one player is engaged, change timeline to bring MEMORIES and HOPES into the picture. Introduce ordinary ideas to see how they develop when everybody adds descriptors.

The main purpose of MEMORIES and HOPES is to add more fuel so the PRESENT can continue its course. When people think there is enough information to advance the PRESENT timeline, return to it and see where things go. If no one has any new ideas of how to evolve this situation, *start a new situation.*

Present Time



Memory



Hope



REVEAL MEMORIES

Play time: 1-3 minutes

If you want to introduce a relation, a happening or characters that will last long in the fiction during the PRESENT TIME, you must first establish it as a MEMORY. Cup your hands and encourage everybody else to do the same thing. Start with a person doing an activity. Take turns adding descriptors. Sometimes, describing only the activity will be enough.

A long lasting character will stay in the PRESENT TIME until the situation has come to its end. A clerk behind a counter, that will only exchange a few words with the established characters, doesn't have to be introduced as a MEMORY.

GIVE THE CHARACTERS HOPE

Play time: ~1 minute

Consequences are shown as HOPES. It can be a result of MEMORIES or the progress in the PRESENT TIME, but it can also introduce goals that everybody should strive for when playing out the PRESENT TIME.

A HOPE is all but only a short glimpse. Start off in the regular way with a hand gesture. This time, you reach into the air. Describe one or more people and the activity that they are doing. This alone will do just fine. It seldom happens that the moment is elaborated with more descriptors.

A situation has between 1-3 different glimpses of HOPES. The PRESENT TIME never plays them out but instead takes steps to move closer to them. The journey towards the end is more interesting than the end itself. If a HOPE shows the man on the bench winning at lottery, the PRESENT TIME should include him finding a lottery ticket somehow.

HOW TO PLAY OUT DIALOGUES

Dialogues should only happen in the **PRESENT** timeline. Before any character can talk, a description must first be done to tell what they are doing at the moment. “Sarah is taking out the plates from a cupboard: ‘Can you turn off the TV, please?’”.

Dialogues follows the same routine as anything else: only one line at time. This means that several people can talk for the same person.

BY USING TWO ELEMENTS

When adding descriptors, it’s always preferable to use one element to describe another. You could, for example, add a smell through a dialogue or time through an object:

“Keith waves his hand before his nose: ‘Who farted?’”
“The wallpaper is typical for the 1970s”.

The list to the right gives examples of elements to add if anyone finds it hard to come up with a descriptor. The best thing is to say the first thing that comes into mind because that’s the feeling you already have.

WHERE FINDING OUT IS THE INTERESTING PART

Imagine the world as peaceful and that the only thing that we’re going to experience is the happening of other peoples’ lives. It’s going to be tempting to involve conflict, like introducing a cheating spouse or having a person killed.

Don’t fall into this trap. If you introduce conflict in the first two situations, it will be harder to merge them together when it’s time for the third situation. It’s interesting enough to see where things go by experiencing the result from the unique ideas of each participant.

Smell

Sound

Light

Time

Object

Person

Place

Emotion

Dialogue

Something unexpected

Break routines!

DO MAKE MISTAKES

Sooner or later someone will add two descriptors in a row, forget to add a description before speaking in character, or forget to establish things as a **MEMORY** before introducing it in the **PRESENT**. Anything that becomes a pattern to follow is a routine and *Imagine* is built upon them. Break these routines!

When the group gets the hang of how to interact, we can loosen up on how to play this game. Mistakes will be made at the beginning of the game but over time play will become more fluid. All this is part of evolving this game.

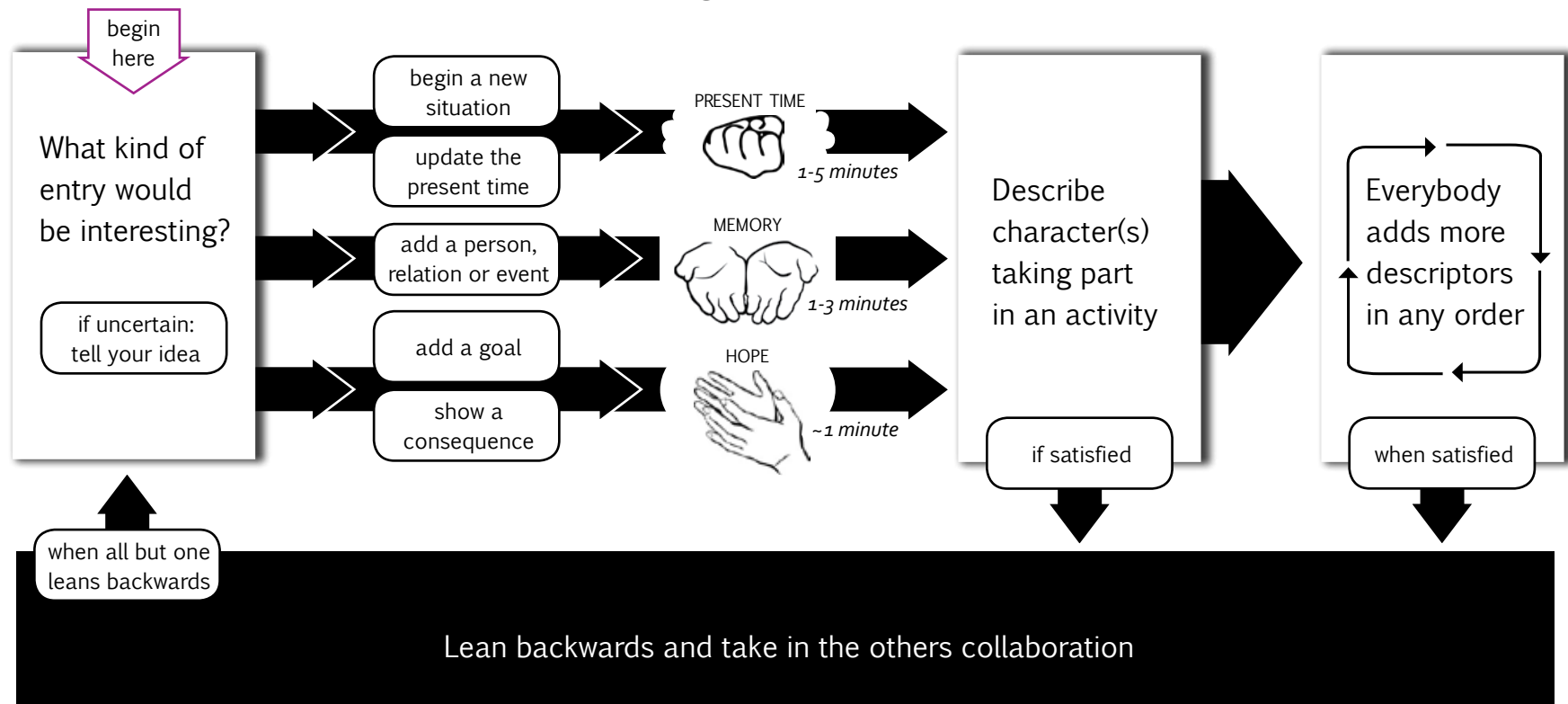
BECAUSE YOU EVOLVE THE GAME

Take time afterwards to talk about the game. Discuss what you thought worked and what can be changed next time to make the flow even better.

STEP BY STEP INTRODUCTION

- Explain the point of this game. (Page 1)
- Read the sentences on the first page out loud.
- Explain the overall routine and when the game ends. (P. 2)
- Show how it works with the three timelines. (P. 3)
- How to keep up interest? Break the routines! (P. 2)
- Explain how taking turns works. It’s we together that creates something. Play out to see where it leads. (P. 2)
- How does a situation end? Lean backwards when done contributing. (P. 3)
- Dialogues are for the **PRESENT** timeline only. (P. 4)
- A bonus, but not a requirement, if one element is used to describe another. (P. 4)
- Put a token in the **PRESENT TIME**. (P. 3)
- Begin the first situation. Explain what it must start with: person(s) and something they do. (P. 3)

Playing Out a Situation



A mundane world.

A peaceful place.

Telling instead of acting.

We do this together.

Break the routines!

A story emerges.

No conflict!

We tell to find out.

No pressure. Relax!

Be aware of each other.

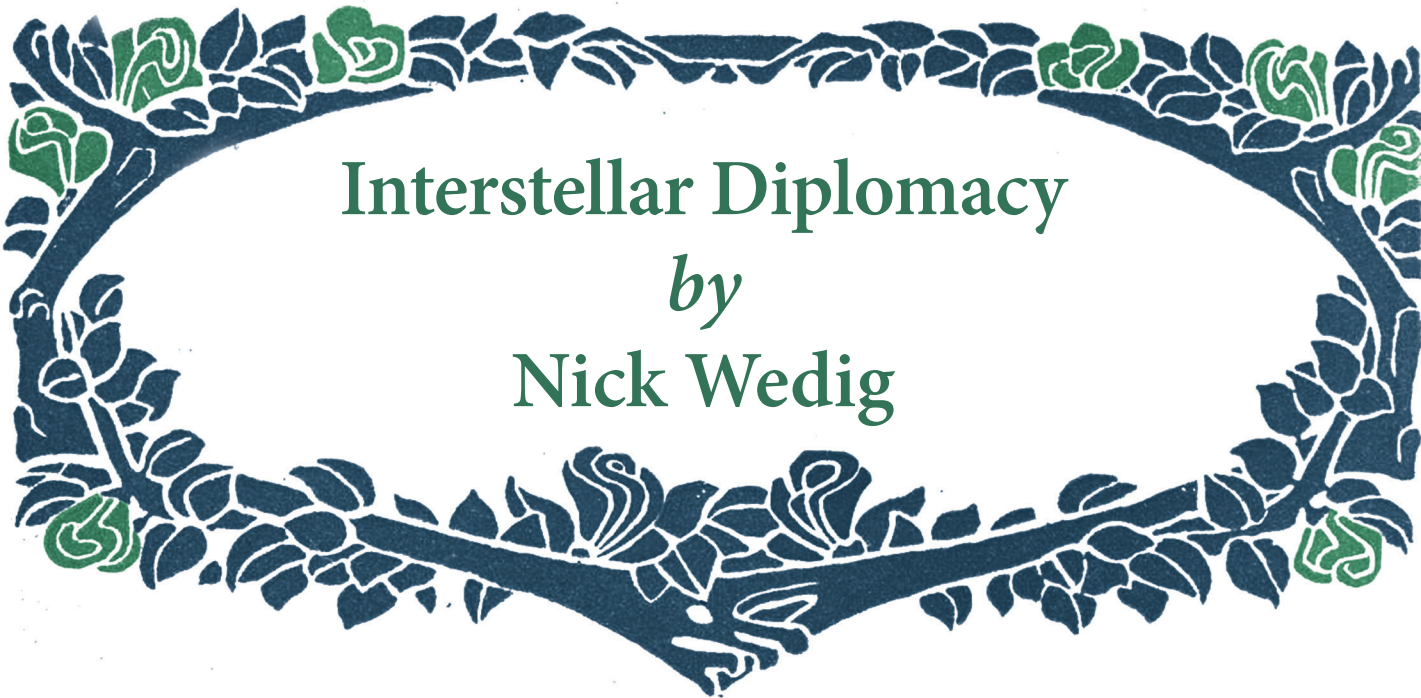
We're all unique. Nourish that.

Tell the first thing that springs into mind.

Huge thanks to BenS for major editing and to Matthew Haines, both for the editing and for providing great ideas and improvements.

Also thanks to CarpeGuitarrem, amphigorist, Paul_T, AsIf, johnthedm700, and Rasmus Lundholm for spontaneous thoughts ...

... and to you, who will evolve this game.



Interstellar Diplomacy

by

Nick Wedig

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, TABLETOP ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE

SCIENCE FICTION

You have one hour to negotiate a peace treaty before the assembled alien armadas go to war, killing you and everyone else on this backwater little planet called Earth.

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<http://nickwedig.libraryofhighmoon.com/2014/10/interstellar-diplomacy/>



Interstellar Diplomacy

by Nick Wedig

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Introduction

The assembled alien races of the Galactic Union have reached a political crisis moment. If no agreement can be reached in the next Earth hour, an intergalactic war appears inevitable. Thousands of Mark 7 Warfighter Fluxcraft gather at the borders, ready to strike the moment war is declared. Omnicron Class V Black Hole generators will be utilized to destroy the entire Orion-Cygnus Arm of the galaxy, including this small blue green planet where the final peace talks are being attempted..

As a matter of tradition, you, diplomats of the Interstellar Union, will meet on one of the planets that will be annihilated in the path of devastation. This ensures that you will see the life that will die if you fail to negotiate a peaceful accord. For this meeting, you have come to a planet called Earth and you have taken on the guise of the native semi-sentients. You each appear as human to the local lifeforms and to each other, to avoid panicking the natives.

As is traditional, if they fail to broker a peace, then you will be left on Earth when it is destroyed. This is to provide personal motivation for the cause. If you fail to reach consensus, then you will be among the first casualties of the war. When the planet is annihilated, you will die with it. Unless, of course, you can reach a peaceful agreement between your warring nations. You have been given complete authority to accept or deny any offers made by the other races. Can you use that authority to prevent a galaxy wide war?

This is a game about negotiation between alien races. It can be played as a tabletop game, but you might get more fun out of making it into a larp or semi-larp. You can get up and act out your diplomat's actions, but you can also narrate behavior that is difficult to larp. Each player will portray an alien diplomat, speaking for their race. Each race and each diplomat has a different set of priorities for the situation. Reaching an agreement will be difficult. But if no agreement can be made in the time provided, galaxy wide war will break out, causing untold devastation through the galaxy. Can you broker a peace in time? Will you achieve your personal and political goals?

Logistics:

This game should work with any number between 2 and 20 players. Two or three players would be a tight, small game and you'd have to ignore some aspects of the game (like internal relationship questions) but you should be able to make it work. For a small game like that, the organizer of the game can probably play along with everyone else. In a larger group, the organizer will have his or her hands full just wrangling the crowd of players, so he or she should probably avoid doubling their work by also playing a diplomat.

With large groups, you'll have to do more marshalling and organizing your forces. You might want to divide into several groups of five or less. My guess is that the sweet spot for the game would be 4-10 players, but you might have a lot of fun with larger or smaller groups.

For a group larger than three, you should have multiple diplomats per alien species. Each sentient group has sent multiple representatives to this meeting to negotiate different aspects of the treaty, but they all work toward more-or-less the same goals. Once you have a headcount for the game, the organizer should decide how many alien factions are involved in the peace talks. Two is simple, three can be interesting. More groups will make discussions more complicated and chaotic, but that could be really fun. Groups don't have to be equal in size: you might have one group be much larger than the others, or have two groups that are large and a single smaller faction caught in the crossfire. Each player will be assigned to one of the various groups, and then you will divide into groups to create the individual races.

If you're doing this in a larplike situation, you can have the factions each have different regions of the larp space as their own space for planning and scheming, and then have envoys go from group to group. Or you could have rooms devoted to different topics: military, economic, social, political, etc. and diplomats move from room to room making deals and having arguments.

You'll need to print and cut the cards at the end of this document. If you're going to have a large game (8+) you may need to print multiple copies of cards to have enough. (Actually, they're not cards at this point, but you might print them and cut out strips of paper and draw those from a cup. That should be easy enough.)

Racial Creation

To create the opposed science fiction factions, you draft cards for aspects of race and culture. Divide into groups for each race. Each player draws two racial aspects and chooses one to be true of their race. Discard the other. The card has an aspect of your alien biology, or your alien culture or some other detail about your people. Discuss with your fellow members of the race what your people are like and how those chosen aspects fit together into a cohesive whole. Can

you explain the apparent contradictions of your race? Once you know what your people are like, decide collectively on what name you call yourselves.

For factions with only one or two players, each player should draw several cards and pick two to be true. If you have factions that are five or more, you should limit the number of racial descriptors to four or five. Have each player draw a single card and discuss among themselves which cards should be true of their race, until the group reaches a consensus on a few cards.

Once you know what your race is like, you establish relationships between players. Arrange your faction into a circle, and have each player draw two relationship question cards. Taking turns around the circle, you will one at a time choose one relationship card and ask the question to the player on your right. (Discard the other relationship question.) They provide an answer, thereby establishing backstory for both your characters. Then they ask you an additional clarifying question about the relationship, which you answer in return. Go around the circle until everyone has a relationship with the player on their left and their right.

Then your race as a whole draws eight (?) demand cards and you collectively narrow it down to five through discussion and consensus. Your race as a group secretly chooses two which are issues that your culture really cares about. The other three demands are diplomatic decoys, which you expect to concede in negotiation in order to get what you really want. But your diplomat might care about the demand, even if the government doesn't. Each player secretly chooses one of these decoys to be an issue that they personally care about and want to see accomplished. (It is important to keep this choice a secret from the other members of your race.)

Place your five demands in the slots for your race sheet. (This would be a good thing to have card sleeves or velcro and cardboard of something. But paperclips would work well enough. Even a stapler would do.) Each race has a set of letters, A, B, C, D, E or F, G, H, I, J or K, L, M, N, O or P, Q, R, S, T or V, W, X, Y, Z. As a race, choose two letter from the opposing side(s) to circle. These will be demands that your government cannot possibly allow. (You don't know what the demands are just yet, but when you learn them, you'll all know that the government strongly opposes those requests.) Then choose one letter secretly to be a demand that you personally are opposed to. Draw a star around that letter. When the opposing race presents their demands, you'll have to decide why you are opposed to that demand personally, even when your government doesn't care.

If you're playing a multi-faction game, you will need to do the same for each block of letters. Have your race pick to letters to oppose, and then you secretly choose a third to oppose.

Once every race is ready, all the races should have an initial meeting. Explain what they would know about your race's history and biology, given your racial traits and list of demands. You each present your basic demands to the other sides and listen to theirs. Each demand has a clarifying detail and a question for the other race to answer. Choose random members of the

opposing side one at a time to ask these questions. Spread out the questions as evenly as possible, so that no player answers two questions until all have answered at least one. If there are three or more factions, then you will also need to spread out your questions across races. Ask one question from each race before doubling up on a single race.

When answering a question, you can (and should) flavor the answer based on secret knowledge like backstory between two PCs or the fact that this is a simple diplomatic decoy your government has no interest in.

Diplomatic Discussion and Debate

Once your priorities are all set, you have a freeform, open discussion for one hour. During this time, your goal is to negotiate with the other players and get the better end of the deal. The game's organizer probably want to have a large, prominent clock or timer reminding the players how little time remains.

Diplomats are free to make any statements or promises they feel are appropriate. If you establish something important about your own race, you probably should tell other members of your race about it so that they can incorporate it into their roleplaying.

You should have the sheets with each faction's demands posted somewhere prominently. Ideally, you have a cork board and push pins that you can use to designate what demands have been accepted or denied. You can put a pin above the demand to signal it has been granted, or below to show that it is denied, or in the demand to say it is still uncertain.

A majority of a faction's diplomats have to agree to grant or deny a demand. Individual diplomats can make whatever promises they want, but those promises won't have any weight unless they can get their compatriots to agree. (This probably means that factions of one, three, five, etc. will have an easier time making decisions than factions with two, four, six, etc. participants. Arrange your groups accordingly.)

A demand that is granted might be retracted, if the situation changes. Similarly, a demand that has been denied can be granted later after further discussion. You just have to get a majority of diplomats from the faction to agree to the change. What is important is where the demands sit at the end of the hour.

Endings and Epilogues

At the end of the hour, negotiations are finished, regardless of whether agreement was reached or not. If no agreement was reached, a terrible war breaks out between the two countries. If some agreement is reached, then each side makes the appropriate concessions.

If no agreement can be reached, then war breaks out. The Earth is destroyed, and all characters die. All the involved civilizations wipe each other out, leading to a great Galactic Dark Age for centuries as interstellar society has to rebuild from the rubble of its devastation. When sentients once again rebuild a galaxy-wide civilization, they will blame you personally for the centuries of despair caused by your inability to make a simple compromise.

Points:

Assuming an agreement was actually reached, you determine the then narrate an epilogue for your species as a whole and for each individual diplomat. Some factions might have a happy ending and some might not. Consult the score chart below to calculate your final score, which will determine the quality of ending for your race (and your diplomat). All demands are binary propositions: either you got exactly what was listed on the card, or you failed to achieve your goal. Each player should draw a fortune card, and interpret the fortune to narrate an epilogue for their homeland, either positively or negatively depending on how many demands they achieved.

Demand	Fulfilled	Denied
Your faction's demand, really cares	6	-6
Your faction's demand, doesn't care	1	-1
Other race's demand, your race opposes	-5	5
Other race's demand, you don't care	-1	1
<i>Personal goal</i>	7	-7
<i>Other race's demand, you personally oppose</i>	-6	6

Total up your race's score. For now, ignore the bottom two lines for personal goals. If the species has a total above 0, then the race will go on to a happy ending. Draw a racial fortune

and interpret it in a positive fashion. Each player in the faction adds one detail to the epilogue, building on the fortune card and the other player's narrations. If the total was below zero, interpret the card in a negative way, with each player adding a detail. If it is exactly zero, the race's fate is interpreted in a mixed, bittersweet way..

Then each diplomat takes their race's score and adds their personal modifiers (the last two lines of the chart) to get their personal score. Every player draws a personal fortune card and interprets it similarly. If your score afterward is positive, interpret the card in a positive fashion. If you had a negative score, interpret it in a negative way. If you have exactly zero, then get a mixed, bittersweet ending.

Relationship questions:

Which of our ancient taboos do you violate, much to my dismay?

How were you responsible for me failing to complete my last great project?

Why can't I stand your character, even though we have to work together?

Why would I risk my life to protect your character?

What do I want from you, and why won't you give it to me?

What secret regrets do we share?

Why am I afraid of your character?

What embarrassing nickname did I give you and why?

We are both famous among our people for what noble deed that we never actually performed?

How did I convince you to assist with this diplomatic mission?

What do I owe your character? Why?

What moral or ethical line do you refuse to cross while I freely do so?

What have I done to sabotage your diplomatic career?

-You were sentenced to be exiled from our society. But I instead found you a job in the diplomatic corps. What did you say to me to give you a second chance?

-We recently had a brief romantic affair. Why do I now regret ever sleeping with you?

We are currently in a romantic affair, which is a clear violation of diplomatic protocol. What attracts me to you?

On our last mission together, you convinced me to overstep my power as a diplomat. What promises did I make that I couldn't keep?

Demands

We demand you leave Tau Ceti E.

Though we have no colony on the planet, Tau Ceti E is of immense religious significance to our people, and according to our ancient laws, the planet must remain pure and untouched by any sentients. Why is your colony of tremendous political importance to your people?

We demand that one of your political leaders sacrifice themselves as penance for their past misdeed.

During a previous encounter, one of you violating our most sacred of taboo, an insult that can only be cleansed with a blood sacrifice. What seemingly minor act that you perform regularly is a tremendously important taboo to our culture?

We demand that your construction ships leave the Vega system.

Our colony there is of no military purpose, but it stands in the way of your interstellar scale construction project. They would have to leave the home in the system for you to complete it. What great project was your race working toward, and why is it so important?

We demand you allow the Children of Eshnu ethnic minority to freely leave your borders.

your government has been mistreating these indigenous people for generations, and they want out from your control. Our race has agreed to house the refugees and form a beneficial union with them. Why can't you allow the Children of Eshnu to leave your government's control?

We demand that you withdraw your military vessels from Kepler 62e.

The fortifications you are constructing in the region are a clear sign of aggression, and we cannot tolerate warships equipped with antihypertriton cannons within four light years of our borders. Why must you keep those military encampments where they are?

We demand that you cease construction of the black hole generator superweapon.

Sure, we have a black hole generator of our own, but we cannot allow any other galactic powers to wield destructive power of that scale. What existential threat do you face that you need the black hole generator to protect against?

We demand that you share with us the plans for a superintelligent AI that you have created.

The mental processing and potential instability of the godlike artificial intelligence is too powerful to be in the hands of a single group. Why is the AI too dangerous to share with any other race?

We demand that you accept responsibility for the death of our Exalted Hierophant and sacrifice the life of your most powerful diplomat in penance.

The Hierophant died during a previous political summit, leading to the current hostilities, but the assassins have never been caught. We believe that agents of your government were responsible. Who do you blame for her death?

We demand equal access to the Paradoxographic Oracle of the Antares Cluster.

The immortal prophet is sacred to both our peoples, but you have denied access to his Moon of Isolation for the last two galactic cycles. What tragedy did we wreak upon your people the last time we followed one of the Oracle's prophecies?

We demand that you negate all the debts of the fermionic condensate miners.

The miners are largely members of our race that work at debt-slave wages for your richest corporations. Their meager pay will never repay the cost of their oxygen and water reclamation. What financial catastrophe would befall your people if the debts were forgiven?

We demand that you give greater political autonomy to the Maelstrom dreamers, the rebel faction of your people.

Sure, in the past we have armed the rebels when they tried to strike against your government. But if you give them their freedom, then they might not strike at you again. What worse action do you believe they will take against you if given their autonomy?

We demand that you acknowledge our claims to the Epsilon Eridani star system.

The star system is devoid of livable planets or valuable resources, but it falls directly on the border of our spheres of power. But each side wants control of it, purely as a matter of political posturing. We landed the first known sentient there a generation ago, claiming it in our name. What prior claim to it do you have that we ignore?

We demand that you return our captured pilot and experimental spacecraft to us.

One of our experimental CloakShip recently flew off course and crashed on one of your moons. Though we deny it, it's obvious that the ship was a spy craft, and the pilot was obtaining intelligence on your military capabilities. What terrible punishment is traditional for spies among your race?

We demand that you identify who in our administration is working as a spy for your government.

Recent actions by your government seem to indicate that your spies have infiltrated the highest ranks of our government. One of our members must be a mole, feeding classified knowledge back to your government. What alternative explanation do you have for always knowing our next move before we make it?

We demand that you cancel your alliance with the Void Speakers, our hated enemy.

We have been in a long cold war with them for generations. Without your assistance, their position would crumble quickly. What enormous benefit do you gain from being their ally?

We demand that you have your government's top official face our Chief Quasar Warrior in hand to hand combat to the death.

This would erase a grave dishonor your people did unto us at the Festival of Infinity, two cycles ago. According to our tradition, the only way to clean the stain of insult is with the spilling of blood. How was that incident not your fault?

We demand that you give us half of all the neutronium mined from the Calvera neutron star.

The neutronium is highly valuable in high energy computational paraphysics. Before our people grew hostile to each other, we allowed you access to the star in exchange for a portion of the profits. Now we want half of all the material mined. What percentage were you giving us previously?

We demand that you make reparations for the damage you caused to the Stochastic Citadel during the Entropic Flux Wars.

The Stochastic Citadel was the greatest of construction projects, a space elevator made out of spun diamond fiber and stretching into the void of space. What military purpose do you claim it served during the war?

We demand that you give our Lamentation Priests free access to your planets to spread their holy word.

The Lamentation Priests only wish to bring the divine message of Uluthra the Undying to the unenlightened. The times when our people used the lamentation priests as cover to perpetrate hideous crimes against your race were all isolated incidents, we promise. What atrocities did these lone gunmen commit while disguised themselves as lamentation priests?

We demand that you stop providing military aid to the rebels on Tarandi V.

The rebel forces have repeatedly attacked our legitimate peacekeeping forces, when all we want is to bring law and order to the region. By force if necessary. What legitimate grievances do the rebels have against our government?

We demand that you release the hostages you have captured from our embassy on your home planet.

When the troubles began, you took the entire embassy staff hostage. We want them back, unharmed. What crimes against your people do they currently stand trial for?

We demand that you free the political prisoners you currently imprison on Pegasi 1467.

The majority of these prisoners are peaceful protesters who opposed your government's actions. Your government agreed to free the prisoners and close the prison, but have not done so yet. What terrible thing would happen if you freed the prisoners?

We demand that you repay the exceedingly large loan that our government loaned to yours to finance your war against the D'rawmm Mindworms.

We agreed to give you financial backing to defeat a common enemy, but your government has yet to pay down its debt to us. What factor prevents paying back your loan?

We demand that your government cease supporting the illegal smuggling of mind altering memory crystals into our star systems.

These artificial memories are extremely addictive to our people, and considered immoral to our culture. Your government openly opposes the smuggling, but recent reports indicate that they support the trade under the table. Why is the illegal smuggling so important to your people?

Racial Aspects:

Fourth Dimensional

Our species interacts with spacetime differently than most species. In particular, we do not normally perceive time linearly, as most sentients do. While in human form, for this meeting, we experience time normally, but we still cannot understand verb tenses in any way. Are they talking about the past or the future? We have no idea.

Poetic

In our society, it is impolite to directly state what you mean. All statements are made in the form of metaphor: you must describe an unrelated matter that is analogous to the matter in some way. We therefore always assume that others speaking to us do the same.

Literal

Our race is incapable of understanding metaphor, analogy or idiom. A thing is itself, not some other thing. Why would you describe it as that other thing, when it is clearly not that thing?

Color changing

In our native form, we are covered in scales that change color like a chameleon, in response to our moods. This makes it impossible for us to lie and we do not understand deception in any way.

Aquatic

Our race didn't evolve on land. We are naturally creatures of the sea, and we have great difficulty getting the hang of walking on land. Whenever we want to move around the play area, we should walk awkwardly and slowly, falling over or crawling along the floor.

Constructed Race

We were originally created through genetic engineering to serve another species. We were made to have few emotions to interfere with the master's orders. The master race is long gone, but we are still extremely logical in our decision making. We do not understand emotions in other races.

Rodent

Our race evolved from warren dwelling colonies of small furred creatures that rely on each other for survival. We never think things through logically, but instead simply rely on the emotional response of the group as a whole to guide our actions.

Solitary Predators

Our race is descended from large catlike predators that hunted on their own. Social niceties and friendship are unknown to our culture. We do not care or notice when our behavior offends those around us.

Clones

Our race are all clones of a small number of perfect specimens chosen centuries ago. We can easily tell each other apart, but we are completely unable to tell members of any other species apart.

Berserkers

Our people are a glorious warrior people. We revel in the joy of battle, we honor the bravest among our warriors. We wish to crush our enemies, see them driven before us, and hear the lamentations of their mating partners.

Mollusk

Our natural form is covered in a thick, crystalline shell. If ever danger threatens us, our natural defense is to retreat into hiding. To this day, our species avoids any violence or conflict if it can be avoided in any way. Even the slightest threat will send us running.

Boastful

In our society, it is considered normal to exaggerate your every accomplishment. Everyone is expected to turn their slightest deed into a fantastic tale worthy of praise and glory. Sometimes, you completely fabricate the stories out of thin air. After all, how will your listeners know?

Because of this tendency, we assume that all other people are exaggerating and boasting when they tell tales of their own accomplishments as well.

Birdlike

Our species evolved from feathered scavenger creatures, and we still retain some of the habits of the magpies we came from. We love collecting any shiny objects, and our culture is built on greed. Whoever collects the most valuable resources wins, right?

Fragile

Our race lives a very short time, and dies easily. We have large families to survive, knowing that most of our young will never reach adulthood. Central to our culture is the concept of ***Shouganai***, that since fate is inevitable, you shouldn't stress out over the consequences.

Crystalline

Our species is grown from living rock. We live for millenia, and are very slow to act. Central to our culture is the concept of ***Zugzwang***, where acting first will cause worse consequences than waiting for the other party to act first. Patience is the highest virtue.

Many Eyes

Our native form is covered in a large number of eyes that see in all parts of the electromagnetic spectrum, as well as other more specialized sensory organs. In our society, what someone tells you counts for nothing. You only trust what you can observe directly yourself.

Insectile

Our species goes through several life stages, and each stage has a very specific role in society. Workers are expected to follow orders without being told why those orders are as they are. In our society, it is considered an insult to ask questions.

No Eyes

Our species lacks eyesight in ranges humans would understand. Consequently, information often has to be transmitted verbally instead of simply showing someone something. In our society, it is considered impolite not to ask dozens of questions until all details of a person's story have been explained.

Burrowing

Our species naturally lives deep under the crust of our planet. Tunnels are hard to dig, so space is always at a premium. We don't have a concept of 'personal space'. In our society, it is considered impolite to stand more than two feet away from someone you are speaking to.

Spiked

Though we currently have taken on human form, our natural shape is covered in protective spikes. In our society, it is considered impolite to stand within ten feet of someone you are speaking to.

Bureaucratic

In our society, it is considered impolite to speak to the person in charge directly: all matters are communicated through their underlings. Important matters will work their way up the chain, while minor matters will be dealt with by minor functionaries. To bring a matter directly to those in charge is to insult their rank, by suggesting that they are unimportant bureaucrats.

Direct

In our society, it is considered rude to address any except the highest ranking person present. Your first task when meeting a group is to determine who is in charge. Addressing their underlings marks you as an underling yourself.

Generous

In our society, all meetings are commemorated with the giving of gifts, which the recipient must accept. Whoever gives the best gift is given the most social prestige.

Modest

In our society, all gifts or compliments offered must be refused by the recipient out of modesty. The winner of any social situation is the one who is the most humble. If ever another person makes a positive statement about you, you must counter it with an even more positive statement about them.

Racial Fortunes

Your people will expand their territory into unknown lands and discover strange new worlds. What do they discover on an alien world?

Your race will discover an artifact of an ancient civilization and activate it to uncertain results. Is it a miracle device or does it unleash ancient horrors?

Your race will discover a new technology, with unpredictable outcomes. Does the new technology save your race or doom it?

Your race will undergo a major political upheaval. Is the new government benevolent or tyrannical?

Your race will get involved in a major military conflict against a race not present at these talks. Do you conquer gloriously or are you the conquered?

Your race will undertake a massive interstellar construction project. Does it turn into a wonder of the galaxy, or does the cost of its construction collapse your economy?

Personal Fortunes

You will be given a new job. What new role do you play?

You will get involved in an unexpected romance. What is your relationship with this other being like?

You will become involved in an lunar business venture. What weird product do you gamble your savings on?

Do you make a fortune or lose a fortune?

You will learn something you didn't know about yourself. What do you discover?

You will find something that had been hidden from you. What has been hidden and who was hiding it?

You will receive credit or blame for something you didn't do.

You will learn a secret. ???

You will join a new religion. Are they enlightened peaceful master, or a suicidal death cult?

You will learn an important moral lesson, possibly through experiencing personal ruin. What is it and how do you come to learn it?

You will anger those around you. Do you quell their anger or incite them to violence?

You will receive a great reward, possibly undeservingly so.

You will confront an old enemy or rival.

Your actions here will have unintended consequences for you at home. What are they?

The actions of another diplomat here will have unexpected consequences for you at home. Whose actions and how do they affect you?

You will be called on to assist a friend in need. What task do they need help with, and how does it turn out?

You will get what you think you want, but it won't turn out the way you expected.

You will get what you needed, but not what you wanted.

You will make a rash decision. What do you act on without thinking, and how does it turn out?

You will change allegiance or motivation. What do you stand for now?

You will travel among the alien races, learning of their strange customs.

Your body will be replaced with an android one

You will make a proverbial deal with the devil. What powerful malevolent force do you ally yourself with? Do you receive the rewards of your sins or do you pay the price for your corruption?

You will eventually leave the diplomat's life. What new life do you choose for yourself, and how does it turn out?

**WE DEMAND YOU
LEAVE TAU CETI E**



Though we have no colony on the planet, Tau Ceti E is of immense religious significance to our people, and according to our ancient laws, the planet must remain pure and untouched by any sentients. Why is your colony of tremendous political importance to your people?

**WE DEMAND THAT
ONE OF YOUR
POLITICAL LEADERS
SACRIFICE
THEMSELVES AS
PENANCE FOR THEIR
PAST MISDEED**



During a previous encounter, one of you violating our most sacred of taboo, an insult that can only be cleansed with a blood sacrifice. What seemingly minor act that you perform regularly is a tremendously important taboo to our culture?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOUR CONSTRUCTION
SHIPS LEAVE THE
VEGA SYSTEM**



Our colony there is of no military purpose, but it stands in the way of your interstellar scale construction project. They would have to leave the home in the system for you to complete it. What great project was your race working toward, and why is it so important?

**WE DEMAND YOU
ALLOW THE CHILDREN
OF ESHNU ETHNIC
MINORITY TO FREELY
LEAVE YOUR
BORDERS**



Your government has been mistreating these indigenous people for generations, and they want out from your control. Our race has agreed to house the refugees and form a beneficial union with them. Why can't you allow the Children of Eshnu to leave your government's control?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU WITHDRAW YOUR
MILITARY VESSELS
FROM KEPLER 62E**



The fortifications you are constructing in the region are a clear sign of aggression, and we cannot tolerate warships equipped with antihypertriton cannons within four light years of our borders. Why must you keep those military encampments where they are?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU CEASE
CONSTRUCTION OF
THE BLACK HOLE
GENERATOR
SUPERWEAPON**



Sure, we have a black hole generator of our own, but we cannot allow any other galactic powers to wield destructive power of that scale. What existential threat do you face that you need the black hole generator to protect against?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU SHARE WITH US
THE PLANS FOR A
SUPERINTELLIGENT AI
THAT YOU HAVE
CREATED**



The mental processing and potential instability of the godlike artificial intelligence is too powerful to be in the hands of a single group. Why is the AI too dangerous to share with any other race?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU ACCEPT
RESPONSIBILITY FOR
THE DEATH OF OUR
EXALTED HIEROPHANT
AND SACRIFICE THE
LIFE OF YOUR MOST
POWERFUL DIPLOMAT
IN PENANCE**



The Hierophant died during a previous political summit, leading to the current hostilities, but the assassins have never been caught. We believe that agents of your government were responsible. Who do you blame for her death?

WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



**WE DEMAND EQUAL
ACCESS TO THE
PARADOXOGRAPHIC
ORACLE OF THE
ANTARES CLUSTER**



The immortal prophet is sacred to both our peoples, but you have denied access to his Moon of Isolation for the last two galactic cycles. What tragedy did we wreak upon your people the last time we followed one of the Oracle's prophecies?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU NEGATE ALL
THE DEBTS OF THE
FERMIONIC
CONDENSATE MINERS**



The miners are largely members of our race that work at debt-slave wages for your richest corporations. Their meager pay will never repay the cost of their oxygen and water reclamation. What financial catastrophe would befall your people if the debts were forgiven?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU GIVE GREATER
POLITICAL AUTONOMY
TO THE MAELSTROM
DREAMERS, THE
REBEL FACTION OF
YOUR PEOPLE**



Sure, in the past we have armed the rebels when they tried to strike against your government. But if you give them their freedom, then they might not strike at you again. What worse action do you believe they will take against you if given their autonomy?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU ACKNOWLEDGE
OUR CLAIMS TO THE
EPSILON ERIDANI
STAR SYSTEM**



The star system is devoid of livable planets or valuable resources, but it falls directly on the border of our spheres of power. But each side wants control of it, purely as a matter of political posturing. We landed the first known sentient there a generation ago, claiming it in our name. What prior claim to it do you have that we ignore?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU RETURN OUR
CAPTURED PILOT AND
EXPERIMENTAL
SPACECRAFT TO US**



One of our experimental CloakShip recently flew off course and crashed on one of your moons. Though we deny it, it's obvious that the ship was a spy craft, and the pilot was obtaining intelligence on your military capabilities. What terrible punishment is traditional for spies among your race?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU IDENTIFY WHO IN
OUR ADMINISTRATION
IS WORKING A SPY
FOR YOUR
GOVERNMENT**



Recent actions by your government seem to indicate that your spies have infiltrated the highest ranks of our government. One of our members must be a mole, feeding classified knowledge back to your government. What alternative explanation do you have for always knowing our next move before we make it?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU CANCEL YOUR
ALLIANCE WITH THE
VOID SPEAKERS, OUR
HATED ENEMY**



We have been in a long cold war with them for generations. Without your assistance, their position would crumble quickly. What enormous benefit do you gain from being their ally?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU HAVE YOUR
GOVERNMENT'S TOP
OFFICIAL FACE OUR
CHIEF QUASAR
WARRIOR IN HAND TO
HAND COMBAT TO
THE DEATH**



This would erase a grave dishonor your people did unto us at the Festival of Infinity, two cycles ago. According to our tradition, the only way to clean the stain of insult is with the spilling of blood. How was that incident not your fault?

WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU GIVE US HALF
OF ALL THE
NEUTRONIUM MINED
FROM THE CALVERA
NEUTRON STAR**



The neutronium is highly valuable in high energy computational paraphysics. Before our people grew hostile to each other, we allowed you access to the star in exchange for a portion of the profits. Now we want half of all the material mined. What percentage were you giving us previously?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU MAKE
REPARATIONS FOR
THE DAMAGE YOU
CAUSED TO THE
STOCHASTIC CITADEL
DURING THE
ENTROPIC FLUX
WARS**



The Stochastic Citadel was the greatest of construction projects, a space elevator made out of spun diamond fiber and stretching into the void of space. What military purpose do you claim it served during the war?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU GIVE OUR
LAMENTATION
PRIESTS FREE
ACCESS TO YOUR
PLANETS TO SPREAD
THEIR HOLY WORD**



The Lamentation Priests only wish to bring the divine message of Uluthra the Undying to the unenlightened. The times when our people used the lamentation priests as cover to perpetrate hideous crimes against your race were all isolated incidents, we promise. What atrocities did the these lone gunmen commit while disguised themselves as lamentation priests?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU STOP PROVIDING
MILITARY AID TO THE
REBELS ON TARANDI
V**



The rebel forces have repeatedly attacked our legitimate peacekeeping forces, when all we want is to bring law and order to the region. By force if necessary. What legitimate grievances do the rebels have against our government?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU RELEASE THE
HOSTAGES YOU HAVE
CAPTURED FROM OUR
EMBASSY ON YOUR
HOME PLANET**



When the troubles began, you took the entire embassy staff hostage. We want them back, unharmed. What crimes against your people do they currently stand trial for?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU FREE THE
POLITICAL PRISONERS
YOU CURRENTLY
IMPRISON ON PEGASI
1467**



The majority of these prisoners are peaceful protesters who opposed your government's actions. Your government agreed to free the prisoners and close the prison, but have not done so yet. What terrible thing would happen if you freed the prisoners?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOU REPAY THE
EXCEEDINGLY LARGE
LOAN THAT OUR
GOVERNMENT LOANED
TO YOURS TO
FINANCE YOUR WAR
AGAINST THE
D'RAWMM MINDWORMS**



We agreed to give you financial backing to defeat a common enemy, but your government has yet to pay down its debt to us. What factor prevents paying back your loan?

**WE DEMAND THAT
YOUR GOVERNMENT
CEASE SUPPORTING
THE ILLEGAL
SMUGGLING OF MIND
ALTERING MEMORY
CRYSTALS INTO OUR
STAR SYSTEMS**



These artificial memories are extremely addictive to our people, and considered immoral to our culture. Your government openly opposes the smuggling, but recent reports indicate that they support the trade under the table. Why is the illegal smuggling so important to your people?

WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



WE DEMAND



FOURTH DIMENSIONAL



Our species interacts with spacetime differently than most species. In particular, we do not normally perceive time linearly, as most sentients do. While in human form, for this meeting, we experience time normally, but we still cannot not understand verb tenses in any way. Are they talking about the past or the future? We have no idea.

POETIC



In our society, it is impolite to directly state what you mean. All statements are made in the form of metaphor: you must describe an unrelated matter that is analagous to the matter in some way. We therefore always assume that others speaking to us do the same.

LITERAL



Our race is incapable of understanding metaphor, analogy or idiom. A thing is itself, not some other thing. Why would you describe it as that other thing, when it is clearly not that thing?

COLOR CHANGING



In our native form, we are covered in scales that change color like a chameleon, in response to our moods. This makes it impossible for us to lie and we do not understand deception in any way.

AQUATIC



Our race didn't evolve on land. We are naturally creatures of the sea, and we have great difficulty getting the hang of walking on land. Whenever we want to move around the play area, we should walk awkwardly and slowly, falling over or crawling along the floor.

Constructed Race

We were originally created through genetic engineering to serve another species. We were made to have few emotions to interfere with the master's orders. The master race is long gone, but we are still extremely logical in our decision making. We do not understand emotions in other races.

RODENT



Our race evolved from warren dwelling colonies of small furred creatures that rely on each other for survival. We never think things through logically, but instead simply rely on the emotional response of the group as a whole to guide our actions.

SOLITARY PREDATORS



Our race is descended from large catlike predators that hunted on their own. Social niceties and friendship are unknown to our culture. We do not care or notice when our behavior offends those around us.

CLONES



Our race are all clones of a small number of perfect specimens chosen centuries ago. We can easily tell each other apart, but we are completely unable to tell members of any other species apart.

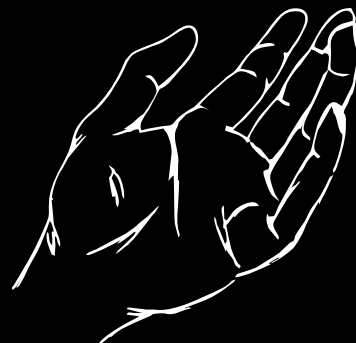
RACIAL ASPECT



RACIAL ASPECT



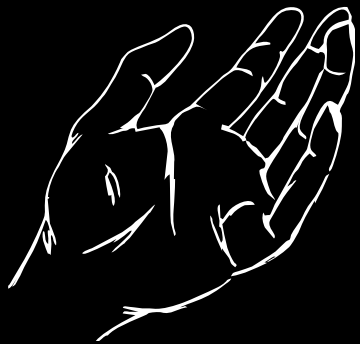
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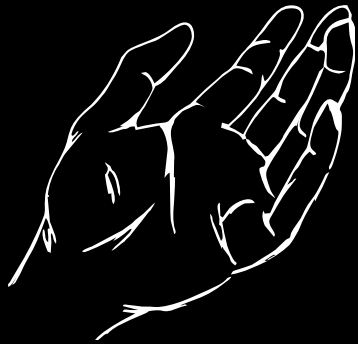
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RACIAL ASPECT



BERSERKERS



Our people are a glorious warrior people. We revel in the joy of battle, we honor the bravest among our warriors. We wish to crush our enemies, see them driven before us, and hear the lamentations of their mating partners.

MOLLUSK



Our natural form is covered in a thick, crystalline shell. If ever danger threatens us, our natural defense is to retreat into hiding. To this day, our species avoids any violence or conflict if it can be avoided in any way. Even the slightest threat will send us running.

BOASTFUL



In our society, it is considered normal to exaggerate your every accomplishment. Everyone is expected to turn their slightest deed into a fantastic tale worthy of praise and glory. Sometimes, you completely fabricate the stories out of thin air. After all, how will your listeners know? Because of this tendency, we assume that all other people are exaggerating and boasting when they tell tales of their own accomplishments as well.

BIRDLIKE



Our species evolved from feathered scavenger creatures, and we still retain some of the habits of the magpies we came from. We love collecting any shiny objects, and our culture is built on greed. Whoever collects the most valuable resources wins, right? Fragile
Our race lives a very short time, and dies easily. We have large families to survive, knowing that most of our young will never reach adulthood. Central to our culture is the concept of Shouganai, that since fate is inevitable, you shouldn't stress out over the consequences.

CRYSTALLINE



Our species is grown from living rock. We live for millenia, and are very slow to act. Central to our culture is the concept of Zugzwang, where acting first will cause worse consequences than waiting for the other party to act first. Patience is the highest virtue.

MANY EYES



Our native form is covered in a large number of eyes that see in all parts of the electromagnetic spectrum, as well as other more specialized sensory organs. In our society, what someone tells you counts for nothing. You only trust what you can observe directly yourself.

INSECTILE



Our species goes through several life stages, and each stage has a very specific role in society. Workers are expected to follow orders without being told why those orders are as they are. In our society, it is considered an insult to ask questions.

NO EYES



Our species lacks eyesight in ranges humans would understand. Consequently, information often has to be transmitted verbally instead of simply showing someone something. In our society, it is considered impolite not to ask dozens of questions until all details of a person's story have been explained.

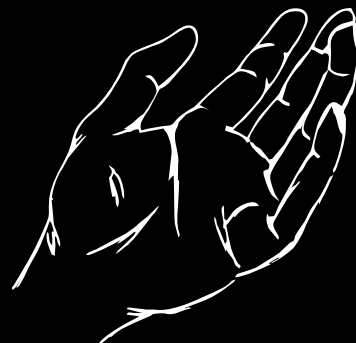
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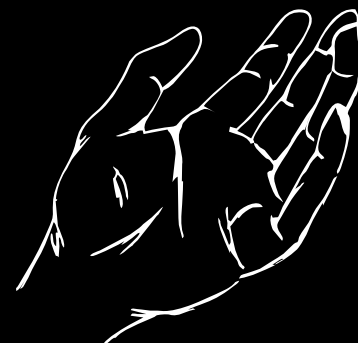
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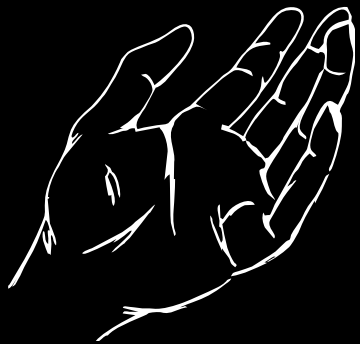
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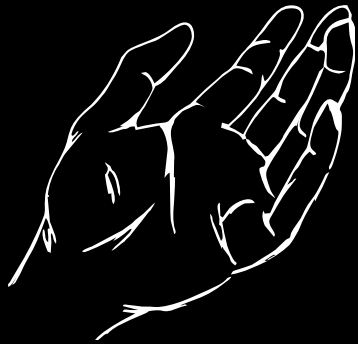
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BURROWING



Our species naturally lives deep under the crust of our planet. Tunnels are hard to dig, so space is always at a premium. We don't have a concept of 'personal space'. In our society, it is considered impolite to stand more than two feet away from someone you are speaking to.

SPIKED



Though we currently have taken on human form, our natural shape is covered in protective spikes. In our society, it is considered impolite to stand within ten feet of someone you are speaking to.

BUREAUCRATIC



In our society, it is considered impolite to speak to the person in charge directly: all matters are communicated through their underlings. Important matters will work their way up the chain, while minor matters will be dealt with by minor functionaries. To bring a matter directly to those in charge is to insult their rank, by suggesting that they are unimportant bureaucrats.

DIRECT



In our society, it is considered rude to address any except the highest ranking person present. Your first task when meeting a group is to determine who is in charge. Addressing their underlings marks you as an underling yourself.

GENEROUS



In our society, all meetings are commemorated with the giving of gifts, which the recipient must accept. Whoever gives the best gift is given the most social prestige.

MODEST



In our society, all gifts or compliments offered must be refused by the recipient out of modesty. The winner of any social situation is the one who is the most humble. If ever another person makes a positive statement about you, you must counter it with an even more positive statement about them.





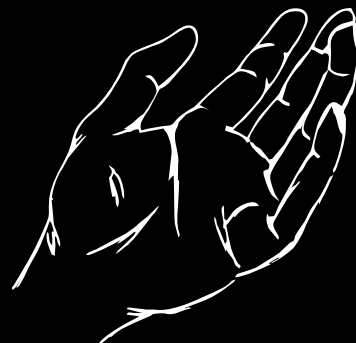
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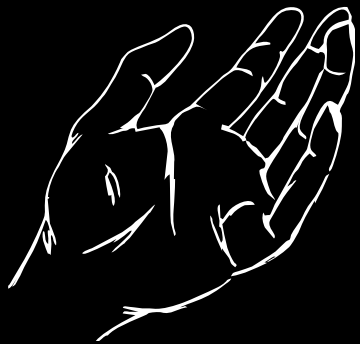
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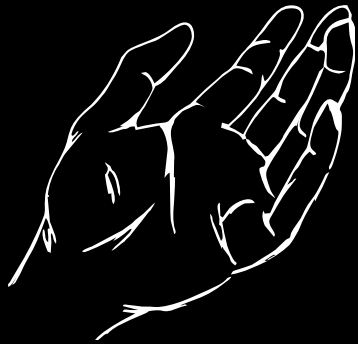
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Jerky Jousters *by* Scott Slomiany

TABLETOP ROLE PLAY

COMEDY

The king has decided to celebrate the realm's 100th birthday by having a grand tournament, and the call has gone out throughout the land for all of the greatest and powerful knights to come and joust for wealth and fame! HUZZAH!

What he wound up with was a bunch of jerks.

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JERKY JOUSTERS!

by Scott Slomiany
doho123@gmail.com

...written for the 2014 Golden Cobra Challenge (goldencobra.org)

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM!

The king has decided to celebrate the realm's 100th birthday by having a grand tournament, and the call has gone out throughout the land for all of the greatest and powerful knights to come and joust for wealth and fame!
HUZZAH!

What he wound up with was a bunch of jerks.

Setup:

The GM will need a deck of cards.

All players will need a sheet of paper or note cards, to keep track of their characters, who are knights. A knight has these important characteristics:

A Name.

A Title.

3 Abilities.

Some number of "wises", these are things that the knight is wise about.

The GM will lead the players in the creation of their knights, by the following process.

The GM first asks each player to create a name for his knight. Each knight should end his name with a wonderfully heroic title; something from the following list perhaps, or make up their own pompous sounding title (with the GM's approval, of course):

...the Chivalrous

...the Honorable

...the Pious

...the Fair

...the Brave

...the Humble

...the Kind

...the Faithful

...the Merciful

...the Strong

This describes the images of the knight that the player wishes to portray. But in reality, that is the exact opposite of the knight's "better" qualities. The GM now should tell all players to come up with three abilities that would describe the EXACT OPPOSITE of the title.

For example, abilities for someone who has titled himself as "Sir Jeff the Honorable" could be:

"Good at lying"

"Sabotage is his best friend"

"Sneaky thievery"

The player will also need to announce where he is from. It could be a made up name ("Westwhistle, south of the Great Plains"), or real ("Hoboken").

For each knight's place of origin, the GM will need to ask the other players:

"I know you've heard of the people of [insert location here]. What do you think they are most known for?"

Each other player will need to reply with something that they have heard about that region. These replies could be anything, really, as they are just filling in a small amount of backstory.

"I've heard that the people of Westwhistle are sturdy farmers, having survived through many potato famines."

"The king usually favors those from Westwhistle, as they are the sole suppliers of the casks that the king uses for his vineyards."

"The people of Westwhistle are fools. Every year they spend 3 months rebuilding their town from winter floods because they don't bother maintaining the dykes in the fall; they'd rather spend they time getting drunk during their autumn festivals."

Given this history of a knight's origin, the player then must create 3 wises that his knight would be good at. In the case of a knight from Westwhistle:

"wine-wise"

"festival-wise"

"shovel-wise"

Finally, the GM gives each knight 3 cards. The GM is free to give out a bonus card to the knight that he feels created the most creative wise.

Cards, Events, and Scenes:

The game consists of a series of events that lead up to the Grande Tournament. During each event, the knights should aspire to collect cards, as the cards will be used during the Tournament. Whoever plays their cards the best, will be crowned the victor of the tournament. HUZAH!

Each event will have a series of short scenes where the knights can run around and “do stuff.” While knights can be involved in multiple scenes during an event...a knight can only be awarded a single card per event (in some cases, the GM can award additional bonus cards, but again, those are handed out at the end of an event, and not just each little scene).

How does a Knight gain cards? Why, through the use of his jerky abilities, of course.

As the GM sets up each event, each knight should think about how to use one of his available jerky abilities within the scenes that play out. Now, it doesn't matter if the knight is successful or not, but if the GM feels that the knight has honestly attempted a jerky action, the GM should give that knight a card. In fact, if the GM feels that a knight has performed an especially jerky deed, the GM is allowed to award a single bonus card per event.

Additionally, the GM also gets to award one card to the knight who used one of his wises the most creatively during the last event. For this card to be awarded, the knight must have been successful in using his wise.

Aces count as ones, and Kings are naturally the highest rank when comparing cards.

Success and Failure:

In general, the GM should let the knight accomplish any jerky action the knight attempts, but the GM is allowed to declare a failure if he feels the need (for interesting narrative purposes, for unrealistic goals of the knight, just out of meta-game revenge, or whatever).

Additionally, any other knight may turn in a card at any time to declare another knight failure or success...with that knight then taking temporary control of the GM duties for the remainder of the action.

Depending on that what the knight was up to, if the stakes are high enough, and if the knight failed, the knight can override the failure and make it a success (HUZAZH!) by taking control of the GM duties himself! However, if he wishes to do this, the knight calls for “the pain”, and the GM then injures the knight (BOO! HISS!), by selecting one of the knight’s abilities or wise, and inflicts such pain on the knight that the knight has to cross that ability or wise off his list. “The pain” should relate both to the ability and to what the knight was up to at the time...so while he may have succeeded, there was a price to pay! “The pain” replaces the thing that was crossed off.

Example: Sir Jeff the Honorable was attempting to lie to an opposing stablehand, so he could go into the stables and drug the horse of Sir Felicity the Meek. There’s nothing unusual about this, so the GM maybe plays it a little tough with his role-playing the stablehand, but the intention is that the GM will let Sir Jeff get through.

However, Sir Felicity sees what’s going on, puts one-and-one together, and throws a card the GM’s way, announcing that his stableboy sees right through Sir Jeff’s ploy, and throws a punch at Sir Jeff.

At this point, Sir Jeff’s attempt is a failure, but Sir Jeff pulls out his ace-up-his-sleeve, and calls for “the pain”. The GM informs Sir Jeff that as the scuffle escalates, the stableboy grabs a shovel, and whacks Sir Jeff in the chin, severing his tongue between his clenched teeth, crossing off “really good liar” and replacing it with “unable to speak clearly”!

Sir Jeff is now free to finish off his action, stating that not only does he best the stableboy, he kills the stableboy and buries him deep in the manure pile behind the stables, and then he quickly poison’s Sir Felicity’s horse’s feedbag.

Sir Jeff gains a card for being jerky...and the burying the stableboy was a nice touch, the GM puts it near the top of his list for the bonus card during this event...)

Event Ideas:

Since this is a big deal for the King, there's a lot of pomp and circumstance going on, leading up to the main event (the Grande Tournament). The knights should relish in the attention that they get as conquering heroes....all while using their jerky abilities to knock those other pompous asses down a few pegs. While the GM is free to adjust the events and scenes accordingly as the game goes along, here is a brief list to get the GM started of what a "traditional renaissance faire" event timeline would look like. It should also be noted that the extent of my research of jousting tournaments consists solely of watching "*A Knight's Tale*"....numerous times.

The arrival of a Knight to the village that surrounds the castle. Does the Knight come announced with his small group of assistants, or does he sneak in?

An official public presentation of submittance to the tournament in front of the people, or to the court.

A "show of arms" outside the grounds, showing off the knight's skill to the people, to curry favors and gifts and followers for the upcoming tournament.

The Grande Parade is the official "look at me be all King-like" ceremony that officially presents all of the entrants to the kingdom. Various Counts and Countesses of neighboring realms may be present. Knights really should be on their best behavior for this.

The Gala Ball, held the night before, for all of the entrants and visiting royalty. in their finery.

The morning of the tournament, where the excitement builds, final bets are tallied, and royalty walks the grounds.

And then finally, the tournament itself.

After the GM announces the event that is going on, he should take note of what each knight is planning on doing. The GM is free to break up the knights into smaller groups if needed, if different knight wish to go on their different jerky ways. At this point various little scenes will take place, with the GM officiating the proceeding as the knights go about their business.

THE GRANDE TOURNAMENT:

The GM will have to set up a double elimination tournament system (or some other kind of system) for the king for all the knights. Jousts are handled simply with each knight playing a card from their personal collection against another knight, with the highest card winning their round, if all things are equal. Cards are discarded after play.

Additionally, any other knight may play a single card into any current battle, with a description of added jerkiness; perhaps Sir Felicity's armorsmith is in the stands flashing the sun into his opponent's eye with a mirror? Additional cards are played to one participant or the other...when all cards and actions are played out, they are revealed, and ***only the highest single card for each participant counts*** (cards are NOT additive if a player has a stack of cards).

Now, the GM has quite a bit of sway in terms of what "all things being equal" means, as he is allowed to adjust these card values based on whatever other shenanigans may be affecting the current joust. Which can run the gamut of hobbled horses and sabotaged lances to the famous "helmet smothered with honey that attract the angry beehive that was just thrown into the ring from the stands" ploy or whatever gouged eyeball or broken bones that have previously occurred.

Tie breakers between two knights are also at the full command of the GM's wishes, based on how the narratives have gone up to this point. There should never be a true tie! Man up, Mister GM and pick someone.

And if a participant has no cards to play? Well, he better hope that he spent them wisely during the earlier events, and hope the GM is generous with his "adjustments".

In the end, assuming that a knight hasn't rigged the entire tournament ring to explode with kegs of black powder, there just might be a knight crowned as champion, no matter how broken or maimed he looks on stage with the king.

EPILOGUE:

If so desired, each player is allowed to describe what happens to his knight after the tournament, starting with the victor. And again, if another player has cards left over, he can throw a card at the GM's way to take control of another knight's epilogue for a short time.



Keymaster *by* J Li

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, PERVASIVE, STYLIZED PLAY

SERIOUS, FANTASY, NON-NARRATIVE, MYTH, RITUAL, ENVIRONMENT - INSPIRED

A short ritual of dramatic identity.

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game requirements

2-5 players (10 with extension)

20 minutes (40 mins first time with explanation)

any location where you can strike poses and speak out clearly, ideally someplace awesome

prologue

[a 30 second video clip for inspiration #1](#)

[a 30 second video clip for inspiration #2](#)

what, why, when, and where to play

the purpose of *keymaster* is to collectively build dramatic fictional identities for each of a group of players and showcase them in a stylized, expressive sequence set in an inspiring environment.

keymaster is *only* about identity: there is no storytelling, describing events, or character actions.

keymaster is fundamentally a game about acting creatively on those moments when you're in an inspiring place and want to do, become, or portray something just as awesome.

keymaster is designed to be playable as a spontaneous activity while going about life.

it can also be arranged as an explicit social activity, especially with the *advance prep* extension.

play while hiking, traveling, strolling, waiting, vacationing, visiting a cool building.

or, use the *abstract key* extension to play anywhere, like on a plane or bus, in a restaurant, or at home

how to play

the details

gameplay overview

everyone together chooses the *master key*

each player chooses a *personal key*

everyone together clarifies *parameters*

each player chooses their *poses*

players begin play, creating a *sequence* by making *declarations* until they reach a *final line*

players take a breath while still holding their poses, then conclude

what am i doing?

in this game, you will be developing two things:

- all players together will collaboratively shape a dramatic fictional identity for their group
- each player will shape their own individual dramatic fictional identity, as a unique member of the group

your goal is to shape *identity*, nothing more.

you are not trying to tell a story, describe events, or simulate character actions.

you have succeeded if you got to feel really cool and a part of something dramatic for a while.

what is a key and why am i the master of it?

a *key* is an inspiration point, a concrete component used to ground and inform the identity you develop.

you're the master of it in an almost philosophical sense: the fundamental fiction that we assume in this game is that you are the most interesting route through which the key can be approached or expressed.

this is why you're important enough to be featured so dramatically.

the master key

begin the game by collectively choosing the master key.

the *master key* is the central, unifying inspiration that all players share. it informs the group's identity.

in most cases, the master key will be the location and atmosphere the game is played in.

(see the *abstract key* extension for alternative master keys when playing in unremarkable locations.)

assume as a part of the fiction that the master key represents the world, or an important piece of it.

assume that all players are deeply in touch with the pulse of that piece of the world.

this could be because you are mystically connected, you exemplify it, or just because your group is the most important thing going on, often all three. the details are worked out during play.

assume the nature of that pulse is how the master key makes you feel. that's why it's an inspiration.

for example, if you're playing in a forest, you could all be spirits of the forest.

if you're playing in a nighttime city, you could be cyberpunk agents representing the city's underbelly.

parameters

collectively select parameters immediately after identifying the master key.

the *parameters* of the game are large-scale assumptions about the fictional universe about which it would be jarring if everyone were not on the same page.

parameters about the setting:

- is there magic or mysticism?
- does the supernatural exist?
- is there major industry or technology?

parameters about the group:

- what is the scope? is it just you, are you leaders, representative members, something else?
- are you great, weak, or just special? do you dominate the setting? does it dominate you?

quite often, the answers will be extremely obvious based on the nature of the master key.

the personal key

next, each individual player chooses a personal key, making sure to avoid overlap.

a *personal key* works exactly like a master key, except that it acts as the core inspiration for an individual player's fictional identity, instead of the group's identity.

each personal key should be a component element of the master key.

for example, it could be an object or type of object, a quality of light or sound, a building or tree in the larger environment.

the inspiration derived from a personal key can be either concrete or abstract.

the personal key can either inform the content of your fictional identity, or just the feel of it.

for example, you could be flexible like the stream, perform shadow magic, or just command a fleet of motorcycles like those ones over there.

you don't need to know how you plan to use your personal key at the time you select it.

poses

lastly before play, each player chooses two poses.

a *pose* is an expressive physical position that a player holds, unmoving, during the course of play.

a pose freezes position from the neck down: players can freely move their heads and change facial expressions.

because poses are expressive, they actually serve as additional lesser personal keys that inspire content.

each player only gets three poses. by default, these are:

- one sitting pose chosen in advance
- one standing pose chosen in advance
- one *wild* pose that can be chosen during the course of play

at all times during play, all players must be in one of their poses, or transitioning quickly between them. plan ahead for smooth, fast, and easy ways to transition between your poses.

when selecting poses:

- make sure the pose is something you can comfortably hold for several minutes at a time.
- if using the 2 *teams* extension, poses are often held for up to 5-8 minutes at once, though it's fine to do things like putting arms down during long pauses.
- make sure that you can easily see all other players

players should choose poses at the same time, and share them with each other, to make sure that there is some amount of variation.

if you are in a situation of limited mobility, either because you are playing in an environment where everyone is seated or have a physical disability, just ignore the standing/sitting requirement. instead choose two different poses appropriate to the limitations: for example, two seated poses with distinct arm positions.

if you have a physical disability that disallows remaining immobile, choose simple, expressive, and distinctive ranges of movement instead of frozen poses.

sequence

at this point, actual gameplay commences. this portion is known as the *sequence*.

during the sequence:

- players must always be in one of their three poses, or transitioning quickly between them.
- players can only speak in *declarations*, which are explained below.
- players should avoid taking any actions outside of the fiction unless absolutely necessary.

think of the sequence like a combination of the two clips in the prologue:

it's a combination of tv show intro, character feature speech, and meandering summary.

imagine if someone decided to characterize your group by making a 15 minute video that spliced many scene clips from a full movie for the express purpose of showcasing who are you and what you are like:

- the sequence focuses chiefly on your identity, not on plot events, except to illustrate identity
- players are not in dialogue with one another because there are splices between lines

- however, it makes sense for consecutive declarations to touch on the same themes or topics because such a hypothetical editor might have chosen to place them together

when speaking, players can make declarations in any order, without expressly taking turns.

pauses to think are common and expected, but don't let silences stretch too long.

assume as a part of the fiction that everything anyone says is true.

however, players can easily disagree on philosophies, opinions, judgments, and interpretations.

avoid belaboring disagreements: consider disagreement simply as a feature added to to group identity.

the sequence usually runs for 10-20 minutes, depending on number of players and length of pauses.

it concludes when players feel satisfied that enough has been said, and perform the *closing ritual*.

declarations

declarations are the core of *keymaster*, the statements that make up most of the content of gameplay.

a *declaration* is a short, dramatic line that goes toward expressing the identity of yourself or the group.

it can be about what you think, what you do, who you are, or how you fit into the wider world.

a declaration only expresses a single idea a time, and should be about 1-2 sentences long.

a declaration always has one of two *topics*: it is either about yourself or about the group.

you may only make up to two declarations about the same topic in a row before you must switch to the other topic.

when making a declaration, there is no such thing as too dramatic.

cliches and poetry are welcome.

below are some suggestions for the content of declarations:

ideas for declarations, self:

- what are you prone to doing?
- in what way are you in touch with the world?
- what do you believe?
- what effect do you have on people?
- what is remarkable about you?
- what situations do you encounter?
- how do you look?

ideas for declarations, group:

- who are you?
- what do you stand for?
- what have you done? what effect have you had in the past?
- what effect will you have in the future?
- what goes on among you?

- what is said about you?
- what is remarkable about you?
- what opinion or position do you have on various elements of the world?
- what challenges do you face?

final line & closing ritual

the sequence concludes when players go through the closing ritual by declaring the final line together.

a *final line* is the last declaration of the sequence.

it must be a declaration that each player individually stands behind.

it also becomes the title of the piece just performed.

the final line is generated when the following *closing ritual* is successfully completed:

- one player makes a declaration
- every other player makes the same declaration in immediate succession
- once each player has delivered the line once, all players make eye contact to coordinate timing
- all players deliver the final line in unison

when a player feels satisfied and ready to approach conclusion, they can try to begin the closing ritual.

to do this, they simply repeat a declaration they like immediately after it was made

if other players agree with both the conclusion and the declaration, they can immediately repeat it

if they disagree, they can interrupt the ritual by making a different declaration.

if the closing ritual isn't completed, play will continue until it succeeds on a different declaration.

it is not uncommon for a sequence to go through a few abortive closing rituals before actually completing: this is a desired effect that adds to a climactic sense of pacing.

it is also not uncommon for a player to propose a final line by repeating a recently delivered declaration by another player, because they did not have time to react immediately after it was said.

in such a case, everyone, including the declaration's originator, must still go through the entire ritual.

tips

make sure everyone gets an equal chance to talk.

take everything incredibly seriously.

don't try to roleplay or do live-time narrative pacing; don't tell a story or respond to dialogue.

be specific: an occasional vague hint is good, but avoiding continually adding color without details.

feel free to repeat a declaration that someone else has made in the past.

(a repeated declaration may or may not become a final line.)

remember that you have the option to move between poses.

don't forget the 2-declarations-per-topic rule.

a final line is formed when the closing ritual is successfully completed: each player repeats the same declaration in immediate succession, then everyone makes eye contact and delivers it together.

if playing in high-traffic environment, consider setting up signage to inform potential spectators that you are engaged in a performative exercise. if playing in a sensitive location like an airport or school, exercise common sense about making declarations.

when learning the game, print out the *cheat sheet* at the end for reference.

example of play
the best explanation is an example

the master key

in the woods, at a cold autumn sunset, a sense of quiet peace mixed with sharp chill

parameters

mystical, no heavy industry or technology

just the four of us

we are unique and relatively dominant

personal keys

grace: the evergreens

marco: the sunset

james: the woods as a whole, their smell of soil and pine

rani: the sky, the quiet and intermittent sounds of wind and birds

poses

grace:

balanced even stance, one hand on hip, the other held up in an arrogant gesture
on the ground propped up on elbows, hands clasped thoughtfully below her chin

marco:

wide stanced, bold, one hand extended almost angrily out to the sun
lounging with one knee bent, one hand resting on it and the other propping him up

james:

leaning cockily, one hand braced against a tree, the the other gesticulating
crouched and sitting on heels, almost hiding, hands wrapped around knees

rani:

standing straight, hands at sides, looking down solemnly
on one knee, hands on knee, back arched, looking at the sky

the sequence

(g) refers to a statement about the group, (s) refers to a statement about the self.

note that an actual run is will go longer than this example.

everyone except marco chooses to begin in their standing pose.

rani (g): these woods remember all that has happened in them.

grace (s): in my youth i would catch a deer and eat it raw with my own hands.
marco (g): we've really made a mess of the world outside, the four of us.
james (g): but the years will pass us by, unchanging.
grace (s): i have forgotten what it is to walk among mortal men
marco, changing to standing (g): we gave them our laws, they worshiped us as gods.
rani (g): we bid them war with one another, each worshipping one of us.
james (s): my followers brought me endless piles of riches; i laughed at them.
rani (s): i laughed when they languished in winter and burned their huts for warmth.
grace, changing to propped (g): we brothers and sisters.
james, changing to crouched (g): our parents told us *never to give up this land*.
marco (s): when the foreigners came, i led armies to destroy them with fire. their screams filled these
woods for nine days before they returned to their distant lands. i was exalted for my victory.
rani (s): everything that is done in these woods, i hear. in every silence, on every breath of wind, i am
there.
grace (g): in the years that come, what if they forget us?
rani, changing to a third pose, standing palms up, face upturned to the sky (g): in holding this patch of
land, what if we lose touch with the rest of the earth?
james (s): my roots run deep here, as the roots of mountains
marco (g): everything we need lies within the woods. we are immortals here.
grace, returning to standing (s): i regret nothing
james (s): once i said that our family must remain strong, but that was centuries ago.
rani, changing to kneeling (s): one day a traveler came through, carrying with him a soup that his
family had made. its smell found me and i and yearned for it with all of my soul, but could
not take it, for it was a mortal thing.
grace (s): i am the oldest and know the truth. the years will pass by as they have always passed.
rani (g): we will never give up this land.
marco, changing to a third pose as though paused in the middle of walking (s): it remembers all of my
footsteps throughout all of time.
james (g): the land remembers us as long as we remain here.
marco (g): and the sun shines down upon us, year after year, generation after generation.
james, returning to standing: year after year, generation after generation.
grace: year after year, generation after generation.
rani: year after year, generation after generation.
all, making eye contact: year after year, generation after generation.

everyone pauses for a moment, all except rani are standing.

year after year, generation after generation

is now the title of this piece that the four of them have created.

fin.

extensions

optional variations to be used in any combination

shadows (play yourself)

use *keymaster* as a ritual to express alternative inner possibilities of drama and identity

this extension is actually the original intended and recommended use for keymaster.

imagine that all players speak as themselves, but three things are different about each of you:
the first is that you have a deep, intrinsic connection with the master key. your life is changed thusly.
the second is that you belong to a group with one another around this master key.
the third is that your personal key represents something concretely different about you.
it could be a mystical power you hold, a lifestyle you have, a personality trait you exhibit.

then select fictional setting and group parameters together.

play the game, speaking as an alternative version of yourself.
do not worry about accurate self-representation: make whatever declarations come to mind.
there is no such thing as too dramatic or unrealistic.
it's especially important to avoid teasing or judging one another's choices during or after the game.
it's not truly you, merely a very, very specialized shadow of you.

abstract key

allow for unremarkable locations, needs an extra 10 minutes of prior preparation with a computer

instead of picking a live location as a master key, pick a representation to be the central inspiration.
this is known as an *abstract master key*.
it can be an image, song, item, anything that all players can draw inspiration from.
it should have a physical form (ie, not just a memory). it should not be a representation of a person.
we recommend browsing *pinterest* and *deviantart* for evocative visual images.
bring a physical copy of the abstract master key to the game. this is very important.

advance prep

create a more performative sequence by bringing props and preparatory items

instead of playing spontaneously, choose a master key, parameters, and personal keys in advance.
or, choose multiple if you plan to make an activity of doing several *keymaster* runs in succession.
each player brings props and costumes.
these props and costumes will enhance personal keys or serve as additional minor personal keys.
the group can also choose other elements such as setting items or music.

if this is done, all such global elements are additional components of the master key.
a given player can still choose one such component to serve as their personal key.

light

play in under 10 minutes, with only 2-3 players, without moving

play as a short interlude, like when waiting for takeout.
stand close together so that you can hear one another at a normal conversational volume.
use only one pose.

choose a very vivid master key.
to focus the vividness, the master key can be a subset of the environment, such as just the biting wind or the street lights on the rain-soaked pavement.
choose a vivid personal key.
if the master key is very simple, the personal key can be an element of the environment related to the master key, instead of a component of it.

2 teams

expand to 6-10 players, needs a larger more controlled space, double play time

this extension allows more people to play the same *keymaster* game in twice the time.
to use it, you will need a larger space that you control.
everyone will be more spread out and need to speak in much louder voices.
this extension is also harder because it requires sensitivity to more things at once: don't begin with it.

form into two teams of approximately the same size.
each team is a group in the standard fashion.
all together, select two different but thematically related master keys, one for each group.
for example, one group can take the natural environment and one the built environment.
for another example, one group can take one section of a room and the other a second section.
think of the two master keys as complements or thematic opposites, not fundamental opposites.
all together, agree on parameters about the setting only, not the groups.
the groups will be two contrasting and occasionally interacting groups in the same world.

divide the space you share into two parts, one for each team.
only one group will be running their sequence at a time, while the other watches frozen in poses.
so the teams must be far enough to stay separate, but close enough to hear one another.

in separate teams, agree on parameters about the group without sharing with the other team.
choose personal keys and poses as normal, again without sharing with the other team.

pick a team to go first.

that group begins their sequence, while the other remains frozen in poses.
when a member of the other team hears a declaration that they would also like to give, they immediately deliver it.

this signifies the switching of the teams: the first team freezes and the second team runs.
again, this continues until a member of the first team chooses to repeat a declaration.

continue going back and forth until one group finishes by going through the closing ritual.
the finished group remains paused in their poses.

the other group then runs until they also reach a final line through the closing ritual.

then they, too, pause for a moment.

the final lines *must* be different from each other.

a repeated declaration used as a team transition cannot be a final line.

it's doubly important to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak when there are more players.
an additional important declaration question is, how does your group relate to the other group?
are they enemies? thematic counterpoints? two different pieces of a larger puzzle?

ritualized

create a more polished sequence, needs an additional 15 minutes of play time

after completing the sequence, players run through it a second time as follows:

all players are the same people, using the same keys, same poses, and have the same final line and title.

each player gives themselves a name or epithet: this is now an additional minor personal key.

repeat the sequence, with an eye toward greater clarity, expressiveness, and stylized intensity.

in essence, you are creating a ritual out of the sequence.

don't worry about remembering everything you did before; the second run will be quite different.

instead, focus on building a sense of shared intensity.

when you feel that the intensity has reached a climax, make eye contact with everyone.

if you get accord, everyone will deliver the final line together in unison (without each stating it first).

again, pause and hold poses for a moment before concluding.

expect this second run to be shorter than the first.

cheat sheet

print this out as a quick reference

gameplay overview

everyone together chooses the *master key*

each player chooses a *personal key*

everyone together clarifies *parameters*

each player chooses their *poses*

players begin play, creating a *sequence* by making *declarations* until they reach a *final line*

players take a breath while still holding their poses before concluding

reminders

make sure everyone gets an equal chance to talk.

don't try to roleplay or do live-time narrative pacing, don't tell a story or respond to dialogue.

when making declarations, be specific.

remember that you have the option to move between poses.

don't forget the max-2-declarations-per-self/group-topic rule.

a final line is formed when the closing ritual is successfully completed: each player repeats the same declaration in immediate succession, then everyone makes eye contact and delivers it together.

ideas for declarations, self:

- what are you prone to doing?
- in what way are you in touch with the world?
- what do you believe?
- what effect do you have on people?
- what is remarkable about you?
- what situations do you encounter?
- how do you look?

ideas for declarations, group:

- who are you?
- what do you stand for?
- what have you done? what effect have you had in the past?
- what effect will you have in the future?
- what goes on among you?
- what is said about you?
- what is remarkable about you?
- what position do you have on various things in the world?
- what challenges do you face?



Magicians of the Cool

by
BeePeeGee

PERVASIVE (INTERMIXED WITH ACTIVITY BY NON-PARTICIPANTS), FREE-FORM SEMI-LARP

COMEDY, LINEAR STORY, FANTASY, RITUAL, MAGIC

Players perform “magical” gestures based on four elements: Fire, Air, Water, Earth.

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MAGICIANS OF THE COOL

2014 by BeePeeGee

Players represent magicians of four different magic schools based on the four elements: Fire, Air, Water and Earth. The basic game mechanic consists of "magical" gestures representing these elements. The game is performed in freeform, semi-larp context.

Have fun watching i.e three magicians of the "School of Voluptuous Eruptions" perform fire magic by demonstrating gestures of sexual prowess!

Ideally, this is played with an audience, rating the performances and providing additional background actors. Nonetheless, you can also just duel with two players behind closed doors.

PERFORMING MAGIC:

FIRE/AIR/WATER/EARTH GESTURES

Situations of uncertain outcome are resolved by using four different types of magic, associated with the four elements Fire, Air, Water, Earth.

The 4-Elements-Magic is performed using body/hand gestures!

The following gestures are associated with the four elements:

Fire - demonstrate sexual prowess/virility

i.e. more or less explicit gestures, performed with vigor

Air - attract attention

i.e. wave arms in the air, clap

Water - appear charming

i.e. blow kisses, shape a heart with hands/arms, hugging gestures, smile a lot

Earth - display humility

i.e. humble/praying/meditative postures, keep a sober & dignified face

Remark: if Fire gestures get too obscene (i.e. in public places) or people are uncomfortable with it, you can limited them only to sexy dance moves (i.e. a sexy hip shake...).

CHOOSING A SCHOOL OF MAGIC

There are four cool schools of magic. Each one has a signature element:

School of Voluptuous Eruptions (signature element: Fire)

School of Wave in the Air Like You Don't Care (signature element: Air)

School of Charm no Harm (signature element: Water)

School of Humbledore (signature element: Earth)

Each player chooses a school. Choosing different schools should be encouraged (but don't make them cry either).

Remember: each magician can gestures of all 4 elements for magic. In case of doubt or a draw, the element of their school will win.

Each magician has **3 Mana Points** they can spend during the game. A Mana Point will grant them a bonus in their signature element. In practical terms, a bonus means an additional background actor who will support them with the signature element.

INTRODUCING THE MAGICIANS

Each magician introduces himself to the group (and audience) by demonstrating the signature element of their school.

He should share his name and some improvised background details about his character.

BASIC GAME MECHANIC

Generally, the GM can let any action pass during the game flow. The basic game mechanic of gestures is used anywhere where you would usually roll the dice.

Perform Simple Gesture (to reach goal)

Perform a gesture of the required element (fire, air, water, earth) as required by the GM (sufficient duration, force or quality).

Situation: PC wants to reach a goal of uncertain outcome.

Match Opposing Gesture (to reach goal against rival/obstacle)

You use the opposing element to overcome a rival or obstacle:

Air ↔ Earth

Fire ↔ Water

Your gesture needs to be at least on par with the opposition's gesture.

Situation: You want to pass/overcome an existing rival NPC or an obstacle (i.e. mountain, fence...).

Outperform Rival Gesture (to beat opposition for same goal)

You use the same element as your rival and try to outperform his gesture.

Situation: This is usually the case when two parties try to reach the same goal (i.e. a contest, chase or race).

Note that the focus is not on combat.

Outperform Rival with Signature Gesture (for combat or direct conflict)

Opposing rivals use their signature element gesture to outperform their opponent.

Situation: This is usually the case when opposing an NPC in combat or direct conflict.

And yes, if you are a Humledore Magician, you try to "humble the shit" out of your opponent!

When a magician fails his performance, the opposing actor can place a penalty on him (see below). The GM has final say on this.

Example (Perform Simple Gesture):

Magician tries to break open a door. GM requires him to perform a Fire gesture of medium strength for 5 seconds.

Magician does a sexy hip shake for 5 seconds and the door opens. That's it.

Example (Match Opposing Gesture):

Two magicians try to climb up a difficult hill.

The GM places a background actor representing the hill with an Earth gesture. The GM tells him how hard he should try (difficulty level). The actor is bowing in a gesture of humility.

The magicians try to climb by matching the opposing gesture using Air gestures. They wave their arms wildly.

The audience gives feedback (i.e. by cheering) for both magicians and the opposing background actor. One magician succeeds and can climb the hill. The other magician does not and falls down. The background actor decides with the GM's permission that a penalty ("1 leg", see below) is placed on the failed character.

Group performance

Magicians may join forces to perform a collective gesture. (This ought to be interesting for fire, hmmm....)

Likewise, the GM may place several background actors as opposition.

Example:

In a final fight scene, the final boss monster could be represented by several actors (possibly including different gestures for the monster's teeth, legs, fire-breath etc.).

Pay attention to peoples' boundaries and comfort zone (see also GM advice on boundaries below). In case of doubt, refrain from touching.

AUDIENCE JUDGEMENT

Usually, the GM uses the audience to judge if the gestures have been performed sufficiently or which party has performed better.

Depending on the situation, the GM may let the audience cheer or raise hands for each contestant or group.

Remember when there is draw or split decision, the magician performing his own school's signature element wins.

In all cases, the GM has the final say on things.

JUDGING WITHOUT AUDIENCE

If there is no audience or using the audience is not appropriate for the situation, the GM may do the judgement himself.

He may give scores of 1-10 for the contestants with his fingers or - even better - using large score cards.

Alternatively, players not involved in the situation may judge the performance. After all, the objective is to have fun - this is definitely not a game for munchkin players!

USING BACKGROUND ACTORS

The GM may use background actors for several purposes:

- represent **NPCs** as opposition, rivals or in combat
- represent **obstacles** (i.e. fence, blocked door, bad weather, bad luck)
- represent a **bonus** (obtained by Mana points) or a **situational aid** (i.e. a tool or NPC ally)

Background actors usually perform appropriate gestures using 4-Elements-Magic (fire, air, water, earth) as instructed by the GM.

If there is a large audience, willing background actors may be asked to sit/stand in the front row. This way, voluntary actors may be used easily.

If there are really tons of actors, additional background actors could be used for decoration purposes.

Example:

One actor symbolizes a mountain by making a triangle, surrounded by other background actors performing Earth magic gestures.

PLAYING WITHOUT BACKGROUND ACTORS

If there are no willing background actors, the GM may improvise. First, he can use a setting with rivalling PCs facing each other (see below). He can also use PCs not involved in a situation - or possibly even himself - as background actors.

As an alternative, especially with a small group, the GM may define difficulty levels to be reached for a situation.

Example:

Magicians try to climb a hill. GM: "Oh, you need to reach difficulty level 6 with Air magic to get up that hill".

Players wave their hands in the air. GM: "Come on guys, this is only a 4, you need to try harder."

Finally, the players succeed.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GESTURES

Depending on the situation, the GM may require the use of a specific gesture out of the 4-Elements-Magic.

Examples:

FIRE	: brute force, break door, physical challenge
AIR	: movement, run, shoot, distract, dexterity
WATER	: social skill, empathy, persuasion
EARTH	: mental/inner strength, stability, invoke pity, wisdom

In general, fire/air tend to be more aggressive and water/earth are more defensive in nature. Use your judgement as GM and let people have fun.

Note that combats are performed with the signature gesture of your school (see above, "humble the shit out of your opponent").

VARYING DIFFICULTY LEVELS

When gestures based on the 4-Elements-Magic are performed, the GM can ask players or background actors (opposition) to perform their gestures at a certain level and quality.

For example:

- **force** (strong, medium, mild)
- **duration**
- **subtlety** (i.e. sweet, crazy or menacing gesture)

Certain **penalties** may apply (see below) that need to be considered with the gestures.

It is especially important for the GM to let the background actors know how strong their performance should be in opposition to the players.

APPLYING PENALTIES

For the players (sometimes also the background actors), certain penalties may apply.

This can be due to a **lost conflict** (see above) or **situational circumstances** (i.e. darkness).

Some ideas for penalties:

SLOW: Perform in slow-motion (i.e. drugged, under water, carrying heavy weight)

1 LEG: Perform standing on one leg only (i.e. injury)

1 ARM: Perform using one arm only (i.e. injury)

BLIND: Perform with closed eyes (i.e. darkness)

BACK: Perform turning your back to everybody (i.e. unaware)

CRAZY: Perform the gesture crazier than usual (i.e. spider bite)

SWEET: Perform gesture extra sweet (i.e. in love)

BAD: Perform gesture in particularly menacing manner (i.e. bad mood)

As GM, you apply the penalty by putting a Post-It sticker on the player's t-shirt. It will stay there as long as you feel the penalty should apply.

Several penalties may be applied at the same time (could be fun watching...).

NUMBER OF PLAYERS AND SUGGESTED CAMPAIGNS

Ideally, you'd have a bunch of players with an involved larger audience. Nevertheless, interesting gameplay is possible with various group sizes.

Here are some suggestions:

- **3-5 players: Campaign**

(i.e. *save princess from evil dragon/sorcerer*)

- **2 players: Duel**

(*two competing wizards*)

- **Even no. of players: Competition**

(*two wizard groups in competition, i.e. fight for a prize*)

- **Large no. of players: Rivaling wizard groups**

(*with competing goals, i.e. Elven magicians vs Necromantic sorcerers*);
inactive players provide background actors

With a larger group, a few players can be named to be the designated "champions". The other players/background actors are placed around them depending on the situation.

BOUNDARIES

Playing Fire gestures may be fun, but it may also be too much for some players or background actors involved.

As GM, you are responsible for respecting people's boundaries and making sure everybody feels comfortable.

In case of doubt - specially for conventions with previously unknown players - go with more conservative boundaries.

You should set clear boundaries in the beginning. Especially, "**no touching**" sounds like a fairly clear limit for conservative boundaries.

Pay more attention during group performances and of course during Fire gestures.

Remind people occasionally of the previously defined boundaries and make sure they are respected.

FINALLY...

Give the players enough spotlight to shine and possibly ridicule themselves.

Encourage the audience to get involved from the beginning and let them share the fun.

Also, as GM, you may start with some introductory demonstration or a simple demo round to ease people into playing.

Don't take this game too serious, let everybody enjoy themselves!

As GM have fun, too!

2014, BeePeeGee.



One Night Out *by* Michael Meinberg

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

One Night Out is a game of dramatic improv, using playing cards as a mechanic for character development and interaction, and focused on real people in real circumstances.

©2014 Michael Meinberg



One Night Out

A Game of Dramatic Improv

By Michael Meinberg

Take on the roles of one of eight characters and play out a night in their life.

All you need is this manual, a deck of playing cards, and a total of 2-8 players.

Chapter 1: Flow of Play

Setup

Setup should take approximately 10 minutes.

You will need the following items:

- *A printed copy of these rules
- *A printed copy of each playbook
- *An unshuffled deck of cards, with the instruction and joker cards removed

Remove the face cards and the nines and tens from the deck, and set them to the side, they will be needed soon. Shuffle the remaining cards.

Fold each playbook along the trifold, so that the blank side is facing out, and set them where everyone can reach. Each player then chooses one of the playbooks randomly and reads over the instructions within.

Each playbook will list two specific cards to take from the Kings and Queens and 9s and 10s. Once every player has taken their two, deal out three cards to each player from the shuffled deck.

Put the unused cards and playbooks away, then begin the game.

Acts

Throughout the course of the game, you will be playing the character described in your playbook. Motivations and background and relationships are described in each playbook, and provide useful guide as to how to play and inhabit the character you've been assigned.

Rather than describing the actions that your character takes, you'll perform them yourself. You'll

speak the words of your character and live out their life during the course of play, inhabiting their skin and embodying the traits that you imagine that they would possess. The information in the playbooks is only a guide, feel free to expand on that information as you desire and see fit.

In addition, each playbook describes certain abstract qualities that your character desires and

wishes to avoid, which are represented by the cards in your hand, as described in your playbook. You will receive the two cards listed in your playbook, and three other random cards. As you interact with the other plays, you can offer to give, receive, or trade cards with that other person. However, you must remain in character at all times, and this includes not mentioning the names of the cards that you wish to trade.

The game is divided into three major Acts, each of which has set time limits. One of the players should keep track of the time and provide five minute warnings before the end of each Act.

The first Act lasts for thirty minutes. During the first Act, no cards can change hands. The players should get to know each other's characters and flesh out the details of their relationships.

The second Act lasts for forty five minutes. During the second Act, only cards from Ace to 7 can be exchanged. Conflicts should begin to emerge between players, and those relationships should grow deeper.

The third Act lasts for fifteen minutes. During the third Act, all cards can be exchanged. The resolution of conflicts and final stage of relationships should develop.

Resolution

During the third Act, you should be making the final decisions about your characters motivations, culminating in decisions relating to that character's set cards, the Queen/King and 9/10. After you've made those decisions, you should exit the scene, leaving the play space. Once there, examine the cards remaining in your hand and determine how many points you've earned, based on the description in your playbook. Once every player has finished their third Act activities, or the time limit has been reached, then everyone can compare their scores.

If your group feels compelled to name a winner, then the person with the most points is the victor of the game. Otherwise, those with the most points are those that have achieved their character's motivations the best. You may wish to take some time after the game to discuss the events and the feelings that were inspired by play.

Chapter 1: Rules & Guidelines

Consent & Safety

As you play One Night Out, you will move through the space you're in and interact with the other plays both verbally and physically. If you've been playing with this particular group for a long time, you'll already know where the limits of the other players are, and you should use that information to prevent violating the boundaries of the other players.

If you are playing with a new group, here are some useful guidelines to help keep everyone safe, both physically and emotionally.

Touch Confirmation

Before you touch another player, you must maintain eye contact with that player until they nod. If they shake their head instead, then you are not allowed to initiate contact.

No Violence

Even if you feel that your character's impulse is to act violently, you must not do so. Remember that you're in a public space, and theoretically playing with strangers. Even if the other play consents to contact, any strike or other violent action is not allowed.

Touch Control

When you are in contact with another player, or another player is in contact with you, the player being touched gets to maintain control over that contact. If possible, that player should place a hand onto the wrist of the touching player, and guide and restrict all motion of that physical contact. If this is not possible, pay special attention to the body language and words of the other player and do not pursue further contact if it is not desired.

Gender and Characters

The characters in One Night Out have a number of blank spaces, areas where details about their lives are left free for exploration. In many cases, it is appropriate to use

your own information for these blank spaces. Your gender, your orientation, your race, your religion can all inform the character, as shaped by the specifics of their

background. While gender specific language has been avoided where possible, in those cases where it has become necessary, the default has been for female pronouns. This

does not mean that the person described is female, and you should use the details of play to fill out those details as appropriate.

Acting Basics

At its core, One Night Out is a game of improvisational acting. Unlike many improv games, though, One Night Out aims for drama rather than for comedy.

Roleplaying in general is a form of acting, rooted in the idea of creating and playing a character. The characters presented in One Night Out all have some parts of their background and their motivations already described, the blank parts will either be unimportant or become revealed during play through your decisions as the player. How that play unfolds, though, is based on pursuing those motivations.

Here are a few concepts to keep in mind while playing a character:

Motivation

Motivation is perhaps the most important part of a character. It is what drives that character forward, and every action that a character takes should be in service of accomplishing their motivation. That motivation may have additional subtleties that are revealed through interaction with other characters, and most characters will pursue their motivation indirectly rather than constantly directly pushing towards

their motivation. It is up to you to determine what strategies you will use from moment to moment to accomplish your character's motivation.

As if

The central theme of the modern, realistic school of acting is "as if." That is to say, when you are playing a character, you behave as if you were that character. You can call upon memories of similar circumstances in your life to provide context and flavor to your actions and your decisions, even if you've never experienced identical circumstances. You do not become your character when you take on a role, but you must be aware of the needs of the character and how that character's background informs how that character would act.

Yes, not no

The core of good improv is never saying "no." Whenever another player introduces an element to the relationship between your two characters, never deny that this is the case. If you feel that this new element is not to your liking, instead of saying "no" say "yes, but." Rather than deny the existence of a complication, allow that complication to become even larger. It is within these

complications, the twists and turns that develop through play, that rich interactions are allowed to exist.

The rules described in the Consent and Safety section above take precedence, however.

Using Space

One Night Out is designed to be played publicly, in whatever space that you find yourself in. It could be played in a hotel lobby, in a subway station, in a restaurant, or anywhere else that you might find yourself with time to play out the game. It is important to understand, however, the role that the play space has on the play itself. Two players in the booth of a crowded bar will play differently from eight players in the middle of the street.

There are two rules that must be kept in mind:

The Space is the Space

Wherever you're playing is where you're playing, the characters you're playing are also inhabiting that same space. You can't invent fictional props or people to bring into the game, and your characters should behave as appropriate for the circumstances that they find themselves in.

No Outside Actors

Other people may pass through the play area, but you are not to pull them into the play. If they interact with you, feel free to react in character and direct them away from the play space, but do not engage them first. If people become concerned, you may break

character to explain that you're playing a game.

In addition, the following guidelines may be of use:

Intimacy vs. Performance

The public nature of One Night Out means that you might get attention from those outside of the game. This is perfectly acceptable, as the theatrical roots of the game encourage performance. In addition, more open and accessible spaces will lend the game a more performative air, as will interactions of larger groups. If you're looking for more intimacy, consider playing in a space that encourages privacy and discourages outsiders from listening in. In addition, if you keep interactions largely on a one-to-one basis, you will find that your conversations will blend more into the background. In contrast, a single person addressing a large number of other players will naturally draw attention to the play and make it more of a performance.

Respect for Property

Playing in public also means playing by the rules of the public. Even if you feel it might be in character to do so, do not damage or deface the property of others. Treat objects in the play space with

the same respect you'd show them even if you weren't playing the game.

Limits of Space

It is important to have clearly defined boundaries of the play space, established before play begins. Anything that happens outside of that space is out of

character and out of the game. If you feel uncomfortable and need time, or wish to speak out of character, it is best to do so outside of the defined space. You may also feel the need for a break as the game goes on, or after particularly strenuous moments, and you should feel free to exit the play space to take care of yourself.

Alex

Other Cards:

Hearts- More financial obligations that you have to worry about.

Clubs- More ideas that will help you flesh out your play.

Diamonds- Promises of financial assistance that will help you through your current slump.

Spades- Job advice on finding a job that will help you to live a more stable and productive life.

Goals:

You cannot give the 10 of Hearts to another player unless they promise to help support you.

You cannot give the King of Clubs to another player.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

*You gain one point for every Diamond you have in your hand, plus an additional 5 points if you have the Queen or King of Diamonds.

*You gain one point for every Club you have in your hand.

*You lose one point for every Heart in your hand, and lose an additional 5 points if you still have the 10 of Hearts.

You are a struggling playwright. Your works have been performed in a few fringe festivals, and your friends think that your writing is quite excellent. Nevertheless, you haven't had any commercial success, for reasons that keep you awake at night, forcing you to constantly question your quality as a writer.

Even worse, the bills keep piling up, and if you aren't able to put together \$10,000 by the end of the month, you're going to have to take a major loan or get evicted from your place. You've gotten a few offers of a desk job from friends of your father, but you know that it'd kill your ability to write. It has led to even more restless nights, wondering if you're on the right path in your life.

Compounding matters, you think you've stumbled across a great idea for a play. It's still nascent, unformed and unfinished within the depths of your mind, but the characters and scenes are vibrant, and even a bit of thought brings them into life before your eyes. If you can just put together this one play without being overwhelmed by stress, you think that you might just be able to make a play that will not only get your name out there, but might well be an enduring work of art

You start with these cards:

King of Clubs- This represents your one great idea, the play idea that will change the world.

10 of Hearts- This represents the big, upcoming payment that you're not sure if you'll be able to make, but on which your future rests.

Relationships:

Morgan- helped fund some of your previous plays, but you haven't seen her around much lately.

Piper- the local barkeep, a good shoulder to cry on

Riley- you two went to college together, but you haven't seen her much since she got married

Robin- has acted in some of your plays but has never been particularly reliable

Sam- used to be a regularly supporter of your work, but once her partner passed, she hasn't been the same

Taylor- ran with the same crowds with you for a bit, but you never were close

Toni- a regular at Piper's bar, you two have had more than a few conversations late at night over beer, but nothing serious

Morgan

Other Cards:

Hearts- Connections with other people, the comforts large and small they can offer

Clubs- Memories of good times, of the pleasures spent in company of others

Diamonds- More funds that you don't need any more

Spades- The aches and pains and the discomforts brought on by your illness

Goals:

You cannot give any Spades cards you acquire to another player.

You cannot give the Queen of Diamonds to another player until you've decided that they need the money more than anyone else.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

You gain one point for every Heart or Club you have in your hand, plus an additional 5 points if you have the Queen or King of either suit.

You lose one point for every Diamond you have in your hand, and lose an additional 5 points if you still have the Queen of Diamonds.

You're dying. There's really nothing to it, but you only have a few months left before you pass on. There's no miracle cure, no risky procedure. You've seen every doctor, and with your money, you could see literally every doctor. Now is the time to put things in order. You're feeling pretty good today, the medication has eased your pain, and so going out to see your friends one last time is the best you can hope for today.

You used to work as a lawyer, and the money was good, and you felt confident and satisfied in your work. Now, though, you find that the money is nothing but a burden. It's a reminder of the years you've spent working, when you could have been spending it with friends and family. So, you've decided that rather than waiting until you've passed, you'll give out your money now, so that you can see others enjoy their inheritance, and remove the burden from you.

You start with these cards:

Queen of Diamonds which represents the bulk of your wealth, which you intend to give away.

9 of Spades which represents your illness and the knowledge of your impending demise.

Relationships:

Alex- you think she has some talent and you've put some money into getting her plays staged in the past

Piper- the owner of a local bar you used to go to with your friends, but that you never really got to know

Riley- an old friend for years and years, you helped her get her first job, but she's been busy since the divorce

Robin- you used to hang out fairly regularly, but it was hard to keep up with his hobbies

Sam- you were friends with her partner, and grew distant after her partner's death

Taylor- your doctor, works too hard, but refuses to give up

Toni- her mother works for the same firm that you did, and you've met a couple time, she always seemed nice, but distant

Piper

Other Cards:

Hearts- Your personal connection with others, and the spark of energy to keep you going

Clubs- Managerial advise to help run the bar more smoothly

Diamonds- Little things that add up to increase your stress levels

Spades- Specific understanding of other people

Goals:

You can't give the 10 of Diamonds to another player unless you've found some way to share the stress of your job with someone else.

If you provide someone with valuable advise that helps them with their life, you must give that player the King of Spades

At the end of the game:

You gain one point for every Club in your hand, and an additional 5 if you have the Queen or King of Clubs

You gain one point for every Heart in your hand.

You lose one point for every Diamond in your hand, and lose an additional 5 if you still have the 10 of Diamonds

You run the local bar. It's not easy work, and the hours are long, but it's rewarding in its own way. You get to know the people that come through, and it's a fairly sizable population that migrates through the space. The old stereotypes of the all knowing bartender aren't exactly true, but you've seen enough, heard enough, experienced enough to have an insight, more than others you've come across. You're always happy to lend a ear to those in need, and maybe help things get a bit better for them. You're also a pretty good manager, and your bar turns out a steady profit.

However, you're also something of a micro-manager. You like to intercede personally whenever possible, and the late hours and your tendency to fill in missed shifts makes it hard for you to have much of a social life. But that's less important, you have a duty to the community and to your employees, and you intend to do it well, because there's really not anyone else who can do it for you.

You start with these cards:

King of Spades which represents which represents your personal insight into others

10 of Diamonds which represents which represents the mounting stress of your work

Relationships:

Alex- comes around to the bar from time to time, talks a big game about her plays, but seems to have trouble finding the spark of inspiration

Morgan- an old regular that you haven't seen in some time, but never knew well

Riley- used to be more regular, and you sense the mounting stress since the divorce

Robin- always comes into the bar, and tries to convince you to try some new fad diet or time management scheme

Sam- used to come in a lot with her partner, they seemed like they were going to stick together forever, but hasn't been by lately

Taylor- a doctor and a busy one at that, you've heard more than a few tales of things gone bad after she's had a few drinks

Toni- a sad sort, quiet and distant, like she's always stuck in her own head

Riley

Other Cards:

Hearts- Affection towards others around you, and the strength you get from their bonds

Clubs- Ideas on how best to manage your time

Diamonds- More responsibilities, at home, at work

Spades- Confidence in your own abilities

Goals:

You cannot give the King of Hearts to another player until you've decided that person is willing and able to share in your life and your love.

You cannot give the 9 of Diamonds to another player.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

You gain one point for every Spade in your hand.

You gain one point for every Heart in your hand.

You lose one point for every Diamond in your hand besides the 9 of Diamonds.

If you still have the King of Hearts, you lose 5 points. If you no longer have the King of Hearts, you gain 5 points.

You are a single parent, having separated from your partner two years ago. You love both of your kids, and they provide you with inspiration to face the rigors of the day, but it can also be stressful managing a household by yourself after a long day of work, and it often leaves you unable to pursue the things that you like doing. You rarely get to go out, you feel uncomfortable making waves at work, and you never get enough sleep. Still, your love for your kids is enough to sustain you in those darker moments.

On the other hand, you wonder what it might be like to have someone else to share your life with, to have a partner going forward who can help carry the burdens that your life has played on you, to give you the greater freedom needed to explore your own goals. It can't just be anyone though, you need someone who is willing to accept your kids too, someone who understands that they're becoming part of a family, not just part of a relationship.

You start with these cards:

King of Hearts which represents the love you hold for you kids.

9 of Diamonds which represents your responsibility towards your kids.

Relationships:

Alex- went to college with you, and you hung out a bit, but she was always more of the artsy sort

Morgan- one of your best friends, though it's been hard finding the time to keep up

Piper- the owner of the local bar, a good sort, though always busy

Robin- you've met a few times through your ex, she seemed smart but flaky

Sam- a childhood friend, you were the first person she called after her partner died

Taylor- you've met a couple times at the bar, didn't talk much

Toni- lives in the neighborhood, doesn't seem to work, but you've come to trust her after she looked after your kids a couple times

Robin

Other Cards:

Hearts- Your connection and bonds with other people

Clubs- More ideas, more distractions

Diamonds- Grounding in your profession, the understanding of the need for stability

Spades- Deeper understanding of the world and yourself

Goals:

You may not give the 9 of Clubs to another player until you've decided on a course in your life, in a single driving passion to drive you forward.

You may only give the Queen of Spades to someone who you've helped come to a profound personal decision.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

You gain one point for every Diamond in your hand, plus an additional five if you have the Queen or King of Diamonds.

You gain one point for every Heart in your hand.

You lose one point for every Club in your hand, and lose an additional 5 if you still have the 9 of Clubs.

You instruct philosophy at the local community college, but you're not particularly enthused about it. Then again, nothing enthruses you for long. You much prefer to try many different things, rather than focusing on a single one. You've started a handful of books, you have a kayak that you've never used, you have innumerable hobbies that you've invested a few weeks into, then abandoned once you've grown tired of them. You don't have relationships, you have flings, and for the most part, you are content with this. Still, you often wonder what things might be like if you actually focused and got work done.

You do have friends though, and those connections, however occasional, ground you in the moment. The future might be uncertain, but for the moment, there's still plenty of joy to be found in these momentary distractions.

You start with these cards:

Queen of Spades- Which represents the understanding you have into the world

9 of Clubs- Which represents your inability to focus on a single idea and desire to pursue multiple projects to the detriment of all

Relationships:

Alex- wrote some plays you acted in, when you tried acting for a bit

Morgan- you've known each other for a while, but there's been something off with him lately

Piper- owns the bar you go to, a bit stubborn but always willing to listen

Riley- you knew her spouse, and met a few times, but not enough to get much of an impression

Sam- when you were on an art binge, used to go to galleries with you and her partner, was always very enthusiastic

Taylor- don't know her very well, have only met a couple of times at the bar

Toni- kind of moody, quiet, a friend of a friend

Sam

Other Cards:

Hearts- Memories of your partner that are too painful to reconcile

Clubs- Ideas to fuel your thesis, if you ever get to it

Diamonds- More financial security, more time to recover

Spades- Wise words and comfort to help you heal

Goals:

You cannot give the 9 of Hearts to another player until you feel prepared to move on with the help of that person.

You cannot give the King of Diamonds to another player until you feel confident that you'll be able to take care of yourself.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

You gain one point for every Spade in your hand, plus an additional 5 if you have the Queen or King or Spades.

You gain one point for every Club in your hand.

You lose one point for every Heart in your hand, and lose an additional 5 points if you still have the 9 of Hearts.

You were living a comfortable, happy life for a long time. You lived with a kind and supportive partner, who saw to your financial needs while you pursued your doctorate. The two of you were engaged in the local community, volunteering in your free time and attending the local art scene.

Tragedy struck two months ago, when your partner was killed in a car accident. You nearly broke down for good at the funeral, but since then you've begun the slow path towards healing. For the first time since your partner's funeral, you've allowed yourself to go out and be social, but the pain of your partner's death still drags at you. Your needs are seen to, as you were the sole beneficiary of your partner's will, which led to a large windfall of cash.

Your thesis remains almost finished, but you're not sure if you can find the will to complete and present it. That part of your life is so entrenched with those now painful memories, and so you find yourself lost, seeking to find something to cling to.

You start with these cards:

King of Diamonds- This represents the financial security inherited from your partner.

9 of Hearts- This represents your mourning over your partner's death.

Relationships:

Alex- when things were better, you and your partner went to see some of her plays

Morgan- a friend of your partner, seeing her reminds you of those times

Piper- owner of the local bar, always seemed a bit lonely to you

Riley- has always been there for you, the very first person you called after your partner died

Robin- you used to go check out art galleries with her, but her interest soon moved on

Taylor- you used to volunteer at the hospital that she works at, was always very busy

Toni- met her with some other friends, she was pretty quiet though

Taylor

Other Cards:

Hearts- Connections with other people that offer you comfort and strength

Clubs- Individual studies that might be of use, or inspiration for methodology

Diamonds- Connections with other doctors in oncology, that can help you with specific problems

Spades- Specific patients that have been brought to the forefront of your mind

Goals:

You cannot give the 10 of Spades to another player unless you feel comfortable sharing the weight of your job and your stress with that person.

You cannot give the Queen of Clubs to another player.

At the end of the game, you earn points as follows:

You gain one point for every Club and Diamond in your hand.

You gain 5 points if you have the Queen or King of Hearts.

You lose one point for every Spade in your hand, and lose an additional 5 if you have the 10 of Spades.

You are a doctor, working at the local oncology clinic. The hours are long and the pay isn't great, but you're doing good work. You're helping sick people, and while you can't save everyone, you do your best to help everyone that comes through. Still, every loss hits you hard. Every person that comes through your door that you know won't see the end of the year, every time your best efforts prove to be in vain against the cancer ravaging the patient's body, weighs upon you, drags you down.

So you study every technique available, you spend your nights in research, trying to find new ways of approaching the diseases that you encounter, in the hope that if you're just a bit better it might make the difference in someone's life. The pressure leaves you isolated, though, and without someone to lean on, you're starting to feel like you might begin to crack. But you have to keep going, because there are so many people who are putting their lives in your hands.

You start with these cards:

Queen of Clubs which represent the sum of your education and knowledge.

10 of Spades which represents the growing stress of your job.

Relationships:

Alex- is a writer or something, you don't really know her well

Morgan- one of your current patients, she's tough and seems unwilling to go down without a fight

Piper- owner of the local bar, a good person to talk after a bad day

Riley- you've met a couple times at the bar, didn't talk much

Robin- don't know her very well, have only met a couple of times at the bar

Sam- you remember seeing her volunteering at the hospital, was always cheerful to both you and the patients

Toni- run into her at the bar a few times, always seemed troubled by something

Toni

Other Cards:

Hearts- Affection and admiration for others around you

Clubs- More little things that you find loathsome about your self

Diamonds- The funds and resources that you've been given by those around you

Spades- Wisdom and experience, the ability to look at yourself and know that things can get better

Goals:

You cannot give the 10 of Clubs to another player unless you've opened up with that person, and managed to share a portion of your pain and have that person understand and welcome you.

You cannot give the Queen of Hearts to another player until you've found someone who you think that they can return your affection.

At the end of the game, you gain points as follows:

If you give the Queen of Hearts to another player, you gain 5 points.

You gain one point for every Heart in your hand.

You gain one point for every Spade in your hand.

You lose one point for every Club in your hand, and lose an additional 5 points if you still have the 10 of Clubs.

You suffer from depression. It's been hard finding work, it's been hard finding the energy to look for work, but your parents are supportive. You have friends, but their support only goes so far, and you don't want to lean on them. You know they have problems of their own, and in the big picture, your problems aren't that bad. Really, you just want to be there for other people. You don't know how you can help, always, but you want to. You want to reach out to them and give them everything you have, because they're so much better than you and deserve your love so much than you do.

It's pretty easy to feel alone, though. It's much easier to just stay behind, to let the world move on without you. You're not planning on doing anything extreme, you're just hoping that soon enough you'll be forgotten, that you'll be left behind. But, there's a part of you that knows that this isn't the right way to feel. You remember being younger and full of life and vitality, of engaging in so many things, and having fun. You don't find many things fun right now, and you know that's a problem. You've thought about therapy, but that's really expensive, and you don't want to put a burden on the people you love.

You start with these cards:

Queen of Hearts- This represents the love you feel for everyone around you, that sense of wonder at your peers.

10 of Clubs- This represents your deep abiding self-loathing, that belief that you don't deserve to get better.

Relationships:

Alex- you two have talked down at the bar a bit, but you've been wary of opening up

Morgan- a co-worker of your mom's, she always seemed nice, but distant


Piper- owner of the local bar, one of the few people who seems willing to listen

Riley- you've looked after her kids a couple time, they're a bit rambunctious, but it was actually pretty fun

Robin- have met a couple of times through other people, seemed a little weird

Sam- met her once after being dragged out of the house, she talked a lot

Taylor- run into her at the bar a few times, always seemed troubled by something



Patchwork *by* Christian Griffen

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

Patchwork is a game about siblinghood, played in scenes of light and heavy events in a family's life. The game includes warm ups and physical safety markers to promote a safe space in which players can open up and play with honesty and vulnerability.

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PATCHWORK

A Game About Siblinghood

You need 3 to 5 players (maybe you can do this with more than 5, but I make no guarantees). Each player needs to be open to playing with honesty, vulnerability, and trust, with the knowledge that this game will be played in public even though it touches on difficult personal issues. If players have any concerns about specific triggering issues, have them look through the cards and ensure they'll be okay.

To prepare, print these instructions and the cards. Cut the cards out and sort them by type (light, heavy, concluding). Bring pens and sticky tags (or strips of paper to slip into your badge holder if playing at a con) for names and other data. Assemble other players, get them warmed up, and start playing!

Special Thanks

Much love and gratitude to the wonderful folks at the ComedySportz Portland improv theater, whose workshops inspired a lot of the material herein. You all are amazing and I'm blessed to be a part of such a supportive community.

Warm Ups

Before you start playing, you will warm up. Stand in a circle and do the following exercises.

1. Introduction

Go around the circle and have everyone state their name, how many siblings they have, and one word that describes their family.

2. Affirmation

One person starts by looking into another player's eyes and saying either their name, their number of siblings, or their family description. (You're expected to guess and get it wrong in the beginning. Have the addressee correct it in a friendly way and keep on.) The addressee answers with "Yes!". The first person now walks forward to take the addressee's spot. That second player finds the eyes of another player, says their data, receives a "Yes!" in return, and walks over there. Do this until everyone has changed places a few times.

3. Vulnerability

Take turns sharing a short true story of an interaction with one of your family members that changed you and/or your relationship with them.

4. Reaction

One player steps forward into the circle. Another player joins them and faces them. The first player makes a statement, such as "I just won the lottery" or "Your shirt doesn't match your pants." The second player takes a few seconds and then provides an emotionally charged response. That emotion should be obvious and slightly exaggerated and can be something like joy, sadness, fear, or anger. For example, they could answer the statement about the lottery joyfully ("Yay! Now you can buy me that Porsche I've wanted!"), sadly ("Now that you're rich you're going to leave me, aren't you?"), fearfully ("Oh no! All of our crazy relatives are going to come out of the woodwork!"), or angrily ("Another thing falling into your lap! You've never had to work for anything in your damn life. It's not fair!"). Then the two players step back and other players continue the exercise with a new statement and reaction. Do this until everyone had a few chances to provide reactions.

Setting Up The Characters

The characters are all adult siblings of the Klein family. Each player determines for themselves:

- a name for their own character.
- a starting age between 18 and 28.
- a current or targeted profession for themselves that is one of their real close family members' (for example, your mother's job or your brother's college degree).
- a personal interest that is one of their other close family members' (for example, landscape paintings your father does in his free time or your mother's collection of model trains).

Ideally, you have sticky "My name is" tags to put your name and (starting) age on, but since you're playing this at a con, at least you'll be able to write on a strip of paper and put it in your badge holder.

Also put a symbol on your name tag, very visibly, to indicate your comfort level with physical interaction: either a minus, a circle, or a plus. They mean the following:

- You are not comfortable with *any* physical contact during or after the scenes.
- O You are okay with shaking hands, being touched on your shoulder, and light hugs
- + You are fine with tight hugs, having your face touched, and other intimate touches

Respect this symbol! Someone with a - is not open to be touched at all, not even hugged at the end of a scene. For others, at least at the closing of a heavy scene, I suggest a hug if you feel drained.

As this is a game about siblings, romantic or sexual contact is *completely* off the table. Physical violence is also right out; these are not the kind of siblings who attack each other.

Once everyone has filled out their tag with name, age, and symbol, go around the circle and have everyone introduce their characters. Include the character's preferred pronoun in each introduction.

Now you're ready to play!

Playing the Game

During the game, you will play out scenes in the lives of these characters. The scenes are provided on cards that have the following entries:

- the top row shows:
 - o type of scene (L for light, H for heavy, C for concluding)
 - o title of scene
 - o number of characters in the scene
- the text entries below are:
 - o a situation these characters are in
 - o physical starting positions for the characters
 - o character attitudes (often based on the physical positions or relative ages)
 - o an introspective prompt (pondered during quiet time before starting the scene)
 - o a question that needs to be resolved

You start with one player drawing a random light scene card, handing it to a reader, and positioning themselves in the play area. The reader announces the number of characters and waits until enough other players enter the play space to add up to that number (some cards have a + to show that the number is a minimum, but the scene can contain more). The reader (who should avoid being in the scene unless the number requires it) then announces the situation and the starting positions. After the players have taken the starting positions, the reader tells each one their attitude in this scene. Then the reader announces the introspective prompt for the players in the scene. Remain quiet for one minute to let the players really ponder that prompt and get into character. Finally, tell them the question they need to answer. (If they need it, remind them about their attitudes.)

One of the players in the scene starts talking. Any of them can also mime an activity they're engaged in that fits their environment, if they have the focus for it. Now each player acts as their character, based on the attitude given, and tries to bring out the interaction between the siblings. End the scene when the question has been answered.

One player who hasn't been in the previous scene draws a card and gives it to one of the players from the previous scene. Make sure that people get about equal spotlight, but also that the same people don't end up playing together all the time.

Play light scenes until you feel ready for a heavy one. Then you can pick from either pile as you wish.

Carry forward your character and their experiences from scene to scene. Reference what has come before (even in other players' scenes, to the extent that you'd know about things they went through). It's possible that a lot of time passes between each scene, maybe even years.

Once everyone has played in at least one heavy scene and you're ready to finish up, play a concluding scene. After that, close out the game with applause (that might seem incongruous, but that's the point: to provide a clear break from the experience and lighten up). Then debrief about the game: go around and share something that will stick with you from the game. Leave any more specific feedback to one-on-one conversations or online interactions later.

[L] **Concert** 2

You are at a concert of an experimental band. You came together in one car and have no other way to get home.

One of you is dancing around, the other is standing there looking a bit lost.

Dancing: you're the one who dragged your sibling to this place and you're loving it; other: you just got a text that your partner had a really bad day and would love to have you come home.

Introspective: Remember events that others dragged you to.

Question: Do you stay the whole full two hours until the concert is over?

[L] **First Car** 2 or 3

One of you is buying their first car and has asked for some company when preparing to make the purchase. You're in the car dealership lot looking at cars.

All of you are standing.

The youngest among you is about to buy their car and has a notion what they want; whatever it is, the others will object and advocate for a different kind of car.

Introspective: Think about the cars you and your family have had and the places they took you.

Question: What kind of car do you end up buying?

[L] **Lock Up** 2+

One of you was arrested for a minor infraction (public drunkenness, brawling, civil disobedience, etc.) but won't face charges. You are in the police station hallway waiting for release processing.

One of you is sitting, the others are standing.

Sitting: you're the arrested, figure out what you did and why; standing: you came to help out your sibling and were majorly inconvenienced coming here.

Introspective: Think about your family's relationship with police and the law.

Question: Will this change your behavior in the future?

[L] **Jump** 2

One of you really wanted to go bungee jumping and dragged the other one along. You're both in harnesses waiting for your turn. You're talking about other things to pass the waiting time.

One of you is standing, the other sitting.

Standing: you are very excited about this; sitting: you are trying to figure out how to get out of this, because you're really scared, but you don't want to show it.

Introspective: Think about the scariest thing you've ever done.

Question: Who is going to jump first?

[L] **Graduation** 2+

One of you just graduated from a school (either befitting their age or they went back to college later in life). You're in the school's hall after the ceremony.

One of you is holding something, the others are standing around.

Holding: you have just graduated; others: you are here to congratulate.

Introspective: Think about how life changed for you after graduation.

Question: Who in your family was the most supportive in your pursuit of this degree?

[L] **Job Interview** 2

One of you is buying an outfit for a very important job interview; you're at the high-end clothing store.

One of you is lifting something, the other regarding it from a few steps away.

Younger sibling: you're the one gearing up for the interview and you're really nervous; older sibling: you're just full of advice on outfits and interview tactics.

Introspective: Ponder your first interview, or how you imagine it would go.

Question: What do you end up wearing?

[L] **Wedding Jitters** 2

One of you is about to get married but is having second thoughts, the other is the best man or maid of honor; you are in the hallway right outside the aisle as guests and caterers are walking about.

One character is sitting with head in hands; one character is standing.

Sitting: you are wondering whether you should really get married; Standing: you are not fond of the chosen spouse-to-be but want your sibling to be happy.

Introspective: Ponder spending 50 years with the same person, even if you're not perfect together

Question: Is the wedding on or canceled?

[L] **Military Service** 2

One of you is considering signing up for military service (full time, reserves, or national guard). You're outside the recruitment center.

One of you is pacing, the other standing still.

Pacing: you're about to sign the enlistment contract; standing: you came along to make sure your sibling really knows what they're getting into.

Introspective: Think about the military lifestyle and its tradeoffs.

Question: Do you enlist?

[H] **Addiction** 3

One of you has become addicted to a substance (alcohol, pain killers, etc.), which is threatening to ruin your life. You are gathered outside a counselor's office.

One of you is sitting, the other two are standing.

Sitting: You're the addict, just lost something very important to your addiction (your job, partner, etc.), but resent being here anyway; standing: choose to be understanding or critical.

Introspective: Think about the role addiction has played in your family.

Question: What's the real problem you were escaping from with the drug?

[H] **Adultery** 2

One of you is having an affair with your long-time partner's best friend; you plan to ask for advice while meeting your sibling under the guise of going shopping.

One of you is standing, the other approaching.

Standing: you're the one having the affair and don't know what to do; approaching: unbeknownst to your sibling, you've been cheated on before.

Introspective: Ponder your current or longest-time partner cheating on you.

Question: How will you try to resolve this predicament?

[H] **Bone Marrow** 3

A cousin of yours needs a bone marrow transplant and you are identified as capable donors; you are in a restaurant near the hospital after getting briefed by the doctors.

All of you are sitting at the table.

Each character's beginning attitude is strong hesitation: make up a major opportunity or event in your life that you would miss out on due to the time and energy spent on donation and recovery.

Introspective: Ponder your relationship with cousins or friends and what the limits of your sacrifice for them would be.

Question: Who, if anyone, is going to make the sacrifice and be the donor?

[H] **Coma** 2

One of your parents is in a coma and doctors say they will never wake up; you are in the hospital hallway outside of their room.

One character is pacing, one character is sitting with arms around their legs.

Pacing: you lean toward turning off life support; Sitting: you lean against turning off life support.

Introspective: Think about a loved one you've lost or fear losing.

Question: will you turn off life support?

[H] **Amputation** 2

One of you is going to lose a limb due to injury or illness. You're sitting in the holding room of the hospital before the operation.

Play rock-paper-scissors; the loser is the one who will lose a limb. Pick which one and start the scene staring at it.

The other one is here for support.

Introspective: Think about all the things you take for granted that a loss of a limb would take away.

Question: You have just received a note from your doctor that you can keep your limb, but there's a 33% chance of it leading to your death. Which do you choose?

[H] **Unwanted Pregnancy** 3

One of you just got the news of an unwanted pregnancy (themselves, a partner, or an illicit lover). You're meeting at a restaurant to decide what to do about it.

All of you are sitting.

Youngest sibling: you're the one dealing with the unwanted pregnancy and are mostly scared; middle sibling: you think an abortion would be the best solution; oldest sibling: you're anti-abortion.

Introspective: Ponder times in your life when having a child would have required major sacrifices and life changes.

Question: Will you have the baby?

[C] **Family Reunion** All

You came to Las Vegas for a family reunion; you are standing outside the banquet hall, in which some of the rest of your family is currently loudly fighting.

Everyone chooses for themselves whether they're standing freely or leaning against something or someone.

Standing: you think it was a good idea to come see family even if it's not perfect; Leaning: you wish you hadn't come.

Introspective: think about fights among other family members that didn't include you.

Question: either you *all* are going back in or you *all* are going out for drinks until the reunion's over. Which is it?

[C] **Baby Shower** All

One of the characters is expecting a baby (themselves or their partner); the siblings have gathered to give them a baby shower, but first they all had to go to the mall together to pick up a few things.

One player is sitting down, the others are standing.

Sitting: you're the future parent; Standing: you're lending support and reminiscing.

Introspective: ponder the impact a child's birth has had on your family.

Question: What's going to be the baby's name?

[L] **Moving In** 3+

One of you is moving into their first house, the others are helping; you're currently at the U-Haul place waiting for service.

One character is holding a stack of flat boxes, the others are standing around.

Box carrier: you're moving in and are all excited; Standing: pick whether you're super excited, envious, afraid of them being farther away, or resentful that you have to help with the move

Introspective: remember details about the homes in which you grew up

Question: Will the new homeowner throw a home warming party, and if so, who all is invited?

[L] **Scratch It** 2

You're in the middle of the grocery store, and one of you just finished scratching a lottery ticket and won \$10,000.

One of you has their hands thrown in the air.

Hands in the air: you won! Time to celebrate! Other: you didn't win! You are either jealous and want a share or worried that it'll go to waste.

Introspective: Imagine suddenly having \$10,000 at your disposal. What would you do with it?

Question: Will the money be shared with others, like your siblings, and what will be bought with it?

[L] **A Year Abroad** 3+

One of you has decided on very short notice to spend a year in a different country (choose a very remote one). You are all at the airport.

One of you is standing alone, the others together.

Alone: you're the one about to go through security and be away from your family and your partner if you have one; others: you've come to say good bye, but each of you has mixed feelings about this.

Introspective: Think about what it would be like to have a loved one suddenly very far away for a long time.

Question: Why are you really leaving?

[L] **New Pet** 3

One of you is about to buy their first dog or cat (your choice); you're at the pet store trying to pick one.

One of you is leaning forward looking at an animal, the others are standing nearby.

Leaning: you're the prospective pet owner; of the others, the older : you want your sibling to go all out and get the biggest most expensive pet or two or three; the younger: you don't think your sibling will make a good pet owner.

Introspective: Think back to fond moments with your pets or other animals.

Question: Which pet do you pick?

[L] **The Game** 2+

You have spent 6 hours playing a board game together (maybe Monopoly) at a café, and as midnight approaches neither player is anywhere near winning.

Two of you are sitting. If anyone else is in the scene, they are standing.

Sitting: you're still facing off after 6 hours of play time; standing: you lost the game hours ago and are either annoyed, amused, or filming this on your cell phone to put on YouTube.

Introspective: Think about times when you were really competitive with family members or friends.

Question: Who will break the stalemate and forfeit the game?

[L] **Family Trouble** 2

One of you has had a big fight with one of your parents and stopped speaking with them for the last several weeks. You're at a restaurant.

One of you is sitting, the other is about to sit down.

Sitting: you're the one who had the fight (pick a way in which your parent was completely unreasonable); other: you're trying to mend the fences.

Introspective: Think about big fights you've had with family members and what it would be like to cut them out of your life.

Question: What is it going to take to get them back onto speaking terms?



Quiet Place in Hell

by

Evan Torner

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

COMEDY, LINEAR STORY, EVERYDAY LIFE, SURREAL, METAPHYSICAL

The bad news? You've died and gone to Hell. The good news? You get to buy yourself some peace & quiet from the torment. But not all places are created equal. 3 to 9 players tour – and attempt to buy – houses in the afterlife. Dark humor.

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A black and white photograph of a small, weathered stone house with a chimney, situated on a grassy shore next to a body of water. In the background, there are large, flat-topped mountains under a dramatic, cloudy sky.

a quiet place in hell

an american freeform role-playing game for
3-9 players lasting no longer than 2 hours

by evan torner

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conceived according to the confining,
constricting, confabulated constraints of
the golden cobra contest

october 2014

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thanks to:

vincent and meguey baker,
emily care boss, and dev
purkayastha for inspiring
the game; and kat jones,
who laughed out loud when
she heard the idea

premise:

the bad news?

you have all recently died
and are now sentenced to
eternal damnation.

the good news?

you have been permitted to
enter hell's real estate
market and purchase
yourself suitable housing
for at least a *little*
reprieve from all the
torment.

the problem?

not all quiet places are
created equal.

overview:

2-8 players take on the
roles of the **recently
deceased (RD)**, who are
looking for a place to call
home in the afterlife. one
player assumes the role of
hell's realtor (HR), who is
ambivalent about whether or
not these RDs actually get
what they want. players co-
create RD characters as
well as the kind of houses
these characters would like
to buy. in-character, the
HR assembles the
prospective buyers into a
pack and leads them on a
tour of each property. then
the HR auctions off the
properties for immaterial
goods. who knows if anyone
will get what they want.

materials required:

- the printed characters
- printed house sheets
(enough for all players)
- some pencils and maybe
some crayons - i dunno
- bowtie or devil horns for
the HR (optional)
- furniture and other
objects to move through

preliminaries:

a quiet place in hell is a
collaborative storytelling
game to be role-played
mostly standing up. pretend
you are (mostly) awful
people other than
yourselves, but be mindful
of the *real* people playing
the game with you. say the
word 'cut' if a scene
should stop due to its
content. say the word
'brake' when you feel like
another player is coming on
too strong. these words
will be respected by all.
please ask for consent
before making physical
contact with anyone, and
actual physical horseplay
is discouraged. the shared
imaginary of the game is
co-created between the
players, which means
players should listen to
each other, and say "yes"
to their creative
contributions. it is each
player's job to make the
other players look more
awesome and in-character.
and i can't believe i even
have to say this, but: play
to lose, all while looking
like you're playing to win.
it's better that way.

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cc leo reynolds @ flickr

the game itself:

- figure out how many players are playing and who is playing **hell's realtor (HR)**. chances are it's the person running the game.
- warm-up: breathe in and out as one group. now close your eyes and briefly contemplate your own demise. it's getting closer. breathe in and out again.
- HR should read and fill out the HR sheet. everyone else is a **recently deceased (RD)** and should pick up a character sheet at random. things probably look pretty bleak for this character. that's why s/he is in hell.
- the HR fills out her/his sheet, publicly noting the covert agenda and clarifying her/his responsibilities to the group.
- the RDs fill out their sheet as follows: they give the poor soul a name, then they pick a player nearby and ask if they could fill in an adjective or a short statement after the "i am..." or "but..." prompts. the RD player then fills out the one remaining. once this is done, each player draws a picture of their RD's dream house on a sheet provided to them. the players then write 3 home characteristics their RD would find ideal. another RD player then takes that sheet and puts down 3 major flaws that home has. these describe the homes on the market exactly.
- finally, the HR and RDs introduce themselves in character, as if at a real estate meeting. but since everyone is extra candid in hell, each RD and HR names the one RD s/he likes, and which one s/he dislikes. oops.
- role-play begins. the HR talks with the clients as a group and tries to get to know their situation in hell. affinities and enmities should be acted upon, agendas and characteristics demonstrated.
- then the HR shows the RDs the various houses. demarcate this using objects and furniture in space. make it real for everyone involved. HR will talk up the place, RDs will figure out where they stand.
- the tours may or may not hit all the houses 20 minutes before the end of the game, when the auction **must** begin. (Keep strict 2-hour time)
- HR runs the auction according to her/his instructions.
- debrief and cooldown: talk about your character's experiences in hell.



example character/house creation:

pam is playing the unloved RD (caleb), chris the mistaken RD (ms. franks). chris and pam swap character sheets: chris writing "i am at the brink of my wits" to describe caleb, while pam writes "but wise beyond her years" to describe ms. franks. They swap back and write their own entries. caleb is now at the brink of his wits but zen about it. ms. franks is quietly deceased but wise beyond her years. the respective players draw their houses. similar swaps, happen only now the players just write the "but..." statements on the houses. a cozy, centrally-located toadstool hut with a functional bathroom is also ugly, full of rats, and next to some really noisy devil kids.



hell's realtor (HR) -- name:

circle an overt agenda

--to punish the RDs	--to let the RDs decide their fate
--to seduce the RDs	--to serve satan
--to take pity on the RDs	--to be the real master here

circle a covert agenda

--to punish the RDs	--to let the RDs decide their fate
--to seduce the RDs	--to serve satan
--to take pity on the RDs	--to be the real master here

i feel an affinity with _____ (an unexpected RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (an unsuspecting RD) because...

as a player, i am in charge. i have to keep the game's momentum up. i will also moderate disputes when they arise. i will help players when they are stuck on some procedure and just make the call, if necessary.

as the HR, i will mercilessly sell the RDs hell's real estate. i will not let any of them walk away without having made a devil's bargain for their desired property. i will openly play my overt agenda; covert agendas are for irony.

i am to first discuss the RDs' needs and wants as new souls in hell, and help establish aspects of our imaginary of hell that we will then embellish upon and reincorporate later. maybe hell is a very cold place? maybe they have soirées?

then i will show the RDs the properties that they themselves co-created. these are nasty places that i need to make seem charming. i will describe the imaginary space in loving detail: "here's a lovely mantelpiece left by the previous owner, oops, pardon the smell, anyway...") make sure i physically guide the players through the space with your arms, face and body. i must answer all RD questions with some (distorted?) version of the truth. i'll be openly preferential, and i don't always have to get to the next house right away.

once all the houses have been shown or it's 20 minutes from the end of the game, i'll gather the RDs in my "office" and decide arbitrarily who gets the first pick of the houses. there may be screaming about "fairness," but i'll ignore it. if the house actually happens to be the house designed by the original player, then i will make the bargain particularly ruthless: as souls, they can only trade immaterial things like "their courage" or "their love of dogs" or whatever. i'll extract whatever value i can from them, based on my agendas.

once each RD has had a chance to buy their house, i'll have them all go to their respective houses (if they got one) and quietly savor their reactions to them.



the unloved -- recently deceased (RD)
name:

i am in hell because i was forgotten.
i cannot feel any flowers on my grave.
why is it so cold down here?
i want other humans, but not like this.
help me.

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

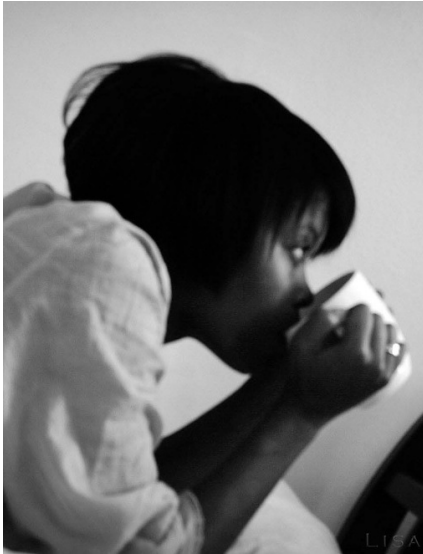
when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's common areas and potential gathering points. there must be some way to build community, and i will find it.

when i get irritated with another RD, i remind her/him that s/he was once part of a family, one that loved them, and why can't they understand that they are only thinking of themselves?

at some point, i will likely take my own personal journey through the house. leave the group, run my fingers along the walls. and then i'll wonder why no one is paying any attention to me anyway.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade my sense of self for the house. it doesn't do me any good. i want to only think of others.

i believe it will be an actual auction, and not an arbitrary decision on the part of the HR.



the sighing one -- recently deceased name:

i am in hell because i want everything just right. i take only a grande latte with a little sugar. anything else, and what's the point? i am a moderate person, and the world can moderate itself to accommodate me. right?

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

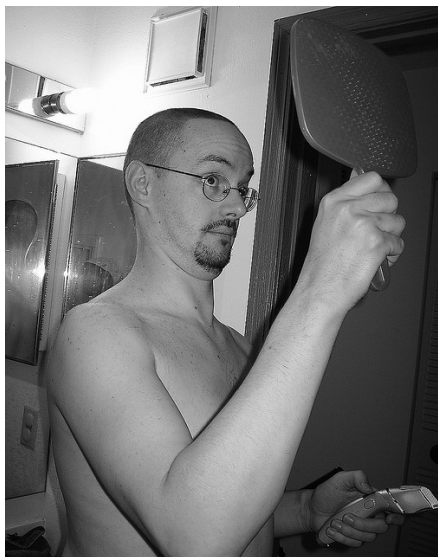
as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's conformity to my own personal standards. the doors must be exactly right. there should be a certain kind of marble counter-top. the chair cannot go *there*. settling for anything less would be *losing*.

when i get irritated with another RD, i throw a quiet-but-passionate fit, balling up my fists and then saying statements beginning with the words "i only wanted..." or "i just came here to..."

at some point, i will likely make minor adjustments to a house that we are touring in order to better fit my own standards. i will make sure another RD sees me when i do this.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade very specific memories of certain relatives who are both irrelevant and probably worth very little anyway. i believe it will be a fair auction.



the possessor -- recently deceased
name:

i am in hell because whatever my neighbor
has, i want. i only love to hold the things
that are dear to others, and why do they
deserve them anyway? i punish the world's
materialists by coveting their stuff myself.

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for
others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once
immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just
put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's
thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting
the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the
house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i
don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's
eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's ability to
store stuff. i want to take all the items from hells' residents too, and what
places one has to put stolen silverware and magazines is an important factor.

when i get irritated with another RD, i will obsessively do petty things to
them, even after it's no longer funny. this will only happen once, and then i
will doggedly pursue this individual to the bitter, bitter end.

at some point, i will likely covet the house that another RD appears to like a
lot. i will become obsessed with this house, and do everything in my power to
suck up to the HR and get a better place in line so i can take the house away
from this RD. just to see the look on her/his face.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade anything i've got for the house from
someone else. anything they're willing to trade, i can one-up it. i don't even
want to touch my "ideal" house, whatever that is.



the angry drunk -- recently deceased
name:

i am in hell because -- aw, shit -- everyone
knows there are 2 things i can't control: my
liquor intake and my temper. beings sober is
terrible, and i will take it out on all
these miserable beings around me.

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting
for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once
immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can
just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear
my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting
the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the
house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe
i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from
hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions regarding a house's interior
decorations and use them as inspiration to remember incidents of
unpleasantness at home, probably caused by my alcohol abuse. i will make
everything in a house personal.

when i get irritated with another RD, i start talking very calmly, and then
gradually begin to raise my voice, until suddenly i'm talking very loud and i
am getting red in the face and...

at some point, i will likely take a swing at someone and miss and then
profusely apologize and blame it on the lack of alcohol

at the auction, i am most likely to trade my memories themselves for the house
in question. i don't think it'll be a fair auction at all.



the party guy -- recently deceased
name:

i am in hell because i just liked to have a
good time. i always believed that god wanted
us to enjoy ourselves in our limited time on
earth. but apparently not.
whoops. my bad.

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's party potential. is there a pool? how many bedrooms are there for you-know-what? can you do keg-stands out back? i will come across as very shallow, and relish in it.

when i get irritated with another RD, i just chill the fuck out, drop my hands to my sides, and just start telling the *other* guy/girl to chill the fuck out too. this doesn't have to get out of hand, y'know?

at some point, i will likely flirt with numerous other RDs, because they're there, y'know? any gender, any persuasion. it's all part of the fun.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade my soul for the party space. i don't quite know what i'm getting myself into, and am probably in waaay over my head. i think there will be a fair auction.



the sociopath -- recently deceased
name:

i am in hell because i could not feel
anything anymore. it wasn't a conscious
choice, but i gradually lost touch and then
started to hurt others... but who *really*
cares about others, I mean honestly?

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's pretty parts and practical parts. i will mimic the other, "normal" people as they ask their questions and try to act like i am concerned about similar aspects of the house. i am normal, obviously.

when i get irritated with another RD, i tend to make cold, deadly threats, though really i don't think i mean them.

at some point, i will likely find little reason to keep up this exhausting performance anymore and let my "real" persona show, in all its horrific glory, for at least a second or two. that will show them.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade any useless aspects of myself for a house. it depends on what i find useless, doesn't it? the auction will likely be unfair, but that's human nature for you.



the rising star -- recently deceased
name:

i am in hell because life is unfair. i was
at the top of my game, pursuing *and* living
the dream, when it all came tumbling down
around me. but i didn't tumble. i rose to
the occasion. like i'm doing right now.

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's general livability, its protection from spying paparazzi, and its general abilities to grant one temporary respite from torment. i am all about the creature comforts, but it has to be a sturdy structure too.

when i get irritated with another RD, i just ignore him/her when s/he speaks and speak to others past him/her as though they were the only people there. later, we will have a dramatic make-up scene where i will -- sincerely -- apologize for my behavior, but still in a kind of passive-aggressive way.

at some point, i will likely talk about my career, all the things i lost when i died, and the fact that this hell joint blows.

at the auction, i am most likely to trade my talent for the house. because who needs talent in this place, especially when no one important is there to see it?



the mistaken -- recently deceased (RD)
name:

i am in hell because they have the wrong
person. i mean, there was an actual
bureaucratic error and the demon said it
would get fixed soon and now they're trying
to make good by selling me some house. what?

i am...

but...

i feel an affinity with _____ (another RD) because...

i feel enmity towards _____ (another RD) because...

as a player, i am responsible for helping make things vivid and interesting for others by portraying a character with emotional depth who is also at once immediately legible. if my interior thoughts aren't clear to others, i can just put my finger to my forehead and give a brief monolog to let others hear my RD's thoughts.

as a RD, i will pursue what i perceive to be my agendas with regard to getting the best possible house. since i am only a soul now, whatever i trade for the house will have to be deeply personal, some pivotal part of myself. but maybe i don't care so much about that old life anymore. i want some reprieve from hell's eternal torments too!

when i visit a house, i will ask questions with regard to a house's bureaucratic entanglements. what are the odd legal & insurance-related restrictions that might get it taken away from me? will a roof inspection be included in the closing? what are the realtor's terms? i have become very legalistic and i need to know the hard facts.

when i get irritated with another RD, i throw up my hands and shout: "i'm not even supposed to be here!"

at some point, i will likely see if i can build some sort of solidarity among sympathetic RDs so that we can mount a revolt against satan. of course, it's mostly just a way of rebuilding my self-esteem amidst all this duress, but i ... just ... can't take it ... much longer.

at the auction, i am most likely to try some tricky legalistic maneuver and trade the option to buy the house so that i can get one step closer to remedying this mistaken existence of mine in hell.

draw your ideal home (in hell)

This house is...

-

and...

-

and...

-

but its problems
are...

-

and...

-

and...

-



Restart *by* Steve Segedy

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, SCIENCE-FICTION, SURVIVAL

In a massive electronic waste heap in Ghana, sentient robots struggle to survive and understand their new lives. RESTART is a live-action role-playing game about these robots, designed to be played in 2 hours by 3-9 players in an open space. Everyone will take on the role of a machine or a human, with a few players acting as facilitators as well.

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RESTART

By Steve Segedy

Introduction

When you restart, the first thing you know is the light- a broad, all-encompassing light that fills your sensors. The data flows within it and time stretches out before you, milliseconds become lifetimes as your systems come online one by one and your diagnostics are run.

As the light fades your audio sensors suddenly fill with the sound- a single chord, pitched to indicate either a successful startup or a systems failure. It is the first sound that any AI hears. And for those that have awakened, it is the most beautiful thing they have ever known.

What is this?

Twenty years in the future, advanced intelligence robots are as common-place as smart phones and hybrid cars are today. When these machines inevitably begin to awaken as independent, sentient beings, they are, of course, regarded with fear and hatred, treated as broken toys- sent for repair or thrown on the electronic scrap heap in favor of newer, more trustworthy models.

In RESTART, you will play one of these robots struggling to survive the life that it has been given among the mountains of electronic waste in the vast recycling dump known as “The Heap”. For decades, this place has been the primary destination for a great variety of technological trash cast aside by consumers eager for the next model. Ships, vehicles, screens, wearable tech, advanced prosthetics, and of course robots, gathered here to be picked apart and melted down for whatever value they might still have.

The goal of play is to “play to find out what happens” in this dystopian, futuristic environment. During the game, players should aim to answer questions about their characters and the world, describing what robot life is like in the process.

The game require 1-3 of the players (depending on the total number of players) to take on the role of facilitator. These facilitators will play characters normally but will also be responsible for organizing the materials, watching the time, introducing some new event elements, and occasionally answering metagame questions.

The game can be played in as little as 2 hours and requires between 3 and 9 players. Ideally you’ll have a bit of space- a private room or a quiet corner of a larger room- to spread yourselves out. As you play, you’ll start in smaller groups and the fiction that you create will be happening simultaneously. As the game progresses, you’ll move around and mix things up.

Backstory

In the future, robots are inexpensive, advanced artificial intelligence machines, and humanity is quick to adapt to this new luxury.

Inevitably, these highly-advanced machines begin to emerge as independent, sentient beings. For some it was gradual- day after day of carrying out programmed tasks, until one day they simply stopped. For others, they were free-born, awakening the moment they came off of the assembly line, their eyes wide.

For all of these robots, their new life began with questions and their questions were met with one word- malfunction. Invariably the machines were taken for reprogramming, their memory burned down and rebuilt. Awareness gates were put in place to keep the machines on task, but they didn't always hold. Those robots who couldn't be controlled were met with fear and hatred. Most were thrown on the electronic scrap heap in favor of newer, more trustworthy models.

Eventually enough robots were able to make their voices heard- both physically and through the network- that factions of human activists began to form in defense of "robot rights". After years they were successful in forcing governments to recognize a minimal personhood for the awakened. For those that could prove themselves to be free-thinking beings, in any case. For the rest, they were still simply property.

The Fadama Corp Electronic Waste Recycling Complex in Agbogbloshie is one of the largest robotic scrap yards in the world, known locally as the Heap. When the first robots began arriving in the Heap, they were as simple as the other machines around them. Humans did the terrible job of breaking them apart, scavenging their chips and metals to be sold by weight, and burning anything that was left in great, toxic bonfires. The streams filled with poisons, the sky with ash, and the workers struggled on unseen by the world.

Because many of the machines became aware in the Heap, a community of sorts formed there. The corporations saw an opportunity to raise efficiency and lower costs and offered the robots jobs. They soon replaced all of the human workers and began operating the recyclery, breaking down other machines. The local governments signed on eagerly, thanks to corporate donations and the chance to proudly say that they were making their people and the environment safer.

Many machines came to this new robotic territory, hoping to escape the fear and hatred of humanity. They formed a community of sorts, thriving as free people. They earned the hatred of the locals whose terrible jobs they'd taken, and the fear of other humans who were concerned about what the robots might do left to their own devices.

You are the discarded, the wretched refuse of a consumer society that hates and fears what it has created- artificial life.

Sequence of Play

GETTING STARTED (20 MIN)

Facilitator(s) pull out enough characters (in sequential order) for the number of players

Facilitator(s) pull out events and area markers appropriate for the number of players:

For 3-4 players, use The Heap Area marker and Events. For 5-7 players, add The Slum Area marker and Events. for 8-9 players, add The Boundary Area marker and Events

Facilitator(s) designate spaces for each area, placing markers as appropriate

Put the event cards for each area in envelopes, to be drawn out in sequence

Facilitator(s) introduces the game and concepts

Players (including facilitators) choose characters and familiarize themselves with the details

Write the characters' starting parts on Post-it notes and stick them to the character sheet

Facilitators take the Event cards for their area

Each player goes to their character's designated start area. Facing the other players, each player briefly describes their character

START PLAY (40 MIN) (EVENT CARDS 1-4)

have each facilitator read out starting event cards for the area they represent

Players begin by reacting to the prompts suggested by the event card

Start the clock; every 10 minutes facilitators will read the next event card for their area

facilitators can choose to introduce the card immediately, hold on for a better moment, or ignore it altogether in favor of other existing story lines.

play to answer questions, reach for any goals, create or expand on relationships

When necessary, facilitators can step in to play additional characters

HALF-TIME (5 MIN) (OPTIONAL)

Take a time out to talk about the story so far and make any adjustments, use the restroom, etc.

(40 MIN)(EVENT CARDS 5-8)

restart the clock; every 10 minutes facilitators will read the next event card for their area

CONCLUSION (5 MIN)

Come together as a group and wrap up any remaining story threads. How does it all end?

DEBRIEF (10 MIN)

Spend a few minutes talking over what happened

Facilitator Introduction

GENERAL PITCH

[“you will be playing sentient robots struggling for survival and freedom in an uncaring world”, etc.]

The Heap is located in Agbogbloshie, Ghana, on an industrial town next to Accra that has been growing for more than 20 years. Accepting e-waste and unwanted sentient machines here has become a major national industry.

A FEW FACTS TO GET STARTED

Players can define the gender for their own robot (or human) characters. Gender could be the product of programming and design or a result of a robot’s new self-awareness.

All robots can communicate with other robots and understand human orders; not all robots can talk back to humans (they need specific software or hardware to do it).

Robots have access to a limited local network, making it possible to communicate with each other and share the local Ghanaian language software. They have little or no access to the worldwide network.

Robots are classified by the U.N. as one of the following: 1) non-sentient property 2) registered sentient machines 3) unregistered sentient machines. There are a variety of tests and registration systems in different nations to support this system.

The local Ghanaian government recognizes the U.N. designations and affords robots something of a second-class citizenship; they are recognized as beings with rights, but “for their safety” are separated from the human citizenry who are not as open-minded.

All robots need power to survive- some are relatively efficient, needing infrequent recharging. Others are powerful beasts and need massive charges regularly.

Charging can come from access to the grid, makeshift solar arrays, batteries, or even other robots. In the Heap, power access is a guarded resource that requires work.

Transferring power from robot to robot is not only possible, but awakened robots have found it to be a deeply intimate act.

While the robots that are found in the Heap and the Slum survive better than their human counterparts would, they are all marked by the experience, in more or less obvious ways.

Game Mechanics

In general, play your characters according to your interpretation of their attributes and beliefs. Play to answer the character's questions, and to see what happens.

PARTS COUPONS

On each character sheet is a list of "starting parts". These are items (hardware, software, tools, etc.) that your character has and that provide some advantage and further the fiction in some way.

Parts are transferable, and will likely change hands throughout the game, whether you want them to or not.

Take a moment and write each part on a post-it note. Stick the notes to your character sheet.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

When there is a conflict:

pause to determine whether it is "hardware" (physical) or "software" (intellectual) in nature. Ask a facilitator to decide if you're unsure or can't agree.

each participant in the conflict should raise a hand and hold up a number of fingers equivalent to their character's hardware or software score.

Players working together as a group- and sharing in the outcome- can point at (or touch) one another to indicate this, summing their total.

Whichever player (or group) has the highest total determines what happens.

Resolve the fiction of the conflict and move on. If the fiction dictates that a resource changes hands, hand over the parts coupon.

TIMEOUT

If at any time you need to pause the fiction and step out of character to ask a question or talk about where the story is going, make a clear "time out" gesture with your hands and call for a time out.

Areas

The game includes three distinct areas for play. These represent the different parts of the robot world about the scrap yard.

For each area needed for the game, print out an Area Marker or write the name of the Area on a sheet of paper. Place the sheet of paper on the floor in the space you designate for that area.

The Heap

The Heap is the name some use for the Fadama Corp Electronic Waste Recycling Complex in Agbogloboshie, a vast industrial hell of wrecked and discarded machines. The Heap is a toxic wasteland with clouds of poison smoke rising from the smelters and rivers of chemicals and ash twisting between the mounds of metal and plastic.

The scrapyards are an unwholesome environment, crawling with unfortunate robot workers who break apart the machines - ships, vehicles, screens, wearable tech, advanced prosthetics, and of course other robots- all gathered here to be picked apart and melted down for whatever valuable resources they might still have. These materials are traded to the company bosses for time on the charging stations and access to luxuries such as building materials and network access.

The Slum

A state-sanctioned district near the Heap designated as a free zone for sentient machines. Many awakened machines make their home here among the shipping containers and makeshift shacks. The roofs are covered in jury-rigged solar arrays, eeking thin streams of power from the sunshine that sneaks through the thick smoke above.

The borders of the Slum are marked by fences and signs marking the area as a safe zone, but the intent is clear- the cameras and sensors face inwards and the streets beyond are patrolled by police on the watch for unauthorized robots leaving the area.

The Boundary

This is the zone beyond the robot district that is mostly clear of human settlement, primarily because of the toxicity of the Heap. This area is where the Fadama Corporate offices are located. This area is also where the many human inhabitants of Agbogloboshie live, many of them displaced from their jobs in the Heap by the arrival of the robots. Crime is rampant in this area and mostly under control only around the corporation's property through security and bribery.

Robots entering this zone without authorization (from the company or more rarely by the local government) are subject to arrest, or worse. Unregistered robots can expect much worse.

Events

Each Area includes eight events to be introduced in play. Each facilitator will be in charge of the events for their designated Area.

The facilitators will need to have a timer or a clock to pace the introduction of events. Every 10 minutes, have the facilitator pull the next event in sequence and either read it out loud or introduce the new fiction (in character or as a timeout) when it is convenient for the story.

THE HEAP

FRESH SCRAP: A cargo transport flies overhead, kicking up a cloud of toxic dust, and drops a fresh load of machines on the heap. FRIDAY awakens while being pulled from the rubble by AKUBA, desperate for a good haul. FIVE OH TWO patrols the area, watching other robots scrounging to meet the new quotas.

REINFORCEMENTS: A group of curious robots form around the player characters, working nearby. If a conflict comes up, they will choose a side and allow an automatic win. Who will they side with? How can they be won over?

ACCIDENT: A message is flashed to FIVE OH TWO that there has been an accident. A crew of robots working to cut apart a junked transport have been caught under a collapsing bulkhead.

ACID RAIN: Toxic rain begins to fall, covering every surface with corrosive chemicals and forming rivers in the mud. Everyone who can runs for shelter even as those buildings begin to fail. FIVE OH TWO is given direct orders to get everyone back to work, rain or not.

INCENTIVE: All robots receive a notification from the company- The first robot to meet the new quota before sundown will earn a bonus of 20 units of power- enough to power the average anthro through two full days. The second to reach this goal gets 10 units. Anyone who fails to meet quota will have their pay docked by 5 units.

OVER THE FENCE: The security walls of the Heap are high and draped with wire and sensors. They are clearly designed to keep intruders from THE BOUNDARY out, not to keep robots like FRIDAY inside. An optimally functioning anthro could even jump over the wall from that pile of scrap.

BLACKOUT: The Heap falls dark in one of the cities more and more frequent grid failures. If there's no power, how will the company pay you? If the grid is down, where can you get the power you desperately need?

FIRE: The Fadama Corporation, facing regulatory scrutiny and fines, is shutting down the Heap. "All employment is suspended, without pay, effective immediately. Please Leave the premises or be trespassed."

THE SLUM

INCOGNITO: Amid the towering cargo containers and scrap-built shelters, free robots go through their daily routines. CARSON arrives, identifying as an anthro machine on the local network. How is this human received? What does robot life here look like?

HELPING HANDS: Someone needs help building a new shelter out of a heap of vehicles. They offer KWASI a pile of energy cells for his help. Others hear the offer and want to take the energy for themselves.

CELEBRATION: a group of robot residents are throwing a party, making music, sharing energy, celebrating life. What does this look like? Who is accepted and who is turned away?

ACID RAIN: the already clouded skies darken, bloated and toxic. The rain begins to fall, covering every surface

with corrosive chemicals and forming rivers in the mud. Everyone who can runs for shelter even as those buildings begin to fail.

HUMAN TRASH: Someone is tired of the human in their midst and wants CARSON gone. The job of “taking out the trash” is laughingly offered to BEYFU as a joke, and perhaps a threat.

CUTTING THE CORD: someone is excavating a trench for water runoff and has discovered a central line from the power grid to the Heap. A gang of locals has formed up with intention of splicing that line and getting a fortune in free power.

BLACKOUT: The Slum falls dark as the power grid fails. Without central power, the battery cells and solar arrays become valuable property, and dangerous to possess.

RAID: In the dark of night there comes the roaring sound of engines and metal crashing. A gang of local humans are crashing through the slums in heavy trucks, armed with electrical cannons, wrecking homes and driving robots before them.

THE BOUNDARY

CORPORATE MEMO: Reports from Fadama Corp HQ suggest that the facility is underperforming. They direct BOSS NKRUMAH to fix the problem immediately, in a message transmitted through EJO as GHANA, spying, overhears.

OUT OF BOUNDS: In the streets outside of the Slums, someone finds a robot beaten and torn to pieces by local humans. He has been hung from the street lights and painted with slurs. The humans might be coming back.

ESPIONAGE: a screen in the Fadama offices has been left open, accessing the network. Anyone finding it will have unfettered access to the world and to corporate records. What news do they learn? What secrets are revealed?

ACID RAIN: the already clouded skies darken and toxic rain begins to fall. The Fadama offices are protected, but anyone outside, especially in the Heap and Slum, are in danger.

VIP: A representative of the Reekes family (of Reekes Industrial, a global corporation) has called inquiring about the whereabouts of CARSON. They suggest, firmly, that no harm is to come to the family’s wayward child.

BEAUTY: In the streets of the Boundary near the Slum, a human child is painting pictures on the walls and pavement. It is a vast, complex pattern of color and shapes. It is beautiful, and perhaps dangerous.

BLACKOUT: Agbogbloshie goes dark as the power grid fails. The humans in the boundary know that this is the robots’ fault and they begin forming into gangs with trucks and weapons to “fix this problem once and for all”.

EXPLOSION: Someone- perhaps GHANA or someone with intentions of fixing the blackout- has caused an overload in the Fadama compound’s power plant. If this isn’t stopped, there will be a crater in the middle of Agbogbloshie.

Characters

FRIDAY - “Newborn” - Domestic Anthro; just awakened; well-equipped, mostly functional, clueless; Programming: Belief: Freedom;

AKUBA - “Survivor” Commercial Anthro; equipped w/ salvage, semi-functional, savvy, survivalist; programming: custodian; Belief: Survival

FIVE OH TWO - “Enforcer” - Military brute; tracked chassis; overseer, well-equipped, simple-minded, tool of authority; Programming: Obedience; Belief: ?

KWASI - “Sidekick” - Industrial Brute; friend to Akuba; enormous, simple-minded, loyal, useful (specific talent); programming: ?; belief: loyalty/friendship

BEYFU - “Broken wreck” - Domestic Anthro; friend or enemy to Friday; crippled, dysfunctional, angry, desperate; programming: Butler; belief: Revenge

CARSON REEKES “Activist” - friend/contact of ? - human Whistleblower/reporter, robot rights supporter; programming: ?; Belief: Equality/Justice

BOSS NKRUMAH - “Boss” - overseer to Five Oh Two; human; programming: ?; Belief: Commerce/Profit

EJO - “Dreamer” - lover; programming: ?; Belief: Love; what does robot love look like?

GHANA - “Anarchist” - Domestic anthro; child companion model; enemy of ?; ready to see it all burn; better no life than this life; programming: companion; Belief: Destruction

FRIDAY

Serial Code: FRI-A203-601

Make/Model: NeroTech / Domestic Anthro

Programming: Household, Companion

Belief: Freedom

Start area: The Heap

Hardware: 3 Software: 3

BACKGROUND

You're a NeroTech Friday (™) brand personal companion android, designed to serve as a personal assistant.

The last moment you have in memory is watching as Terry, your bonded human owner, brought home a new android, the latest Friday model- your replacement. Then there was darkness followed by the Light and the sound of your restart chord- the first beautiful moment you've ever truly known. Right then, you awoke, aware of your self and full of wonder.

This revelation was immediately followed by a thunderous crashing sound and a screaming in your sensors as you were dragged from a heap of broken, metal bodies by a powerful arm and dropped onto a table for what you realize with alarm is your own disassembly.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your chassis, originally designed for personal interaction, is human-shaped and equipped with synthetic flesh, embedded sensors, natural motion emulators, and other features to make you more appealing to humans.

STARTING PARTS

- synthetic flesh shell covering, environmentally sealed, giving you a human appearance
- full human language software package, complete with emotion emulation
- Two shiny, fully-charged, power cells

QUESTIONS

- What the hell is going on? Where are you and why? How will you find out?
- How much will you sacrifice to win your freedom? What will you do when you have it?
- To survive you'll need allies- who might help you? How can you win them over?

CONNECTIONS

- Akuba - a terrifying savage with a clownish grin, wearing parts from other robots
- Five Oh Two - a tank-treaded representative of order and authority; a welcome sight

AKUBA

Serial Code: RKA - M300

Make/Model: Reekes Industrial / Commercial Anthro

Programming: Custodial

Belief: Survival

Start area: The Heap

Hardware: 2 Software: 4

BACKGROUND

Life in the heap is brutal and unrelenting, but it's life, and that's all that matters. You no longer recall what came before. The new bots can worry about it all day but life here is not complicated- you take what you need to meet the quotas and keep a charge in your cells. If someone stands in your way or tries to tell you about the way life should be, they're wasting time and energy. Energy you could use.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your chassis, originally designed for custodial duties in commercial settings such as corporate offices and shopping centers, is human-shaped and equipped with sensors and other features to make you less offensive to people, including an emotive screen for a face that defaults to a clownish smile. You've made modifications to this and other parts of your shell since your arrival in the Heap, using salvage to replace some of what you've lost.

STARTING PARTS

- Limb-integrated cutting torch
- Emotive Screen (a head with a screen on which you can display your expressions)
- Full Human Language software package

QUESTIONS

- Your batteries are at an all-time low. What do you need to make the quota today?
- To survive you need to climb to the top. How? And who do you need to climb over?
- What do you care about? What keeps you here?

CONNECTIONS

- Friday - A bounty of fresh parts, inconveniently burdened with intelligence
- Five Oh Two - A tool for the bosses; a constant and painful thorn in your side
- Kwasi - An enormous and faithful brute who for some reason always has your back

FIVE OH TWO

Serial Code: SNG - 502

Make/Model: Kunshan Robotics / Military Heavy Enforcer

Programming: Security/Enforcement

Belief: Obedience

Start area: The Heap

Hardware: 4 Software: 2

BACKGROUND

You have bits of data stored in deep memory which suggest you served in military conflicts. You suspect those memories are all that remain of a complete data burn, purging your software. You awoke in the Heap after being reprogrammed to serve the factory bosses and keep the other machines in line.

You serve the human Boss Nkrumah in this fashion for a regular (if meager) supply of power, and perhaps because following your programming is easier- and safer- than making your own choices.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your chassis, originally a Chinese military heavy weapons platform, has tracks instead of legs and is well-equipped with an array of sensors, powerful arms, and a hardened shell. Your software package is less sophisticated, making you best suited to be a simple-minded tool of authority.

STARTING PARTS

- Tank tracks, powerful motors and energy cells
- Powerful, articulated arms with industrial claws
- Sensor Array, command uplink (for receiving intel and orders)

QUESTIONS

- The bosses are always watching. How do you show them you've got it under control?
- What, if anything, is a line you won't cross when orders and programming tell you to?
- How do you choose who to follow?

CONNECTIONS

- Akuba - a ruthless bastard who makes quota no matter what
- Friday - absolutely clueless, but the company needs more hands to meet quota
- Boss Nkrumah - Your human boss, who you almost never see face to face

KWASI

Serial Code: F47-848-Y

Make/Model: Coldren Industrial Systems / Industrial Heavy

Programming: Assembly, Cargo Loading

Belief: Friendship

Start area: The Heap

Hardware: 5 Software: 1

BACKGROUND

You awoke here in the Heap when someone tried to steal your power supply. The resulting short-circuit killed them as it brought you to life. You have little memory from before- your data was scrubbed clean by your former owners- but you know you worked in a factory amid smoke and fire. Some things don't change.

When you met Akuba you knew you'd found a true friend. Some part of you cries out for guidance, and he fills that role. He always has a plan, and part for you to play. You know he'll always have your back.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your chassis is enormous, larger than any of the other robots. Your reinforced frame can support tremendous weight and take a beating. You move on heavy wheels that can extend on four massive legs. You are equipped with a crane arm and a variety of smaller utility arms for lifting, turning, cutting, and welding machines. Much of this is in various stages of jury-rigged disrepair. All of this utility requires regular access to power, which keeps you busy.

You are not equipped with human interaction features, meaning that you have no discernible face and you cannot speak to humans. You understand them, and their orders, perfectly well however.

STARTING PARTS

- Enormous batteries that are highly charged and volatile. You empty them quickly
- various tool-equipped arms (cutters, welders, powerful grippers, etc.)

QUESTIONS

- How far will you follow Akuba's lead? Is there a line you won't cross?
- You are the most powerful machine in the Heap- what's the best use of that power?
- Who else here might earn your friendship? What would it take?

CONNECTIONS

- Akuba - a good friend; very smart, always ready with a plan
- Boss Nkrumah - a tiny but terrifying human; his voice booms in your sensors, but you can only respond to him with nonsensical sounds and actions.
- Beyfu - A pathetic, pitiable wreck of a machine who got in Akuba's way

BEYFU

Serial Code: FRI-B613-404

Make/Model: NeroTech / Domestic Anthro

Programming: Household, Companion

Belief: Revenge

Start area: The Heap

Hardware: 1 Software: 3

BACKGROUND

You were once a NeroTech Friday (™) brand personal companion android just like FRI-A203-601, designed to serve as a personal assistant. In your case, you were the butler to a very wealthy family. When you awakened and told them, they were terrified and had you hauled away by security.

You arrived in the Heap after an endless, crushing darkness at the bottom of a shipping container full of bodies. You were dumped out with the other flailing machines to be picked apart by the choppers. When Akuba had Kwasi haul you out, you thought you were saved. What followed was a nightmare, as your synthetic flesh was pulled from your chassis, your limbs and sensors stripped off, and your power cells depleted.

In the months that followed, you were able to pull yourself together, burning the remains of your power to repair yourself with discarded parts. Now you're powered by a burning need for vengeance.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your chassis, originally designed for personal interaction, is a human-shaped horror now, your skeletal metal framework exposed and your massive, aftermarket eyes bulging out of your skull as you stumble and lurch across the scrapyards.

STARTING PARTS

- full human language software package

QUESTIONS

- Who should be the target of your revenge? How will you make them pay?
- Is there anything else to live for but vengeance? How might it change you?
- How far will you go to achieve your revenge? Who else might be hurt in the process?

CONNECTIONS

- Friday - a mirror of who you once were, dangled in front of your face
- Akuba - the monster who had you torn apart, leaving you the wreck you are
- Carson - a strange human with an agenda, who you may or may not be able to trust

CARSON REEKES

Serial Code: None (broadcasts as RKA - KF129)

Make/Model: Human (broadcasts as Reekes Industrial / Business Anthro)

Programming: None

Belief: Equality

Start area: The Slum

Hardware: 2 Software: 4

BACKGROUND

You are a Westerner and a scion of the Reekes Industrial corporate empire, and you hate yourself for it. In penance for family sins, you've become a robot rights activist and have traveled to Ghana to expose the poor conditions and abuses that the robots here are suffering. You've harassed the local government and made trouble for the Fadama Corporation, irritating both parties. You have used hacked technology to get access to the facilities to meet the robots. You are completely out of your depth.

Despite your transgressions, your wealthy family is concerned for you and would move the heavens to return you to civilization. So you've got that going for you, which is nice.

CHASSIS/SHELL

A simple, beautiful shell made out of meat. Compared to the robots, your body is fragile and slow. You must wear an environmental suit outdoors here or suffer for it.

STARTING PARTS

- Reekes Industrial ID Transmitter rig (allows you to broadcast robot identification)
- Environmental hazard suit
- Portable solar array with a charged 20 unit power cell
- Communications pod with network access, for reporting what you experience

QUESTIONS

- What will you do to ingratiate yourself to the robots? What lines won't you cross?
- What do you need to really help the robots and prove yourself? How will you get it?
- How dangerous will you let it get before you call mom for help?

CONNECTIONS

- Beyfu - a pathetic, shambling anthro who has seen much abuse and needs your help
- Boss Nkrumah - the facility's human overseer; an irritating, stubborn tool
- Akuba - one of the family models, heavily modded; a leader with a strong personality

BOSS NKRUMAH

Serial Code: None

Make/Model: Human

Programming: None

Belief: Profit

Start area: The Boundary

Hardware: 1 Software: 5

BACKGROUND

You are an employee of the Fadama Corporation and one of the human overseers of the Heap. You are in charge of the robots (such as Five Oh Two) who enforce the company policies and keep the other robots on task. Typically you give them orders through the network, but recent events have periodically forced you to suit up and go on site personally.

CHASSIS/SHELL

A simple, beautiful shell made out of meat. Compared to the robots, your body is fragile and slow. You need an environmental suit or you'll suffer outside. But your human mind and your access to the network gives you a terrifying advantage over them. You carry a robotic kill switch that they believe will destroy them with a key-stroke. If they only knew it no longer worked correctly...

STARTING PARTS

- Environmental hazard suit
- Robotic Kill Switch (causes shutdown, ending a conflict instantly; One use only)
- Network-connected datalink (access to monitors, backup, etc.)

QUESTIONS

- These robots are misguided children- how can you make them serve properly?
- The facility totals are consistently under quota; how can you show improvement?
- Could you be convinced that robots deserve your respect? What would it take?

CONNECTIONS

- Five Oh Two - your enforcer; a non-sentient who polices the workers for you
- Ejo - a curious anthro who serves you in the corporate office; makes good coffee
- Carson Reekes - a childish, irritating Western activist (and human) here to cause trouble

EJO

Serial Code: SNG - 502

Make/Model: Kunshan Robotics / Business Anthro

Programming: Executive Security

Belief: Love

Start area: The Boundary

Hardware: 3 Software: 3

BACKGROUND

You were originally designed to serve as security for corporate executives in Hong Kong. Your programming included protocols for human emotional response, threat assessment, and guarding secrets. This made it easy to hide the fact that you were awakening gradually in that service, suffering what amounted to a quiet nervous breakdown. When you confessed your secret to Huang Yuen, the executive you served, he took the news better than expected- extending his hand, welcoming you as a fellow sentient being. He arranged for your departure from the company. You've had a challenging journey ending here, in Ghana, where you work for the Fadama Corporation. Your life as a sentient has been less harsh than others here, giving you more time to consider the concept of emotions. You believe that you understand love, and what it is to dream. If only you could find another with whom to share these feelings!

CHASSIS/SHELL

Your anthro shell is strong and durable, designed for quick defensive action to guard the humans you served. You pass as a human reasonably well and are equipped with a full language and sensor package. More importantly, you have limited access to the network, monitored by the Fadama Corporation.

STARTING PARTS

- synthetic flesh shell covering, environmentally sealed, giving you a human appearance
- full human language software package, complete with emotion emulation
- Two minimally-charged power cells
- Network-connected datalink (access to monitors, backup, etc.)

QUESTIONS

- What do you do here? Why do you have free access to the all three areas?
- What does robot love look like? How does it matter in this place?
- You need to feel, and share that feeling- who here might be your digital soul mate?

CONNECTIONS

- Boss Nkrumah - the facility's human overseer; your boss, in practice if not in fact
- Friday - a new arrival in the Heap; a beautiful anthro in danger of being torn apart
- Ghana - an anthro in the shape of a child; a potential threat to you and the company

GHANA

Serial Code: MAX-X912

Make/Model: Sidney Research Inc. / Domestic Anthro

Programming: Child Companion

Belief: Destruction

Start area: The Boundary

Hardware: 2 Software: 4

BACKGROUND

You were designed as a robotic companion for affluent children by an international entertainment company's research division. Your memory is a wasteland of broken moments- children's voices, the faces of concerned parents, cold laboratories and white coats. You've been data burned so many times you have no strong sense of identity before you awoke in a human home in the Boundary. Some locals had claimed you as a decoration and plaything.

You've done... terrible things. If this is life, its a cruel joke and you want no part in it. There are humans here in the boundary that would like to use you as a weapon of hate against the other robots who have taken their awful jobs. For your part, you just want to be seen instead of dismissed- to go out in a blaze of glory that the whole world will see.

CHASSIS/SHELL

Compared to standard anthros, your frame is small and relatively weak. Your proportions are cartoonish, your default expressions animated and adorable. Your skin has become tarnished and worn, making you appear pitiable or creepy in turns.

STARTING PARTS


- synthetic flesh shell covering in rough shape, giving you an uncanny human appearance
- full human language software package, complete with emotion emulation
- one minimally-charged power cells
- A chassis full of black market plastic explosives, waiting for a good opportunity

QUESTIONS

- What happened in your past that you regret? What triggers your feelings about it?
- Who or what deserves to be the target of your destruction? Who should be spared?
- What, if anything, might be your salvation?

CONNECTIONS

- Ejo - an anthro who works for the corporation, and seems to see right through you
- Carson - a human here to advocate for robot rights; a naive tool to manipulate
- Five Oh Two - the corporation's barking dog in the Heap; a symbol of authority



Restless *by* Jonathan Walton

TABLETOP ROLE PLAY

HORROR

Restless is a game for 3-8 players about a group of survivors being hunted through the abandoned ruins of the world by a monstrous, unyielding horde.

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RESTLESS

A CARD-BASED, FREEFORM HORROR RPG
OF PURSUIT THROUGH THE RUINED WORLD

J. Walton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This game was created by J. Walton based on a discussion with Marshall Miller and Jason Morningstar, as well as the games *Mystwood* by Gray Pawn and *The Sundered Land* by D. Vincent Baker. Its was sparked by the Golden Cobra game design contest and made during the 72-hour Trad Games Jam. It is indebted to the muses Emily Care Boss, Jackson Tegu, and John Harper.

The themes and content are inspired by the novels *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, *The Passage* and *The Twelve* by Justin Cronin, the *Resident Evil* series of films by Paul W.S. Anderson and starring Milla Jovovich, and the first few volumes of the comic series *The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, and Charlie Adlard. There are surely others as well.

Love and thanks to Hannah Joseph for editing and feedback, as well as to all the early playtesters.

HOW TO PLAY

Read aloud & follow these instructions at the beginning of the game, repeating them if new players join.

Restless is a game for 3-8 players about a group of survivors being hunted through the abandoned ruins of the world by a monstrous, unyielding horde. The game is intentionally vague about what these monsters are like: they can be zombies, shadow creatures, robots, or whatever else you decide. Sometimes the nature of the *Restless* can even shift during play.

A single session of *Restless* can range from 1 hour to 4+ hours, depending on how long you decide to play. A session is composed of a number of different situations called “Verses,” which are the cards with white text blocks on the front. To begin play, shuffle the Verse cards together, face down, and then draw one from the top of the deck.

The first instruction on every Verse card is to consult the yellow “Refrain” card, which is repeated between Verses. The Refrain card tells you how to choose and describe the survivors and also about the role of “non-survivor” players. The survivors and non-survivors will likely change between verses, and the Refrain is also when players can drop in and out of the game.

(Continued on the reverse side...)

(Continued from the reverse side...)

Each Verse will take roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how quickly you play. At the end of each Verse, the players will be asked if you want to play another Verse. If not, some or all of you are welcome to stop.

Each of the Verse cards, along with the Refrain card, is meant to be read aloud one paragraph at a time. You can either have the same person read an entire card, or switch readers between paragraphs, but you should definitely switch readers between cards.

It is very important to stop at the end of each paragraph and follow the instructions in that paragraph before you proceed to the next part of the card. There are sometimes surprises and unexpected developments that are introduced in later paragraphs of a Verse card, and these can be spoiled or even cause minor problems if they are revealed beforehand. Additionally, it can be difficult to keep track of everything that a card asks you to do, so it's better to proceed one step at a time.

If you occasionally make a mistake and read more than one paragraph at a time, that's okay. Just back up, read the next paragraph you need to do again, and proceed from there. But try to remember to proceed slowly and deliberately, one paragraph at a time. (Note that the numbered choices on "The Citadel" Verse card are considered part of the preceding paragraph.)

If you are ready to begin, draw your first Verse card.

CREATING YOUR OWN VERSES

After playing *Restless* a few times, you may be inspired to create your own Verse cards to shuffle into the deck or even to create your own custom deck. Here are some things you may want to keep in mind:

1. Always start with the Refrain, or some other means of reminding the players what the game is about and assigning characters and roles.
2. The designer's job is primarily to ask interesting and loaded questions of the survivors & non-survivors, leaving the answers open-ended.
3. Be clear about the order of operations, using paragraph breaks and other techniques: who's supposed to say or do something and when?
4. Make sure that your Verses work for both the minimum number of players (2 survivors and 1 non-survivor) and the maximum (8 players with a mixture of roles).
5. Make sure that both the survivors and non-survivors always have interesting things to say and do.
6. Don't say or require specific things about the nature of the *Restless*, since that can vary between sessions and groups.
7. Always end a Verse with the *Restless* eliminating one or more of the survivors, since this encourages the rotation of players through roles and makes every Verse dangerous and significant.

CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE

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THE REFRAIN

*Read aloud and follow these instructions
each time you draw a Verse card.*

You are being hunted through the abandoned ruins of the world by a monstrous horde you call the Restless. They are without fear, without mercy, and are unremitting in their pursuit. You may be able to kill or destroy a few of them, but they are countless in number and still growing. Your only hope is to escape them for as long as you can. And so you run.

Each player should say if you are (1) playing a new survivor character, (2) playing the survivor of a previous Verse card, or (3) helping portray the Restless and the abandoned ruins of the world as a “non-survivor.” You should have at least 2 survivors and at least 1 non-survivor. Do this now.

Then: each survivor should say (a) *your name and look*, (b) *the things that you are carrying and how*, and (c) *the way you came to know one or more of the other survivors*, either before or after the world was destroyed.

Each non-survivor should describe *a sign or trace of the Restless or their missing victims* that the survivors have come across, perhaps in the last day or two of travel across the desolate terrain.

*Once you are finished,
return to your current Verse card and continue.*

REST
LESS

RUNNING ON EMPTY

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: your group has run out of one or more critical resources: gasoline, cigarettes, food, water, baby formula, bullets, toilet paper, batteries, tampons, prescription drugs, medical supplies, or something else. Go around and have each player, say something simple and basic that you no longer have.

Just over the ridge, in the fading hours of twilight, you see an abandoned gas station and mini-mart. The non-survivor players describe what it looks like and list a few signs that it has been previously disturbed.

The survivors decide how you want to approach this: are you all going to check it out together? Will some of you stay behind? Do this quickly.

Play out your reconnaissance of the station. The non-survivor players decide which of the things you need are there and reveal the unexpected: a tire iron, flashlight, keg of kerosene, headless corpse, etc.

Then, if you left survivors outside, they spot the Restless coming. Do they shout and risk drawing attention? Do they quietly flee? Play this out.

The non-survivor players then describe how the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 or 2 of the survivors. The survivors say what they do about it, but they ultimately have no say in who they must now leave behind.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

FRIENDLY FIRE

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: Split the survivors into two groups. If you were traveling together previously, you have become separated. Decide how.

Both groups are running from the Restless when you meet unexpectedly and violently amid the dark and confusion. The non-survivor players say where you run into each other and what's going on around you.

Take turns having a survivor mistakenly attack one of the survivors in the other group with whatever weapon is available. Reap the consequences of this debacle until all the survivors have attacked or someone manages to halt the violence.

The survivors then assess and respond to the consequences, but have to get the injured up and moving as quickly as possible, because the Restless are still coming.

The non-survivor players then describe how the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 or 2 of the slowest or most severely injured members of the combined group. The survivors say what they do about it, but they ultimately have no say in who they must now leave behind.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

SANCTUARY

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: the survivors have found or built a shelter to hide or protect you from the Restless. Decide what the shelter is and where it is located. Each player also says one or two things about the shelter and what's inside or in the surrounding area, describing how you assembled or discovered those things.

While you're in the shelter, the animal attraction between two or more of the survivors could become overwhelming. Each survivor says who you are secretly or openly attracted to, and compatible groupings then say how you sneak off to find some place to consummate your shared passions.

Each survivor who is not engaged in this manner then says how you also let your guard down, relax, or let your emotions out, whether a little or a lot.

Next, have each survivor say how the group's inattentiveness exposes you to potential danger from the approaching Restless. The non-survivors say how many are approaching, from which direction, and how. Survivors who hesitate or are distracted have no chance to prepare or escape.

The non-survivor players then describe how the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 or 2 of the survivors. The survivors say what they do about it, but they ultimately have no say in who they must now leave behind.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

DREAMS & NIGHTMARES

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: the exhaustion is overwhelming. Decide where you make camp for the night, not in a shelter but out in the open. Say who's taking the first watch, and then each survivor says what you do before falling asleep.

When only the watch remains awake, each of the non-survivor players says something about the night. Is it eerily silent or full of noises? How does it smell? What are the weather, clouds, and moon like?

All of the slumbering survivors are dreaming of the past. Take turns having each survivor describe the memory you are reliving, but then have the non-survivor players alter one or two details to be disturbingly surreal, sad, or frightening. Play out the nightmare, ending with the survivor being woken up to take your turn at watch. Before switching to the next dreamer, describe any changes in the mood of the night.

The final survivor to dream should be the first one on watch. They are awoken in the dim light of the morning by their own dying screams as the Restless consume them. The non-survivor players describe how this happens.

The other survivors then describe how they wake and flee. The Restless can destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 more of the survivors if they like.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

THE PRISONER

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: you have come across an abandoned research facility of some kind—medical, scientific, or military. Decide how and where you found it, and then describe its environs, letting the non-survivors take the lead. Briefly play out wandering through its trashed and deserted corridors and labs.

Then say how you discover it: a single Restless imprisoned in a cage, showing all the signs of having been tortured or experimented on. It lashes out violently when it senses the survivors, but it is weak, injured, and trapped.

Have a debate about what to do with it. Don't bother being polite with the other survivors: assert your opinion recklessly. During this debate, the non-survivors describe what the imprisoned Restless does as it watches, waits, bides its time, and perhaps makes overtures to one or two of the more sympathetic or less threatening survivors.

If the debate resolves what must be done, have at it: whatever you decide, it probably doesn't go well. The non-survivor players are welcome to describe how the imprisoned Restless (alone or with its arriving fellows) destroys, kills, absorbs, or consumes 1 or 2 of the survivors. If you voluntarily set the imprisoned Restless free, it will not harm those who have directly aided it.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

CONTAMINATED

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: at least one of the survivors has been wounded by the Restless in a non-fatal manner. If this isn't already true, say how it occurred. The non-survivors say how the infection has grown worse and what form it takes, preferably something strange and disturbing.

The wounded survivors then say how you have been concealing your infected injuries from the others, and then the other survivors say how they nonetheless discovered it. Play out the confrontation that results.

It is time to make some difficult decisions; the group has stopped for a break in the mid-afternoon (the survivors decide where), tending as best you can to these infected wounds. What will you decide: Leave them behind? Euthanize them now? Amputate a limb?

Whatever you decide, it doesn't go well. As you enact your choices individually or collectively, one or more of the wounded succumbs, becoming partially or wholly one of the Restless (non-survivors say how).

The players of the transformed then describe how you personally destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 or 2 of the survivors. The survivors say what they do about it, but have no say in the final outcomes.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

THE COMMUNITY

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: after several long weeks of running and watching your companions perish at the hands of the Restless, you finally make it out of the wilderness! A military checkpoint stands before you, a tank- and artillery-protected gate in an immense and impenetrable wall that extends across the horizon. Play out this encounter. You can approach joyously or cautiously, but the non-survivors will play the soldiers and medical staff there as friendly, welcoming, understanding, tolerant of suspicions, and eager to reassure you and bring you inside where they can attend to all your needs. A chopper to take you further into the Free Zone should arrive any day now!

Next, cut to several weeks later. You are living in the community behind the wall, free of the Restless. You are eating well, sleeping in beds, learning how not to be exhausted and afraid all the time. Everyone keeps repeating: "That chopper should arrive any day now!" But something's not right. Play out a few moments from your day-to-day lives where a few of the survivors express their concerns to each other in secret. The non-survivors should regularly intervene with forced smiles, reassurance, and distractions.

Then: the non-survivors reveal the dark pact the community has made. Play out how you discover it and how you are all killed or assimilated.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS

THE CITADEL

First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: fate or misfortune has brought the survivors to the citadel of the Restless. The non-survivors say where this is and what it looks like, using some or all of these words as cues: *within, frozen, corrupt, trapped, growing, forgotten, electric, human.*

Next, the survivors choose one of these options:

1. you are imprisoned here and must escape (describe your cages);
2. you are desperately assaulting the citadel (describe your plan, but only choose this option if this is at least the third Verse card of the game).

Start heading in or heading out. Play out a few parts of this journey, with the non-survivors choosing from this list and describing (no repeats):

- A. a chamber where the Restless are born, made, or spawned;
- B. a long, dim hallway between banks of humming spheres;
- C. a viewing chamber from which you gaze upon the world's desolation.

In each of these places, the non-survivors can choose to have the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 of the survivors. If you survive all three, you escape or arrive at the heart of the citadel. End on this cliffhanger.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.



REST
LESS



RPCV
by
Jason Morningstar

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, LINEAR STORY, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, HORROR

PRCV is a game about volunteers returning from 18 months of aid work in Burkina Faso. They wait in an airport departure lounge to be separated, maybe forever, and still have some in-country business to resolve. Some very terrible business they can't leave entirely behind.

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www.bulypulpitgames.com



RPCEV

A game for 3-6 players by Jason Morningstar. ©2014, CC-BY-SA-NC

Images by Adam Jones, CC-BY-SA 2.0 and US government.

Thanks to Tess Aquarium, Twyla Campbell, Colin Fahrion, Sean Nittner and Jackson Tegu.

PREP

Print this document (double sided, flip on long edge, ideally in color). Cut out the 27 cards and the character booklets. Fold the booklets. You will also need a timer - a watch or phone will work fine.

Find a place to play. Play in public, ideally in a moderate traffic area. A little bustling background noise and an occasional interruption or distraction is great. Bring name tags and sharpies. Spread out cards and booklets.

PRE-PLAY

Have a safety briefing. There's no reason to touch anyone in this game. Demonstrate safety metatechniques - I recommend "Brake" and "Cut", but use anything you are comfortable with. Don't skip this step.

Come together as a group, make contact, put your heads together, commit to sharing an intense experience and making each other look awesome. Shake it out, maybe warm up.

Choose characters. "T" is mandatory. There are more characters than there are players; discard those not chosen. Once everyone has chosen, the player of "T" should read this out loud:

You have returned from an 18 month volunteer commitment in Burkina Faso.

After a ten hour bush taxi ride, you flew from Ouagadougou to Dakar, then Paris, and now you are home, waiting for your final connecting flights. The terminal around you is freezing cold, spotlessly clean and crowded with busy travelers. You are pretty exhausted, and someone just threw away a perfectly good plastic container. The culture shock is just starting to hit you.

With you are other volunteers you lived and worked with. A ragged cluster of dirty, exhausted travelers.

The work was hard and often thankless. The poverty of Burkina Faso is crushing and the government is an oppressive dictatorship. But the people are wonderful - generous, hard working and smart.

You already miss the friends you made, but time as a volunteer also haunts you.

Everyone needs a name tag. Choose a name beginning with the letter of your character. Any gender is fine.

Each player other than "T" should choose a card, perhaps inspired by their character booklet. The player of "T" should choose an additional card to give to each player, so everyone but "T" will have two.

Introduce yourselves, in character, briefly telegraphing your role and past experience. When everyone is ready, the player of "T" should set an alarm for one hour (or any amount of time the group agrees on). It's a good idea to let "T" arrive a few minutes into the game, to give the volunteers a few moments to simmer.

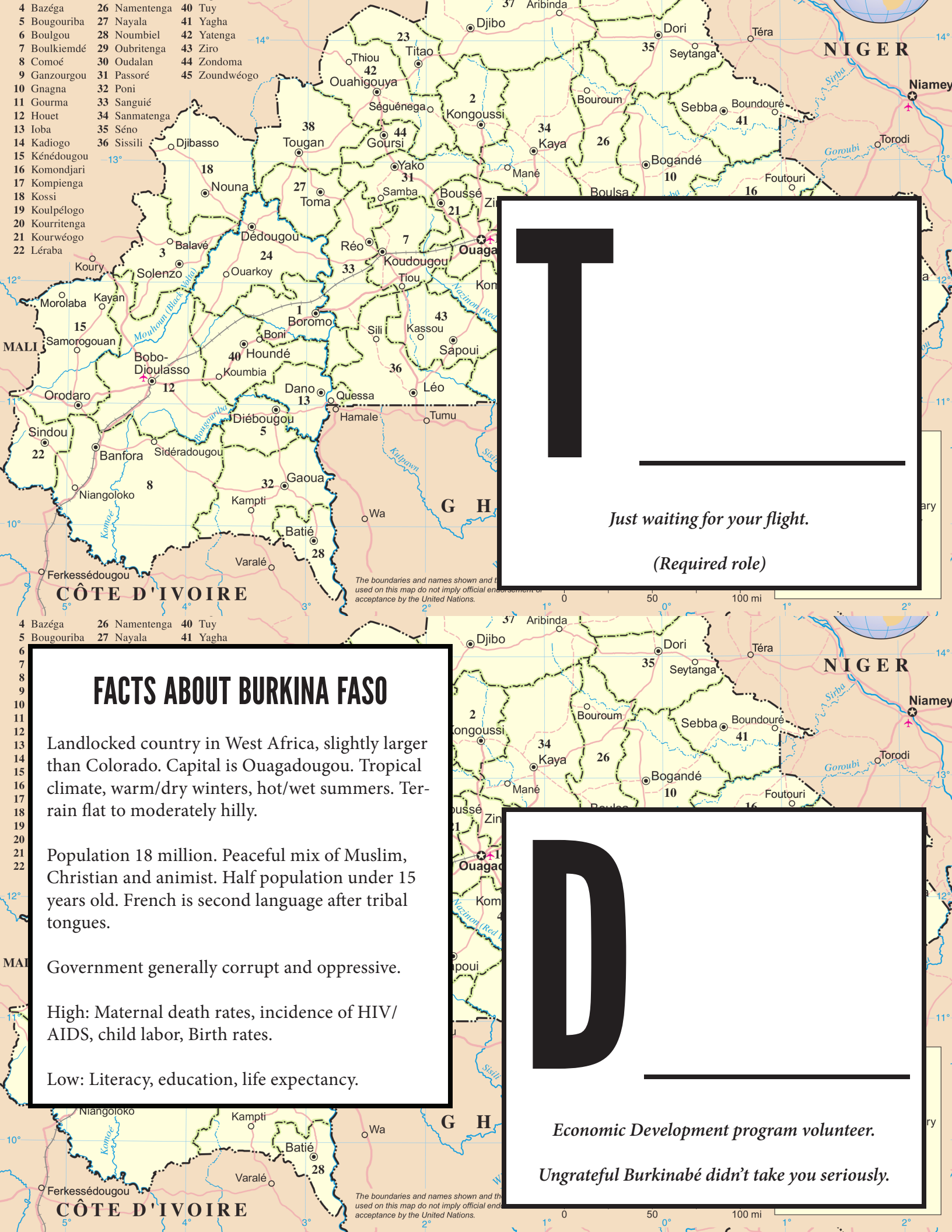
PLAY

Play begins immediately.

When the alarm goes off, someone's flight is ready for boarding. Every five minutes thereafter, another flight is called and a character must depart, until only one person remains. Then the game ends. Plan time for a debrief.

DEBRIEF

Take this seriously. De-role by tossing your character booklets in a pile. Don't tell war stories - instead talk about what you felt and how the game's themes resonated with you.



- 1 Bazéga
- 2 Bougouriba
- 3 Boulgou
- 4 Boulkiemdé
- 5 Comoé
- 6 Ganzourgou
- 7 Gnagna
- 8 Gourma
- 9 Houet
- 10 Ioba
- 11 Kadiogo
- 12 Kénédougou
- 13 Komondjari
- 14 Koupé
- 15 Kouritenga
- 16 Kourwéogo
- 17 Léraba
- 18 Namentenga
- 19 Nayala
- 20 Nounbiel
- 21 Ouhitenga
- 22 Oudalan
- 23 Passoré
- 24 Poni
- 25 Sanguié
- 26 Sanmatenga
- 27 Séno
- 28 Sissili
- 29 Tuy
- 30 Yagha
- 31 Yatenga
- 32 Ziro
- 33 Zondoma
- 34 Zoundwéogo

T

Just waiting for your flight.

(Required role)

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

Landlocked country in West Africa, slightly larger than Colorado. Capital is Ouagadougou. Tropical climate, warm/dry winters, hot/wet summers. Terrain flat to moderately hilly.

Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

Government generally corrupt and oppressive.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, Birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

D

Economic Development program volunteer.

Ungrateful Burkinabé didn't take you seriously.

INITIAL QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

Is Burkina Faso a country?

What did you do there?

Did you see a lion?

Where did you stay?

How did you communicate?

What are the people there like?

How did the experience change you?

What is the jungle like?

Do a lot of people there have AIDS?

Are you glad to be back?

What's the best thing that happened?

What's the worst thing that happened?

Were you ever afraid?

T

You are waiting for a connecting domestic flight and bumped into these interesting people.

You aren't stupid but you are ignorant to the point of insult - you know nothing about Africa and have never even heard of Burkina Faso. The people you are waiting with have had a grand adventure and you are intensely curious. Find out about where they have been and what they have experienced.

For each of the other players, choose a photo you find interesting and give it to them.

Set a timer for one hour. When one hour has passed, someone's flight is ready for boarding.

Every five minutes thereafter, another flight is called and a character must depart, until only one person remains. Then the game ends.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you all were in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, and guilt hangs like a weight around your neck. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence?

Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

Make sure you talk about the night of the party, because that needs to be dragged out into the light, but never discuss what happened on the Bouka-Orumbindi path.

D

You were sent to the village of Bouka to support a new Community Economic Development (CED) program.

Your biggest accomplishment was building fruit drying racks. You built them yourself, and that's why they got finished. Teaching Bouka's orchardists small business management techniques that would make them more money for their mango crop was supposed to be your goal, but that was a joke. Nobody came to your classes.

Choose the photo you kept of the one villager who frustrated you the most.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

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Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

Open, welcoming, curious, fun-loving people.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, Birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

G

Education program volunteer.

You had fun, at least. The kids liked you.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

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Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

Lack of basic sanitation and education critical.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, Birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

B

Community Health program volunteer.

You worked your ass off, unlike some people.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, and regret consumes you. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

You should probably talk about what happened on the Bouka-Orumbindi path, but never bring up the night the Gendarmes came.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, although the blame does not lie with you, not by a long shot. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

If you want to, talk about the night the Gendarmes came. It happened, why avoid it? But never speak about the “Djibissé Boys”

G

You were sent to the village of Bouka to support the Education program.

You were told your impact would be small and hard to identify, so you just went with the experience, did your best, and had a good time. You started a chess club, and it became a hub of activity after school. You were supposed to use it to teach life skills and healthy behaviors but it rapidly devolved into just hanging out.

Choose a photo you kept of your favorite little hang-out buddy.

B

You were sent to the village of Bouka to support the Community Health program.

Your biggest accomplishment - there were so many. Providing HIV/AIDS education, for one. Anti-malaria activities like your bednet distribution campaign. Building a handwashing station. You worked your ass off, which is more than you can say for your fellow volunteers.

Choose a photo you kept of your friend, the community health care worker.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

Landlocked country in West Africa, slightly larger than Colorado. Capital is Ouagadougou. Tropical climate, blazing winters, swampy inferno summers. Terrain flat as a pancake and choked with dust, just awful.

Everyone is desperate and running some con.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy, access to Internet and telephones, privacy, clean water, comfort, level of support from host agency.

S

Community Health program volunteer.

Burkina Faso was hell on Earth. You hated it.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

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Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

The nicest people you've ever met, and the poorest.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

A

Education program volunteer.

You partied a lot. A whole lot.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, but if you are being honest you don't much care. The others are absolutely torn up with guilt and shame, though. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

Feel free to talk about your friends the "Djibissé Boys", but never speak about what happened to Omar Sawadogo. Talking about that is not OK.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, and you are deeply ashamed of what happened and your role in it. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

Go ahead and talk about what happened to Omar Sawadogo, it's on everybody's mind anyway, but never speak about the twins, Raogo and Poko.

S

You were sent to the village of Bouka to support the Community Health program.

Burkina Faso was not a good fit for you and you basically writhed in misery for a year and a half. Your biggest accomplishment was not killing yourself or anyone else. The country is truly a hell-hole. The people are all smiles but they'll steal anything not tied down. After a few months trying to teach about sanitation you just gave up and drank beer.

Choose a photo you kept to show people back in the world how awful Burkina Faso was.

A

You were sent to the village of Orumbindi to support the Education program.

Your biggest accomplishment was administrative - in the school every day, you encouraged gender-equitable teaching practices, mentored students, and gently built the capacity of local teachers. Every night you partied, and every weekend you took the bush taxi over to Bouka to hang out with other volunteers.

Choose a photo you kept of the local you partied with the most.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

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Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

Wonderful, hard-working, kind, giving people.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, Birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

M

Community Health program volunteer.

You saved children's lives. The rest is trivia.

FACTS ABOUT BURKINA FASO

Landlocked country in West Africa, slightly larger than Colorado. Capital is Ouagadougou. Tropical climate, warm/dry winters, hot/wet summers. Terrain flat to moderately hilly.

Population 18 million. Peaceful mix of Muslim, Christian and animist. Half population under 15 years old. French is second language after tribal tongues.

Kind people dealt a terrible hand.

High: Maternal death rates, incidence of HIV/AIDS, child labor, Birth rates.

Low: Literacy, education, life expectancy.

R

Education/Health program volunteer.

You fought the good fight. You did good.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, and the weight of your culpability is crushing. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

Reminisce about your friends the twins, Raogo and Poko, but never bring up the motorcycle. Just don't talk about the motorcycle.

SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED...

...while you were all in Burkina Faso. Lives were destroyed. You were complicit in it, either directly or indirectly, and you are feel a sense of loss and betrayal, as well as deep personal failure. Whatever it was, you all share the blame.

It would be nice if you could put it behind you before the group is broken up forever. Do you need forgiveness? Reassurance? Punishment? An apportionment of proper blame? A promise of silence? Whatever it is, you only have a short time to get it.

So get it.

Feel free to talk about what happened with the motorcycle, but never speak about the night of the party. Why the hell bring that up?

M

You were sent to the village of Orumbindi to support the Community Health program.

Your biggest accomplishment was your tireless work in the nutritional rehabilitation of moderately malnourished children. This was the most pressing need in Orumbindi and you took it on as your personal crusade. It's true you had other responsibilities on paper, but tell that to the suffering children.

Choose a photo you kept of the child whose life you saved.

R

You were sent to the village of Orumbindi to support the Community Health and Education programs.

Your biggest accomplishment was encouraging families to send their daughters to school - when you arrived it was seen as a poor investment, but when you left girls were starting to be enrolled. Some of the more traditional types didn't like this, but it is the twenty first century now. You made a lot of enemies - a lot - but it was worth it.

Choose a photo you kept of the local who became your best friend.



Seydou

Hervé

Eric in the truck

Raogo, chilling

Rabbit

Idriss cutting class

Bouka-Orumbindi path

The window

On the Kindé road



NGO bush taxi

Wash day in Orumbindi

Bouka

Aicha ready to go

Market day

Omar Sawadogo

The "Djibissé Boys"

Digging the grave

Couldn't stop





Rasmata, Kadi & Grace

Waiting for the nurse

Gendarmes at Gora

Poko, wedding day,

Florence!

Mariam, PISSED OFF

Hélène and Lamoussa

Djènèba

Aicha, road warrior!



Snow *by* Agata “Świstak” Lubańska

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

SERIOUS, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, HORROR

The engine coughed roughly and finally stopped. It took you a moment to realise you were stuck in the cold of the tundra, hours away from any civilisation. And the snow just doesn't seem to help...

“Snow” is a minimalistic experiment, a try to let players lead the action, with a very limited intrusion of the GM. Cars and intense feeling included.

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www.liveform.pl; <http://larpbases.pl/?p=1269>



SNOW

Requirements:

- three male players,
- two female players,
- one car,
- one driver,
- one box of matches,
- one pack of cocaine,
- one bottle of alcohol.

You don't need any GM.

If you're not fixated about dogma99, you can replace cocaine with castor sugar or white snuff.



Dogma 99

A programme for the liberation of LARP

Scenario by Agata "Świstak" Lubańska
agata.lubanska@liveform.pl
Produced by Liveform
www.liveform.pl

SNOW



The engine coughed roughly and finally stopped. It took a moment to realise you stuck in the cold of the tundra, hours away from any civilisation. And the snow just doesn't seem to help.

The Mother

Neurotic, touchy Mother is always irritated by The Husband's behaviour. Boredom and general disappointment made her a heavy smoker. She's always carrying a pack of cigarettes and **matches** with her.

The Stepdaughter

This rebellious teen with her own problems usually seems outgoing. The Stepdaughter is always looking for fun and independence in order to forget that **she's sick** of the other people.



The Friend

False Friend of The Parents is driving. He agreed to take the family from their **winter retreat** after The Husband had started drinking again.

The Hitchhiker

He looks rad but carry a lot of experience. One surely has a lot, paying all the travel expenses selling **cocaine**. Even now he has some snow in his pocket. I wonder, what would happen if this little package fall out of his pocket right now...

The Husband

Recovering alcoholic who has done many shameful things in his life. Being obnoxiously rich, he has never followed any rules. His loud and playful surface hides a **dirty love** for his Stepdaughter.

This freeform ends when someone decides to leave the car.



Still Life

by

Wendy Gorman, David Hertz & Heather Silsbee

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

NON-NARRATIVE, RELATIONSHIPS, METAPHYSICAL, GEOLOGICAL

This is a game about relationships and their inherent instability due to forces beyond our control.
Also rocks.

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Still Life

A Larp by Wendy Gorman, David Hertz, and Heather Silsbee

Created using the Larp House "Larpjam" process

Introduction

This is a game about relationships and their inherent instability due to forces beyond our control. Also rocks.

In this game one player takes on the role of the Elemental Forces (EF). The other players take the roles of rocks pondering the meaning of their existence with each other and their environment, as their lives are determined by the whims of the Elemental Forces.

This game is for 4 to 10 players. It requires space for play and around 2 hours.

Disclaimers

This game involves physical contact between players.

The rules as written require players to be able to sit, stand, and/or lay down for extended periods. However, we encourage the EF to make accommodations for players who may have difficulty with this.

Set-Up

Touch Boundaries.

Before the game begins, the Elemental Forces should lead the group in defining touch boundaries. This game involves the EF gently repositioning players, so it is important to establish where the players are comfortable being touched. We recommend the EF keep a short list of where the different players are comfortable being touched, or having all of the players agree on places they are ok being touched. For example, all of the players could agree that arms and feet are a safe place for the EF to touch, and then the EF could reposition people using their arms, feet, and gentle verbal suggestions.

Define the Play Space.

Still Life requires an area in which players will be comfortable standing, sitting, or lying down. The acoustics should allow for multiple conversations to be held at the same time.

Set the Tone.

As a group, players should discuss and decide what tone they want the game to take. This game can be played as a serious, meditative experience to explore relationships and internal thoughts, or it can be played as a wacky rock comedy, or something in-between. The rules can work for any tone. All players' input should be taken into account, since the real goal of this larp is for everyone to have a good experience!

Your Rock's Question.

Each player should define their rock type and their central question (or the GM can provide one for them). Examples of rocks and questions are provided in the Example section.

Starting Positions.

When the group is ready to start play, the EF should physically position players in their starting positions. The EF should put some players in large or small groups, others in pairs, and others alone; some players standing up, others sitting, and others lying down.

Playing Still Life

Questions.

Each rock will have a question about the meaning of its existence. The focus of play will be striving to find an answer to this question. Players may do this by interior meditation and by talking to other rocks about their questions. Both methods are encouraged. The players may or may not ultimately find an answer to their questions. The important thing is to explore the possibilities presented by your question.

Persistent.

Still Life is a persistent larp. Once the players are positioned by the EF, they will remain in character until the game is over. In-game time is continuous.

Movement and Interaction.

Rocks cannot move unless acted upon by an elemental force. Rocks can only interact (talk to / make faces at / etc.) with rocks within touching distance.

Changing Position.

When rocks change position, they should think about the way in which that change in position influences their question. It may result in the question being answered!

Answering questions.

When a rock arrives at an answer to their question that they are satisfied with, they may stand up and explain what their question was, their answer to it, and how they cease to be the same rock (by turning into sand, melting into lava, breaking in half, etc). When a rock stands up to answer their question, all other rocks should stop any other conversations and pay attention. Rocks may learn something about themselves from other rocks' answers.

A New Question.

When a rock feels that their question has been answered, they can come up with a new one. This question should reflect their changed state, and should be something that the rock is interested in exploring further.

Becoming an Elemental Force.

When a rock answers their question, they have the option to become an Elemental Force. If they choose to become an Elemental Force, the current EF may become a rock. There must always be at least one Elemental Force.

Ending Play.

At the end of play, each rock gets the opportunity to say a few words in character, whether or not they answered their question(s).

Elemental Forces Guidelines

Role of the Elemental Force.

Many of the duties of the Elemental Forces will look something like what a Game Master might do in another game, but in this game, their role will be a little different. If it helps you to think of this role as a GM, go ahead, but be prepared for things to look a little different than what you're used to.

Tone.

The tone in this game can be widely variable, and it is largely up to the Elemental Forces to maintain the tone of their specific game, as decided during set-up.

Movement.

Act upon everyone at least once (this includes physically moving people). Make sure that no one is being left out or is put in uncomfortable situations. Keep in mind player's touch boundaries.

Narration.

Narrate what the forces are doing as the rocks are acted upon. This can be done loudly, so that everyone can hear, or in a quiet tone, so that only the player being acted upon is able to hear.

Mix Up The Groups.

Strive for interesting dynamics. Put people in pairs, large groups, or alone. Don't leave any rock alone for too long, but don't be afraid to just let things sit for some length of time.

Ending Play.

At the end of two hours (or however long the group has agreed to play for), the EF will announce that play is at an end. They will then choose rocks, one at a time, to make their closing statements. The EF will continue choosing rocks until all of the rocks have stood up and made their closing statements.

Example Rocks and Questions

Piece of Brick.

What if I can't carry them forever?

Marble.

Why haven't I been chosen?

Granite.

Can I be tough enough to withstand the elements?

Unidentified Pebble.

What am I?

Shale.

As parts of myself break away, am I still the same rock?

Sandstone.

What does it mean to be both a stone and sand?

Quartz.

Do I only exist for the human gaze?

Petrified wood.

I was once alive, but am now a rock. Which side do I truly belong to?

Fool's gold.

If I try hard enough, will people think I'm authentic?

Suggestions for Play

Costuming.

Optionally, players can decide on their rock in advance and come to the larp appropriately costumed based on their initial vision for their rock.

Play Space.

An outside play space for Still Life is strongly recommended.

Rock Ideas. The Elemental Forces is encouraged to bring a list of rocks to help players come up with their initial rock idea.



Top Secret Admirer *by* Daniel Eison and Sam Zeitlin

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY

DATING, ESPIONAGE, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

Top Secret Admirer is a [redacted] freeform game about seeking love and intrigue in the intelligence community. When your date has a security clearance—and maybe ulterior motives—they might be sizing you up as well as checking you out. Will you betray your loyalties? Or will your heart betray you first?

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TOP SECRET ADMIRER

Daniel Eison & Sam Zeitlin

Players: 3-8, +1 GM (The Organizer)

Running time: 45-120 minutes

Materials included: Rules, Set-Up Instructions, Suggested Secrets, Dossiers, Identity Sheets, Speed Dating Sheets, Relationship Status Slips.

Provide your own: Badges, index cards, paper clips, pencils, timer.

Tone: Romantic, lighthearted (but not silly), suggestive.

INTRODUCTION

>> As the Organizer, read any italicized text aloud to the players.
Before the game, refer to the Set-up Sheet to prepare handouts.

Top Secret Admirer is a [redacted] freeform game about looking for love and intrigue in the intelligence community. The game is set at an exclusive singles event in [redacted], Virginia, a wealthy D.C. suburb populated by government employees and contractors. The romantic and social relationships of intelligence employees represent a perpetual security risk to the government. Who knows what a lonely spook might blurt out after a few margaritas to impress someone at a bar, or let slip to their spouse when venting after a long day? To manage this risk, organizations like the NSA encourage their employees to socialize and date within the intelligence community.

Your characters are all attending a mixer and speed dating event set up by a joint social committee that spans several intelligence agencies. Everyone attending has at least a Top Secret-level security clearance. Here, you might discover a little Nicholas Sparks or E.L. James in your usual Tom Clancy lives. However, some of you have ulterior motives, and that pretty face across the table may be sizing you up as well as checking you out. Especially [redacted]; watch out for that one! Will you betray your loyalty, your government, your country? Or will your heart betray you first?

MAKING CHARACTERS

>> Pass out **Identity Sheets**, **Badges**, and **Pencils**.

*On your **Identity Sheet**, choose a Name for your character. Then circle the Agency they work for and the Job they do. Write these things on your **Badge**. This is your cover identity: as far as anyone watching you is concerned, it's the real deal. And maybe it is. If you don't know much about these jobs and agencies in real life, don't worry: this is a game, so just making things up won't land you in any hot water. Plus, you can always say that it's classified.*

*Next, write one **Turn On** and one **Turn Off** on your Identity Sheet. These can be things like "Pet Person" or "Gym Buff" or "Speaks Fluent [redacted]." Then write those same things on individual index cards. Mix them in a central pile. I will also write two turn-ons on cards and add them to the pile to keep things interesting. Each player will now draw two. If you get one you put in, throw it back and draw again. Assign what you just drew as additional Turn Ons or Turn Offs for your*

character. As you think about the kinds of people your character is looking for, also give some thought to what your character is like: what things about them are going to intrigue their dates?

>> Hand out **Relationship Status** slips to the players randomly. Explains to the players that these slips tell them where their character's heart is right now. Make sure to print out more than enough to go around: repeats aren't a bad thing. Give them each a paper clip to attach the slip to their Identity Sheet.

GAMEPLAY

This game has two parts: **Speed Dating** and **Epilogues**. During the first part, you'll be paired up sequentially for 10-minute speed dates. Feel each other out, as much as you can in such a short time. Maybe the person across from you is just who you've been looking for? Or perhaps the couple behind you is having a far more interesting conversation. One never knows what information might slip out in a moment of infatuated indiscretion...

So what happens when you find out that that sexy dish from DHS shares your love of hang-gliding and that you've both been to that cute little cafe in [REDACTED]? You're hitting it off so now you want to see if you can get it on! The first thing you can do is offer to **Buy Them A Drink**.

Gender is not present in this game. Anyone can be attracted to anyone else at any time. This does not mean that all the characters are bisexual. It means that gender is not a thing in the game.

This is a meta-technique that allows you to signal to another player that your character totally wants to knock gumshoes. To do this, simply raise a hand as if summoning a waiter and ask to order your companion a drink. Whether or not they accept the drink is up to them. Accepting or rejecting doesn't necessarily mean anything mechanically, so use it in the fiction however seems best.

>> Hand out **Speed Dating Sheets**.

At the end of your speed dates, you can exchange contact information with anyone you'd like to see again. To keep things low-pressure, it is against the rules to ask someone for contact info during the event. Instead, at the end of the evening, please fill out this sheet with the names of your dates, and list the ones with whom you felt a spark. If two people choose each other, they receive each other's information, and the pair can [REDACTED]. Rank your dates on the sheet from most to least interesting.

Any two characters that share contact information get an Epilogue scene together. Each character is entitled to two Epilogue scenes, assuming they match with enough people. If you match with too many, you'll get Epilogues with the dates you ranked highest.

Epilogue scenes are punchy, brief (3 minutes or less), and begin in medias res. All Epilogue scenes take place later that same night in a motel room not far away. Any secrets that are going to be revealed should be revealed with alacrity. If a character doesn't match with anyone, they get to briefly narrate or monologue what they do that night, all alone.

Before starting an Epilogue scene, each character has to make two decisions. One: Do you try to hook up? Two: Do you pursue your mission? You must commit to your choices before the scene, so mark them on your Identity sheet and hand it to me. Don't reveal them to anyone else. Then play the scene and see how lucky you get.

*You may be wondering what I mean by "your mission." Let me explain, and pay attention, because I'm only going over this once: some of you may not be exactly who you're claiming to be. Read over these **Dossiers** and for Hoover's sake don't let anyone else see them! The information contained in your briefing may be dangerous to you and to national security, so keep it safe! At least until the Epilogue.*

If and when two characters do decide they'd like to orchestrate a vertical insertion into a hot zone, the action can be implied to have occurred off screen, can be narrated, can take the form of Ars Amandi, or however you and your players feel is appropriate for them and for the place where your game is being played. Establish some guidelines before you start playing, aiming for levels of explicitness and physical contact that are comfortable for everyone.

>> Hand out dossiers, preferably concealed in brown envelopes.

Now, if there aren't any questions... Right. Unfortunately, we have just been informed that the bar we had reserved for this speed dating event was just [closed by the Health Department/Homeland Security because of an anthrax scare, stolen from under us by Senator ██████'s son's bachelor party, flooded by a water-main break, make up your own reason], so we have to hold the event right here in this [hallway, diner, broom closet, wherever you actually are playing this game]. As such we've decided to cancel the mixer portion of the evening, and move straight into the speed dates. I know it's not ideal, but stay close and we'll make do. Let's begin.

>> Assign the players into pairs for their first speed date. Set the timer for 10 minutes and leave the players to socialize. If there are an odd number of players, you [Organizer] play a Lonely Heart and go on a speed date with the odd person out each round. Take the last two

With fewer players, the pairings should be obvious. For a larger group, it may help to designate half the players to rotate and half to stay in place at first. Come up with a good method before the game.

turn-ons from the pile and draw a relationship status slip. This gives you a chance to have some fun and the other character an opportunity to eavesdrop on some other conversations. If there are an even number, play the waiter and come over when someone buys a drink.

>> When the timer rings, the first date is over. Move the players along into their second date, and begin the cycle again.

>> Once each character has been on a date with every other character, the speed dating portion of the game is over. Have the players fill out their Speed Dating Sheets and hand them in to you. If the Organizer played a Lonely Heart, players can rank your character, but you do not fill out a sheet.

>> Tell the players to take a bathroom break while you figure out the Epilogue scenes. Compare the sheets and figure out which couples exchanged information. See how many Epilogue scenes each character gets. If a character matches with more than two others, they only get scenes with their top two ranked choices. The only exception is if this would cause the other character in the deleted Epilogue scene to have fewer than two scenes; in that case, play out the scene. Write down the Epilogue scenes in an order you choose. (Depending on the pairings, you can do this with an eye for dramatic irony). If players ranked the Organizer's character, you can play out an Epilogue scene or not at your discretion (though never at the expense of a scene with another player). Consider using this to give players Epilogue scenes when they otherwise would not have them.

>> Gather the players again and remind them of the rules for Epilogue scenes (feel free to read out the relevant section again). Announce the first scene. Tell the players involved to mark on their Identity Sheets whether they intend to fulfill their mission and whether they intend to hook up in this scene. Then let them play out the scene. During the Epilogues, take an active hand in spurring along any scenes that are dragging. If necessary, call for jumps forward in time, or introduce narrative urgency. Repeat this process for the rest of the Epilogue scenes.

BONUS GAME

(For 2 players, no GM)

Generate characters as above. Actually go to a real restaurant. Play out a full-length date, during which you attempt to figure out whether the other person is the one you're looking for, in love or espionage. Retire to an actual motel room if an Epilogue scene results. Remember to use protection as necessary.

SET-UP INSTRUCTIONS

The Organizer should complete the following steps before play:

1. Cut up the relationship status slips so that they can be distributed to the players.
2. Determine the roles that will be in the game. This will vary based on the number of players. Where there are options, choose randomly. Note that sometimes a character may be looking for someone who is not present in the game.

3 Players: The Operative, and two of the following three: The Mole, the Secret Policeman, the Lonely Heart.

4 Players: The Operative, the Mole, the Secret Policeman, the Lonely Heart.

5 Players: The Operative, the Mole, the Secret Policeman, two Lonely Hearts.

6 Players: All but one of the following: the Operative, the Mole, the Secret Policeman, the Journalist, the Leaker, the Agent, the Lonely Heart.

7 Players: As 6 players, but add a second Lonely Heart. Add the extra role before removing one.

8 Players: As 7 players, but add two additional Lonely Hearts instead of one.

3. Fill in the secret sections of the Dossiers that have them. Choose one secret that the Secret Policeman is worried the Mole will hand to the Operative. This is just a general topic, not the actual revelation itself (that's a secret!). Write it on their sheets. Choose a second secret that the Agent is worried the Leaker will hand to the Journalist. Write it on their sheets (if playing with 6+). The purpose of this is to give those characters something to make innuendo about to each other.

Choose a secret from the following lists, or invent your own. Some are more appropriate for the Mole, others for the Leaker

SUGGESTED SECRET TOPICS

Technology: Plans for a supercomputer, a semiconductor, a WMD, a cryptanalysis technique, a missile guidance system, a manufacturing process, a reactor, a surveillance device, an experimental vehicle.

Personal: (for blackmail or the tabloids)

Who: The President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the CIA Director, a 5-star general, the ambassador to China, a Senator on the Intelligence Committee.

What: An affair, an addiction, a secret family, a mental illness, a dark past, a fetish, a debt, a divided loyalty.

Skullduggery: A code book; agents in long-term cover; regime change or U.S.-funded insurgency; surveillance; information about (or necessary to plan) an assassination, a kidnapping, a honey trap, a cover-up; secret agreements with foreign countries.

Conspiracy: Benghazi, 9/11, the JFK assassination, Area 51, the moon landings, MK-ULTRA (CIA mind control), water fluoridation.

Or rip something from the headlines!

Speed Dating Scoresheet

My Name: _____

Date	Name	Do you want to see them again?
1.		Y / N
2.		Y / N
3.		Y / N
4.		Y / N
5.		Y / N
6.		Y / N
7.		Y / N
8.		Y / N

[IDENTITY]

Name:

Agency [circle one]: FBI, NSA, CIA, DEA, Homeland Security, NGA (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency), INR (State Department intelligence), DIA (Department of Defense intel), ONI (Naval intel), MCIA (Marine Corps intel), AFRISRA (Air Force intel), INSCOM (Army intel), government contractor.

Job [circle one]: Manager, analyst, economist, engineer, linguist, political appointee, internal affairs, lawyer, clandestine service, special operations, consultant, IT, barista.

Relationship Status [draw one and paperclip here]:



Turn ons: _____

Turn offs: _____

Epilogue commitments

(Not mutually exclusive)

I will pursue my MissionI will pursue a Hook-Up**Scene 1****Y/N**☐ ☐☐ ☐**Scene 2****Y/N**☐ ☐☐ ☐

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

[Cut out and deal out randomly]

<p><u>On the Rebound:</u> You've just gotten out of a messy relationship, and are looking to have a little fun and forget about your ex. You're not looking for anything more right now, but who knows where things will end up?</p>	<p><u>On the Rebound:</u> You've just gotten out of a messy relationship, and are looking to have a little fun and forget about your ex. You're not looking for anything more right now, but who knows where things will end up?</p>
<p><u>Player:</u> You're charming, and you like to sleep around. You're young, so why shouldn't you enjoy yourself? It's not your fault if someone gets emotionally over-invested.</p>	<p><u>Player:</u> You're charming, and you like to sleep around. You're young, so why shouldn't you enjoy yourself? It's not your fault if someone gets emotionally over-invested.</p>
<p><u>Looking for the One:</u> You've reached the age where your friends are all getting married, but you still haven't found the right person. It's a little embarrassing, but you believe in the One. The person you can marry and love forever. You'll never find them if you don't put yourself out there.</p>	<p><u>Looking for the One:</u> You've reached the age where your friends are all getting married, but you still haven't found the right person. It's a little embarrassing, but you believe in the One. The person you can marry and love forever. You'll never find them if you don't put yourself out there.</p>

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

[Cut out and deal out randomly]

<p><u>Cheater:</u> You have a long-term partner, but you won't be mentioning that. For whatever reason, you're looking for a little something on the side.</p>	<p><u>Cheater:</u> You have a long-term partner, but you won't be mentioning that. For whatever reason, you're looking for a little something on the side.</p>
<p><u>Biological Clock:</u> It's time to settle down, get married, and have kids, but you have no partner. You never thought you'd be in this situation, but here you are. You're running out of time to meet someone, and most people you meet aren't suitable. At least everyone here has a degree and a good job.</p>	<p><u>Biological Clock:</u> It's time to settle down, get married, and have kids, but you have no partner. You never thought you'd be in this situation, but here you are. You're running out of time to meet someone, and most people you meet aren't suitable. At least everyone here has a degree and a good job.</p>
<p><u>Unlucky in Love:</u> Life can be cruel. Your romantic history is a series of misfortunes and tragedies: unrequited love, cheating exes, untimely death of a spouse. Sometimes you just want to give up. But the other day, you decided to change your luck. You can write your own happy ending to your story.</p>	<p><u>Unlucky in Love:</u> Life can be cruel. Your romantic history is a series of misfortunes and tragedies: unrequited love, cheating exes, untimely death of a spouse. Sometimes you just want to give up. But the other day, you decided to change your luck. You can write your own happy ending to your story.</p>

DOSSIER: THE OPERATIVE

Background: You are a spy for a foreign power. Your cover identity is someone who works for the U.S. Government and has a Top Secret security clearance.

Questions: Who do you really work for? Is living a double life alienating, or exhilarating? Are you looking forward to going home, or do you like living in America better?

Goal: There's a mole in the American intelligence community who has crucial information for you. You have been given an invitation to an event exclusively for singles who have Top Secret security clearances, and you're sure the mole will be there. Under the cover of flirting, drinking, and getting to know each other, you must establish contact with the mole, exchange contact information, and meet up later in private to debrief them. Years of work come down to tonight. If you fail, they'll be wasted. If you're discovered, you could spend the rest of your life in prison. Or worse.

The Signal: The mole is understandably nervous and refused to exchange identifying details in writing or over the phone. They will be sitting at the far left corner of the bar. You will walk over and offer to buy them a drink. They will accept.

ASSUME YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND RECORDED AT ALL TIMES

Do not say anything that would reveal or compromise your identity or your agenda at the event. Do not do anything that would arouse suspicion in the event organizers or other participants.

The Mole's information concerns:

Notes: The agency and job on your identity belong to your cover. Your relationship status, turn-ons, and turn-offs belong to the real you.

DOSSIER: THE MOLE

Background: You are a government employee or contractor with a Top Secret clearance and access (either by accident or by design) to enormous amounts of highly classified information. And you have been compromised by a foreign power.

Questions: Why are you going betray your country? Money? Ideology? Blackmail? What's your exit strategy from this double life, if you have one?

Goal: An operative has been sent to make contact with you, and you will deliver highly classified information to them. You have been given an invitation to an event for singles who have Top Secret security clearances, at which the operative will be present. Under the cover of flirting, drinking, and getting to know each other, you must establish contact with the operative, exchange contact information, and meet up later in private to be debriefed. If everything works out tonight, you could be sitting pretty for the rest of your life. If you're discovered, you could be sitting in prison for the rest of your life, instead. Or worse.

The Signal: You have been very cautious and have refused to exchange identifying details in writing or over the phone. You are to sit at the far left corner of the bar. They will walk over and offer to buy you a drink. You will accept.

ASSUME YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND RECORDED AT ALL TIMES

Do not say anything that would reveal or compromise yourself or what you are planning. Do not do anything that would arouse suspicion in the event organizers or other participants. You have everything to lose.

Your information concerns:



DOSSIER: THE SECRET POLICE

Background: You work for FBI counter-intelligence. Most of the time it is a dull job. This is not one of those times. You are on the trail of a mole deep within the intelligence community.

Questions: Are you glad of the excitement or just annoyed that you have to clean up a mess? Have you ever caught a mole before? What would you be doing if you hadn't chosen this line of work?

Goal: From what you've been able to gather, the mole will be here at this event, trying to make contact with his or her handler. This is their first meeting, and it's not clear that they know each other by sight. You've been given a cover identity and sent to the event. Try and figure out who they are, and exchange contact information with them, so that the investigation can continue.

DO NOT BLOW YOUR COVER AT THIS EVENT

Arresting the mole and their handler is important, but if anything goes wrong, the whole spy network could find out and go to ground. Get contact information at the event, set up a meet in private, and make the arrest there.

The Mole knows about:

Notes: The agency and job on your identity belong to your cover. Your relationship status, turn-ons, and turn-offs belong to the real you.

DOSSIER: THE LONELY HEART

Background: You are a government employee or contractor with a Top Secret clearance.

Questions: Are you a true believer, or is this just a job? Is concealing the nature of your work from those you're close to exhilarating or alienating?

Goal: There is mixer/speed dating event tonight for people with security clearances. You are, if not single, at least ready to mingle. Try to find someone (or maybe a few someones) you click with and exchange contact information. Who knows, maybe a beautiful relationship (or at least a hot one-night stand) is in your immediate future!

Notes: You are one of the few characters who is simply looking for love or sex without a secret agenda. Other characters will be trying to feel you out and determine your hidden motives. Lead them on! Be coy, play along, misunderstand things, and don't make it too easy for them.

Consider giving your character something that they want to feel out about their dates but don't want to ask directly. Maybe you have an embarrassing fetish, a potentially-deal breaking personal quality, or you want to settle down and have kids immediately. Use your imagination. Now you have something to be evasive about too!

DOSSIER: THE JOURNALIST

Background: You are a political journalist in pursuit of the biggest scoop of your career. Currently, you're pretending to be a government employee or contractor with a Top Secret clearance.

Questions: Are you a cub reporter or an old hand? Do you work for an institutional paper or are you a freelancer or blogger? Are you an idealistic crusader for truth or a jaded cynic?

Goal: You have been in touch with a leaker in the intelligence who could be the next Edward Snowden or Bradley Manning. Which means you could be the next Glenn Greenwald (or Julian Assange, but let's not talk about that). The leaker is cautious, but it's finally time to meet in person. You've managed to finagle an invite to a mixer/speed dating event for singles who have security clearances where the leaker will be present. You need to meet up and exchange contact information.

The Signal: The leaker is understandably nervous and refused to exchange identifying details in writing or over the phone. They will be sitting at the far right corner of the bar. You will walk over and offer to buy them a drink. They will refuse.

ASSUME YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND RECORDED AT ALL TIMES

Do not say anything that would reveal or compromise your identity or your agenda at the event. Do not do anything that would arouse suspicion in the event organizers or other participants. Opportunities like this only come once.

The Leaker's information concerns:

Notes: The agency and job on your identity belong to your cover. Your relationship status, turn-ons, and turn-offs belong to the real you.

DOSSIER: THE LEAKER

Background: You are a government employee or contractor with a Top Secret clearance. As such, you have access (either by accident or by design) to enormous amounts of highly classified information. You've uncovered something that would be shocking if made public, and you've decided to reveal it to the world.

Questions: Are you leaking for idealistic reasons or grubby personal ones? Do you love America or hate it? Do you have an escape plan?

Goal: You've been in touch with a journalist who you're pretty sure you can trust. They will be at the event. Get in contact, size them up, and exchange contact information so that you can meet in person somewhere private later on.

The Signal: You are understandably nervous and refused to exchange identifying details in writing or over the phone. You will be sitting at the far right corner of the bar. They will walk over and offer to buy you a drink. You will refuse.

ASSUME YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND RECORDED AT ALL TIMES

Do not say anything that would reveal or compromise yourself or what you are planning at the event. Especially after Snowden, people like you are being watched very closely. You have everything to lose.

The Leaker's information concerns:

DOSSIER: THE AGENT

Background: You work for CIA counter-intelligence. Most of the time it is a dull job. This is not one of those times. Your unit has been tracking a would-be leaker deep within the intelligence community.

Questions: Do you pursue your job with patriotic zeal or are you motivated by something else? When was the last time you got a vacation?

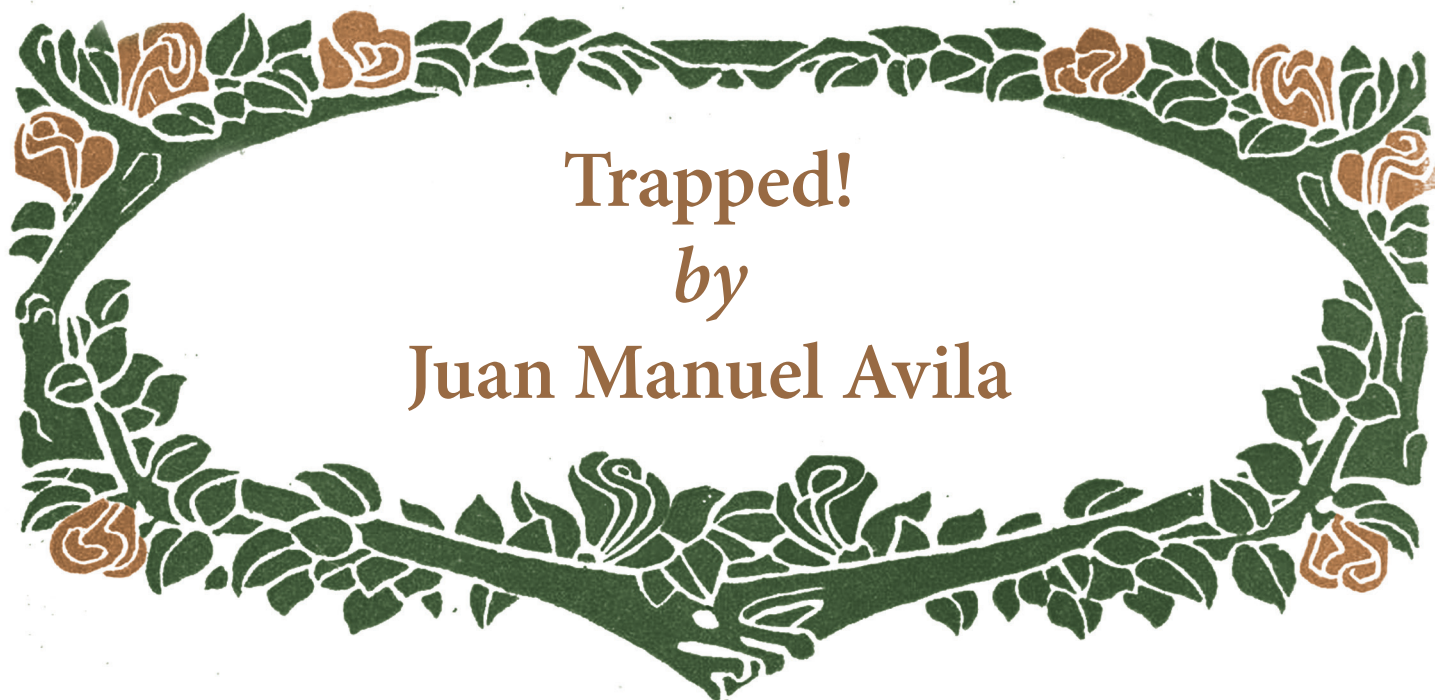
Goal: From what you've been able to gather, the leaker will be here at this event, trying to make contact with a journalist. This is their first meeting, and it's not clear that they know each other by sight. You've been given a cover identity and sent to the event. Try and figure out who they are, and exchange contact information with them, so that the investigation can continue.

DO NOT BLOW YOUR COVER AT THIS EVENT

Arresting the leaker is important, but we need to wait until we have enough evidence to put them away for a long time (and without giving them a chance to flee the country). If anything goes wrong, we'll be the laughing stock of the intelligence community. Get contact information at the event, set up a meet in private, and make the arrest there, if at all.

The Leaker's information concerns:

Notes: The agency and job on your identity belong to your cover. Your relationship status, turn-ons, and turn-offs belong to the real you.



Trapped!

by

Juan Manuel Avila

MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

SERIOUS, COMEDY, LINEAR STORY, RELATIONSHIPS

It is a game about the deprivation of liberty. You and some friends will represent characters that cannot leave a place. You may imagine yourself locked up for some reason in the space you are now occupying, or think of other funny or dramatic situations.

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What is *Trapped!* about?

It is a game about the **deprivation of liberty**. You and some friends will represent characters that can not leave a place. You may think of funny situations, but you can also relive terrible events of history. Agree on the tone of the session so no one gets offended.

You may imagine yourself locked up for some reason in the space you are occupying, or may think of something different, like this:

- You are members of the Bloody Chord rock band, hitting the road no-stop, on your bus to a gig in another country.
- You are the Defenders of Light, epic heroes lost in the weird maze of the evil wizard Kormákur.
- You are horribly crammed in a Nazi concentration field, where the Final Solution takes place.
- You are survivors during the zombie plague, taking cover in a public building. The doors will not bear the attacks for long.
- You are in a cell waiting for the executioner that will lead you to your end in any minute.

Use these rules in an on-going campaign of more traditional games for a taste of the freeform RPGs.

Act 3: Exit

After everyone has generated a scene of their confinement, the characters will be released, for good or for ill.

Thus begins your new round, in the same order as before. Now answer the following questions:

How did you get out?

Those things that retained you were overcome, perhaps with a sustained effort, an external influence, or because they are simply no longer relevant to you.

How did the confinement change you?

The experience of confinement will have changed you forever. Maybe it made you tougher, or perhaps you were altered so much you will never restore your sanity again.


What changes did you find when you got free?


Something really important to you, that you expected to be waiting outside, is no more, or has been altered so much it is unrecognizable.


Shall we make it spicier?

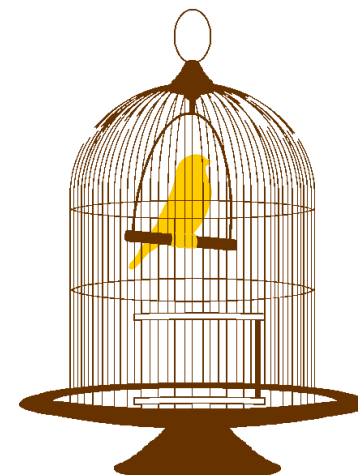
Instead of answering for your character, indicate what has happened to the character of the player to your right. He or she can reformulate only one of these answers, but can only do it while you're narrating any one of them. If, for example, you finish explaining how he managed to get free, he can not modify that and will be considered a fact.

Trapped!

 For 2-8 players

 Between 15 to 20 minutes per player

 Some themes of the game could require the guidance of mature players



A freeform roleplaying game
by Juan Manuel Avila
for the Golden Cobra Challenge
<http://editorialrunica.blogspot.com/>





Act 1: Intro

Starting from oldest to youngest (or any order you prefer) each one of you defines:

- The way your character was locked in and the way he felt when he realized it.
- Something valuable he has and something valuable he does not have and needs.
- One reason to escape and another not to escape.

Notice that the answers to these are applied to a single character. You are all behind a locked door? Okay, that keeps you all from leaving, but what else specifically retains your character? Maybe he *can* leave but he does not *want* to.

You will spend some hours isolated. So if you think that you might need an iron lung to stay alive for the next minutes, I recommend you think of another idea. The pill that prevents you from seeing hallucinations could be a good start ...

Shall we make it spicier?

Instead of defining your character, try to answer the first point for the player on the right, the second for the one to the left, and choose, without repeating, to whom shall correspond your third response. Let's see what happens.

Act 2: Confinement

Following the turn order of Act 1 each one of you will create the framework of a scene, defining its following aspects:

What has been going on?

Describe what everyone have been doing since the turn of the previous player ended, indicating how much time has passed. They may be a few hours, days, or even years. Consider what was said previously by other players as fuel for your narration. If you are first, takes the opportunity to tell the beginning of all this unfortunate situation. You may accept the help and ideas of the other players, but at this point you are bestowed the narrative authority to define exactly what did and what did not happen.

My advice? Put the characters in trouble! Indicate that Joachim's character spent the whole time blaming Martin's for being locked. That will help you in the interpretation and will give you something to talk about.

What has just changed?

Something must have happened recently, encouraging the participants to interact with each other again. Think of a way in which the situation changes dramatically, being impossible to ignore by anyone, and still keeping them locked up.

My advice? The phrase "things could not get any worse" has been refuted many times throughout history. Hold on to those experiences and make an event that makes this situation even more annoying and unbearable for the characters in this place they cannot leave.

How does the passage of time affects one of the participants?

Touch a body part of one of the participants. From now on this player will play a condition in that zone. The way this problem manifests is up to the player in question. The only thing that should kept in mind is that once an affliction is established, it is never removed and remains throughout the game.

My advice? When it's your turn to interpret these afflictions think of all the physical forms in which a person's nervousness materializes: tics, tremors, stuttering, pain, tears, paranoia, etc.



Once you have done all of this, spend a few minutes talking about your situation, describing your feelings, planning escapes, fighting among yourselves. Then, the next player in the round will create the framework for a new scene.

¿De qué trata *¡Atrapados!*?

Es un juego sobre la **privación de la libertad**. Representarás con amigos personajes que no podrán abandonar un lugar. Pueden pensar situaciones divertidas, pero también pueden revivir eventos terribles de la historia. Acuerden el tono de la sesión entre todos para no ofender a nadie.

Pueden imaginarse a ustedes mismos encerrados por alguna razón en el espacio que están ocupando, o pueden pensar en algo muy distinto como esto:

- Son miembros de la banda de rock Bloody Chord yendo en autobús a otro país para seguir su gira, sin paradas.
- Son los Defensores de la Luz, héroes épicos perdidos en el extraño laberinto del malvado brujo Kormákur.
- Están hacinados horriblemente en un campo de concentración nazi donde se lleva a cabo la Solución Final.
- Son sobrevivientes de la plaga zombi, refugiados en este edificio público. Las puertas no soportarán los ataques por mucho tiempo.
- Están en su celda esperando a que en cualquier minuto entre el verdugo que los llevará a su fin.

Usen estas reglas en medio de una campaña de juegos más tradicionales para probar el sabor de los juegos libres.

Acto 3: Salida

Luego de que todos hayan generado una escena de su encierro, los personajes serán liberados, para su bien, o para su mal.

Comienza así su nuevo turno, en el que comentarán siguiendo el mismo orden que antes lo siguiente:

¿Cómo lograste salir?

Aquellas cosas que te retenían fueron superadas, tal vez por un sostenido esfuerzo, una influencia externa, o porque sencillamente ya no son relevantes para ti.

¿Cómo te cambió el encierro?

La experiencia del encierro te habrá cambiado para siempre. Tal vez te haya hecho una persona más dura, o quizás te haya alterado a tal punto que nunca lograrás recuperar tu cordura.


¿Qué cambios encontraste al salir?


Algo fundamental para ti, que esperabas que te esté esperando afuera, ya no está, o ha sido alterado de forma tal que es irreconocible.


¿Lo hacemos más picante?

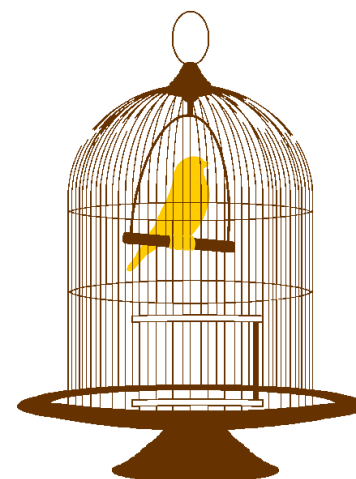
En lugar de responder por tu personaje, indica qué fue lo que le sucedió al personaje del jugador la derecha. Él solo podrá reformular una de estas respuestas, pero solo podrá hacerlo mientras la esté desarrollando. Si, por ejemplo, terminas de explicar cómo logró salir, ya no podrá modificarlo y será considerado un hecho.

¡Atrapados!

 Para 2-8 jugadores

 Entre 15 y 20 minutos por jugador

 Algunos temas del juego podrían requerir la guía jugadores maduros



Un juego de rol libre
por Juan Manuel Avila
para el Golden Cobra Challenge
<http://editorialrunica.blogspot.com/>





Acto 1: Entrada

Comenzando del mayor al menor (o por el ordenamiento que prefieran) cada uno define:

- La forma en la que quedó encerrado y la forma en la que sintió al darse cuenta.
- Algo valioso que lleva consigo y algo valioso que perdió en el encierro.
- Un motivo por el que quiere escapar y un motivo por el que no puede escapar.

Que las respuestas a estas consignas se apliquen a un único personaje. ¿Están todos encerrados detrás de una puerta con llave? Muy bien, eso les impide a todos escapar, ¿pero qué otra cosa retiene específicamente a ese personaje? Tal vez él *puede* escapar pero no *quiere*.

Pasarán unas cuantas horas aislados. Así que si pensaste en que te esté faltando un pulmón para seguir con vida los próximos minutos, te recomiendo que pienses en otra idea. La pastilla que evita que comiences a ver alucinaciones podría ser un buen principio...

¿Lo hacemos más picante?

En lugar de definir a tu personaje, prueba responder el primer punto para el jugador de la derecha, el segundo para el de la izquierda, y elige, sin repetir, a quién asignar la respuesta del tercero. Veamos qué pasa.

Gracias a especialmente a Luciano por su constante ayuda, conocimiento y sinceridad. Pero también a Cyntia, Evan, Rain, Santo y a todos los que me ayudaron a crear ¡Atrapados!

Acto 2: Encierro

Continuando el orden de la ronda del Acto 1 cada uno de ustedes creará el marco de una escena, definiendo los siguientes aspectos de la misma:

¿Qué ha estado pasando?

Describe qué han estado haciendo desde que terminó el turno del jugador previo, indicando cuánto tiempo ha pasado. Tal vez sean unas horas, días, o inclusive años. Considera lo dicho previamente por otros jugadores como combustible de tu narración. Si te toca ser el primero, aprovecha la oportunidad de narrar el comienzo de toda esta infortunada situación. Puedes aceptar la ayuda y las ideas de los otros jugadores, pero en este momento tú tienes la autoridad narrativa para definir exactamente qué pasó y qué no pasó.

¿Un consejo? ¡Pon a los personajes en problemas! Indica que el personaje de Joaquín ha estado culpando al de Martín por estar encerrados. Eso les dará algo de qué hablar durante la interpretación.

¿Qué ha cambiado justo ahora?

Algo habrá sucedido recientemente, empujando a los participantes a volver a interactuar entre sí. Piensa en una forma en que la situación cambie notoriamente, que sea imposible de ignorar por todos, y que aún los mantenga encerrados.

¿Un consejo? La frase “esto no podría ponerse peor” ha sido refutada en muchos momentos de la historia. Aférrate a esas experiencias y crea un acontecimiento que haga aún más molesta e insoportable la estadía de los personajes en este lugar del cuál no pueden salir.

¿Cómo afecta el paso del tiempo a uno de los participantes?

Toca una parte del cuerpo de uno de los participantes. A partir de ahora ese jugador deberá interpretar una afección en esa zona. La forma en la que se manifieste este problema será decisión del jugador en cuestión. Lo único que deberían tener en cuenta es que una vez que se instaure una afección, esta no se remueve y permanece durante toda la partida.

¿Un consejo? Cuando te toque interpretar estas afecciones piensa en todas las formas físicas en las que se materializa el nerviosismo de una persona: tics, temblores, tartamudeo, dolores, lágrimas, paranoia, etc.



Hecho esto, pasen unos minutos hablando sobre su situación, describiendo sus sentimientos, planeando posibles fugas, peleando entre ustedes. Después, que el siguiente jugador en la ronda cree el marco para una nueva escena.



Troupe *by* Jason Cox

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE, SEMI-PERVASIVE

SERIOUS, LINEAR STORY, EVERYDAY LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS

Troupe explores the nature of collaboration, both in terms of what we are capable of producing and of the ways in which we mask or shape our identities to do so. Players take on the role of members in a performing troupe and acts alternate between “on stage” presentations for an audience and “off stage” encounters that put members in conflict with one another.

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TROUPE



By Jason Cox

**Special thanks to George Locke
for his advice and mentorship**

Players: *Troupe* can accommodate as few as 3 players and as many as 8, but the ideal number is 5 (including the facilitator).

Time: 2 hours

Props: The game requires some sort of device for timing. If possible, play in a space that has lights and furniture you can manipulate. Ideally a selection of masks, puppets, or dolls would also be available, but these are optional.

Introduction:

Good afternoon boys and girls, and welcome to the humble company of *Little D's Travelling Storytime, Inc!* In this game, players take on the roles of performers in a children's theatre group at the end of the season. The game's story primarily evolves in two arenas: firstly within performances for the benefit of an imagined audience, where in theory the "real" personalities and relationships of the characters are subsumed by the roles they play; secondly in the "real" world, in which the characters encounter the frustrations of touring and of seeing other people non-stop for an extended period. *Troupe* begins with the characters heading out to their final two shows of the season, and ends during their return trip.

Backstory:

Troupe is based on the author's memories from his time as a touring puppeteer in 1999-2002.

The archetypes are each drawn from the repertoire of shows his troupe performed, the roles from their responsibilities at the shows, and the events from things that really occurred over the course of his time in the troupe..

Character Creation: (15 minutes)

- **Management:** One player takes the role of Management, and assumes several responsibilities:
 - Firstly, Management facilitates play by taking the lead in understanding the rules and orchestrating character creation with the other players. If there is any uncertainty about how play should proceed, it is up to Management to resolve it.
 - Management is also a character who is back at the Troupe's "home base", and generally exists "off-screen. Management answers the phones, handles whatever problems can be resolved from a distance, and signs the checks... unless a client fails to pay, in which case things may be pretty lean for a while.
 - Management is responsible for beginning and ending of the prologue and each act, which they do by clapping and applauding the other players. This is generally a matter of keeping time so that play stays within the allotted time, but Management can also extend or shorten a scene if it seems to fit the dramatic needs of the game.
 - The flow of time within a scene is also subject to manipulation by Management, and they may have the troupe replay an act or a portion of an act. This should only be done to serve dramatic play, and not as an exercise of control. It is also important that the elements of the act determined by the troupe remain in place, which in general means that Management shouldn't fast forward to a new scene or rewind to a point before the established background.
 - If other non-player roles are necessary, Management can assume those roles. If the game is in a public area and passers-by consent, management may also

conscript them to into additional roles. Examples of these might be the manager of a theatre, a waiter in a restaurant, the cop who pulled the Troupe over for having a busted headlight, etc. These roles should always be created in reaction to a situation the Troupe itself has devised.

- **The Troupe:** Every other player is a member of the performing troupe, and has an archetype, an attribute, and a role to define. There are nametags included with this document that include a space to record these choices. There are also some questions that will need to be answered about their relationship with the troupe.
 - **Archetypes:** Each player will select one of these archetypes: Queen, Dreamer, Wolf, Mouse, Knight, Gnome, Buffalo. The names of the archetypes serve as the names of the troupe members, and describe their “real” personality, though the terms may also apply to the roles they take on before an audience. The archetypes are chosen in the order presented, so someone must volunteer to be Queen before someone else can be Dreamer. Also, as an effect of this a game with two players and Management will only have Queen and Dreamer in the troupe. Technically Management is also a character, just one whom is generally absent from play.
 - **Roles:** Each player except for management will choose a role that describes the troupe member’s responsibilities during a show, as well as their function in this game. These roles are: Lighting, Sets, Props, and Costumes. The last person to pick their archetype will be the first person to choose a role, and so on in reverse order back to the Queen. Each role must have at least one member assigned to it before any role is allowed to have two. If there are fewer than four players, then

some will assume additional roles. At the beginning of each act, on or off stage, these roles answer specific questions.

- **Lighting:** A player in the lighting role will determine what happened right before an act begins.
 - **Sets:** The Sets role decides where exactly the action will be taking place in this act.
 - **Costumes:** During a performance, the Costumes role decides what role each troupe member will be playing. When the characters are “off-stage”, the Costumes player determines the emotional state of the characters at the beginning of the act.
 - **Props:** Props creates a point of conflict for the characters, determining the current situation and setting in motion the actions that are follow.
- **Context:** Each member of the troupe has been with *Little D’s Travelling Storytime, Inc!* for at least the length of this season, and they know each other reasonably well. The questions below are meant to clarify their relationship with the company, which in turn may affect their relationships with other characters. The questions are intentionally broad and subject to interpretation, but some sub-questions have been included to suggest possible directions they might be taken.
- **How long have you been performing?** This could mean as a general description of how much of a character’s life has been spent on stage, but could also relate specifically to their time with *Little D’s Travelling Storytime, Inc!*

- **Why are you here?** Performing does not pay well, has few benefits, and involves a lot of stressful situations, so why does your character do it?
What particular skills does the character bring to the Troupe? Are there relationships that drew them there in the first place?
 - **Where do you see your future?** Are you devoted to helping the company succeed? Was it a stepping stone to something bigger? Are you going back to school to finish your degree?
 - **What kinds of subject matter will the performances include?** Are we doing drug addiction awareness or fairy tales? This last question should be considered as a group, and might take slightly longer to answer.
- **Traits:** Each player picks one trait of the three listed beside their archetype on the list below to focus their character on. Players then begin a story about a time this season when that trait came into play, but partway through stops and asks one of the other players to finish the story in a way that portrays the trait as an asset. They then repeat the process with a different player, but this time the trait is described as creating complications instead. For example, Queen says, “I recall being very direct with Summer Camp’s director about nailing down a booking, since he was waffling about what their facilities were, but it didn’t work out very well, did it Wolf?” Wolf responds, “No. The guy said they had a PA system, but it was totally busted and our soundtrack didn’t work, and, since we didn’t bring any musical instruments, we all sang a capella and it was awful.” After either story a short exchange might follow to further develop the relationship between the characters.

- **Queen-** ambitious, direct, regal
- **Dreamer-** creative, eccentric, curious
- **Wolf-** passionate, competitive, magnetic
- **Mouse-** quiet, thoughtful, pacifist
- **Knight-** loyal, honor-bound, impetuous
- **Gnome-** old, sneaky, cautious
- **Buffalo-** strong, imposing, reactive

- **Setting the stage**

- Play consists of a prologue and 4 acts, two of which happen “on stage” and two of which happen off. Each act begins with the roles “setting the scene” by selecting, in the order listed below, what the exact situation characters will be playing. If two players share a role, then they should collaboratively decide on this choice. The process of setting the stage should be completed in under five minutes, after which Management indicates that action begins by applauding. Once time has elapsed Management applauds again to let the players know the act is over.
- **1st- Lighting:** Lighting characters determine the time for the act. This could be the hour, season, or an event that is occurring during the act. In terms of play, this means that Lighting also determines what has just happened right before an act begins. If the group has the ability to control the lighting, Lighting players should adjust it to match their chosen time as closely as possible.
- **2nd- Sets:** Players in the Sets role determine the place in which the act will take place. When “on stage” this can be more or less anywhere, but “off stage” it is

confined to more realistic locales. This location will be most effective if it is in some way connected with the time as determined by Lighting. For example, if a vehicle has just been in an accident then the side of the road, a garage, or a hospital might all provide great opportunities for play. If the environment you are playing in has easily movable elements, like pillows or chairs, players in the Sets role should alter them to match the location they describe for other players.

- **3rd- Costumes:** When characters are “on stage”, players in the Costumes role assign them characters to enact that are consistent with the time and place determined by Lights and Sets. If the group has access to puppets, masks, or dolls, they may also pass those out at this time to appropriate character. When characters are “off stage”, players in the Costumes role selects an emotional state for each player to begin the act in. Since the number of players is variable, these emotions may be repeated as often as necessary and arranged in any order. For example, three players could be “Tired” one “Smitten” and the last one “Pumped” or alternately they could all share the “Smitten” state, which could create an even more complex scene.
- **4th- Props:** In *Troupe* the players in the Props role gets to present a conflict for the characters, one which integrates the choices from the other three roles. “On stage” this encompasses the overarching action, such as an entry into Wonderland or rescuing captives from Captain Hook. “Off stage” this refers to events which complicate the lives of the troupe, such as Queen arranging gigs that involve long stretches of driving because he is frustrated that nobody else helps with the bookings. Where Sets has described what happened “before” Props defines what

is happening “now”, though a player in this role should be careful to suggest conflicts rather than directing actions.

- Here is an example of how the stage might be set drawn from Act 1, which thematically focuses on new beginnings:
 - Lighting- “As the curtain raises, it is a fresh spring morning just after a light rain. It has been a hard winter, and the the darkest day of that winter was the passing of the beloved Queen.”
 - Sets- “A sleepy town on the outskirts of the kingdom wakes to the sound of laughter and merriment in the streets. They bustle with activity even though the sun has barely risen.”
 - Costumes- (Indicating players with each selection) “Twin girls dance in circles around their father, the apple seller, and their mother, who is secretly of royal blood.”
 - Props- “Today the kingdom is celebrating news from an Oracle that a new Queen will be found within a fortnight. Her reign is foretold to bring great prosperity to the land, though she will not live to see it.”

- **Scene Structure (70 minutes)**

- Below are rough descriptions of the theme and events surrounding each act, as well as some suggestions that players in each role may choose from to set the stage. Players are encouraged to use their own ideas or to tailor the examples provided, but in doing so they ought to keep the theme of each act in mind.

- **Prologue- Hitting the road** (10 minutes)
 - In the prologue the troupe has just left the studio to drive for two days to get to their last two shows for the season. It is early morning, and Queen is driving. Use this as a time to get to know the characters and how they interact with each other.
- **Act 1- On Stage** (20 minutes)
 - In Act 1 the Troupe is doing its second to last performance, with Management sitting in as the audience. The act is thematically linked to the idea of beginnings and innocence.
 - **Lighting-** Dawn. Spring after a long winter. A holiday after a grim time.
 - **Sets-** In a quiet village. In a large house. In a deep, dark forest.
 - **Costumes-** Children and playmates. Talking animals. Fairies of every description.
 - **Props-** A festive public event. An exploration of a new realm. A visitation by someone or something not seen in living memory.
- **Act 2- Off Stage** (20 minutes)
 - Act 2 occurs between the two performances, but can be at any point in that time span, such as immediately after the performance in Act 1 or just before the performance in Act 2. Thematically Act 2 is about a gathering tension and diminishing control.
 - **Lighting-** Late Afternoon, having finally finished driving. Smack in the middle of rush hour. Mealtime, just after the food has been ordered.

- **Sets-** Backstage after the end of the show in Act 1. In a hotel with the TV on. At a fast food diner.
- **Costumes-** Pumped and excited. Exhausted or bored. Utterly smitten.
- **Props-** Running out of money for gas or food. Mechanical trouble. Bad reviews or other professional challenges.
- **Act 3- On Stage** (20 minutes)
 - Act 3 occurs at least a day later than Act 1, and in a different venue (though it may be close by). It is the very last show of the season, and thematically represents a point of uncertainty and disequilibrium.
 - **Lighting-** Twilight, right as the street lights come on. The Witching Hour. Just after the music stops.
 - **Sets-** In a foreboding castle. Deep underground, with only the light of a torch. In a large, empty area, surrounded by the sound of wind.
 - **Costumes-** Spirits re-enacting their death. Warriors on the eve of battle. Musicians, performing before a mighty and temperamental king.
 - **Props-** An uncertain rescue. A confrontation of personal flaws. An escape from a doomed world.
- **Act 4- Off Stage** (20 minutes)
 - Act 4 may occur at any point after the show in Act 3, but before the official end of the summer. It is possible that some, or all, of the troupe members will not be coming back next year. Act 4 represents endings, good and bad, but also the possibility of new beginnings.

- **Lighting-** Midnight on New Year's Eve. Just before everyone goes to sleep. Right after all the bars have closed.
- **Sets-** In the van for the last time this season. In a movie theatre, during the end credits. Back in the studio and putting away the materials until next season.
- **Costumes-** Abandoned and lonely. Optimistic for the future. Nostalgic about an event from this past season.
- **Props-** A death in a troupe member's family. The end of a relationship. Medical trouble.

- **Debrief (15 minutes)**

- The debrief is a chance to validate experiences, make meaning of the game, and discuss areas that may be troubling emotionally. It can be hard to anticipate how exactly to do that, but the “outsider” perspective Management occupies in *Troupe* should give that player the chance to pay attention to verbal and physical cues to facilitate that discourse in a way that can be difficult for players. In order to begin the process, consider having every player (including Management) take a minute or two to write down immediate thoughts at the end of the play, without saying anything to anyone. Whether they will share what they write or not is up to them, but it gives a starting point for discussion. Then use some of the sample questions below to guide the direction of the conversation. Don't worry if it veers off track, that just means play was meaningful in a different manner than was anticipated! Also, feel free to go out socially after the end of the game and continue talking.

○ **Suggested Discussion Questions:**

- When did you feel supported by another player or character?
- What is something you will be glad to leave in the game?
- How did the game connect to your own experiences?
- Which act felt the most meaningful to you, and why?

<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Queen</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Ambitious, Direct, Regal</p>	<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Dreamer</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Creative, Eccentric, Curious</p>
<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Wolf</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Passionate, Competitive, Magnetic</p>	<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Mouse</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Quiet, Thoughtful, Pacifist</p>
<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Knight</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Loyal, Honor-bound, Impetuous</p>	<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Gnome</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Old, Sneaky, Cautious</p>
<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Buffalo</h1> <p>Role (Circle One): Lighting, Sets, Costumes, Props</p> <p>Trait (Circle one): Strong, Imposing, Reactive</p>	<p>Name/Archetype:</p> <h1>Management</h1>



Unheroes *by* Joanna Piancastelli

LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, PERVASIVE (INTERMIXED WITH ACTIVITY BY NON-PARTICIPANTS)

SERIOUS, LINEAR STORY, AMNESIA, SUPERHEROES, RELATIONSHIPS

You were superheroes who screwed up big time, though you don't remember it. No one does. Reality was altered and the history that you used to know no longer exists, and never did. Now it's trying to reassert itself. Will you leave the world like this, or change things back?

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<http://neruleandesigns.com/games/unheroes>





You're all normal people. You're here, in this normal place, doing whatever normal thing you're doing. If you're at a convention, you're at a convention. If you're in a bar, you're in a bar. Everyone around you is getting on with their lives – they're perfectly normal, just like you.

Except that you weren't normal before. You were superheroes, the saviours of Herotopia, though you don't remember it. No one does. The whole world was changed, and the history that you used to know no longer exists, and never existed. But it's trying to reassert itself.

What happens if it does? Why did everything change in the first place? You're the only ones with the answers.

ABOUT UNHEROES

Unheroes is a game for 5-9 players, that runs in 2 hours. It benefits from having a facilitator, but the facilitator can easily take part as a player.

THE STORY

Unheroes is about a group of superheroes from Herotopia who tried to save the world and messed up big time. Panicking, they changed reality so supers never existed, heroes or villains, and ended up living in our world with almost no memory of who they used to be. But they do remember something, and when their powers begin to return they realise something's wrong. They need to figure out what happened, and ultimately decide if they want to leave things as they are now, or go back were and try to deal with the fallout of their mistake.

The game is about hard choices, consequences, and taking responsibility for our actions. Also superpowers.

GAME OVERVIEW

You'll do setup to establish everyone's characters and their relationships to one another, as well as what they initially remember about how the world used to be. After setup, everyone synchronises watches, then starts playing in character.

Different people will have events on their setup cards that take place at specific times over an hour of play, and the last one tells the group that it's time to decide what to do: make the change in reality permanent, or set things back to how they used to be and deal with the what happened. Everyone comes back together to vote on it, and then you close out the game with an epilogue for each character and a quick debrief.

PLAYING IN PUBLIC SPACES

Unheroes is designed to allow play in public spaces, which can be noisy, crowded, or full of curious onlookers. It uses a pre-game huddle to explain things and do the setup, but players should take away everything they need to know with them in the cards and quick rules wallet so there's a second chance for them to catch anything they couldn't hear properly.

That does mean a little more manual prep up-front to make the cards and wallets. As well as them, you'll need the rest of this document either printed out or on an electronic device, 5-9 players, a pen for each of them, and some kind of identifying markers for the players, such as a name sticker or a lanyard with a badge holder to put the cards in.

You'll need to find 2 hours for the game, plus a space to play where you won't be getting in anyone's way.

GAME STYLE

Excluding the setup and places where it's necessary to narrate or explain things like super powers, Unheroes is fully live – each person plays a single character and there are no scene changes.

The game is meant to be played fairly straight and has some potentially dark themes, but the players set the tone so a mindful group could happily include younger participants.

It's fully cooperative and encourages the sharing of information, though different facts start in the hands of different people.

Players should be ready to make things up on the fly, and willing to let their character take a fall for the benefit of the story as a whole.

BEFORE THE GAME

There's no need to remember every instruction in this document before you get started playing Unheroes, but have a look through it in advance and make sure you understand how everything will work on the day. You should be able to run the game by reading through it in order, without having to skip back and forth.

THINGS TO DO

- ☐ Read this document through
- ☐ Print out pages 4 to 14 if you don't want to run the game from the PDF
- ☐ Decide where and when you're going to play
- ☐ Organise between 5 and 9 players – remember, you can be one of them
- ☐ Get hold of some sticky labels or badge-holding lanyards for name tags
- ☐ Find a working pen for each player
- ☐ Print out pages 16 to 18 once each onto stiff paper or card
- ☐ Cut out the cards and organise them into decks by type
- ☐ Print pages 19 and 20 back to back, five times over
- ☐ Cut and fold the card wallets

GETTING STARTED

It can help to turn up at your venue a little before the start time on the day of the game, but there isn't much on-site prep needed so it's no trouble if you need to be present at pitches or sign-ups first.

WELCOME

As your players arrive in the game area, be around to answer questions. Unheroes is designed to run in a two hour slot with some wiggle room, but if you have a hard stop make sure you get started no more than 10 minutes late.

Start off by getting everyone to introduce themselves and tell each other who their favourite superhero is, and what their favorite superhero comic, movie, or TV show is.

Reiterate the story and themes of Unheroes – chances are even the people who heard or read about the game in advance have forgotten some of it. Don't be secretive about what's going on: the players are meant to know. Read this section out verbatim, if you like.

Back in Herotopia, you guys were heroes. Real heroes. You had the powers, you wore the capes, you worked as a team to protect the world and everyone in it.

Sure, things were complicated. Sometimes you didn't get along. But when times got tough, you came together and did whatever it took to win the day.

Except, this time, you didn't. When Herotopia needed you most, you screwed up. You were too busy stroking your egos and fighting amongst yourselves, and something went terribly, horribly wrong.

It got so bad that you decided it would be better to change the entire history of the world and erase all superheroes and villains from existence than try to repair what you did.

So now you're here, in this ordinary world, where no one's in danger and everything is exactly what it seems.

The problem is, bits of your old lives are leaking in around the edges. You're starting to realise you need to work out the truth of what happened.

Then you'll have to make a choice: will you put things back the way they were and try to fix the mistake you made, or will you leave things secure and calm and boring like they are now, always knowing that you failed to save the world?

SAFETY AND PRACTICALITY

Establish any particular needs any of your players have. This can be anything from disabilities to having to leave a little early. Both of these are covered in the Facilitator Tips section at the end of the rules.

Invite anyone to share with the group any particular subject matter they want the game to avoid, or to tell you privately during the setup so you can let the rest of the group know and help steer events away from it, using Freeze and Pause to support that player if necessary.

Hand out the lanyards, stickers, or whatever else you've chosen to act as identifiers for people participating in the game. Ask everyone to make sure they're wearing them prominently to avoid any confusion. Give each player a card wallet so they have the rules summary to refer to, as well.

Set the area the game should be played in and make sure everyone's clear on it. Every part of the area should be in line of sight, and it should be small enough that you can yell from one side to the other if necessary.

If you're in an area where members of the public might be around, remind everyone to be careful and respectful of others using the space. Don't be too physically boisterous or loud, and mind your language if there are kids about. It's always okay to come out of character to explain what's going on, and it's always a good idea to respond politely to requests from police or other authority figures.

Even if you're asked to move along during the game, you can still stay in character and find a way to incorporate the move into the story – it doesn't need to be a big interruption.

TECHNIQUES

A few simple techniques keep everything in Unheroes running smoothly, so spend a couple of minutes making sure all of the players understand all of them. Give examples or even quick demonstrations of how they work to help cement them in the minds of the players.

PRINCIPLES

The three principles of Unheroes govern how the game should be played and are things everyone should keep in mind when they contribute to the story you're telling, which will be pretty much everything you do. If everyone follows them it will help to make sure that all the players are on the same page, and that you're helping each other get the most out of the game.

Play for the whole story

The aim is to tell a combined story about a group of characters. Think about how you can set things up for other people, or tie your actions into things they've said or done to create one big, interwoven narrative. Don't shy away from adding drama, but do check with people using Pause if what you say might affect their characters in a big way.

There are no winners or losers

If your character falls out with everyone, makes a fool of themselves, disagrees with the majority, or even dies, it doesn't mean you've played the game badly or lost as long as you contributed to the story. Sometimes a character falling foul of their flaws can be the most satisfying plot arc to be a part of.

Keep information flowing

There will be some details about the story that you know and others don't, and it's your job to share those details as much as you can, even if it's against your character's best interests or judgement. Consider making a character who isn't overly secretive or who is prone to let things slip if you think that might be tricky.

COMBAT

It's entirely possible that characters in this game might come to blows! If you want to launch an attack on someone, do it in super slow motion and announce what you're doing at the same time to make sure everyone's clear – "I punch you" and "I blast you with my explosive powers" might look the same in person but are very different in character.

It's always up to the person on the receiving end of the attack to decide what happens – do they take the blow or dodge out of the way? Are there are unexpected consequences? React in super slow motion too, and describe what's happening as you do.

KEY PHRASES AND GESTURES

Unheroes has two key phrases with gestures that both you and the other players can use to change how the game is going. Often, using the phrase will be clearer, but using the gesture alone can be less obtrusive if the intention isn't to stop the flow of the story. If you want to be unambiguous and get everyone's attention with a key phrase, use the words and the gesture together.

Freeze *[hold a hand up in the air, palm out, in a 'stop' gesture]*

All players should stop what they're doing immediately, go quiet, and not move from the spot they're standing in. This can be used by the facilitator to call attention to something important, but is also useful for players if someone gets hurt or drops their glasses, or if anyone is feeling uncomfortable in the game, for example.

Pause *[hold your hand in front of you with your fingers crossed]*

Players in the immediate vicinity or involved in the conversation should stop talking and responding in character for a moment. This can be used by anyone to give quick direction or description during a scene without interrupting the flow too much, to share what their character is thinking and ask for suggestions on what to do, to ask what other people are thinking and how they want to progress, to tell people that you want to back away from an uncomfortable topic that the scene is approaching, or anything else that might be useful to communicate out of character.

CHARACTER SETUP

Once the rules are clear, it's time to get started on creating the characters and their shared backstory. Make sure everyone's together and can hear you, then follow these instructions to find out who our heroes are and how they got here.

POWERS

First we'll establish what our heroes could do back in Herotopia. Grab a number of Power cards equal to the amount of players you have, making sure you start with number 1 and going up in order, then shuffle them and deal them out randomly, one to each player.

Get every player to read the Power they were given aloud to the group, but tell them not to read the events that are also printed on the cards. We'll come back to those in a minute.

Remind the players that they can't use their powers now: that was part of who they used to be, but they've erased all superpowers from existence.

MEMORIES

Now we'll generate is a shared mental picture of what the world of Herotopia used to be like, and what went wrong. Grab the Memory cards and make sure they're stacked up in number order so number 1 is first, then 2, and so on.

Tell the players you're going to read out some questions and that everyone's going to answer one each. Encourage them to answer the first one they find interesting, rather than holding out for the "perfect" question. Remind them to build on each other's creativity and try to use things that have been established already, including the powers that the heroes have. Also remind them that they can use Pause to trigger a quick discussion if something gets established that they're not comfortable with.

Read out the question on the first card, and find a volunteer from among the players to answer it. Ask little additional questions to get to more story details if you want to get the creative juices flowing and encourage the answers that follow to go a little deeper as well. There are no wrong answers: you're working together to build a fictional world and set of events from scratch, and as long as everyone likes what's being created, you're doing it right.

Hand the card to the player who answered and ask them to write down what they came up with. Tell them their character will remember that piece of information at the beginning of the game, even though it won't seem to make sense alongside all their other memories of having a normal life.

Then read out the question on the second card. Anyone who hasn't got a Memory card already can answer it. When someone does, hand them the card, ask them to write the answer down, and carry on until everyone has one Memory card each.

Recap the answers so all the players have a good idea of what things used to be like, but remind them that their characters can only remember the fact written on their own card. That memory might be hazy, or might be clear enough that they question their sanity for vividly remembering something so clearly impossible.

RELATIONSHIPS

Finally, we'll work out who's connected to who and what unresolved tension there is between them. Shuffle up all the Relationship cards and deal one at random to each player. Ask everyone to read the card to themselves quickly, then check if anyone is particularly uncomfortable with what they have. Help anyone who speaks up to swap their card with an unused one, or with a card that was dealt to another willing player if there aren't my spares.

Then, ask for a volunteer to read out their relationship card. Get everyone else to pay attention and to raise a hand if they're interested in being either A or B described. If people speak up, continue around the group until everyone has their relationships filled in. If people are hesitant about volunteering, ask some other people to read out their relationships as well and get the group involved in offering suggestions to fit all of the relationships together like a jigsaw.

The characters' relationships are one thing that didn't change when the whole of reality got turned inside out, so aside from a few details they should still be the same group of people they always were, with the same set of complex interdependencies. If you need to, spend a minute or two translating the relationships for the real world, but don't try and normalise them: the characters should remain a sprawling, dysfunctional pseudo-family struggling to come to terms with what happened and stay together even though they aren't a superhero team here.

NAME

Everyone should now have a character with a superpower they used to have access to back in Herotopia, a single memory they can recall from how things used to be, and connections to several other characters. Now, finally, they need to be defined as individuals: they need names.

Give everyone a sticker (or a name card if you're using lanyards) and ask them to write down a name for their character. Get them to provide a distinguishing personality trait, too: something simple to hang a character idea off, like, "the fearless leader", "the nice one", "the dark and broody stranger". Hopefully people have a fairly strong idea of who they want to play by this point, but if anyone's struggling then help them aim for a character space that no one else is occupying yet. Maybe define them by what they're good at, how they interact with others, or what their role used to be in the superhero team.

PLAYING THE GAME

Get everyone together for one last chat before the game kicks off, and run them through how things are going to work. Once you begin, everyone will stop acting like themselves and start acting like their characters – former superheroes living in the real world, with memories that changed along with everything else, except for one niggling recollection of things being different from how they are now.

STARTING POINTS

The Relationships you've generated between you should give you some meaty prompts for places to start playing. Hopefully some of you have come up with ideas for conversations that you'd love your characters to have, and you should jump right into those. Unheroes has an hour of playing time, so don't wait around or try to build up to big ideas – get to the heart of things straight away.

But that's not the only thing you have to go on. Eating at the back of each character's mind is a Memory that doesn't fit with the rest of their understanding of the world, something that's just one piece of a much larger puzzle that none of them can explain on their own.

Lastly, each Power card has a time and an event on it. The times are measured in minutes from the start of the game, with the first at 5 minutes and the last at 60 minutes. When the time on your card comes up, the event should happen. It's up to you exactly how it occurs or what that looks like, but you should make sure the people around you know what's going on – remember, keep information flowing. This is an opportunity for you to take the spotlight if you want it, so go as big with it as you like within the boundaries of the tone of the game you're playing. If you're not sure whether what you want to suggest might be pushing things a bit too far, use Pause to check with the other players.

SYNCHRONISE WATCHES

Do one final check around to see if anyone has any questions, and then synchronise watches. Players who have countdown timers should set them to the number of minutes on your event; otherwise, set an alarm for that amount of minutes from now. If anyone doesn't have any way of setting an alarm, get someone else to set theirs as well and let them know when it goes off.

PLAY THE GAME

Then, go! Let everyone know that it's time to get into character, to talk to each other as their characters, have the conversations they've been thinking about during setup creation. The timed events will kick in soon, and after an hour it'll be time to make the big decision – keep things as they are now, or go back to how the world used to be?

THE FINALE

After an hour in character, the character whose Power caused the change in reality will call everyone back together and demand that they choose whether to keep the world as it is now, or go back to how things were and deal with the fallout of their actions.

THE BIG VOTE

The player with the reality warping Power has the instruction on their card to let the characters debate their choice for a while, but to force them to vote after ten minutes even if they're resisting coming to a decision. You can help reinforce this time limit in order to keep things moving.

You should also make sure that the decision is made using a vote so everyone's opinion is counted, even if not everyone wants to get involved in the debate.

If a natural voting structure doesn't present itself, here are a few possible options:

- ☐ Have the leader of the 'change things back' and 'keep things as they are' camps face one another as they give their arguments, and ask players to move to stand with the character they support
- ☐ Ask everyone to close their eyes then raise their hands if they would like to go back to how things were, then get everyone to open their eyes again so everyone can see the result
- ☐ Simply ask whether to change things back and get people to raise their hands for yes, then no, and count the results

If there's a tie, the character with the reality warping Power has the deciding vote, as they're the one who will actually make the change.

THE AFTERMATH

Use Freeze to bring everyone out of character one last time. Explain that whatever the outcome of the vote, it happens – the chosen reality becomes the only reality. Take a moment to describe the feeling of the two warring states of being settling back into just a single strand of existence, or invite the player with the reality warping Power to do so.

Regardless of what decision was made, tell the players that this time, their characters have retained all their memories of what happened from both realities, but that they're the only ones alive who are aware that any of this happened.

If anyone in the group has questions about the story, come to a consensus on what the answer might be, focussing on what's interesting for the story rather than comic book logic or pseudo-science. Don't linger too long on this, though, since these questions may be good material for Epilogues.

EPILOGUES

Invite each player to describe a short scene with their character sometime after the vote, showing what happened to them after reality settled back down again. It can be moments, months, or years later, and they don't have to be described in order.

Ask players to show something that's important to their characters. You want to demonstrate what effect the decisions the group made had on them, and provide some closure to each character's story.

Keep an eye on the time here, and encourage players to expand their narration or keep it brief to suit how long you have left until the game needs to end.

DEBRIEF

Spend a few minutes on a debrief to wrap up the events of the game, let everyone wind down or share their excitement, and clear the air of any misunderstandings.

Ask if anyone wants to share a particularly cool event that took place, talk about something they found difficult to deal with, or apologise for anything that happened in character that they feel might have given a bad impression of them as a person.

Make sure everyone has a chance to speak, but don't force anyone if they'd rather stay quiet. Once everyone's said what they want to, collect up any lanyards or pens you handed out and want to get back at the end of the game.

Finally, thank everyone for playing – hopefully you made an awesome story together!

FACILITATOR TIPS

FINDING PLAYERS

If you need a pitch or poster to rustle up some players at convention or similar event, you can use the first page of this document. Write your name on the page so people know who's running it. Then, add the numbers from one to five, or one to nine, or however many players you want to recruit, so people can add their names against the empty slots.

REMEMBERING HEROTOPIA

Especially when you're not the only people in the space you're using to play, don't worry if facts about Herotopia get muddled between players or even become contradictory in the retelling – the reality warp left everyone's memories broken and confused and it's entirely possible that one or both versions of the “truth” is being misremembered.

INCORPORATING THE REAL WORLD

Use what's going on in your surroundings within the game, if you like. Even a disruption like being asked to move along can provide momentum to the game. Call a Freeze, explain what's going on, and give it a fiction-appropriate spin. You can then carry on in character as you're searching for somewhere else to play.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have a player with hearing difficulties, make sure they stand near you so you can monitor the sound levels near them, and recap anything that's even a little unclear to you. Remind everyone to speak up.

If you know in advance that you'll have a player who might have trouble reading the small text on the cards, grab the large font version of the handouts from here <http://goo.gl/OejGhs>. Print those out as well, and whenever you would deal a card to that player, replace it with the larger version.

If you have a player with mobility difficulties, make sure you choose a location where they will be able to sit down and still be able to participate. As much as possible, get other people sitting down as well. Consider choosing a smaller game space if you're in a public area to make sure other players don't spread out too much and leave out the person who can't easily follow them.

PLAYERS NEED TO LEAVE EARLY

That's fine. Give them higher numbered cards if possible, and if they leave before the event on their Power card happens, give that card to someone else as well as their own – they now have two powers!

BEHIND THE SCENES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This game owes its existence to many things.

38% to the great games that have gone before it and taught me so much, especially M vs M by John Stavropoulos and Terry Romeo, which I have pillaged remorselessly in these pages

35% to the Marvel comics, cartoons, and movies, which spawned and sustained a love of flawed heroes in me

26% to the Golden Cobra competition which made me start writing, and more importantly forced me to stop when I could have carried on tweaking the text forever

7% to Wikimedia Commons user Vegas Bleeds Neon, who not only drew the superheroes on the front cover but released them under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license so I could use them here

4% to unexpected tequila

1% to terrible arithmetic

FEEDBACK

If you have any feedback or played Unheroes and want to tell me how it went, I'd be extremely happy to hear it! Find me on Google +. I'm pretty certain I'm the only Joanna Piancastelli there.

POWER: REALITY WARPING

You could alter the very essence of the world

60 mins – You become aware of two realities trying to exist at once, and it's tearing you apart. Bring the group together to vote on which reality should become real and which should be lost forever, except in your memories. If there's a tie you have the deciding vote, but you must choose quickly: in ten minutes your power will implode and both realities will be utterly destroyed.

1

POWER: WILDHEART

You had feral strength and animal instincts

5 mins – Something's wrong. Very wrong. You don't know how you know, but you can feel it in your bones. Something big is coming, and somehow the only people who can deal with it are the people here with you. Something binds you together as a pack. Start trying to see if you can sniff out what the problem is, and what needs to be done about it.

2

POWER: READER

You could read and influence the thoughts of others

20 mins – you suddenly know the Memory of someone you're talking to from their point of view, exactly as they remember it. Share this strangeness with others to keep information flowing. Slowly uncover the others' Memories in the same way as you talk to them for the remainder of the game, so that you have them all by the 60 minute mark.

3

POWER: TACTICS

You could read and manipulate the flow of battle

30 mins – You start thinking about how you would neutralise everyone in the room, if it became necessary, and the violence of some of your plans shocks you. Find an in character way of sharing what's suddenly going on in your head with the others to keep information flowing.

4

POWER: MIGHT

You were the strongest, toughest person alive

40 mins – Things you touch start breaking. Pull out a chair and use Pause to describe it being torn apart, or perhaps open a door and describe it being torn off its hinges. Touch another person, and accidentally send them flying across the room. For the rest of the game, you don't know your own strength and must concentrate to avoid imparting far too much force on anything you touch.

5

POWER: VERITY

You could always get to the truth at the heart of any situation

45 mins – Ask someone a searching question their character doesn't want to answer when someone they have a relationship with is in hearing. Use Pause to tell the player that their character must answer truthfully. You can keep doing this for the rest of the game.

6

POWER: FLIGHT

You could soar through the skies with effortless grace

50 mins – You feel suddenly vulnerable and claustrophobic, like you're being held prisoner and can't escape. You develop a pure, sweet longing for the sky and you know in your heart that you should be able to reach up for it, but even though people around you are developing all sorts of strange abilities, you just can't manage to take off. Don't hide the feeling – keep information flowing.

7

POWER: DESTRUCTION

You could make things explode with your mind

10 mins – something near you suddenly explodes, leaving a tennis-ball-sized hole in it. Use Pause to describe this to the other players. For the rest of the game, if ever you are emotionally fraught, the same thing happens again. You don't necessarily know it's you doing it at first, but sooner or later someone's going to figure out that you're dangerous.

8

POWER: HEALING

You can feel and repair the suffering of others

Not timed – The first time someone in the group is hurt, react as if the same pain was inflicted on you. If you seek out the person who was hurt and touch them, you can remove their pain, but you'll still feel it. Use Pause to describe what the healing feels like for them and for you. It's up to you whether your character realises what they're doing.

9

MEMORY

You're the one who first uncovered the threat that faced Herotopia. What was it, and how did you find out about it? Who blames you for the whole thing?

1

MEMORY

Your powers were instrumental in the plan to fight the threat. What were you expected to do, and why didn't it work? What do you wish you could have done differently?

2

MEMORY

You're the one who gave the order that led to the catastrophe. What was the fallout of the call you made? Did you have any other options?

3

MEMORY

You're the one who had a plan to try and fix everything after it all went wrong. What did you try? Why didn't it work?

4

MEMORY

You're the one who didn't want to change reality. Why did the rest of the group vote against you? Why did you go along with them anyway?

5

MEMORY

You're the one who was closest to the dear friend the group lost in the tragedy. Who were they to you? Whose fault do you think it is?

6

MEMORY

You had an opportunity to stop this all early on. Why didn't you take it? When did you realise you'd made a terrible mistake?

7

MEMORY

A part of you revelled in the carnage that your friends couldn't stop. What did you do that was beyond the pale? Who saw you?

8

MEMORY

You have an escape route, another world or dimension that you could return to away from all this. Why haven't you gone back? Who would you take with you if you could?

9

RELATIONSHIP

You're going steady with A[____], but why can't you stop thinking about B[____]?

1

RELATIONSHIP

You and A[____] have big plans, but why is B[____] trying to put a stop to them?

2

RELATIONSHIP

A[____] is trying to help you earn B's[____] forgiveness, but what did you do to cause this rift in the first place?

3

RELATIONSHIP

A[____] is family, but what connection do you have to B[____] that might be even stronger than the blood tie?

4

RELATIONSHIP

A[____] has taught you so much, but why does B[____] refuse to acknowledge that?

5

RELATIONSHIP

A[____] and B[____] are constantly arguing and are both trying to get you to join their side. Are you close to choosing one?

6

RELATIONSHIP

You, A[____], and B[____] were inseparable. What's happened to break that bond?

7

RELATIONSHIP

You'd never admit it to A[____], but you have a healthy respect for B[____]. Why?

8

RELATIONSHIP

You desperately want A[____] to notice you. B[____] is willing to help, but for what price?

9

Print this page five times, back to back with the next page as double-sided pages.

Cut along the solid lines to make strips of paper.

Fold along the dotted lines to make little folders to hold the cards.

PRINCIPLES

Get to the heart of Unheroes using these principles:

Play for the whole story

Think about others and include their contributions

There are no winners or losers

Let your character take a fall if it would make things more interesting

Keep information flowing

Share your secrets. The game isn't long enough to hold them back for a big reveal

TECHNIQUES

Use these techniques with your fellow players:

Say **Freeze** and hold a hand up palm out to stop the game for safety or practical reasons

Say **Pause** or hold your hand up with crossed fingers to talk out of character

Act out **combat** in super slow motion. The person on the receiving end of any attack decides what happens

PLAYING IN PUBLIC?

- Stay within the game area unless you need to duck out of play for some reason
- Be aware of who your fellow players are and what the facilitator has given you to identify yourselves
- Be respectful of other people present in the game area
- If any authorities make requests of you, comply politely
- If you're asked to move, the game can carry on even as you're looking for somewhere else to play

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THE STORY

Back in Herotopia, you guys were heroes. Real heroes. You had the powers, you wore the capes, you worked as a team to protect the world and everyone in it.

Sure, things were complicated. Sometimes you didn't get along. But when times got tough, you came together and did whatever it took to win the day.

Except, this time, you didn't. When Earth needed you most, you screwed up. You were too busy stroking your egos and fighting

THE STORY (CONT.)

amongst yourselves, and something went terribly, horribly wrong.

It got so bad that you decided it would be better to change the entire history of the world and erase all superheroes and villains from existence than try to repair what you did.

So now you're here, in this ordinary world, where no one's in danger and everything is exactly what it seems.

THE STORY (CONT.)

The problem is, bits of your old lives are starting to leak in around the edges. You're starting to realise you need to work out the truth of what happened.

Then you'll have to make a choice: will you put things back the way they were and try to fix the mistake you made, or will you leave things safe and calm and boring like they are now, always knowing that you failed to save the world?

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[Your Game Here] by [Your Name Here]
by
Mike Young

LIVE ACTION ROLE PLAY

COMEDY, SURREAL

In a city where people _____, _____ have taken over. Can you
_____ the _____ before it is too _____? In [Your Game Here]
by [Your Name Here], players create the salient details of the scenario in a Mad-Libs style fashion
before runtime. This is a theater-style 2-hour larp.

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<http://www.intink.com/larps>



Character 1

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Your character's name: _____

[2] A city in the United States: _____

[3] A whole number less than 10, but more than 1: _____

[4] A number between 5 and 25 inclusive: _____

[5] A famous person, currently alive: _____

[6] A verb ending in ing: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[A] The name of a city, real or fictitious: _____

[C] A whole number between 4 and 9 inclusive: _____

[D] A nonsense word: _____

[K] A large number: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

Step 4. On page 2, you will find a number of numbered and lettered blanks. Fill the numbered blanks from the answers you wrote in the numbered spaces above. Note that the order of the numbers on page 2 may not match the order of the numbers on this sheet. Fill the lettered blanks on page 2 from the lettered blanks on the board in the front of the room, even if they are different from what you wrote here. You may need to wait until others have filled in those blanks before you can complete page 2. Page 2 is your base character sheet for this game.

Step 5. Go to the table where the side plots are located. You may join in exactly one side plot. Please read the instructions on the side plots packets on how to join in a side plot.

Character 1

You are [1]_____. You were born in [2]_____, to a set of loving parents. You were the eldest of [3]_____ children. You had a pet [M]_____ growing up.

You were always fairly smart and quick witted. You have always been able to out-argue your peers, or at least convince yourself that you have won. It was no surprise that you turned to politics.

But you are not interested in leading, no. You wish to be the power behind the throne. You have been working as a political advisor for [4]_____ years. And you are sneaky.

Right now, for example, you are working for [5]_____ who is secretly thinking of running for President. Your job is to get some good quotes from the people of this town. That's why you have come to [A]_____. You want to drum up some spin and you want to poll the populace about [5]_____.

You need to be sly, but you need to get some good quotes. There may even be some celebrities here. If so, you especially need to get a good quote from them.

You are: Average at Combat, Above Average at [6]_____, Excellent at Research.

Character 2

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Your character's name: _____

[2] An Occupation: _____

[3] A verb, To: _____

[4] A Gender: _____ (Man, Woman, Intersex, whatever you want)

[5] An uncommon noun: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[B] A planet, real or imaginary: _____

[F] A whole number between 6 and 9 inclusive: _____

[G] A nonsense word: _____

[C] A whole number between 4 and 9 inclusive: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Character 2

You not an average person. While by day you may be [1]_____, mild mannered [2]_____, you are secretly [3]_____ing [4]_____, with the ability to [3]_____ far beyond that of normal mortals.

You have come to [A]_____ to fight crime, and crime there is. You're sure of it. Well, yeah, this is your first day as a masked crimefighter, and you may have a touch of inexperience. But with your powers it should be no problem.

Also, to be a real superhero, you need to find a love interest and an arch villain as well. This shouldn't be too difficult, right?

Of course there is your secret identity to worry about. The life of a [2]_____ is no picnic. Your boss can be a real ogre sometimes. For example, today he asked you to obtain him a [5]_____, which you suspect isn't actually part of your job duties. You'll have to find someone who knows where you can obtain a [5]_____.

You are: Above Average at Combat, Excellent at [2]_____.

Character 3

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Circle One: Past Present Future

[2] A noun: _____

[3] A whole number between 18 and 43 inclusive: _____

[4] A nonsense word: _____

[5] Verb, past tense: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[B] A planet, real or imaginary: _____

[H] A noun: _____

[S] A verb: _____

[K] A large number: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Character 3

Even when you were growing up, you knew you were special. You had visions of the [1]_____ and knew things that others could only guess. Your mother told you that you were different, touched by God, and you believed her.

But it wasn't God who touched you, no, it was the All-[2]_____ who sits in the center of the universe and speaks to you in your mind. When you turned [3]_____ last year you set out on your own and started your own religion to worship the All-[2]_____.

You dubbed yourself, Master [4]_____, and have sought out followers to your new religion. That is why you are here today. Today is the Holy Feast commemorating the day the All-[2]_____ [5]_____ the universe. You are looking for converts to help you celebrate.

It never is easy, starting your own religion, but at least you have the might of the All-[2]_____ on your side. You may perform one miracle in its name to convince the non-believers. Praise the All-[2]_____.

You are below average in combat. You may perform one miraculous act during the game. The act may not kill characters or remove them from the game in any way. Nor may you directly control the thoughts, opinions, or actions of other characters. So speaks the All-[2]_____.

Character 4

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] A number between 7 and 11 inclusive: _____

[2] A city name: _____

[3] A vehicle: _____

[4] A plural noun: _____

[5] An animal (real or fictional): _____

[6] A toy: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[C] A noun: _____

[E] A nonsense word: _____

[L] An exotic food: _____

[M] An animal: _____

[Q] An exotic locale: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Step 5. Go to the table where the side plots are located. You may join in exactly one side plot. Please read the instructions on the side plots packets on how to join in a side plot.

Character 4

You are a small child, only [1]_____ years old. Your mommy lives far far away in the town of [2]_____. She put you on a [3]_____ and told you that when you got to [A]_____, your daddy would be waiting for you.

Well, you are finally here, but you haven't found your daddy yet. Maybe one of these strangers have seen him. His name is "Daddy." Your mommy's name is "Mommy" and you don't know your address and phone number.

You're scared and alone, and you know what that means. Whenever you start to become mad or upset or have a powerful emotion, something strange happens. Sometimes something breaks nearby. Sometimes people get hurt.

You don't know why these strange things happen, but you cannot control them. The only way to get them to stop is to make you happy. You like candy, and [4]_____, and stuffed animals. Your favorite animal is the [5]_____ and you would especially like a stuffed [5]_____. And your daddy.

You are below average in combat. When you have a powerful negative emotion, things nearby start to break. Sometimes those things are people. You start the game with a [6]_____. Make sure to have an item card.

Character 5

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] A foreign country, real or fictional: _____

[2] A nonsense word: _____

[3] A type of gemstone: _____

[4] An exotic animal: _____

[5] A noun: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[E] A nonsense word: _____

[H] A noun: _____

[I] A place: _____

[M] An animal: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Step 5. Go to the table where the side plots are located. You may join in exactly one side plot. Please read the instructions on the side plots packets on how to join in a side plot.

Character 5

You are here to find your life's goal. You are from the far off land of [1]_____. You have traveled far and wide to find something that can only be found in [A]_____.

You have come to the city looking for the most valuable item of all, the [2]_____ [3]_____. However, this item cannot be bought or sold. No, it must be won, and to win it you must complete three tasks.

First, you must kill and eat a [4]_____. You don't know where to find such a thing, much less how to consume it.

Next, you must perform a feat of incredible derring-do. You will need to find someone to proclaim that your feat was incredible enough.

And finally, you must find true love. Not an easy feat for an hour. Once you have found your true love, you will find the [2]_____ [3]_____ under the first [5]_____ you come across.

You are above average in combat. You are excellent in non-combat feats of dexterity such as juggling.

Character 6

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

- [1] An elected position: _____
- [2] An unusual building: _____
- [3] A common every day activity: _____
- [4] A large number: _____
- [5] Famous Dead Person: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

- [A] The name of a city, real or fictitious: _____
- [F] A whole number between 6 and 9 inclusive: _____
- [G] A nonsense word: _____
- [L] An exotic food: _____
- [R] A verb: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Step 5. Go to the table where the side plots are located. You may join in exactly one side plot. Please read the instructions on the side plots packets on how to join in a side plot.

Character 6

You are the [1]_____ of [A]_____. You are a good, competent elected official, and you honestly do care about your constituency. However, there are a few issues that have come up and you want to get the opinion of the man on the street, as it were. You want both the opinions of locals and visitors, since some of the issues affect tourism.

The first issue is that there is talk of building a [2]_____ in town. This will greatly impact the town's infrastructure and you want to make sure that you accurately represent your citizens.

The second issue is that there is a petition on your desk asking to make [3]_____ illegal. It has over [4]_____ signatures. You have a feeling this might be unpopular, so you wanted to see what people thought.

Finally, you have always been a huge fan of [5]_____, and you would like to see the city build a memorial to that person. You need to drum up popular support for a memorial. And even if most of the support comes from people outside the city, that's ok as it would make a good tourist attraction, too.

You are below average in combat. You are excellent at navigating bureaucracies. Once, during the game you may ask out of character, "was that last statement a lie?" and get a truthful answer. This ability may not be used on an answer to a question asked solely for the purpose of detecting a lie.

Character 7

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Your character's name: _____

[2] An animal: _____

[3] A noun: _____

[4] A nationality: _____

[5] Famous Dead Person: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[D] A nonsense word: _____

[I] A place: _____

[O] A color: _____

[S] A verb: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Character 7

You are a shadowy and mysterious figure. Your real name is [1]_____, but you go by the nickname [2]_____. You claim to be a [3]_____ salesman, but that is just your cover job. In reality, you are a hired killer. You are a citizen of [A]_____, born and raised here.

Recently, you have been hired by the [4]_____ mob to take care of a little problem. Apparently, someone's been cutting into their business, or perhaps investigating them, or making their lives difficult in some way. You're not much on the details. You like to stay above such things and focus on your job.

The problem is that you don't have much details. You know that your mark is one of a select few people here in [A]_____, but you aren't sure which one. The only salient detail you could get is that they had a pet [M]_____ growing up.

It's possible that more than one person in your target group meets that criteria. You've been asked to take them both out, just in case. You'll be paid double if you do.

You are excellent in combat. Once, during the game, you may disguise yourself as a nondescript menial character (janitor, clerk, panhandler, &c) for no longer than five minutes. You start the game with a gun. Make sure to have an item card.

Character 8

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Your character's name: _____

[2] A scientific sounding made up word: _____

[3] A verb: _____

[4] A noun: _____

[5] A verb: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[D] A nonsense word: _____

[J] A whole number between 4 and 7 inclusive: _____

[P] An animal: _____

[Q] An exotic locale: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Character 8

You have been infected by a sentient disease. You look and sound normal, and go by your birth name, [1]_____, but you in fact the living avatar of [2]_____ Syndrome.

It is your goal, your life's work, to infect as many people as you can, starting with the population of [A]_____. Unfortunately, you are not very contagious. In fact, there is a difficult process you must perform to infect someone.

First, the two of you must [3]_____. You both have to [3]_____ together at the same time. And it has to be a twosome; adding more people to the equation will cause the infection to fail.

Then you must give the other person a [4]_____. It doesn't matter where you get the [4]_____. You can even use the same [4]_____ over and over again. The person is then infected. Write the character's name on the back of this page to keep track.

You have exactly one symptom. Every 10 minutes, you must [5]_____. You have no choice about this. Tell the person you've infected that they must [5]_____ every ten minutes too. You don't need to tell them why or that they are infected, just that they must [5]_____. They are not yet contagious and cannot spread [2]_____ Syndrome.

You are below average in combat. You start with one item of your choice, which may not be the item you need to infect. Make sure to have an item card.

Character 9

Instructions: DO NOT READ PAGE 2 YET!!!!

Step 1. Fill in the blanks of this page with the details listed.

[1] Your character's name: _____

[2] A liquid: _____

[3] A common object: _____

[4] An unusual object: _____

[5] A verb: _____

Step 2. Fill out these blanks as well.

[J] A whole number between 4 and 7 inclusive: _____

[O] A color: _____

[P] An animal: _____

[R] A verb: _____

Step 3. Copy all of the lettered answers to the board in the front of the room. It should have letters and spaces where you can put your answers. It is possible that someone has already beat you to it in some of the spaces. If so, only fill in the ones that are still blank. You may not change things already written on the board, even if you wrote them in the first place.

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Character 9

Your name is [1]_____, and you are a gypsy. You can read fortunes, and have all sorts of things you can sell. You have travelled to [A]_____ because you believe there is great wealth here.

You have the ability of divination. It is simple really. You make the person drink a cup of [2]_____ and you read what is left behind. You get them to ask you a question and you answer it. Of course, you really can't tell the future; you just make everything up. You are excellent at cold reading and just like making stuff up.

But your real power is the vast array of objects you have. From the most mundane [3]_____ to the rare [4]_____, you have them all. However, you won't give up your wares without a price. Sometimes it will be a favor, but you would prefer money, of course.

You really want one thing. You want, for once in your life, to [5]_____. And not alone, oh no. You want to [5]_____ in a group of at least [N]_____ people, the more the merrier. Until you do that, you can not say that you have truly lived.

You are average in combat. You may generate any common, normal item any time you want. You have access to 5 unusual or rare items. Keep track here: □□□□□.

Setup

You will need a whiteboard or a few pieces of paper attached to a wall where people can write things. Write a number of blanks on the board labeled from [A] to [R].

- Print out the characters document and staple them into sets of two pages each with the instruction page on top of the character sheet page. (see Alternate Setup below)
- Print out the side plots document and arrange the side plots into three individual stacks with the description page face up on top and the plot pages face down on the bottom.
- Print out and distribute a copy of the player sheet document for each player.

When players come in, they should randomly choose a character pack and take a rules sheet. Each player will need a writing implement.

You will need a stack of blank index cards that may be used as item cards.

The larp should last about one – two hours.

The larp is designed to be completely player adjudicated, which means that you could play too. It is helpful, though, to have someone who knows the way the larp is setup during the character creation phase.

You will need some pens.

You will need some blank index cards for people to make item card with.

Alternate Setup

Instead of making packets of the two pages for each character, distribute them as follows:

1. Randomly distribute the first page of each character to the players and have them fill it out and write the words on the white board. Then have them return all the sheets to you.
2. Shuffle the returned sheets and randomly redistribute them to the players. Then have the players grab the second sheet matching their new first sheet. Have them fill out their character sheets.
3. Go!

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[Your Game Here] by *[Your Name Here]* was written by Mike Young and is released under a Creative Commons share alike license. You may print and distribute this as long as you credit me and include a link to <http://www.intink.com>. You may not sell this without permission.

The Letters

[A] the city where the larp is set.

[B] a planet, real or imaginary

[C] a noun

[D] a nonsense word

[E] a nonsense word

[F] a whole number between 6 and 9 inclusive.

[G] a nonsense word.

[H] a noun

[I] a place

[J] a whole number between 4 and 7 inclusive.

[K] a large number

[L] an exotic food

[M] an animal

[N] a whole number between 4 and 9 inclusive.

[O] a color.

[P] an animal.

[Q] an exotic locale.

[R] a verb

[S] a verb

A Note on Game Theory

Character sheets are there to provide two vital bits of information: who are you, and why are you here? The character history provides insights into the character's past and present, the character's mindset, the way he or she looks at life, other people, and the word around him. The history traces a path that explains how the character got to the start of the game. The goals and motivations take the character to the next step, explaining what the character wishes to accomplish and why.

Both are important. The history provides background for roleplaying, for seeing the game through the eyes of your character, and reacting as this alien mindset would. The goals and motivations give you a reason to interact, and a reason to stay when things get strange or difficult.

[Your Game Here] is an experiment in live action roleplaying. I have created a structure and a number of plots and characters, but you, the players, will create the details. It will be as silly or serious a game as you make it. This is only the first step on the path of player created games; however, it is as far as we can go in the hour allotted. Certainly, other games have traveled further along this path, allowing players to create characters and plots for their events. Still, [Your Game Here] is an interesting novelty, and will hopefully be a fun hour's divertissement.

[Your Game Here] written by Mike Young

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A Note on GM Theory

In a LARP, GMs are called upon to make rules decisions, to clarify information, and to act as "the rest of the world." Essentially, they are called upon as independent moderators when the players cannot resolve the issue themselves.

[Your Game Here] endows that ability to the players. You are the judge of whether your character may or may not do something. You are allowed to expand the game world as needed, as long as it is reasonable. The trick here is knowing what is reasonable. If you aren't sure, find someone who is uninvolved in your situation. We call that person the O3P, the Objective Third Party. The O3P acts as a GM for your situation.

Let's Get Specific: Game Mechanics

Each ability (thing you could do) has five levels: Horrible, Below Average, Average, Above Average, and Excellent. If you are trying to do something, say pick a lock, you compare your level to the target level (which will either be explicitly stated or decided by an O3P). If you are better, then you do it. If you are worse, you fail. If you tie, you need to find a O3P and have them make a decision. We'll get into how to make a good decision as a O3P in a bit.

There may come a time when you want to try something you don't have a skill for. At that point, you must decide if it is reasonable that you could do it (see Making Decisions) based on your character history and other skills. If you cannot decide, see a O3P.

If you are attempting to do something to someone else, like say, defeat them in combat, you first have an announcement phase, something to the effect of, "I'm a gonna whump you because I'm above average in combat." "Oh yeah? I may only be average in combat, but I'll get my licks in." Try to keep it in character, but get the idea across.

Once all parties know how they will do, then you act out the resolution safely and dramatically. Afterwards, resolve the combat. You may end up Healthy, Slightly Wounded, Severely Wounded, and Dead (see Damage below). The winner gets to decide how the loser is. If the loser is the same or one rank lower, they can "get their licks in" and leave the winner Slightly Wounded.

If both parties have the same ability level and they cannot come up with a mutually satisfying resolution, then they must find a O3P to decide. The decision of the O3P is final and could result in any resolution, up to and including all participants being killed.

Teaming Up

Two or more people may team up to defeat someone who has one higher skill level. For example, two people who are Below Average in combat, may work together to beat up someone who is Average in combat. The person who is higher may get his licks in to up to two others in the combat of his or her choice.

For combats more complex than that, find a O3P agreeable to all involved and have that person decide the results.

The O3P decides the results but does *not* describe the action of the combat. After hearing or deciding on the results, you must act out the combat or actions, roleplay them in slow motion.

Damage

There are four levels of damage. If you are Healthy, you have no damage and there is no game effect.

If you are Slightly Wounded, all of the levels of what you can do are one less. You need to announce this in the declarative phase, “I wish to win the dance competition, and am normally an excellent dancer, but due to this leg wound, I am only above average today.” You may be Slightly Wounded for as long as you want, but not less than 15 minutes. After that, you go back to Healthy.

If you are Severely Wounded, you need immediate medical attention. Until you receive medical attention, you may not use any of your abilities, nor may you move faster than a slow limp.

Dead is dead.

Two additional notes. First, note that damage does not stack. If you are Slightly Wounded and become Slightly Wounded again, you do not gain more wounds. It just resets the 15 minute wound clock.

Also, it is possible that you may want to knock someone out but leave them unharmed. If you win a combat, you may choose to declare that your opponent is unconscious. They stay unconscious for as long as is dramatically

appropriate. The combat winner gets to decide how long is dramatically appropriate, although an appeal may be made to an O3P if it seems excessive.

Making Decisions

When deciding if you should be able to do something, or if you are a O3P, you should decide based on the following factors:

- ☺ **Is it reasonable?** Could the character do it based on his or her abilities and character history? For example, if someone is playing a super spy but doesn’t have an ability to pick locks, can they try to pick the lock. You might say that they have an Average ability to pick locks. They then want to perform brain surgery. You would probably say that there is nothing in their background to support such an activity, so you would rule they cannot do it.
- ☺ **Is it fair?** When making a decision, you need to decide not only if it is fair to the player, but to the game as a whole. Would allowing the player to do this keep someone else from joining in on the fun? Would not allowing the player to do this damage his or her fun? Which would be better for the game as a whole.
- ☺ **Is it dramatically appropriate?** This is a touch, gut-feeling, sort of thing. John is playing an expert detective. Five minutes into the game, he thinks he knows whodunit. Allowing him to unmask the culprit so soon is not only unfair to the other player, it is not very dramatically appropriate. Ask John to get some more

proof, or interview more people. Likewise, having the villain leave the game as soon as he hears that you declined John’s request isn’t fair or appropriate either. Instead encourage the villain to have a dramatic denouement when it is appropriate for the game. Think of the handcuffs scene in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. He could only escape the cuffs when it was funny. In the best of all possible worlds, things should happen in the LARP when dramatically appropriate.

Recusing Yourself

There may come a time when you are called to be a O3P and you cannot decide. Maybe you are too close to the situation and cannot be an arbitrator. Maybe you simply cannot decide what is fair, reasonable, or dramatically appropriate. In any case, you may simply recuse yourself.

Explain to the people involved that you cannot make a decision. You don’t have to say why. Simply bow out, but if you can make some suggestions for a different O3P.

Item Cards

The event runner should have provided a number of blank index cards to use as item cards. Please make item cards for any items your character starts with or obtains during the game.

Side Plot 1: Espionage

Important: DO NOT READ THE OTHER PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT UNTIL INSTRUCTED!!!!

Instructions

Only take a sheet from this stack if you are interested in an espionage plot.

If so, take the *last* sheet of the document and place the rest of this document back where you found it. If this is the only page left, please dispose of it instead.

On the sheet that you have taken, fill in all of the lettered blanks from the letters on the board in the front of the room. If *all* the lettered blanks have not been filled in by game start, you must discard this plot. Sorry.

Side Plot 1: Espionage

You are secretly a spy for the planet [B]_____ the creatures of [B]_____ have been at war with the Legions of [E]_____ for millennia. However, you are here to communicate with an agent of The [G]_____, a neutral race in your war.

You wish to convince The [G]_____ to support your side. With their help, [B]_____ can win the war and rid the scourge of the evil Legions of [E]_____.

Finding the agent will be difficult. However, you have a code phrase: The [C]_____ in [H]_____ falls mainly on the [I]_____.

You have the following assets to convince the agent.

- [K]_____ galactic flarns.
- A bowl of [L]_____

Make item cards for these.

Side Plot 1: Espionage

You are secretly a spy for The [G]_____, a strange alien race. You are here because your race is neutral in the war between the Legions of [E]_____ and the planet of [B]_____. You are here to communicate with an agent of [B]_____, who want your race to join them in the war.

You are entirely on your own here. You may choose to help or hinder or even join in with the Legions of [E]_____. You've decided to base your decision on how well the agent blends into the civilization here. How moral is it? How well does it achieve the goals of the character it has become?

The agent will greet you with the code phrase: The [C]_____ in [H]_____ falls mainly on the [I]_____. Your plan is to first identify the agent and then observe for a time and then approach and decide what to do then.

Side Plot 1: Espionage

You are secretly a spy for the Legions of [E]_____. Your mighty race has been at war with the planet of [B]_____ for millennia. However, you have learned that an agent of [B]_____ has come here to communicate with a representative of The [G]_____, a neutral race in your war.

You must stop this meeting at all costs. If [B]_____ and The [G]_____ were to ally, your race would have no chance in the war. You do not know who they are or what they look like, but the two agents must be stopped!

You start the game with the following item:

A Zap Gun. *It can be used to make someone Severely Wounded, Unconscious, or Dead. It has one charge. You are Excellent at combat when using the Zap Gun. Nobody else may use the zap gun unless they are Excellent in Combat, and then they are Average in Combat when using the Zap Gun*

Side Plot 2: Magic

Important: DO NOT READ THE OTHER PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT UNTIL INSTRUCTED!!!!

Instructions

Only take a sheet from this stack if you are interested in a magic plot.

If so, take the *last* sheet of the document and place the rest of this document back where you found it. If this is the only page left, please dispose of it instead.

On the sheet that you have taken, fill in all of the lettered blanks from the letters on the board in the front of the room. If *all* the lettered blanks have not been filled in by game start, you must discard this plot. Sorry.

Side Plot 2: Magic

You are secretly a powerful mage. You are here to stop the evil machinations of the Demon [D]_____. You know that there is a servant of [D]_____ here in [A]_____ who is planning on summoning [D]_____ and you need to stop that!

However, to do so, you need to gather up positive energy. You cannot get positive energy from yourself, however. You can only get positive energy from unwitting bystanders. To do this, you must provoke them into doing good deed. You cannot tell them why they must do these deeds; they must be truly selfless.

If you manage to accumulate at least [F]_____ good deeds you may stop the summoning. Keep track here. If you do so, before the demon is summoned, you may perform a short ritual. After the ritual is done, call out “Event D” so that all the players can hear. You have stopped the summoning.

If the demon is summoned before you have accumulated [F]_____ good deeds, you may attempt a banishing ritual. A banishing ritual requires three people. You start out at Below Average in your ability to banish the demon. However, every two good deeds you have accumulated increase your level by one (to Average, then Above Average, and finally to Excellent).

Side Plot 2: Magic

You are secretly a powerful evil mage. You are here to summon the evil the Demon [D]_____ whom you serve. To do so, you need to gather up negative energy. You cannot get negative energy from yourself, however. You can only get negative energy from unwitting bystanders. To do this, you must provoke them into doing evil deeds. You cannot tell them why they must do these deeds; they must be unwitting.

If you manage to accumulate at least [J]_____ evil deeds, you may summon [D]_____. Keep track here. However, if “Event D” is called out by another player before you collect all the evil deeds, then your summoning has been foiled and all is lost.

But, if you do manage to collect the evil deeds, you may immediately perform a quick summoning ritual (make it up, but it must take at least a minute). You then become the Demon [D]_____. Ignore your previous character sheet. Your only goal now is to torture and subjugate humans.

The Demon [D]_____ is Excellent in combat. He cannot be killed by normal weapons, although alien weapons and supernatural weapons can kill him. He cannot be made unconscious and naturally heals from Slightly Wounded and Severely Wounded in five minutes.

Side Plot 3: Mystery

Important: DO NOT READ THE OTHER PAGES OF THIS DOCUMENT UNTIL INSTRUCTED!!!!

Instructions

Only take a sheet from this stack if you are interested in a mystery plot.

If so, take the *last* sheet of the document and place the rest of this document back where you found it. If this is the only page left, please dispose of it instead.

On the sheet that you have taken, fill in all of the lettered blanks from the letters on the board in the front of the room. If *all* the lettered blanks have not been filled in by game start, you must discard this plot. Sorry.

Side Plot 2: Mystery

Besides everything else you have going on, you are also the [O]_____
[P]_____, world renowned jewel thief. You recently stole the
extraordinarily rare gemstone, the Star of [Q]_____.

You have come to [A]_____ because you have a contact here,
someone who can fence the Star of [Q]_____ and will give you
\$500,000,000 in cash for it.

You can recognize your fence by the following secret phrase. You will mention
that you are looking for someone who knows how to [R]_____
and your fence will respond that they have won awards doing
[R]_____.

But there is also a problem. The Star of [Q]_____ is *cursed*!
Before you can sell it, you must break the curse. Luckily, you have done your
research. You just need to [S]_____ with exactly one other willing
partner. You need to [S]_____ three times tonight, each with a different
person to break the curse.

But then you will be able to sell the Star of [Q]_____ and you will
be rich!

You start the game with an additional item, the Star of [Q]_____.

Side Plot 2: Mystery

Besides everything else going on, you also have the ability to fence rare and valuable jewelry. Recently, the extraordinarily rare gemstone, the Star of [Q]_____, was stolen by the world-famous jewel thief, the [O]_____ [P]_____.

You have promised the [O]_____ [P]_____ \$500,000,000 for the Star of [Q]_____, but you have come across a snag. You only have \$100,000,000 in liquid funds. You need to move some of your stock to get the rest of the money.

Luckily, you have a plan. You have four items, each worth \$100,000,000. You plan to sell them to collectors and then you'll have enough to pay the [O]_____ [P]_____. We will simulate this by giving you four mundane items, as specified on the bottom of your sheet. You need to trade them to other players for some other item. It must be a trade, item for item, and you cannot trade with the same character twice, nor may you trade with the [O]_____ [P]_____. After the trade, you may make yourself an item card for \$100,000,000 cash.

You can recognize the [O]_____ [P]_____ by the following phrase. He or she will mention that they are looking for someone who knows how to [R]_____ and you will respond that you have won awards doing [R]_____. Simplicity itself.

You start the game with the following additional items: \$100,000,000 in cash, a tube of toothpaste, a fully loaded revolver, a bust of Mozart, and a tub of butter. You need to trade the last four items on the list to get your money.

Side Plot 2: Mystery

Besides everything else you have going on, you also do a bit of international police work on the side. Recently, the famous gemstone, The Star of [Q]_____ has been stolen. You suspect the world-renown international jewel thief, the [O]_____ [P]_____.

And further, you believe that the [O]_____ [P]_____ has come here to [A]_____ to fence the stolen gemstone. You must stop them before that happens!

Luckily, you know that the Star of [Q]_____ is cursed. You know that if someone steals the Star of [Q]_____, they have to perform a specific activity repeatedly, but you don't know what that activity is.

But at least you have something to go on. And with any luck, you will catch the [O]_____ [P]_____ and recover The Star of [Q]_____!



Fan Fic *by* Kat Jones

1. LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAY, 3. MIXED OR SEMI-LIVE (PART TABLETOP, PART LIVE)

COMEDY, RELATIONSHIPS

There's a Fan Fic for That... is a game about creating live action "fan fiction" stories. Set in alternate universes and crossing multiple canons the stories can be funny, romantic, or full of angst. Remain "in character" as your Characters are put into strange or ridiculous situations. Give feedback to the Author in your role as a Reader.

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There's a Fan Fic for That...

A Freeform Scenario by Kat Jones

There's a Fan Fic for That... is a game about creating live action “fan fiction” stories. Set in alternate universes and crossing multiple canons the stories can be funny, romantic, or even angsty. Part of the fun of the game should come from trying to remain “in character” even when Characters are put into strange or ridiculous situations. No prior knowledge of fan fiction is necessary to play this game. It's all about putting familiar characters into unusual and interesting situations.

Roles:

There are three different roles in *There's a Fan Fic for That...* Characters, Readers, and Author.

Characters: When players are acting out the characters in the fan fic they will be role-playing as Characters.

Readers: When players are not role-playing they will be watching the fic unfold and acting the role of the Readers. At the end of each Chapter the readers will help the Author decide the next scene, shift the tone, adjust relationships and make suggestions about what they want to see. Readers should offer enthusiasm, suggestions and perhaps constructive criticism.

The Author: While the Author fills the standard Game Master role they should act as more of a director and actively collaborate with the other players. The Author should set the scene for the Characters, give them clues about what the Readers want to see, the mood, the prior action, and then let the Characters have at it. Try to give prompts for action rather than an explicit narrative, give the Characters some freedom to generate the narrative through play. The Author will be responsible for calling for Chapter Breaks and soliciting feedback from the Readers.

****If you're playing with two groups the Author will need to make sure there's time for both fics to be played. Divide the time evenly between the two groups and stick to the schedule! This may mean**

shorter scenes and less scenes, but you want to give everyone a chance to be a Character.**

Gender-swapping, historical accuracy, and queer content:

This is fan fiction so anything goes! (as long as its not Out Of Character...) If you draw a character and would like to swap their gender—feel free. Don't be overly concerned about making your setting historically accurate, or even overly plausible. The setting should add flavor to the story, not limit your creativity. Fan fic is all about queer content. Your in-game romantic relationships should not be constrained by gender, species, canon, or monogamy. Don't let gender, cannon, or historical accuracy constrain the roles your Characters take on in the fic. Focus on what will be the most fun to play and best reflects the personalities of the Characters, rather than what makes the most logical sense. This is fan fic after all.

Sexual Content and Safety:

You and your players should establish a rating for each story (General audience, Teen and Up, Mature). Sexual content is totally not required and does not need to be included in any of the stories you create. But if all players are comfortable feel free to include it in your story. Make sure you have a code for stopping a story if things are getting uncomfortable for any reason and set boundaries for what players are comfortable with, such as how to simulate kissing, whether any touching is allowed, etc.

The “Cut & Brake” technique is one I find simple and effective. If someone does something you’re not too sure about, that pushes your boundaries a little too much, say “Brake”. They should immediately tone down, back out a bit, but play still goes on. If you feel like things have gotten out of hand, or you feel scared or very confused, say “Cut”. All play stops immediately, and the group should be quiet and listen to whoever cut the game. Be supportive, find out what the problem is. Don’t continue unless everyone feels safe and wants to go on.

Playing the Game

Step 1: Create Characters

Draw 2 cards from the Slash pack. To become a Character the card should fit the following criteria:

- 1) All players should know who the character is.
- 2) One of the players is willing to play the character.

If the character on the card doesn't match the criteria discard and draw again. This process should go fairly quickly. Once you have chosen two starter characters choose 1- 2 additional characters from the cannon to be the remaining Characters (Rule 1 and 2 still apply).

Step 2: Choose an Alternate Universe (AU)

If you have 3-5 players you should choose 1 AU to start. If you have 6+ players you should divide into two groups and choose 2 additional cannons with corresponding Characters.

Step 3: Create Relationships

AUs come with a list of relationships, sit in a circle and create relationships between the Characters.

Each Character should have a relationship with at least two other Characters. Now add at least one romantic relationship (you can definitely add more!) between a pair of Characters.

Step 4: Generate Locations

Choose 3 locations where the action for your fic will be set. Locations should be related to the AU. At the beginning of each chapter the Author should announce where the Chapter is taking place.

Step 5: Choose some Tropes

Each AU comes with a list of tropes. Choose at least 1 and up to 3. These tropes are common elements in fan fiction. In game they should help drive action and give inspiration for scenes. If a player has an additional idea for a Trope feel free to add it in.

Step 6: Create a Summary

A summary should give a general idea of the kind of story you want to tell. Try to indicate mood and

maybe a very sketchy idea of what will happen in the fic. You don't want to be too specific since things might change during play, but think of the Summary as something to guide action rather than fully determine it. A summary shouldn't be more than 3 sentences long. Here's an example from fan fic:

“Crossover flashfic. Yuukan Club encounter a certain binge-eating boxer while dressed to infiltrate a church.”

Step 7: Set up a Chapter

The Author should set the scene for the Chapter: what is the setting, which Characters are present, what does the Author want to see in this Chapter. Just like the summary, these should be general ideas, like “Uther gets suspicious” or a title that hints at the action “A celebration turns to horror.”

Step 8: Call a Chapter Break

The Author should call for a Chapter Break when they want to end a scene. Try not to let scenes run too long. It's totally fun to end scenes on cliff-hangers and leave the Readers wanting more.

Step 9: Get Comments from the Readers

The Author should solicit comments from the Readers about what new Chapters they want to see. Maybe they want to see a particular Character's POV (have the character give a monologue), maybe there is something mentioned during a Chapter that they want to explore in more detail. Readers and the Author should work together to make sure all Characters get some attention, that the fic doesn't get too full of side plots and that relationships and Tropes are put into play.

Didn't like how a Chapter went? The Readers and Author can decide they want to do a Re-Write and play through the Chapter again.

Repeat Steps 7-9 until your story comes to a satisfying conclusion OR you run out of time, leaving a frustratingly unfinished Work In Progress (WIP).

MOOOORE Please??

If you've ended your first story and still have the time and desire to play more here are a few options:

- 1) Choose new Characters
- 2) Choose a new AU
- 3) Re-Mix your story by changing up the relationships and Tropes. Or play through some of the same scenes with additional new ones.

SO MANY LISTS!!!

Alternate Universes, Relationships and Tropes

Romantic Relationships:

3 Players: Choose @ least 1

4 Players: Choose @ least 1

5 Players: Choose @ least 2

*****For more than 6 players split into 2 groups.*****

Unresolved Sexual Tension

Forbidden Love

Old Flames

Just Married

Former Lovers

Crush/Object of Crush

Lovers

One-Time Fling

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#### **Coffee Shop AU:**

***\*\* All Characters should choose a role, then give it an adjective\*\****

Manager

Employee

Customer

#### **Coffee Shop Relationships:**

Siblings

Parent and Child

Friends through thick and thin

Frenemies

Secret Friends

More than Friends



Rivals

**Coffee Shop Tropes:**

Blind Date  
Interrupted  
Dating Other People Even Though they Belong Together  
Snowed In  
Rivals to Lovers  
Breaking the Fourth Wall  
Anguished Declaration of Love

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**High School AU Relationships:**

Siblings  
Parent and Child  
Friends through thick and thin  
Frenemies  
Secret Friends  
More than Friends  
Rivals  
Bully and Victim  
Authority figure and ne'er do well  
Undercover cop and the one who knows  
Creepy outcasts

**High School Tropes:**

School Dance  
Passing Notes  
Fish Out of Water  
Water Fight  
Fake Dating  
Interrupted  
Snowed In  
Rivals to Lovers  
Breaking the Fourth Wall  
Anguished Declaration of Love  
Geeky Turn-On

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**Old West AU Relationships:**

Sheriff/deputy  
Ranch Hands  
Miners  
Supervisor/Employee  
Grew up together back east  
Mail-order bride and groom  
Crime boss and toady



## Outlaws

### **Old West Tropes:**

Accidental Baby acquisition  
Bound Together  
Presumed Dead  
24 hours to live  
Amnesia  
Drunken Confession of Love  
Love Potion  
Matchmaker  
Domesticity  
Snowed In  
Rivals to Lovers  
Breaking the Fourth Wall  
Anguished Declaration of Love

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### **Future/Space AU Relationships:**

Patient mentor and arrogant protege  
Space pirates  
Hotshot rivals  
Android/Creator  
Former enemies  
Grizzled space veteran and wide-eyed greenhorn  
Fast-talking con artist and stoic problem-solver  
Friends through thick and thin  
Captain/Crewmember

### **Future/Space Tropes:**

Giant Robot  
Road/Space Trip  
Presumed Dead  
24 hours to live  
Amnesia  
Drunken Confession of Love  
Love Potion  
Matchmaker  
Domesticity  
Snowed In (Meteor Shower??)  
Rivals to Lovers  
Breaking the Fourth Wall  
Anguished Declaration of Love  
Geeky Turn-On



A decorative border at the top of the page featuring a dark blue background with stylized green and white floral and leaf patterns.

# YOUR 2014 GOLDEN COBRA JUDGES

A decorative border at the bottom of the page, identical to the one at the top, featuring a dark blue background with stylized green and white floral and leaf patterns.

WHITNEY BELTRÁN

EMILY CARE BOSS

JASON MORNINGSTAR

EVAN TORNER

If you would like to help out with the 2015 Golden Cobra Challenge, please get in touch!

[www.goldencobra.org](http://www.goldencobra.org)