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A compendium of role playing games by Emily Care Boss
Tabletop & live action games for 1 to 10 mature players.



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ROMANCE TRILOGY EMILY CARE BOSS



EMILY CARE BOSS Romance TRILOGY

Breaking the Ice
Shooting the Moon · *Under my Skin*
Three Quick Games about the Human Heart



Cover 2016 by Jenn Manley Lee

Romance TRILOGY

Breaking the Ice
Shooting the Moon
Under my Skin

*Three quick games
about the human heart.*

By Emily Care Boss

Black and Green Games
A division of Shield and Crescent Press
Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA

The games in this book were previously published in print and electronic format by Black and Green Games. First editions of the games were published in the following years: *Breaking the Ice* (2005), *Shooting the Moon* (2006) and *Under my Skin* (2008). The games are revised for the current edition and new original material is included.

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Romance Trilogy: *Breaking the Ice*, *Shooting the Moon*, *Under my Skin*.

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*For Andrew and Krista
with best wishes and gratitude
on the journey of love*

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Five percent of net annual proceeds from the Romance Trilogy will be donated to each of the following charitable organizations. Please consider supporting their work.

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FOREWORD

by D. Vincent Baker

Emily and I are driving out to Worcester, I believe, to a game playing birthday party our friend Tom's throwing. It's 2004 and she, my wife Meg and I have been playing rpgs and talking about rpgs and rpg theory together for a solid decade. I've just finished writing my game *Dogs in the Vineyard* and I'm getting ready to publish it. This is the dawning of PayPal and PDFs, and we've found a contentious gang of misfits to argue and work with at the Forge. It's an exciting time.

Emily is working on a game I don't know much about, and she's asked me to give it a shot with her. It's a romantic comedy game.

"The game is two characters, and we play through their first three dates," Emily says. "You're a man and I'm a woman, so we switch, your character's a woman, mine's a man."

"Gotcha," I say.

"Over the course of our dates, we accumulate some dice, and at the end we roll them to find out whether we get together or what. We can give that a try if we want, but let's start by creating our characters."

"Sure thing."

"So first we brainstorm some words..."

You'll forgive me, I hope, that I don't have any memory of the words we brainstorm. I do happen to have a record of the character sketches that come out of our brainstorming: My character is a 32 year old woman who works for the county housing office. She has car trouble and she broke her leg skiing, it's still in a cast. Emily's character is a 31 year old man who works building houses. He volunteers time to Habitat for Humanity and has several birds as pets.



Emily's driving. I'm scowling at our characters. She broke her leg, he keeps birds. So they date, so what?

"Oh we aren't done, there's one more step," Emily says. "The last step is, their upcoming first date, what makes it problematic?"

And bam! It comes straight into my head. I know exactly what makes their first date a problem for my character. But I don't say anything. I keep scowling, for a long, long time in fact. Emily glances over at me more and more.

"Can't think of anything?" Emily says.

"Oh no, it's not that," I say. "This is a moment of truth, you realize? I have the perfect thing, but I don't know if I'd want to roleplay it. It's kind of intense."

"Well, that's good though, isn't it?"

"I guess," I say. "It's: I'm a virgin, I've never had sex." (Isn't it funny that I felt the need to define "virgin"?)

Emily's eyebrows are up, in a "yeah, that'd make dating problematic" way. Also in a "yeah, that kicks your character into motion" way. And definitely also in a "yeah, that'll make the roleplaying more personal and intense" way.

I have this picture in my mind of my character, this woman, stressing and in almost a crisis over shaving her legs before the date, which I don't even tell. "Your turn," I say.

"My last relationship was really bad," Em says. "Not restraining order bad, but..."

"Why not restraining order bad?"

"Well," she says. "Men very rarely get restraining orders against women, you know."

"Sure. But I meant the other way around."

"...Oh crap," she says. And I'm like, ha! Put that in your what makes dating problematic pipe and smoke it.

I'm not really like that. But kinda I am.

"Oh crap," she says.

So picture us, me and Emily, driving out on 2 East toward Worcester, thinking about these characters. Two human beings caught up in their own personal struggles with love and loneliness and insecurity, hoping somehow to connect. We're rooting for them. She's a virgin with a broken leg, he's got power tools and a restraining order against him. They date!

So," Emily says, after a while. "Want to give the game a try?"

Heck yes.



ABOUT THE GAMES

Many great stories of human history have love at their heart: *War and Peace*, *Pride and Prejudice*, the *Ramayana*, *Layla and Majnun*, *The Tale of Genji*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Beloved*, *Casablanca*. Role playing games let you experience a story from the inside: A stolen first kiss in a sheltered forest glade; the tempestuous high-flying affairs of a dragonrider brigade; the realization over a cold, dismal sink full of dishes that a marriage is over. The elation and fragility of passion enrich the amazing breadth of story that role playing games let you weave together with your friends.

The Romance Trilogy brings love and human emotions to the forefront. Welcome to this romantic passage you'll add to the stories of the world.



This book contains the three core texts of *Breaking the Ice*, *Shooting the Moon* and *Under My Skin*, written from 2005 through 2008 and revised in 2016. They are united by the theme of romance each tells a different kind of love story with rules that express its unique dynamic.

Breaking the Ice and *Shooting the Moon* are tabletop role playing games, using dice and storytelling. *Under My Skin* is a freeform live action role playing game (larp) where you act out what the characters say and do. *Under my Skin* uses meta-techniques reminiscent of plays and film, such as inner monologues, to give a window into the characters' thoughts. All three games are rules light, with few numbers.

Each game is accompanied by hacks and modified versions (mods) that expand the games for different numbers of players, give rule variations and create new worlds and settings for you to explore.

Below is a summary of each game to help you choose what you wish to play.



BREAKING THE ICE

Players: 2 (up to 10 with modifications, with hack for 1)

Facilitator: None

Format: Tabletop (uses dice)

Time: 2 to 4 hours

Plot: A game about a couple going on their first three dates. Will they fall in love?

Themes: *Breaking the Ice* deals with a new relationship which may or may not work out. An intimate game for two, set in the modern day, it showcases emotional vulnerability. You each take on a role that the other person has insight into, and help each other see what that's like. The rules guide you in making things go well, and things go wrong. This can lead to funny events—screwball comedy is a common tone for the game. And sometimes the story can touch a deep nerve.

Play Style: *Breaking the Ice* is a collaborative tabletop role playing game. Take turns playing two custom-built characters, award and roll dice that help you move toward the goal of having them fall in love. The characters develop further as you go along.



SHOOTING THE MOON

Players: 2 (or up to 6 with modifications)

Facilitator: None

Format: Tabletop (uses dice)

Time: 3 to 4 hours

Plot: A love triangle in which two Suitors vie for the attentions of a shared – and exceptional—Beloved. What sacrifices will be made for love?

Themes: *Shooting the Moon* deals with a competitive situation: two Suitors courting the same Beloved. Adaptable to any setting and flexible in tone, the game's format sets the scene for heartbreak and tragedy since at least one person will not reach their goal. The story also follows the Beloved's pursuit of their own aspirations.

Play Style: *Shooting the Moon* is a competitive and collaborative tabletop role playing game. Two players compete for their characters to gain the affections of the third, while cooperating with that character's player. Players roll dice to gain points toward winning a goal, and create new details about their own and each other's characters as they go along.



UNDER MY SKIN

Players: 4 to 8

Facilitator: One director, or none, if playing with an experienced player base

Format: Live action (diceless)

Time: 4 to 6 hours

Plot: A circle of friends find romance arising outside of existing relationships. What does the heart need?

Themes: *Under My Skin* deals with love, fidelity and betrayal in a group of friends. Set in the modern day, this game puts personal and emotional issues at the forefront. Strong themes and live action play—where you get up from the table and behave as your characters would—fosters intense emotional experiences with fellow players. Intended for adults, this is an emotionally rich game that often creates a lasting bond among players. Setting aside time to talk and debrief after play is highly recommended.

Play Style: *Under My Skin* is a freeform live action role playing game (or freeform larp). Players act out scenes between characters they create together, while a facilitator directs them, calling “cut” when scenes end, calling for monologues, and using other tools specified in the game text.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book contains the complete rules for the three Romance Trilogy games, an introduction to basic concepts for the games, hacks and mods that give you different ways to play each, and some essays and explanatory sections that provide insight into the games and their history. Read the introductory sections for background, or jump right to the rules texts to start playing. Find the rules modifications and discussion with each game.

Each game text includes several parts:

- Overview
- Setup
- Walkthrough
- Mechanics
- Strategy & Tips

The “Strategy & Tips” sections describe ways to intensify play, highlight nuances of the roles, and explore non-obvious ways in which the rules interact. Some of these observations represent fundamental thoughts that went into the making of each game. Others have emerged after playing and running these games over a decade. None need to be read prior to running or playing for the first time. They are food for thought to offer deeper insight into the games.

GROUND RULES

Rules for communication and setting ground rules are included in the book. These include rules common to all the games, rules to help navigate awkward aspects of talking about love and sex, and guidelines for what to do if emotions run high. These are mostly common-sense ideas that you can use as needed. Games refer to this section for ground rules which apply.



HACKS AND MODS

You'll find mods after the core rules for each game. These are add-ons to each of the core games of the trilogy. A mod might expand the number of players, or introduce a menu of new rules you can use to adapt the game according to your taste. "Double Dating" increases the play group for *Breaking the Ice*, while "Story Games Seattle Custom Blend" provides a suite of new rules for *Shooting the Moon*. "Directing Variations" for *Under My Skin* includes rules to help the players collaborate to run the game.

A hack creates a new setting and introduces rules related to the change. For example, "Let's Be Friends" makes *Breaking the Ice* about two children looking for boon companions. "Versus Nature" takes *Shooting the Moon* and makes it a contest for survival against trials of the natural world and each other, and adds new roles such as the specter of Death itself.

To play a hack or mod, alter the main game rules as directed. See the Game Materials section for quick reference sheets to the core games.

COMPANION GAMES

These are new games inspired by the original trio. Their rules are based on the core games, but are altered and arranged in ways that make them an altogether new experience. For example, "Sun and Moon" is a tabletop game for two players in which you generate a creation myth. It uses *Breaking the Ice*'s two-player dynamic and progressive character development but has little else in common. "Love is a Battlefield" is a hack of *Shooting the Moon* which sets the love triangle in wartime, using a chessboard and pieces. "Ere Camlann" is an Arthurian adaptation of *Under My Skin* with both live and tabletop play.

GAME MATERIALS

Reference sheets and support materials found here at the back of the book. Find other downloads at blackgreengames.com.

Thank you and enjoy!



GROUND RULES

What are ground rules?

- Rules that create common understanding among players used in many games.
- Rules that help players attend to their emotional comfort while playing.

Find three types of rules here: *Universal rules* apply to all games in this volume. *Local rules* are appropriate for several of the games, which refer to this section in their rules. *Communication guidelines* give tools to negotiate in the presence of mature themes and emotional play.

Universal Rules

DICE

If used, all dice are common, six-sided dice.

CHARACTER

A fictional person portrayed by one or more players. Unless indicated otherwise in the rules of a game, do not describe the actions, thoughts or feelings of another players' character. See *blackgreengames.com* for character sheets.

SCENE

A sequence of related events as found in plays or film. Narrated in tabletop, played out in live games. Basic unit of play.

ACCESSIBILITY

Before play begins, check in with the group to provide for any mobility or other accessibility issues. Ascertain how they can best be accommodated through arrangement of play area, access to food or facilities, and adaptation of rules. If running publicly, include any mobility considerations in description.



TRANSPARENCY

There are no secrets from the players in these games. Characters are created with the whole group. Sharing their motivations, weaknesses and strengths gives you needed insight to build on each other's work. As in novels, the players experience dramatic irony, knowing more than the characters do and enjoy the anticipation and reveals this brings with it

THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN

For physical or emotional comfort, a player may exit the game at any time. Self-care is the priority. If possible, let another player or facilitator know you plan to leave. The group can re-allocate the role, or bring the game to a conclusion.

Local Rules

PLAYING CLOSE TO HOME

Choosing to include issues, emotions, or descriptions that remind you of your own life. Can make the emotional experience stronger. You're not ever playing yourself, but are invited to inform your play with parts of your life knowledge.

PHYS BREAK

A physical activity performed during a break in play to energize players. Dancing to music, stretching, running in place or playing tag if space accommodates. Choose activity suited to players physical abilities and appropriate for space. Useful to raise spirits, create spirit of playfulness or bring players into synch. Provide other options for players who do not opt into the activity, such as listening to music while seated, or one of exercises suggested for quiet phys break.

May opt for quiet phys break. For example, meditative thought in silence or with calm music, or gentle movement such as walking or breathing exercises.

TOUCH

For live action games. Before playing, establish how comfortable members of the group are with physical touch. Describe what type of touch is likely to occur in the game. Clarify where each player is comfortable being touched (i.e. hands, arms,



back and head, but not torso or legs). Provide for issues of mobility or perception. If players opt out of participating in touch, provide alternatives such as miming or describing actions.

Cultural and group social customs vary greatly from place to place. Be sensitive to the needs of the individual group and the physical setting of the game. The context of play will greatly determine what may be comfortable: a group of friends playing at home is likely to have different boundaries about expression of affection in play than a group playing at a convention.

RATINGS

Sex and affection are natural parts of a love story. They fit well within the context of the game, but different players will feel more or less comfortable with describing and talking about these elements. Creating guidelines about how sex is represented by descriptions in your game helps everyone be on the same page.

Discuss your game as if it were a movie. As in films, sex may be on-screen or off-screen, or simply not a part of the tale. The rating determines the explicitness of the sexual content described during play. Remember, you can always change the rating during the game, as long as everyone agrees.

- “Chaste” No sex occurs, though kissing, holding hands and verbal affection are always welcome.
- “Fade to Black” When the characters have sex, it happens off-screen.
- “Mature” Sex happens as part of play, but is not described in graphic detail.
- “Explicit” Graphic sex is A-okay. This requires trust and understanding between the players.

Communication Guidelines

CUT AND BRAKE

Cutting a Scene

Calling “Cut!” means to end the scene, or to take a pause from it for a time. Calling cut is a normal way to end a scene. However, if a player is having hard feelings about the events of play, they may also call cut sooner. Stop play if a safety issue is



involved. Group may jump the story forward to skip the difficult events, or take time to talk about how to proceed. Demonstrate and encourage use by all.

Braking (ie “going slow”)

If the action hits on issues that are extremely emotionally charged, or if someone has a strong reaction to what is going on, you can ask people to “put on the brakes.” Putting on the brakes means that the action should go slower with their descriptions or play, or the intensity should be lessened somehow. In a live-action game like *Under My Skin*, describing action instead of acting it out works well. Demonstrate use. Encourage and model common use to create ease with and acceptance of use.

BOUNDARIES AND VEILS FOR SEX

Boundaries* are agreements among players about whether sex will occur in the story during play.

A veil† refers to how sex may be represented if it does happen in game. A deep veil is drawn over action if it is described minimally or in very little detail. A light veil or none allows for description.

Players can use the ratings (see page xxiii) to set their desired boundaries and veils.

Other Boundaries

A boundary may also be noted for an issue that evokes strong negative feelings for a player. For instance, discrimination because of racism may be set as a boundary. This can be discussed during play or before you start the game. The group is asked to not focus on the issue, except if chosen by the person who noted the boundary.

Stopping Play

If boundaries are set at the start and then are crossed by other players, stop play. Re-negotiate whether it will be continue as a boundary or be discarded and the topic is allowed in play. If agreement cannot be reached, stop playing the game and do something else.

* Boundaries comes from a discussion on the now-retired forum Cultures of Play (culturesofplay.com).

† Veils from *Sex and Sorcery* by Ron Edwards. (Adept Press, 2003) <<http://www.adept-press.com>>



PART ONE

BREAKING THE ICE

Players: 2

Facilitator: None

Time: 2 to 4 hours

Supplies: Shared character sheet

Pens or pencils

Scrap paper

12 six-sided dice, with nine of one color
and three of a different color from the
others. Minimum number needed is 3.
More dice expedite play.

INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

In *Breaking the Ice*, two players create a fun and exciting love story. Together they take on the roles of a pair of characters going on their first three dates and explore what it's like to fumble through those first impressions and feel the spark of mutual attraction arise. Seeking to increase their attraction to one another and create long-term compatibility, the characters will have to overcome mishaps, misunderstandings, and their own personal conflicts.

The mishaps and misunderstandings encountered are trials to be overcome. But they are also openings that may allow deeper intimacy to develop and, ultimately, cause true love to bloom.

During the setup phase, players choose a setting and discuss their feelings about potentially sensitive content. Then, they use their similarities and differences as people to collaboratively create a pair of characters. Each character has a Conflict, an internal or external obstacle that complicates their quest for love. As the game continues, players will develop the characters' Traits—hobbies, career, passions, faults and so on—and use these to inspire events that happen during the three Dates.

*Finding love is not
always easy:*

*An intimate picnic in
the park turns into a
madcap dash from a
thunderstorm...*

*On the way to a
restaurant, the car breaks
down on a lonely road...*

*A hoped-for sultry
seduction gets
interrupted by a surprise
birthday party...*





In Breaking the Ice, two players take on the roles of a pair of characters going on their first three dates and explore what it's like to fumble through those first impressions.



PLAY STRUCTURE IN DEPTH

The game consists of three Dates, each made up of 4 to 6 turns.

During a turn, one player is the Active Player and the other player is their Guide. Players swap roles whenever a new turn begins.

Here's what happens during a turn:

The Active Player describes and plays out a scene in which their character attempts to win the other character's heart. They do so in stages, having things go well at first, then get messier and more complicated. The Active Player chooses from a menu of options of what to describe and play out through the stages. The Guide gives suggestions, plays any other needed characters and awards dice to the Active Player for each option they choose. The dice make up dice pools for each stage. You can read more about how awarding dice works in the game walkthrough on page 19.

The dice are rolled at each stage and you check to see if you have enough successes to bring the characters closer together.

The rolls determine whether the chemistry—or Attraction—between the characters grows, and if they find some common ground—a Compatibility—that may form the basis for a lasting relationship. Attraction may decrease between Dates, but compatibilities are permanent.

If the main characters have enough Compatibilities at the end of the game, it is likely that their relationship will continue.

After three Dates, the game concludes and the fate of the relationship is resolved. The players answer three questions and decide together whether this romance was a flash in the pan, or the beginning of something beautiful.



SETUP



The setup phase of this game will take about 30 minutes. It consists of:

- Rating: decide how sex will be represented (or not) in the game
- Genre: decide on game's setting and mood.
- Setting: play contemporary characters, or choose a different period
- Character creation

PAVING THE WAY FOR ROMANCE: RATINGS AND GENRE

Love stories come in many forms: from a light and breezy walk in the park holding hands, to a passionate and stormy illicit affair. Discussing your shared vision for the game before play begins will help maintain narrative unity.

Ratings

With Genre and Ratings use film as a metaphor to create shared understandings about the tone and adult content of the game. Choose a “rating” to decide whether sex will take place in the story. See page xxiii for sample ratings to use.

Genre

Think of your game as though it will be made into a film and choose the Genre of the story that you want to create.

Are you looking forward to a romantic comedy, like *When Harry Met Sally* or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? Or a romance with an edge, like *Intolerable Cruelty*? Perhaps a dramatic romance, like *The Notebook* or *Cold Mountain*?



Different kinds of characters and plots fit into each type of story. Do you want to have your characters grapple with serious difficulties, or will it be more fun to make a light-hearted comedy? Choosing a genre together can help you shape the types of characters you create.

The easiest genre to play is Romantic Comedy, and the default setting is your contemporary surroundings. You can use your own knowledge of film, or the Genre Examples (page 18) to find a mutually agreeable tone for the game. For support playing in other settings, or with more weighty issues, see the section “Deepening Your Play”, p. 57.



GENRE EXAMPLES

Romantic Comedy

- *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*: A 30-something Greek woman finds love in the arms of a very whitebread man. Culturally conflicted hijinks ensue as the wedding nears.
- *Love and Basketball*: Monica and Quincy share a passion for basketball that grows into love for one another. But will success on the court throw off their game in love?
- *Jaane Tu . . . Ya Jaane Na*: Jai and Aditi are opposites-attract best friends in college. They are the only ones who can't see that they are perfect for one another, so of course they try to help one another find that love-of-their-life.
- *Better Than Chocolate*: A woman tries to stay in the closet about her new live-in lover when her mother and brother move in.
- *Salaam Namaste*: A chef and a disc jockey hit it off, then have to decide whether their love can survive getting pregnant together.

Screwball Comedy/Quirky Romance

- *Bringing Up Baby*: The quintessential screwball comedy. Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant's characters fall in love amidst the chaos induced by babysitting a six-foot leopard named Baby.
- *There's Something about Mary*: Ben Stiller will lie, cheat and steal for a second chance with former prom date and dream-girl, Cameron Diaz in the title role.
- *Nick and Nora's Infinite Playlist*: Nick's heart has just been broken, but when Nora asks him to be her boyfriend for five minutes, he is in for the adventure of a lifetime.
- *50 First Dates*: Two people fall in love, despite her long-term-memory loss condition. Somehow they make it work.
- *Moonstruck*: Loretta falls for the dramatic, revenge-hungry brother of her nebbish fiancé. Opera and passion bring them together.



Dark Humor

- *Harold and Maude*: Ruth Gordon and Bud Cort teach each other about love, life, and death in this quintessential May-December romance.
- *But I'm a Cheerleader*: A perky teenager's family fears she is a lesbian, so she is sent to a "sexual redirection" camp where she finds her true identity and love.
- *Grosse Pointe Blank*: At a high-school reunion, a hitman attempts to re-ignite the flame with his high school sweetie.
- *Silver Linings Playbook*: Released early from a mental health institution, Pat tries to win back his wife in spite of his bipolar condition and an incident of jealous violence. Helped by Tiffany to take charge of his life through dance, somewhere along the line he realizes life may take a different turn.

Dramatic Romance

- *Fire (1996)*: Two women in arranged marriages into the same family struggling with poor treatment find love with one another.
- *Romeos*: Lukas, a transitioning transgender man moves to Cologne for his year of Zivildienst (non-military community service). He falls for Fabio, a confident, promiscuous gay man who he fears won't understand.
- *Jason's Lyric*: Jason, a TV repairman struggling to overcome the legacy of crime and abuse in his family, falls for Lyric. But his family history threatens their love and her life.
- *Brokeback Mountain*: Wyoming cowboys unexpectedly find lasting, secret love with one another until hate intervenes.

Action

- *A Moment of Romance*: A heist-turned-hostage situation in Hong Kong turns into a love story that throws everyone's life into chaos.
- *Romancing the Stone*: A romance writer finds a real-life adventure in Colombia where a smuggler helps her rescue her sister and secure a priceless emerald.
- *The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938)*: Robin Hood and Maid Marian brave the wrath of the Sheriff of Nottingham to find love and return good King Richard to the throne.
- *The Mask of Zorro (1998)*: The successor to El Zorro steps into his shoes and fights for elder Zorro's daughter's heart.

continued . . .



Period

- *Pride and Prejudice*: Jane Austen's timeless story of the fiery Elizabeth Bennett and unbending Fitzwilliam Darcy, who both learn to overcome first impressions.
- *Twilight Samurai*: Seibei, a down-on-his-luck widower samurai at the end of the Edo period, accepts a duel to free his childhood friend Tomoe from her abusive husband.
- *Romeo and Juliet*: Young lovers are kept apart by a feud between their families. This classic tale by William Shakespeare has been put on the screen many times.
- *Tipping the Velvet*: A waitress falls for a woman entertainer who impersonates men, which puts her on the rocky road to love in Victorian England.

Political

- *Strawberry and Chocolate*: An erudite gay man in Havana befriends and falls in love with a zealous young communist. The two find common ground and understanding across ideological lines.
- *Reds*: Diane Keaton and Warren Beatty portray an American couple who find love and idealism in the Russian Revolution.
- *Under the Hawthorne Tree*: During the end of China's Cultural Revolution, Zhou Donghyu and Shawn Dou play lovers torn apart by political strife and family duty.
- *Casablanca*: From Hollywood's golden era, young lovers find a chance at love in the cause of freedom during World War II.

Double Dating and More:

- *About Last Night* (1986 and 2014): The trials and tribulations of two newly dating couples, from both the men's and the women's point of view.
- *Eat Drink Man Woman*: Three sisters, the daughters of a master chef in Taipei, navigate balancing their hopes and fears against family traditions, while seeking love.
- *Caramel*: Five women in Lebanon connected by a beauty salon help each other overcome obstacles to finding love.
- *Love Actually*: Tender and sometimes bittersweet intertwining tales of nine stories of love from the UK—from a lonely writer finding love, to a devoted sister losing her chance at it, to the Prime Minister telling off the President of the US in the name of love.



Veils, Boundaries

Veils describe the level of detail given to love and intimacy in the game. Stating boundaries around certain topics sets them out of play. See p. xxiv in Ground Rules.

Example of Choosing Genre and Rating:

Meimei and **Jed** are playing *Breaking the Ice*. They are at a mutual friend's house for game night, and are just getting to know one another.

Jed: What do you have in mind for a rating?

Meimei: I'm thinking "Fade to Black".

Jed: Cool. So sex may happen but we won't get into it.

Meimei: Yeah, what they do in their own privacy is fine but we don't have to go there. What are your thoughts on Genre?

Jed: I'm thinking Romantic Comedy. If we want to play down sex, it could be set in high school. We could do an Anime high school kind of thing?

Meimei: Romantic Comedy is good, but I'm not sure about Anime high school—those sailor suit school girl uniforms . . . not my thing!

Jed: Okay, what would you suggest instead?

Meimei: How about screwball comedy?

Jed: Something like *His Girl Friday* or *There's Something about Mary*? Sounds great.

Meimei: Awesome. It's settled.

AGREE ON A SETTING

As you begin to create a pair of characters, come to some agreement about where and when they are. The default setting for this game is the present day in the country where you live or are both most familiar with, but you could choose any location appropriate to the characters that you have created. Some ideas for brainstorming about alternative settings are included in the mod "Long Ago, Far Away" (Page 61).



CHARACTER CREATION

You'll need your shared character sheet for this part. Work together to create your characters through the following steps:

Steps of character creation

- Agree on a Setting (Page 11)
- Making a Switch (Page 12)
- Favorite Color and Word Web (Page 13)
- Creating Traits (Page 14)
- Choosing a Conflict (Page 16)
- Creating Compatibilities (Page 18)

Find your Character Sheet

Breaking the Ice uses a single character sheet for both characters. Find these and other downloads at the Black & Green Games website: blackgreengames.com

The Switch

Begin by considering how you are different from your co-player. Chat with one another to find out your commonalities and differences.

Examples of differences between players:

- Gender or sex (androgynous, male, female, intersex, cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, gender-fluid, etc.)
- Town, region, or country of origin
- Sexual orientation (queer, bi, gay, straight, pansexual, fluid, etc.)
- Ethnicity (Chinese American, Wampanoag, Latina, Irish American, etc.)
- Politics (conservative, progressive, etc.)
- Social group (geek, jock, yuppie, etc.)
- Job
- Age

Pick one category of difference. Your characters will also be different in this way. Switch this difference with your partner: assign the attribute they have in the real world to your character, and they take yours. If Jed is politically



conservative and Mimi is liberal, and they decide to use this category for their switch, then Jed's character will be liberal and Mimi's character will be conservative. If the players have different genders, you may use gender as a default difference, or choose gender plus another difference.

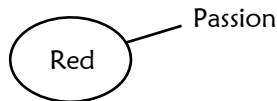
Write the switched traits down on the character sheet. Pick something that is fun for you, interesting to explore, and that you are comfortable playing in the game.

Unless the trait switched is gender, there is no restriction on what gender, or sexual orientation that a character may have, except that it should include attraction to the other character. Do what you want, stretch yourself, have fun.

Favorite Color and Word Web

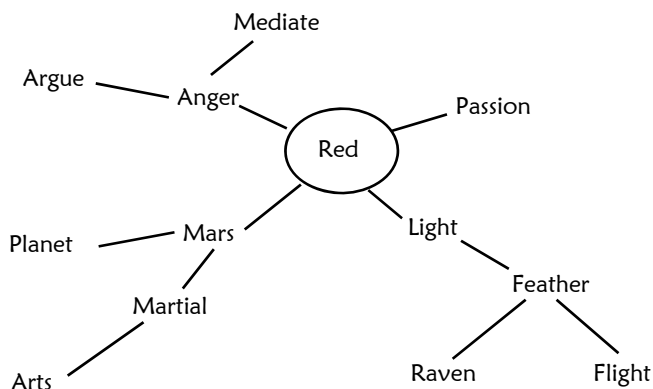
Choose your character's favorite color, and write it on the character sheet on the appropriate line. Each player should also write it in the middle of a blank sheet of paper.

Choose which player will go first. On your turn, draw a circle around your own character's color and choose a different word inspired by the color. For example, if the color was Red, the player might say "Passion." Write the new word on the page and draw a line from it to the color, as in the example below:



The other player then thinks of a different word, inspired either by the color itself or the word that the first player wrote on the page. Write the new word on the page joined to another by a line as was done with the first. The first player then thinks of a word inspired by any of the words written on the page, and so on, until each player has written 6 words (not counting the color), for a total of 12. This will result in a Word Web similar to the one pictured below.





These words are used to inspire your characters' Traits.

Brainstorming for Traits

Look at the Word Web around your character's favorite color and imagine what it might tell you about your character.

What personality traits do these words suggest? What jobs might they represent? What interests would follow from them? Are there other words they bring to mind? Make notes on the page and share your ideas with your co-player. If you find connections between the two characters, include them in your brainstorming.

From these words and ideas, create Traits as follows.

ABOUT TRAITS

Traits are words or short statements about the character. Many games in this volume use Traits. In *Breaking the Ice* they are divided into the categories "Self," "Work," and "Play" on the shared character sheet.

Self includes temperament, personality, home, pets, family, friends.

Work includes career, vocation or calling.

Play includes hobbies and interests.



New Traits can be created at any time. Throughout the game, the players describe actions and characteristics of the characters that bring these Traits into play.

EXAMPLE TRAITS

Self	Work	Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast driver • Lives in parents' house • Short temper • Dog owner • Foodie • Shy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police officer • Pilot • Teacher • Owns a bar • Librarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays basketball • Plays jazz music • Obsessed with viral videos • Knits • Run garden shop • Classic film buff

Choose 4–6 Traits total with at least one in each category: Self, Work and Play. You will add many more Traits throughout the game.



Choose a name for your character at this point if you have not done so already.

Choosing a Conflict

After Traits have been chosen and you have some sense of your character as a person, take turns asking each other the following question:

What is problematic for your character about going on this Date?

Your answer is the character's Conflict.

This Conflict can be internal or external, about their own emotions, about something happening in their life, or even about the other character. Discuss it and allow yourselves to be open to finding Conflicts that are interesting to both of you. Write the Conflict on the character sheet in the appropriate blank.

Example Conflicts:

- Is babysitting a leopard
- Has never had sex
- Dated the other character's older brother
- Has a jealous ex
- Is an internet addict
- Has a broken leg
- Is nursing a broken heart

The Conflict you choose will become a theme throughout the game. Choose something that makes sense for your character, that is juicy or fun, and that you and your co-player find believable. Choose something you find funny, or that inspires you, or that makes your hair stand up on end in a good way. You will use the Conflict to trip up your character, creating those twists and turns on the road to love.



Example of Choosing Conflicts

Jed and **Meimei** are finishing up their character creation. They have written down Traits, chosen names for their character—June and Mitch—and are now talking about which Conflicts they will choose.

Meimei: Will your Conflict have to do with the daredevil aspects of June or her sadness?

Jed: Either would be good. What if something bad happened to her recently?

Meimei: How about a broken heart? Maybe she just got dumped and she's still pretty broken up about it.

Jed: Well that's a good issue, but I want a Conflict that will really make it a Screwball comedy. Ah, I've got it. She fell while climbing and has a broken leg. That's not funny in real life, but in a comedy a cast can be a great prop.

Meimei: Perfect. That's a great set up for slapstick humor.

Jed: Okay, so now what about Mitch?

Meimei: I kind of like the recent breakup idea. It's not really part of the Word Web we made for him though.

Jed: That would be fine, Argue is in there. Maybe he was recently divorced and went through a huge ordeal where he tried to fix it all by using his conflict resolution skills.

Meimei: Yeah. Actually, that might make a better Conflict. Between his mediation and his martial arts skills, he could chase around trying to intervene in other people's problems. Kind of playing the hero.

Jed: But he doesn't realize he's doing it.

Meimei: Bet that was involved in his divorce!

They write down Conflicts on their joint character sheet.

Jed writes "broken leg."

Meimei writes down "hero complex."



Compatibilities

During the game, the characters gain special Traits called Compatibilities. The characters share these Traits. Compatibilities are created when four successes are achieved during a Turn (explained on page 29). Write them on a line in the center column labeled “Compatibilities” which is found between the two characters’ information. They apply to both characters.

Example Compatibilities:

- Love to travel
- Cry at movies
- Hate ballroom dancing
- Are geeks
- Play basketball
- Have great sex
- Trust one another

During their turn, the Active Player may call upon their Compatibilities to gain extra dice. Each Compatibility gives a total of 2 dice and may be used only once per turn. They may not be Re-Rolled.



WALKTHROUGH



STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

After you have created your characters, you can begin to play.

The game is played out in three Dates. The players tell the story of what happens on each Date, describing scenes, playing out in-character what the characters do, giving one another suggestions on what to do next, and rolling dice to see if the characters grow closer.

Each Date is made up of four to six turns that alternate between the players. The player whose character is in focus is the Active Player, the other player is the Guide. The Guide awards dice to the Active Player for describing and playing out the events of the Date. The results could increase the Attraction levels between the characters or create new Compatibilities; the Active Player and Guide work together to turn these die rolls into descriptions of the couple's joys and misfortunes.

At the end of each Date, the Active Player makes a Reality Check, rolling for new Attraction they've collected to see if it endures. At the end of the third Date, the story of the new lovers is resolved.

ABOUT DATES

As the game begins, the characters have agreed to go on their first Date. A Date is just what it sounds like: the two characters spend time together and share one or more activities. For example, going out to dinner, then taking in a movie would constitute a single Date.



Dates need not be what is thought of as a stereotypical “date,” since contemporary relationships don’t always fit this pattern. They are simply three significant times that the two characters spend together in their relationship. The characters might do something related to a shared interest: go boating, gamble at a casino, or help build a house for Habitat for Humanity. Maybe work throws them together when they pull an all-nighter in the office or collaborate on a case they’ve been assigned. Do what feels natural.

A Date begins when the characters meet, and ends when they part again. The players determine what length of time makes sense, according to their characters and what has happened in the game. Maybe a Date lasts through an evening or an afternoon, or possibly longer. The trip to the movies after dinner could turn into an epic struggle to fix a flat tire, or be interrupted by a frantic call for help from a friend that occupies the characters long into the



night. If the couple finally made it to that movie after dinner, maybe it ends when they finish the movie, or perhaps after a nightcap and more?

Each Date consists of four to six Turns. If the Date is still running when you reach 6 Turns, find a way to wrap it up.

Beginning the First Date:

Before starting the first Date, briefly establish how the characters met and decided to go on a date. Who asked whom out? After you've decided, formally begin play with the first turn.

If one of the players is a veteran player of *Breaking the Ice* before, let them go first. Otherwise, decide among yourselves.

Jed: So how do you think these two met?

Meimei: I think she took a martial arts class he taught.

Jed: And then he asked her out? Or did she?

Meimei: Let's say she did. And you can take the first Turn since you played with before with Tom.

ABOUT PLAYER TURNS

Each Turn is a series of narrations and collaborative imaginings about what happens to the two characters on their Date. The players alternate Turns: the player who is currently taking a Turn is the Active Player and the other is the Guide. The Active Player's character is the Active Character. During each Turn, the Guide will award up to five different types of dice to the Active Player: Attraction Dice, Bonus Dice, Re-Roll Dice, Conflict Dice, and Compatibility Dice.



At stages during the turn, the Active Player rolls these dice to raise the Attraction Level and increase the number of Compatibilities between the two characters. New Traits can be added at by the Active Player at any time.

In between Dates, new Attraction Levels can disappear. Compatibilities remain constant.

The Active Player does the following on their Turn:

- a) Set the scene: Describe the location of the characters.
- b) Establish the time: Describe how much time has passed since the last Turn.
- c) Describe parts of the date going well. Active Player creates new Traits as desired. The Guide awards dice for these descriptions. (See Bonus Dice and Menu of Options for Bonus Dice page 31)
- d) Make an Attraction Roll: (See page 30)
- e) Describe parts of the date going poorly. Active Player creates new Traits as desired. The Guide awards dice for these descriptions. (See Re-Rolls and Menu of Options for Re-Rolls page 33)
- f) Re-Roll dice (See page 33)
- g) Roll Conflict and Compatibilities, if applicable (See pages 34 and 35)
- h) With enough successes (See page 36 increase one or more Attraction Levels, or add one or more Compatibilities (See page 36).

As the Active Player, your audience is the Guide. You are creating stories about the characters to entertain and enliven not only yourself, but your partner as well. You get to see what your fellow player thinks is funny, or cool, just right, or not so very. Know that the Guide wants you to succeed and to make up interesting things. Speak your ideas confidently; the other person is there to support you. But also, be open to alternatives they suggest.

Together, you'll have good and bad things happen to the characters on the way to bringing them closer together, or not.



The Guide does the following during the Active Player's Turn:

- Represents their own character.
- Gives the Active Player feedback about their narration.
- Awards five different kinds of dice: Bonus dice, Attraction dice, Re-roll dice, Conflict dice, and Compatibility dice to the Active Player (page 27)

The Guide may also:

- Ask for more detail about events or more information about the characters or setting.
- Ask for the Active Player to speak in character and role play out what has been described. If other supporting characters are needed, the players work together to decide who plays them.
- Make suggestions for narration that the Active Player may choose to adopt.

When you take your turn as the Guide, the dice you award give feedback to the other player. Give them verbal feedback too: "that was a great idea" or "that really fit with what we know about your character" or "that was so funny!" If you disagree with something narrated, give an alternative suggestion. Your role is not to block, but to coach and support. As the Active Player narrates, describe your own character's responses and make suggestions about possible events or consequences. Remember that you'll get the same kind of help and input when it is your turn to be the Active Player.

Make Every Turn Count

Think of each Turn as a memorable sequence of events that happened during the Date. Don't get bogged down in minute-by-minute detail; rather, play the highlight reel. The time that elapses between Turns can vary from moments to hours. If one Turn ends at a pivotal moment, the next might pick up right there. On the other hand, if a Turn ends at a natural transition point, such as leaving a restaurant or fixing a flat tire, the next Turn might pick up minutes or hours later, when a new part of the Date begins. Choose your Turn wisely: what you narrate are the amusing or pivotal moments of this encounter, things the characters might tell their grandchildren many years hence.



THE SECOND AND THIRD DATES

For the Second and Third Dates, continue with the same sequence. You may wish for the characters to gain deeper understanding of one another by choosing less superficial or more intense things to do: meeting the family, going sky-diving, spending a long afternoon talking about what makes them who they are. Having sex. Speaking of which . . .

SEX IN THE GAME

. . . should be handled just like any other activity, within the comfort level of the players, and according to the Rating or Boundaries and Veils discussed at the beginning of the play session.

If it makes sense as a Date progresses (and within the limits of the game's Rating), a player may suggest that the characters have sex. The Guide gets to respond for their character, and award dice based on whether they think it appropriate or timely. The encounter may be handled in a variety of ways, for example:

A Date with many successes could lead up to the pair spending the night together, off camera after the Date ends.

A turn's events could deal with the characters flirting and gaining intimacy with one another, then the characters having sex could be narrated as the outcome of an Attraction Roll.

Sex can also be handled as you would any other activity in a scene. Players may narrate what happens as part of the stages of an Attraction Roll or Compatibility. Described in as much or as little detail as makes both players comfortable.



Meimei: Okay, he brings you to the door and takes your hand.

Jed: She meets his gaze and smiles. What kind of body language are you giving her?

Meimei: Well, the evening's been going well. I think he reaches up and pushes a strand of hair off her forehead.

Jed: Very tender. You get a die for that. Quick roll so she can kiss you and invite you inside . . .



MECHANICS



The back and forth of each Turn hinges on an exchange between Active Player and Guide. As the Active Player narrates, the Guide awards dice. Add Traits, and mark new Attraction Levels on the shared character sheet.

Dice Rolls Order of Play

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 1) Roll Attraction Dice | } | Done together |
| 2) Roll Bonus Dice | | |
| 3) Roll Re-Rolls | | |
| 4) Roll your Conflict Dice | } | At any time |
| 5) Roll your Compatibility Dice | | |

5s and 6s are Successes!

- 3 Successes: Increase Attraction
4 Successes: Create Compatibility

AWARDING DICE

All dice are awarded by the Guide. Over the course of each turn, the Guide awards five kinds of dice to the Active Player: Attraction Dice, Bonus Dice, Re-Roll Dice, Conflict Dice, and Compatibility Dice. Each type of dice are associated with narration described by the Active Player with help from the Guide.

All Dice used are standard six-sided dice.

Dice are often associated with Traits—new Traits can be added at any time.



PLAYING SCENES AND GATHERING DICE

At the start of each turn the Guide gathers together all dice to be awarded. They hold them throughout the Active Player's Turn, distributing them as appropriate.

The Active Player describes most of what happens, and the Guide responds by awarding some of the dice for each part of the narration. Both may speak dialogue in character or describe what happens. The Guide also makes suggestions the Active Player may adopt. Find the dice types, the kind of narration they represent and how many dice are gained for each below:

TYPES OF DICE

Attraction Dice—a starting romantic gesture (number is equal to the attraction level at start of turn)

Bonus Dice—have things go well on the Date (1 die each)

Re-Rolls—if you don't gain enough successes, have things go wrong, another chance for romance (1 die each)

Compatibilities— shared interests you establish over time, both characters join in on these (2 dice each)

Conflicts—major issues that rock the boat, but can really make the difference (3 dice each)

Roll the dice at the end of several stages:

- Pool Attraction Dice and all Bonus Dice together, then roll.
- Pool Re-Rolls together, then roll. *Must be rolled after Attraction Dice and Bonus Dice are Rolled.*
- Roll for Conflict. Roll at any time. Once per Turn. *Cannot be Re-Rolled.*
- Roll for each Compatibility. Roll at any tie. Once each per Turn. *Cannot be Re-Rolled.*

This is where you get to know what makes the characters tick, see how they create harmony or havoc, and how they affect one another's lives. Each roll brings a plot twist that may carry your characters closer together.



Narrating using the Menu of Options: (pages 31 and 33)

Choose from among these options to guide what happens on the Date. The menus mirror each other—positive and negative. Customize your events to fit the unique situation of this Date and the characters in play.

OVERVIEW OF DICE AND ROLLING***Attraction Dice, Bonus Dice and Re-Rolls***

Start with the number of dice equal to the number of Attraction Level boxes marked off. You always have at least one. These are your Attraction Dice. Add them to your pool once you've described a romantic gesture the character makes.

Add up to 3 more dice to this pool by doing up to 3 of the things on the menu for play that are positive and make the date go well (see character sheet and menu of options on page 31). Those are your Bonus Dice.

Then you roll them. That is the Attraction Roll.

Count your successes and failures. Each '5' or '6' on a die is a success. Each 1–4 is a failure.

If you have enough successes to gain an Attraction Level, you may choose to stop. If you do so, check off a new Attraction Level. If not, you can choose to Re-roll one or more of the failures. For each failure that you wish to Re-Roll, narrate 1 thing that goes wrong or puts the Active Character in a bad light. See menu of options on character sheet and page 33.

Continue rolling to: try for enough successes for a Compatibility (four successes), to try for multiple Attraction Levels, or for a mix of these rewards (see page 29).

There is no minimum number of successes; you can choose to fail.

When you're done narrating, then you Re-Roll. Any that roll a 5 or 6 are now successes. Add these to the successes rolled in the Attraction Roll.

Total the new number of successes. If there are enough, add an Attraction Level or continue rolling.



Type of Dice	Type of Narration	Number of Dice
Attraction Dice	A romantic gesture	Equal to current Attraction Level, roll with Bonus Dice
Bonus Dice	Positive things (See menu of options on page 31)	3 maximum per Turn
Re-Rolls	Negative things (See menu of options on page 33)	Equal to Number of Failing Attraction Dice plus Bonus Dice (those that roll 1-4)
Conflict	Invoke character conflict (see page 34)	3 Dice (use once per Turn)
Compatibility	Invoke Compatibility, Active Player and Guide each contribute (see page 35)	2 Dice per Compatibility, Use each no more than once per Turn

Conflict and Compatibilities

At any time, once per turn: bring up your Conflict and narrate how it comes into play, representing things go wrong for your character. This gives 3 more dice to be rolled. They cannot be Re-Rolled.

At any time, bring up a Compatibility—each can be used at most once per Turn. The players work together to bring it into play, in a way that reinforces the bond between the characters. Each Compatibility gives 2 more dice to be rolled. They cannot be Re-Rolled.

- If you have 3+ successes—add another Attraction Level
- 4+ successes—create a new Compatibility.
- 6+ successes—add 2 Attraction Levels
- 7+ successes—add 1 Attraction and create 1 new Compatibility
- 8+ successes—create 2 Compatibilities

You can always opt to get the reward of a lower level.

Check off new Attraction Levels in pencil. They may be lost later! However, Compatibilities are permanent.



After a Date is over—roll a Reality Check.

- Roll 1 die for each Attraction Level that you acquired during this Date. For each roll of a 5 or 6 make one Attraction Level permanent. All other Attraction Levels are lost. (See p. 39)

THE GUIDE AND DICE

At the start of each turn the Guide gathers together all dice to be awarded and holds them throughout the other Player's Turn, distributing them as appropriate. See tips for being the Active Player and Guide on page 21-23 for tips.

STAGES OF A TURN IN DETAIL

1) *Attraction Dice*

WHAT THE DICE ARE FOR:

Attraction dice are awarded to the Active Player for describing a romantic gesture made by the Active Character, such as bringing roses to the date, cooking dinner, going to a favorite playground from childhood, etc.

HOW MANY ATTRACTION DICE DO YOU GET?

Your Attraction Dice are equal to the number of boxes labeled "Attraction" that are checked off or filled in. These are also called "Attraction Levels".

Both characters share the same Attraction Level. At the start of the game, start with one box filled in on the shared character sheet.

When a new Attraction Level is gained, make a check mark in that box. Use pencil. These newly-added Attraction Levels that may be lost between Dates. When an Attraction Level is made permanent by a successful Reality Check, fill in the box completely. (See Between Dates on page 39.)

WHEN DO YOU ROLL THE ATTRACTION DICE?

Roll the Attraction Dice in one large pool with the Bonus Dice.



Jed: June asked Mitch out to go see a movie.

Meimei: Okay, but will they go straight to the movie?

Jed: They'd probably go out for a drink first, and pick the movie together. Nothing too strenuous, since she has a broken leg.

Meimei: That sounds good. Here's one Die for our starting Attraction . . .

2) Bonus Dice

WHAT THE DICE ARE FOR:

Bonus dice are awarded to the Active Player for narrating and playing out **positive** things: i.e., things that put the character at an **advantage** in the scene. Choose an option from the Menu of Options below and customize it to fit the events of your date as you describe it.

MENU OF OPTIONS FOR BONUS DICE:

- Taking positive actions or using words that call on either character's Traits—remember new Traits can be added at any time.
 - Having the Active Character do something nice to, or for, the other character.
 - Describing a setting element (another character, a location, an object, etc) that contributes to the Active Character's efforts.
 - Narrating something going well that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative or well done.
 - Taking a suggestion for one of the above from the Guide.
-



HOW MANY BONUS DICE DO YOU GET?

The Active Player may receive up to three Bonus dice per turn from the Guide—one die per element described, narrated, or acted out. Go for as many Bonus Dice as you can. This will allow you to make more Re-Rolls later in the turn.

Meimei: So tell me about what goes right when they get a drink.

Jed: Well, to start off, it's a cool little hole in the wall. It's in a seedier corner of town, and the clientele is a mix of people from all walks of life,

Meimei: Bikers drinking with airline stewardesses.

Jed: Yup. Working class guys getting down with club kids.

Meimei: Here's a Bonus die for that cool description. And, you know this has got to be a gay club, right?

Jed: Of course. Completely.

Meimei: Excellent. Another Bonus die for taking my suggestion.

Jed: Let's call it the Oasis. I'll add the trait "Regular at the Oasis" to her list, and when they go up to the bar, she gets a round of "Hey June!"s from everybody, like on *Cheers*.

Meimei: That's three Bonus dice, plus one for our Attraction level. Roll 'em.

Jed: 2-1-4-6. One success! Let's keep going.

ROLLING ATTRACTION AND BONUS DICE:

All that roll a 5 or 6 are successes! See Resolving Rolls page 36.

All that roll 1–4 are failures. The Guide places these dice aside to be awarded as Re-Rolls.



3) Re-Rolls

WHAT THE DICE ARE FOR:

Re-Rolls are awarded to the Active Player for narrating and describing **negative** in-character things that put their character at a **disadvantage** in the scene. Choose from the options for this type of narration listed below:

MENU OF OPTIONS FOR RE-ROLLS:

- Taking actions or using words related to a Trait that puts your character at a disadvantage—remember new Traits can be added at any time.
 - Narrating how a setting element (other characters, props, locations) has tripped up your character or made them look bad.
 - Narrating something going wrong that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative or well done.
 - Taking a suggestion from the Guide for what goes awry.
-

HOW MANY RE-ROLLS DO YOU GET?

Each of the Attraction Dice and Bonus Dice which had a failing result (1–4) are eligible to be Re-Rolls.

Conflict Dice and Compatibility Dice are not Re-Rolled.

How many Re-Rolls do you get?

Attraction Dice

+ Bonus Dice

– Successes

= Re-Rolls



Example

Jed: Okay, I didn't roll enough successes to do anything, so I'll keep going. Bad things need to start happening now.

Meimei: You rolled four dice and got one success, That leaves three dice that you can Re-Roll.

Jed: Maybe an old flame gets mad that she brought Mitch in.

Meimei: So, about it being a gay bar . . .

Jed: Yeah! The old flame is a woman. I'll write "Queer" on the character sheet too. Good call.

Meimei: Thanks. So, how does that play out?

Jed: Why don't you play Trixie—

Meimei: Trixie?

Jed: Trixie. She's beautiful and stylish. Long nails, killer dress, the works.

Meimei: Okay. She walks up to June, pointedly ignoring Mitch and starts playing with her shirt collar. "June, I've missed you."

Jed: (gulp) June blushes and gently moves Trixie's hand away. She gestures to Mitch. "Um, Trixie meet my new friend Mitch."

Meimei: Mitch is looking surprised. You get all your Dice. One for bringing in the ex, one for taking my suggestion, and one for incorporating the new Trait: "Queer".

4) Conflict Dice

WHAT THE DICE ARE FOR:

The Guide may award Conflict Dice, once per turn. The Active Player may invoke their Conflict to gain them at any time during their Turn. To do so, the Active Player must narrate how that Conflict affects their character's actions or the events in play.

The Active Player describes to the Guide how the Conflict emerges: in something the character says or does; a character arriving on the scene like an ex-partner or rival; something going awry with that dang cast again. It raises the ante for the character and puts them on the spot.



The Guide awards dice when they are satisfied that the Conflict has well and truly entered the scene.

HOW MANY CONFLICT DICE DO YOU GET?

Bringing in a Conflict gives you three dice. Conflict dice may be rolled at any time: before Attraction and Bonus dice are rolled, before Re-Rolls, in between or after Compatibilities. Use three dice different from the rest in color or size to distinguish them from the others.

NOTE: *Conflict Dice may not be Re-Rolled.*

Jed: Well, I got one more Success, but that's still not enough. I think I'll bring in my Conflict, which is her broken leg. June is so flustered that she forgets she's on crutches. She steps wrong on her foot and slides forward into Trixie.

Meimei: Oh I see where this is going. Trixie catches her in her arms—

Jed: And another woman, tall, well-dressed, angry and obviously drunk, comes up and says "Hey, get your hands off my wife!"

Meimei: 3 Dice for you. . . .

5) Compatibility Dice

WHAT THE DICE ARE FOR:

Compatibility Dice are awarded for joint narration of character actions that involve the shared Compatibility. Both players work together to bring this trait into play.

These are shared resources for the players. Each is recorded as a Trait shared between the characters. When they are earned by rolling four successes during a Turn, write them on the shared character sheet below the boxes for Attraction Levels.



Using Compatibility Dice has two parts:

First, the Active Player invokes it by describing how their character brings up this Trait.

Second, the Guide responds by describing how their character in turn participates in this shared liking or interest.

HOW MANY COMPATIBILITY DICE DO YOU GET?

Two dice in total are awarded for each Compatibility: one die for what the Active Player describes, and one die for what the Guide describes. As with Conflicts, they can be used at any time during the Active Player's turn. Each Compatibility can only be used once per turn.

For example, if Meimei and Jed's characters share the Compatibility "kick-boxing," Meimei could invoke it by describing her character beginning to spar with Jed's for one die. Jed's player could then gain the second die by describing how his character sweeps a graceful inner-crescent kick over the other character's head.

NOTE: Compatibility dice may not be Re-Rolled.

6) Resolving Rolls

A result of 5 or 6 on any die counts as a success. If you get 3 or more successes within a single Turn, do the following:

With Three Successes:

You may increase the Attraction Level by one.

OR

With Four Successes:

You may create a new Compatibility

(or choose instead to raise the Attraction level).



To Add an Attraction Level,

1. Make a check mark in one of the Attraction boxes. (Do not fill them in at this time, more at page 39, "Between Dates"). Use pencil.
2. Describe how the events of the Scene resulted in the characters feeling more attracted to one another.

To Add a new Compatibility,

1. Choose some aspect of the preceding scene to become a permanent source of connection and mutual understanding between the characters.
2. Write down a word or phrase that describes this on one of the lines marked Compatibility

If neither occurs:

- Describe how the events of the scene left the characters feeling unmoved by one another, or become more distant.

Choose:

- With 4-5 successes you must choose whether to create an Attraction Level or a Compatibility
- With 6 successes you may gain two Attraction Levels
- With 7 successes you may gain one Attraction Level and a Compatibility
- With 8 successes you may create two Compatibilities, or gain two Attraction Levels.

Who Has Final Say about Attraction Roll Resolutions?

Both the Guide and the Active Player share in the discussion of the outcome. Come to a collaborative agreement on the characters' interpretation of the events narrated. Suggest ideas to one another and take one that feels like it fits to both of you.

But it is the Active Player who chooses Compatibilities, and who has the final say on what occurs.



Example of Resolving an Attraction Roll

Jed rolls the three Conflict Dice and gets two successes

Jed: That makes four successes, I can increase the Attraction Level between the two, or I can create a new Compatibility.

Meimei: What would the compatibility be?

Jed: Well seems like they've both got messy breakups in their past.

Meimei: Want to go with that?

Jed: On second thought, no. I think I'll raise the Attraction level this time. Seems a bit early for Compatibilities to arise.

Meimei: Fair enough. Done.

As they wrap up the turn...

Meimei: So you were successful, how do you think this makes Mitch more attracted to June?

Jed: Well, if he's looking to be a hero, he's got the perfect opportunity.

Meimei: Yes, he'd feel protective and thus drawn to her. Nice set up for me



TRANSITIONS

Ending the Turn

A Player's turn ends when:

- 1) enough successes have been rolled to either add an Attraction Level (three) or create a new Compatibility (four).

OR

- 2) all possible dice have been awarded and rolled, even if too few successes were rolled to increase any attributes,

OR

- 3) if the Active Player decides to end the Turn before the other two conditions have been fulfilled.

Between Dates: The Reality Check

Between Dates is when Attraction Levels may disappear. Those that remain become permanent. This represents how, with time and reflection, the chemistry sparked in the Date can lose its shine. You have a chance to prevent that loss.

- 1) At the end of the First and Second Dates, roll a Reality Check to see how many of the Attraction Levels created in that Date become permanent. For each *newly added* Attraction Level in a given Date, roll one die. Newly added levels are represented by a check mark in an Attraction Level box.
- 2) For each 5 or 6 that is rolled, fill in one of the checked-off boxes. These are permanent Attraction Levels that carry over to the next Date.
- 3) Erase all the other check marks that were made during the last Date.

Attraction may be fleeting; in contrast, Compatibilities are permanent once created. They do not get erased between Dates. However, a firm foundation of attraction allows a pair to build more compatibilities over time.

After the Third Date, make a special Reality Check described on page 41.



A CHANCE TO BRING BACK ATTRACTION: THE SETBACK

In order to sustain the level of Attraction between Dates, you may Re-Roll failing dice from the Reality Check.

Narrate a Setback, something bad that occurs to one or both of the characters between the Dates. It affects them personally, or gets in the way of the relationship developing. Write these events down as one or more Traits on the appropriate character's sheet.

SETBACK EXAMPLES

Job	Personal	Relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fired • Workplace sold • Stressful promotion • Conflict with co-worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car accident • Hobby-related incident • Family crisis • Financial crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument • Miscommunication • Inadvertent insult • Conflict with a relative of other character

For each Setback narrated, roll one die.

For each five or six that is rolled, fill in one of the boxes. These become permanent Attraction Levels that carry over to the next Date. For example, if Meimei and Jed wished to Re-Roll one of their lost Attraction Levels, Meimei might describe her character getting a tempting job offer somewhere far from where the two characters live. The complication happens whether or not the die rolls a success.

Reality Check dice cannot be Re-Rolled after the Third Date. Instead, see page 41 for the steps taken to end the third date and the game.

KEEPING ENERGY UP

In between Dates is a good time to take a break. Get food or drink. To raise energy and get in synch, consider doing a fun physical activity, or a few stretches before starting again. See Phys Breaks on page xxii.



ENDGAME



THE FINAL DATE

Before beginning the third Date, think back on the events of the first two. This is your last opportunity to wrap up any outstanding doubts or questions that have arisen about the forming relationship. As players, consider what the relationship may become and what still keeps them apart, and focus on these things in your narrations. In particular, look at the number of Compatibilities: the more you have, the better chance the relationship has over the long haul.

At the end of the third Date, you'll make a final Reality Check that is slightly different from the others. This establishes the Final Levels of Attraction and Compatibilities. Then Take Stock and answer three Questions. Both steps are described below.

FINAL LEVELS

After the third Date has been completed, make a final Reality Check for all the new Attraction Levels, but this time with some additional support:

- Roll one die for each Attraction Level (new and permanent) and one die for each Compatibility. These dice cannot be Re-Rolled.

Each 5 or 6 rolled makes one more new Attraction Level permanent. (Note: You cannot gain more Attraction than you had at the end of the third Date.) Now look at your final Attraction Levels and number of Compatibilities to help you narrate the outcome for the two characters. Follow the directions for Taking Stock, and then answer Three Questions about the relationship.



ENDING AFTER ONE OR TWO DATES

If the players end the game must end before the characters have gone on all three Dates—due to lack of time, or some other reason—leave the levels of Attraction and Compatibility where they are at the end of whichever Date you complete. Take Stock and Ask the Three Questions based on these levels.



TAKING STOCK

How many Attraction Levels do the characters have?

- 0–2 Not many sparks here.
- 3–4 A flame is present, burning steady but low.
- 5+ Chemistry sizzles! Hot-cha-cha

How many Compatibilities do the characters have?

- 0–2 There doesn't seem to be much in common between these characters.
- 3–4 Some common ground, but is it enough?
- 5–6 They have lots in common, a lot of material for their relationship.
- 7+ So much to do together! So little time!

Many hacks and mods have variants of this. If they have fewer than five Compatibilities, this relationship may or may not stand the test of time. If they have few permanent Attraction levels, what might be missing for them?

THREE ENDGAME QUESTIONS

After the end of the third Date, the players resolve the story of their characters. Reflect on what the Attraction and Compatibility levels meant when you Took Stock. Think back over the events of the game and each player answers the following questions: Many mods & hacks use questions for endgame as a simple debrief.

- Do you think they stay together after the third Date?
- When did your character fall in love with the other?
- What are the long-term chances for this relationship?

Take a moment to consider what happened in these three Dates. Did they fall in love? What was it like for them to deal with the issues that came up for them? How did the other character respond? You may wish to end the game by playing a short scene set sometime in the future. Perhaps the characters are laughing together about the events you just described, or looking back on them from a different place in their life, perhaps in different relationships. Give yourselves closure about what these dates meant in the characters' lives.

The tale is told. The story done. Does it end in tears or laughter? You get to decide.



STRATEGY & TIPS



Romance and Comedy

The ups and downs of *Breaking the Ice* are very compatible with the roller coaster tone of comedy. Things go well with the Attraction Dice and Bonus Rolls, then plunge downhill with the Re-Rolls. These poor characters get themselves into trouble, and need help getting out. But they have a very good chance of being able to grow closer in the end.

The tone is often set by the Conflict chosen. When creating characters, compare notes to be sure they fit together. Use Genre (page 6) to get on the same page.

Be Sensitive

This can be a light, even flirtatious, game. But it can evoke painful feelings for some. For players who are already involved it has been known to bring up some rocky emotions. If a real-life couple is in the middle of an argument or rough patch, trying to play an intimate scene of new love might draw too strong of a contrast to present day hard feelings.

For some players, the simple fact that it is about dating is more terrifying than playing a game of cannibalism and betrayal. Real world loss, recent break-ups, fresh emotional wounds hurt. Stories of love may bring that all to the fore.

Be sensitive to real-world emotions that may arise during the game. Take a break, talk, set the game aside. Whatever you may need.



Embrace the Juggernaut of Love

Go for broke in *Breaking the Ice*. Take all the rolls you can. Play the maximum number of Turns. Use the Conflict when possible. Conflicts are especially important at the beginning of the game when there are fewer dice available. Investing in Attraction Levels early on makes it more likely that Reality Checks will yield some permanent Attraction. And reduce the number of Setback you must consider taking on.

When you gather several permanent Attraction Levels, getting successes grows easier. Late in the game, if you have 4 or 5 Attraction Levels and several Compatibilities to call upon, you may feel like a Juggernaut of love, rolling over all problems that enter your path. At this point, Compatibilities can take the place Conflicts once held—allowing the character to move beyond that issue. The characters have enough Compatibilities, most likely, so that they can omit calling on the Conflicts.

Use Re-Rolls to allow the characters to gain multiple Attraction Levels or Compatibilities. The setbacks keep the events interesting, and develop the relationship further. The additional levels create a firm foundation for long-term commitment and fulfillment.

Two Heads are Better than One

The players in *Breaking the Ice* are a team . . . Their goals are united, they support and reward one another, and face the challenge set by the system together. There is no omniscient narrator throwing out challenges for the players to deal with. Instead, both players discover and create the story at the same time.

Having just two players allows space to take risks with your narration and work things out together. The players can ask questions and not feel judged by onlookers; they can create a groove that they like and can be pleased with their own achievements.

By the same token, the game generally stays in comfortable zones. Although the game was written to include the possibility of exploring touchy issues, the mechanical structure angles toward comedy, which helps to defuse



tensions. Still, there is space for the players to bring their own lessons into the game, and also real emotions to arise.

Many Heads are Better than Two

Although the game was written for two, its collaborative nature makes it highly adaptable. Having multiple pairs, going on double- or triple-dates, sharing characters between two players, or even having an observer without a character—it all works. The asking of questions and taking of suggestions make the story a fluid, changeable thing open to co-creation. In order to succeed, the players must think of things that go both well and wrong for the characters. See the Ways to Add Players mods (page 47) for rules to play with bigger groups.

Making Agreement Concrete

Dice in *Breaking the Ice* represent creative agreement flowing back and forth between the players. In all role playing games the events of the story hinge on all participants accepting them. System in games greases the wheels of consensus.

The moments of love growing or being lost, the descriptions of the world and the characters within it, are each undergirded by the exchange of dice. Moments of play happen as the exchange between the players allows them to build a shared story, and they are both rewarded by having a chance to move closer to their goal by the act of working together.

This dynamic flourishes with a supportive atmosphere. The Guide looks for ways to agree. The Active Player attends to what the other responds to. Each uses the menu of options to give them ideas of what to describe and play out along the way.

The mechanical rules—rolling the dice, getting successes, failures—creates a dramatic structure within which the moment-to-moment events fit. Laughter and tears lead to love, if the dice so fall. The players reach towards this goal, and receive surprise twists and prompts for their play, making something neither person would have been able to do on their own.



HACKS & MODS

For *Breaking the Ice*



Ways to Add Players

Breaking the Ice can also be played with more than two people. It is best suited to an even number of people, but can accommodate odd numbers with some slight adjustments. Several ways to handle this are described below.

DOUBLE DATING

With four players, you can easily combine two games of *Breaking the Ice*. Create pairs of characters using the Word Webs as usual, but find ways that they all know one another. Then choose a setting that could include all of the pairs in a social circle that brings the characters together. For example, they may be thrown together at community events, as in the movie *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Perhaps they have a shared hobby like gaming or the Society for Creative Anachronism so they attend conventions or fairs together. Or, one of the Dates might be a vacation they take together.

During play, in addition to the usual traits on the shared character sheet, create a communal list of recurring characters, locations or objects. For example at a wedding you might have the bride's scary uncle, the scenic & private balcony, or the caught bouquet. Everyone can use these as they would a Trait for Bonus or Re-Roll Dice. Keep the list in the center of the table, available to all the players equally.

Turns alternate between the couples. Each pair takes their turns, then play passes to another couple. Play is the same as in a regular game, but anyone



can give suggestions, not just the Guide. The Active Player gets a Bonus Die or Re-Roll as usual but can accept a suggestion from any of the group.

In order to keep the game from being too long, the Guide may also award a second Bonus or Re-Roll Die for narration or suggestions they think are particularly good. However, the usual limits on the number of dice to be awarded still apply. For example, let's say that Meimei had Mitch use his conflict management skills to get them out of a fight in the bar. Then she went for a Re-Roll by having him totally lose it when the character Trixie throws a drink in his face. If Jed really likes that turn of events, he could then award 2 Dice for the one action, provided there were two Re-Roll Dice available.

To keep the game a reasonable length, play only two Dates. Use the alternate rules for Taking Stock with fewer Dates (see page 42)

When the game is done, who stays together? Was it what you would have guessed? Are the couples friends afterwards as well?

LARGE GROUP MATCH-UP

If you have a large group of people (up to 10) who want to play, you can also simply split up into pairs (with a trio if there is an odd number), who play out separate games. People can pick whomever they want to play with, or it can be determined randomly. Put everyone's name in a hat and draw names until everyone has a partner. Perhaps, start with a fun Phys Break activity (p. xxii) with the whole group.

Or, you can create characters and do a quick round of Speed Dating to see who pairs off with whom.

SPEED DATE MATCH-UP

For up to 10 players. To set up for the Speed Dating round, prompts for the characters are created in randomly chosen pairs. All that is needed initially for the Word Web is a few words attached to the favorite color. Pair with the person next



to you and choose 6 words total for each character (rather than the standard 12). Based on these words, jot down four traits for each character. Take a moment or two to think about what this character is like and choose a Conflict that could interfere with any attempt at dating. For example, “still getting over my ex”, “obsessed with work”, etc. Choose a name. Write the name and one Trait on the name tag, and you’re ready to go.

Have the players get in two lines of equal length facing one another. Bring the lines together, and each pair has thirty seconds to chat before the lines cycle through. To cycle, have one line move to the right, and the person at the end come around to the top of the line. The other line stays stationary.

Once each player has spoken to every person on the other line, choose pairs.

To choose pairs, use a coin flip to pick which line gets to choose first. The person at one end of that line picks someone from the other line. Then the person at the other end of the second line chooses from those in the first line.

Alternate this way between the lines until all are paired off.

Optionally, allow the last two people to “steal” a date from other couples. They have the choice of anyone in either line, including each other. Those who have a date stolen from them then get to pair off, or pair with the other person last in line if that person chooses not to “steal”.

Once all are paired off, each pair chooses an attribute to switch, add appropriate Traits and start the Dates. The characters may have met at a local Speed Dating event, or in another situation that works for everyone.



SHARED CHARACTERS

Another option for more than two players is to have multiple players share a single character. They create the character together, consult on what they want to happen in the game, and take turns describing or playing out what the character does. Since most of the game is about working together with someone to figure out what happens, working together on a character fits in well with the rest of the game.

ODD NUMBER

If you are playing with an odd number of people, you can accommodate this in a two ways.

- 1) Active Audience. If one person would prefer to watch and not play a main character, they can be a floater, and give suggestions to whoever is the Active Player just as a Guide would.
- 2) Team play. The odd numbered player shares a character with another player.

Players who share a character confer about character actions. They may take turns speaking for the character. Or have one player speak dialogue while the other gives the character's thoughts.

For further discussion of Team Play see p. 147 in *SHOOTING THE MOON*.



Alternate Mechanics

ROLL AS YOU GO METHOD

Rather than amassing dice pools, Bonus Dice and Re-Rolls may be rolled individually as they are earned. In this case, Attraction Dice are rolled with the first Bonus Die awarded.

For each Attraction Die and Bonus Die, put a circle on your character sheet. When you roll the dice, fill in or check off one circle for each success and leave the rest blank. For each unfilled circle, make one Re-Roll. For each Re-Roll that is a failure, put an X through its circle

Example

At the start of the first Turn, Jed has one Attraction Die and will narrate items from the menu of options, working towards gaining three Bonus Dice. He describes a beautiful sunset happening as they reach the bar for their drink and is awarded his first Bonus Die. He rolls the sole Attraction die with the Bonus Die.

He rolls: **6, 3**

One Success (the **6**) and one Failure (the **3**).

He makes the following marks: ● ○

He chooses to roll Re-Rolls immediately, so he has June stumble over a curb in the parking lot. (This doesn't involve June's broken leg, so it is not a Conflict Roll.) Jed describes how June looks awkward and feels silly, so Meimei gives him one die to Re-Roll.

He rolls: **1**

So now he marks an "X" over the open circle and his record is: ● ☒



USING CARDS INSTEAD OF DICE

A standard deck of playing cards can be used instead of dice. Remove all Jokers.

Before each turn, shuffle the deck. The Guide then holds the deck and deals cards, face down, to the Active Player as dice would have been awarded. For example, in the first turn of the First Date, the Guide would deal one card for the Starting Attraction, then up to three Bonus Cards for positive things narrated by the Active Player.

Examples

Starting Attraction: 

Bonus Cards:   

Reveal the cards when each pool of dice would have been rolled.

Outcomes are as follows:

Success: Ten, Jack, Queen, King

Failure: Ace through Nine

Set the Successful cards in front of the Active Player face up and perpendicular to the table's edge. Set Failing cards to the side, parallel to the table's edge. As Re-Rolls are awarded, deal cards onto the Failing cards. Add new successes to the success pile, and discard Failing cards.

Deal three cards face down for Conflicts or two cards for Compatibilities. Reveal. For both Conflicts and Compatibilities, add successes to the success pile, and discard Failures.

Conflict:   

Compatibility:  

Re-shuffle before dealing cards for Reality Checks between Dates, and before the final tally at the end of the game.



TABLETOP FREEFORM *BREAKING THE ICE*

To play *Breaking the Ice* as a diceless system, use the following modifications.

Create characters as in the standard game.

Set up for the first Date as in the standard game.

Start with one free Attraction that cannot be taken away.

After making the characters and establishing how they meet, create Hopes and Fears for the characters. Write each one down on small pieces of paper, fold it up and place them in a cup. Create 5 Hopes and 5 Fears each.

Hopes & Fears

These are incidents that the character may hope will happen. They relate to the romance or to events of their life.

- Hopes—positive strokes of luck or progress made

Examples: promotion at work, made up with estranged family member, passionate lovemaking with the other character

- Fears—negative occurrences

Examples: workplace shuts down, accident, argument with other character or family member

Both Hopes and Fears are valuable. Whether something is interesting matters more than whether it's good or bad: both can shake up the relationship.

For any that relate to the romance, lay them out face up and have the other player inspect them. They turn over any that they would be comfortable including. Remove those from play and replace. Get the others inspected, and move on once a full set is complete.



Hopes and Fears may not include things that determine the outcome of the relationship. For example: “We get married and live happily ever after” and “they hate me and refuse to see me again” are both not acceptable.

Place all Hopes and Fears in a cup. Set aside until they are used between Dates.

If a drawn Hope or Fear just doesn’t make sense at this time in play, draw again and place first one back into the cup afterwards. If a Hope or Fear is found to be invalid when it comes up, discard it and draw another.

Dates

Dates consist of 4 to 6 Turns, as in the base game.

Play out three Dates to complete the game.

Turns

Alternate taking Turns which focus on each player’s character, as in the base game. The player whose character is in focus is the Active player; the player whose character is not in focus is the Guide.

Turns consist of narration and checks.

NARRATION

Instead of having dice awarded by the Guide for these things, the Active player looks over the menu of things to narrate, and chooses from the menu of options:

- Good Stuff (from Bonus Dice menu): choose two to narrate
- Mishaps (Re-Roll menu): choose two to narrate
- Conflict—invoke once per turn (maximum)
- Compatibility—work with other player to invoke once per turn (maximum) for each Compatibility.

Good Stuff and Mishaps can be interspersed. Make marks on the character sheet, or use tokens to keep track of how many have been done.



ATTRACTION CHECK

At the end of each turn, discuss together whether the characters would have been drawn together by those events. If both agree that the answer is yes, make a check mark for one point of Attraction. If not, do not mark Attraction.

At the end of each turn in the Second and Third Date, in addition to Attraction, discuss together whether something seemed like a Compatibility between the characters. If so, add it to the character sheet.

When it seems logical for the Date to end, wrap up the narrative.

Between Dates

After the First and Second Dates, do a Reality Check.

First, make two new Attraction Levels permanent.

Then each additional new Attraction Level must be erased unless you create a Setback, or choose a Hope or Fear to come true.

1) SETBACKS

A Setback is something that goes wrong for one of the characters, or places some obstacle between them. (see page 40)

Decide how many Setbacks you wish to create, then erase the Attraction levels in excess of that number.

You may decide to create no Setbacks.

Two new Attraction levels always remain, even if there are no Setbacks.

2) DRAWING HOPES AND FEARS

Draw up to two of the Hopes and Fears created at the start of play. For each one, an Attraction Level is made permanent. May decide to not draw any Hopes or Fears.



If you run out, create more before the next Date.

At the end of the Third Date, all the Attraction Levels gained become permanent.

Ending the Game

Take Stock as in the standard game. Compare with the levels of Attraction and Compatibilities to ascertain how much staying power and chemistry they are likely to have.

TAKING STOCK

How many Compatibilities do the characters have?

- 0–2 There doesn't seem to be much in common between them.
- 3–4 Found some common ground, but is it enough?
- 5–6 They have lots of shared interests, providing much material for their relationship.
- 7+ So much to do together! So little time!

How many Attraction Levels do the characters have?

- 0–3 Not many sparks here.
- 3–6 A flame is present, burning steady but low.
- 7+ Chemistry sizzles! Hot-cha-cha . . .

If they have fewer than seven Compatibilities, this relationship may or may not stand the test of time. If they have few permanent Attraction Levels, what might be missing for them?

ENDGAME QUESTIONS

Answer these three questions, and talk about the events of play. Reflect on what has happened.

- Do they stay together after the third Date?
- When did your character fall in love with the other?
- What are the long-term chances for this relationship?



DEEPENING YOUR PLAY

The tone of *Breaking the Ice* can range from comic to quite serious, exploring deeper human issues. A lighter tone may be more comfortable for a pair of players that do not know one another very well. However, if both players are interested in engaging with a story about real life problems that people grapple with in their lives: loss, grief, failure and so on. Or that touch on bigger issues (for example, issues of race, class, abuse), the following rules are suggested:

Brake and Cut

Use agreed upon phrases to signal that a player needs space to talk before moving on. Use the Brake and Cut rules page xxiii.

Carefully Crafted Characters

When creating the characters make them embody the issues the players would like to explore by choosing Traits and Conflicts that focus on those issues. For instance, if the player Jed in the example above wanted to do a more serious examination of being gay, he might have chosen “Bi” as a Trait for June and “Coming to terms with her sexual orientation” as her Conflict.

As you go along, consciously create additional Traits that relate to the Conflict chosen. June might have a disapproving father: perhaps he’s deeply religious or even a conservative minister. “In the closet” would be a very apropos trait as well. You may allow the Guide to award a second die when these traits are used, or when something seems very true to life. The usual limits apply to the number of Bonus or Re-Roll dice.

Keep the Conflict in tune with the character being open to the relationship. And if the issues move beyond the comfort of either player, end the game early and wrap up with a discussion about why that happened and what might have been.

Close to Home Switch

If you want to pick an issue that is closer to home (see p. xxii) for the players, choose substantive switched attributes and focused on them. For example, Jed and Meimei



could have chosen race for their switch. To do so they commit to working together to follow through with Conflicts that reflect the issues they themselves have faced or witnessed.

Do this advisedly, and be prepared for strong emotions to be raised. Consider doing this type of exploration with close friends, rather than with strangers. Be aware of the play environment. Is this one where each player feels well supported, heard and understood?

Exercise the Door is Always Open (p. xxii) if the events of play go beyond comfort.

Debrief

Be sure to take some time after the end of the game to talk about the game and settle any strong emotions fully, especially if you do play close to home. Look through debriefing and de-roleing rules in *Under my Skin* (p. 239). Give yourselves the opportunity to reflect on the events of the game and resolve anything that might have come up in play. Listen to what each person wants to share. Consider and share what it felt like to play the character going through those problems and issues.



Online Play

CHAT-TEXT *BREAKING THE ICE*

A mod of *Breaking the Ice* for play online, or through text or chat

A tabletop role playing game for 2 players.

Time: 1–2 hours

Play *Breaking the Ice* with a friend via chat or text messages. Enjoy a romance when you're far apart, or on your break at work.

Rules Changes:

Create your characters as in the standard game—but only trade back and forth 3 words each for the Word Webs.

Play out 2 turns each during each Date (four turns total).

For turns, roll dice separately, or log in to an online roller site such as Rolz (<https://rolz.org>) to share the roll outcomes.

Skip the “Reality Check” between Dates.

Places to Play: (as of July 2016)

ROLZ ([HTTPS://ROLZ.ORG](https://rolz.org))

Rolz is an online site dedicated to supporting online play. Their Dice Rooms are chat spaces that allow you to roll virtual dice using commands. There is a wiki and



a private dice room for *Breaking the Ice* there. Log in and join the dice room “BreakingtheIce.” Or, in the “lobby” use the command: /join BreakingtheIce

Once you have created a login name, you can jump directly to the *Breaking the Ice* Dice Room at this url: <https://rolz.org/dr?room=BreakingtheIce>

See the Wiki for an overview of the rules. Also, a list of custom commands to be used for Attraction Rolls, Bonus Dice, Re-Rolls, Conflict and Compatibilities.

If other players are already using the space, consult the Wiki for rules & commands useful at the site, and create your own Dice Room to play in.

CATCH YOUR HARE ([HTTP://WWW.CATCHYOURHARE.COM/](http://www.catchyourhare.com/))

Graham Walmsley (author of rpg improv tips book *Play Unsafe*) hosts an online platform for playing *Breaking the Ice*.

See this site: <http://www.catchyourhare.com/breaking/>

Coordinate with a fellow player to be online at the same time. Enter your information, and have them do the same.

It will show both of you as logged on. Choose them to play with and use this page to record your game as you go along.

Use the Dice Roller at Catch Your Hare to make rolls for each Turn: <http://www.catchyourhare.com/diceroller/>

This dice roller allows you to share rolls with a friend by entering a shared password.

Use the “Label” and color of dice functions to keep track of which dice were from your Attraction levels, Bonus narrations, Conflict and so on.

Thanks to Graham and the folks who make Rolz for these great online resources!



Other Worlds

ADVENTURES LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY

Mod of *Breaking the Ice*

Number Players: 2



Many stories of action or adventure have a love story at their heart. You can use the rules of *Breaking the Ice* to create any story that charts the course of two characters' path to love. What is *Star Wars*TM, but a series of dates between Han Solo and Leia Organa? A story of a gangland fight can revolve around the love between a headman's moll and loyal lieutenant, as in Dashiell Hammett's novel, *The Glass Key*. Or, you can tell the tale of lovers in a more fantastic setting, as in the medieval fantasy film *Ladyhawke* or the picturesque martial arts film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Setting Creation:

Make sure you create the setting before the characters, so the characters are properly grounded in the world.

- Decide upon a genre, for example European medieval fantasy, urban supernatural or space opera.
- Make three columns on a blank sheet of paper. At the top of the first column write "Sources", at the top of the second column, write "Elements," and at the top of the third column write "Themes".



- Under “Sources”, write down titles of movies, books or stories that fit the genre. Brainstorm between the players. Following the above example, *Braveheart*, *Robin Hood*, *Ivanhoe*, and *Brother Cadfael* might be listed as Sources. Talk about the items. Circle the ones that both players especially like, and cross out any that either player strongly objects to.
- Under “Elements”, brainstorm a list of elements typically found in stories in this genre. The previous example might go on to list: knights, queens, rogues, battle, archery, tournaments, nobles peasants, forests. Some of these may be elements that you wish to subvert or change about the source material. Elements to subvert may be: all white characters, binary genders and patriarchal dominance; changed to: diverse community, egalitarian & inclusive gender roles.
- Under “Themes”, brainstorm some common themes that these stories contain. Themes are conflicts that motivate people and groups; strong moral questions or values that can be contested. For example: rich vs. poor, betrayal, loyalty to lover, injustice, loyalty to lord, independence, rightful monarchs, vulnerability of the oppressed, etc.
- Now take all these concepts and use them as a backdrop to your character creation. Pick words in keeping with your lists, and interpret the Word Web to fit the chosen setting. Choose Conflicts that are inspired by the Themes and Elements of the setting: “avenging murdered sibling,” “ruined by usurping sovereign,” etc.
- Interpret Date more loosely. It could instead be three eventful moments in the course of these characters’ stories (e.g. an archery tournament, a kidnapping by an evil lord, etc.) Weave together a story hinging on love that fits into the setting you wish to explore. Use the Themes and Elements, as well as events from the sources, to inspire the event of the three Dates.



FIRST BLOOD

A mod of *Breaking the Ice*

Players: 2

Time: approx. 3–4 hours

Inspired by the Gauntlet Podcast's traditional interview question:

Imagine an alternate history where your games turned out more or less the same, but with the minor change that they are entirely about smooth-chested teenage werewolves. What would each game's name be?



Full moon night and the satellite exacts its curse. The woods beckon and the scent of blood and prey drift on the wind.

You two are teens, newly come into the great secret of your life: you are a wolf. Half wolf, half human, tumbled together in the light of the full moon.

And you may be in love.

Follow the standard rules with a new premise, and the following adaptations.

Warm Up

Start with an easy physical warm up, or take a Phys Break (p. xxii). Howling, or listening to atmospheric music may be appropriate.

CHARACTER CREATION

Human person

Your characters are two teens. Create them keeping this in mind, using the standard rules from *Breaking the Ice*: pick a favorite color, create a word web and choose 1 to 2 Traits for Personality, Work and Play. Interpret the word web in terms of a younger person.



Transform to Wolf

Now, instead of deciding how the two met and went on their first date, roll a single die for each and check the Vector list below to find out how they each became the wolf. Answer the relevant question, and connect them through that transformation.

Vector List:

- 1—**Inheritance.** The blood of the wolf runs through your family, coming on at the age of maturity (15–18). Choose your age in that range. *Someone else close to you in your family is also a lycanthrope. What story did they tell you of when they first transformed?*
- 2—**Transmission by Blood.** You were wounded by what you thought was a wolf. You've been drawn to the wild or abandoned land and feel your body itching with change. *What betrayed the creature who bit you as more than a wild animal?*
- 3—**Transmission by Water.** Hiking in the woods listening to the sound of howls, you drank from a clear stream by moonlight. By next full moon's light, you long for those woods and feel the howl on your lips. *What dreams of running wild have haunted you?*
- 4—**Curse.** You were present at a violent death near your home. With their dying breath, the victim cursed all in earshot. *How could you have helped? What kept you from saving them?*
- 5—**Choice.** You found a charm that promised to shift your mind to the body of a wolf. It succeeded beyond your wildest dreams, and made your body change. *What was the magical price you paid for this power? What allows you to change?*
- 6—**Bargain.** An unearthly entity gave you the chance to rescue your family from ruin. But you paid a great price. *What desperate situation had your family fallen into? What do they think saved you all?*

When making your character, use the above Vector instead of your Conflict. Bring it up (once per Turn) for 3 dice.



Also choose one:

- This is my first transformation to wolf form.
- I have become a wolf before.

Rules of the Change

The full moon's light triggers your change. Choose 2 or 3 more conditions from the following list or create other similar conditions you prefer.

- Silver is fatal.
- Wolfsbane repels you.
- You hunger for flesh when in wolf form.
- Your changed form is between that human and wolf.
- Your human nature wars with the wolf when you change.
- Your strength increases as you come closer to changing.
- Your senses of smell and hearing are heightened, even in your human form.

These rules are the same for all werewolves in a given game, regardless of the source of their transformation.

Wolf Person

Add a new Trait category: Wolf. Choose one from each of the following to write under it, and add more as you do other traits during play. These deal with the character's body, temperament, desires or interests while in wolf form.

Color	Body	Energy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black • White • Silver • Grey • Brown • Tawny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massive • Burly • Stately • Sturdy • Lanky • Whipcord thin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile • Plodding • Sprightly • Domineering • Tenacious • Sharp



The Meet Cute

Instead of deciding how the two meet and picking who asks whom out, consult the following table. Choose one or roll randomly.

- 1—**Howling.** Drawn to the sound of another's plaintive howl, you meet under the light of the moon.
- 2—**Haunted.** Seeking help from a therapist or religious counsel, you find a kindred spirit in another who seeks guidance.
- 3—**Hunted.** Pursued by human or animal foe, you fall in together and make your escape.
- 4—**Hunting.** Frolicking in the nighttime woods, pursuing prey—you meet another like you.
- 5—**Healing.** Nursing wounds suffered under the full moon, you see another with a shared plight.
- 6—**Bonded.** You meet as strangers and instantly recognize the wolf in each other.

Human/Wolf Dates

The game takes place during the days and nights of the full moon when first these two meet.

With each Date, decide whether it will begin in human or wolf form. Accordingly, choose an appropriate location for it to begin. The two may change to or from wolf form during the course of the date, or even during a Turn.

Animal Attraction

Attraction and Compatibilities accrue as in the standard game. Attraction is the same mechanically and in the story. However, between Dates roll an extra die in your Reality Check to see if you retain Attraction. This die represents your bond as werewolves.

Compatibilities may be of the human variety or wolfly.



Ending the Game

At the end of the game, take stock as usual. However, also ask these endgame questions:

- When did you feel most deeply human? Most truly wolf?
- Has your relationship helped you embrace or pushed you away from your wolf nature?
- What future do you see for you both?



FREEZING THE POND

A mod of *Breaking the Ice*

A tabletop rpg for 2 players

Time: 2–3 hours

Original idea by Autumn Winters



How wrong can three dates go?

Instead of trying to bring these two together, you are seeing how they tear each other apart.

The date starts as per the usual: two people drawn together by the whims of fate, or the machinations of meddling friends. But when you make the characters, your goal is to set them up for ironic setbacks and painful twists. Create characters with powerful reasons to get together, then set them up for a fall.

Tone

Instead of the traditional romantic comedy flavor of *Breaking the Ice*, this will have a darkly humorous vibe, and may veer into a variety of tones:

- **Zany**—Absurd misfires rule the day. (Think the one-upping mistakes of *There's Something About Mary* and the wildlife & scientific don'ts of *Bringing Up Baby*—without the happy endings.)
- **Destructive Orgy**—Property damage is the rule of the day. (Think of the escalating divorce in *The War of the Roses* or the domicile-destroying dispute in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*.)
- **Fantastic**—A larger than life element creeps that throws things awry. (Think the half-insect transformation in David Cronenberg's *The Fly*, the obvious malady in



An American Werewolf in London, or the existential mindwipes of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.)

- **Poignant**—Love that might have been, or love denied. (Think the strangers on a train of *Brief Encounter*, or the war-torn lovers in *The English Patient*.)
- **Dramatic Tragedy**—Romantic obsessions end in a violent climax. (Think the 80s family-values affirming *Fatal Attraction*, or society's failure of the gay sheep-herders in *Brokeback Mountain*.)

Favorite Colors:

- Smoky, Icy White
- Frostbitten Blue, Puce
- Black & Blue, Bruised Purple
- Gag Green, Blah Beige
- Revolting Orange

Changes to Rules and Character Creation:

Replace Attraction with Hatred. These are reasons the pair can't stand one another.

Replace Compatibilities with Entanglements. These are shared connections or coincidences of life that tie them together.

Replace Conflict with Grand Illusion. This is a pair of conceits—known to the players, not the characters—that dramatically cries out for them to get together. Pick concrete aspects of their life. For example, “Desperate for Love” and “Smothered by Family” fit to a T. So do “Rescued my life” and “They depend on me.” “First Love” and “First Fuck”, work great. A generic reason such as “Soulmates” is not acceptable alone, but something that tells more about the character, such as “A sign from my deity told me we’re Soulmates” would be fine.

Menu of Options for Bonus Dice:

- Including actions or words that involve the Active Character's existing Traits, or a new Trait that may be added at this time. These actions should be boring, well-intentioned but ill-timed, or poorly judged.



- Having the Active Character do something awkward to, or for, the other character.
- Describing a setting element (another character, a location, an object, etc) that shows up the active character or makes things go flat between the two.
- Narrating something going well that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative, or well done.
- Describing Active Character actions that highlight or bring into play one of the Guide's character's existing traits (no new traits may be added).
- Taking a suggestion for one of the above from the Guide.

Menu of Options for Re-Rolls:

- Actions or words that involve the Active Character's existing traits, or a new trait that may be added at this time. They should be insulting or at odds with the other character.
- Having the Active Character do something upsetting, absurd or dangerous to, or for, the other character.
- Describing a Setting Element (another character, a location, an object, etc) that creates interferes with or causes chaos for the two.
- Narrating something going well that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative or well done.
- Describing Active Character actions that highlight or bring into play one of the Guide's character's existing traits (no new traits may be added). They should be insulting or at odds with the active character.
- Taking a suggestion for one of the above from the Guide.

Roll Entanglements for the following:

Having one of the characters try to gracefully get out of the date. Each player contributes to describing how the Entanglement pulls them right back in again.

Roll Grand Illusion for the following:

When things get really bad, bring in the active character's part of the Grand Illusion to trap them into trying to make it work.



To aim for Zany:

Focus on chaos and insults in the Re-Rolls.

Escalate the scale of the disaster. Come to agreement about how outlandish you want to go as the Guide and Active Player negotiate the awarding of Dice

To aim for Sad:

Play up The Grand Illusion, keep the wackiness down, and lean on having “well-intentioned” actions by the characters.

Between Dates:

Do not Re-Roll Hatred Levels or make Reality Checks. There is no maximum to the number you can gain, but you are stuck with them. You also don’t need to escalate in between the Dates. However, you do have to figure out why they go on the next date.

Option to Bail: If the relationship has become such a trainwreck that you can’t imagine the characters continuing, feel free to end before the third Date. Take Stock now.

Ending the Game

TAKING STOCK

How many Entanglements do the characters have?

- 0–2 Bye-bye! Sayonara baby.
- 3–4 You keep crossing paths, and it’s awkward for everyone.
- 5–6 How did you keep it together? Gives your friends lots to gossip about.
- 7+ So much to do together! Why?!? Well, at least life ends eventually.



How many Hatred Levels do the characters have?

- 0–2 Meh. Well, there are lots of other worse people in the world.
- 3–4 You just don't see eye to eye, about anything really. But getting one-up on one another is so satisfying.
- 5–6 Stormy, raging. Your arguments are epic, and occasional bouts of passion equally regrettable.
- 7–10 Dramafest. You bring your bad times with you like a storm cloud, raining on the parades of all those around you.
- 11+ There must be some *Dangerous Liaisons* or *House of Cards* level spite and scheming going on here. Only some greater game could keep you together. Watch out, world!

ENDGAME QUESTIONS

Ask each other these questions:

- Were you ever in danger of falling in love?
- What was the worst thing I did?
- What do you regret the most about this relationship?



LET'S BE FRIENDS

A mod of *Breaking the Ice*

A tabletop rpg for 2 players

Time: approx. 4 hours

Original idea by James Brown



How do the friendships of childhood begin?

A light and innocent version of *Breaking the Ice*. The characters are two children meeting for the first time. Tell the story of their first three Play-Dates, and see if they will become fast friends.

Warm Up

To get into the mood, do something like sing the song with movements “Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” as a warmup at the start or as a Phys Break (p. xxii).

Favorite Colors:

- Pink, Fire Engine Red
- Yellow, Sky Blue
- Wish-upon-a-Star-White
- Summer Green, Grass Green, River Blue

Changes to Rules and Character Creation:

Characters go on three Play Dates. These may be distinct events like parties, a hike, etc; or they may be three informal encounters where the characters spend time together: playing outside, playing video games, etc.

Choose your character's age. Each child is between 7 and 11.

Rating is always “Chaste.”



Switch — find some way that the players' childhoods differed to exchange (rural/urban, only child/many siblings, etc.)

Replace Trait category "Work" with "School."

Create Trait "Home" — this is where the child lives.

Replace Attraction with "Friendship."

Conflict is something that may keep the child from befriending the other. For example, "shy", "new in town", "speak a different language."

Make Friendship Rolls rather than Attraction Roles. If you get three successes, gain another Friendship level.

Create Compatibilities as in the standard game, but these are hobbies, experiences, interests or knowledge that the two kids now share. They are potentially the basis for lifelong friendship, not romantic love.

There are no Complications.

There are no Reality Checks.

Ending the Game:

Take Stock and answer three questions, as in the standard game. Use these alternate outcomes and questions.

TAKING STOCK

How many Compatibilities do the characters have?

- 0–2 Not much overlap in interests here.
- 3–4 A good buddy for chores and play alike.
- 5–6 Very compatible imaginations and experiences!
- 7+ Complete each others' sentences much? Total mind meld? Pretty close!



How many Friendship Levels do the characters have?

- 0–2 You remember their name when you're older, but what did they look like?
- 3–4 Your good old friend, with many good times (and hard ones) spent together.
- 5–6 One of the steady rocks of your childhood. You can't imagine what life would have been without them.
- 7+ Best friend for life. For real.

ENDGAME QUESTIONS:

- Did they become close friends?
- What is your character's favorite story about this friend?
- Are they still in each other's lives as adults?



LABYRINTH OF LOVE

An adventure mod for *Breaking the Ice*

Number of players: 2–6 players

Time: approx. 2–4 hours



Delving deep for love and adventure

Can be used for a typical 2 player game, but is particularly good for groups of 4 or 6.

An innovative life-size Labyrinth Adventure Theme Park is opening. A handful of lucky players will be the first adventuring party to face the challenges together. Are you ready to take on the unknown with comrades at your back, and perhaps...fall in love?

Setup

Choose a map to represent the theme park dungeon.

Recommended Sources:

- Dungeons & Dragons (TM) classic adventure modules, such as the Tomb of Horrors, Castle of Greyhawk, etc.
- Dungeons & Dragons Art and Map Archive, including their Map-a-Week archives, at the time of publication available at <http://archive.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/arch/ag&page=2>
- How to Host a Dungeon <http://planet-thirteen.com/Dungeon.aspx> and For the Love of Dungeons <http://planet-thirteen.com/DungeonMaps.aspx>



Rule Changes

CHARACTER CREATION:

Have players divide into pairs. Each creates a pair of characters who are going on this adventure together who have a spark of romance between them.

Create characters as in the standard game. Add the trait: “love to role play” to each.

Pick how they met. Choose one or roll a die:

1. In line for the labyrinth park
2. Friends who signed up together
3. Met online and are meeting for the first time here
4. On the way to the park, sat together on the plane
5. Introduced by friends who were supposed to come too, but had to bow out
6. Have a mutual friend who works for the park

THE PARTY:

All the characters are in the same adventuring party. They travel together and experience the labyrinth as a group.

TURNS:

The game is not split up into Dates. Omit Reality Checks.

The pairs alternate taking their Turns. One pair has a player take a turn, then another couple's member takes their turn, and so on till all players have gone.

Play out four rounds of turns (four turns per pair).



SHARED TRAITS:

Create a list of items, people and locations in the dungeon. Any player may call upon them during their turn in addition to their Traits.

EXTRA DICE:

Give each player three extra dice.

Players from other pairs can give suggestions that add onto what the Active Player and Guide narrate. If accepted by the Active Player, they hand one of their extra dice to that player.

For example: If Mitch and Mei-Mei are playing with George and Gracie, when Mitch is the Active Player and describes his character bringing wine to dinner with Mei-Mei's character. Mitch will gain a Bonus Die. Gracie can offer to add an Extra Die to his pool by suggesting that the wine was recommended by the sommelier at a local wine shop, and turns out to be extra delicious. If Mitch accepts that, he gains the Extra Die to roll.

Extra dice may be Re-Rolled.

Extra dice may not be used for a player's own Turn, or given to the other member of their couple.

THE MAP:

Show how the characters progress along in the dungeon. You may use distinct dice, markers or miniatures to represent them.

Describe aspects of the labyrinth just as you would any other setting element of play, however, they correspond to parts of the map you use.



SCENARIO SEEDS:

Pick one or create your own:

- The grand opening got pushed up several weeks, and the special effects aren't working quite right yet
- You're in a competition to make it through the labyrinth before other parties make it.
- It's a true labyrinth and the party has to find their way out—you're given a panic button to use if you get lost, but lose out on attending a fantastic party that's planned for those who find their way
- It's a supernatural themed labyrinth: you'll fight liches, ghosts and vampiric monsters that "steal your energy" by grabbing flags from off your belt. Find potions, treasure boxes, etc, that give you energy back & special powers to fight the undead.

Remember to keep following the *Breaking the Ice* rules! If you introduce a puzzle, solve it the same way it's created: by saying what the solution is! Don't introduce mysteries for your friends to guess the answer to. Keep it collaborative, keep it fun.



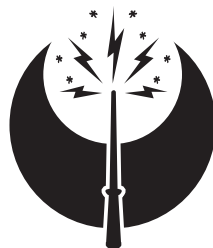
SLASHING THE VEIL

A mod of *Breaking the Ice*

A tabletop rpg for 2 players

Time: approx. 4 hours

Original idea by Alexander Newman and Phredd Groves



Play out your favorite slash fiction.

See what went on behind closed doors on the Enterprise, who Harry Potter really had a crush on, or which superhero could keep up with Clark Kent.

Use all the base rules of *Breaking the Ice*. Choose favorite characters from fiction and bring together altfic pairings you'd love to have seen by shipping them.

Set-Up

Rating "Mature" or "Explicit"

Character Creation

Traits

Replace the Work, Play and Self trait categories with "For Others", "For Fun", and "Who I am." Create six starting traits in total.

- Brainstorm three traits you associate with the character.

Favorite Colors:

- Colors associated with the characters

Or, for over the top queer or gender-bending the original, something like:

- Chartreuse, Fuschia, Silver, Gold, Lavender, Red, Crimson, Vermillion, Burnt Sienna, Prose Purple



Create a word web with six words total from the favorite color. Brainstorm more traits to personalize your take on this character, and add to the list.

Ending the Game

When ending the game, use these levels and questions for Taking Stock:

TAKING STOCK

How many Compatibilities do the characters have?

- 0–2 Yeah, maybe the canon texts were right.
- 3–4 They are rubbing along well together.
- 5–6 OMG, so much awesome, so much goodness.
- 7 or more Yeah, that was meant to be...

How many Attraction Levels do the characters have?

- 0–2 Fizzle...that ain't going nowhere.
- 3–4 Hmmm...what is this?
- 5–6 Um, yeah, um. Is it me or is getting really hot in here?

HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

After the end of the third Date, the players should resolve the story of their characters. Think back over the events of the game and have each player answer the following endgame questions:

Do they get a celebrity name, or is it kaput?

- What is this relationship going to be like? Partners in crime or always at each other's throat?
- What are names of novels that should be written about them?

Examples

Famous Couples you may wish to explore:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xena/Gabrielle* • Spock/Kirk* • Xander/Spike* • Harry/Ron* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luna/Hermione* • Batgirl/Catwoman* • Batman/Superman*
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* See trademark details on copyright page.



WITH THE WOODS

A mod of *Breaking the Ice*

A tabletop rpg for 2 players

Time: approx. 4 hours



Leaving home or lost, you find shelter in the embrace of nature. Struggle to survive, overcome what sent you there, and learn the beauty of the natural world.

A traveler leaves all they know. Through heartbreak, ruin, accident or exile they are broken from the company of other humans. They find a hermitage and nature offers sanctuary.

The players work together to help the human survive and perhaps gain what they need to return successfully to their life. They see what effect this has on the natural feature.

Stories with similar struggles:

- *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George
- *Dragonsong* by Anne McCaffrey

In this version of *Breaking the Ice*, use the standard rules with the following modifications:



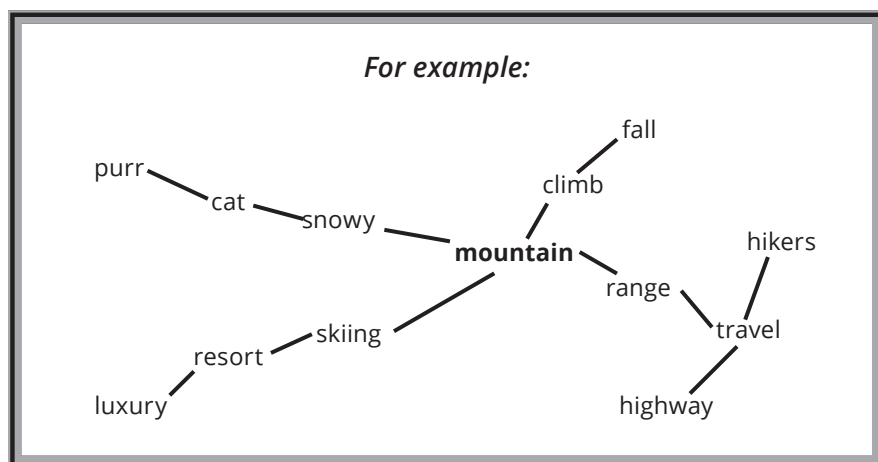
Setup

CHARACTER CREATION

Create two roles: the Human who must leave their home and the Natural Feature they flee to. For example: mountain, desert, island, a river, forest.

For the Human: use the standard favorite color and the word web to learn about them. Look for likely problems or issues that the words suggest that would cause this person to run away by choice.

For the Natural Feature: use the name of the feature as the central word instead of a color. Associate words that relate it to create details about the landscape or themes that may be explored. Do a full 12 words.



GLOBAL TRAIT: AGE

Decide how old the Human is. This will inform their traits, the conflict that they flee, the dangers they face, the reactions of other people they encounter. Age may also be used to pitch the tone of the game as a whole: more innocent and optimistic with a young person, possibly more intense or personal with an older character.



TRAITS

For the Human, create traits as in the standard game, making Work, Play and Self Traits.

In addition, create the Backpack: a list of 8–12 items that this person could be expected to carry on their back. Take this moment to think about their build, level of physical ability (and temperament perhaps) to create your sense of how much they might carry. Items beyond this must be found, created or stolen from the hermitage surroundings.

For the Natural Feature, replace Self, Work, and Play with Wildness, Shelter and Food. Start with a few more traits than usual: create 4–6 traits.

For example

Using the mountain with word web above;

Wildness – waterfall cascade, view of mountain range

Shelter – cabin

Food – ski resort dumpster, traps

CONFLICT

For the Human, the Conflict is the reason they felt they needed to leave their life and home behind. Write it as a phrase or sentence that describes the situation they faced. Spin off traits from it to include as Self, Work or Play.

For example:

- Conflicts: “embezzled money from financial firm employer” and “husband left for best friend”
- Related traits: financier, wealthy and separated, bitter



For the Natural Feature, create a list of Dangers instead of a Conflict. Choose 3 elements of the hermitage surroundings that can offer threat of injury, discovery or other danger to the human.

For example:

Continuing the mountain example from above:

Dangers – ski resort staff, wild mountain cat, hikers, cold

One Danger can be invoked per Turn. If a Danger is resolved, cross it off. New ones may be added later. Conflicts cannot be resolved before the end of the game.

Gain 3 dice during a Turn for using the Conflict or Danger, as in the standard game.

Play

EXPLORING AND IMPROVING

The Human may add traits as in the standard game, at any time the Natural Feature can only add traits by the human Exploring or Improving.

Explore: at the start of the Natural Feature's turn, the Human's player asks a question about the surroundings. The Natural Feature's player answers it by creating a detail about the surroundings.



For example:

H: "What water is nearby?"

NF: "There is a rushing stream that leads to those spectacular fall."

H: "What sign of animals crossing through do I see?"

NF: "There are scratches on a tree that look like a great cat."

H: "What plants that I can eat are nearby?"

NF: "You realize that you're here in time to harvest pine nuts from the pinyon pines in the forest."

Record the answer as a one or two word trait.

For example:

Wildness – stream, wildcat scratches

Food – pine-nut trees

Improve: at the start of the human's turn, the human's player proposes a way to improve their hermitage. The natural feature's player tells them what resources are at hand.

H: "I'd like to set up a shower."

NF: "There is a barrel behind the cabin and you find several heavy plastic bags that were used to store food in a cupboard."

H: "I want to heat the cabin."

NF: "There is a small wood stove in the corner of the cabin."

H: "I want to carry back a lot of food from the ski resort dumpster so I don't have to go there frequently."

NF: "There are small trees you can take down with your hand saw. With your blanket you could make a small travois sled that you can pull."



SURVIVAL AND FREEDOM

Attraction is replaced with Survival. This represents the Human's ability to find what they need to adapt to living in these rough surroundings. Gain them through successful rolls as in the standard game.

Compatibilities are replaced with Freedom. These are shifts in the Human's outlook on the world: skills the human learns that helps them feel empowered to face living in the wild, or moments that help them feel they can overcome whatever drove them out of their life.

TURNING POINTS

Dates are replaced with Turning Points. The Human stays in this hermitage for some long period of time: perhaps a few weeks or even months. Each Turning Point you play represents a moment of major development for the human. Play through 3 Turning Points with 4–6 Turns each, as in the core game. Look for a natural moment for the Turning Point to close.

IN BETWEEN TURNING POINTS

Before starting the second and third Turning Points, roll a Reality Check to see if new levels of Survival persist. Freedoms remain, as would Compatibilities. If Survival levels are lost, explain this by stating what major setback the human encountered between Turning Points. Perhaps the roof to the cabin leaked, or the wood stove backed up and set the wall on fire.

To roll additional dice to gain back Survival, do one of the following:

- Invoke the human's Conflict for some major issue they learn about that threatens them or makes them wish they could return home.
- Add a new Danger that threatens the human's livelihood in the hermitage. Narrate how it manifests in the human's surroundings, and add it to the Danger list.

URNS

During a Turn, alternate focus as in the standard game. When it is the Human's Turn, they make overtures towards settling in and becoming comfortable and part of the landscape. During the Natural Feature's turn, they describe how the natural and human aspects of the surroundings develop and interact with the human.



Gain Bonus dice and Re-Rolls as in the standard game: Bonus dice for having things go well, Re-Rolls for having things go wrong. Freedoms, Conflicts and Dangers are invoked as described above and gain the same number of dice as their analogs in the standard game: 2 for Freedoms, 3 for Conflicts and Dangers.

Menu of Options for Bonus Dice:

- Using actions or words that involve the Active Character's existing traits. For the Human, a new Trait may be added. For the Natural Feature, the Trait must in some way impact the Human.
- Having the Active Character do or describe something that helps the Human or supports the integrity of the Natural Feature (for example, taking care of waste or planting plants that feed butterflies).
- During the Human's turn, working towards completing an Improvement. During the Natural Feature's turn, giving information about helpful aspects about what was found when Exploring.
- Describing a concrete detail about the environment or the human's belongings.
- Describing Active Character actions that highlight or bring into play one of the Guide's character's existing Traits (no new Traits may be added).
- Taking a suggestion for one of the above from the Guide.
- Narrating something going well that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative or well done.

Menu of Options for Re-Rolls:

- Actions or words, involving a Trait that puts the Human at a disadvantage or does damage to the Natural Feature. During the Human's Turn they may add a new Trait.
- Narrating how a setting element (other characters, props, locations) may trip up your character or make them feel insecure or unsafe.
- During the Human's turn, having something go wrong for an Improvement. During the Natural Feature's turn, giving information about harmful or irritating aspects about what was found when Exploring.
- Narrating something going wrong that the Guide judges to be very true to life, creative or well done.
- Taking a suggestion from the Guide for what goes awry.



Ending the Game

TAKING STOCK

At the end of the game, take stock of the Survival and Freedoms the Human has accrued. Having more Survival levels helps make it possible for the Human to leave the hermitage on their own terms. Freedoms empower them and give them the ability to change what went wrong for them. Also assess how the Human and Natural Feature affected one another.

How many levels of Survival have they gained?

For the human:

- 0–2 Do you die? What is the rescue effort that gets you out of there alive?
- 3–4 You don't want to leave, but circumstances force you to go. What causes this? Other humans? The land? Hunger?
- 5–6 You learned the ropes and created something stable and comfortable. What was your shelter like when you left? What brought you home?
- 7+ Your life has been changed by this experience and you've learned the ways of the land. When you chose to return home, what did you leave behind, and what did you bring with you?

How many Freedoms do you have?

- 0–3 Your fear and burdens weigh you down still. All you did was run away, no help has come to allow you to overcome what you left behind. What slams back into place to hurt you as soon as you return?
- 4–6 You've learned a lot about yourself and what you are capable of. You have a new hope. What is the strategy that helps you face your troubles?
- 6+ This has been a life changing experience. You see your home life in a whole new light. What major shift happens to lighten your burden when you return home?

ENDGAME QUESTIONS

- What does the Human take away from this experience?
- What kind of mark does this leave on the Natural Feature?
- What is it like when the Human returns someday in the future? How has the Natural Feature changed?



PART TWO

SHOOTING THE MOON

Players: 2 or 3.

Main text gives rules for 3 player game.

Also see Two Player version page 142.

Facilitator: None

Time: 3–4 Hours

Supplies: Shared character sheet

Writing utensils

Scrap paper

12 six-sided dice per player

OVERVIEW



In Shooting the Moon, love brings together three characters and puts them through the wringer.

Two Suitors compete for the affection of a shared Beloved, who has overwhelming odds of their own to face. United and divided by their shared fates and intertwined destinies, these characters discover what they are made of, and what they will do for love.

True love conquers all: alien invasion, bankruptcy, shipwreck — you name it.

But whose love is the truest?

CHARACTERS

The Beloved is a person of power and paragon of the world the characters inhabit. The traits you give to this character reflect and determine what is sought after and desirable in this setting. The Beloved is drawn to the Suitors and accepts their advances.

The Suitors are movers and shakers—or are moved and shaken—in this world. They have strengths like the Beloved, but are flawed and clay-footed, as well as heroic and enticing.

All the main characters are created collaboratively by the players, though each person plays just one.

Character Sheet Note: The standard character sheet for *Shooting the Moon* has room for all three characters. Separate sheets may also be used. Using a shared sheet makes it easy for everyone to keep track of each other's information. Separate sheets permit greater ease of individual use. You can find both types on the Black & Green Games website: blackgreengames.com



STORY & STEPS

The story is like a tango, gaining energy from the frisson between the players. Together the players take each other to places they would not go alone.

Two Suitors vie for the Beloved's attentions. Their shared goal, called the Prize, is a unique connection with the Beloved. You will choose the Prize at the start of the game. The Suitors' attempts to achieve this goal—and keep the other from doing so—form the story told in the game.

The Beloved has a Dream, an aspiration or ambition they are driven to achieve. They are attracted to each of the Suitors for different reasons. The Beloved's player collaborates with the other players to move their character closer to this goal, and will also get ahead by throwing obstacles in the other characters' paths.

The players create Hurdles for one another. Hurdles are obstacles, forged from the weaknesses and complexities of the characters. Surmounting a Hurdle gives characters resources they can use to attain their goals. Success and failure further develop the characters, and all the players get a chance to contribute to how the characters change or grow.

At the end of the game, when all players have taken three turns, each player rolls dice equal to the number of points they have amassed toward their goal to see whether they have reached it. Most often there is one winner, but the Beloved and a Suitor can reach their goals together. It is also quite possible that everyone fails. Tragedy comes with these romantic heights.

Breaks

During the course of play, take breaks after each round of Turns. Consider taking a Phys Break (p. xxii)—stretch, playing tag, or dancing to a character's favorite music. This is a healthy way to keep your blood pumping and inject some levity into play. Provide alternatives and support opting out. For more grave games consider quiet activities such as meditation or listen to contemplative music.



SETUP

To prepare for the game, you'll work together to generate your setting and characters.

Choose a Setting

Pick a setting that is familiar and interesting to everyone and gets the group's creative ideas flowing.

You may set this game in any time, place, genre, or venue, so long as it's possible to imagine a tale of long-fought romance and struggle for the heart of another set there. You might begin by discussing movies you've recently seen and liked, books you've all read, or situations that seem fun and compelling to you.

The setting could be the decks of swift pirate brigs racing across the Atlantic; the dark sultry shadows of a vampire-infested inner city; or the work-a-day world of your everyday corp, where love may take a tumble over the water cooler or spark by the copy machine.

SAMPLE SETTINGS

Adventure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fairy tale• Arctic explorers• big game hunters• super spies• alien hunters• ancient Greek heroes• space marines• hackers• haunted house• cyberpunk reality• swashbucklers• witch war• magical order• moon base	Real world <ul style="list-style-type: none">• office romance• high school prom• meeting on a long bus ride• trendy night club crowd• AA meeting• Sschool PTA• outdoors club• fandom convention• artist's community• neighborhood sports team• chess club• college gaming group
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In Shooting the Moon, play out the triumphs and despair of a love triangle in the world of your choice.

When you've chosen a setting, write it on your shared character sheet, or on the Beloved's character sheet if using individual versions. The Setting need only be described by a few words or a simple phrase.

You will further develop the setting into a starting situation during Character Creation.



SAMPLE SITUATIONS

- The gilded courts of 18th century France, scene of *Dangerous Liaisons*. Sex and love are traded like blows in the dance of manipulation by powerful and bored French nobles.
- High space-opera science fiction. War rips apart the court of the galactic Regents as the last scion of royal blood seeks a worthy Consort.
- Romance on the high seas. The most dreaded pirate of the Caribbean faces the entire British navy, as the bloodiest and fairest women pirates on the seven seas seek to make him their own.
- Vampire hunter. A sexy slayer of vampires and demons has her guardian and a vampire friend seek her true affections—if they can find a second in between all the slaying!

Character Creation

This process weaves back and forth between the Beloved and the Suitors.

Steps of character creation

- Beloved Attributes, p. 99
- Synonyms and Antonyms chosen, p. 99
- Assign Synonyms and Antonyms (as Starting Traits for Suitors) p. 100
- Suitor Traits are Modified (the “buts”), p. 100
- Final Beloved Attributes: Opportunity, Obstacle, Dream, p. 102
- Suitor’s Traits: Person, Place, Thing, p. 103
- Finishing the characters: The Prize, p. 104





Begin by deciding who will take the role of Suitor 1, Suitor 2 and the Beloved.

The steps of character creation involve collaboration. The players of Suitor 1 and Suitor 2 (SP1, SP2) and of the Beloved (BP) all make up aspects of each of the characters.

For this reason, try not to get too attached to one particular vision for the characters. What they become will likely surprise you.



DEFAULT TURN ORDER

Throughout the game, unless an exception is noted, follow this default turn order: Suitor Player 1 (SP1), Suitor Player 2 (SP2), Beloved's Player (BP).

A. BELOVED ATTRIBUTES

Take turns choosing words or phrases that describe an aspect of the Beloved until you have generated 6 starting Attributes. These define what is desirable in the world the characters inhabit, and create facts about the setting. They are strengths and resources the Beloved has sway over. They may be defining personality traits or physical characteristics. Each person chooses two Attributes.

Example

In the Setting "Pirates," the players chose the following Attributes for the Beloved:

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| • Ruthless | • Ambitious | • Carouser |
| • Daring | • Infamous | • Best Ship |

B. SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

Now, create Synonyms (words with the same or similar meaning) and Antonyms (words with the opposite meaning) for **three** of the Beloved's Attributes. Each player picks one of the Attributes and makes both an Antonym and a Synonym for it. Three Attributes will not have pairs created for them. Use default turn order.



Example

For the Beloved's Attribute "Daring," the Synonym "Thrillseeking" and the Antonym "Cautious" were chosen.

C. SUITOR'S STARTING TRAITS

The Synonyms and Antonyms now become opening Traits for the Suitors. Take turns choosing one of the available Synonyms or Antonyms and assigning it to a Suitor. The other word from that pairing becomes a Trait of the other Suitor. Take turns until no Antonyms or Synonyms remain unassigned, and each Suitor has three Traits. Use default turn order.

Example

SP1 goes first. From the pair "Cautious" and "Thrillseeking," she chooses "Thrillseeking" and makes it an Attribute for her character, Bloody Anne. Suitor 2, Fair Bonnie, thus gets the Antonym "Cautious."

D. MODIFY SUITOR TRAITS

Next, you will add nuance to each of the Suitor's Traits by choosing words or phrases as new Traits that modify the existing one in some way. The modification should strengthen, weaken or give more detail to what we know about the character based on the original Trait.

You do this by writing "but" after each original Suitor Trait and adding the modifying Trait below it. There is space for this on the character sheet.



Order Exception: Modify all three of each Suitor's Traits using the following order: Each Suitor first modifies their own character, then the other Suitor gets the chance, then the Beloved. Continue until all the Suitors' Attributes have been modified (3 for each Suitor).

So the order is:

- For Suitor 1 – SP1, SP2, BP
- For Suitor 2 – SP2, SP1, BP

Example

SP1 modifies an Attribute on S1:

- The pirate Bloody Anne has the trait "Vainglorious." Her player, **SP1**, modifies it with the Trait "Practical."

SP2 modifies an Attribute on S1:

- Bloody Anne has the trait "Heartless." **SP2** modifies it with "Loves animals."

BP modifies an Attribute on S1:

- Bloody Anne also has the trait "Surefooted." **BP** modifies it with "Afraid of heights."

So, for Anne on the character sheet it now reads:

- Vainglorious *but* Practical
- Heartless *but* Loves animals
- Surefooted *but* Afraid of heights



NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

What are Traits and Attributes?

They are ways of describing the characters. When you bring them into play, you will get dice added to your pool, which can help you succeed on certain rolls.

Descriptors given to Beloved during Setup are Attributes. They define aspects of the world. Suitors descriptors are Traits that describe the character and what is important to them.

Both Suitors and Beloved gain Traits during play. Record them on the character sheet in each character's area.

E. THE BELOVED: OPPORTUNITY, OBSTACLE AND DREAM

In addition to their starting Attributes, the Beloved also has three more: an Opportunity, an Obstacle, and a Dream. Each is chosen by one of the players as shown below. Generate these by each writing an answer to the Attribute question. The group can brainstorm about possibilities.

- **Opportunity:** Why is the Beloved available? (Created by SP1)
- **Obstacle:** What major challenge is the Beloved facing? (Created by SP2)
- **Dream:** What is the Beloved's Goal, or ambition in the world? (Created by BP)

After creating these, the Beloved's player describes how their character feels about each. Describe how the Opportunity and their interpersonal connections make the Beloved open to both of the Suitors. Give insights into what makes the Beloved tick.



Example

The Opportunity for the Beloved, Captain Jack, is that the two lady pirates are his only equals, and his Obstacle is that the entire British Navy is after him. The Dream of the Beloved is to become an Admiral of a Pirate Fleet.

Captain Jack is delighted to have the two pirates fighting over him, and is devil-may-care about the threat of the Navy. However, he is deadly serious about becoming Admiral and having a fleet of ships under his command.

F. THE SUITORS' TRAITS: PERSON, PLACE, THING

The players choose three more traits for each of the Suitor characters: a Person, a Place and a Thing. The Person is a friend or ally, enemy or rival, or other acquaintance of the Suitor. The Place is somewhere the Suitor frequents or is associated with, or that the player wants to see featured in the game. The Thing is an object the Suitor uses or owns. Since all the players create these Traits, they can range from positive to negative, as do the Attributes.

Order Exception: The Suitor Player of the character in question chooses first, then the other Suitor's Player. The Beloved's Player goes last.

- For Suitor 1 – SP1, SP2, BP
- For Suitor 2 – SP2, SP1, BP

The Person, Place and Thing may be created in any order by the players.

SUITOR CONFLICTS

You can also create optional Conflicts for the Suitors. This creates more complications and back-story for the Suitors. It is required when playing with two players. See page 144 for details.



Example

SP1 chooses Bloody Anne's Person: her talented First Mate who loves her. **SP2** chooses a Thing for Bloody Anne: a poison dagger. The **BP** chooses Bloody Anne's Place: the free-port for pirates. Following this, **SP2** chooses a Place for their own character, **SP1** chooses a Thing for **SP2**, and the **BP** chooses a Person for **SP2**.

G. FINISHING THE CHARACTERS: THE PRIZE

After all characters have Attributes and Traits, if they have not done so already, each player should choose a name for their character.

Next, imagine what your character might look like, how their traits fit together and what personality might be. What do the other characters mean to them?

Take some time to share these things with one another before beginning the characters' pursuit of romance.

The Prize

The Suitors are after a single Prize that you will now decide upon. This is the Goal of both Suitors. It may be the heart of the Beloved, a date, the hand of the Beloved in marriage, a rose from their hair, their true affection, or anything else that makes sense and seems fun in the setting.

While everyone—including the Beloved's Player—can suggest potential Prizes, the Suitors' Players make the final selection. Both Suitor Players must agree.

If the Beloved's Player has an objection to the Prize chosen, the Suitors must modify their choice.

Write the Prize on the labeled space at the bottom of the character sheet.



Example of Character Creation: (3 Player Game)

Ben, **Alexis** and **Emily** begin a 3 player game with the setting “Mythic China” and decide to be inspired by various famous Chinese works. **Ben** plays Suitor 1, and **Alexis** plays Suitor 2, and **Emily** plays the Beloved Bao-yu. After making the Beloved Attributes, they create the following Antonyms and Synonyms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Warrior • <i>Synonym:</i> Undefeated in battle • <i>Antonym:</i> Sickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Philosopher • <i>Synonym:</i> Learned • <i>Antonym:</i> Illiterate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Master of the Guqin (zither) • <i>Synonym:</i> Brilliant Erhu (fiddle) player • <i>Antonym:</i> Tone deaf
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Ben makes the first Suitor’s Attributes: he assigns “Learned” to his character, Lin Dai-yu, and gives “Illiterate” to **Alexis’** character, Guan Yu. In return, **Alexis** takes “Undefeated in battle” for Guan Yu and gives “Sickly” to Lin Dai-yu. **Emily** chooses “Brilliant Erhu player” for Lin Dai-yu, and so Guan Yu is “Tone deaf.”

When they modify the Traits, **Ben** modifies Lin Dai-yu’s trait Sickly with “Has Unearthly Beauty”. **Alexis** makes **Ben’s** character Learned but “Cursed”. **Emily** makes Lin Dai-yu a Brilliant Erhu player but she “Plays with no Heart.” **Alexis** then modifies Guan Yu’s Tone deafness with “but Charming.” **Ben** modifies the Undefeated nature of Guan Yu with “Losing his Edge.” **Emily** makes Guan Yu Illiterate but “Canny”. After they finish with the Suitors, they switch their focus to the Beloved:

Ben: For the Opportunity, I’d say that Bao-yu is available because he is looking for an ideal he can never find. He is a Dreamer, and so misses what’s going on in the real world.

Alexis: I can see that. And his Obstacle is that his family has a very prudent match in mind for him, but he would never be happy with her.



Emily: Yes. And his dream is to live up to the story about him, that he is the uncut Jade of prophecy.

They next create a Person, Place and Thing for each of the Suitors. For Lin Dai-yu, **Ben** creates a Place, the Garden where they meet in secret. **Alexis** adds the cruel lady Xi-Feng as an opponent for Lin Dai-yu. **Emily** gives **Ben**'s character a Journal of her Poetry. For her character, Guan Yu, **Alexis** creates the Land of Dreams. **Ben** gives Guan Yu the Ghost of an opponent he killed, and **Emily** makes a Great Hall where Guan Yu lives.

The Suitor Players opt to create a Conflict for their own character: Lin Dai-yu with her Debt of Tears, and Guan Yu with his fierce loyalty to his lord who is an enemy of Bao-yu's family.

Consulting with **Emily**, they choose the Prize: to win the heart of Bao-yu, no matter what price they must pay.

Character Goals

The characters have objectives they are trying to reach. For the Beloved, the Dream (p. 102) is what they seek to attain. The Beloved's goal is based on their own priorities and hopes for the future.

For the Suitors, it is the Prize (p. 104)—their goal relates solely to the Beloved.



WALKTHROUGH



STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

The game consists of a short prologue, then three rounds in which each character takes a turn. Suitor Turns have a set of rules which are different from the Beloved's Turn.

A Game of *Shooting the Moon*

Prologue

Round 1:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 2:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 3:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

End Game

Over the course of the game, the players narrate how the Suitors pursue the Beloved, how the Beloved pursues their Dream, and the Obstacles everyone encounters.

The Players gain points toward their goals during turns. Points represent dice that will be rolled at the end of the game to win one's goal.

ON PLAY

On Playing a Suitor

Your goal is to portray this character pursuing the Beloved. The character will change through your choices and the choices of your fellow players. Embrace the changes and see where it leads. Be aware that the Prize may not be yours. And know that even if it is, this tale may be a tragic one.



On Playing the Beloved

Your goal is to portray this character pursuing their Dream, and considering whether to accept the Suitors into their life as the Prize dictates. Although you as a player may root for one or the other of the Suitors, the dice will determine whether the Beloved ends up with one of the Suitors—or not. Focus on finding ways that the Beloved is drawn to each of the Suitors, until the end game gives the final answer.



Your character will change over time by your choice and that of your fellow players. Be open to these changes and see where they lead you. The game may be humorous, full of longing or tragic—play to find out which your game will be.

WIN CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, a final confrontation determines who achieves their goal:

- **One Suitor**—if they alone gain the Prize
- **Beloved alone**—if they gain their Dream but neither Suitor achieves the Prize
- **The Beloved and a Suitor together**—two may achieve their goal and share victory.
- **No one**: if no one gains the advantage over the others.

How to Win

The Players try to gain points toward their goals during turns. Points represent dice that will be rolled at the end of the game to win one's goal or perhaps share the victory.

Suitors' Goal: The Prize

The Suitors compete to gain a romantic connection with the Beloved.

Example Prize:

The pirates Bloody Anne and Fair Bonnie seek the Prize: the "Hat of the Admiral who hunts for Captain Jack."

Beloved's Goal: The Dream

The Beloved's Dream is a goal that they are trying to realize during the course of the game. In each turn the Beloved's player will try to gain points toward this goal.

Example Dream:

Captain Jack wants to become Admiral of a pirate fleet.



PROLOGUE

The game begins with a brief scene focusing on the Beloved, called the Prologue. Choose to narrate or play out the scene as follows.

Narrate the Prologue:

- The Beloved Player describes the Beloved in their daily life contemplating their Dream, and introduces the Opportunity.
- Describe what the Dream means to the Beloved.
- Illustrate how the Beloved feels about the Opportunity and the Obstacle.
- Have the Beloved show how they are drawn to both of the Suitors.

OR

Play out the Prologue:

- The Beloved Player sets the scene where the Beloved contemplates their Dream: *where is the Beloved, what is the Beloved doing, what characters are there*. The Suitors are not present, but their players may portray other characters in this scene.
- Speaking in character, play a brief scene showing the Beloved and their intimates (or those opposing their ability to pursue their Dream) discussing the Beloved's Dream, and the Opportunity.
- End the Scene once both items have been addressed.
- After the Prologue is done, continue with play, starting with the first round.

Prologue

Round 1:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 2:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 3:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

End Game



PLAYER TURNS

In any given turn, the two players narrate how their characters pursue their goals, and one player creates opposition for the others. All the players gain dice for their narrations and roll them competitively. The players take their Turns in the standard order: SP1, SP2, BP. The game ends when each player has taken 3 turns.

TYPES OF TURNS:

There are two types of turns: **Suitor Turns** and **Beloved Turns**. Suitor Turns and Beloved Turns have different structures (see page 123).

For a shorter game, have just two Turns per player and then enter the Endgame (see page 136).

SUITOR TURNS

Each Suitor in turn takes an active part in courting the Beloved. In Suitor Turns, the Active Suitor teams up with the Beloved to participate in a scene, and potentially gain points towards winning the game.

The other Suitor takes the role of the Opponent, providing an obstacle or Hurdle for the Beloved and Active Suitor to overcome. The characters will likely gain a new Trait or two in each Turn.

About Turns

- Play out Suitor and Beloved Turns.
- Order for Turns is SP1, SP2, BP.
- The game ends when each player has had 3 turns, making a total of 9 Turns.





1. Free Play (Suitor Turns)

A Suitor Turn begins in “free play” which focuses on interactions between the Active Suitor (the player currently taking their turn) and the Beloved. During this phase, talk about what your characters see, say, and do, describe your characters and their surroundings, and interact with one another as if you are your characters.

Prologue

Round 1:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

Round 2:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

Round 3:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

End Game



Suitor Turns

1. Free Play, p.112
2. Hurdle, p. 114
3. First Pool, p. 115
4. Roll Dice, p. 118
5. Optional: Second Pool, p. 120
6. Roll Dice, p. 121
7. Final Narration, p. 122

BELOVED SETS THE SCENE

The Beloved's Player sets the scene, describing how the Beloved is living their life and pursuing their Dream. The Active Suitor may suggest locations that mesh with the Suitor's background and character. As the Beloved frames the scene, the Suitor describes how their character interacts with the Beloved.

In this scene, the Active Suitor tries to get in good with the Beloved. To do so, they may try to help the Beloved, and the Beloved can call upon their aid. For example, the two of them hatch a plan to ambush their enemy, or to study hard for the big test at the end of the year.

Jess and **Jurgen** are playing the Beloved and Suitor in a fantasy game of *Shooting the Moon*. **Jess** is a *rajumari* (or princess) in north India, and **Jurgen** is playing a radiant warrior coming to her rescue.

Jess: Well, I've been bitten by the king of serpents, which hasn't killed me but condemned me to sleep forever. I am lying on a bier beneath a tree, surrounded by the bright flowers of summer, and my grieving family.

Jurgen: I walk slowly to your sleeping form, holding my head and my sword down, hoping to find a way to heal your wound.

THE OTHER SUITOR BECOMES THE OPPONENT

The player of the non-Active Suitor takes the role of the Opponent: the trickster who will muck up this cozy scene. They listen to the Free Play, giving time for the Active Suitor and Beloved's Player to have a meaningful interaction, then they step in and introduce a Hurdle. (See p. 114)



Joshua is the Opponent. His character is a magician's apprentice, seeking his fortune in the world and trying to find a way to rescue the princess using his misfiring magics.

2. Hurdles (Suitor Turns)

A Hurdle is an obstacle narrated by the Opponent. They receive 5 dice for the First Pool (see p. 115). A Hurdle involves at least one of the following elements:

- The Active Suitor's Attributes, Traits or Conflict
- The Beloved's Attributes or Obstacle
- The Opposing Suitor's Traits or actions
- Some aspect of the world already described or newly established

The Opponent has many choices. They might exploit the Active Suitor's weaknesses, intensify the Beloved's Obstacle, have the Opposing Suitor make trouble, or make up some new aspect of the world—whether local or global—that creates new problems for the characters.

Introducing a Hurdle interrupts the flow of free play, and begins a several-step process in which the Opponent, the Active Player and the Beloved's Player all get a chance to speak and respond in turn. This process involves one to two rounds of dice rolls in which you first build a pool of dice earned through narrative. If the Opponent wins this pooled roll, then the active Suitor will have a new trait added to their character sheet.

Joshua listens to **Jess** and **Jurgen** talk about the scene between their characters, then looks at his character sheet. He sees the Attribute "Performs Transformations" and decides to have his wizard's apprentice cast a spell on **Jurgen's** Knight.

Joshua: I sneak out of the forest and wave my wand at you. You are enveloped in a green haze, and the family members cry out again—now in fear—and run away.

Jurgen: What is happening to me?

Joshua: If I win, I'll have you write "Turned into a Frog" on your character sheet!



Order of Play for Suitor Turns

1. Free Play
2. Hurdle
3. First Pool
(Three Responses by Active Suitor and Beloved)
4. Roll Dice
(Determine who wins: Active players or Opponent)
5. Optionally (if Active Players lose): Second Pool
(Either Suggestion by Opponent or Complication by Active players—Add a Trait)
6. Roll Dice
(Determine winner, Award points if Active Players win, Add Traits)
7. Final Narration: Winner sums up events

3. *The First Pool (Suitor Turns)*

For creating a Hurdle, the Opponent receives a pool of 5 dice.

Meanwhile, the Active Suitor and the Beloved create their first dice pool together. They are known as the Active Players. Here's how this works:

The two players narrate three Responses to the Hurdle. A Response is a description of what a character does to overcome the Hurdle. Many hacks & mods have variants of these. It can involve an element of the setting which assists. Each player must make at least one Response, and the team gets three in total.

Responses must include:

- at least one of the Suitor's Attributes or Traits
- at least one of the Beloved's Attributes or Traits



The Responses might involve the Beloved and Suitor working together or acting alone, or how another character or part of the world comes to their aid because of one of the Active Characters.

Depending on how you describe each Response, you gain the following dice:

- 2 dice = First use of one's own Trait for a Response.
- 1 die = Second use of one's own Trait for a Response.
- 2 dice = Making a suggestion for the other Active player that they like and use.

This forms the **First Pool** of dice for the Active Players in a Suitor's Turn.

What is described in a Response happens regardless of how the dice roll works out. They are not suggestions of how the situation could be resolved, but illustrations of how the characters react.

Limits for Hurdles and Responses

The following limits must be observed in Hurdles and Responses:

- Cannot eliminate any of the characters.
- Cannot fulfill Beloved's Dream.
- Cannot gain one or the other the Prize.
- Cannot govern actions of other player's characters, unless included in the rules (as with Suggestions) or by their permission.
- Supporting characters and elements of the world can be directed by anyone.



In Response to Joshua's Hurdle, Jess and Jurgen describe their character's actions:

FIRST RESPONSE

Jurgen: Last turn I befriended a little beggar girl with sharp eyes and fast fingers. I wrote her down on my sheet—so I'll say she sees the wizard point his wand at me, and she shouts to warn me.

(Jurgen uses a Trait, "Befriended beggar girl," from his own character sheet. This is the first time he's done so, so he takes 2 dice and adds them to the First Pool.)

SECOND RESPONSE

Jess: The chaos of my family crying and flitting about makes it hard for the apprentice to aim at the knight.

(Jess uses a Trait of her own: "Family wants her to get married." This is also the first time Jess has used this Trait, so she adds two dice to the First Pool.)

THIRD RESPONSE

Jurgen: So we each got two dice for using Traits of our own characters: the beggar girl for me, the family for you. Now, how about I suggest one for you to use? What about the golden dove your mother gave you?

Jess: Yes—the dove sees you as my protector and flies in the way of the green smoke. . . .

(Jess accepts the suggestions that Jurgen made. Since they worked together on this third Response, Jurgen can add another 2 dice to their First Pool.)



ALTERNATIVELY
(AN ALTERNATE THIRD RESPONSE)

Jurgen: Since the little girl warned me, I raise my Shield (my “Thing”) to ward off the green smoke.

Jess: Does it have some arcane power to protect you? We’ll find out! You get one die since you are using a second Trait of your own.

*(In this scenario, **Jurgen** adds the Third Response by using a second of his own Traits. So, he adds one die to their shared First Pool.)*

If a player suggests a Response for their partner which the partner rejects, the first player may choose something else to do—the ability to make a Third Response is not lost! You’ll also note that if the Active Players really want to win a roll, it pays for them to collaborate on the Third Response, so that they get two dice instead of one.

4. Roll Dice for the First Pool (Suitor Turns)

The Opponent rolls their 5 dice.

The Beloved and Active Suitor pool their dice (5 or 6, depending on how many they received for their Response) and roll them all.

Compare dice results and resolve the roll.

The side with the most sixes wins. If no sixes are rolled, then look for the highest number rolled—whoever has the most dice showing that number, wins.



Example rolls

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**6**, 4, 2, 1, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (5, 5, 3, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player win

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5**, 4, 3, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5**, **5**, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 wins

All ties are broken in Suitor Turns; players cannot tie:

If both sides have rolled the same number of dice with the highest value—compare the **next highest die**. If those dice are equal, compare the **next highest die**, and so on.

Example rolls

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5**, **4**, **3**, 1, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5**, **4**, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player win

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5**, 3, 3, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5**, **4**, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 wins

If the Active Suitor and Beloved win, they each receive one point towards their own Goal, and check off one box. They may each also add a new Trait to their character. (See Final Narration for Suitor Turns on page 122)

If the Opponent wins, no one receives any points toward their Goal at this time. The Active Suitor and the Beloved gain Traits declared by the Opponent. Whatever the outcome, keep the First Pool dice showing their results for the next phase.



The Active Suitor and the Beloved may choose to continue to try to overcome the Hurdle, by rolling more dice again during the (optional) **Second Pool**. Regardless of whether the Beloved and Active Suitor continue to the Second Pool, the Active Suitor still gains a Trait bestowed by the Opponent.

Joshua has 5 dice to roll for the Hurdle he created: a spell to turn the knight into a frog. **Jurgen** and **Jess** have 6 dice: 2 for the beggar girl's warning, 2 for the distraction of the princess's family, and two for the intervention of the dove.

The dice are rolled. The results are:

Jess and Jurgen: 5-4-4-3-2-1

Joshua: 6-3-3-2-1

Joshua: Aha! I have a 6 and your highest die is a 5. Come and croak for me little knightly! Ribbit, ribbit!

Taunting and talking smack (in a playful and respectful manner) is highly recommended.

5. The Second Pool (Suitor Turns)

If the Active Player and the Beloved Player lose after rolling the First Pool, they get a second chance. They can earn more dice through narration involving a character element—but this opens the door to suggestions by the Opponent. Things get down and dirty here.

First, the Opponent must make a suggestion for what occurs. If either of the Active Players accepts this suggestion, they get to roll 4 Dice. The Opponent immediately assigns a complicating Trait related to the suggestion to either the Active Suitor or the Beloved.

If the Active Players reject the Opponent's suggestion, they can still gain extra dice. However, the Active Players have to create a complication for themselves. They may call upon one of their own Conflicts (if included in character creation), a Trait that can cause problems for the Suitor, or the Beloved's Obstacle. Either



the Active Suitor or the Beloved must create a new Trait for their own character that reflects the complication. This allows them to roll 3 Dice.

DICE FOR SECOND POOL:

- 4 dice = Opponent's suggestion (new trait added to 1 character) **OR**
- 3 dice = Complication by Active Suitor Player and Beloved Player (new trait added to 1 character)

Note: A rejected suggestion does not occur in the story, unless narrated as part of later play.

Continuing from the last situation, **Joshua** the Opponent makes the following suggestion:

Joshua: The knight is overcome with fear and runs from the spell.
You would add the Trait "Big Coward" to your sheet.

Jurgen: That's cold, man.

Jess: How do we feel about that suggestion?

Jurgen: No way am I making them a coward.

Jess: Okay, suggest something else good, 'cause those 4 dice are looking good to me.

Jurgen: All right, let's take a look at our Traits here . . .

6. Roll Dice for the Second Pool

The Active Players roll these additional 3 or 4 dice earned from accepting the Opponent's Suggestions or making their own Complication and adding a Trait.

Include these results to the Beloved's side of the First Pool and compare again to see who wins.



7. Final Narration for Suitor Turns

Once all the Die Pools have been rolled and compared, resolve the outcomes. Award Points toward goals, add Traits to character the sheet, and narrate the outcome of the situation appropriately depending on who wins.

If the Active Suitor and Beloved Win

- The Active Suitor and Beloved each gain a new trait, chosen by their own players.
- The Active Suitor and Beloved each earn one Point toward their Goal.
- The Active Suitor and Beloved both narrate the outcome of the situation together.

Record Points on one of the Goal circles in the appropriate area of the character sheet.

If the Opponent Wins

- No points are awarded.
- The Opponent narrates the outcome of the situation.
- Optionallly: add Traits to the Active Characters

NARRATION

- A player narrating the outcome of a turn resolves the action based on what happened during play. That player can narrate any aspects of the world as they please. However, if they wish to say what another player's character does in response, they must have that player's agreement.
- No one can narrate that another player's character has died or been taken out of action.

ADDING NEW TRAITS

- Write new Traits on the character sheet on the lines below existing Traits. All Traits are eligible for Sacrifice later in the game, except for the Beloved's Opportunity, Obstacle and Dream.
- Characters can have identical Traits (for example if both Suitors work together in a law firm, they could both have the Trait "Fired.")
- Traits often relate to the Hurdle and should reflect a new aspect of the character. As new Traits are added, the characters will change and grow (perhaps in ways unexpected).



- If an added Trait substantially changes a character—say, a knight gets turned into a frog—that’s okay. A later Trait might alter this, or it might make sense to treat the Trait as a passing condition. For example, when the next Turn begins, the knight has changed back to his normal self, although that wouldn’t change the fact that he **had been** a frog. Perhaps he still croaks now and then, or has a strange tongue. “Frog tongue” could be added as a new Trait in a later Turn.

Prologue

Round 1:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

Round 2:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

Round 3:

1. Suitor 1 Turn

2. Suitor 2 Turn

3. Beloved Turn

End Game

BELOVED TURNS

During the Beloved’s Turn, the Beloved’s Player is the Opponent. They create Hurdles for both Suitors at once. In return, they—as well as the Suitors—have the chance to gain multiple points toward their Goal.

The Suitor Players create separate Dice Pools that they will roll against the Beloved’s Player and each other. Similar to the Suitor Turns, players create dice pools via narration.

1. Choose the Hurdle Level (Beloved’s Turn)

BEGINNING THE TURN

The Beloved’s Player creates a Hurdle, a challenging situation facing both Suitors. Before doing so, the Beloved’s Player sets the Level for the Hurdle.

The Level determines the degree of reward and risk at stake: winning a higher Level earns more points toward a character’s Goal.

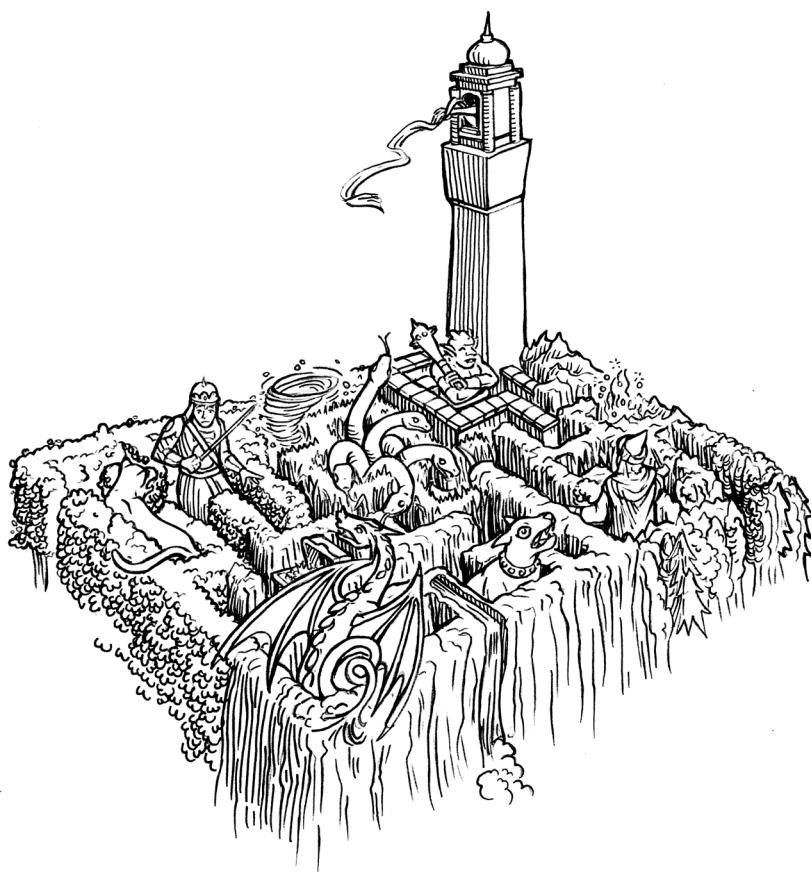
Level one gives the Suitors a challenge and offers a reward of 1 point.

At Level two, the Suitors face danger and harm, and all seek a reward of 2 points.

At Level three, the Suitors and Beloved face danger, but the reward is 3 points.

See pages 125 through 126 for more details on Levels and dice the Beloved gains.





2. Hurdles (*Beloved Turn*)

Once the Beloved chooses the Level, they describe the specifics of the Hurdle for the Suitors. A separate circumstance may afflict each of the Suitors, or one big mess of monkey wrenches may come down on all the characters at once.

When this Turn is resolved, the person who wins applies a new Trait to each of the characters. It may be the same Trait to all, or a unique one for each.

Order of Play for Beloved Turns

1. Choose Level, p. 123
2. Hurdles, p. 124
3. Responses, p. 128
4. Resolve the Turn



Beloved's Turn Hurdle Levels

LEVEL 1

- **Situation:** Suitors face challenge
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 5 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 1 point

LEVEL 2

- **Situation:** Suitors are threatened
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 7 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 2 points

LEVEL 3

- **Situation:** Suitors and Beloved are all threatened
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 9 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 3 points

For each level an example is given that shows the magnitude of danger at that level. Also sample Traits that might be applied at the end of the Turn.

LEVEL ONE

A **Level 1 Hurdle** must present some challenge to the Suitors. It blocks agendas or compromises recent Suitor actions. Perhaps some contest is set, or the Beloved demands some condition be met.

Examples

Level 1 Hurdle: The Suitors meet a beautiful woman in the magical forest.

Sample Traits: Beguiled by the wood witch, Flirtatious, Distracted

Level 1 Hurdle: The pirate ship's navigational charts get blown overboard.

Sample Traits: Lost at sea, Steering by the stars, Despairing



LEVEL TWO

In a Level 2 Hurdle, both Suitors must face some danger—personal, emotional, professional, etc.—that is appropriate to the setting. The Suitors may be captured, attacked, fired, and so on.

Examples

Level 2 Hurdle: The boss blames the Suitors for losing the firm's biggest account.

Sample Traits: Fired, Underdog, Demoted

Level 2 Hurdle: A fire breathing dragon attacks the Suitors.

Sample Traits: Burned by the drake, Proved their courage, Dragonblood-touched

LEVEL THREE

In a Level 3 Hurdle, the Suitors and the Beloved are all threatened.

Examples

Level 3 Hurdle: A great storm besets the pirate ships at sea.

Sample Trait: Shipwrecked, Hauling to, Riding the storm

Level 3 Hurdle: The firm gets bought out in a merger and everyone's job is suddenly on the line.

Sample Traits: Newly unemployed, Vying for position, Blackballed



ADVICE FOR CREATING HURDLES

When creating a Hurdle, take a cue from the Suitors' or Beloved's Attributes, Traits or Obstacle. These are ready-made openings waiting to be exploited and developed into character problems, dilemmas, and plot twists. Consider the setting, and who might oppose the Suitors or wish them ill.

Using these tools, ask your co-players to stretch the abilities of the characters and explore new directions that they likely would not have ventured into alone. These Hurdles enhance the story by forcing characters to show their mettle in the face of opposition.

A few suggestions to explore in any setting:

- Threaten the character with bodily harm or abduction
- Threaten something or someone they care about
- Threaten an aspect of their character that the player cares about
- Distract them from their goals
- Order them to do something objectionable
- Make them look stupid in front of the Beloved
- Separate them from the Beloved or their friends
- Make someone they care about request something at cross-purposes with gaining the Beloved's love
- Send them on an impossible errand or give them a trial to overcome
- Change their form or appearance



3. Suitor Responses (Beloved's Turns)

Once the Beloved's Player has described the Hurdle, the Suitor Players Respond.

The Suitors make Three Responses each, for a total Six Responses per Beloved Turn.

Note: There are more Responses in a Beloved's Turn than in a Suitor's Turn. The Suitors have separate Responses since they compete with each other—and the Beloved—to win this turn.

For each Response, the players choose from the Menu of Options below to describe what happens as they try to overcome the Hurdle. Narrate the actions, or speak in character. Provide details about the location, involve other characters as inspired by the Options and your imagination.

After each Response, the Suitor Player gains dice. How many dice a Suitor Player gains for each Response depends on what story and character elements they bring into play. The Menu describe the dice rewards.

Menu of Options:

- **2 dice** = Involve a Trait of your own character or the Beloved.
- **3 dice** = Involve your own character's Trait and add a related new complicating Trait to your character sheet.
- **3 dice** = Create a complication for the other Suitor that the Beloved's Player approves.
- **3 dice** = Flirt with the Beloved.
- **4 dice** = (If Conflict is in use) Involve your own character's Conflict and add a related new complicating Trait to character sheet.
- **4 dice** = Suggestion from other Suitor Player: something that goes wrong for Active Character and a complicating Trait they gain. Suitor is required to give Suggestion if asked. Active Player may reject Suggestion and must pick another Option. (Rejected Suggestion does not count as one of three Responses. for Turn)
- **5 dice** = Sacrifice: Cross a Trait or Attribute off your sheet and replace it with one that substantially changes your character, and that all players agree on. (E.g. best friend turns to bitter ally, jaded character becomes touched by wonder, magic sword becomes inhabited by wild demon, etc.) There may be only one Sacrifice per turn per Suitor Player. The Beloved's Traits may not be Sacrificed.



Write down new traits during the Response in which they are created. They take effect immediately and are used in narration for other Responses (including Sacrifice).

After each Response, the Beloved's Player has the opportunity to further develop their Hurdle, describing how it continues to impact the characters. This does not mean new Hurdles are being created, just that the characters still feel the effects of the initial situation.

Limits to Narration: Responses may not resolve the Hurdle until all six Responses have been made and dice are rolled. This outcome will determine who gets to narrate the resolution to the situation.

Example

Matt, Meredith and **Meg** are playing a game set in a modern corporate high-rise. **Meg's** character Annibel is the Beloved, a new partner in the law firm where Avanti and Aaron (**Matt** and **Meredith's** characters, respectively) work.

Meg gave **Matt** and **Meredith** a third level Hurdle; the firm is looking to down-size, so the three are given an unwinnable case and an ultimatum: win the suit or hit the road.

Meg: Selene dumps a huge file on Annibel's desk and walks away with a wry smile. "Enjoy that beautiful view while you've got it."

Meredith: Okay, Aaron calls in some favors with his friend from Yale, looking for dirt on the defendant. That gets me 2 dice.

Matt: Avanti is hunting down leads as well. She looks through the firm databases—and finds some not so nice connections that lead back to Aaron! That leads to a complication for **Meredith**, so that's 3 dice for me, if **Meg's** okay with it. (**Meg** nods.) Yes!

Meredith: This means war!



PACING

The group may wish to switch back and forth between one Suitor's story and the other, or to do all three Responses from each Suitor's Player all at once. The play group should decide how to handle this, since each Suitor Response may affect the other Suitor's character. Your order might vary depending on the dramatic needs of the scene.

The Responses end once each Suitor Player has completed three.

4. Resolving the Beloved's Turn

After the three Responses, each Suitor will have a pile of dice in front of them, forming their personal dice pool. The Scene Level sets the Beloved's pool (see page 125).

In this roll, it's every player for themselves—each roll is judged competitively against the other two.

As in a Suitor's Turn, look for the highest die value present. If only one player has rolled that value, that player wins the roll.

Example rolls

Suitor Player 1 (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**6**, 4, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1)

Beloved Player (5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 2, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor 2 wins

Suitor Player 1 (5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1,)

Beloved Player (**6**, 5, 4, 4, 2, 2, 2, 1)

Beloved wins



If two or more players have rolled the same value, use the same process as in Suitor Turns and compare the next highest die until a winner is determined (See page 118).

All ties are broken in Beloved Turns; players cannot tie.

Once the winner has been determined, that player gains points and adds Traits to all of the characters.

The number of points gained is equal to the points offered as a reward for the Level (see p. 125). Fill in this many circles for the character's Goal under the winning character on the character sheet. This is the Dream for the Beloved and the Prize for each Suitor.

Base the Traits added on the events of play. They may reflect the Hurdle, or some action taken by the character, or some facet of their personality that was high-lighted. If appropriate, the same Trait may be applied to all three characters.



MECHANICS



SUITOR TURNS

Free Play (pp. 112-113): Choose where & why Active Suitor and Beloved are together.

Active Suitor and Beloved play brief scene interrupted by the other Suitor Player acting as Opponent.

Hurdle and Responses (See pages 114-116):

- Opponent introduces Hurdle, and gains 5 dice to roll.
- Three Responses by Active Suitor and Beloved gain dice for First Pool.
- Optional Second Pool of dice if Active Players fail.

First Pool (pp. 115-120): Active Suitor and Beloved roll against the Opponent. Compare dice as shown below. (See “Rolling Dice for First Pool” page 118)

- If Active Players succeed, they win. End Turn. (See Final Narration)
- If Active Players fail, can push for Second Pool of Dice, leave dice values showing. If they do not push for Second Pool, end Turn. (See Final Narration)

Second Pool (optional) (pp. 120-121):

- Opponent gives suggestion for Response that complicates things for Active characters, and adds one new Trait immediately - Gain 4 dice if accepted
- If Opponent suggestion is rejected, Active Players choose complicating Response and add one new Trait immediately - 3 dice

Active Players roll Second Pool, place in line with First Pool in order from highest to lowest.

Compare dice pools again.

- If Active Players now beat Opponent, they win. End turn as if won First Pool.
- If Active Players lose, no one gains any points.

Final Narration (pp. 122-123): Winning side describes outcomes.

- If Active Players win, each gains 1 point toward goal and chooses new Trait.
- If Opponent wins, chooses new Trait for each Active character. No points are gained.



Rolling Dice in Suitor Turns

Each side rolls all dice in pool. Each side lines up their dice from highest to lowest values

Compare dice results.

The side with the most sixes wins. If no sixes are rolled, then look for the highest number rolled—whoever has the most dice showing that number, wins.

Example rolls

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**6**,4,2,1,1)

Suitor Player 2 (5,5,3,2,1)

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player win

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5**,4,3,2,1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5,5**,2,2,1)

Suitor Player 2 wins

There are **no ties** in Suitor Turns:

If both sides have rolled the same number of dice with the highest value—compare the *next highest die*. If those dice are equal, compare the *next highest die*, and so on.

Example rolls

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5,4,3**,1,1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5,4**,2,2,1)

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player win

Suitor Player 1/Beloved Player (**5**,3,3,2,1)

Suitor Player 2 (**5,4**,2,2,1)

Suitor Player 2 wins



BELOVED TURNS

- Beloved chooses Threat Level, sets points toward Goal to be gained.
- Beloved describes situation and Hurdles. Gain dice shown for Threat Level.
- Each Suitor gives three Responses choosing from Menu of Options, and gains dice as shown.
- Beloved, Suitor 1 and Suitor 2 all roll dice gained against one another.
- Compare Dice as in Suitor Turns.
- Winner gains all points toward Goal, assigns a new Trait to each character.

Menu of Options for Beloved Turns

Suitors each have three Responses. Choose from menu of options below.
Gain dice number of dice associated with choice to create dice pool.

- **2 dice** = Involve a Trait of your own character or the Beloved.
- **3 dice** = Involve your own character's Trait and add a related new complicating Trait to your character sheet.
- **3 dice** = Create a complication for the other Suitor that the Beloved's Player approves.
- **3 dice** = Flirt with the Beloved.
- **4 dice** = (If Conflict is in use) Involve your own character's Conflict and add a related new complicating Trait to character sheet.
- **4 dice** = Suggestion from other Suitor Player: something that goes wrong for Active Character and a complicating Trait they gain. Suitor is required to give Suggestion if asked. Active Player may reject Suggestion and must pick another Option. (Rejected Suggestion does not count as one of Suitor's three Responses for the Turn.)
- **5 dice** = Sacrifice: Cross a Trait or Attribute off your sheet and replace it with one that substantially changes your character, and that all players agree on. (E.g. best friend turns to bitter ally, jaded character becomes touched by wonder, magic sword becomes inhabited by wild demon, etc.) There may be only one Sacrifice per turn per Suitor Player. The Beloved's Traits may not be Sacrificed.



Rolling Dice in Beloved Turns

Beloved chooses Threat Level. Describes situation and Hurdle.

All three players compete for points toward Goal. Threat Level determines how many can be gained.

All ties are broken in Beloved Turns; players cannot tie.

BELOVED TURN HURDLE

THREAT LEVEL 1:

- **Situation:** Suitors face challenge
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 5 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 1 point

THREAT LEVEL 2:

- **Situation:** Suitors are threatened
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 7 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 2 points

THREAT LEVEL 3:

- **Situation:** Suitors and Beloved are all threatened
- **Beloved's Dice Pool:** 9 dice
- **Points toward Goal:** 3 points

Compare Dice as in Suitor Turns, determine sole winner. The (sole) winner gains all the points and adds a Trait to each character

ENDGAME

At the end of the game, players decide on final climatic situation. Each rolls number of dice equal to points gained during play.

Determine winners, leaving ties unbroken. See page 136 for outcomes.



ENDGAME



Prologue

Round 1:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 2:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

Round 3:

1. Suitor 1 Turn
2. Suitor 2 Turn
3. Beloved Turn

End Game

When each player has had three turns, the game concludes. The players collaboratively describe the climactic scene and set the stage for a final decision about their goals. This is the time to bring any outstanding issues into the mix, letting the characters (and the players) tie up loose ends and answer any open questions that may have arisen throughout the game.

After the group has set the scene and described the situation, the players roll for their goals: Dream for the Beloved and the Prize for the Suitors.

DICE FOR THE GOALS

The players each have a dice pool equal to the number of points they earned towards their Goal as marked on their sheet.

Set the scene for the final outcome and describe the situation. Let each player say what their character does to try to accomplish their Goal, then roll the dice and determine the overall results.

ENDGAME OUTCOMES

Compare dice and resolve rolls as in Suitor and Beloved Turns. If one player rolls the highest value on a die or dice, they are the **sole winner**.



Example Sole Winner rolls

Suitor Player 1 (5,4,3,2,1,1)

Suitor Player 2 (**6**,4,3,2,2,1,1)

Beloved Player (5,5,5,4,4,2,2,2,1)

Suitor 2 wins

Suitor Player 1 (5,4,4,4,3,2,1)

Suitor Player 2 (5,4,3,2,1,1)

Beloved Player (**6**,5,4,4,2,2,2,1)

Beloved wins

However, if two or more have rolled the highest value on the same number of dice, go on to **endgame ties**.

Endgame Ties

Ties are allowed in the Endgame, they **are not broken**; players can tie. There may be two winners, or all may lose.

Compare how many of the highest value each side has rolled. If two or more players have an equal number of this value, they **tie for the win**. Players with fewer of the highest value lose.

Example Endgame Tie Rolls

Suitor Player 1 (**6, 6**, 5, 3, 2, 1, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**6**, 4, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1)

Beloved Player (**6, 6**, 5, 4, 4, 2, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor 1 and the Beloved tie for the win

Suitor Player 1 (5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 1)

Suitor Player 2 (**6**, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1,)

Beloved Player (**6**, 5, 5, 4, 4, 2, 2, 2, 1)

Suitor 2 and the Beloved tie for the win



Resolving the Game and Final Narrations

A SOLE WINNER

Suitor wins: If one Suitor's Player has the highest die or dice, their character wins. That player narrates how they attain their Prize and what lies in store for the winning Suitor's relationship with the Beloved. The Beloved Player and the losing Suitor Player may describe an epilogue about what their character did since they did not attain their Goal.

Beloved wins: If the Beloved's Player wins, they narrate how the Beloved attains their Dream with or without the help of the Suitors and what they go on to do. Each Suitor Player may describe an epilogue for their Suitor: a few words about how their character moves on...or not, as the case may be.

Ties for the Win

In the case of a tie between the Beloved and one Suitor, both of these characters attain their Goal. The Beloved's player says how they accomplish their Dream. Together, the Suitor's player and the Beloved's player describe together how the Prize is attained, and what this means for their relationship. The losing Suitor Player narrates an epilogue for their Suitor.

If the Suitors' Players tie, neither of them wins. The Beloved's player narrates how the obstacles of the world blocked the Suitors. The Suitors' players describe how what they have become defines their own characters' stories, and what direction they follow after this loss. The Beloved's Player neither wins nor loses, the Beloved is simply still on their journey. The Beloved's Player narrates an epilogue of how the Beloved continues to work towards their Dream.

In the case of a three way tie, all three Characters fail to attain their Goal. Each describes a separate epilogue that reflects this. The Beloved's player narrates how the obstacles of the world blocked the Beloved from ever attaining their Dream. The Suitors' players each describe how their own character's story becomes defined by what they have become, and what direction they follow after this loss.



STRATEGY & TIPS



The Bribe

Dice in *Shooting the Moon* are weighted. Often, the bolder the move taken, the more dice are awarded. It's a very friendly bribe.

In Suitor Turns, it points you toward collaborating with each other in the First Pool. Then rewards you for letting the Opponent author your character and make things go wrong in the Second Pool. During Beloved Turns, there is a menu of options that range from low rewards for using your own Trait on up to sacrificing a Trait, which brings the most dice in reward.

This creates a tension between choosing what will keep a character safe, or true to the player's own intentions, and letting the world (and the other players) make the best—or worst—of it. You gain more dice by letting go of control, but give the other Suitor or the Beloved's player a chance to author your character. And often what gets added will create problems, trip your Suitor up, or even bring them down.

This is good for the story. It encourages people to accept things going wrong. It gives the job for coming up with the setbacks to someone who is motivated to do so: your adversary.

It is much more likely for you to win or tie at the end of the game if you gather more dice this way. But it is not impossible for someone, even if far behind the others, to win the day. You are rewarded for playing boldly, but other choices can still bring you to victory.

The Beloved has less option to pile on the hurt, but since they have twice the chances to gain points through Suitor Turns, the gain balances.



Free Play

When beginning Suitor Turns, it can be delicious to let the atmosphere build. Give space and time to the characters to be together, in this space, in this world. Adversity will come soon enough.

When you see an opportunity for the Hurdle—enter in with confidence.

Shoot the Moon

The name is a tip off to one strategy for play. In the card game *Hearts*, to shoot the moon is to win by losing every hand. Analogously in this role playing game, each turn the Suitor players have the option to let someone else add a problematic Trait to them. If they do, they receive a friendly bribe for their pains.

Suitor players can choose this route, opening up to adversity authored on their character by themselves and others. Or hew closer to what their existing Traits and own actions bring to bear, with lower risk and less reward. Both paths create a rich story, but they are different paths. You steer your character toward a destiny you choose or one you must surrender to.

Choosing options that let you make your own choices about the character is yet another way to figuratively shoot the moon. If a character loses the Prize, or Dream, losing may mean winning something else. Keeping their integrity, helping others, being true to one's self.

Character Development

The characters change, grow, are wounded and irrevocably changed as Traits are added or removed through Sacrifice. Players often gravitate toward the Sacrifice—in an Elizabethan comedy themed game one of the Suitors chose “the Duke’s mansion” as a place. From the first beat of the game, everyone was looking forward to destroying it. In the third Beloved’s Turn it burned, allowing the Responses to be a comedy of errors of the wrong person rescuing the right person, ending—true to genre—in a wedding.



The changes that happen to your character can develop in ways unguessed at. A sympathetic character can become a villain. A hearty character can become downtrodden. In a noir themed game, the Beloved's player chose "Has been murdered" for the Obstacle. This naturally lead to the whole game being played out as flash-backs, and one Suitor become harsher and more horrible as time went on—and became the murderer when love was denied them.

GM Practice

When designing *Shooting the Moon*, the fact that there was no traditional Game Master role but the game was strongly competitive was an important creative constraint. If three people sat down to play, all three would need to know how to "GM" at least a little bit, or the game would have to teach each of them.

What exactly was needed, out of all that a GM does? In the two types of Turns the real need was for some kind of obstacle to be offered up. Creating the setting, characters, judging the progress towards the final goal—all this could be handled collaboratively or through the formal system.

The role of the Opponent and the Hurdle they create boil down the specific acts needed to give the scene tension. As it happened, this made the "GM"-like role the easiest in each of these scenes. In Suitor Turns—watch the Beloved and Suitor maneuver around one another, and then pull out one of the hooks provided by world and character creation to trip them up. Beloved Turns put more pressure on the Beloved—they must generate a situation that can affect everyone. But after that, they respond as appropriate, and collaborate if needed, but there is a hand-off to the Suitor Players. And the menu of options gives everyone a creative safety net.



HACKS & MODS

For *Shooting the Moon*



TWO PLAYER

Shooting the Moon is playable with two, using these modifications to the rules for three. Read the standard rules and apply these changes.

Character Creation

In a two-player game of *Shooting the Moon*, each player portrays one of the Suitors. As in a three-player game, create all three characters together, including the Beloved.

First, create the Beloved:

- Each player chooses 3 Attributes for the Beloved
- Suitor One creates the Opportunity
- Suitor Two creates the Obstacle
- The Beloved has no Dream.

Then create pairs of Antonyms and Synonyms:

- Each player chooses two Attributes to make Antonym and Synonym pairs for.
- Both players together allocate these Traits to the Suitors. Each Suitor gets four Traits to start.
- Suitor 1 then Suitor 2 is the default order. Order exception is when the players modify Traits (“but..”). First they do one for their own Suitor, and then one for the other’s, alternating until all four Attributes for each character have been modified.

Create Person, Place and Thing Traits for Suitors. Create two for your own Suitor.

Discuss and agree on a Prize as in the core game.



Example of Character Creation: (2 Player Game)

Tom and **Tuyet** begin a two-player game with the setting "Pirates." **Tuyet** plays Suitor 1, **Tom**, Suitor 2. After making the Beloved Attributes, they create the following Antonyms and Synonyms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Ruthless • <i>Synonym:</i> Heartless • <i>Antonym:</i> Caring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Daring • <i>Synonym:</i> Thrill-seeking • <i>Antonym:</i> Cautious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Best Ship • <i>Synonym:</i> First Rate Ship • <i>Antonym:</i> Awful Tub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beloved Attribute:</i> Ambitious • <i>Synonym:</i> Vainglorious • <i>Antonym:</i> Contented
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Tuyet: For the Opportunity, I'd say that our Beloved, Captain Jack, is free because we are his only equals. He has other women, but no one but us will ever be able to capture his heart.

Tom: Sure! And his Obstacle is that the entire British Navy is breathing down his neck, trying to catch the scourge of the sea.

Tuyet makes Suitor 1's starting Traits; she assigns "Heartless" to her character Bloody Anne, and gives "Caring" to **Tom**'s character, Bonnie. In return, **Tom** takes "Thrill-seeking" for Bonnie and gives "Cautious" to Anne. **Tuyet** chooses "Vainglorious", and **Tom** chooses "First Rate Ship," giving "Contented" and "Tub" to each other in turn.

When they modify the Traits, **Tuyet** modifies Bonnie's trait "Thrill-seeking" with "Afraid of heights" and **Tuyet** makes **Tom**'s ship "Haunted." **Tom** makes Bonnie "Cautious" but "Not when gambling" and **then** makes **Tuyet**'s character "Heartless" but "Loves animals"...

After finishing their modifications, they create a Person, Place and Thing for each of the Suitors. **Tuyet** creates a crackerjack First mate for her ship as her Person and a Hidden cove as the Place. Then she gives **Tom** a ghost for Bonnie: the Spanish former Captain as her Person and **Tom** gives Bloody Anne a lucky medalion as a Thing, and a Lost island as her Place. He gives **Tuyet** a Poison dagger for Anne's Thing. Each then creates a Conflict for their own character: Anne has a vow to follow no one, and Bonnie has a love of the dark arts.



Character creation is complete when they choose the Prize: to get the hat of the British Admiral who hunts Jack—with the Admiral's head still in it!

Conflict

Each Suitor has a Conflict: a problem or issue that stands in their way of attaining the Prize with the Beloved. While optional in the core game, this is essential and required in the two-player version.

THE SUITORS' CONFLICTS

A Conflict is a special Trait that gives players a bonus in play. In order to use it, a Suitor must:

- narrate something that complicates the story or makes things harder for their character
- add a new Trait to their character that reflects what has been described

EXAMPLE CONFLICTS

- Bloody Anne has sworn never to take orders from another while her beloved, Jack, seeks to command her in a pirate fleet.
- In pre-revolutionary France, Victor is a poor artist, so Julianne's aristocratic father rejects him as a Suitor for his daughter.
- While competing for Rita's love, Sanjay risks his friendship with the other Suitor, Laura.
- Avanti's Conflict is that she is closeted about being gay.



- Caleb is a Xsian spy paid to infiltrate the Jovian League, which would undermine the Beloved's goal of creating peace between these warring factions in his empire.

Structure of a Two-Player Game

Over the course of the game, the players narrate the Suitors' pursuit of the Beloved and the obstacles that enter their paths.

Since a two-player game lacks a player for the Beloved, there are only Suitor Turns. The default order is: Suitor Player 1, Suitor Player 2.

The players alternate turns advancing toward **The Prize**, the connection with the Beloved that each seeks.

At the start of play, fill in one circle on the character sheet for each Suitor towards dice in the End Game.

Play is made up of the following steps:

Round 1

- Suitor Player 1 Turn
 - Free play (page 112)
 - Hurdle (page 114)
 - Three Responses and First Dice Pool (page 115)
 - Second Dice Pool (page 120)
- Suitor Player 2 Turn
 - Free play
 - Hurdle
 - Three Responses and First Dice Pool
 - Second Dice Pool

Repeat two more Rounds, until each player has had three Turns.

In a two-player game, the Active Suitor describes both the Beloved's and their Suitor's actions. During Free Play, both the Suitor and Beloved's actions and words are described.



During the First Pool, the Suitor Player gets 2 dice for each response. In the Second Dice Pool, the same number are awarded as in the three-player game (4 for the Opponent's suggestion, 3 for using creating your own complication).

How Many Points Toward a Goal?

In a two-player game, the number of points towards a Goal gained during each Suitor Turn increases as the game goes on.

- First Round = 1 point
- Second Round = 2 points
- Third Round = 3 points

Endgame

After each player has taken three turns, move on to resolving the final Outcome, which will explain which Goals are gained and lost.

When the game comes to a close, determine the final Outcome by following the procedure in Endgame (page 136) with these changes:

- The Suitor Players roll against one another
- If there is a tie in the final roll, each player describes how the other Suitor has failed to win the Prize.

After resolving Outcomes, each player gives an Epilogue: a brief description of their Suitor's life some years later. How did it change them? What is their life like now? How much did they give up for the Prize?



Ways to Add Players

TEAM PLAY

To play *Shooting the Moon* with more than three players, use teams. Two players may play each Suitor or the Beloved; see below for more details on how to allocate players to teams.

Each Team takes the place of one of the Players. So, for example, if there is a Team playing Suitor 1, whenever the rules call for Suitor 1 to do something, the Team works together to do this instead.

The rules of the game give players many opportunities to make suggestions about another character. Sharing a character is an extension of this. Each person on the team should support the other, acting as a sounding board for ideas and a helping hand to create interesting play.

When sharing a character, remember to **Alternate** and **Confer**:

Alternate: Players take turns making choices, and playing out what the character does. During character creation, take turns creating and modifying Traits for your team's character—first one person on the team adds something, then the next, and so on. During a Suitor or Beloved Turn, the members of a team alternate which player speaks for the character or who narrates a Response. Alternating is a way to keep play flowing quickly.

Confer: Team players should also consult each other throughout the game about character actions and adding Traits. At any time, one player on a team can interrupt the other and ask to confer about their actions. However, conferring about every action can add a great deal of time to play.

A good balance between alternating and conferring makes for fun play.



FOUR OR MORE PLAYERS

- **FOUR:** A team of two players portrays the Beloved.
- **FIVE:** A team of two players portrays each Suitor.
- **SIX:** A team of two players portrays each character: both Suitors and the Beloved. Or, of course, the group could split into two games of three.
- **SEVEN AND HIGHER:** With seven or more players, split into two smaller groups, and use the above guidelines to direct play in the smaller groups. For example, seven players can become a group of three players and a group of four. Eight players can become a group of three and a group of five, or two groups of four, etc.



Alternate Rules

STORY GAMES SEATTLE CUSTOM BLEND

That's our secret recipe: no GM & no Prep. It's about giving everyone (everyone) an equal voice. Our ground is level and our table is round. It's as simple as that. Story Games Seattle is about participation. We want to hear what you have to say and we want you to hear what everyone else at the table has to say too.

STORY GAMES SEATTLE FAQ
<http://www.meetup.com/Story-Games-Seattle>

This set of mods was inspired by the Story Games Seattle meet-up group, whose players embraced *Shooting the Moon* and brought their special spin to it.

You can add each of these mods independently, or all of them together. Look at them as an *à la carte* menu for your play.

1) *Player-Blind Character Creation*

Go through the steps of setting choice and character creation first, and choose who will take each role after character creation is done.

Instead of making choices in the traditional order (Suitor 1, Suitor 2, Beloved), randomly determine player order (Player 1, Player 2, Player 3).

Alternate who gets first choice. For example, for Beloved Attributes use this order: Player 1, Player 2, Player 3, etc. For starting Traits: Player 2, Player 3, Player 1; For modifying Suitor Traits: Player 3, Player 1, Player 2, etc.)

When all roles have been created, choose who will play each for the duration of the game. Choose through discussion, or assign randomly.



2) Setting Traits

Once you have chosen a Setting (for example, classic Hollywood pirates, lawyers' office, MMORPG), create four Setting Traits for the world that act as a backdrop for play.

Setting Traits may be: locations, vehicles, social movements, institutions, resources

FOR EXAMPLE:

Pirates	Lawyers	MMORPG
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freebooters Island• Ghost ship• Bluebeard's treasure• Pearl of Immortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corner office• Unwinnable case• Choosing a new firm partner• Combination to company safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Raid leader needed• Grimdragon Steed• Fortress of Diamond• Well of Healing

Use these elements to inspire the Beloved's Traits, Attributes and Suitor Traits.

3) The Beloved and the World

When choosing the Beloved's Attributes, use these as inspiration for characters and places that can establish setting for play.

Example

- **Beloved:** Captain Jack
- **Attributes:** Ruthless, Infamous, Daring, Carouser, Ambitious, Best Ship
- **Opportunity:** The Suitors are his only equals
- **Obstacle:** Whole British Navy is after him
- **Dream:** To found an independent country, based on the Verdant Islands

Example Setting Elements

- Infamous—Adoring fans on the Verdant Islands
- Daring—Eluded capture by threading ship through the Bone Reef
- Carouser—Regularly drinks people under the table at the Blue Parrot tavern
- Best Ship—The Grey Opal, his custom built sloop



4) *Person/Place/Thing and the Beloved*

Create a Person, Place, and Thing associated with each Suitor. These should be significant to that character—for good or ill—and also provide a connection with the Beloved.

Example

- Annibel is the Beloved, Senior Partner in the Law Firm.
- Avanti the paralegal and Aaron the Junior Partner are the Suitors.

Avanti

- **Person:** Her mother, Jaya—went to school with Annibel
- **Place:** Red Spider Cafe—regular stop in the morning for Annibel
- **Thing:** Statue of Ganesh—"Secret Santa" gift from Annibel

Aaron

- **Person:** Selene, Executive Director of Firm—old friend of Aaron's, is also Annibel's mentor
- **Place:** Squash Court—Annibel is a frequent player
- **Thing:** Smartphone—limited edition Annibel wants to get

5) *Romantic Connection*

Before starting play, have the Person playing the Beloved state why their character is drawn to each of the Suitors. Work together to make sure that there is an equal connection with each Suitor. Use these questions to help shape the connection:

- When did you first feel a spark?
- What made you pay attention to them?
- What keeps them on your mind?

Have the Suitors answer the following question:

- What draws you to the Beloved?

6) *Extended Prologue*

As an introductory interlude, play out or describe a brief scene showing the Beloved having a positive interaction with each Suitor. These interactions should have no major conflict; they should just show what the dynamic of interaction is between each pair.



Example

- Annibel likes Avanti's ambition and sometimes encourages her.
 - Establishing scene, Avanti and Annibel work late on a challenging case.
- Annibel gets along well with Aaron and plays squash with him occasionally.
 - establishing scene, a vigorous and relaxing squash match between them.

7) Consequences

At the end of a Suitor or Beloved's Turn, take time to play out the aftermath of the roll. The winner of the Turn briefly says what the outcomes are, then everyone enters free play where the events are enacted.

The winner of the Turn has final say on what happens. Don't add major actions or consequences beyond what has been decided in the turn.

8) Interlude Scenes

In between each Turn, have a brief narration or play of scene that fleshes out the characters or the world.

EXAMPLE INTERLUDE SCENES

- Scene between Suitor and Person
- Scene between Beloved and someone of importance to them
- Show the villain of the piece or an antagonist for the Beloved putting pressure on them
- Show a rival or friend of Suitor talking or worrying about them
- Show how those who work with Suitors and Beloved view them and the love triangle
- Describe unseen but soon-to-be-felt consequences of events in the Turns
- Play out a Flashback for a Suitor or the Beloved

Keep these scenes brief. They have no mechanical effect. Do not cover ground that should happen in the main Turn.

Do not narrate the actions of the other player's Suitor. You may cast another player as a side character in the scene.



SEMI-LIVE *SHOOTING THE MOON*

A hybrid live-action and tabletop rpg

Number of players: 3–6

Time: *approx. 4 hours*

Shooting the Moon involves many scenes of talk and emotional interplay between the lead, and other, characters. Enacting parts of play provides a different experience of feeling the first person nature of the story.

What you need to play:

- *Shooting the Moon* Rules
- Character sheet and writing utensils
- Table with chairs for pen & pencil play
- Open area near table
- A couple of chairs and perhaps a small table for simple props

To play this game, use the rules for character creation, Suitor and Beloved Turns as in the core game.

For certain parts of play, stand up, move around, and play out parts of scenes.

Prologue

The introductory scenes to the game which introduce the Beloved and major characters. Create an open space in a room, called a set, with an area nearby for players not in a given scene to observe. Place a few easily moved chairs and perhaps a table or two as simple props.

Players with a character involved in the scene speak in character and act out simple actions of play. Move furniture around to represent the setting. No costumes or complicated props are required.



Other players may take the role of side characters, such as those mentioned in Traits or part of the Suitors' Person, Place and Thing.

Suitor Turns

During Free play, Beloved player and Active Suitor player talk and act out what their characters do. Opponent introduces hurdle through action, or description.

When action goes beyond what one can act out (for example, attackers break into the scene, or hail comes raining down from the sky), move back to the table and continue play as in the standard game: describing Responses, making Traits, doing the Second Pool, etc.

Beloved turns are played out at the table. If there is a moment the players wish to see enacted, move to the set area and do so. Outcomes or particular responses may suggest themselves for this style of play.

End game

Make rolls and narrate outcomes as in the standard game. As in Beloved Turns, if there is a moment that lends itself to being acted out, players do so in the open set area.

Four or More Players

As in Team Play (see page 147), players create teams to play each role (Beloved, Suitor 1, Suitor 2). Alternate or confer about how to play the characters in live scenes.

Breaks

Consider taking Phys Breaks (p. xxii) of a quiet or energetic variety, especially if there are more than three players.



Other Worlds

ALONE AGAINST THE WORLD

A mod of *Shooting the Moon*

A tabletop role playing game for one player.



Embattled and striving against your past, a rival and the land itself.

One player takes the roles of two Seekers traveling across an unfriendly landscape competing for a common destination but with conflicting Goals. To create a story full of adventure and drama, this game uses tables and questions to prompt ideas from the solitary player.

Use the standard rules from *Shooting the Moon* with the following modifications.

You will play many roles, answering questions, determining character actions and resolving conflict through rolls. As you proceed, you may wish to speak aloud, make notes, tweet, or use some other way to mark what occurs. Or follow the steps and simply imagine what happens.

Follow the rules below for set up.

Challenge Types

Choose a Challenge Type that the Seekers face. This defines the form of their competition. Choose one of the following Challenge Types, or roll a die to determine it randomly.

• 1—Search	• 3—Message	• 5—Claim
• 2—Race	• 4—Chase	• 6—Escape



The Challenge

Each Challenge Type has six specific Challenges listed beneath it. Find your Challenge Type and pick a Challenge for your Seekers to overcome. When picking a landscape afterwards, choose one that can be compatible with the story setting details.

Answer the Challenge Question from the point of view of the characters to begin Setup.

Search

- **Jewel:** You've stumbled across the secret location of an ancient cursed jewel. Why do you believe that the first to touch it now will be free of the curse?
- **Treasure:** You each clutch half of an ancient map. Who did you steal it from together?
- **Medicine:** The herb grows in small quantity in but one place. Who would each of you heal with it?
- **Relic:** A beloved saint died in this place and you seek their last remains. Who is each Seeker's Patron whose career you would make with this?
- **Hermit:** This person has been lost from human habitation, and you seek to draw them back with you. What must they provide for you alone?
- **Time:** A book of knowledge hidden from all. What great feat would one of you accomplish with the power it promises?

Race

- **Purse:** A grand prize. What wealth can only one of you claim?
- **Fame:** Glory or notoriety. Whose attention will you capture?
- **Technical achievement:** It is not just reaching the goal, but how you reach it that matters. What is your innovation that you believe will win you the day and inspire others?
- **Sponsorship:** A contract for life. What company promises you fame and fortune?
- **Nation's pride:** Become a champion for your people. How will your country reward you?
- **Personal mission:** Friends turned rivals. How did the other betray you that you must best them now at any price?



Message

- **War:** “But for a nail...the battle was lost.” What undeniable advantage will this message give one side over the other?
- **Espionage:** A life hangs by a thread. Whose undercover career will be blown if the message arrives into the right hands?
- **Affair:** A love betrayed. What manner of deceit has been concealed?
- **Crime:** If evidence can reach the authorities an innocent life will be saved. Who has ordered you to save or destroy them?
- **Family:** Loyalty divides. A great bounty is offered to deliver or intercept this message. What advantage will your clan gain?
- **Smuggling:** Two shipments from rival gangs. What price is offered the first Seeker to fulfill the contract?

Chase

- **Theft:** A daring crime. How did one of you get away with this priceless treasure?
- **Bounty:** A wanted criminal pursued by a hunter. Who offers the price on their head?
- **Murder:** A killer escaped. What drives one Seeker to pursue the other alone?
- **Abduction:** Holding a hostage. Why has one of you taken a prisoner? Who are they to the other Seeker?
- **Deserter:** AWOL from duty. How did the pursuer become isolated from the others on the hunt and stay on the deserter’s scent?
- **Betrayer:** A deep deception. What price did the betrayer make the pursuer pay?

Claim

- **Land:** First in takes all. What great wealth is promised to they who claim this land first?
- **Water:** In a parched land. What territory will the first claimant control with this precious water?
- **Passage:** A perilous exploration. What company offers an exclusive contract for the first to map this course?
- **Mine:** Precious ore. What vein has been struck? What price was paid that leaves this mine to the first taker of the two?
- **Bounty:** In pursuit of an outlaw. What drives each of you to be the one to capture this criminal?
- **Reward:** A promised purse. What special item must be brought in and for what purpose?



Escape

- **War:** To the guns! One of you pursues the other to bring them back. Why must you pursue?
- **Prison:** On the run. How was it the fault of one Seeker that the other escaped?
- **Disease:** A relentless killer. A patient breaks quarantine. What is the pursuer willing to do to stop the spread of this illness?
- **Government:** Rejected and out in the “cold”, an agent flees their former agency. What secret do they bear?
- **Secret Society:** Speak not. An initiate flies to neutral ground pursued. What promises do they break?
- **Blood Feud:** Eye for an eye. Who was killed, and what were they to the hunted Seeker and the hunter?

Landscape

Choose the landscape over which this journey takes place. Each type of landscape comes with two pre-determined Attributes attached which describe locations within the landscape. The Attributes have locations associated with them (p. 169).

Choose one Landscape Type from the following list:

- **Mountain**—Haunted & Resplendent
- **Desert**—Unforgiving & Untamed
- **Caves**—Serene & Haunted
- **Savannah**—Vivacious & Untamed
- **Swamp**—Vivacious & Angry
- **Forest**—Angry & Sacred
- **High Plains**—Unforgiving & Serene
- **Jungle Ruins**—Haunted & Untamed
- **Tundra**—Frozen & Serene
- **Glacier**—Frozen & Resplendent
- **Arctic Sea**—Swells & Cold Harbor
- **Tropical Sea**—Swells & Safe Haven



ATTRIBUTES AND LOCATIONS:

(See page 162 for questions for each)

<p>Haunted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charnel Vale• Graveyard of the Giants• Chasm of Spirits• Murderer’s Mere <p>Unforgiving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sheer Cliffs• Parched Plain• Scorching Sands• Salt Flats <p>Angry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raging Cataract• Teetering Avalanche• Fire Ant Valley• Driving Gale Pass <p>Untamed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choking Vine Tangle• Hardscrabble Scree• Cat in the Night• Ravening Pack	<p>Resplendent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eagle’s Eyrie• High Mountain Meadow• Eternal View• Rainbow Falls <p>Sacred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening Cave• Ancient Forest• Sighing Grotto• Polished Stone Seat <p>Vivacious</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Songbird Sere• Herd Browse Patches• Coyote Highway• Bee-humming Meadow <p>Frozen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Herd’s Snowy Plain• Treacherous Karst• Icy Gale• Blinding Snow	<p>Swells</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endless Reef• Storm Swollen Swale• Driving Hurricane• Ravenous Gull Swarm <p>Safe Haven</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrow Harbor• Fresh Water Rivulet• Palm Grottos• Nocturnal Porcine Herd <p>Cold Harbor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ice Choked Port• Leviathan Hunting• Floes• Mating Season Beach
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MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

On a blank piece of paper or dry erase board, draw an outline of the overall Landscape. Then add the eight locations associated with it, spaced roughly evenly across the Landscape. Draw in symbols (trees, mountain, river, etc.) to show the topography.



Mark the Seekers' starting point on one side of the map with an X.

On the far side of the Landscape, place an arrow pointing off the board to the final destination. Alternatively, if it makes sense for the destination to be on the Landscape (as in the case of finding healing herbs), choose a destination on the far edge of the map.

TRAVEL ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE

Each Seeker's Turn takes place in a location. The first happens in the starting Location. The Seekers may travel together, or travel apart to different locations. If they diverge, they may rejoin. However, you may only play one scene per location on the map.

For each scene, choose a location close to the last. You do not need to go to every location. Trace the path of the Seeker over the landscape with a dotted line.

Seekers

Character creation uses an adapted version of the *Shooting the Moon* and *Breaking the Ice* standard rules.

First, relate your two Seekers to the Challenge. For example, in a Chase of an escaped criminal, the Seekers could be thief and police officer. Use these roles as the Favorite Color is used in *Breaking the Ice*—at the center of a word web (page 13) used to generate character ideas. Add just six words for each.

Write three Traits on the Seekers' sheets based on the word web.

Modify these Traits as in the standard rules of *Shooting the Moon* (page 100) as you go along.

OTHER TRAITS

Unlike the Beloved, the Landscape has no Obstacle, Opportunity, or Dream.



Seekers create a Person, Place and Thing with the following modifications:

Person—someone they love or answer to back at home

Place—a location in the landscape they have been to or have a connection with

Thing—a piece of equipment or memento they bring on this trip

Choose a Conflict for each Seeker. It is something from their past that makes them pursue the Challenge.

Final Setup Question:

Answer this question and begin play:

The Seekers cannot work together, what keeps them apart?

Scenes and Turns

Play out only Seeker Turns in this game. Each Turn puts one character in the spotlight as Active Seeker, while the other Seeker is the Opponent. You will play both roles, and they will swap every turn.

Each location has a scene-setting question associated with it. Begin each scene by answering this question as the Active Seeker. If the text requires a number, roll two six-sided dice (2d6). Then narrate the actions of the Active Seeker. Introduce a Hurdle as in standard rules of *Shooting the Moon*.

Seekers must survive until the final end game, though they may die as part of the final outcome.

Use standard *Shooting the Moon* rules to resolve, with Solo player taking both roles.

Play out 6 Scenes (3 Turns each for the Seekers), and move the Seekers across the Landscape so that they reach the Destination at the end of these Turns. You may skip locations to do so.

Optionally, move the Seekers across the landscape and add additional pairs of Turns as needed to move across the Landscape slowly, going to each Location in turn.



Landscape Location Questions

HAUNTED

- **Charnel Vale**—what warning do ancient characters spell?
- **Graveyard of the Giants**—what great beast's footprints do you find here?
- **Chasm of Spirits**—what form do the spirits perilous take here?
- **Murderer's Mere**—what raises the raving, wronged dead from their murky graves?

UNFORGIVING

- **Sheer Cliffs**—what safe passage down do you see?
- **Parched Plain**—what small creatures must you eat to persist here?
- **Scorching Sands**—is the greater danger the scuttling scorpions or the sand storm in the distance?
- **Salt Flats**—what twisted feature offers the only shelter in this trackless waste?

ANGRY

- **Raging Cataract**—what threatens the small rope bridge hanging above the flood?
- **Teetering Avalanche**—what herd of wildlife grazes below the threat of avalanche?
- **Fire Ant Valley**—what traces remain of another human passing by the great mounds of the ants?
- **Driving Gale Pass**—what do you cling to while moving against the force of the gale?

UNTAMED

- **Choking Vine Tangle**—what small animal do you see choked by vines before your eyes?
- **Hardscrabble Scree**—what perfect shelter offers itself in the midst of these ankle-breaking rocks strewn on the slope?
- **Cat in the Night**—what scar do you wear from a great cat like the one that prowls here?
- **Ravening Pack**—how many eyes glow in the night beyond your fire?



RESPLENDENT

- **Raptor's Eyrie**—what bones tumble from the giant nest?
- **High Mountain Meadow**—what brilliant colors and restful bowers does the meadow offer?
- **Eternal View**—what do you see of your home from here?
- **Rainbow Falls**—what mythical creature is said to have blessed this vale?

SACRED

- **Listening Cave**—what deep sound of earth do you hear?
- **Ancient Forest**—what have these trees silently witnessed in past centuries?
- **Sighing Grotto**—what spirit of sorrow speaks to those here?
- **Polished Stone Seat**—what leader once held counsel here?

VIVACIOUS

- **Songbird Sere**—a bird lights on you in the brushy opening. What message does it bring?
- **Herd Browse Patches**—what grazes peacefully in this opening when you reach it?
- **Coyote Highway**—when you come upon the coydogs at play, what are their reactions?
- **Bee-humming Meadow**—how many broken snag trees are filled with dripping honeycomb?

FROZEN

- **Herd's Snowy Plain**—how do the dashing caribou come upon you?
- **Treacherous Karst**—how do you stumble across these frozen tunnels?
- **Icy Gale**—how prepared are you for this spray of ice from the sky?
- **Blinding Snow**—what unexpected shelter do you find?



SWELLS

- **Endless Reef**—what great beast tries to eat you?
- **Storm Swollen Swale**—how high is your ship tossed?
- **Driving Hurricane**—what warns you of the coming storm?
- **Ravenous Gull Swarm**—what do they attack first?

SAFE HAVEN

- **Narrow Harbor**—whose chart do you have that shows the hidden rocks?
- **Fresh Water Rivulet**—what virtuous herb grows near this precious spring?
- **Palm Grottos**—what animals are harvesting the sweet palm fruits?
- **Nocturnal Porcine Herd**—how many snort out of the darkening thicket at dusk?

COLD HARBOR

- **Ice Choked Port**—what manner of icebreaker is used to rescue stranded ships?
- **Leviathan Hunting**—how many small outboats are used to spear the great in the abyss?
- **Floes**—what hues of blue striate the massive bergs heading toward your boat?
- **Mating Season Beach**—how do you protect yourself from the cacophony?

Play

Play out each scene. Alternate between Seeker 1’s Turn and Seeker 2’s.

The three Responses may include Seeker 1’s Traits, that of the Location, or that of Seeker 2.

Suggestions for obstacles:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hunger• Predator• Threat of discovery by Enemy Seeker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danger from the location• Illness• Weather• Losing the path
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Roll according to *Shooting the Moon* standard rules for Suitor Turns (p. 132). Gain points as in the two player game (p. 146).

To push after the 1st Pool: Look to a detail of the Location to suggest some greater price that can be incorporated. Here is a list of additional suggestions:

- Become injured
- Lose something
- Betray information
- Be sighted
- Lose ground
- Be ruthless
- Be selfish
- Betray others

Gain 1 point for the Seeker side that wins each Turn. Add Traits as in the standard rules, but omit adding traits to the Landscape. You may add details to the map at any time if desired.

Ending the Game

At the end of the game, gather all dice for each side and roll off as in the two player rules (see page 142).

Narrate the end in favor of the Seeker who wins.



BARKING AT THE MOON

A mod of *Shooting the Moon*

Players: 2 or 3

Inspired by the Gauntlet Podcast's traditional interview question:

"Imagine an alternate history where your Romance Trilogy games turned out more or less the same, but with the minor change that they are entirely about smooth-chested teenage werewolves. What would each game's name be?"



In the mortal world, unknown powers stalk the shadows. Wolves hunt the hills with human eyes. Undead court the young with promises of immortality.

And sometimes love blooms, a corpse-flower by the light of the moon.

In this story, three are drawn together by the promise of romance and renewal. The mortal Beloved is at the heart, being fought over and wooed by other-worldly Suitors.

Follow the standard rules with this new premise, and the adaptations that follow.

Stories with Similar Themes:

- *Count Dracula*, novel by Bram Stoker (1897)
- *The Hunger*, novel by Whitley Streiber (1981) and film (1983)
- *Buffy the Vampire Hunter*, film (1992) and tv series (1997–2003)
- *Gingersnaps*, film (2000)
- *Twilight*, novel by Stephanie Meyers (2005)
- *Monsterhearts*, game by Avery Alder Mcdaldno (2012)
- *What We Do in the Shadows*, film (2014)
- *Penny Dreadful* (TV, 2014–2016)



Setup

CHARACTER CREATION

Create three characters entangled in a love triangle as in the standard game. However, the Beloved takes the seventh desirable Attribute: Mortal Nature. Each of the Suitors is unlike the Beloved in this. Choose their type of other-worldly Supernatural Nature.

• Werewolf	• Succubus/Incubus
• Vampire	• Demon
• Ghost	• Ghoul

Pick three Attributes other than Nature to create antonym and synonym pairs from. Create pairs and assign to Suitors as in standard game.

OFFER AND THREAT

Instead of creating the Opportunity and Obstacle for the Beloved, create Traits for the world through the Offer and the Threat. Track them on a piece of paper.

Offer: Two world Traits, chosen by the Suitors that answer the question...
What does each monster have to offer the mortal Beloved?

Relate the traits to the particulars of being a ghoul, werewolf or ghost in this world. Explain why these tempt the Beloved to trade their life of security and safety for an uncertain future with a supernatural creature.

Threat: Two world Traits chosen by the Beloved that answer the question...
What threatens all of these would be lovers?

.Before answering, choose together the community from which the threat arises for the trio: mortal or supernatural. The Threat is two specific ways the community may keep the lovers apart.

- **Mortal Threat.** The truth of these supernatural creatures is not known to other mortals. Being found out could threaten their survival.
- **Supernatural Threat.** The other members of your supernatural community see these Suitors as a threat to all. They will do what they can to separate them and may seek to end them.



DREAM

If you have three players, create the Beloved's Dream as in the standard game.

PERSON, PLACE AND THING

When creating the Person, Place and Thing for the Suitors, two of the three will be aspects of the Threat. The players of the Beloved and of the other Suitor create threatening elements. The player of the Suitor may create an ally or resource, which may be Mortal or Supernatural.

MORTAL EXAMPLES

- **For a Werewolf:** Lycanthrope expert (created by Beloved), Gun with Silver Bullets (created by other Suitor), Dense, dark woods (created by the Suitor)
- **For a Vampire:** Interfaith Sanctuary (created by the Beloved), Vampire Hunter (created by the other Suitor), Coffin (created by the Suitor)

SUPERNATURAL EXAMPLES

- **For a Ghost:** Undead Enchanter (or Litch) (created by the Beloved), Soul collecting stone (created by the other Suitor), Cemetery (created by the Suitor)
- **For an Incubus:** Spell of binding (created by the Beloved), Holy ground (created by the other Suitor), Helper spirit (created by the Suitor)

PRIZE

The Prize in this game is to gain the unconditional and reciprocal love of the Beloved.

Play

INNER MONOLOGUE

Inner Monologue – During Suitor and Beloved Turns, any player may ask for an Inner Monologue from another. (See page 357.) In Team Play, players may split role—one speaks dialogue, one speaks thoughts of character.

SUITOR TURNS

Opponent gains 7 dice, instead of 5 as in the core game.



BELOVED TURNS

During the Beloved's Turn, they may choose what level the adversity is, as in the standard rules, rewarding the winner of the turn with 1, 2, or 3 points towards dice at the end of the game.

Special Beloved Dice:

Threat level 1: 7 dice

Threat Level 2: 9 dice

Threat Level 3: 12 dice

During the Beloved's Turn, they may choose what level the adversity is as in the standard rules rewarding the winner of the turn with 1, 2, or 3 points towards dice at the end of the game. However, use the following custom menu of Responses:

MENU OF OPTIONS FOR DICE

- **2 dice** = Response involves Suitor's own Trait.
- **2 dice** = Response involves the Suitor defending the Beloved from the Threat.
- **3 dice** = Response involves complication for Suitor's Trait and a related new complicating Trait is added to their character sheet.
- **3 dice** = Response involves the other Suitor interfering or making trouble.
- **3 dice** = Response involves the Suitor flirting with the Beloved.
- **4 dice** = Response involves the Threat affecting the Suitor.
- **4 dice** = Response involves the Threat affecting the Beloved. The Beloved's player describes how the Beloved responds to this Threat and adds a Trait to the Beloved. Beloved's player gains 2 Dice for their Pool.
- **4 dice** = Accept a suggestion given by the other Suitor's or the Beloved's Player. Add related trait chosen by them. (Suggestion must be given, may be rejected.)
- **5 dice** = Sacrifice. Trait or Attribute is crossed off Suitor's sheet and replaced with one that substantially changes character as agreed to by all players (e.g., burnt by the sun, weakened by garlic, feel longing for daylight, change to horrific form, etc.) May only be done once per Beloved's Turn. The Suitors' Supernatural Natures cannot be sacrificed.
- **5 dice** = Transform. Ask the Beloved to cross off a Trait and replace it with another of the Suitor's choice. If the Beloved accepts, gain the dice. May only be used once per game by each Suitor, in the final Beloved's Turn.
- **5 dice** = Shield. The Suitor gives up their own un- or supernatural life to preserve the Beloved. The Beloved adds a Trait to the Suitor. This may only be invoked in the final Beloved's Turn, once, and takes the place of Sacrifice. It will most often make the most sense if this is the final Response. A Shielding Suitor still takes part in the End of the Game.



SECOND BELOVED'S TURN

May eliminate one of the Threat world Traits, if doing so follows from the events of play.

Endgame

After the final Beloved's Turn, the players each roll as many dice as their character has accrued points during the game. Compare values as in the standard game.

FINAL OUTCOMES:

- **Suitor wins alone:** The Suitor is united with the Beloved, but the Beloved must continue to pursue their Dream. If the Suitor who wins is dead, the Beloved loves them beyond death.
- **Beloved Wins:** Neither Suitor gains the Beloved's affections. The Beloved realizes their Dream.
- **Suitors tie:** The Suitors lose their connection with the Beloved forever.
- **Suitor and Beloved tie:** the Suitor gains the love of the Beloved, and the Beloved also achieves their Dream.
- **Three way tie:** Both Suitors are accepted by the Beloved, and together they help the Beloved gain their Dream.

EPILOGUES

In all versions of the ending, all three give brief epilogue summary of what happens to the character after the events of the game are over.



THE PRIZE

Mod of *Shooting the Moon*

Number Players: 2-3



"Only one of you can be initiated into the secrets of my lineage"

"To the most innovative goes the sweat of my labor to the tune of \$100,000"

"The Numina gift only the most clear of heart with their wisdom and power"

Not every player is drawn to the love triangle of *Shooting the Moon*. It may not be right for those role playing for the first time, at a convention playing with strangers, or with younger participants. Use this mod to enjoy the rough and tumble race for the top with a situation that may risk the heart, but does not involve passion.

Setup

SETTING

Choose a setting in which two learners will seek knowledge or power from a master adept or sublime being.

Example Settings

- A land on a windswept plain, plagued with ghosts and demons.
- A wise one's seclusion in full flower.
- A bustling weapon-maker's guild, with a high-master providing sharpest steel to noble and mercenary alike.



CHARACTER CREATION

The Beloved figure is known as the Sage.

Choose six Attributes of their wisdom and skill that are highly regarded in this world for their acumen, impact or competitive edge they provide.

Example

Master Weapon Smith—she is Dauntless, Deft, and Strong, has Deep insight, is a Ruthless negotiator, and Undefeated dueler

- **Opportunity**—reason why Sage is seeking a student, heir or other to follow them.
- **Obstacle**—problem facing the Sage
- **Dream**—what the Sage longs to accomplish or gain

Suitors are now Seekers.

Create Antonyms and Synonyms as in the standard game.

Modify Traits and choose Person, Place, and Thing as in the standard game.

Omit Conflicts. Instead, say why each Seeker wants to learn. For example, to overcome poverty, to fulfill family legacy, to gain power to seek revenge, to help others, etc.

Choose a Prize: some ongoing status or gift from the Sage that will provide great power or skill to the Seeker who wins.



In Play

SEEKER TURNS

- Play as in standard game.
- Set the scene for each turn: a situation that allows the Seekers to prove themselves or learn from the Sage.
- Establish the relationship between Sage and Seekers, and show that each Seeker is a viable candidate. It's perfectly fine if the Sage dislikes one or both Seekers, but each Seeker must have the opportunity to show their potential.

SAGE TURNS

- Progress from Level 1 to Level 2 to Level 3
- Use adapted menu of options below:

MENU OF OPTIONS FOR SAGE TURNS:

- **2 dice** = Response involves Seeker's Trait.
- **3 dice** = Response involves complication for Seeker's Trait and a related new complicating Trait is added to their character sheet.
- **3 dice** = Response involves Sage's Attribute, Opportunity or Obstacle.
- **3 dice** = Response involves Sage's Dream, and the Sage creates a new Trait.
- **4 dice** = Response involves Seeker letting down, disappointing or betraying the Sage, and a new complicating Trait is added to the Seeker.
- **4 dice** = Accept a suggestion which must be given by the other Seeker's player or the Sage at Active Seeker's invitation. Add related trait chosen by them.
- **5 dice** = Sacrifice: Cross off a Trait or Attribute from a Seeker's sheet and replace with one that substantially changes the character in a way that hinders them or replaces something valuable with a fraught new Trait: e.g. best friend turns to bitter ally, jaded character becomes touched by wonder, magic sword becomes inhabited by wild demon, etc. All players must agree to the Sacrifice.



Ending the Game:

Roll final number of dice amassed and compare as in standard game.

Seeker wins alone: They gain the Prize, but the Sage does not gain their Dream . . . yet.

Sage Wins: Both Seekers are sent packing, and the Sage goes on to gain their Dream alone.

Seekers tie: They decide to work together to gain their goals, and abandon the Sage.

Seeker and Sage tie: Seeker gains the Prize and aids the Sage in gaining their Dream.

Three way tie: Both Seekers are accepted by the Sage, and together they help the Sage gain their Dream.

In all versions of the ending, all three give brief epilogue summaries of what happens to the character after the events of the game are over.



VERSUS NATURE

A Hack of *Shooting the Moon*

Players: 2 to 7



A trek, a climb, a journey across a pock-marked frozen karst.

A desperate race to bring a message to the front lines in time.

Searching ancestral land for the mortal cure.

Versus Nature pits two Seekers against the majesty and mortal danger of the natural world. A race to be the first to scale a suicidal peak. A quest through the underdeep of urban ruins after the fall of an ancient or future civilization. A chase across fen, mire, and pool.

Instead of a Beloved and two Suitors, you represent Nature and two Seekers crossing the face of the land. Additional players may take roles of others such as a Guide, Companions, Traces of People who inhabit the land, and haunting signs of Death itself.

This is an opportunity to examine what individuals do under life-threatening stress, as well as to revel in the callous beauty of the natural world. Also, to note, comment on, and subvert the colonial and marginalizing nature of these narratives.

Stories with a similar struggle and tone:

- *Three Day Road* (novel by Joseph Boyden)
- *The Cage* (novel by Audrey Schulman)
- *Into Thin Air* (non-fiction book by Jon Krakauer)
- *To Build a Fire*, or *Race for Number Three* (short story by Jack London)
- *Gravity* (film directed by Alfonso Cuarón)



Setup

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

The number of roles determines which roles are available.

- **Two Players:** 2 Seekers
- **Three Players:** 2 Seekers and Nature
- **Four Players:** 2 Seekers, Nature and one Companion or Guide
- **Five Players:** 2 Seekers, Nature, 1 Companion and 1 Guide (or 2 Companions, or 2 Guides)
- **Six Players:** 2 Seekers, Nature, 1 Companion and 1 Guide (or 2 Companions or 2 Guides), and People
- **Seven Players:** 2 Seekers, Nature, 1 Companion and 1 Guide (or 2 Companions, or 2 Guides), People, and Death

Descriptions of each role follow in this mod. Use standard rules for rolling, Hurdles and Threat Levels.

Begin by choosing a type of Terrain the contest will cover.

TERRAIN

- **Mountain**—steep trails through dark forest give way to rocky crags and cold, unforgiving ice and snow at the peak
- **Ocean**—traversing the rolling deep through storm, reef, and becalmed sea
- **Air**—racing across the ocean of air, battered by icy rain, baffled by fog and re-fueling mid-air
- **Caves**—darkness, the weight of all the earth above you, endless chaining chambers pillared with ice or salt
- **River**—serpentine, ever-changing channel flowing over tumbled stone, fallen trunk and waterfall plunge
- **Forest**—twining shadows, green-leaved deliverance, sun-dappled home, den of claw and fang
- **Glacier**—cold, harsh icy face of the world, stony and frozen karst tunnels, crevasse and brutal sheer face to climb
- **Tundra**—rocky, frozen home to endless caribou herd, howling wind and white-furred wolf, soggy marsh in sudden spring



- **Arctic**—broken landscape, scrambles across icebergs to avoid the icy plunge, greedy predators of land and sea
- **Swamps**—sweltering climes, befogged by biting insects and dazzled by a threnody of color, life and swift death
- **Desert**—dry, grinding heat by day and core-destroying cold by night, be pricked and tested by an unforgiving land

Omit Opportunity, Obstacle, and Dream: Nature gives and takes, uncaring of human hopes and desires. It is as you find it, and as you make it.

6 NATURE ATTRIBUTES

Choose six attributes which characterize the natural feature the Seekers will venture across.

Example

MOUNTAIN

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
| • Tall | • Snowy | • Beautiful |
| • Treacherous | • Full of Animals | • Unmapped |

CHARACTER CREATION

Instead of Antonyms & Synonyms, give Seekers Traits that are Strong or Weak with relation to three of Nature's Attributes.

Examples

Mountain is Tall

- **Tall:** powerful climber/afraid of heights;

Forest is Full of Animals

- **Full of Animals:** great tracker/wounded by wolves;

Mountain Slopes are Unmapped

- **Unmapped:** sees in the dark/lost compass



Assign the Traits as in the base game, splitting each pair by giving one to each Seeker. With two players, assign the third pair randomly.

With three or more players, each Seeker chooses how one pair is assigned, and the other player or players choose how the third is allotted.

Modify the Traits as in the base game, in the same order as the pairs of Strong and Weak Traits, depending on the number of players.

Create Person, Place and Thing as in standard game.

For the Prize, as a group choose what the Seekers compete for.

Examples

- The title of first to conquer the unconquerable
- A coveted university research position
- A purse of thousands of dollars offered by the popular energy drink company Silver Dog

Additional players

GUIDES

- contribute toward exploration and finding the way

One who lends their knowledge to the Seeker. A Seeker may have either a Guide or Companion, but not both.

Creating a Guide:

After creation of Nature and the Seekers, think on who lives in this land, knows it deeply and well. This is not an invitation to make a loyal savage, magical native or other stereotype. The Seeker may be local, also. The Guide is a skilled and experienced individual who has their own reason for going on this quest.

The Guide's player chooses two of Nature's Attributes that were not used for the creation of the Seekers.



Create Related and Unrelated Traits for the Guide.

Related Traits pertain to the Attributes of Nature. The Guides player chooses one that provides an advantage with respect to it. The other player or players choose one that is a drawback. Make these specific and personal details from a person's life. Use this as an opportunity to flesh out the place and setting.

Create two Unrelated Traits. These reflect the Guide's personal interests or background independent of the landscape. The Guide's player picks one, then the other players choose the second.

Then create the Reward and Hope of the Guide.

The Seeker and Guide discuss and agree upon a Reward, the compensation they will receive for guiding the Seeker.

The Guide chooses a Hope, something the journey can help the Guide achieve.

Examples

RELATED TRAITS

- Tall – (advantage) grew up in the shadow of the mountain
- (drawback) nearly fell from Cougar Peak
- Unmapped – (advantage) knows a litany of tales warning one off the Iron Face
- (drawback) still terrified by place on mountain they were lost in as a child

UNRELATED TRAITS

- Studying environmental conservation
- Family owned this land long ago but lost it

Reward: A portion of the purse offered for climbing the mountain first

Hope: To map a new route through the mountains to connect with nearby settlements



Guides in Play

During Seeker Turns, the Guide adds details to the description the Opponent gives.

Their character is present with the Seeker and participates in Free Play.

When Seeker is making Responses with a Guide in play, gain dice for the following:

- Seeker's Trait (first time)—2 dice
- Seeker's Trait (second time or more)—1 die
- Guide's Contribution (first or second time)—2 dice
- Guide's Contribution (third time)—1 die
- A Moment (once per game)—3 dice

The Guide's Contribution is to describe some aspect of the land or take some timely action based on their Traits to help the party overcome the Hurdle.

A Moment is when the Guide and one of the Seekers or a Companion see the world through each other's eyes.

COMPANIONS

— *contribute toward morale and good humor*

The Companion is a person who keeps the Seeker's spirits up and gives them the strength to carry on. A Seeker may have either a Guide or Companion, but not both.

Creating a Companion

After creating Nature and Seekers, imagine who the Seeker or Seekers might know well and depend on.

For each Companion, make a pair of Traits spun off from one of Nature's Attributes: one will be Strong, and one Weak. Use this pair as inspiration to create two new Related Traits for the Companion that support or



intensify the Seeker's Traits. Companion chooses one to be Strong, other players make a Weak trait from the other Attribute.

Create two Unrelated Traits for the Companion. These are skills that aid in leisure, healing or service. The Companion chooses one, the other player(s) choose the other.

Choose a Reason: what makes the Companion support and aid the Seeker? Companion creates this.

Choose a Prospect: something promising for the Companion to pursue on their own if they return from this journey. The other players create this.

Example

ATTRIBUTE TRAIT PAIR

- Tall – (strong) powerful climber
- (weak) wounded by wolves

RELATED TRAITS

- **Powerful Climber:** bouldering companion
- **Wounded by wolves:** lost rifle in attack by wolves

UNRELATED TRAITS

- **Leisure:** plays the violin
- **Healing:** was a medic in the war

REASON AND PROSPECT

Reason: The Seeker saved their life

Prospect: The Companion wants to win world renown

Companions in Play

During Seeker Turns, the Companion adds details to the description of the camp and things seen on their travels.



Their character is present with the Seeker throughout the events. Participate in Free Play as the Seeker does.

When Seeker makes Responses with a Companion in play, they may gain dice for the following (maximum total 3 Responses per side):

- Seekers Trait (first time)—2 dice
- Seekers Trait (second or more times)—1 dice
- Companion's Contribution (first time)—2 dice
- Companion's Contribution (second or third time)—1 dice
- Bonding (once only per game)—3 dice

The Companion's Contribution is to describe some action taken by the Companion or use of a Trait that supports the Seeker in mind, body or spirit.

In Bonding, the Seeker and Companion's shared description shows the trust and reliance between them.

PEOPLE

— evidence of human habitation in the present or past, and interaction with inhabitants along the way

One person represents human communities and their presence on the land.

Character Creation

- **Past:** Describe a group or community who built, lived in, made trails through, or harvested from this landscape.
- **Present:** Describe a group or community who are in this landscape now. If it is the same as the group from the Past, what has changed for them? Are the Seeker, Companion, or Guide members of this Present group?

During Seeker Turns:

Work with Nature and Death to describe the location for each scene. Describe evidence of past or present human habitation. May add the Present group to the scene.



Legacy: Offer a Suggestion for a Seeker Turn First Pool Response involving the Past or Present that hinders the Seeker. This Suggestion adds a Trait to Nature that reflects presence of the Past or Present group. 3 dice, once per Turn.

Concern: Offer a Suggestion for a Seeker Turn Second Pool Response that reflects issue or goal that the Present People pursue. The People's player adds a Trait to either one of the Seekers, or to Nature. 5 dice.

During Nature Turns:

- **Disappoint**—Seeker gains 2 dice when they let down, destroy, or betray the People. The People's player adds a Trait to Seeker.
- **Suggestion**—Seeker gains 3 dice when they accept a suggestion made by People that involves artifact, belonging, concern of People in the story.
- **Flashback**—Seeker gains 4 dice when People's Player describes a Flashback that shows how others use the land the Seekers cross. The actions depicted in the Flashback may provide either aid or obstacle to the Seeker who requested the Flashback; the People's Player chooses which. People's Player adds Trait to Nature.

DEATH

—a glimpse and foreshadowing of the death that stalks the Seekers

One person plays the role of the metaphorical specter of Death, looming over all who seek to test Nature.

During Character Creation:

Symbol: Choose an image evoking Death to be a recurring motif. Choose something with a haunting aspect that suits this Terrain Type.

Example

- **Mountain**—the prints of a cougar
- **Ocean**—shrieking cry of a great silver gull
- **Air**—a plume of smoke
- **Caves**—a glistening stalagmite



Death needs no traits and has no corporeal form during the events of play. However, Death's Player contributes to the story in both turn types by adding images, visions, dangers, etc. as described below.

During each Round of Turns, Death's Symbol should figure prominently at least once.

During Seeker Turns

Death consults with Nature and People to describe each scene's location. The Symbol may be present overtly, or some other element may hint at it. Death describes details that evoke fear, confusion, or madness, and proposes elements that sap the party's morale and resolve.

Example

Seeker 1 Scene. Nature describes a tent shelter strapped to a narrow ledge on the cliff face.

Death describes the sound of a cougar's cry strangely near.

As part of the description of scenes, or as Responses Death can offer optical illusions, dreams or nightmares, strange hallucinatory images, or moments of strong emotional conviction for one member of the Seeker's party.

If the Seeker accepts the Suggestion for a Response, Death adds a Trait to that Seeker's sheet. If Death is working with Nature to make a Suggestion, Death works with Nature to add the new Trait as well.

Example

The Seeker and Companion have given their three responses to the great wind that shook their tent and sent their pots falling to the base of the cliff. Death suggests that all night the Companion dreams that he falls down, down, down . . .



During Nature's Turn

- Vision of Death—Death makes the Symbol appear clearly at the moment of death, or posing a threat to the Seeker or a party member.
- Nature's Price—Select whom Death will claim. Incorporate Symbol into this death.

Death in Play

Number of Turns: Play out three Rounds, or sets of Turns, as in the standard game.

*Playing the Game***SEEKER TURNS**

The player of Nature describes the setting. Guide, People, Death, if present, add details.

The Seeker, and Companion if present, describe the Seeker's camp or progress upon the trail.

Free Play ensues, with the Seeker and company describing their interaction with the land, and Nature responding with details about what is seen, heard and felt.

The Opponent introduces a Hurdle. Nature describes how the peril manifests itself.

Seeker's party provides three Responses using Guide, Companion, or other rules as apply.

Nature and Opponent work together to provide a Suggestion to the Seeker and their party. People, Death contribute if present.

Adding Traits: If the Opponent wins, Opponent adds a Trait to the Seeker and Companion or Guide (if any). Nature takes a new Trait.

If the Seeker wins, players in that party add Trait to their own character, and Nature takes a new Trait.



NATURE TURNS

Assign Level 1 to first Nature Turn, 2 to second, and 3 to Third. Nature describes setting and Obstacle according to Level description in base game. Each Seeker makes Three Responses.

MENU OF OPTIONS FOR DICE

- **2 dice** = Response involves own Seeker's Trait, Trait of Nature, Companion, Guide or involves People character or artifact
- **3 dice** = Response involves own Seeker's Trait that creates a difficulty. Add a related, new complicating Trait to your character's sheet
- **3 dice** = Response involves Companion or Guide's Trait (from your Seeker's party). Add a related new complicating Trait they choose to their character sheet.
- **3 dice** = Response involves creating a Complication for the other Seeker. Nature's player must approve.
- **3 dice** = Response involves Bonding between Seeker and Companion.
- **4 dice** = Response involves Unrelated Trait of the Guide or Companion in your Seeker's party.
- **4 dice** = Response involves Seeker letting down, disappointing or betraying a Guide, Seeker or People. The player of the character who was let down adds a Trait to the Seeker who made the Response.
- **4 dice** = Accept a Suggestion given by the other Seeker's player or Nature. Add a new Trait related to that Suggestion.
- **4 dice** = Accept a vision of the Active Seeker's death that Death's player gives. Add a related Trait chosen by Death.
- **4 dice** = The People request a Flashback of how others live in this landscape or use this land. Must aid or hinder one Seeker (of the People's choice) and People add a Trait to Nature that reflects this.
- **5 dice** = Sacrifice: Seeker crosses a Trait or Attribute off their sheet and replaces it with one that substantially changes character as agreed to by all players. One Sacrifice per turn per Seeker Player. Only a Seeker can Sacrifice.
- **6 dice** = Death. Only usable on Nature's third turn, and if a Guide or Companion is in the party. Seeker, Guide or Companion sacrifices their life to allow the party to move forward.
- **7 dice** = Nature's Price. (Nature's Turn only, when with Guide or Companion) Nature describes how land or gear takes the life of one member of the party. Nature chooses member who dies, unless Death is in play in which case Death chooses, and incorporates Symbol into events of the death.



With Four to Five Players

Additional players take the role of Companions or Guides, partnering with a Seeker..

SEEKER TURNS:

Seekers collaborate during Turns with their Companion or Guide. See descriptions of roles for new Response options during Seeker Turns.

NATURE TURNS:

Seekers make Responses with their Companion or Guide.

See menu of options (page 186) for rolls in which Companion and Guide participate during Nature Turns.

With Six to Seven Players

Additional players take the roles of People or Death. They work with the Nature player to set the scene in both Seeker and Nature Turns.

See description of roles for new Responses options in Seeker Turns.

See menu of options (page 186) for rolls Companion and Guide participate in Nature Turns.

Endgame

OUTCOMES

After the third Nature Turn, determine the outcome of the game by rolling dice for all points gained by each side. The surviving Seeker(s) and Nature roll as in the base game; if a Seeker has died, their Companion or Guide rolls instead.

Compare dice as in the standard game. Ties are not broken. See page 136.

Possible outcomes are for there to be a sole winner, or a tie between two or three parties. Each has a different fictional impact.



SOLE WINNER:

If **Nature wins**, Nature and People (if any) narrates how the land and inhabitants defeat both Seekers. Neither Seeker gains the Prize and Companions and Guides are disappointed.

If a **Seeker wins**, that Seeker narrates how their party gains the Prize. Guides gain their Reward. Companion and Guide players decide in Epilogue if they gain Hope or Prospect.

If a **Companion or Guide wins**, that Companion or Guide narrates how their character gains the Prize. That Companion or Guide begins the Epilogue round with a story of their character accomplishing their Hope or Prospect.

TIES:**Between one Seeker Party and Nature**

- Seeker gains the Prize, Guides gain Reward.
- Nature and Seeker describe how Seeker comes to have life-long relationship with this landscape.
- People (if any) describes how Seeker is received by inhabitants. Are they accepted? Rejected? Ignored?
- Guide and Companions gain Hopes and Prospects in epilogue.

Between two Seeker Parties

- They all fail to gain the Prize, Reward, Hopes and Prospect.
- Nature (with Death and People if present) describe how Prize is snatched away.

Three Way Tie (between both Seeker Parties and Nature)

- A disaster occurs. All is lost.
- Nature describes how the land undergoes a transformation.
- Death and Nature describe how all the characters are killed.
- People describes how this affects the inhabitants of the land, and may choose to rescue one member of the Seeker parties from Death.



EPILOGUES

After determining and narrating the Outcomes, each player gives an Epilogue

Epilogue Order: If Death is not in play, Nature always goes last. If both Death and Nature are in play, Death goes last, and Nature second-to-last. Seekers, Companions, Guides, and People may go in any order.

Surviving Seekers, Companions, and Guides describe something they do when they go back to their lives.

Non-surviving Seekers, Companions, and Guides describe someone remembering them.

People describe how the events of play affect the lives of those who live there, or some detail of what humans left behind on the land that was invisible to Seekers.

Nature describes the land and how its rhythms go on.

Death describes the Symbol one last time, appearing in or near the aspect of the land that Nature described.



PART THREE

UNDER MY SKIN

Players: 4–8

Facilitator: 1–2

Time: 4 to 6 hours

Supplies: Character sheets

pencils

a private room or other space with a

little bit of furniture

OVERVIEW



Under My Skin revolves around faith, love, and commitment. The characters are friends—some couples, some single—each of whom becomes drawn to someone new. The players explore their characters' fears about loss and betrayal and navigate the tricky issues of openness, trust, and communication that challenge all relationships sooner or later.

What will the heart do when love is on the line?

What we love is what we most fear to lose.

In this game, the players work together to create the group of friends and acquaintances whose lives are changed by new love and attraction, then act out what those characters do. One person takes the role of Director and helps the others act out their stories.

This game asks the players to address serious emotional issues within the game. A quiet, private space for play is ideal. Please play advisedly, and be guided by common sense and compassion.

WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS?

Some characters begin the game as part of a couple in a relationship that is committed, but that has stresses, issues and lines they may not lightly cross. Other characters are single and looking for love. As a whole, the characters are a circle of friends connected by work, history, or other interests.

Each character has a core issue: an emotional challenge they have grappled with throughout their life, and that presents problems that inform the character's choices and loves.





In Under my Skin, characters find a new flame among their friends and acquaintances: someone entrancing who is not their original romantic partner. This sets the game's chain of events in motion.

STORY ARC

The game's story arc takes place in scenes. Groups of related scenes together form various stages, like acts in a play. As in a play, the players physically enact what the characters do and say, using simple props.

Here are the Acts of the game:

- **Beginnings:** establishes the characters' lives and the original state of their relationships.
- **Meeting:** all the characters come together and new flirtations arise.
- **New Flames:** the new potential couples are alone for the first time.
- **Changes:** we see how the original couples are doing.
- **Angels and Devils:** the new couples approach the lines they have pledged not to cross in their old relationships. They must either choose the new or honor the old.
- **Revelations:** the fallout from Angels and Devils.



- **Denouement (optional):** the characters look back on what has happened and give a taste of the future of these relationships.

In each stage of the game, players play out Flashbacks that give insight into the characters and their core issues.

BEING A PLAYER

The players have several jobs in this game.

Their primary role is as the character they have created. This character will appear in scenes set in the present, and may also appear in their own Flashback or someone else's.

These scenes bring out the best and worst of each character. Players get to see, in some small way, how it feels to face conflicts they might ordinarily avoid in their daily life.

DIRECTING

The Director is a kind of game master. They do not play a main character but rather assume responsibility for the tasks needed to keep the story flowing. The Director calls for scenes and Flashbacks, asks questions, makes suggestions, and ends scenes.

The Director also has a responsibility to help the game run smoothly. They should be familiar with the rules and bring all necessary game materials.

Outline of Under my Skin

Overview
 Guidelines for Play
 Setup
 Character Creation
 Relationships
 Break
 Play out Scenes and Flashbacks in Acts:
 Beginnings
 Meeting
 New Flames
 Changes
 Angels and Devils
 Revelations
 Denouement (optional)
 Debrief



WHY TUNE IN?

Paying attention to what the other players do and say as their characters is vital, both when you are participating and watching. Serving as audience during a scene helps you build on the others' actions, which makes future scenes more enjoyable and interesting. It also helps you make connections between your story and the others, rendering the whole story arc more coherent.

Plus: Watching other scenes is quite fun.

The Director keeps track of time and paces the activities accordingly, helping the players stay on task and keep hold of the thread of play. They may share these responsibilities by asking others to help out, but the Director holds primary responsibility for them. Also, the Director supports the players: they give suggestions or ask pointed questions if a player falters or needs to move into deeper territory.

If desired, use two Directors, especially with groups of six or more players. Two Directors split the tasks and help each other maintain focus on characters and plot lines. Alternatively, you can play with no specific Director, and all the players can assume responsibility for the tasks of Directing. (see Everyone Directs in Directing Variations section, p. 249). However, having a Director is recommended for the first time a group plays.

PLAY SPACE

Choose a space that is free of other activity and noise. The players need to be able to concentrate on the action and to hear one another. They also need privacy, as the game content can be sensitive.



LENGTH OF PLAY

With 4–6 players allow at least four hours for play.

With 7–8 players, allow six hours.

Limit time for preparation to one hour at the most. The instructions for setup include recommended time estimates for each preparatory step. Stick to these times to allow plenty of time to play out the story.

If possible, schedule informal time to share food or socialize after play for anyone so inclined.



SETUP



Under My Skin explores the boundaries of relationships. It connects relationship jealousies with our own personal fears, using the safe alibi of playing a fictional character. As such, the game raises many hard-hitting, potentially awkward, and even explosive questions about relationships. Since players will act out events, the emotional impact of play can be very strong. For these reasons, it is good to establish some common understanding among the players before starting the game.

During the Setup phase, the Director explains the format and methods of the game to the players, including the tools that will help them process the experience before, during, and after the game. Players may disclose their own real-world relationship status if they wish. They should all agree on a level of touch, and discuss boundaries and veils that, along with the tools of braking and going slow, help lessen emotional intensity. Discussing polyamory (loving more than one person at a time) also gives the players tools to think about the events of play that can deepen the experience.

GUIDELINES FOR PLAY (25 MINUTES TOTAL)

Introductions and Disclosure (10 minutes)

Begin the game by sitting in a circle. Make introductions. Starting with the Director, have the players say their name and share their relationship status. They may say as little or as much as they wish. Ask them to indicate if any information should be held in confidence among the players. They may say something as general as whether they are in a relationship or single; or they may say something specific, such as the fact that they are in an open marriage with various secondary partners, or happily involved in a monogamous long-term relationship. Players are welcome to share their sexual orientation if they are comfortable doing so.



Sharing this information prior to what could be intense in-character flirtatious play helps clarify real life relationship boundaries before blurring the in-game ones. It also helps everyone to understand something of the history and experience that each person brings to play.

Important note: If one or two people have histories that differ significantly from the rest of the group (for example if only one person is poly or divorced; or two players are queer), place them in couples first during character creation, matching them with like-minded or supportive individuals as Partners. This helps prevent them from becoming isolated. In the real world, discrimination based on differences can cause painful feelings that could be echoed in game. Giving these players an ally, or putting the questions raised by the alternative outlook if they choose to explore it in a central position, helps avoid this: these techniques move outliers into a place of strength and influence. The Director should be conscious of this dynamic and check in with the affected players during play to see if they are having any issues. See communication guidelines page xxiii, and isolation p. 210.

Touch and Accommodations for Play (5 minutes)

Before playing, establish how comfortable the group is with physical touch among the players. During the course of the game, it may make sense for partners to embrace, or new flames to touch while flirting, etc. If the players are open to including touch, have some physical contact between the players before the game starts. Have people hug or shake hands with everyone in the group after the Introductions. Clarify where is appropriate to touch (i.e. hands, arms, back and head, but not torso or legs). If one or more players request there be no touch, make sure that all players are aware of this boundary.

Cultural and group social customs vary greatly from place to place. Be sensitive to the needs of the individual group and the physical setting of the game. The context of play will greatly determine what may be comfortable: a group of friends playing at home is likely to have different boundaries about expression of affection in play than a group playing at a convention.

Before play begins, check in with any players who have mobility or other accessibility issues to ascertain how play can best accommodate them. This may affect what type of touch is acceptable as well as other aspects of play.





For example, players may need to play while seated, or to have eye contact with those who are speaking.

Communication During the Game (5 minutes)

This game may touch on sensitive topics for some players. Giving people a shared terminology to be able to talk about what kind of content they do or don't want during play is useful: i.e., **Veils** (page xxiv). **Braking** and **Cutting** (page xxii) give people tools to slow or stop play if it turns in an unexpectedly painful direction. However, some gaming communities may have their own ways of filling these needs; if your group does, you are welcome to use them.

Explain Playing “Close to Home” (2 minutes)

In Jeepform (jeepen.org), a Nordic tradition of role playing which greatly influenced the design of this game, they talk about playing close to home. See also page xxii in the Ground Rules. This means choosing to play out issues and difficulties—or things desired or loved—that come from the player's real emotions. When playing close to home, rather than choosing to create distance between what the player feels and what the character feels, the player uses the resonance of what happens in the game to explore their own emotions and reactions.



In *Under my Skin*, players can choose Core Issues for the characters that relate to their own experiences. This is (relatively) safe space to explore what might be very risky to do in one's own life.

Etiquette of Play (2 minutes)

Act with respect. Play with awareness. And respond with attentiveness to the choices of others. As you play, be mindful of boundaries: both your own and others'. Although you are invited to bring your real feelings to your experience, remember that you are playing with a group of other people who may expect to do the same—or they may want to simply play out an interesting story. No one is signing on for therapy, or to be a plaything in anyone else's fantasies. We approach the game as adults, and as equals.

Other points:

- **Core Issues are chosen alone.** Everyone has the option to choose one that is meaningful to them. No one has any obligation to say why. In the wrap-up, players may choose to share the reason, or not to. The experience is what matters, not what can be said or gleaned by others. That said, if there is safe space to share, and if the group or a subset wants to talk about the deeper parts of play, much can be learned.
- **Partners are chosen based on character compatibility.** Find characters that make sense together: that share professional or other interests, or that have naturally intertwining Core Issues.
- **Partnerships can be chosen to support players.** Give players whose real world relationships are non-majority the option to create character partnerships first.
- **New Flames are chosen randomly.** Everyone is playing a person worthy of love and desire. Choose New Flames arbitrarily to avoid biases or subconscious desires from making some players feel unwanted.
- **There are Friends as well as Lovers.** Life is full of relationships. Be aware of what you may give up to fulfill desire.
- **The Characters do not have Goals or Agendas.** The game is a structured experience, not a set of victory conditions. Even the Lines are simply expressions of strong feeling, not a limitation to conquer. Players should surrender their agendas at the door. Play to see what happens; play to feel what there is to feel.
- **Scenes are not plotted.** Scenes arise from each moment's action, building upon the last and leading to the next. It's perfectly fine to check with your co-players,



to get a shared sense of what dramatic beats you might hit or what events to focus on. But let events unfold, and don't stick to any script.

- **There are tools for the Director and other Players to help you.** Suggestions can be made and ideas communicated before, during, and after play. See *Meta-Techniques* p. 356 for rules on inner monologues, re-playing scenes, and *Directing Variations* on page 249, for pre-planned scenes. These rules provide inspiration and new directions for the story.

Monogamy and Polyamory (2 minutes)

Faith and faithfulness mean different things to different people. In a monogamous relationship, one of the primary agreements is sexual exclusivity between the partners. Those in non-monogamous or polyamorous arrangements may embrace a philosophy that love is not a scarce commodity, and open their relationship to include more than one other person. Marrying more than one person is illegal in the United States and many other countries, but many times the lived realities of relationships are more complex than what the legal code reflects.

Relationship can include many types of love: erotic attachments, deep intimacy of understanding and friendship, commitments to raising children or shared projects, etc. However, even when a relationship openly encompasses multiple partners, jealousy and fear about losing a loved one still surfaces.

ARRANGING THE PLAY SPACE

Find a quiet, private space to play. A room with a door that can be closed for privacy is ideal. Arrange the room so that there is open floor for playing. This is the "set" for Scenes. Place seats near to the set for watching players or audience. (see p. 223)

If no separate space is available for the game, use a quiet corner of a large shared space. Not recommended for groups larger than 5. In a shared space, though, being able to hear each other can become an issue, so make sure that everyone is close enough.

Place several chairs and a table or two in the set area. These will be used to create simple sets for scenes. Players can also use simple symbolic props,





such as a pen for a rose or a pillow for a child. No specialized costumes or set decorations are needed.

Playing the game can be a thirsty job. If possible, provide water for the players. Having snacks on hand for during or after the game is also recommended. Name tags for the players, extra paper, tape and markers are useful for posting things for all to see and refer to during the game.

CHARACTER CREATION (35 MIN.)

Working together, the players create characters in the same social circle. Gather the group around a table or another central place where they can write and share information. They will do some parts as a group, some in relationship pairs, and some solo. At the end of the process, they will share all information before putting the characters—and their complex and tangled emotional webs—into play.

TIME IS TICKING

Keep an eye on the clock during character creation—leave plenty of time to play! Larger groups may take longer. Couple creation often drags. Rein in this process so that other relationships have time, too. Time the Acts, and stick to the time limits.

Character Creation Outline

1. Individually: Choose Core Issues, p. 204 (2 min.)
2. As a Group: Suggest Areas and Assign relationships among characters, p. 205 (5 min.)
3. Character Ideas, p. 207 (3 min.)
4. In Pairs: Create Connection Levels (Intimacy, Passion and Commitment p. 207 (15 min.)
 - All characters have a Friend, p. 209
 - Singletons have a Best Friend, p. 208
 - Couples talk about their relationship, p. 209, then choose Lines, p. 215
5. As a Group: Share information (10 min.), and as you do so, make Locations, p. 217
6. Then, choose New Flames, p. 218 (3 min.)

1) Individually: Choose Core Issue (2 min.)

First, each player chooses a name and a Core Issue for their character. A Core Issue is a broad problem or weak spot for the character: an aspect of their life that has brought the character grief or heartache in the past and may still do so in the present. Keep Core Issues very general.

Core Issues are each a single word.



Examples:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• neglect• abandonment• fear• anger• honesty• insecurity• superiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• control• sacrifice• inferiority• madness• depression• attachment• loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• commitment• intimacy• hate• rage• apathy
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Players may wish to choose something personally resonant. (See *Playing Close to Home*, page xxii). However, this is completely optional, and players need not share the personal significance.

Each player writes their Core Issue on their character sheet. The group will further define the Core Issue in the next step.

2) *Create Areas (5 min.)*

A character’s Core Issue affects three particular areas of their life. The group works together to brainstorm ideas for these Areas.

Areas can be activities, personality traits, or concepts connected to the character’s Core Issue. For example, the Issue “loneliness” could affect a person’s *relationships*, have been experienced in the character’s *childhood*, or come from their work as a *writer*.

Areas should be a single word.

Tip for Play

Create a nametag for your character and write the character’s Core Issue on it. For example: “Peter (Anger).”



Example Core Issues and Areas:

<i>Neglect</i>	<i>Anger</i>	<i>Sacrifice</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• alone• children• poverty• housework• emptiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• temper• driving• internet• arguments• intolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• career• children• silenced• caretaking• martyr

Focus on each character’s Core Issue in turn, letting the group suggest which areas of the character’s life it impacts. You could go around the table for suggestions, or offer them up as they come to mind. At the end of the

CORE ISSUES IN PLAY
WHAT MAKES PEOPLE TICK?

Core Issues are themes for play as well as underlying character.

A character’s Core Issue colors their experience and influences the choices they make. See where it leads you as you play. Do these emotions keep the character tied down? Do they remain the same, or change?

Players may frame scenes using the Core Issues as a jumping-off point. For example, Flashback scenes specifically illustrate a character’s Core Issue (See Flashback Scenes page 225). The Director and the other players mirror and echo events or details from the Flashback scenes to show how events of the past continue to influence the present. Or, scenes in the present can involve Areas and Issues directly by placing the characters in a situation that evokes them.

Overall, use the Issues as inspiration and allow parallels to arise naturally. They are the framework of these characters. Listen, and follow each other’s leads.



process, each character should have three Areas. Write them down on the character sheet below the Core Issue.

The player will use these Areas as inspiration for details of the character's life, so they must not be too narrow or prescriptive, and the interpretation is ultimately up to the player. Do not describe details about the character's life at this time. For example, one player may add the word "police" to another character's Areas, but cannot say "You got beat up by the police; that's why you've got anger issues." If a player wishes, of course, they may ask for help or further suggestions as they make up their character.

3) *Character Ideas (3 min.)*

Next, working individually, players use their Core Issue and Areas to suggest character details. What does their character do for a living? Do they have hobbies where their Core Issue plays out? What might their family of origin be like?

Loose ideas are best at this stage, because soon players will share their character ideas with the group, and the group will help flesh them out more fully.

4) *Creating Relationships (15 min.)*

These characters have relationships with one another. Some have a Partner, some have a Best Friend, all have a Friend. There may be single characters in the game—they are called Singletons and there may be at most two—and the number of couples varies depending on your group size.

At this stage, players should **not**:

- Choose relationship status (married, single, etc.)
- Decide if the character has children

These will be decided when Relationships are completed (p. 214)



First, as a group, pair everyone up into Partner, Best Friend and Friend relationships, according to the framework laid out below. Then, break up into the assigned pairs to talk about the relationships between each pair of characters.

Relationship Types and Number of Players:

- Four players: two singletons (Best Friends) and one couple.
- Five players: two couples and one singleton.
- Six players: two couples, and two singletons
- Seven players: three couples and one singleton.
- Eight players: three couples and two singletons

First, choose the Couples: long-term, committed romantic relationships. Each character in a Couple is the other's Partner. Characters not in a Couple are Single.

Next, choose Best Friends. Singletons each have a Best Friend. This is an important person in their life that they rely on and open up to about matters of the heart. With four players, the two Single characters are Best Friends with each other. With larger groups this can vary.



Then, choose Friends. Everyone has a Friend who is neither their Partner nor their Best Friend.

COUPLES: BY CHOICE OR RANDOMLY

- **Choice:** To assign by choice, the Director works with the players to assign Couples based on their Issues or character backgrounds. For example, two characters who both have a military background may be a natural choice to be married. Choices may also be based on player preferences—such as finding others who also would like to explore polyamory, and so on. If there is no Director, the players confer to choose Couples. But be efficient—there is a lot more to do.
- **Random:** To assign randomly, flip a coin or use a die to choose which characters go with which. Those not matched with another character are Singletons.

Be aware of who is a Singleton. These characters are free of the influence of Angels and Devils (personifications of a character's brightest and darkest impulses, used in that Act), and can cross Lines at will. However, as characters they can be more vulnerable to rejection, which means that as players within the game they are more prone to isolation.

People with non-standard relationship identities may become isolated during play, which can replicate real world experiences in an unpleasant fashion. Please read *Beware of Isolation* (page 210) playnotes.



BEWARE OF ISOLATION

In *Under my Skin*, players may choose to be in polyamorous, non-monogamous, or other non-normative types of relationship. Sometimes, only a few players in a group of 6 or 8 people do so; perhaps only one. Social pressures—both in game and out of game—can isolate these players and characters in a way that mirrors real world rejection and discrimination.

Pay attention and avoid this dynamic.

- Be aware of people's real world relationship types.
- Use the fiction to support the players. Ask if anyone wants to be in a non-standard relationship before matching Couples; find them partners first.
- It is the Director's role to find someone supportive for the role, or assume the role of a partner themselves if need be.
- Encourage the group to embrace these issues and adopt them in character relationships, even if they are not part of an individual player's own experience.
- Look for ways to allow all relationship types to be treated with equal respect.
- Acknowledge polyamory as a solid, reasonable choice. Acknowledge the risk in all relationships.

It's also possible that poly folk might predominate in your play group. In that case, if there is one person who identifies as monogamous, give them similar respect and support by coupling them up first. Adapt this philosophy to other unequal dynamics.



CONNECTIONS: INTIMACY, PASSION AND COMMITMENT*

Connections represent aspects of each character's relationships, and guide players in co-creating the shared lives of their characters. They fall into three Categories*:

- **Intimacy:** understanding of one another, or shared history.
- **Passion:** sexual attraction and compatibility.
- **Commitment:** important shared goals and activities.

RELATIONSHIPS: FRIENDS, BEST FRIENDS, PARTNERS, NEW FLAMES

Each type of Relationship has a certain number of Connections associated with it. Each Connection may be of high, moderate or low intensity. What the intensities mean varies according to the type of Connection.

- **Friends** share one Connection: either Intimacy or Commitment.
 - Intensity: Moderate or Low.
- **Best Friends** share two Connections: one Intimacy and one Commitment.
 - Intensity: One High, one Low.
- **Partners** share three Connections: one Intimacy, one Commitment, and one Passion.
 - Intensity: One High, one Moderate, and one Low.
- **New Flames:** (to be added later) gain high intensity Passion in addition to any other Connections.

*These three components of love in this game—Intimacy, Passion and Commitment—are inspired by Robert Sternberg's "A triangular theory of love," *Psychological Review* Vol. 93 (1986). However, this use is not intended as a 1-to-1 correspondence.



WHAT INTENSITY MEANS

Intimacy:

- High Intensity means the characters know each other very well. For example, they may be old friends from childhood, or college buddies. In a Couple, it may mean that these two have been through a lot together, or are extremely open with one another.
- Moderate Intensity means they know each other, but have some big gaps in their mutual understanding. Perhaps after years together they have begun to drift apart or take each other for granted. Perhaps their relationship is young and are still getting to know the deeper parts of each other. They have a good foundation here, but room to grow.
- Low Intensity means the characters don't know each other well. Maybe they have a shallow relationship or have lost touch with who the other is over time. Perhaps they know each other from work, but don't get together socially. They might be a brand new couple, still getting to know one another. Their self-awareness or insight into each other may also be very low.

For Passion:

- High Intensity means the characters strongly desire one another. They can't keep their hands off each other. Sparks fly!
- Moderate Intensity means that they have a solid base of connection and compatibility. They enjoy each other's physical presence and have compatible sex drives. However, their passion is not a brightly burning flame.
- Low Intensity means the characters do not connect sexually. Either they are mismatched, or they have lost their desire for one another over time.

For Commitment:

- High Intensity means the characters share three specific shared activities they rely on one another for (see the list of examples on the next page). Their deeply intertwined lives mean they need one another for many important things.
- Moderate Intensity means that the characters have two strong shared activities or obligations. They spend a lot of time together, but also devote a good deal of time to solo pursuits.
- Low Intensity means the characters share one specific activity they share. They have only one thing that brings them together regularly.



Example Commitments

Home and Household

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• live together• own a home• have children• paying off debt• inherited a dilapidated Victorian home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• adopting a child together• have a parrot• building a house• are remodeling• putting kids through college	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• breed bulldogs• garden together• jog• have a rent-controlled apartment• share a stock portfolio• family
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Work

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lawyers in the same law firm• own a publishing business together• run a bodega (grocery store) together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• are colleagues at a research university• operate a farm together• a taxi driver and their dispatcher• work in the same office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• teach at the same high school• both work at Staples• landscape together
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Creative Endeavors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• writing a book together• in band together• research wetland ecology together• tag graffiti together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create lavish decorative gardens• write and publish games together• make quilts• in Roller Derby team• attend same Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bowl in a league together• hike the Appalachian trail• are running for office• run larps• share activism
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Write the appropriate number of Commitments down on the character sheet.

All Connections are mutual and have the same Intensity for both characters.



For example

Judith and **John** are Best Friends. They choose two Connections: Intimacy (high) and Commitment (low).

Together they choose what this means:

- They have high Intimacy since they were best friends in high school and have kept in touch.
- They have low Commitment since they both have busy lives. They get together once a month to bowl.

COMPLETING RELATIONSHIPS

Give the players some time to talk to their characters' Friends, Best Friends, and Partners to establish details about their characters' lives. Have them switch partway through to ensure all relationships get equal time. They will share the results in a group afterward.

If players need prompts, ask some of the following questions. They should record major points of their answers on their character sheets.

Best Friend and Friend Relationships:

How do you know each other? Do you work together? Did you meet through a Partner? Do you live near one another? What is the nature of your friendship?

Start with Friend and Best Friend relationships. Since creating Couples often takes longer, if you begin with the Couples, the Singletons will have to wait. With this order, if the Couples take longer, Singletons can take a break and relax while the Partners chat. Keep things moving, perhaps set a timer.



Further questions based on Connections:

If you have a high Intimacy, are you old friends? From how far back? Did you live together, back in the day? And if so, what was that like? What are your Commitments? What do you share? For example, do you co-moderate a popular internet forum? Design games together? Lead neo-pagan rituals? Co-own a house?

Couple Relationships:

Based on the Connections:

Are you married? Living together? How long have you been together? Do you have children? What do you do for a living? Is there a main breadwinner?

And answer some questions about the relationship:

Why is the low aspect low? The high, high? What does it say about your sex life or how well you know each other? Are you new to the relationship, or have you grown apart? What are the things you can't let go of? What keeps you together? What do you enjoy?

Lines

Choose **Lines**: Lines are things that are sacred—or sore spots—in the romantic relationship. They are things unique to the relationship that would hurt one partner if the other did or shared them with someone else. See examples below. **Only Couples have lines.** Lines should be observed scrupulously by characters until the Angels and Devils Act.

Observe Lines Until...

Partners observe Lines throughout the initial Acts. Do not frame scenes that bring them into question until the Angels & Devils Act.



Choose **three Lines** for each character and write them on their own character sheet and that of their partner.

Lines are explicit or implicit agreements within relationships about what behavior is tolerated. Crossing a Line with someone outside of the relationship constitutes a betrayal of trust. These are different for each member of the Couple: what would feel like a betrayal is unique to each person based on their past history and sense of what is precious and important about the relationship. Two characters may happen to have the same Line, but they should not all be the same.

A Line could be anything from eating at a favorite restaurant with someone else to having sex with a new partner in **your** bed. Lines may symbolize deeper fears or knottier problems that are difficult to put into words; they bring anger and insecurity into full light. They are the flashpoints for conflict.

The default Line in all relationships in the game is sex outside the relationship, but the players may choose not to use that as a Line. If so, they replace it with something else of an intimate nature. Players choose other types of Lines based on their characters' temperament, needs, and relationships.

Lines may not be part of formal or explicit agreements between the Partners, but each person knows that if they did this, their Partner would feel hurt.

Example Lines:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have sex• read out loud to one another• go to the park with their kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• kiss• sleep in their bed• play tennis• write together• go to a special restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fish• hold hands• tell dirty jokes• walk in the cemetery
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Crossing off Sex

"*Having sex*" is a default Line for Couples: it is pre-written on the character sheet. So, for most Couples, each player will only have to choose two additional Lines



for their characters. However, if players don't want to go with the default, they can cross it off and choose another.

To play a Couple in an open or polyamorous relationship(see discussion of Polyamory in Guidelines for Play section, page 202), cross “sex” off of the Lines section and replace it with some other form of physical or emotional intimacy that would cause hard feelings if shared with someone else (e.g. having sex in the Couple’s bed, introducing them as your partner, etc.).

For Players: About Lines

Partnered characters: Write your Lines and those of your Partner on the character sheet. Your character will respect this perhaps unspoken agreement. But during a scene later in the game, there will be a temptation scene with a New Flame, during which you’ll have to choose whether to cross one of your Partner’s Lines. Although you may not do so, the impact of the temptation is still there.

5) Share Information and Create Locations (10 min.)

After all of the players have spoken individually with their in-character relationship partners, collect the group. Go around and share the information generated so far.

Clarify relationships throughout the group: Who works with whom? Who knows whom? What pulls this social circle together? Perhaps they

TIP FOR PLAY

Lines set events in motion that tempt characters and test relationships. Choose things that seem true to the character, or play close to home and choose things that have been an issue for you, the player. Find your own comfort level. Be daring. Explore. The game is an opportunity for you to examine what your life might have been like if you made a different choice. Or, perhaps, what life will be like if you succumb to temptations that confront you now.

Under my Skin



share a hobby, or know one another from college. Perhaps social circles intersect through one or two people.

Create Locations: As the group shares, examine the commitments, jobs, interests, and Lines created and make a list of locations where they take place. These will become settings for scenes in play. Record places mentioned by players and brainstorm others until you have up to a dozen locations. Write them on a large piece of paper or whiteboard. Post it where all can see, so that it can inject fresh inspiration if needed during the game. Add new Locations as needed during play.

6) *Create New Flames (5 min.)*

The last step of character creation throws the game into motion. Choose pairs of New Flames.

These pairs will gain a strong, new attraction to one another during the game's second stage, called Meeting. New Flames may already be Friends, but must not already be Partners or Best Friends.

After the Meeting Act, a high Passion for one another is kindled.

New Flame Passion

During the game's first scene, Introductions, the New Flames' Passion level is not yet in effect. This aspect of their relationship comes into play during the Meeting Act.

To choose New Flames, begin by matching each Singleton with a member of a Couple. Exclude their Best Friend, and choose randomly using dice or names drawn from a hat. This character will be their new love interest.



Next, randomly choose one of the remaining Partners to start with. Randomly assign them a New Flame. Going around the table, continue to assign New Flames.

New Flames gain a High Passion Connection with each other. If they already have a Friend relationship, they add Passion to their existing Connection.

LEFT OUT

If there is an odd number of players, one character will not have a New Flame. This character is left out of forming a new, potential couple.

Singletons cannot be Left Out.

Being Left Out gives the player freedom that the others will not have, but also reduces the focus on their character. You can offset this in several ways:

- Consult with the player about what will help them feel satisfied with play and follow through on their requests.
- During the New Flame Stage, play a scene with the Left Out character and their Friend.
- Base scenes in locations and situations connected with the Left Out character, to make them central to the storyline.
- Use additional techniques found in the Meta-Techniques section (p. 356) such as Inner Monologue (p. 357) to provide additional spotlight to Left Out character's emotions and experiences.

P L E A S E N O T E

- Singletons cannot be New Flames with their Best Friend or another Singleton.
- Partners cannot be matched with one another as New Flames.
- In a game with four players the Singletons each become the New Flame of the member of the Couple who is not their Best Friend.



7) *Take a Break (5 minutes)*

The preparations are complete. Now take a short break and in a few minutes come back to start playing the game.



WALKTHROUGH



STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

The game takes place in Acts that form a story arc. Each Act is made up of individual Scenes. Most Scenes are set in the present, but the Director can choose to introduce one to two Flashbacks during any stage. Read more about Flashbacks on page 225.

Acts

- Setup
 - **Beginnings:** Establishing Scenes.
 - **Meeting:** (*Group Scene*) Everyone is together. New Flames ignite.
 - **New Flames:** New Flames spend time together. Left out characters spend time with friend.
 - **Changes:** Couples together, examine issues. Singletons with best friends, dish about romance.
 - **Angels and Devils:** New Flames face temptation to cross relationship Lines. Will they cross one?
 - **Revelations:** (*Group Scene*) The whole group is reunited. What has been lost? What can be saved?
 - **Denouement:** (*Optional*) Looking back on the events of this game from the future.
- Debrief

1) Directing Tasks:

CALLING FOR SCENES (SEE ALSO SCENES, PAGE 224)

The game is made up of many Scenes. The Director chooses which characters' Scenes happen in what order within the Acts, and can use these choices to set the tone. For example, opening a Stage with a Scene that promises conflict can start





things with a bang. Choosing a Scene that is cheerful or hopeful can provide contrast when things have gotten intense and overwhelming. Try to balance screen time for players: if a Scene has additional characters and a player hasn't been in a Scene lately, cast this player as an extra or suggest that their character be involved.

CALLING FOR FLASHBACKS (SEE ALSO FLASHBACKS, PAGE 225)

Flashbacks happen intermittently within each Act. The Director chooses when they happen, and which character has one; however, if a player requests one, the Director should follow through. The Director asks for player suggestions for Flashbacks, consider what the characters have discussed in their other Scenes, and use Flashbacks to focus on a character's Core Issue.

ASKING QUESTIONS

If a player is unsure of what to do during a Scene, the Director (or any player) may prompt them with questions that relate to the events of the Scene. Ask questions that stir up Core Issues or follow up on problems noted during character creation. Good questions help us better understand the character's thoughts and feelings.

Example questions:

Where are the kids? What do you do after work? Does she do that to annoy you? What are you afraid to tell your friend?



Questions lie outside the narrative, even though the player responds in-character. They are directives that the players can use to move deeper into the role. Use them judiciously, but do use them, especially if the players have a hard time getting into a groove with one another. If the players are doing well on their own, you may need them rarely, if at all.

MAKING SUGGESTIONS

Directors and players may also suggest things to incorporate into a Scene. For example, that the children join the parents, or that a favorite song suddenly plays on the radio. The suggestions are intended to give the players more to work with, to increase the pressure, or to add something meaningful to the Scene. Players choose to follow up on the suggestion or not.

ENDING SCENES AND FLASHBACK SCENES

The goal of each Scene is for everyone to understand how the characters feel and relate to one another. Some Scenes will have major conflicts; others will be simple vignettes of moments in the characters' lives. Allow Scenes to go on long enough for the players to really dig into their characters, but end Scenes promptly when they have fulfilled their purpose.

2) Playing in the Space

Divide the playing space into two areas: the audience and the set. In the audience, place enough chairs facing the set for those who are not on stage to sit and watch. The audience should be close enough to the set that they can easily hear all conversations. If people want to discuss what they will do in an upcoming Scene, they should move out of earshot so they will not distract others.

The set will represent all the various places used in the story; it should be large enough to accommodate all of the players at the same time. Clear the set of extraneous objects; confine bags and character sheets to the audience area or a safe empty corner. Place some chairs and small tables as props in the set. For example, two chairs next to one another could represent a sofa; with a table they could represent seating at a restaurant.



If no separate space is available for the game, use a quiet corner of a large shared space, especially for a small group (4–5 players). In a shared space, though, being able to hear each other can become an issue, so make sure that everyone is close enough.

3) *Scenes and Flashbacks*

SCENES

Each Act contains several Scenes between the characters. Most are Focus Scenes with some players involved, and others watching. Exceptions are noted. Each Act has different rules for how to frame the Scenes, with processes for deciding where the Scene takes place and who is present. Scenes should highlight issues or bonds between the characters; the Director and Players work together to decide exactly what a Scene will be about.

Set Scenes in locations established during character creation; or in new places as appropriate. When in doubt, set Scenes in the characters' homes, and use the setting to throw characters' dynamics into focus. A Scene cooking dinner could highlight a character's *control* issues. Partners grown distant might sit watching TV. Passionate newlyweds might be in the bedroom. Scenes can also be in locations where friends and acquaintances would likely meet: the workplace, the gym, a favorite cafe or bar. As characters change and grow, they might branch out into new locations: showing up at a protest with an idealistic New Flame, or ending up at a hospital if things go wrong.

When a character is not present in a given Scene, their player watches from the audience. They may also opt to play an extra needed to support the Scene's core characters.

Ending Scenes

The Director ends a Scene by saying "cut" at a suitable point. Watch and consider when to do so. It's an art—you'll get a feel for good moments with practice. Whatever you do, try to keep the momentum going. It's better to end a Scene while it still sizzles with tension, rather than allowing it to fizzle out. It's okay to leave us hanging and allow the action to move to the next set of characters. The best time to end a Scene is right after a satisfying beat in the story, preferably accompanied by a good ending line. Watch for telling remarks, decisive actions, or quiet moments of contentment and intimacy. These are often good places to cut.





Balance the time devoted to each Scene in order to spotlight all players. It's okay to let Scenes with more characters (for example, Meeting and Revelations) have more time. But, as a rule of thumb, if a Scene goes longer than 5 minutes, start looking for a moment to end it.

FLASHBACKS

Flashbacks are special Scenes that show an episode from a character's past. Choose a situation for the character that highlights their Core Issue. You may connect it to the present by playing a past event mentioned during a regular Scene. For example, if a character with the Core Issue "*abandonment*" has a tense Scene in which their partner accuses them of being like their deadbeat dad, they could then play a flashback involving the father: for example, the last time they saw their father during their childhood, or when they confronted him as an adult.

Be on the lookout for Flashback Scenes that will illuminate the character. Are they driven to success? Play a Scene with their parents forcing them to choose a law degree over social work. Isolated and cut off? Play a happy moment with their late wife. Gripped with writer's block and slowly losing touch with reality? Play a Scene where youthful success with a novel puts untold pressure on them and causes a panic attack. Or, just depict a simple

USING META-TECHNIQUES

Directors can introduce special rules called Meta-techniques. Some, like Flashbacks and Flash-forwards, are short scenes that introduce background of the characters, or glimpses of the future. Others, such as bird-in-ear and inner monologue provide suggestions for the players or open a window to the thoughts of the character. Several are part of the core rules (Angels and Devils, Flashbacks, Questions, Suggestions). Others listed here are recommended for common use in play. These and others used in other games in this volume are described in the Meta-Technique list on pages 356.

- Angels and Devils
- Bird-in-Ear
- Inner Monologue
- Flashback
- Flash-Forward
- Questions
- Suggestions

For players unfamiliar with this style of play use the base rules of the game the first time you play. Come back to the Meta-technique section the next time you play. If you are familiar with this style of play, feel free to incorporate additional Meta-techniques as they feel right for your game. By experiencing others use them, or by using them yourself, develop a feel for what they add. Experiment and grow in confidence and sophistication with their use over time.

See Meta-techniques in Game Materials section, page 356.

moment of humor and love in the early years of a relationship. Flashbacks provide past context for characters, evoke sympathy in other players.

Flashbacks can be touching, painful and funny, or reflective, but the purpose remains the same: to help the players better understand the characters and where they come from.



When to Run Flashbacks

Limit Flashbacks to one or two per Act. This allows players to explore characters' pasts, but keeps the story's main focus on the present. Not all characters will need to play a flashback.

Flashbacks are a good way to spotlight characters who receive less screen time in group Scenes. Therefore, it's best to start with flashbacks for the Singletons, since they may have less to explore in the initial Scenes. Do not do any flashbacks during group Scene Acts, adding a Flashback is overkill. Once you reach Angels and Devils, the narrative may be so close to complete that there is no need for any more input from the past.

End a flashback when the situation naturally comes to a close, or when the way the Scene relates to the Issue is clear.

The Acts form a story arc:

- People live their lives, either as couples dealing with the changes in their relationships, or singles seeking love and companionship.
- They meet someone who they become madly attracted to, or unexpectedly fall for someone they already know who is not their current partner.
- The new love interests talk and discover connections, then return to their partner or good friend and talk about what the new interest has brought up.
- The new potential relationships escalate, and characters must choose whether to cross a line in their current relationship. What do they do?
- They face the consequences or reap the benefits of this decision, and life goes on.
- At the very end, flash forward into the future. The characters show us how these events have shaped their lives or faded away from memory.

4) Acts

BEGINNINGS

In the first Act, play an establishing Scene for each Couple or Singleton. Show the characters' relationships as they exist at the start of the game. Couples have Scenes with their partners. Singletons have Scenes with their Best Friend.



Story Arc

- Beginnings: Partners in their daily life: simple stresses and joys. Singletons with Best friend: looking for love.
 - Flashbacks for Singletons
- Meeting: (Group Scene) Everyone is together. New Flames ignite.
- New Flames: The New Flames alone together. Left Out characters with Friend: how is life?
 - Flashbacks for left out or any character
- Changes: Couples together. How is this going to work? Singletons with Best Friend: what is happening? with whom?
 - Flashbacks for any characters
- Angels and Devils: New Flames negotiate their relationship Lines. Will they cross them?
- Revelations: (Group Scene) Everyone is together. What has been lost? What can be saved?
- Denouement: (Optional) Looking back on the events of this game from the future

BEGINNINGS (CONT.)

Couple Scenes:

Each Couple gets a Scene together. These players choose a Location, and the Director or other players choose an activity for them to do in the Scene. Pick an activity that relates to one or both of the character's issues.

During the Scene, the players interact in character. Use the meta-technique bird-in-ear to introduce complexity (See page 356). The Director and other players ask questions or give direction (using Meta-Techniques see page 226) to help the couple's players get into character or to move the Scene toward juicy things that were discussed during character creation.





For example, they could say: *Why is it you always do the dishes? She told her last boyfriend that. What are your pet names for one another? Comment on how the kids never listen to you. When did you last have sex?* The questions and comments are not prompts for discussion—instead they inform what actions the player takes next in-character.

Singleton Scenes:

Singletons play a Scene with their Best Friend. These players choose a Location, based on their Connections and what they know about their friendship. During the Scene, the Best Friend should ask the Singleton about relationships and how they feel about being alone.

Flashback Scenes:

In between the Scenes of this Act, you can opt to play one or two flashbacks. If there are Singletons in play, do flashbacks for these characters. Choose a topic that relates to their Core Issue, and raise relationship issues if possible. If there is a Director, they solicit suggestions or choose a Scene for play. The player of the focus character has final say over the Scene's content. Any other player with an idea may give a suggestion. (See Flashbacks, page 225.)

MEETING

Group Scene:

This Act consists of a single long Scene: an event or social gathering that brings all the characters together. All the characters are present together. It begins to explore the heart of the conflict that will unfold throughout the game by bringing the characters into contact with their New Flames. The group decides on the setup together. It can be a party, a wedding, a concert, a funeral, or whatever else fits for this group of friends.



The Director can watch or be involved in the Scene as another character: a guest, a waiter providing *hors d'oeuvres*, the wedding officiant, or whatever makes sense for the situation. This can help allow them to hear or see more of what happens.

At the start of the Scene, Couples are together and Singletons enter alone. During the Scene, the New Flames interact with one another and start to flirt. It's a good idea to ease into flirting, and allow your character to learn why and how they fall in love with this other person. It's okay for some characters to break off into another room for a tête-à-tête. Friends can cover for one another by occupying the other partner. Perhaps New Flames will make plans, or open the door to seeing one another again privately. Do not make plans for anything that would cross a Line.

Once the New Flames have sparked, and all original couples have come back together, end the Scene. The Director may signal that it's time to wrap up with a chime or other non-intrusive signal.



Play Notes:

Group Scene: Play this Scene in a larp style: all action happens at the same time with no one sitting aside and watching.

No New Flame couples cross lines in these Scenes. Whatever plans they make should not invoke a line from their original relationship. That will happen at a later point in the story, during the “Angels and Devils” Act.



No Flashbacks.

NEW FLAMES

New Flame Scenes:

In this Act, the New Flames follow up on their flirtation. Play Scenes in New Flame pairs. If a character has been left out of the new pairings, they get a Flashback instead.

The Director can choose where each New Flames couple meets, unless the players set up a situation during Initiation. The New Flame players choose how or why their characters get together (by accident, someone calls, they drop by work, etc.) During each Scene the characters test the boundaries of their attraction and see what it feels like to be with their New Flame.

Flashback Scene:

Left out characters, if any, play a Flashback from the character’s life that involves their Core Issue. If all characters are paired, play a Flashback for someone who has not yet had one.





CHANGES

This Scene places the original Couples together again so that we see how the New Flame flirtation is affecting their relationship. Singletons talk with their Best Friend about the possible relationship. Follow or intersperse these Scenes with a Flashback Scene or two.

Couple Scenes:

Play Scenes in original Couples. Time has passed between this stage and the last, and they have been in further contact with their New Flames. The players choose a shared activity that relates to one of their Commitments. Do they tell each other they are falling in love with someone else? Do they ask to be able to pursue this? Does the other suspect? Do they ask suspicious questions? How have things changed?

Singleton Scenes:

Play Scenes between Singletons and their Best Friend in which they discuss their New Flame. The Director or players in the Scene choose the setting. The Best Friend can talk about pros and cons, or ask compelling questions. This may also bring up potential complications if the Best Friend knows the New Flame!



Flashback Scenes:

Any character may have a Flashback Scene. Do one or two at some point throughout the stage. A player may request one for any character, but if not, the Director should do so. The player who calls for it may suggest a situation, or ask for suggestions about what others would like to see from this character's past.

ANGELS AND DEVILS *THIS SCENE IS FIRST WHERE LINES MAY BE CROSSED.*

This Act tests everyone's mettle. Each New Flame pair has a Scene together, with their old relationships potentially at stake. The new relationships are approaching a turning point: an existing relationship line is in danger of being crossed. Almost everyone will get involved in figuring out whether this happens.

NEW FLAME SCENES:

Each New Flame couple decides where the Scene takes place, and how the meeting challenges existing relationship lines.

During the Scene, other players take part, not as their usual character, but as Angels and Devils. Devils will encourage a New Flame to follow their desires and disregard common sense or their Partner's wishes. Angels en-



courage them to be cautious and think of how much will be lost or could be destroyed in the original relationship.

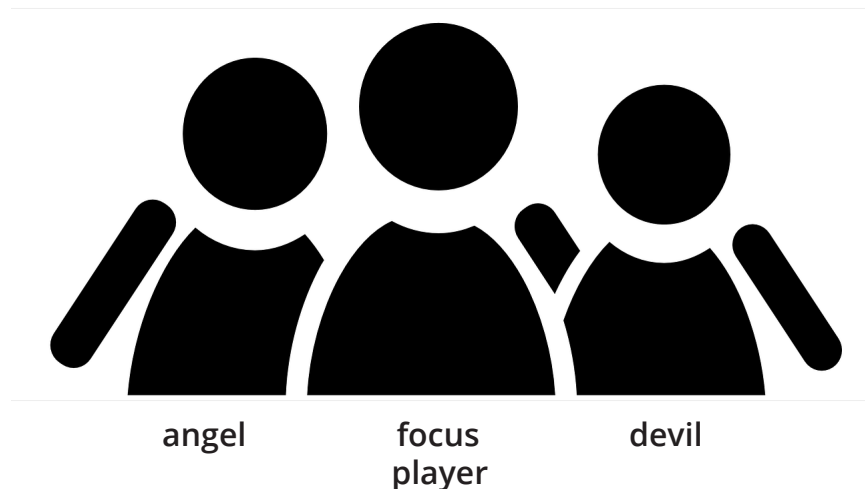
Playing Angels and Devils:

Anyone who began the game in a Couple gets an Angel and Devil pair, each played by a different person. One of these should be the player of the character's original Partner; this player gets the first choice of which role (angel or devil) to play. Any other player may take the remaining role.

The Angel and Devil players stand on either side of the character they are focusing on and tempt or cajole the player into either crossing the Line or respecting it. The whole arsenal of the character's makeup is fair game: all the fears and hopes, the needs and desires, the Core Issue and Commitments.

Singletons do not have an Angel and Devil; they simply play according to their character's desires. Optionally, the player of their Best Friend may speak as the Singleton's conscience—urging or cautioning them as they see fit.

The New Flames play out their Scene, interacting with one another while listening to what the Angels and Devils (or in the case of Singletons, their conscience) say. They should consider what to do and the ramifications it will have on their life and relationships.



CHOOSING THE ANGEL OR DEVIL

When a New Flame players decides what to do, they signal this by taking the hand of their Angel or Devil. If they take the Devil’s hand, they decide to cross the Line; if they take the Angel’s hand, they don’t. The Scene ends once both have made a choice.

If there are two sets of Angels and Devils in a Scene, it can be helpful for the main characters to signal readiness so they can choose at the same time. The New Flame does this by taking the other Flame’s hand first. Once both are ready, they can choose simultaneously.

If a player chooses their Angel, they cannot commit any act that would constitute crossing any relationship Line. When a character chooses the Devil, they make a choice only for their own character. Doing so cannot force another character to cross their relationship lines.

Diverging Choices

What happens if one chooses their Devil but the other chooses their Angel? Certain Lines, for example *having sex*, seem to pose a problem if one desires to do so, but the other does not. In fact, these things are not contradictory. What is important is the choice itself, whether or not the act itself is completed. Similarly, choosing *not* to cross the Line is impactful.

N U M B E R O F P L A Y E R S

With four players, only the Couple characters require an Angel and Devil pair. The other players, or the Director take these roles.

With five players, the Director plays an Angel or Devil for one of the characters.

With six or more players, there are enough players to assume the roles. Rotate through to allow everyone to have a chance, including the Director if needed.



VERY IMPORTANT TIPS FOR PLAY

Allow time for the Flames to listen, respond and talk. Having three people talking to you at once can be overwhelming. Take pauses.

Choosing the Devil doesn't over-ride the other's choice of Angel.

Choosing the Devil means you act on making something happen, not necessarily that it does occur. For example, if the character who chose the Devil decides to have sex, the one who chose the Angel refuses them.

Also, what is transgressive in one relationship could be quite innocent in another. For example, reading a friend's novel isn't a threatening move if your partner's Lines revolve around love and physical intimacy. In this case, New Flames with contrary Angel/Devil choices are free to act accordingly. In some cases, even having sex will not cross a partner's Lines! Remember, though, that there may always be unexpected ripples.

REVELATIONS

In this Act, the group reunites for another event, but things have changed. Characters express their feelings publicly, show off their new relationships, or awkwardly meet the once-potential lover and reckon with past rejection.

This Scene is the time to bring it. Bring the arguments and retributions, the noisy outings of private affairs, and even the quiet recognition of how things can change and yet stay the same. Characters might shore up or abandon relationships; all the fallout comes into the open. Bring it all to this Scene.

Framing the Group Scene: All characters are present. The players decide what event brings the characters together. Perhaps it is related to the



Meeting Stage Scene: the party celebrating a successful political campaign launched in the earlier Scene, or another wedding spun off from the first.

End the Scene when all the players have had an opportunity to gain closure on their character's story. The Director may call the Scene, or there may be some action that naturally ends the Scene (everyone leaves the party, the hall burns down, etc.). Decide on a signal, like a raised index finger, for players to use to say, "I need more time." End when all are ready.

DENOUEMENT (OPTIONAL ACT)

In the Denouement, take a last look at the characters, weeks, months, or years after the previous events. Play brief Scenes that show what is new in the character's lives and perhaps what perspective the characters have gained.

Framing the Scenes: Players choose a Location and a situation for their characters, set some time after the Resolution Stage.

Who is there depends on what happened previously. Couples that stayed together should have a Scene together; if New Flames paired off, they have a Scene together instead. For example, if two New Flames have left their partners for one another, they could play a Scene about settling into a new home together, showing the new zest the characters feel—or how it has faded. Or, if a broader partnership including more than just two has emerged, show how they are together, what their new life is like walking a different path.

Former Singletons not involved in Scenes with their New Flames should play a Scene with a friend—are they still close with their Best Friend?—talking about their experiences and plans for the future.

The characters are changed by their experiences, even if they choose to remain in their old relationships. This Scene should help answer the questions: What has changed? What new directions have they found? What has been lost? What has been gained?





ADDITIONAL SCENES

If other Scenes are needed or desired, they may be added during or between Acts. For example, after *Angels and Devils*, players may want a Scene showing the fallout with the original Partner before moving on to the group Scene for Resolution. Pay attention to time, but be flexible and responsive to the needs of the story and of the players.



ENDGAME



FINISHING THE GAME

Set time aside at the end of play to discuss the game and to debrief. Give players time to hear about each others' experiences and reflect on their own. Answer some questions together about what it was like to play the characters and ponder why they made the choices that they did.

Debriefing

At the end of *Under My Skin*, it's important to allow time for the players to decompress and share with one another about their experiences. It's particularly essential if players have opted to play "close to home." And it's part of the complete experience of *Under My Skin*.

Debriefing allows players to begin processing their experience and come to terms with the events in the game. Some may have valuable insights to offer about how they saw their character and others': their strengths and weaknesses, or what they imagine about the future of the characters after

NOTE TO DIRECTOR

Check in with your players about how they feel after play. If anyone looks unsettled or expresses discomfort, call for a break before re-grouping to debrief. Talk with the person (or people) and see if they have specific needs that can be met. For example, they might want to take a longer break, call a friend, or share something that arose during play. If a player has a larger concern, make an appointment to meet with them after the game to discuss and address it further.





the game. The crucial elements of a debrief are to make room for everyone to speak if they wish to, and to allow for a range of reactions to the game.

Although it's okay for a player to opt out of the debrief, it can be a very valuable part of play.

Share some food and drink and chat about play. The following are formal steps you can take. They draw upon the Nordic tradition of debriefing following intense role play.

Steps:

- 1) "De-roleing"—ritually setting aside the role to provide closure
- 2) Individual sharing
- 3) Group discussion

DE-ROLEING (CHOOSE ONE OR TWO OF THESE TO FOLLOW)

- "Set Down" –Ask players to hold their nametag, or a prop or character sheet that represents their character in their hands. Ask them to think about something they value about playing the character while holding the object. Then, have



everyone set it out in the center of the table, or face-down in front of them, when they are ready to let that character go.

- “Take Away”—Share one thing with the group that was learned or taken home from playing the character. Go around the circle sharing.
- “Let Go”—Share one thing that the players are glad to set aside about being that character.
- “Same & Not Same”—Share a way the character resembles the player or feels familiar, and share a way that the character differs greatly.

INDIVIDUAL SHARING

Ask players to split up into groups of 2 (with one group of 3 if there is an odd number of players).

Each player answers one of the following questions, then all players change groups and each answer the next. Repeat for the third.

- *What was a memorable moment?*
- *What did someone else do, either in-character or directing, that added a lot to the game?*
- *What brought up the most emotion for you?*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Come back together and talk as a group, answering a couple of questions, such as:

- *What changed for the characters during the course of the game?*
- *What surprised you about what the characters did, especially your own?*
- *Why did they make their choices?*
- *How did their Core Issues make a difference?*
- *What was it like for you to play?*
- *How did playing out your Core Issue feel? Was it one that related to your life, or were you just curious about it?*

The players may ask each other for feedback on what it was like to interact with their character. What was it like to be married to a controlling spouse? How did the characters’ issues fit together? How did they pull them apart? What kept them together in the end, or what were the reasons for them



parting? What about the New Flame offered the greatest temptations? What held the characters back?

As you talk, make sure to examine both the strong points and the frailties of the characters and their relationships. Many times, a Core Issue such as fear, insecurity, or loneliness makes a player choose the safety of the initial relationship, even in the face of differences or lack of fulfillment. Also, the events may highlight bonds of loyalty and appreciation among the characters. Embrace the complexities of the characters and their transformation.

Afterglow

If you have the opportunity, go out to eat or get a cup of coffee with your fellow players after playing. The game can be cathartic and moving, or simply thought provoking. If the players want more time to talk, a group trip to your a local restaurant or cafe might be just the thing.

Further reading on debriefing:

Definition and Discussion of Debriefing

- <http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Debriefing>

How to Run a Post-Larp Debrief, by Lizzie Stark

- <http://leavingmundania.com/2013/12/01/run-post-larp-debrief/>



STRATEGY & TIPS



Larger and Smaller Games

The pivotal difference between a large versus a smaller cast in *Under my Skin* is play time. Four hours is sufficient for four to six players, but beyond that six hours is needed.

Setup is fun. Perhaps a little too fun. The hour allotted can easily run long. Chatting in character to find out your relationship history stretches easily. Discussion of what might happen can drift into planning out play. Directors keep the group moving forward. Shift into playing scenes to stop speculating and see what does happen.

Character Dynamics

The characters occupy different social territory. Some are single, some are in couples. Some will have New Flames, others will not. Be aware of and embrace the different dynamics each position brings.

Playing as a Partner in a Couple provides the opportunity to see what makes a relationship tick. How do the two people relate? Do they hear one another, or do they talk past one another? Are there things they can't say aloud? Who has the upper hand? Who gives more, and who takes more?

Playing a Singleton allows more freedom, but also puts a player on the outside of the existing relationships. What does this character look for in relationships? In their life? What does the New Flame offer?

If in a Couple and with a New Flame, a player gets to explore and contrast two relationships. What could each partner bring to this person's life? What would be sacrificed? What is the person they play looking for? Is the original relationship in so much trouble it should dissolve? Is it worth fighting for? Also, are the two relationships compatible? What would that look like?



A player “Left Out” of the New Flame couples can focus on their relationship and what they are facing in their life. What satisfactions are they missing? How has their relationship changed, perhaps failed them? Or did they fail the relationship? The Left Out character has freedom to press and pressure their partner and others. They are a free agent, one under many pressures, so they can make real trouble for others and themselves.

Supportive Yet Independent Play

Each player will make decisions for their own character that will affect everyone else. It is important to surrender assumptions about what other players could or should choose for their characters. Act on your character’s motivations, and embrace the choices others make.

Each player’s primary role is to understand and portray their character. Their secondary role is to help other players get the most out of their play.

One way to do this is to play supporting characters in scenes where others’ characters are the focus. This keeps everyone involved, and gives all players tools to drive the story. Playing a crazy roommate as a supporting character can push another character into relying on their New Flame. Playing another character’s remorselessly guilt-inducing mother in a Flashback can demonstrate why the son grew up consumed by anger.

Emergent Plot

The lives of the characters often coalesce into a plot. The ups and downs of relationships cluster around major themes in the characters’ lives: a political campaign being launched by a candidate realizing he wants to come out of the closet, the launching of a new art show collaborated on by the artist and someone who may become their new lover, a life-threatening illness is revealed just when relationships are beginning to crumble.

When this happens, it flows from the events of play. Framing scenes in the characters’ daily lives gives you material for consequences and follow through. An invitation to a fund-raising party where the New Flames all meet, leads to a climactic campaign launch where words and kisses are exchanged and everyone’s life changes.



This need not be forced or sought out. Be aware of the moments and pulses of the character's lives. Let one that has dramatic potential create hooks for the group scenes, and give space for the others' lives to breathe and grow in the small group scenes between Partners, New Flames and Friends. Let the emergent plot give dramatic potential to the relationship changes. It may be a vibrant thread, but it is just one of the many that weaves the tapestry of these characters lives.

Directing Styles

Leading a Nordic-style freeform larp is an art. (Read more about this style of play at the end of this section.) At base, keeping the scenes in order, helping the players understand their roles, and ending scenes in a timely fashion are all that are needed. From there each Director can develop their own vision and voice that expresses their directing style. Trust your instincts, act with awareness, and check the results with your fellow participants.

Directors create a rhythm. Are the scenes short, staccato, framed boldly to cut straight to the heart of the conflict and ending concisely? Are they slow, with room for characters to breathe, and time for the players to find their footing? How do the players respond? Does the pace change over time: with longer scenes at the start as the players create their ensemble, tightening up later to strike dramatic notes?

Or is the Director a mirror for the players, guiding them through choosing meaty scenes, finding their character's core dilemmas, and stretching their creative wings in more ways than one? One of the Director's tasks is to find ways to help players feel confident and build on one another's contributions.

Flashbacks are another area to develop. They create insight into the character's heart and past struggles. They create relief and contrast—a humorous or loving scene from the past coming on the heels of tragic moment gives texture to the tone of the story. It may humanize a character who is hard to sympathize with, or show the clay feet of one who is too perfect.

The Director's bag of tricks includes the vast array of meta-techniques available, along with flashbacks, inner monologue, replays, bird-in-ear (see p. 356). People resonate differently with them. Experiment and find the ones



that mesh with your style of direction. Consult with your fellow players about ways to incorporate them. Innovate. Your group may find even more ways to tell this tale.

Supportive Players

A critical yet subtle role of players is to embrace the contributions of others. When not in a scene, be an attentive audience. Watching and listening are as important as taking part, because they allow everyone to craft the story together. Reacting to the events—laughing, gasping, clutching your heart—is another way to support. The players feel this feedback reinforcing what they experience and play. Your community of play will have its own unique way of expressing respect and appreciation.

An active way to support a scene is to give suggestions or ask questions (See page 222). For example, to add poignancy to an argument suggest that the place they are fighting in is where they first kissed. Confer with the Director to see if this is a good time to introduce it. Learn to read what may strengthen a scene and you will develop judgement about when a suggestion is needed.

Seeing What's Inside

Watching the game unfold can be gripping. A long fought-against break-up or a tender first flickering of real love from a despairing heart move a viewer. As can an argument over who picks up a napkin, who makes the casserole. What matters is that we know what makes the characters tick.

The battle of wills over the fallen table linen is a stand-in for years of struggle and miscommunication. A thoughtless command to “just cook” slams into a build-up of micro-management and control. Having been there helping someone else make this complicated, motivated character gives everyone the “inside baseball” on the characters. Internal dynamics are shown with dramatic irony—the characters are unaware, but we see all too clearly—and the deeper conflicts are revealed.

Reflections on Running the Game

For a game about infidelity, players choose for their character to stay with their original partners often. The grass is not always greener on the other side. The



opening afforded by the New Flame can be a proving ground for the base relationship. A wake up call for both partners to re-assess just what they may be losing, and see what can be healed instead of finally broken.

It's an opportunity for both to break out of old patterns. Being with someone who sees you in a new way gives the characters an opportunity to break the mold that love and life place them in. If they are locked into a dynamic with a partner with one set of Core Issues, finding someone with a different set of concerns can be transformative. In the very first run of *Under my Skin*, a starting couple who depended on one another ended things—allowing the gender-transitioning partner struggling with issues of identity to find her own way in a new life she chose. This break also freed the former partner, who had fallen into patterns of self-sacrifice, finding a partner seeking to end isolation, to let go of the image of being a rescuer and experience growth himself.

Further Play

Under my Skin is an American freeform larp. It was inspired directly by the international Jeepform community of design and play, and other related communities. If your group enjoyed this game investigate these sites and books for more:

- Alexandria.dk — <http://alexandria.dk/english>
- Golden Cobra Challenge — <http://www.goldencobra.org>
- Introducing American Freeform — <http://leavingmundania.com/2013/11/18/introducing-american-freeform>
- Jeepform — <http://www.jeepen.org>
- Pocket Guide to American Freeform — <http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/128063/Pocket-Guide-to-American-Freeform>
- Stockholm Scenario Festival — <https://scenariofestival.se>





HACKS & MODS

For *Under my Skin*



Alternate Rules



DIRECTING VARIATIONS

Everyone Directs

The Director's role is to keep the story flowing and tease out meaningful character issues. Rather than assigning these duties to a single Director, it's possible to share them among the players. With no single Director, the whole group of players works together to steward the flow of Scenes, watching for ways to keep the action moving and the tone varied and compelling.

Here are two ways to play without a Director. In one, players pre-plan when Scenes will occur. In the other, players who are not in a given Scene take on directing duties. These can be combined.

PRE-PLANNED SCENES

Discuss and choose Flashbacks and Scenes within the Stages at the start of play, and write them down in a Scene list. This will affect how players frame Scenes during the game, since they will know when their Flashback is coming. During play, use this foreknowledge to lead Scenes to intersect with your character's Core Issue.

One easy way to generate a Scene order is to use a standard order. For example, this couple always goes first, then this Singleton, then that couple, and so on.

AUDIENCE DIRECTS

When crowdsourcing directorial skills, players who are not in a Scene take collective responsibility for Directorial tasks. For example, they jump in at an appropriate pause to ask "Is this Scene done?" or call "Cut!" to end it. They end a Scene that has reached an



appropriately rich moment. They suggest who does a Flashback based on how a Scene was played. (Or, you may decide that each player is empowered to request a Flashback for their character when desired.)

Giving the Director duties to the audience makes it easier for people who are not playing to reflect on how the game and story are going. They can sense the Scene as a whole. And since Scenes rotate among the players everyone will have an opportunity at some point to Direct.

TABLETOP VERSION OF UNDER MY SKIN

Players: 4 or 6, plus a facilitator

Time: 4 hours

Supplies: *dice, character sheets, pencils*

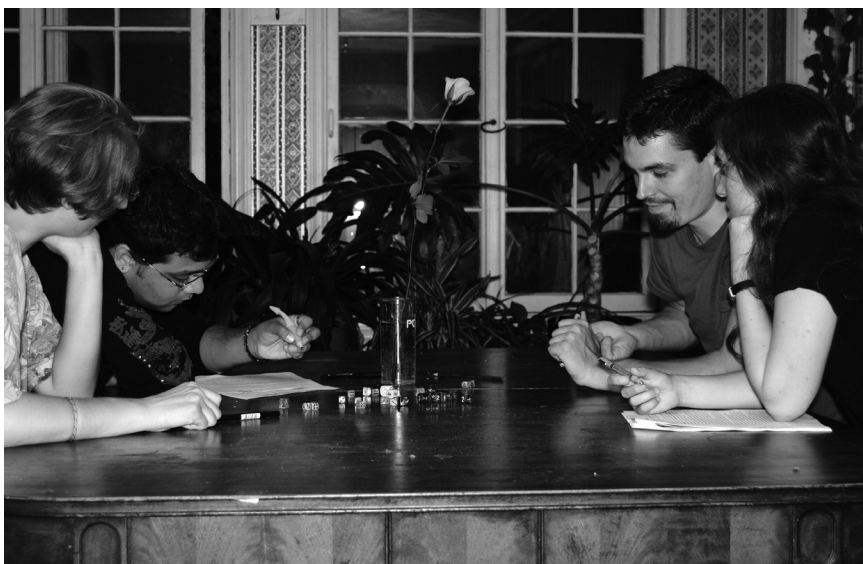
If a group wishes to play a tabletop version, use these rules modifications of the main game. Instead of acting out the story of these relationships changing and going haywire, players describe in words what happens.

Rules Changes

Create characters as in the main game with the following changes:

- There are no Singletons.
- Characters have additional aspects:
 - Insight
 - Drama Points
 - Desires
- Friends also have Lines.





Standard Rules and Character Creation:

Core Issue—emotion or experience that is problematic for them (e.g. loneliness, anger, isolation, self-criticism)

Areas—aspects of life that the Core Issue affects and manifests in (e.g. work, family, internet, self-image, children)

Character Description—A few defining characteristics such as name, age, gender, work.

Couple—Choose who this character is paired with. Assign Connection Levels (Low, Moderate, High) to Relationship aspects: Passion, Commitments and Intimacy. Fill in 1, 2 or 3 dots (respectively) on the sheet and describe the Connection between them. For Commitments, choose 1, 2 or 3 shared activities or obligations (e.g. children, house, business).

Friends—Choose who is a Friend. Assign the Commitments or Intimacy Connection at High level.

New Rules

Insight Points: These represent areas of knowledge that the character has about themselves and their relationship. This number of dice may be used in Scenes after Beginnings,



to *Respect Lines* and potentially *Gain Desires*. Start with one dot filled in. You will associate each dot with a specific explanation of your character's Core Issue and write that down on your character sheet. (More on page 204)

Drama Points: These represent areas of tension for the character in their relationship with their Partner, or in their daily life. This number of dice may be used in Scenes in the New Flames Stage, Changes and Revelations to Gain Desires and potentially Respect Lines. Individual dramas are also written down on the character sheet.

Desires: Something the character wants from or wants to do with their New Flame. Character tries to Gain Desires (see page 255). These express the attraction they feel for the other character. May conflict with the original couple's lines. The first Desire for each pair is to have sex. Two others are created over the course of play. When your character Gains a Desire, you'll add levels of Connection with your New Flame.

Lines: Lines in this game represent areas of the relationship that a Partner or Friend does (or doesn't) Respect. Players will play out scenes in which they try to Gain Desires while respecting lines. If your character crosses a Line, then their connection with their partner (Intimacy, Passion, Commitments) erodes, removing levels in the relationship.

Lines also exist between Friends. Choose one to start. As the game continues, you may add up to two more during Friend scenes. Disrespecting Lines can degrade these friendships. At any time, if a character crosses a Friend's Line, the Friend's player points that out and reduces their connection by one level (High to Moderate, Moderate to Low, Low to None). If reduced to None, this relationship has been destroyed and the two characters cannot have further Friend scenes together. Friends cannot be New Flames.

Scene Overview

- **Beginnings** — A scene between the original Partners in which they are dealing with some contentious issue between them. You can gain Drama points during this scene.



- **New Flames** — The New Flames are alone together. Flashbacks may be played out to gain a Insight Dice. Choose to roll Insight or Drama Dice (see below) to resolve scene. May Push (p. 254) one other character if you use Drama.
- **Optional Friend Scene** — Character talks with their Friend about life. You may gain Insight points.
- **Changes** — Original Partners are together again. Play out a Flashback to gain another Insight Die. Roll either Insight or Drama Dice to resolve the scene. May Push one other character if you use Drama.
- **Optional Friend Scene** — Character talks with their Friend about life. May gain an Insight Point.
- **Revelations** — Scene with Original Partner and New Flame. Players can play out a Flashback to gain another Insight Die. Roll either Insight or Drama Dice to resolve the scene. May Trigger multiple other characters if you use drama.
- **Denouement** — Final scenes with the characters reflecting the changes in relationships. No rolls.

Mechanics.

Use dice to determine Outcomes for certain Scenes.

At the end of Scenes in the New Flames, Changes and Revelation Stages, players must choose whether to roll Insight Dice or Drama Dice.

GAINING INSIGHT DICE:

Play out a Flashback highlighting your character's past and emotional background, add one die to your insight score. Maximum 3 Flashbacks per player per game.

USING INSIGHT DICE:

Roll one die for every Insight Dot you have filled in. If you roll two successes in a given category, you may Respect a Line or Gain a Desire (see page 254-255).

Insight Outcomes:

- 1–2 Failure
- 3–6 Success: Respect Lines
- 5–6 Success: Gain Desire



GAINING DRAMA DICE:

At the end of a scene where you act dramatic and roll Drama Dice, gain one drama point.

Using Drama Dice: During the scene, flout the wishes of others or express your emotions in a strong and selfish way. Roll one die for each Drama point. If you roll three or more successes in a given category, you can Gain a Desire or Respect a Lines. At end of the scene, gain 1 Drama point.

Drama Outcomes:

- 1–2 Failure
- 3–6 Success: Gain Desire
- 5–6 Success: Respect Line

If you Push another character, you may roll dice equal to their Drama points. Use Drama Outcomes, but Respect Lines only on a 6.

Note: Dice can count only toward one success. To gain success in both categories requires two separate sets of successful dice.

PUSHING A CHARACTER:

Not physical, but emotional pressure. In scene, your character pokes at another character's Core Issue or Drama by behaving aggressively or manipulatively. All players may make suggestions about how to do this. The player of the character Pushing has final say on how this occurs. A character can Push only one character per scene. *Clarify with players that pushing is not physical violence or force.*

Pushing a character also erodes the relationship. When a character has been Pushed, that player chooses one Connection between the characters to reduce by a level. Describe how that change occurs.

OUTCOMES OF INSIGHT OR DRAMA ROLLS:

Respecting a Line

- **Success:** The character respects the relationship and does not do whatever would make their Partner feel betrayed. If both Partners Respect their Line in a given



Act, they may increase the level of one Connection by one step (Low to Moderate, Moderate to High). Describe what this means for them.

- **Failure:** The character crosses a Line important to their Partner or Friend. Reduce one Connection (Intimacy, Passion or Commitment) by one level. (High to Moderate, Moderate to Low; cannot be reduced below Low) Other players (not players of this Couple) choose which Connection goes down. Describe what this means.

Gaining a Desire

- **Success:** The New Flame does something the character wants (e.g. rely on them, open up etc.), or they are able to do something together (e.g. have sex, kiss, talk, etc.). Say how this occurs. If either or both of the New Flames Gains a Desire, increase the level of either Intimacy or Commitment between the New Flames by one level.
- **Failure:** The character does not get what they were hoping for. Connections remain the same.

Scenes in Depth

Play all scenes in the tabletop role playing game style. Players narrate the actions of their characters, and either speak in-character or summarize their character's words. No set, props, or active portrayal is required.

BEGINNINGS

The original Couples are together.

Framing the Scene: The players of the characters in the scene choose where their characters are. The other players suggest a conflict that occurs between the characters in the scene.

Based on the events of play, each player may choose to gain an additional Drama Point. If half or more of the other players agree, each character can gain an additional Drama Point at the end of this scene.

Record new Drama Points on the character sheet. For each new point add an additional area of tension in the relationship or the character's life inspired by events in the Scene. Write this on the character sheet. For the first Drama Point, the player of the character who gained the point



describes the circumstances of the Drama. For the second (if any), the other players describe the Drama.

NEW FLAMES

The New Flames play a scene together in which they discover their mutual attraction.

Framing the Scene: First, the players of the New Flames choose where their characters meet. Then, the Partner of each character in the scene picks which Line will be questioned. This means that the character might cross this Line at the end of the scene. Then, play out the scene.

When the characters arrive at the moment when they must decide whether to cross the Line, players roll dice to determine what happens. Before rolling, choose an additional Desire to record on the character sheet. Based on how the characters act, choose to roll either Drama or Insight Dice to see what happens to Lines or Desires. Adjust Connections accordingly based on the Outcomes (see p. 254).

If the character acts thoughtfully and respectfully, use Insight Dice. If the character acts selfishly and in an overwrought manner, use Drama Dice.

OPTIONAL FRIEND SCENES

Players may choose to play a scene with a Friend after New Flames and after Changes. In these scenes, Friend characters get together and talk about their lives, feelings, and actions. Afterward, gain an Insight Point. You cannot play this type of scene if your Friendship with that character has been destroyed.

CHANGES

Scenes between the original couples as they deal with what the new relationship has brought up for each of them. Choose a Desire—something they want to do with the New Flame—for the characters to focus on in the scene.

Gaining this Desire means they have established the possibility of this action with their Partner. Do not cross partner Lines in this scene. However, if the roll at the end of the scene is unsuccessful, it will reduce the



intensity of a Connection, since the character is talking about it with their Partner or working towards it in some other way.

Framing the Scene: The Partners choose the setting and other players choose what the characters are doing.

Roll for outcomes as in the New Flames Stage at the end of the scene. Another character present may be Pushed if Drama Points are being used.

OPTIONAL FRIEND SCENES

Once after New Flames and once after Changes, players may choose to have a friend scene. See discussion in New Flames above.

REVELATIONS

Everyone is together and conflicts break out into the open. Each character's original Partner and New Flame are both present in this scene. Alternatively, there may be a single scene with all of the characters together. Players choose new Desires to attempt to Gain.

Framing the Scene: players choose the scene location together. Players of the original Partners choose which Lines are in danger of being crossed.

Roll for outcomes as in the New Flames Stage with this change: *multiple characters may be Pushed*. However, for each additional character Pushed, an additional normal success is needed to successfully Respect Lines. For example, if two characters are Pushed, three successes need to be rolled; if three are, four successes; and so on.

DENOUEMENT

Play out final scenes with the characters reflecting the changes in their relationships. No rolls.

Endgame:

Debrief and reflect on the game as described in the Endings and Resolutions chapter of the standard game.

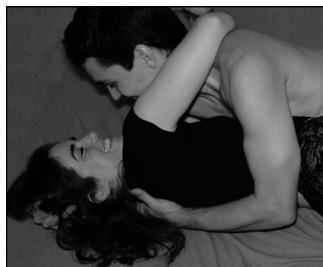


NIGHT AND DAY

A sequel to *Under my Skin*.

A live action role playing game for 4 to 8 people.

Time to play: 2-4 Hours



What happens after the shake-up and break-ups?

How do we rebuild? How are we stronger?

How do we move forward in the new constellation of our lives?

This game is a continuation of events set in motion during the game *Under my Skin*. It may be played as a follow-up session for a full game of *Under my Skin* or as a stand-alone game. To play as follow-up, note the Constellation of relationships at the start during the first game, and then mark down how they have changed after the events of the story to begin *Night and Day*.

- Are there new partnerships?
- Have lives parted ways?
- How have friendships been affected?

Changing Constellations

At the beginning of *Under my Skin*, write each character's name on a sheet of paper. Place them loosely across the page so there is room between them all. Connect names with lines to show existing relationships as follows:

- Partners—thick line
- Best Friends—double lines
- Friends—thin, single line
- New Flame—wavy line



At the end of *Under my Skin*, make a new Constellation as follows to show how things have changed.

First, re-draw the original Constellation. Then annotate it. Show changes in Partner, Best Friend, and Friendship relationships by drawing a diagonal line across the center of the original line for those that end. Don't tamper with those relationships that endured unchanged.

Now draw in new relationships.

- New Partners—thick wavy line
- New Best Friends – double line with circles drawn between lines
- New Friends – dotted line

If the first *Under My Skin* session was some time ago, fill out this map from memory or use character sheets as a prompt.

Update each character sheet using the methods in the core game rules to show the Passion, Intimacy and Commitments of each new relationship, and set levels of each to Low, Medium or High, which unlike in the core game, you may have more than one of a given level within a relationship.

New Constellation

If you don't have existing characters from a run of *Under My Skin*, you can quick-generate them using this method:

Outline of Night & Day

Character Generation
(or play of *Under my Skin*)

Constellation 1

Constellation
2—record or
generate new

Choose Attitudes

Ask Questions

Scenes

Constellation 2 scenes

Internal Monologue

Bird in Ear

Shadow/Ghost

Flashbacks

Constellation 2 scene
continues, or new
scene

Do at least one round
of scenes.

Complete another
round if more are
desired.

End Scenes after final
round.

Give Epilogues

Have food or drink
and talk about play.





Create characters as for *Under my Skin*. Choose New Flames.

For each Partner with a New Flame, toss a coin to determine whether they choose Angel or Devil. Record all choices, then as a group, discuss why each character chose the way they did. Each player decides how their character feels about these outcomes and how they face their new life.

For each Friendship, toss a coin to determine if the relationship survived or not.

Then, each player chooses one Attitude from each of the lists below, corresponding to one aspect of their character's present life. Only one player may choose each Attitude.

Attitude about life as it stands now

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elated • Relieved • Remorseful • Lost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmed • Fulfilled • Recharged • Insecure
--	---



About Original Partner, Lost Friend.

(If you do not have either of those, apply one of these Attitudes to New Partner)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angry• Forgiving• Guilty• Obsessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hopeful• Devoted• Relieved• Avoidant
---	---

If your character has no Original Partner, Lost Friend, or New Partner, apply one of the above Attitudes to one of the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Goal• Educational Path	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job Prospect• Hobby
--	--

Don't worry about knowing more about what your character feels. The scenes will flesh this out.

Introductions & Scenes

To introduce new situation, ask each character one of the following questions:

- *What do you most regret about what happened?*
- *What is your favorite new sexual exploit you've done with your New Partner?*
- *What is the last thing you think about when you go to bed now?*
- *What hits you every so often that you miss about your old life?*
- *What won't someone let you forget?*
- *How has the change affected you financially?*
- *How did your family react?*
- *What are you happiest about?*

The structure of this game is relatively loose, and it's up to you to figure out what will make the best story for your group. You can choose scenes from either the new constellation or the old, or create Flashbacks to any relevant past moment. But you should do at least one round of scenes. A round of scenes means that every character has been involved in at least one. If desired, play more rounds. Here are two loose structures that work for a round:



SCENE STRUCTURE A

- Constellation 1 scenes—scenes from the relationship arrangements in the previous game.
- Constellation 2 scenes: scenes from the current relationship constellations.
- Epilogues for each character, ask the starting questions again.

SCENE STRUCTURE B

- Constellation 2 scenes— a hard moment for each Partnership or Singleton now.
- Constellation 1 flashback
- Constellation 2 scenes
- Constellation 1 flashback
- Epilogues for each character, ask starting questions again.

FRAMING SCENES

For the first scene, look for a powerful moment to focus on and play out. As you talk about the characters, take note of what resonates most with players, and what makes them respond positively or negatively.

Frame scenes intentionally to highlight the characters' Core Issues, and how those issues may have changed.

Move on to characters' situations that are mentioned in play, or others that arose during character generation.

Support the scenes with the use of the freeform larp techniques below.

For Flashbacks, look for moments when a heavy event from the past is mentioned. Cut to that scene, and change set and cast. Look for happy memories, too.

After Flashbacks, you may wish to return to the Constellation 2 scene that spun off the Flashback and allow space for reflection, and /or have an Inner Monologue to let a character share emotions and thoughts about the Flashback.

BREAKS

Consider taking Phys Breaks (p. xxii), either quiet or energetic, to keep connecting and being in synch throughout this game.



TECHNIQUES

Use the following meta-techniques

- inner monologue (page 357)
- bird in ear (page 356)
- flashbacks (page 357)
- shadowing/ghost (page 358)

Endgame

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- *What was different about the new relationships from the old?*
- *Has your character's Core Issue changed?*
- *What relationships support your character the most?*
- *Did any moments touch you?*

Take some time to chat and debrief after play.



Other Worlds

IN THE ARMS OF THE PACK

A hack of *Under my Skin* by Emily Care Boss

A live rpg for 5 to 8 players.

Inspired by the Gauntlet Podcast's traditional interview question:

"Imagine an alternate history where your Romance Trilogy games turned out more or less the same, but with the minor change that they are entirely about smooth-chested teenage werewolves. What would each game's name be?"



The pack is your heart. You live, die, sleep and sweat together.

Your community drives you away. You've been part of something so deep it cannot let you go. Even if you leave it, you cannot escape it.

Your heart is taken by this strange world you stumble into. All those around you have a fire in them you cannot explain. All you know is that you want it, what they have. You hunger for their love, their touch, their blessing.

How high the cost for love and belonging?

In this story you are part of a group of beings, powerful and beautiful, who are tied together. You share a purpose as well as the deepest emotional and physical intimacies. Welcome others into this world in which they must sink or swim. Will you rebel, embrace or be accepted? Will the whole help the parts transcend?



Stories with Similar Themes:

- *Count Dracula*, novel by Bram Stoker (1897)
- *Elfquest*, by Wendy and Richard Pini
- *Interview with a Vampire*, by Anne Rice
- *Lair of the White Worm*, film by Ken Russell
- *Lucifer*, television show based on characters by Neil Gaiman, Sam Keith and Mike Dringenberg

Ground rules

To help navigate difficult topics or graphic images of sex or violence in this game, use a Fade to Black Rating for sex and violence (see page xxiii). Begin and end scenes immediately preceding or following moments when battle or intimacy breaks out.

Discuss whether there are any Boundaries for players (see page xxiv). Observe these limits throughout play.

Discuss what level of touch is acceptable to everyone. (See page xxii).

Consider taking Phys Breaks (p. xxii) to entrain the group. Or start with a good howl!

Character Creation

PACK

Start by choosing the nature of your supernatural band.

- **Werewolf**—Lean, glossy, brimming with vigor and keenly in tune with the wind, moon and life on the earth. The pack lives and breathes together. Hunts, mates and dies together.
- **Vampire**—Unearthly, dire, leached of blood, unseen by sun. Awesome, terrify and beautiful like the shadow of the moon or the edge of a knife. The brood stalk their mortal prey, rest by day and while the years away together.
- **Fae/Spirit**—Enchanted, beguiling, transcendent of yet coupled with the natural world: be it fire, wind, the hearth, winter, under hill or oasis. The circle of spirits obey their own logic and are tied together in unending, unbreakable patterns of glamour, power, majesty and longing for what the mortal world brings: newness and freshness.
- **Numinous Beings**—Transcendent, celestial, descended to earth from realms of energy, love and devotion. Working to guide and guard mortal beings. Powerful



bonds of duty and loyalty tie the column together in the fight to raise mortals from the moral depths to which they fall.

- **Demonic beings**—Unbound, unblinking, unthinkable revels and pursuits that push the boundaries of blood, pain and consciousness. The coterie revels in the pursuits of pleasure together, building upon each other's power.
- **Sorcerers**—Seeking, gathering, amassing power knowledge and, sometimes, wisdom. Ancient orders walking between the earthly and other realms to harness the energies of the universe. Handing down their knowledge in lineages, bound by oaths and bargains to hold true and together.

NATURE

Instead of the Core Issue, chose a Nature for each being. This determines their place in the supernatural coterie, directs the arc of their story and gives input on their motivations.

Natures:

- **Elder**—ancient, revered by all
- **Leader**—decisive, obeyed by (almost) all
- **Adept**—powerful, admired by all
- **Innocent**—curious, perhaps not yet a member of the group, coddled by all
- **Exile**—outcast, shunned by (almost) all
- **Servant**—subordinate, bossed around by all
- **Rebel**—willful, argued with by all
- **Predator**—destructive, feared by all
- **Beloved**—affectionate, treasured by all

RELATIONSHIPS

There are two types of relationships: Universal and Unique

Universal Relationship

Each Nature has a universal relationship listed with it—unless someone has a unique relationship (see below) they default to the universal one associated with a character's nature.



Unique Relationship

A one-on-one, reciprocal relationship that two characters share. Only one set of characters may share this type of relationship per game. For example: a vampire Elder is ancient and revered by all, except for their Initiate who resents it.

Sit in a circle (or around a table) and each person chooses a relationship from the following to share with the character of one person sitting next to them. With an odd number, one person will be in two unique relationships.

List of Relationships:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Siblings• Parent-Child• Student-Teacher• Master-Initiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sworn friends• Comrades at arms (or in the hunt)• Enemies• Rivals
---	--

Omit Commitment, Intimacy and Passion in this game.

MORTAL BOND

Name one thing for each character that ties them to the Mortal world.

Examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a favored plaything• a place of sanctuary• childhood among mortals• a lover• a charge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hunting grounds• a false identity• compassion from a mortal• hatred of a mortal
---	--

CONFLICTS

The community is experiencing Conflicts, one internal, one external.

Internal Conflict

A growing disagreement among members of the group threatens to destabilize everyone. Pick two characters to embody this Internal Conflict.



Examples:

- In a vampire brood, the Adept seeks to take a too-young mortal Innocent into the group. The Elder fights against this.
- In an Numinous, angelic column, the Rebel rises up against the Leader, questioning their judgement.
- A Fae Exile returns home and challenges the Predator for a duel to regain their lost place in the group.

External Conflict

A goal or threat to the group prods them into action.

Examples:

- The demonic coterie seeks new revel grounds after being ousted from a favored home.
- Sorcerers debate the best way to tap the power of an ancient meteor with pulsing, wild magic.
- Werewolves hide from vicious hunters seeking to rid their pack from the land.

Scenes

Characters interact in scenes with the full group, and small group scenes. Play out the character interactions, but frame the action to take place immediately before or after violence or sex if those occur.

GROUP SCENES

Play out 3-5 of the group scenes (list on p. 269) with all the characters present. Begin with the Intro scene, then choose what order to play the others as you go along.

Plan to spend 10–15 minutes in each scene. Choose how many to play depending on how much time you have to spend playing.

Decide where each scene takes place. Create a set to match.

SMALL GROUP SCENES

In between Group Scenes, pairs or trios of players may opt to have a scene together. Players involved choose where it takes place. 5 minute maximum.



LIST OF GROUP SCENES

- **Intro/Clubhouse**

The members of the coterie gather and enjoy one another.

- **Danger**

A threat from outside the group brings them together.

- **Party/Orgy**

Celebration turns to the enjoyment of deeper bonds

- **Adventure**

An outing in to the Mortal world

- **Intimate**

A moment of respite: quiet, sexy, beautiful, serene.

- **Battle**

Taking on forces mustered against the band

Note on playing out the aftermath of sex* or violence:

Each player pick some good or bad thing that befell their character.

Introduce this into the scene, and others build upon it.

* NB: For discussion of angelic sex, please see *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, lines 620-629.

Endgame

Take some time to debrief, use rules as appropriate from *Under my Skin* (see page 239). Share some food and drink if you can, and talk about how it was for each player.

Suggested questions for discussion:

- Will the pack stay together?
- What moment made you feel their bonds the most?
- How did your character feel about the struggles going on?



ON THE ROAD

A hack of *Under My Skin* by Emily Care Boss

A freeform larp for 4 to 8 players

Time: approx. 4 to 6 hours



Love, sex and creative bonds are a potent mix. Your band is tearing it up. But will you tear each other apart?

A group of friends and collaborators tour together in their band. The schedule is tight and the gigs are exhausting, but you have each other to help you get through. But being together so much can make you look at each other in new ways. . . .

In this mod of *Under my Skin*, see what attractions bloom and how they influence the creative process.

Touch Boundaries:

To play this game, players will touch one another on hand, arm or face, and embrace. Before starting the game, have players consult to make sure these kinds of touch are acceptable. (See page xxii)

Music

This game presents many opportunities for engaging with music. Play songs that remind you of your band, perform air-guitar et al. for your performances. Use ideas from the Phys Break (p. xxii) Ground Rules to inspire you.

Band Creation

Create a loose structure for your band. Choose your style of music, how long the band has been together, and which roles you'll each occupy.



MUSIC GENRE

Pick a genre the players are familiar with:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hip hop• Pop• K-Pop• Metal• Punk• R&B• Latin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Folk• Country• Cover Band• Experimental Rock• Outlaw Country• Crunk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Flamenco• Grunge• Goth Punk
--	--	---

Or see the Music Genres List: <http://www.musicgenreslist.com/>

BAND NAME

Each player pick a category below. Write down their answer to make a list of words.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First pet’s name• Childhood Street Name• Childhood Dream Career• Favorite Ice Cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorite Color• First Car You Drove• Favorite Liquor
--	--

Randomly pick two or three words from those listed. This is your band name.

Or go to an online band name generator and pick one you like:

- <http://www.bandnamemaker.com/generator/>
- <http://www.song-lyrics-generator.org.uk/?i=2ynu1z>
- <http://www.musicindustryhowto.com/band-name-generator/>
- <http://www.1728.org/bandname.htm>

Character Creation

POSITIONS

Choose what positions will be in your band, and ask each player to choose one for their character.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Singer • Lead Guitar • Percussion • Keyboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strings • Brass • Mix
--	---

At most, two of the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producer • Manager • Publicist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadie • Driver
--	--

NAME

Pick a name for your character. If desired, choose a stage name or nickname as well.

CORE ISSUE

As in the standard game, pick a Core Issue for your character.

GOAL

Pick one thing your character wants to accomplish. It may be related or unrelated to the music.

For example

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get their GED • master the banjo • play Carnegie Hall • quit smoking • see their mother while on Tour • have sex after every gig 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • play the perfect set • impress an agent • crowd surf • get mobbed by fans • meet a musician they idolize
---	--

Band Development

FANDOM

Together, select your band’s level of fandom and following.

- **Breaking In** – your band is beginning to make a name for themselves. You’ve started a following and are taking on better gigs. You’ve found a creative groove with one another that really works.



- **Raging** – you have hit your stride. You have many fans in your region, and opportunities to headline for national acts. Your creative partnerships are well established and you think you know what works—and what doesn't. A lot of people want your attention—either to help you or cash in on your talent.
- **Coming Down** – after an incredible climb, your spotlight is waning. Many fans have moved on to other bands and genres. Your hardcore superfans still love you, but it's getting hard to find gigs. You're less sure of your creative choices.

QUESTIONS

Once you have selected your band basics, find out more about each member.

Choose the Founder: Which band member founded the band?

Band Members: Each level of fandom has a list of questions about the individual band members. Each member is the answer to one question from that list. Read the questions and choose one for each band member. Not all of the questions will be answered.

Breaking In Questions:

- Who made a fool of themselves on stage?
- Who is the fan favorite?
- Who lost the band's money?
- Who has invested the most money in it?
- Who provides drugs to the others?
- Who writes the most songs?
- Who insulted an important venue owner?
- Who has been finding leads for new gigs?
- Who got in a fight after a show?
- Who made a band video that went viral?
- Who threatened a critic?

Raging Questions:

- Who keeps letting groupies in the tour bus?
- Who is the fan favorite?



- Who blew band money on a special toy?
- Who makes the most money from it?
- Who is into hard drugs?
- Whose song was the breakout hit?
- Who lost money gambling?
- Who landed the band's recording contract?
- Who is getting bad press?
- Who is being courted by another label?
- Who has writer's block?

Coming Down Questions:

- Who keeps drunkenly missing rehearsals?
- Who has a cult following?
- Who is heavily in debt?
- Who has made a fortune from the band?
- Who is struggling with drug addiction?
- Who writes the most popular songs?
- Who gave up a lucrative opportunity for the band?
- Who has a successful solo career?
- Who does the media hate?
- Who does everyone in the band admire?
- Who lost the band a recording contract?

CREATE VENUES

Set up for play by choosing several concert sites according to your level of success:

- **Old Stand-by:** What is the name of a standard, well-proven venue?
- **Up and Coming:** What is the name of a much more prestigious venue where no one knows the band?
- **Prestige:** What is an important venue where you'll end your tour and get scouted for something bigger?



CHOOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Choose Romantic Partners for the characters. Pair up the characters. If there are an odd number of players, one will be Single.

For each, answer the following two questions:

1. *What creative bond do you share?* **For example:**

- *Lead Singer and Publicist work on outfits for Lead Singer*
- *Bassist and Lead Guitarist write songs together*

Examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• write songs together• smoke dope together• watch films	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• read sci-fi• talk late into the night• drink together• draw	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• play violin• give massages
--	--	---

2. *What drives you nuts about them in the close quarters of the tour?*

Examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• snores• drinks/smokes/talks too much• too into the fans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• is a baby about things going wrong• complains• practices constantly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not share their weed
---	---	---

CHOOSE FRIENDS

For each character, choose a Friend who is not their Partner. Singletons have a Best Friend. Answer one question:

What do you do to relax together?

For example:

- *Percussionist and Manager smoke weed together*
- *Roadie and Strings player talk about Proust*



NEW FLAME

Starting with the Singleton, choose New Flames randomly. With an odd number of players, one Partner will be Left Out and not have a New Flame.

A New Flame can be any character, including the Singleton's Best Friend.

Acts and Scenes

Play out the following Scenes:

- 1) **Next Gig:** the band is together and must choose which venue to play next.
- 2) **Partners:** Romantic Partners have a post-coital Scene; Singletons work with Best Friend.
- 3) **New Flames:** New Flames spend time alone together for business or creativity; Left out has Scene with Friend.
- 4) **Gig:** The band reacts to the events of their latest gig together.
- 5) **New Flames:** New Flames spend time together alone and end up having sex, one pair is discovered.
- 6) **The Big Gig:** A Gig with a make-or-break opportunity for them all. Can they do it?

SCENE DIRECTIONS

1) Next Gig

Group Scene: The band is together, choosing which gig to do next: their scheduled gig with a regular, decent venue (Old Stand-by), or an exciting brand new location (Up and Coming). Use the venues you generated during band development.

During the Scene:

- Everyone discusses the options and together the band chooses a venue.
- Romantic Partners start play sitting or standing near one another.
- New Flames should touch each other on hand, arm or face at some point during play.



2) *Partners:*

Play a series of two-player Scenes between Romantic Partners, or Singleton and Best Friend.

Romantic Partners have a post-coital Scene, Singletons and Best Friend have a Scene of relaxation.

Partners Scene: They have just finished having sex and talk about their hopes for the tour. To set the Scene, use these Rules for Sex:

SEX RULES

Decide together:

- *Where did they have sex?*

Each answer individually:

- *What was uncomfortable about it?*
- *What was hot, or intimate, about it?*

Singleton and Best Friend Scene: They are relaxing together. The Singleton talks about what they are looking for in romance: they start the scene by saying, “I wish I were having sex right now.”

3) *New Flames:*

The New Flames get together in pairs for a creative or professional task. Play the Scene until they inadvertently come into close contact, or move closer to one another and embrace.

Touch Boundaries: Before the Scene: have players demonstrate what embrace is acceptable to both. (also see page xxii)

Left Out has a Scene with their Friend, working on a creative or professional project or in pursuit of their goal—where they discuss Left Out’s present relationship.



4) *Gig:*

Group Scene: The band reacts to the events of their latest gig together.

The band played at the venue they chose. Depending on which it was, write the appropriate events on pieces of paper and pull two from a cup.

Old Stand By Events

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fans turn out in force• Get heckled• Make double the usual• Groupies rush the stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fight breaks out• The whole band is in the groove together for most of the set
--	---

Up & Coming

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completely new fans love you• The venue manager hates your music• The take is triple your usual• The audience chants that you're "not the real band"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cops raid the venue• A signed picture of your band is put over the bar
---	---

Air-Performance: After choosing events, play a song in the genre of the band. Perform the piece as your position in the band—air guitar, air drums, behind the scenes as manager etc. When it wraps up, gather for the post-Gig scene. React to the events and each-other's performances.



5) *New Flames:*

New Flames spend time alone together and end up having sex. One pair is discovered! But first...

Left Out Scene: If there is a Left Out character, they have a Scene first with their Partner. The Couple chooses whether or not they have sex (if they do, use sex rules on page 277), and they talk about the gig.

New Flame Scenes: The New Flame couples have parallel Scenes, played out at the same time, taking turns from one set to the next. Instructions on how to do this below:

The New Flame Couples have just had sex. Use the sex rules to set the Scene (see page 277 above).

Arrange the New Flames according to the Seating Logistics below. Each couple is in a separate location in the game, but seated nearby to one another in play.

The New Flame Couple talk about what the gig meant to them, and what they hope this will mean in their life and for the band. Do this according to the Play Logistics below.

Listen to one another and build on what the others say about what happened during the set.

Seating Logistics:

Have all the new couples sit together in two lines, one behind the other. Form the lines into a circle so that everyone can see the other pairs.

Have one of the new flames put their hands loosely on the shoulders of the one in front of them. This symbolizes a post-coital embrace.

If the New Flames are comfortable doing so, have one person loosely embrace the other.

If there is a Left Out, they should sit with the Director.



Play Logistics:

Before starting the Scene, run through the Sex Rules questions with each pair.

Starting with one couple, chat.

After a minute or two, the Left Out, or a Director, rings a bell or claps and the next couple starts talking.

Cycle through all the couples a few times. After the third time each pair has spoken (or after the second time if the players seem ready sooner), choose one of the couples randomly with dice or by spinning a bottle.

All of the other players stand up, leaving the chosen couple. Their Partner or Partners walk in on them. After the Scene has played for a while, other band members may ask to be added to the Scene.

The Big Gig:

The band plays at a prestigious venue. Does it make them or break them?

Group Scene: This Scene is after the big gig they've been leading up to, at the end of the tour. Randomly choose two events that happened at the gig:

Prestige Events

- The audience is quiet and does not seem to “get” the band
- The band gets an offer from a new label
- An expensive instrument on loan to the band is badly damaged
- Social media about the band goes viral
- One member of the band is singled out for a great offer
- A famous musician joins you for one of your encores



Questions: Each band member asks someone else a question from the following list.

- Who screwed up one of the band's signature songs?
- What did the crowd go crazy over?
- Who got angry during the break and refused to go back on stage?
- Who kissed one of the fans while working the crowd?
- What two members of the band had standout solo moments?
- Why did they have to throw out one of your diehard fans?
- Why is your pay so much less than you expected?
- Or: questions about each of the Prestige Events that happened.

After answering the questions, read this aloud:

You are in your dressing room. It is luxurious, with comfy chairs and gold draperies. There is a gift basket with fruit, beer, and a magnum of decent champagne. There are cups on the table.

The much more famous band you opened for has invited you to an after party at a hotel in town. You have been promised drugs, liquor, video games and a jam session.

Play out the band talking about how the tour went, and what they want to do next. Think about this: does your character want to stay with the band? Who do you sit with?

End the Scene when everyone has left to go to the after-party.



Debrief

Set time aside after the game to talk. If there were any major shouting matches between characters, shake hands and make sure there are no hard feelings.

Go around once and say what you think would happen to your character.

Then generally discuss play, or you may use these questions for prompts or structure:

- What was the most self-destructive part of this band?
- Did you envy anything about their lifestyle?
- How did the band dynamic change?
- Did it seem like a trainwreck?
- Do you think they go on to be successful?



TAKING THE PLUNGE

A Wedding Day mod of *Under my Skin*

For Alysia and Tom, March 2016

Number of players: 5–8, plus a director

Time: *approx. 2–4 hours*

Written for Alysia Bartok and Thomas Gale



Exploring love, hope and fidelity on the eve of lifelong commitment.

The Betrothed Couple are witness to the storms and strife of what being in a relationship is like, and have special directorial powers to gain insight into what they may be getting into, and flash forward powers to imagine different aspects of their lives.

About the game

A wedding brings lives together—both intentionally and in sometimes chaotic ways. A joyful time of celebration, deep thought about commitment and reflection for those who witness the joining on their own relationships. And also a time when new opportunities for love may sprout.

The events of the game take place in the week leading up to the wedding. The betrothed couple brings their friends together, and these couples find themselves tempted by new attraction. Explore what happens, and how relationship change over time, with the betrothed couple steering the way.

What you need

To play this game, use the rules for scenes and character creation as in the base game. However, there are two special characters: the betrothed couple, about to



be married. They **do not** have a New Flame, but are friends and confidants to the other characters. They are witness to the storms and strife of what being in a relationship is like, and have special directorial powers to gain insight into what they may be getting into, and flash forward powers to imagine different aspects of their lives.

Character Creation

BETROTHED COUPLE

There are two special characters: the betrothed couple, about to be married. They **do not** have a New Flame, but are friends and confidants to the other characters.

Create them with each other as their partner with the following changes: Do not create Lines. Commitment is high and one of the areas is: the Wedding. Of Passion and Intimacy, one is High, one is Moderate.

Answer these questions for each character:

- *What big change are you nervous about that comes with the wedding?*
- *What about your partner makes it feel absolutely right to get married?*
- *What did always want to do before you got married, that you have not yet done?*

Answer these questions together:

- *What are you both looking forward to doing together after the wedding is over?*
- *What are both most afraid will go wrong with the wedding?*

BEST FRIENDS OF THE BETROTHED COUPLE

Each is a best friend of one of the betrothed pair. Create both Intimacy and Commitment in this friendship. Chose high, medium or low for each as you see fit.

The friends partner up as usual. If there is an odd number, one is single. At least one couple must be married. All couples are in long-term, committed relationships.



Choose New Flames as usual among the friends of the Betrothed Couple only. The Betrothed Couple do not have New Flames.

If there is an odd number, one member of a couple will be left out and not have a New Flame. If there is a single character, they must be included in a New Flame pair.

Play

LOCATIONS

Add wedding related locations to the list generated.

For example

- the sanctuary
- meeting with officiant
- rehearsal dinner
- wedding walk through
- Betrothed Couple's house
- Pre-Wedding party
- bachelor/ette outing
- mikveh blessing
- wisdom circle
- game night
- setting up the hall
- greeting the guests
- getting dressed for the wedding

DIRECTING

Have someone fulfill the Director role to walk people through character creation, to frame and end scenes, invoke meta-techniques, etc.

Meta-techniques in use are: flashbacks, flash-forwards, bird-in-ear, inner monologue (see pages 356-358)



Bride and groom use meta-techniques

Flashback—in any scene with a friend, they may interrupt to ask for a flashback to some moment the friend mentioned or that makes sense to jump back to in that person's life. (p. 357)

Flash-forward—during their scenes together or when with a friend, to imagine what married life will be like. Different views of same moment from each partner may be something to look for! (p. 357)

May invoke Bird-in-Ear (p. 356) or inner monologue (p.357) if it seems right.

SCENE LIST

Scene 1: Bridal couple— a few days before the wedding, making some final arrangements and talk about their expectations for the day.

Pick a location and activity that make sense. For example: meeting with the officiant, visiting the wedding site, talking with Mom and Dad about the bills, etc.

Begin with other characters if they are in play (parents, officiant, etc.) then have them leave part way through to give the couple time alone to talk.

Scene 2: Party—at the Pre-Wedding party, all the friends show up with their partners. Include some sites/props for play: have dance music playing, include drinks in the setting.

During the course of the scene, Director interrupts the scene to frame each New Flame couple into a compromising moment where they are publically affectionate or a bit too intimate. Perhaps they dance together a little too long, perhaps they sneak off to talk in the corner and snuggle and are interrupted by their Partner.

After each New Flame pair has had an embarrassing moment, jump forward to the end of the night, with the original Couples and single folks going home.



Scene 3 & 4: Gatherings—Two scenes run one after the other, where the betrothed partners each separately have a gathering with their best friends. If a character is best friends with both from the couple, they are in both scenes.

Pick events that makes sense (*bachelorette party, all night video game gathering, ritual blessing & wisdom circle, mikveh blessing, strip club outing, etc.*)

The friends talk about the wedding and ask the bride or groom about their fears & hopes.

Bride and groom grill friends on what happened at the Pre-Wedding party. Some partners may be having issues!

Play out flashbacks from the friend's relationships to show more about their relationships' strengths & weaknesses. Players not in the scene enter flashbacks to play their character or other side characters in these scenes. Betrothed characters may have flashbacks as well.

Play out flash-forwards for each of the betrothed characters. These show what they imagine their future to be like. Bring the other betrothed and other characters into these scenes.

Scene 5: The Wedding Day—A short scene with the betrothed couple alone. They have just gone through the wedding ceremony, and have a moment or two alone before they join their friends and the wedding party. No meta-techniques. Just talk.

Friends: to start the scene, the other players offer a few things that went wrong, were amazingly beautiful or got mixed up before or during the wedding.

End the scene with the now married Couple joining their friends and the rest of the reception party.



After Playing

Take some time to relax together after you play. Share some food, drink. Questions to prompt discussion:

- *What was your favorite part?*
- *Who had the biggest tale of woe from their relationship?*
- *What was the most tender moment?*
- *What do the betrothed couple remember the most from their wedding?*
- *What happens with the friend couples and their relationships?*



THE UNICORN

A mod of Under my Skin

A freeform larp for 3 players

Time: approx. 3–4 hours



Adding a happy third to an existing couple is said to be as rare as the unicorn...

To play this game, use the rules for scenes and character creation as in the base game. However, there are only three characters: one Couple and one Singleton who will be invited to become involved with both members of the Couple. This game requires some physicality, including touching co-players' hands to represent kissing.

Choose Core Issue and Areas as in the standard game. For the Couple, choose Intimacy, Passion and Commitments.

Fill out surveys below. One for each player according to their role.

Surveys

PARTNERS:

*What are you looking for in a relationship with another partner?
(circle 2)*

- intimacy
- sexual exploration
- excitement
- commitment

I am enthusiastic / cautious about this. (choose 1)



My fantasy about sex with this new person is. . .

When I am least optimistic I feel angry / afraid (choose 1) that my partner wants to have sex with someone else.

What am I afraid of losing?

SINGLETON:

*What are you looking for in a relationship with this couple?
(circle 2)*

- *intimacy*
- *sexual exploration*
- *support*
- *freedom*

What makes you optimistic about getting involved with this couple?

My fantasy about sex with this couple is. . .

My nagging fear about getting involved with this couple is. . .

A friend / an online service / a matchmaker introduced me to this couple. (choose one)

Group Directing

Throughout this game, all three players will work together to fulfill the role of the Director as in the standard game. See page 249 for discussion of having everyone direct. Take breaks between scenes to make decisions, and examine how the characters and events are developing. Plan for where the next scenes will take place and for possible Flashbacks.

Some scenes have questions. Answer them together to help prompt future play.



Act list

ACT 1—MEETING

Scene 1: Singleton—A monologue in which the player describes their character, and talks about what the personal ad or person who makes the introduction says about them to the Couple.

Scene 2: Couple—A conversation in their home about taking the Singleton as a lover.

Scene 3: First Date—The three meet up to get to know one another in a public, neutral space.

Group Direction Questions: Where do they meet? What do the Couple bring for the Singleton? How does each of the three feel about the meeting?

ACT 2—MATING

Scene 4: First Kiss—one of the Couple is on a Date with the Singleton, and they kiss for the first time.

Kissing is represented by massaging the other player's hand, or (if both players are comfortable) by kissing the back of their hand.

Scene 5: First Sex—the Couple is having the Singleton over for an overnight. What do they have planned? What food / props / prophylactics do they have at hand? Are both going to be involved? How does the Singleton feel?

Play up until they leave to do the deed.

Scene 6: First Fight—*What is causing tension among the lovers? Where does it come to a head?*

Play out a scene where there is a conflict, and see whether they fight or resolve their differences.

Inner Monologue—Each player pauses the action and shares their internal thoughts at least once during the scene.



ACT 3—MATURING

Scene 7: Relaxing Together—Some time later, the three go on a day trip date together.

Where do they go? What is important to each of them about this date? What is a stroke of good luck that happens?

Scene 8: Working Together—The three are working on a project together. Today is a day when they will make progress on it.

What is the task? What is each person's role? How does each person feel about it?

Scene 9: The Future—Over dinner, the three talk about where their relationship is going.

What step might they take to increase their commitment? Is everyone ready for it? What worries or annoys each person?

This scene ends the game. Spend some time talking together afterwards.

Debrief

Take time to discuss the events of play. You may use these questions to prompt discussion:

- Will they stay together?
- What fears were triggered for the characters in this situation?
- What did everyone get out of it?
- Did it make you feel? What gave you the strongest response?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of a relationship like this?



PART FOUR

COMPANION GAMES



ANYTHING GOES

An original game based on *Under my Skin*

A freeform larp for 5 to 10 players.

Time: 3–5 hours

No dice required.

Premise: *Members of a utopian, sexually liberated community struggle with their work, purpose and relationships.*



Leaving the structures of society behind to forge a new way...

An important part of this game is exploring sexual liberation. The rules include a mechanic that abstracts and simulates sex through a deck of cards and free association. If at any time you do not feel comfortable taking part, say “cut” to end the sex scene. Or remove yourself quietly from the scene, with no need to explain yourself. Also, if you don’t want to be part of a group in which other characters are having sex, you may remove yourself and join another.

Before Play: Share the three Caress decks (page 303) with the group and answer any questions about how it will work. If any members of the group say they’d prefer not to participate in the sex system all together, set this game aside and play something else.



SETUP

Create Caress Decks

Write acts of intimacy and sex listed on page 303 on small pieces of paper or note card. Mark backs with appropriate deck names: *Warming up, Hot & Heavy, Exploratory*. Customize by omitting existing cards or adding new ones.

Ground Rules

Describe and demonstrate Cut and Brake (p. xxiii). Discuss Veils and Boundaries. (p. xxiv)

Choose a setting:

- Swingers' Paradise - well-to-do open-minded couples have sex with one another
- Alternative Creative Community - artists support each other in love and art
- Radical Political Coop - committed to the cause and one another
- Back to Nature Commune - making a new society outside of destructive systems

Read off the corresponding list of values—cross off, modify or retain each one.

Swingers

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• decadence• freedom• high-life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pushing boundaries• no accountability
---	--

Creatives

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• authenticity• freedom of expression• pushing boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• breaking normal rules• making it
---	---

Political

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• authenticity• justice• freedom of expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• breaking normal rules• violence is acceptable
--	--

Nature

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• authenticity• justice• sanctity of nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• organic process• living by nature's rules
---	--



Character Creation

Next, create your characters. Choose a name and gender. Then create a role for your character using the setting-appropriate instructions below.

- **Swingers:** choose a Job or source of your Fortune
- **Alternative Creative Community:** Do you make art or have a mundane paying gig? No more than half the characters may have a paying gig.
- **Radical Political Coop:** Choose a job helping organize the coop or putting word out about ideology.
- **Commune:** What job do you have working to support the farm?

Goals

Working together, choose a group goal.

Alone, choose an individual goal for your character.

Relationship Map

Make a diagram of character relationships.

Write names, evenly spaced, on a blank sheet of paper

Use three colors of marker, one for each connection type

- Emotional—Red
- Sexual—Blue
- Work—Green

Each character should have at least one connection of each color with the other characters. They are mutual connections (i.e. if I have an emotional connection with you, then you have one with me). Do not allow characters to be isolated or form a cut-off subgroup. Add additional connections if this arises.



Choose a character to have a negative relationship with. Draw a diagonal line across the connection line. This is also mutual, so pairs of characters will have negative feelings about one another. If there is an odd number of players, one character must have negative relationships with two others.

PLAY

Scenes

There are three types of scenes: whole group, small group, and individual. You can find the suggested scene structure on page 303.

- **Whole Group**—organizing or working on a joint project. Pick the project, then convene the scene with all players interacting in character.
- **Small group**—players come together in groups of two to four, playing out scenes simultaneously (page 358). Those that finish early take a break until others are done. Choose which type of scene the small group will have:
 - Fun
 - Emotional Process
 - Sex (at maximum only one group may choose to have sex, however, each small group session, one group *must* have sex.)

Note: if 4 or more characters have sex together, this is an Orgy Scene. Use pair or threesome rules for smaller group (page 302). Players choose if they are “checked in” or “checked out”—if checked out they are distracted by worry or other upset, if checked in they are focused and relaxed. For the first sex scene of the game, choose randomly which type is chosen.

- **Individual**—consists of guided visualization. Use the included script or improvise your own. Each player chooses the type of individual scene their character will engage in: Work / Relaxation / Creative (see script next page).



INDIVIDUAL SCENE SCRIPT

The Director reads the entire script clearly and evenly, pausing for a few seconds after each question and letting everyone take the physical direction. Some questions will indicate that the Director should take a long pause; around 20 seconds unless otherwise indicated. When the Individual Scene is done, follow up by gathering the group together and having each person share what their character did and felt during this time.

"Find a place to sit or lie down where you can be comfortable for a little while.

Feel free to close your eyes.

You're free of your obligations to the groups or other people right now. This is some time to yourself.

Are you drawn to get some work done? Something that might help your community?

Or do you want to relax and blow off some steam?

Or are you feeling inspired and want to take time to be creative?

Take a moment to choose.

(Long Pause)

What will you do? Where will you do it? What do you notice about this space?

(Long Pause)

You have what you need at hand. Look at it and appreciate what you have. Is it worn-out? Fancy? Is it yours? Does it belong to the group, or others?

(Long Pause)

continued ...



INDIVIDUAL SCENE SCRIPT *(cont'd)*

Take some time and accomplish what you want to on your own. I'll let you know when it is time to come back to the group. If you are done sooner, just rest and relax.

(One to two minute pause)

Okay, you begin to finish up what you are doing. Or perhaps you've been done for a while and have had a chance to rest.

How do you feel? Refreshed? Hurried? Are you looking forward to being with the others?

(Long Pause)

Now, come back to the present, where we are now. When you are ready, open your eyes and sit up or stretch a little.

When everyone is ready, we'll share what our characters experienced."

To make the script shorter for second or third Individual Scenes, read bold passages and observe appropriate pauses..

Playing out Sex

ORGY (4+ SEXUAL PARTNERS):

Players choose if they are "checked in" or "checked out"—if checked out they are distracted by worry or other upset, if checked in they are focused and relaxed. For the first sex scene of the game, may choose randomly which type is chosen.

Players take turns one at a time going around a circle. Divide cards into decks (Warming Up, Hot & Heavy, or Exploratory). On their Turn, player randomly draws a card from one deck. Always choose from "Warming Up"



their Turn, player randomly draws a card from one deck. Always choose from “Warming Up” deck for the first turn. On each subsequent Turn, the player can draw from any deck.

Read the card out loud. Players whose characters are “in” raise their hand if they want to participate in this act of intimacy. The player who drew the card may opt out. Starting with the player who drew the card, each participating player says one descriptive word while pointing to another player: “cinnamon”, “wiggle”, etc. This indicates some part of their character’s sexual experience with the chosen character.

Checked out players may only participate on every other card.

Opting Out: Players may opt out at any point and have their character leave the scene. Opt out when the **character** is done with having sex, but leaves feeling in harmony and comfort with the others. Opt out on your turn by saying that “character X leaves the group, and goes to do Y activity”. The player remains in place and can observe the rest of the orgy.

Ending the Scene: Participating players say “ouch” on their turn or in response to something said by another player. Saying “ouch” means their **character** has felt emotional or physical pain or discomfort. If anyone says “ouch,” the orgy ends and the decks are put away and immediately begin Pillow Talk.

If a **player** needs the game to pause or lessen intensity or to end a scene, use Cut or Brake (see p. xxiii).

Ending the Orgy: The orgy ends after five turns go by. A maximum of 5 cards will be chosen. Pillow Talk begins immediately.

Pillow talk: Players can chat freely with the others, in the full group or in smaller groupings. Players may leave the group to sit quietly separately and reflect or rest. Characters who opted out may return for Pillow Talk.

Ending Reflections: After a few minutes, bring all the players in the small group together. Have any who opted out describe what their character did after they left and how they are feeling.



PAIR OR THREESOME

Using Caress Decks: Shuffle all of the Caress decks together.

Show the top card and decide together whether you do it or not by each giving it thumbs up or thumbs down. If anyone gives a thumbs down to a card, the group does not do that action.

For those the group does, each player in turn shares one descriptive word about how they feel after the action is completed. For example, after pulling “heavy petting” one player says “fired up”, another says “unsure” and the third says “loving.”

Choose another card and do another round as with the first.

Ending the Scene: If anyone says “ouch”, sex ends. Saying “ouch” means that their **character** experiences physical or emotional pain or discomfort. Put the cards away and begin Pillow Talk.

After 5 cards have been drawn or if someone calls “Cut,” sex ends.

Pillow Talk: Players may choose to talk together in-character or rest quietly alone and imagine what they do after sex. If any chooses to go off alone, all members of the group do so.

Ending Reflections: After a minute or two, players come back together and share what their characters did. Reflect together out of character, on how that sex was for the characters. How do they feel now? What do they want more of?



CARESS DECKS

Warming Up

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rubbing back/neck/feet/hands• Heavy Petting• Tickling/light scratching• Sucking on toes/ears/fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dirty talk• Fingering/Rubbing genitals• Using feather
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Hot & Heavy

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fellatio/Cunnilingus• Frontal genital penetration• Genital penetration from behind• Dildo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vibrator• Sixty-Nine• Spanking• Anal
--	---

Exploratory

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blindfolding• Bondage• Flogging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pee/Scat play• Breath control
---	--

SUGGESTED SCENE STRUCTURES

<p><i>Structure Type 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole Group• Small Group• Individual• Small Group• Whole Group• Individual• Small Group• Individual• Whole Group	<p><i>Structure Type 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole Group• Small Group• Individual <p>(Repeat as desired)</p> <p><i>Structure Type 3</i></p> <p>Choose from the three scene types as you see fit based on the flow of play and desires of the players.</p>
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After playing out three Whole Group scenes, end the game.

Take some time to de-role and debrief with the group. Share some food and drink, relax and chat.

DE-ROLEING EXERCISE

Ask each player to “put down” or let go of one item or feeling that they strongly associate with their character.

Go around and say one thing they admire about their character, and one way they are different from them.

Questions and discussion topics:

- What were the tensions you experienced?
- How did it feel to be part of the group?
- What did your character have to give up?
- How was the sex?
- Do you feel like your group made progress towards their goal?
- Do you think the group would stay together?
- Does this remind you of something from the real world?
- Would you want to be part of this kind of a group?



ERE CAMLANN

An original game based on *Under my Skin*.

A semi-live game for 4 to 7 players, plus a Director (semi-live is a mix of tabletop and live action play)

Time: approx. 4 to 6 hours

Premise: *A re-telling of the Arthurian myths.*



Guinevere, Gwenevere, Gwenhwyfar, Guanhumara, Guennuuar, Wenneuereia, Gwynnever. Many names, Many forms, many tales.

This is one telling of the tragic events of the court of Arthur. Of knights, , quests, magic, battles won, loves lost and kingdoms torn apart.

Play this game by acting out scenes from the stories of love and war, and by telling tales of the quests. Characters are based on the figures from story and poetry. The base game includes four roles: Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and Morgaen. With more players add additional roles: Mordred, Merlin, Nimue.

FAQ

What is Camlann?

The tragic battlefield where Arthur slew his (sometimes) son Mordred and took a mortal wound.



Which version of the Arthurian legend is this based on?

It's based on several. The events of the tale are taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, written in the 12th century. Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* poetry cycle of the 19th century inspired the feeling of the love and betrayals. Early folklore of the 7th century inspired the feats and quests of the knights of Camelot. *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* provide inspiration for the empowered state of women. John Boorman's *Excalibur* lends flavor, and it has a dash of Crosby, Stills & Nash.

How do roles of women differ here from in the legends?

This game includes women in leadership and combat. In the legends, women hold positions of power and wield magic and courtly status, but are often subject to the choices men make. In this rendition, gender roles are expanded. Women and those of gender queer identities have increased agency in this rendition.

How does time work in this game?

Due to the many versions and myth cycles that the stories come from, time and chronology is not always consistent. Children are born and become knights, fall in love and die while their parents yet live. Take all as being in mythic time. Where days are long as winter shadows, and years seem to tarry endless, but speed by like summer nights in the land of Albion.

Structure of play

- Assign roles
- Add Scenes and Quests to the Outline
- Begin play Ritual: Camlann aftermath
- Play out Scenes
- Ask questions for Quests
- End play Ritual: dying Arthur sent to Avalon



COMMUNICATION

Use Cut and Brake to aid in communication during play. See page xxiii.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

One player reads the rules and explains to the other players: this is the Director. They are responsible for:

- Demonstrating how to Cut and Brake
- Walking the players through choosing roles and Scenes.
- If music will be used at the beginning and end of game, arranging for this or finding another player to do so.
- When Scenes or Quests begin giving some detail about the events and setting, and direction to the players who take roles in the scene.
- Asking appropriate players to give Inner Monologue as shown on the list of Scenes.
- Calling for Scenes to end and thank the players for their contributions.
- May take the role of supporting characters in Scenes or step in for Primary Cast if a player cannot finish the game.
- Checking in with players if they seem to have questions or concerns during play.
- Offering questions for discussion after the game.

PRIMARY CAST

The base characters are Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and Morgaen.

If there are five players add Mordred.

If six, add Merlin.

If seven, add Nimue.

Each character has a description and two questions for the player to answer.



Arthur

Fulfilled the prophecy to become High King of England. Formed his round table of knights and ladies. Fought invading armies, monsters and seeks the Holy Grail. Taught by Merlin. Arthur is a loving husband, and generous king. He has a blind spot for those he loves most and will do anything for them. His best friend is Lancelot, whom he makes Protector of Guinevere.

Arthur is married to Guinevere of the Golden Hair, the most beautiful and talented woman in England. They have no children. Arthur was raised by a foster father, Sir Ector with his foster brother Kai, a strong but cruel knight.

Arthur is son of Ygraine by Uther Pendragon, High King before King Leodegrace. Uther took the place of Ygraine's rightful husband in bed through Merlin's magic. Arthur's true identity was hidden from all by Merlin until revealed when Arthur took the sword from the stone and became the rightful King of England. Ygraine had a daughter, Morgaen.

The summer before Arthur became High King, Morgaen came to study magic with Merlin. Arthur and she secretly became lovers, not knowing of their blood relation. Morgaen later bore Arthur's son, Mordred, but hid Mordred's parentage from Arthur and everyone. Arthur never speaks of their unholy time together.

To play Arthur, answer these questions:

- What shows Arthur's jealousy of Guinevere?
- What passion does Arthur feel when he speaks of the Grail? Ambition, piety, fear or despair?

Guinevere of the Golden Hair

Most beautiful and talented lady in all of England. Daughter of King Leodegrace, King before Arthur. Her father died in battle, leaving the country in the hands of rulers battling for the seat of High King. She and Arthur meet and marry after he takes the sword from the stone, bringing peace to the land. She leads the court of Camelot in chivalry and the noble arts of love and war.



Guinevere is a woman with a torn heart. In love with her husband, the most noble warrior Arthur, but drawn to his greatest knight and best friend, Lancelot of the Lake. Though she longs to have children with Arthur, she bears none.

Guinevere's passions and love for the land drive her. That her divided love also divides the country is the greatest irony.

To play Guinevere, answer these questions:

- What art of war is Guinevere most skilled at?
- What token does she bear as a reminder of her oath to be true to both men she loves?

Lancelot of the Lake

Shining knight from Avalon, Arthur's right hand man, Guinevere's public champion and private beloved. Raised by the Lady of the Lake, he is Morgaen's foster-brother.

Lancelot joins Arthur's Round Table late, but becomes the most celebrated of its members. His love for Guinevere is a secret, and is long unconsummated. At jousts and on journeys he takes no token from any lady, holding himself simply as the Queen's champion. Arthur's absolute trust in him allows Lancelot time with her as her personal guard on pilgrimages and quests, but also provides the opportunity for their betrayal of Arthur.

After nearly dying on a quest, Lancelot pledges his love to Elaine of Astalot, who heals and rescues him. He wears her favor, and she even bears him a son, Galahad, but Lancelot can never truly give her his heart. He abandons her and she dies.

To play Lancelot, answer these questions:

- What near-mortal wound did Guinevere take that broke down Lancelot's resolve to keep his love for her pure?
- What does Lancelot most fear Arthur will do if he finds out?



Morgaen le Fay

Master of magics and brilliant tactician, Morgaen is half-sister to Arthur and mother to his son, Mordred. Vivien, the Lady of the Lake, raised her in Avalon, where she was foster-sister to Lancelot. She is drawn to Merlin whom she sees as an equal.

Morgaen is a woman of strength and intense passion who makes the best of the life she's been given. She and Arthur loved one another while his paternity remained hidden from them both. She honed her skills to protect her son and to win Arthur's love.

Morgaen is a powerful support to the armies of England. She and her son serve in the Round Table and fight for Arthur. But when she reveals that Mordred is Arthur's son, the heir Guinevere never bore, he rejects them both. She turns to Merlin for love and support but he also spurns her. These rejections turn her energy toward placing her son on the throne and destroying Arthur.

To play Morgaen, answer these questions:

- What spell did Morgaen use to turn the tide of battle against the invading Saxon army, saving England?
- What sustained Morgaen through the difficult years of keeping her son's identity secret?

Mordred

The son of the half-siblings Arthur and Morgaen, a talented knight of the Round Table. Eventual pretender to the throne of England. Mordred's mother Morgaen raised him. He spent part of his childhood on the isle of Avalon. He knows some small magics, but is most powerful in the arts of war and manipulation of minds through words.

Brought to the court of Camelot as a knight of the Round Table, he initially looked up to Arthur and held great admiration for Queen Guinevere of the Golden Hair. That ended when Morgaen revealed Arthur to be Mordred's true father, and Arthur repudiated Morgaen. Mordred has channeled his hunger for love into a quest for power.



Mordred feels great passion for Guinevere, and disdains Lancelot for his cowardice. He leads them into a trap which reveals their betrayal of Arthur, then takes the opportunity to seize the crown and Guinevere for himself.

To play Mordred, answer these questions:

- How did Arthur save him from being gored by the great boar Twrch Trwyth?
- What words did Guinevere give to Mordred that make him believe she might accept him as husband?

Merlin the Wise

Master of mystic powers, esteemed member of the Round Table, advisor to Arthur who lends aid on quest and in battle. He loves Arthur passionately and one-sidedly.

Merlin's conspiracies placed Arthur on the throne, but also caused him grief. Merlin used magic to allow Arthur's father Uther to lie with Lady Ygraine. She was the wife of Gorlois, the King of Cornwall whom Uther overthrew and slew. Ygraine had Arthur by Uther, and then died. Merlin sent Ygraine and Gorlois' other child, Morgaen le Fay, to be raised by Vivien, the Lady of the Lake.

Merlin has a fateful vision about the peasant Nimue who joins the Round Table in disguise as the knight Pellias, but falls in love with her and takes her as his squire and student despite it.

MERLIN'S VISION: Merlin loves Nimue and teaches her. She learns from him and takes his powers away. When she has learned all his magic, she imprisons him in a crystal cave.

Merlin becomes obsessed with Nimue. Merlin sees that Morgaen looks to him for love, but is repulsed by her sin of bearing Mordred and rejects her.

To play Merlin, answer these questions:

- What makes Merlin accept his vision and work to fulfill it?
- When did Merlin realize he loved the man that Arthur had grown to be?



Nimue

Born the daughter of a peasant, she rejects her place in the world. Gender fluid, she goes to Camelot in her identity as the male knight Pellias. She becomes the squire of Merlin the Wise, and learns the skills of warcraft and wizardry from him despite his macabre vision. His student Morgaen is her dear friend and confidant. She befriends Mordred, and grieves when he makes war on Arthur.

Merlin's Vision: Merlin will come to love Nimue deeply and teach her. She will learn from him and take his powers away. When she has learned all his magic, she imprisons him in a crystal cave.

Merlin's love will turn into an obsession with Nimue. In the end, she will fulfill the prophetic dream.

As Sir Pellias, Nimue seeks the love of the lady Ettare who rejects her and marries the knight Galahad instead.

To play Nimue, answer these questions:

- What was the golden token Nimue gained for the lady Ettare on a quest?
- Which of Merlin's powers is Nimue most longing to learn?

SUPPORTING CAST

- **Vivien, Lady of the Lake**—mistress of the island of Avalon, foster-mother to Lancelot and Morgaen; gave Excalibur to Arthur
- **Sir Ector**—Arthur's foster father
- **Kai**—Arthur's foster brother, a bully
- **Elaine of Astolat**—loves Lancelot who abandons her after fathering their son Galahad; sets herself in a boat and dies as she reaches Camelot
- **Lady Ettare**—a beautiful, wealthy and cunning lady of the kingdom
- **Palamedes**—Saracen knight of the Round Table, traveled far from home to join Camelot; formerly a hermit; warned Arthur's court about the Questing Beast
- **Bedivere**—one of earliest knights, sole survivor of Camlann, lost hand to Giant of Mt. Saint-Michel
- **Galahad**—son of Lancelot and Elaine, greatest knight ever, most noble
- **Isolde**—great archer, second only to Lancelot
- **Lamorak**—third-strongest knight after Lancelot and Arthur, fought off 30 knights



PLAYING SCENES

First, you'll read the Scene description aloud. Then, the indicated character sets the tone by giving an inner monologue. Immediately after, the characters in the Scene play out the action based on the initial situation.

End the Scene at the story mark noted in the description, or when it feels dramatically right. The Scenes are interspersed with Quests.

The first and last scene are Rituals. Play them with no words--silently and gravely. Music may be played. All other Scenes are flashbacks from those tragic moments.

PLAYING QUESTS

Choose a Quest to embark on in between scenes. These are flashbacks to the glory days of Camelot. Choose up to three characters to be on the quest. Prioritize players who were not just in a scene. Some quests mention specific characters who should be involved. Pick supporting cast also on the Quest.

Ask questions of those on the quest about their character. Ask questions about their brave or foolhardy deeds. How the character felt or acted. What they witnessed other knights do for or to them. Or about wonders they see and experience in these magical adventures. Involve the supporting cast in questions and in answers.

With four players, each player asks two questions. With five or more, each player asks one question each.

ERE CAMLANN META-TECHNIQUES

Ritual - Opening and closing Scene. These are near-wordless scenes. Lay out the dead and dying Arthur and Mordred as if on a battlefield or boat. May play music if desired. (see page 358)

Inner Monologue – Used in Scenes. The thoughts and feelings of the character are spoken out loud for a brief period. They are given as an aside during a pause in play, so are not heard by the other characters. (see page 357)



Questions – Used in quests. Players with characters in the Quest sit facing the others who ask them questions about what their character experienced. The purpose of questions is to 1) establish the power and talents of the characters 2) put them in situations of failure or loss, or 3) give them hard choices to make. Questions state something about what occurred, and ask for the player to embellish on them. (also see page 357)

For example:

Establish talents: “When the Copper Knight ambushed Lancelot on the green road how did Lancelot overpower him?”

Failure or Loss: “What did Guinevere do to make the guardian of the Cauldron curse Guinevere to never know a child’s love?”

SCENES AND QUESTS

Create an outline of scenes including the base scenes, quests, and additional scenes if there are more than four players. Pick quests for list on following page.

Scenes and Quest Outline

- **Opening (ritual)**—Death of Mordred, Arthur is mortally wounded—the knights find Mordred and Arthur on the battlefield of Camlann. End with Mordred dying in Arthur’s arms.
- **Marriage of Arthur and Guinevere**—a joyous day in Camelot, all the knights are with them. Morgaen officiates the wedding and Arthur names Lancelot the protector of Guinevere. Begin with Arthur’s inner monologue. End with a toast to the happiness of the wedded couple.
- **Quest**
- **Lancelot and Guinevere become lovers**—after rescuing Guinevere from near death on a quest, Lancelot confesses his love. Begin with Lancelot’s inner monologue. End when Guinevere admits that she shares Lancelot’s love.
- **Quest**
- **Arthur rejects Morgaen and Mordred**—Morgaen reveals the identity of Arthur’s son and offers him an heir. Arthur brutally rejects them both and exiles them from his court. Begin with Morgaen’s inner monologue. End with Morgaen cursing Arthur.
- **Quest**



- **Arthur imprisons Guinevere in a tower for her betrayal**—Arthur has learned of Guinevere and Lancelot's betrayal. He visits where he imprisoned her. Lancelot brings warriors to besiege the tower and rescue her. Begin with Guinevere's inner monologue. End with Guinevere freeing herself.
- **Error at the Parley of Camlann**—Peace talks during war between Morgaen & Mordred and Arthur's armies. All main cast are present. Talks almost succeed, except a knight takes out their sword to kill an adder on the field, and all hope ends. Begin with Mordred's inner monologue. End with the first mistaken death and cries for battle.
- **Ending (ritual)**—The dying Arthur is taken to Avalon by boat accompanied by three Queens, the sword is given back to Lady of the Lake.

Additional Scenes for 5 or more players:

- **Merlin trains Morgaen and Arthur** —Morgaen and Arthur as youths learning together and falling in love (begin with Merlin's inner monologue, end with spark of love between the teens, place between marriage and consummation of Lancelot and Guinevere)
- **Sir Pellias (Nimue) is knighted and appointed as Arthur's advisor and protector**—Nimue enters King Arthur's service and the smitten Merlin offers to train her. (begin with Nimue's inner monologue, end with Merlin revealing his vision, place after the wedding Scene)
- **Nimue saves Arthur from Morgaen's gift of poisonous raiments**—Nimue intercepts a deadly gift from the exiled Morgaen, gaining Merlin's eternal gratitude (begin with Arthur's inner monologue, end with Merlin crying over near murder of Arthur, place after Morgaen reveals Mordred's identity)
- **Mordred and Arthur set a trap for Lancelot and Guinevere** —Mordred brings Arthur to a cottage where Lancelot and Guinevere have a tryst (begin with Mordred's inner monologue, end with Arthur sentencing Guinever to prison, place before Guinevere imprisoned Scene)

QUEST LIST

- **Seeking the cauldron of Cerridwen**—This magical vessel gives great powers to the first who tastes its contents after it is tended for a year and a day. Said to be the original source of Merlin's power and guarded by a blacksmith whose armor cannot be pierced.
- **Palamedes kills the Questing Beast**—This ravenous barking monster stalks the woodlands and has killed many. Born of a princess who fell in love with her brother and was tricked into having sex with a demon. Killed by Sir Palamedes with the help of other knights of the Round Table.



- **Hunting great boar Twrch Trwyth**—A knight needs a fitting gift for his betrothed, the giantess Olwen. Only the razor-like tusks of Twrch Trwyth, a giant boar with poisonous bristles (but really a prince transformed into a beast) can cut her hair. Arthur and Mordred bring Arthur's great dog Cavall to hunt it.
- **Giant of Mt. Saint-Michel**—A giant steals the child of a local lord on the coast of Brittany. Arthur and Sir Kay fight and kill the giant by blinding it with its own blood. Bedivere loses a hand in the battle.
- **Lancelot and the Copper Knight**—Twenty knights defend the Dolorous Guard (Castle of Sadness), along with the Copper Knight who challenges Lancelot. After Lancelot defeats them all, the Copper Knight disappears, leaving a copper plaque declaring the castle Joyous Guard, property of Lancelot.
- **Sir Pellias and Lady Ettare**—Pellias (Nimue in disguise) falls deeply in love with the lofty and cruel Lady Ettare. She sends Pellias on a quest to capture a cursed golden token from the Giant Geirrold whom they find pinned to a wall.
- **The Holy Grail**—The grail appears over the Round Table as a sign to seek it. They find the Fisher King with wound that will not heal, and sword that is broken that reveals the grail to they who mend it. Each is tested for their purity of heart.

ENDGAME

After the final ritual laying Arthur to rest, allow the music to play (if used) and let everyone be in silence for a few moments at the end of play.

Have players come together and talk before going on to do other things. Optionally, have them De-Role or use some questions for discussion.

De-Roleing

Have each player set down their character sheet or name tag and say something they want to keep from their character, and something they want to let go. (See p. 240)

Questions for Discussion

Share a highlight moment. May use these questions as prompts for conversation.

- What is something memorable that another character did?
- What pushed your character to do what they did?
- What keeps these myths relevant? Are they still?
- What other versions do you know and/or love of these characters?



LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD

An original game based on *Shooting the Moon*

A tabletop role playing game for 2 people

Time: 1–2 hours

Chess board required.

Premise: A love triangle during a war that will determine the future of two peoples. Inspired by C.M. Corbett



Love and conquest in the heart, and on the field.

This game was inspired by *Shooting the Moon*. It is meant for two players. Each is a Suitor trying to gain the love of the Beloved in the midst of a war that ends lives and tears relationships apart. The war is played out on a grid, with the movements of troops and key allies pushing the story along, as well as the romance.

NEEDED TO PLAY

- Chess set and board
- 12 six-sided dice
- Pencil and note paper
- **Playset:** one of the three in these rules, or a custom one you create.



THE STORY

In *Love is a Battlefield*, you tell a story about a war with a love triangle at its heart. Two Suitors fight over the fate of their people, and the love of the Beloved who rules one of their factions.

The end is winner take all—the war, and the Beloved’s heart.

GAME OVERVIEW

In *Love is a Battlefield*, you will tell a story about sides at war, with a love triangle at its heart. Scenes take place at two scales:

- **Personal**—a moment of heart-felt interaction between the Beloved and a Suitor, something goes wrong
- **War**— an account of a skirmish, sally or other action of the war, prompted by the movement of pieces on the board

Pieces are put At Risk, and dice are rolled based on the position of the pieces. If you lose on your turn, a piece is eliminated.

At the end of the game, the final outcome of the war is decided. Each side rolls dice equal to the pieces you have left in play.

The Suitor who gains the day wins the war, and is accepted into the Beloved’s life and heart.



SET UP

From each set of chess pieces, take the following pieces:

- The Queen
- One Bishop
- One Knight
- One Rook (or Castle)
- Three Pawns

From the darker colored set of pieces, also take the King.

The pieces represent the main characters and other elements of the war:

- **King**—the Beloved
- **Queens**—Suitors 1 and 2 (Suitor 1 is the same color as the King)
- **Bishop**—Person – a person of influence or power in the war effort
- **Knight**—Thing – an object of importance for the war or the country of its origin
- **Rook (or Castle)**—Place – a location with strategic or cultural importance
- **Pawn**—Troops

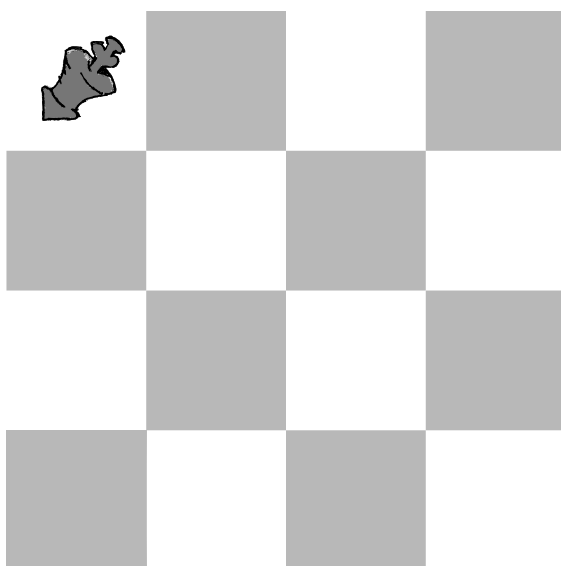
There are three Playsets included with this game. An Ancient world setting, a Near-Future Modern warfare set, and a Future Sci-Fi setting.

Each playset gives you information about what the pieces mean in this setting and who the characters are you will play.

NOTES ON PAWNS:

In each Playset, there are three different types of troops, with flair and character that make them memorable. They are not assigned one-to-one to the Pawn tokens. When the Pawns are moved and invoked for story, their player decides which is involved as it is needed. They also represent traditional troops, which can be invoked in the game at any time by either side.





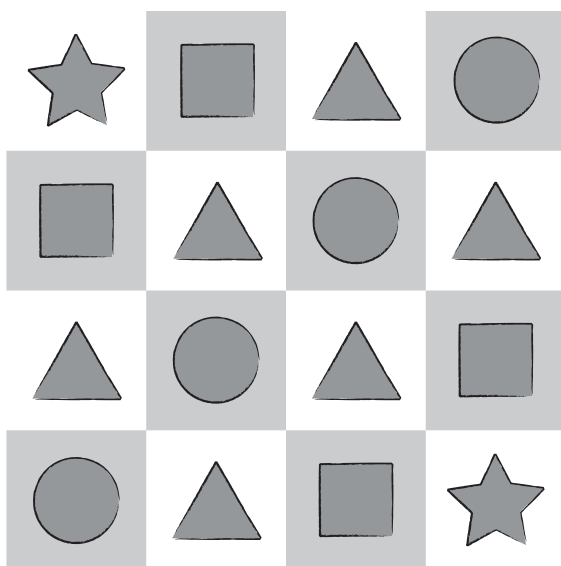
The Board

The chess board represents the land or area on which the two forces are arrayed against one another.

Use one quarter of the chess board, making a grid four spaces by four spaces (4×4).

Place the King on one of the four corner squares closest to the center of the board. The line of squares extending to the edge of the playboard from the King's space define the play area. Pieces may not move beyond these lines.





The board is an abstract representation of areas controlled by each side. Their home kingdom, or region of influence, which will be lost or gained during the course of the story.

Each part of the board represents something different about this place. Each of the diagonal lines of squares has meaning as shown on this grid:

- **Circle**—(center diagonal line of four squares) Front Lines of the battle
- **Triangle**—(second lines out from center, three squares each) the People and their home areas
- **Square**—(third line out from center, two squares each) Cultural buildings, monuments and installations
- **Star**—(corner squares) the Objective, precious resources of the land which the other fights to gain

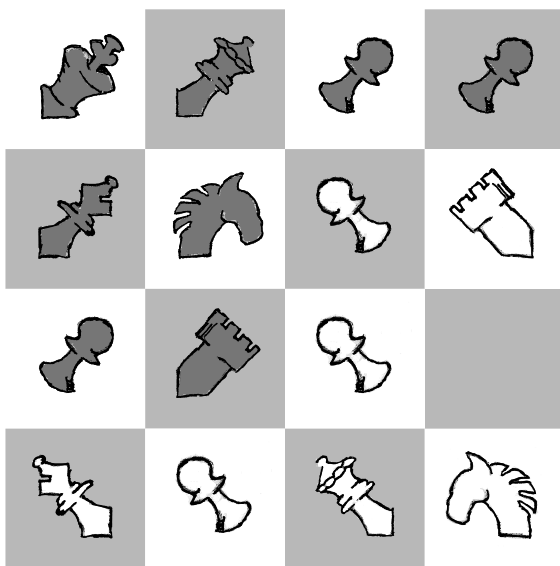


Choose sides

Take one Queen of each color. One player places one in each hand so that the other player cannot see which color is in which hand. The other player picks a hand and takes that side to play.

The Beloved is part of the side played by the Suitor using the darker color pieces. This is Suitor 1.

The Beloved's piece, the King is independent and is not controlled by either side on the board. In the story, the Beloved is on the side of Suitor 1 and is drawn to Suitor 1. However, they have a strong emotional and romantic bond with Suitor 2.



Laying out the Pieces

Beloved starts play in their home side's Objective square.

At the start of play, the other pieces are placed one at a time by the Suitors.



Alternate back and forth, with the player with the lighter color pieces going first.

Follow these rules for placement:

- Place the principal pieces: Queen, Bishop, Knight and Rook pieces first, in any order
- Place on Star, Triangle or Square space of your own side, or on the front lines. (Pieces may not be placed on the other side's area to at the start of play.)
- Rook pieces, once placed, will not move. (But they may be destroyed.)
- For each principal piece (Q,B,Kn,R), note where on the board they are placed and describe briefly how they are interacting with that aspect of the side's Kingdom in preparation for the war.
- Place Pawns last, with no story.

Making Connections:

Describe how each Suitor has a deep connection to the Beloved that makes them a candidate for a romantic connection.

Fleshing out the Characters

Use the descriptions in the Playsets as a creative springboard for your vision of the characters. Add details about their personality and motivations over time. Be inspired by what the others play for their characters and what they reflect about yours.

The setting and characters in each Playset is open to your interpretation and customization.



PLAY

Turns

During a Suitor's turn do the following:

- Describe a Personal Scene between Beloved and Active Suitor (see below)
- The Opponent provides a Hurdle (see page 325)
- There are three Responses to the Hurdle. Each Response is made up of a Move and relating the Events of the War (see Events page 325 and Moves page 326)
 - First Response: Active Suitor
 - Second Response: Opponent
 - Third: Active Suitor
- Opponent chooses a piece that is At Risk (see At Risk page 327)
- Roll Dice and determine Outcome (see page 327)
- Describe follow-up Personal Scene that takes place after Events of War (see page 329)

Personal Scenes

Begin each turn with a Personal Scene between the Beloved and the Active Suitor. The scene is a situation where the Beloved and Suitor are potentially growing closer in their relationship.

Choose a situation from the Playset.

For the first two scenes of the game: Choose one of three scenes described for each Suitor.

For the rest of the game, choose from the list of general scene types listed in all Playsets. These prompts are various types of rendezvous or intimate settings that might bring them together.

To begin the scene, the Active Suitor describes:

- Where the Beloved and Suitor are
- What they are doing



- How the Suitor and Beloved interact that reinforces their bond or shows them enjoying each other's company

The Opponent then describes a Hurdle that the two encounter.

Hurdles

After a personal scene has been described, the Opponent introduces a problem confronting the Beloved and the Active Suitor. This is the Hurdle. It offers danger, threat of loss or inconvenience and places some obstacle in the path of their growing romantic relationship.

Examples of Hurdles:

The Beloved and Suitor 1, the Queen and her unconquered general, meet to plan out their best course for attacking their enemy, Suitor 2, the King of the land of the Sun. They meet privately, in the general's tent, with soldiers outside for security. The general pours wine for the Queen.

After the Hurdle is introduced, the action cuts to three Events of the War created by the Suitors (see below).

Events of the War

Each event begins with a Move on the board involving pieces that represent parts of the world.

The event involving those parts of the world is described.

The events of the war may address or answer the concerns raised in the Personal scene, but they need not do so. This is a moment to

Order of Play

- Play out three rounds.
- Each round includes one turn by each Suitor.
- The Suitor taking a turn is the Active Suitor.
- The Suitor not taking a turn is the Opponent.
- Each Suitor risks losing a piece on their turn, chosen by the Opponent.
- The Beloved moves across the board at the end of each round.
- At the end of the game, roll off based on the number of pieces each side controls. Winner takes all.



explore how the forces would clash and cause havoc. The Suitors share creation of the events, and pieces are risked.

MAKING A MOVE

Queen, Bishop and Pawns may be moved in any direction to

1. Swap position with an enemy piece
2. Swap position with a friendly piece
3. Move into an empty space

Knights may move like a Pawn etc. and also can be moved through a friendly piece to an adjacent empty space.

Rooks do not move. Instead they:

- Move an adjacent enemy piece to another adjacent empty space
- Or swap an adjacent enemy piece with an adjacent friendly piece

King may not be moved and does not move during turns. At the end of each round the King is moved one space diagonally toward the enemy area. If another piece occupies its destination, they swap locations. If the space is empty, the King simply moves into it.

DESCRIBING THE EVENTS

These scenes are telescoped in time, a lot is fit into just a few sentences of description.

Three Events are described each turn:

- First Event: by the Active Suitor
- Second Event: by the Opponent
- Third: by the Active Suitor
- Opponent chooses a piece belonging to the Active Suitor to be At Risk (see At Risk page 327)

Event of War

- Move
- Describe what happens



The Active Suitor takes the first move, shifting pieces on the the board.

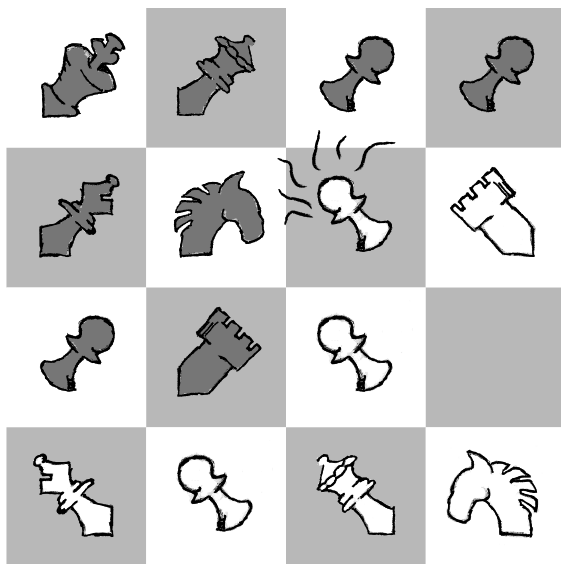
The Opponent responds, making a move of their own.

The Active Suitor gets the third and final move, allowing them to respond to the changes made by the Opponent.

AT RISK

The Opponent continues the turn by choosing one of the Active Suitor's pieces to be At Risk—if the die roll is lost, that piece will be removed from play. King and Queens may not be placed At Risk.

Once the war scenes are related and a piece is at risk, outcomes are determined by dice roll. Lives and key resources are lost or saved. Dice are gathered and rolled to determine Outcomes (see page 328).



GATHERING DICE

After a piece is made At Risk, each Suitor gathers dice to roll.

The number of dice is determined by how many pieces are adjacent to the At Risk piece.

Dice:

- One die per adjacent: Pawn, Rook, Knight, Queen
- Two dice per adjacent Bishop
- Roll one dice for the piece At Risk (or two if it is a Bishop)
- Active Suitor rolls one die for the Beloved if the King is adjacent to the At Risk piece

For example:

The brown rook is chosen to be At Risk.

Brown gathers 5 dice (one each for knight and pawn, two for bishop, one for the rook itself).

Tan gathers 6 dice (one each for the pawns, two for the bishop, one for the queen)

Rolling Outcomes

Each side rolls their dice.

Take the dice and place them in a line, ordered by the value they roll.

Example 1:

Suitor 1 – 6-5-3-3-2	Suitor 2 – 5-5-4-3-3-1
----------------------	------------------------

Compare the highest value. If one side has rolled a higher die for their highest value—that side wins.

In the example above, Suitor 1 has won with a “6” in bold.



If both sides have the same highest value, continue looking down the line of values, until the tie is broken. Lower dice do not matter.

Example 2:

Suitor 1 – 6-5-3-3-2	Suitor 2 – 6-5-4-3-3-1
-----------------------------	-------------------------------

In this example, Suitor 2 wins. The dice compared are in bold, and the “4” which breaks the tie is underlined.

If the Opponent wins, the piece At Risk is lost or captured by the Opponent.

- The Opponent describes how it is lost and the aftermath of the events in failure.
- If the Active Suitor wins, the piece At Risk is saved.
- The Active Suitor describes the aftermath of the events in success.

In the story, elements represented by lost pieces may be described as:

- Destroyed
- Lost
- Abandoned
- Changed beyond recognition
- Irrelevant to the action

Pieces may not be re-gained.

Lost pieces can no longer be an element of the world that takes action in the story. Their loss or change however, can make a lasting impact on the characters and the world.

FOLLOW-UP

The action then goes back to the Personal scene. This time it is a sequel or follow-up to what went on between the Beloved and Suitor. It takes place after the principal characters have learned of the events of the war.

In the follow up if the Active Suitor won, the Beloved responds to the events of the war by drawing closer to the Suitor and their goal in the war.



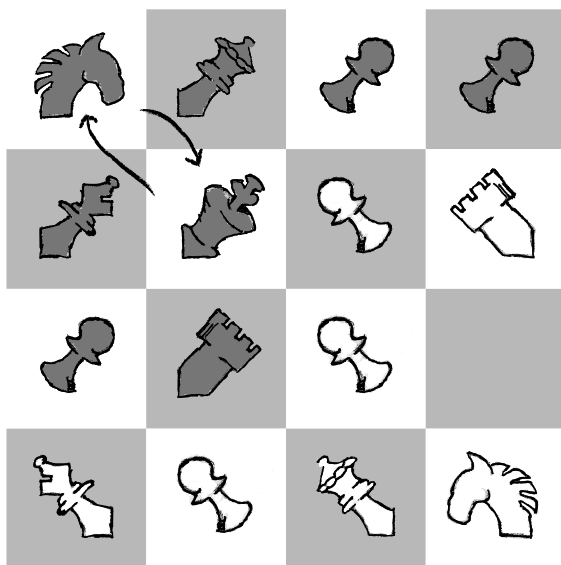
If the Active Suitor failed, the Beloved succumbs to the stresses put upon them by the Opponent, and do not bond with the Suitor.

Beloved Moves

After two Suitor Turns, a round is complete. The Beloved's piece is moved.

Swap the King with the piece diagonal with it on the playing field. Decide together what this means in the story.

- Why has the Beloved interacted with that element?
- What is the Beloved trying to do?
- How does this change things for the element?



Second and Third Rounds

The following rounds consist of pair turns by Suitor 1 and Suitor 2, just as the first round did. Continue the story and remove pieces lost.



ENDGAME

The end game consists of:

- Beloved's final move
- Decisive Battle
- Epilogues

Beloved's Final Move

After the third round has ended, move the Beloved one last time. They are now at the Star space for their enemy. This is a decisive moment. They will either conquer or be conquered. And, if Suitor 2 wins, they will give their love to them as well as their domain.

Decisive Battle

A final clash occurs between the factions. Set the scene for the conflict.

Gather dice for each side:

Count the number of pieces on each side –

- The Beloved does not count
- All pieces, including Bishops, count for just one die

Roll all the dice and compare as during a Turn. Highest value wins.

Epilogues

The side that wins describes how the battle is won—what forces made a difference in their winning, and what happens to the forces which lost.

The side that loses describes the fate of their Suitor, and what casualties the winning side incurred to gain the day.



PLAYSETS

Ancients

Loosely inspired by the warfare between ancient Kush and Egypt in north Africa. Two kingdoms at war, but united by shared worship of a Sun god.

Suitor 1's side:

- **King**—Semi-divine Queen (Beloved)
- **Queen**—Unconquered General (right hand of Beloved)
- **Bishop**—The Supply Master for the Army
- **Knight**—A statue of the Queen
- **Rook**—The cursed fortress
- **Pawn**—Untrained masses of fighters
- **Pawn**—Scholar charioteers
- **Pawn**—Blessed assassins

First Scene suggestions: Council of war, Training the people, Dedicating Her statue

Suitor 2's side:

- **Queen**—Charismatic God-Touched Leader (share connection with deity)
- **Bishop**—Scion of the Leader
- **Knight**—Golden Treasury
- **Rook**—Twisted Hill (key strategic point, allowing access to valley)
- **Pawn**—Untouchable Warriors
- **Pawn**—Treasure Hunters
- **Pawn**—Un-named Ghost Horde

First Scene suggestions: Sacred rites, Stolen moment in secret place, Parley for peace

Land:

- **Star**—Fertile Land
- **Circle**—Ravine riddled border
- **Triangle**—Workers/Farmers
- **Square**—Temples to the Sun God and other deities

Scene types: Seeking a sign, Encounter in disguise, Audience with the people, Wounded, Secret mission, elite resort



Near-Future Modern

Warring nations battle over energy and ethics, with fabulous wealth and clairvoyant powers in play.

Suitor 1's side:

- **King**—Beloved Leader (Beloved)
- **Queen**—Driven General (right hand of Beloved)
- **Bishop**—Corrupt Corporate Security Force Leader
- **Knight**—Offshore Accounts
- **Rook**—Hidden Bunker
- **Pawn**—Organized Protestors
- **Pawn**—Anonymous Force
- **Pawn**—Security Force

First Scene suggestions: Security briefing, Psionic shield fitting, In the bathhouse

Suitor 2's side:

- **Queen**—Wavering Leader (old friend of Beloved)
- **Bishop**—Ethical Council
- **Knight**—Book of Law Governing War
- **Rook**—Well of Seeing
- **Pawn**—Starving People
- **Pawn**—Second-sighted Commandos
- **Pawn**—Ultra-Loyal Corps

First Scene suggestions: Peace conference, Shared shelter in uprising, Neutral territory getaway

Land:

- **Star**—Oil rich land
- **Circle**—Urban battlefields
- **Triangle**—Impoverished peoples
- **Square**—House of Law and Governance

Scene types: Seeking a sign, Encounter in disguise, Audience with the people, Wounded, Secret mission, Elite resort



Distant Future Sci-Fi

Star-hopping space fleets determine the future of the species, divided by technologies and philosophies.

Suitor 1's side:

- **King**—Daring Space Fleet Leader (Beloved)
- **Queen**—Colonist Transporter (right hand of Beloved)
- **Bishop**—Resource Fixer & Parts Finder
- **Knight**—Massive Robotic Fortress
- **Rook**—Homeworld
- **Pawn**—Robot fighter pilots
- **Pawn**—Indomitable Foot Soldier Corps
- **Pawn**—Amitas Societas (secret fraternal/sororal order)

First Scene suggestions: Logistics meeting, Daring rescue by Beloved, Getting massages

Suitor 2's side:

- **Queen**—Brilliant Upstart Fleet Leader (rival worthy of Beloved)
- **Bishop**—Highly Blooded Space Aristocrat
- **Knight**—Invasive Parasite
- **Rook**—Bacterial Minefield
- **Pawn**—Living Craft
- **Pawn**—Organotech Soldiers
- **Pawn**—Organotech Military Scientists

First Scene suggestions: Space duel, Private holo-message channel, Hidden moon

Land:

- **Star**—Colonists for New, Habitable Planet
- **Circle**—Mech versus Organic Tech Laboratories
- **Triangle**—Colonists and Constructs
- **Square**—Planetary Orbit

Scene types: Seeking a sign, Encounter in disguise, Audience with the people, Wounded, Secret mission, Elite resort



HOW TO MAKE A PLAYSET:

1. Pick a setting/time period
2. Choose 6 desirable Attributes for a Beloved in this Setting
3. Spin off a pair of Synonyms and Antonyms for each Attribute
4. Assign one of each pair to each side in the war
5. Create the elements (Queen through Pawn). For each use one of the Synonyms/Antonyms from that side to inspire it. Some will be used more than once.
6. Pick overarching elements for the landscape (Star/Square/Triangle/Circle – Objective/Cultural Landmark/People/Front Lines)
7. Choose three sample First Scenes for each Suitor, and use generic Scene Types from existing Playsets or create your own.



SUN AND MOON

An original game based on *Breaking the Ice*

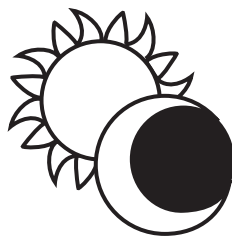
A tabletop rpg for 2 players

Time: 2–3 hours

No dice required.

Uses Structured Freeform and diceless rules
adapted from *Breaking the Ice*.

Premise: A mythic adaptation of *Breaking the Ice*. Discover the creation story for a new or existing world.



How well I know!—Old Qwfwq cried, the rest of you can't remember, but I can. We had her on top of us all the time, that enormous Moon: when she was full—nights as bright as day but with a butter-colored light—it looked as if she were going to crush us; when she was new, she rolled around in the sky like a black umbrella blown by the wind; and when she was waxing, she came forward with her horns so low she seemed about to stick into the peak of a promontory and get caught there.

—ITALO CALVINO, “The Distance of the Moon,” *Cosmicomics*

When the world began, we were there . . .

Two beings at the start of it all—through love, conflict, change and transformation—make a world. The game begins at the world's dawning. Play fresh and imagine the world that comes from this creation, or create a myth for a world or culture you've created for another role playing game. The players create a dynamic or problem that the two Beings experience. The act of creation bridges that distance, or creates a vibrant new universe built upon the Fundament of that which was.



SETUP

Choose two Primordial Beings

- Sun and Moon
- Starlight and the Deep
- The Weaver and the Child
- Wind and a Leaf
- Rabbit and Bear
- Snake and Phoenix

Use one of these sets for character creation or create your own pair. They may be an animal, a feature of the natural world, a mythical creature, a celestial object, a spirit or entity, or perhaps a crafted object like a net or sword or mirror.

Choose who will play each Primordial Being.

Use each Being as the heart of a Word Web.

Write down the Being's name on a sheet of paper. Alternating players, choose words associated with the Being. Connect each word with a line to the word that inspired it. Have the players add a word to the web, connected first to the Being's name, and then to the name or to any other word on the web. Go back and forth three times, so that in total six words are added to the web around each Being's name.

After creating the word web, write down a sentence describing the Primordial Being that uses some of the words from the web, or that is inspired by it.

Example

Li-ling is playing the Moon. She and **Ariel** create a word web with the following words: Silver-Tarnish; Starlight-Dark; Face, Crater.

She writes the following sentence: *The Moon is a tarnished and cratered silver face in the sky.*

Ariel is playing the Sun. They and **Li-ling** create a word web with the following words: Warmth, Nurture; Orb-crown; Summer; Bright.

They write the following sentence: *The Sun is a crowned orb seated on the bright throne of summer.*



Choose a color* associated with each Being, and include that color in descriptions of the new world.

- Each player must use only their own colors in descriptions they make on their turns.
- At the start they have but one color to use.
- New colors will be added later.
- Use the choice of color as an opportunity to plan ahead. Do you want to create water and fish? Perhaps you want to choose “blue.”

Create the Fundament

Where are the two Primordial Beings? This is all there is at the start. It is a brief framework or stage upon which the creation will take place. It should be sparse, just a concrete detail or two. It is perfectly fine—recommended even—for the Fundament to be fantastic and not meet contemporary understandings of the physical structure of the Universe.

For example

- Sun and Moon are in the velvet blue sky.
- Starlight and the Deep meet at a cove filled with glowing jellyfish.
- The Weaver and the Child wake together in a brown and silver wood.
- Rabbit and Bear are curled fast asleep in the lone cave.
- Snake and Phoenix are wrapped around each other, falling ever faster.

* Please note. The inclusion of more colors should not be mistaken for the Berlin and Key universal color evolution hypothesis. For further reading on this issue please see:

Wierzbicka, A. (2008), “Why there are no ‘colour universals’ in language and thought”. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14: 407–425. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00509.x <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00509.x/abstract;jsessionid=6ACC94609C7511931E84F8F447A010CC.f03t01>



Foundations

Create the Foundations. These are elements of the world which are created during player Turns. Foundations are divided into three categories: Bole, Branch and Leaf. These are metaphorical groupings which group things according to their impact on and trajectory in the world.

Bole is inanimate matter such as rocks, earth, trees. These are passive created elements of the world which are acted upon, though some may grow and multiply.

Branch is animate creatures and matter such as the wind, birds and shooting stars. These are active elements of the world which make changes and make their own mark upon the world.

Leaf is institutions and social structures. These venture into the realm of meaning, created through thought and action by creatures and beings with mind and heart.

Example Foundations

Bole	Branch	Leaf
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stones• mountains• trees• lichen• mushrooms• stars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• birds• ants• gazelles• apes• water• comets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• family• polis or social group• marriage• enmity• war• love

PLAY

Cycles

Play out the game in three Cycles.

- In the first Cycle, play out one Arc (see next page)
- In the second Cycle, play out two Arcs
- In the third Cycle, play out three Arcs



Arcs

Each Cycle consists of Arcs. Each Arc is a set of three Turns:

- One player Begins, the other player Follows
- The Beginner takes a Turn, then the Follower takes a Turn responding to what the Beginner did, and then the Beginner takes another Turn, ending the Arc.
- In the next Arc, the players switch roles: the one who Followed now Begins, and vice versa.

At the end of an Arc, the players choose a new Color to add to the World.

At the end of a Cycle, the players choose an Echo which reverberates across the World in this Cycle.

Echo

The Echo is concept like love, honor, faith, despair, anger, gratitude, reconciliation, hope, or fear that reflects the events of play. Echoes are emotions that the Primordial Beings have felt during this Cycle, or created in inhabitants of the world. Think about what kinds of feelings or aspects of relating were demonstrated.

Example:

Ariel plays the Sun, and **Li-ling** plays the Moon.

In their first Cycle, they play out one Arc.

In this Arc, **Ariel** is the player who Begins. **Li-ling** is the player who Follows.

Ariel takes a turn, then **Li-ling** does so as a response. **Ariel** completes the Arc by taking another turn, responding to **Li-ling's** play.

Since this is the first Cycle, it is complete with just one Arc.

Ariel adds the color Blue, and **Li-ling** adds the color Green



If from a pre-existing fictional world:

For Primordial Beings, pick gods or spirits from religion or mythology, natural features of importance in the world or symbolic objects of power or influence.

ENDGAME

When the third Cycle is through, the game is done. The world is complete.

Give a brief epilogue by answering the following questions:

- How does each Primordial Being feel about the World?
- How do the beings of the World relate to the Primordial Beings?
- How do the Primordial Beings feel about each other?



Example of Play

Ariel as Sun Begins and takes the first Turn of the first Arc. They respond to the “static” dynamic between Sun and Moon.

“Sun and Moon always circle round one another, in the velvet sky of the Fundament, Sun has gotten a little weary of it always being the same, so she goes a little too, close to Moon. Pieces of her flames lick at Moon, then break off and scatter. They fall in a rain of Golden sparks which strike the sky and make the Stars.”

- Gold is the Color chosen—**Ariel** adds Gold to Sun’s Color list
- Stars are the Element created—because stars seem to stay still in the sky, **Ariel** writes down “Stars—Gold” as a Bole on Sun’s part of the World Sheet

Li-ling as Moon takes the second Turn of this Arc, as the Follower. She narrates Moon’s response to Sun’s action.

“Moon is startled by Sun coming so close, and the new light of the Stars. She exhales in surprise, and a White Cloud comes out of her covering over the Stars.”

- White is the Color chosen—**Li-ling** adds it to Moon’s Color list
- Clouds are the Element created—since clouds move, **Li-ling** writes it down under Bole on Moon’s part of the World sheet.

Ariel as Sun takes the third and final Turn of the first Arc.

“The Sun was admiring her handiwork, so she is upset that the clouds block her view of the stars. She moves into the clouds, and her spinning churns them up making a storm. Golden lightning leaps from cloud to cloud.”

Ariel adds “Lightning” as a Branch on Sun’s part of the World sheet.

Since this is the first Cycle, with the completion of one Arc, the Cycle is over.

Ariel and **Li-ling** both add an Echo to their Being’s part of the World sheet.

continued . . .



Example of Play (continued)

Ariel adds: “Anger”—since the Sun felt that something had been taken from it

Li-ling adds: “Surprise”—since the Moon experienced shock at being confronted with new creation

Starting the second Cycle, Li-Ling as the Moon Begins this time.

Ariel as the Sun Follows.

Li-ling describes the Moon watching the lightning leaping from cloud to cloud. One bolt strikes the Moon, and a great explosion takes place. A piece of the Moon flies off into space (that is how the Moon got its biggest crater). It is scorched by the lightning and becomes the Brown ground of the Earth.

- Brown is the Color chosen—**Li-ling** writes it down beneath “White” on the Moon’s Color list
- Ground is the Element—**Li-ling** writes down “Brown Earth” as a Bole since it is solid and unmoving

Ariel as the Sun Follows, and spins around the earth, and light and shadows move and fall. The red light gleams golden on the first sunset ever seen on Earth.

- Night follows Day is the Element created—this is a new convention of the universe, **Ariel** writes it down as a “Leaf” on the Sun’s part of the World sheet. This is a new state of being, or celestial institution.
- **Ariel** used “Red” as the new color, to describe the Sunset. **Ariel** writes it on the Sun’s Color list.





PART FIVE

AFTERWORD

DESIGNING THE ROMANCE TRILOGY

Origin Story

Breaking the Ice started with an argument on the internet. Or more precisely, an argument I had in my head with what someone said on the internet. In 2002 or so, a discussion cropped up on a forum about whether it was possible for someone to convincingly play a character of another gender. One commenter had never seen it happen and firmly believed that this was impossible.

Cue disbelief and some anger.

The idea stuck with me and turned into the kernel of an idea for a game. They think no one can play a different gender? How about making it the premise for a game. It's impossible for someone to do it plausibly? Let's give players help and support to do it well. Those were the fundamental ideas that defined what would become *Breaking the Ice*. Everything else came from them.

How to Do Romance

What if players feel embarrassed about doing something new? My solution was to reduce the number of players so there is very little audience. Two players is intimate, and since both make a "Switch" they begin on the same footing. It felt natural to set the game on a date. How to best support the players? The rules emphasize cooperative role play, and the procedures provide positive reinforcement for player contributions. I wanted the gender swap to be an integral part of the game but not to feel forced. So the Switch can be of any type of difference, with gender a default if it applies. Not required, but supported and probably quite common.

The side effects were unexpected and remarkably sweet. Romance games were poorly-trod territory, and two player games an under-represented niche category. The fairly rules-light mechanics made it accessible for new



players. The subject matter made it accessible to people who were not drawn to adventure-fiction style play. It was an ideal game for gamers, often men, who wanted to introduce their significant other to the hobby. When they played with each other the Switch allowed them to break the ice and get to know one another better.

Three and Up

The two-person constraint of *Breaking the Ice* sparked the design of the rest of the trilogy. Later it became clear how to expand the game for more players, but initially trying to play *Breaking the Ice* with an odd number of people proved awkward. That gave me the idea to write another short game for three: *Shooting the Moon*. In odd-numbered groups, pairs could play *Breaking the Ice* and the remaining three could play this. A love triangle suggested itself, and allowed the games to relate thematically.

The hard part was making the game to be playable by two or three. It may not seem very different, but in this case, the dynamics are very distinct: two players competing directly, rather than two vying for the attention of a third. The problem was crafting a set of mechanics that would work in both situations and give that third player a sufficiently satisfying role.

I decided to break the game into subsystems based on whose turn it is. On Suitors' Turns they provide opposition and push to get to add tags to each other's character. But during the Beloved's turn, the players have more options, and more is at risk. The Beloved gets to raise the stakes.

Shooting the Moon became my surprise favorite. On the surface, as a competitive, genre-oriented game, it took fewer design risks. Would it move players? Yet, because the goals—succeeding in romance and love, or the Beloved achieving their dream—are not guaranteed, the game can lead to great pathos. One tragic run, set during the siege of Stalingrad in World War II, still ranks among my favorite role playing experiences.

Finding its Place

There were many years where *Breaking the Ice* overshadowed *Shooting the Moon*. A game meetup community in Seattle helped change that. Story Games Seattle works



to create a welcoming vibe, focusing on playing GMless games that put old and new players on an even playing field. The folks in this community embraced *Shooting the Moon* and it became a standby. They put their spin on the game, and inspired a mod named after them.

Love in Myriad Forms

Under My Skin also arose from the two-player limit in *Breaking the Ice*. What if a larger group wants to play all together? I decided to make a romance game that could handle up to eight people. Obviously, with a large group of people and romance involved the natural premise was a game about everyone falling in love with the wrong person. *Under My Skin* shows how bonds of fidelity are tested, and the strengths and weaknesses of existing relationships in high relief. That's not too intense and weird to play, is it?

As a part of many communities that embraced polyamory, I had seen groups of friends live non-monogamously. Many relationships did not survive. Others did. It was a learning experience, and resembled—in certain cases—jumping out of an airplane to learn to fly. Some, learned to fall with style. Others thrived, or broke out of very dysfunctional situations. A game—since it provides some distance from real life—provides a place to examine and try on the situation.

Unintended Consequences

Playing attraction sometimes leads to attraction. Since I wrote *Breaking the Ice* as a sideways invitation to flirtation, it's always surprised me that the game of the Trilogy that has inspired the most post-game hookups—by an enormous lead—is *Under My Skin*.

However, *Breaking the Ice* did inspire a real-life romance and eventual marriage for one couple: Andrew and Krista. It was one of my life's great pleasures to dance at their wedding and they will always hold a very special place in my heart.

An effect of playing close to home is that the character's emotions may bleed into your real world feelings, and vice versa. Acting out romance is a very alluring experience. The pure act of talking intently to someone, perhaps touching them, feeling strong emotions and working together—all add up to major elements in the lunacy we call falling in love. Having someone say



things to you in character that you long to hear in your real life can be moving. And getting to play out these emotions with someone you may truly be attracted to makes space for all kinds of confusion: wonderful, world-changing confusion that puts you on the road to happiness, as well as terrible, heart-breaking confusion that hurts emotions and damages relationships.

Be warned, your heart is real no matter what fiction you play.

The World's Response

The reception of *Breaking the Ice* at first was . . . reserved to say the least. Or rather, varied. It ranged from intense interest in a game that embraced real world issues and eschewed typical role playing game genres, to polite disinterest, to disbelief that it was possible to play such a game at all, to actual fear in a variety of flavors. Fear of engaging with friends on a romantic level, even with the fictional alibi of the characters' lives; fear of being embarrassed while playing a flirtatious encounter; and—most sympathetically—fear of vulnerability. Why play in a game what can be so fraught, so hard to approach, in real life? Or, why play at romance rather than living it for real?

Breaking the Ice intentionally revolves around being vulnerable to, and with, others. It equally asks each player to bare their soft spots. The games of the *Romance Trilogy* model timeless and beloved stories. Each in different ways.

Why deny ourselves these rich experiences, just because in role playing games we happen to author them from the inside? Why should the first person perspective rob us of the dizzying thrill of new love, the hilarious upsets of emotional fumbles, and even the deepening descents into dark places? Those experiences that wake us up, and make us appreciate what we have and perhaps want more.

Thanks for taking this invitation to step through the doorway. Enjoy the journey.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANKS AND CREDITS

Playtesters

BREAKING THE ICE: Vincent Baker, Tom Russell, Jeremiah Genest, Jessica Pease, Kirby Vosburgh, Ben Lehman, Andrew Morris, Krista Evanouskas, Nicolas Crost, Frank Tarcikowski, Andy Kitkowski, Adam Singer, Jeff Schecter, Jason Morningstar and Autumn Winters.

SHOOTING THE MOON: Ben Lehman, Phoebe Mathews, Vincent Baker, Meguey Baker, Tom Russell, Serena Torry, Jason Morningstar, Remi Treuer, Clinton Nixon, Laura Pothier, David Westmoreland and Julia Ellingboe.

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Design Influences:

BREAKING THE ICE: *The Pool* by James V. West, *Sorcerer and Trollbabe* by Ron Edwards, *My Life with Master* by Paul Czege, *Universalis* by Ralph Mazza and Mike Holmes.

SHOOTING THE MOON: *Capes* by Tony Lower-Basch, *Sorcerer and Trollbabe* by Ron Edwards, *Primetime Adventures* by Matt Wilson and Meredith Reitman. *Universalis* by Ralph Mazza and Mike Holmes.

UNDER MY SKIN: *Doubt*, by Fredrick Axelzon and Tobias Wrigstad. *The Upgrade* by Tobias Wrigstad, Thorbiørn Fritzson and Olle Jonsson. *Otherkind* by D. Vincent Baker. *Homecoming* by Elizabeth Shoemaker.

HACKS AND MODS: *Monsterhearts* by Avery Alder. *In Residency* by Lizzie Stark. *Swords without Master* by Epidiah Ravachol. *Slash* by Glenn Given, Meg McGinley and Dan Brian. *There's a Fanfic for That.* by Kat Jones. Original *Dungeons & Dragons*tm by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson. *How to Host a Dungeon* by Tony Dowler. *Metrofinal* by J. Walton. *Questlandia* by Hannah Shaffer and Evan Rowland. *Slayer Cake* by Evan Torner and Kat Jones.

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GAME MATERIALS



META-TECHNIQUES

*M*eta-techniques are the special effects of live action play. Like a sound track in a film, they give emotional cues to deepen the experience. They also provide windows into character motivation, background and relationships. Some resemble literary or cinematic conventions (such as inner monologue and flashbacks) or improvisational acting techniques (such as bird-in-ear or doubling).

Games using them refer to this section. Each entry explains how to use these special rules. The game text indicates if they occur at set times during play or are introduced at the Director or players' choice. Developing a feel for when and how to introduce meta-techniques happens over time with continued use or observation of how to put them into play.

For more discussion and examples of meta-techniques visit:

<https://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Meta-technique>

<http://leavingmundania.com/2014/08/28/defining-meta-techniques>

<https://playwithintent.wordpress.com>

<http://jeepen.org>

ANGELS AND DEVILS – Created specifically for *Under my Skin*, two players take the roles of “angel (or devil) at your shoulder” at a moment when a character must make a momentous choice. Standing physically behind the focus player who is participating in a scene, they speak internal thoughts of the character, making arguments for or against the course of action. Dialogue is heard by the players, felt by the focus character, but not seen or heard by any other characters in the scene. When the choice has been made, the focus player takes the hand of angel or devil player to signal their decision. Care must be taken to avoid overlapping dialogue. Creates suspense and raises emotional stakes. (See page 233.)

BIRD-IN-EAR – The Director or other players speak to a player during a scene, suggesting emotions the character feels, or actions the player takes. Use this to ratchet up tension or to heighten emotions and dramatic irony. Speak loudly enough that all players can hear the direction unless the goal is to provide seamless direction to players. Goal for use with these games is to have all the players hear.



DOUBLING – Two (or more) players portray different aspects of a single character. For example, embody elements of personality (hopes and fears), phases of life (child and adult) or expressing an alternate outlook on the same events (anger and sadness).

EXPRESSIONISTIC PLAY – Use physicality to mimic and heighten internal states as you play. For example: if a character feels isolated, exaggerate the space between characters—place that character physically far away from others. Group can enhance experience of one member. For example, a group with an overwhelmed character talk faster and faster, make wild gestures reflecting the overstimulation of the focus character. Deploy expressive techniques judiciously. Try to match techniques to the action, and attend to player needs. Balance out pragmatic and expressive matters.

FLASHBACKS – Scenes showing events in the past of the main narrative. Look for important or impactful events that are mentioned in play. Flesh out characters to better understand present dynamics based on these past experiences. (p. 225)

FLASH-FORWARDS – Scene showing possible future for character in the game. May be full stand-alone scene or brief interlude during scene in the “present” of the narrative.

FOCUS SCENES – Default style of play for live action games in this volume. A subset of players take part in a scene, small enough numbers that everyone can be aware of what everyone else is doing. Those not in scene observe play. Similar in effect to tabletop play—creates a shared narrative flow that all participants experience.

INNER MONOLOGUE – Out of character dialogue expressing how a character is feeling. Draw contrast with external actions. For example, ask for thoughts of character falling in love. Prompted by Director or player. Call for brief halt to ongoing scene where all become quiet and listen to the focus player. Make specific request such as “Tell us how her listening to you makes you feel.” Resume play when completed. Use during a moment when there is rich, unspoken subtext. Some games call for monologues at set intervals during play.

QUESTIONS – Direct questions stated by players to another player use as a prompt for narration or to suggest actions during live play. Questions are meant to be on the game narrative level: players are aware of them, characters are not, but are impacted by events of play which are played out or related in response. Example



questions: (drama) Where are the kids? Does she do that to annoy you? (adventure) How did the dragon surprise you? What sacrifice did you make during the battle?

SUGGESTIONS – Elements added to a scene being framed or in motion to give players motivation or action to play off of. May increase pressure or add meaningful element tied to themes being explored in the game. For example, a couple's children join the scene, or that a favorite song suddenly plays on the radio. Players choose how to incorporate suggestion. If does not fit naturally into play, they may decide not to use it at all.

RE-PLAY SCENES – Play out events a second time with a new emphasis or different events. Provide additional direction for how the scene will differ. For example, how they wish an apology played out, or how things could have been if they could say what they really mean. Can be used to replay a scene that did not gel the first time. More often used to show alternate version of events or to increase tension, pathos or joy in a scene. May be repeated, use different players to act out events, show scene from another character's perspective or other innovations. When cycle is done, which version was the "true" version of events? May be chosen by group or Director, or left open to interpretation.

RITUAL – Opening and closing scenes in Ere Camlann. Near wordless scenes where emotionally laden events occur. Describe actions to be taken, then play out events in quiet, intent fashion. May accompany with thematically appropriate music or use lighting and setting to intensify effect. For example, laying Arthur to rest with lights low and bagpipes blowing. (See page 313)

SHADOWING OR GHOSTS – A player takes the role of a character not physically in that scene, but who is present nonetheless: either as a memory or a ghost. This character can be seen and heard only by one other character, who must have strong emotional ties to them. For example, the shadow of a past relationship is represented by a character gone from someone's life commenting on their new relationships, or a dead relative visits in spectral form to harangue a guilty loved one. May represent, regret, self-doubt, happy memories, etc.

SIMULTANEOUS SCENES – Run multiple Scenes between pairs of characters at the same time. This is the standard form of play for most larps, but in this book is only used when specifically called for. Useful to introduce groups, allow for unobserved play, and to compress time needed to cover fictional ground speedily.



QUICK REFERENCE

BREAKING THE ICE

*Play overview for the core game. Reference sheet for play.
Use with hacks & mods to refer to standard rules.*

Agree upon Guidelines:

Genre and Rating (page 6)

Discuss Veils and Boundaries (p. xxiv)

Create Characters by:

Agree on a Setting (page 11)

Make a Switch of player traits
(page 12)

Choose characters' favorite colors and
make a Word Web (page 13)

Create Work, Play and Self Traits
(page 14)

Choose Conflicts (page 16)

Begin the First Date (page 21) by:

Having a player take a Turn as Active
Player (page 22)

Other player acts as Guide (page 23)

The Active Player then:

Sets the Scene (page 22),

Plays out Attraction Roll by

Using Menu of Options to...

Activate Attraction Dice (page 30)

Gain 3 Bonus Dice (page 31)

Gain Re-Rolls - one for each die rolled
under 5, (page 33)

Invoke Conflicts (page 34)

Use Compatibilities working with the
Guide (page 35)

Then:

Resolve Rolls (page 36)

Check for Successes - 5 and 6 results
(page 36)

Raise Attraction Level with 3
Successes (page 37)

Create new Compatibility with 4
Successes (page 37)

Gain more of either with many
Successes (p. 37)

For Transitions:

See how to End a Turn (p. 39)

What to do Between Dates (p. 39),
Second and Third Dates (page 24)

End the Game by:

Playing the Final Date (page 41)

Or if you end early (page 42)

Take Stock (page 43)

Answer Three Questions about the
relationship (p. 43)



SHOOTING THE MOON

Play overview for the core game. Reference sheet for play.

Use with hacks & mods to refer to standard rules.

Three Player Game

Order: SP1, SP2, BP

Choose a Setting (p. 95)

Create Characters:

Beloved's 6 Attributes (p. 99)

Synonyms and Antonyms (p. 99)

Suitor Traits (p. 100)

Opportunity, Obstacle & Dream (p. 102)

Person, Place and Thing (p. 103)

Optional Suitor Conflicts (p. 144)

The Prize (pp. 104)

Play the Game by having...

Suitor Turns (p. 111)

Free Play (p. 112)

Hurdles (p. 114)

First Pool (p. 115)

Second Pool (p. 120)

Resolve Turn (p. 122)

Beloved Turns (p. 123)

Choose Level (p. 123)

Hurdles (p. 124)

Responses (p. 128)

Menu of Options (p. 128)

Resolve Turn (p. 130)

Three Turns for each player

Finishing the Game (p. 136)

Roll Dice for Goals (p. 136)

Outcomes (p. 138)

Two Player Game

Order: SP1, SP2

Choose a Setting (p. 95)

Create Characters:

Beloved's Attributes (p. 142)

Synonyms and Antonyms (p. 142)

Suitor Traits (p. 142)

Opportunity and Obstacle (p. 102)

Person, Place and Thing (p. 103)

Suitor Conflicts (p. 144)

The Prize (but no Dream) (p. 104)

Play the Game with:

2-Player Suitor Turns (p. 145)

Free Play (p. 112)

Hurdles (p. 114)

First Pool (p. 115)

Second Pool. (p. 120)

Resolve Turn (p. 122)

Points toward Prize (p. 146)

No Beloved Turns

Three Turns for each player

Finishing the Game: (p. 146)

Roll Dice for the Prize (p. 136)

Outcomes (p. 138 & 146)

General Guidance:

Mechanics (p. 132)

Advice for Hurdles (p. 127)



SHOOTING THE MOON - QUICKSTART RULES

Play overview for the 3-player core game. Reference sheet for play.

Use with hacks & mods to refer to standard rules.

Setting: Choose period or genre.

Default Order: Suitor Player 1 (SP1), Suitor Player 2 (SP2), Beloved Player (BP)

Creating Characters:

Beloved Attributes: choose six descriptors of Beloved. Desirable in setting, start establishing aspects of the the world. .

Synonyms and Antonyms: create pairs of similar and opposite words for Beloved Attributes.

How many? 2 pairs per player in 2-player game; 1 pair per player in 3-player game.

Suitor Traits: assign a synonym or antonym to Suitors. Other word of pair goes to other Suitor.

How many? Assign 2 sets each in 2 player game, 1 each in 3 player game.

Modifying Suitor Traits: write word or phrase that modifies Suitor Attributes.

How many? 2 each in 2 player game, 1 each in 3 player.

Special Order: Each Suitor gets to go first for their own Trait.

Create Suitor Person, Place, Thing:

Special Order: Each Suitor gets to go first for their set.

Opportunity, Obstacle, Dream: for Beloved.

Use Default Order: Chosen by SP1, SP2, then BP.

No Dream in 2 player game.

Optional: Conflicts: for Suitors. Problem in pursuing Beloved. Chosen by Suitor's player. (Required in 2 player game)

The Prize: connection Suitors seek with Beloved. Chosen by Suitor Players, with input by Beloved's Player.

Playing the Game:

Turn Order: SP1, SP2, BP

There is no Beloved in a two-player game.

Suitor Turns:

Roles: Suitor and Beloved are Active Players, other Suitor is Opponent

Limits: cannot eliminate characters, gain Goals, or talk for other main characters (except as rules allow ie Suggestions, or with permission of player), anyone can direct supporting characters or change world during play



SHOOTING THE MOON QUICKSTART CONTINUED

Playing Suitor Turns:

Free Play: spotlight characters interact, flirt, pursue Goals (Dream & Prize)

Hurdle (5 Dice) obstacle created by Opponent, based on events, Traits, Attributes...

First Pool (3 Responses total by Active Players)

Response options: use Own trait (Dice: 2 first time/1 second time), Make suggestion for other Active Character (Dice 2 if Suggestion is used)

Roll: Most sixes rolled wins. If tie, compare down values to break tie.

If Active Suitor Player & BP win: narrate outcome, gain point toward goal, add trait to characters. Turn ends. (In 2 player game: 1 pt first Round, 2 pts second Round, 3 pts third round).

If Opponent wins: they add trait to Active Suitor/Beloved and Active Players can push on for another chance to win with Second Pool

Optional Second Pool:

One Response, choice of:

Use Opponent's Suggestion and accept one complicating Trait(gain 4 dice)
-- Opponent is required to provide a Suggestion.

Active players use create trouble for Active Characters, or use Conflict/Obstacle and add one complicating Trait to an Active Character (gain 3 dice)

Final Outcome: If Beloved and Suitor win, gain point(s) toward goal.

(One point in 3 player game, may be more in 2 player game)

Beloved Turns: 3-player game only

Choose Level (1, 2, or 3)

Describe Hurdle, gain dice: 5 for Level 1, 7 for Level 2, 9 for Level 3

Suitor Player Responses (3 per Suitor)

Use Menu of Options to create Suitor Dice Pools:

2: use Own Trait or play off of Beloved's Attributes or Traits

3: Use Conflict or create Complication (add new trait); Flirt with Beloved; present Opposition for other Suitor with Beloved's approval

4: Suggestion from other SP (they add Trait to your Suitor) - Suggestion is required, but you may decide not to accept it.

5: Sacrifice cross off your Suitor's Trait and replace with worse one (Once per Turn)

Roll: Winner gains points equal to level, and adds a Trait to all three characters.

Break Ties: compare as for Suitor Turns (most 6's wins, then compare down values)

Final Outcome: set scene and roll dice equal to points gained toward goal.

Winner or Winners gain Goals and narrate Outcomes. Epilogues.

Ties are NOT BROKEN For Tie Outcomes, see Endings and Resolutions p. 138



UNDER MY SKIN

*Play overview for the core game. Reference sheet for play.
Use with hacks & mods to refer to standard rules.*

Set-Up:

Give overview of Game (p. 194)
Establish Guidelines for Touch (p. 199)
Explain Cut and Brake (p. xxiii)
Do Introductions (p. 198)
May Play Close to Home (p. 200)
May Talk about Polyamory (p. 202)
Create Characters (p. 203)
Choose Core Issues (p. 204)
Create Areas (p. 205)
Assign Relationships (p. 207)
Choose Connection Levels (p. 211)
(Intimacy, Passion, Commitment)
Choose Lines (p. 215)
For Couples (p. 211 & 215)
For Friends & Best Friends (p. 211 & 214)
Share Information (p. 217)
Create Locations (p. 217)
Create New Flames (p. 218)
Take a Break (p. 220)

To Play the Game:

Player and Director Roles (p. 195 & 221)
Arrange the Space (p. 223)
Have Scenes (p. 224)
And Flashbacks (p. 225)
In Acts: (p. 227)
 Beginnings (p. 227)
 Meeting (p. 230)
 New Flames (p. 231)
 Changes (p. 232)
 Angels and Devils (p. 233)
 Revelations (p. 236)
 Denouement (Optional) (p. 237)

Finishing the Game (p. 239)
Talk and Debrief (p. 239)

Recommended Meta-Techniques:

Inner Monologue (p. 357)
Bird-in-Ear (p. 356)
Replaying Scenes (p. 358)
Doubling (p. 357)
Expressionistic Play (p. 357)
Simultaneous Scenes (p. 358)

Variations:

Everyone Directs (p. 249)
Tabletop (p. 250)
Night & Day (sequel) (p. 258)

TABLETOP VERSION OF UNDER MY SKIN

Insight Points and Drama Points (p. 251)
Desires (p. 255)
Lines (p. 252)
Insight and Drama Rolls (p. 253-254)
Pushing Other Characters (p. 254)
Outcomes of Rolls (p. 254)
Respecting Lines (p. 254)
Gaining Desires (p. 255)
The Scenes (p. 255)
 Beginnings (p. 255)
 New Flames (p. 256)
 Changes (p. 256)
 Revelations (p. 257)
 Denouement (p. 257)
 Opt. Friend Scenes (p. 256)
Ending the Game (p. 239)



LISTS OF GAMES

GAMES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Game	Description	Players	GM?	Type*	Page
Breaking the Ice	Two characters on their first three dates.	2	N	T	1
Double Dating	First three dates, with company.	4–6	N	T	47
Large Group Match-up	For four or more players divide up.	4–20	N	T	48
Speed Date Match-up	Party game intros for pair play.	6–12	N	L, T	48
Shared Characters	Teaming up to play the couple.	4	N	T	50
Odd Number	Playing without a character.	3, 5	N	T	50
Roll as You Go Method	Replaces dice pools.	2	N	T	51
Using Cards Instead of Dice	Alternate resolution for <i>Breaking the Ice</i>	any	N	T	52
Tabletop Freeform <i>Breaking the Ice</i>	Playing without dice or cards.	2	N	T	53
Deepening Your Play	Dealing with serious issues in play.	any	N	T	57
Online Chat-Text <i>Breaking the Ice</i>	Tools and rules for playing online.	2	N	O, T	59
Adventures Long Ago, Far Away	Choosing a fantastic setting for the romance.	any	N	T	61
First Blood	Werewolves in love.	2	N	T	63
Freezing the Pond	Love turns to hate.	2	N	T	68
Let's Be Friends	Childhood friendship.	2	N	T	73
Labyrinth of Love	RPG theme park double dates.	4–6	N	T	76
Slashing the Veil	'Shipping your favorite characters.	2	N	T	80
With the Woods	Escape to nature.	2	N	T	82
Shooting the Moon	Two Suitors court a shared Beloved.	3	N		91
Two Player <i>Shooting the Moon</i>	Without the Beloved.	2	N	T	142
Team Play	Sharing the characters.	3–6	N	T	147
Seattle Story Games Custom Blend	Pick-and-choose rules mods.	2–3	N	T	149
Semi-Live <i>Shooting the Moon</i>	Alternating live action and tabletop play.	3–6	N	L, T	153

*Game Types:

B = Board

F = Freeform



Game	Description	Players	GM?	Type*	Page
Alone Against the World	Pitting Seekers against Nature, for one.	1	N	T	155
Barking at the Moon	Supernatural love triangle.	2–3	N	T	166
The Prize	Conquests beyond love.	2–3	N	T	171
Versus Nature	Pitiless Nature as the Beloved, with new roles for additional players.	3–7	N	T	175
Under my Skin	A circle of friends start falling in love with each other's partners.	4–8	Y	F, L	191
Tabletop <i>Under my Skin</i>	<i>Under my Skin</i> with dice.	4 or 6	Y	T	250
Night and Day	Sequel to <i>Under my Skin</i> .	4–8	Y	L	258
In the Arms of the Pack	Supernatural love and ties of belonging.	5–8	N	L	264
On the Road	Love, sex and creativity in a band.	4–8	N	L, T	270
Taking the Plunge	The wedding party faces temptation.	5–8	Y	L	283
The Unicorn	Can threesomes last?	3	N	L	289
Companion Games					293
Anything Goes	Love, work and identity in a sexually liberated community.	5–10	Y	L	295
Ere Camlann	A version of the Arthurian myth cycle.	4–7	Y	L, T	305
Love is a Battlefield	A love triangle decides the fate of a war. Uses chess pieces as miniatures.	2	N	B, T	317
Sun and Moon	The tale of how a world began.	2	N	T	336

GAMES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Adventures Long Ago, Far Away	Choosing a fantastic setting for the romance. (Btl)	any	N	T	61
Anything Goes	Love, work and identity in a sexually liberated community.	5–10	Y	L	295
Breaking the Ice	Two characters on their first three dates.	2	N	T	1
Double Dating	First three dates, with company. (Btl)	4–6	N	T	47
First Blood	Werewolves in love.	2	N	T	63



Game	Description	Players	GM?	Type*	Page
Freezing the Pond	Love turns to hate.	2	N	T	68
In the Arms of the Pack	Supernatural love and ties of belonging.	5–8	N	L	264
Labyrinth of Love	RPG theme park double dates.	4–6	N	T	76
Large Group Match-up	For four or more players divide up.	4–20	N	T	48
Let's Be Friends	Childhood friendship.	2	N	T	73
Love is a Battlefield	A love triangle decides the fate of a war. Uses chess pieces as miniatures.	2	N	B, T	317
Night and Day	Sequel to <i>Under my Skin</i> .	4–8	Y	L	258
Odd Number	Playing without a character. (Btl)	3, 5	N	T	50
On the Road	Love, sex and creativity in a band.	4–8	N	L, T	270
Online Chat-Text <i>Breaking the Ice</i>	Tools and rules for playing online.	2	N	O, T	59
Roll as You Go Method	Replaces dice pools. (Btl)	2	N	T	51
Seattle Story Games Custom Blend	Pick-and-choose rules mods.	2–3	N	T	149
Semi-Live <i>Shooting the Moon</i>	Alternating live action and tabletop play.	3–6	N	L, T	153
Shared Characters	Teaming up to play the couple. (Btl)	4	N	T	50
Shooting the Moon	Two Suitors court a shared Beloved.	3	N	T	91
Slashing the Veil	'Shipping your favorite characters.	2	N	T	80
Speed Date Match-up	Party game intros for pair play.	6–12	N	L, T	48
Sun and Moon	The tale of how a world began.		N	T	336
Tabletop Freeform <i>Breaking the Ice</i>	Playing without dice or cards.	2	N	T	53
Tabletop <i>Under my Skin</i>	<i>Under my Skin</i> with dice.	4 or 6	Y	T	250
Taking the Plunge	The wedding party faces temptation.	5–8	Y	L	283
Team Play	Sharing the characters (StM).	3–6	N	T	147
The Prize	Conquests beyond love.	2–3	N	T	171
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OTHER GAMES TO EXPLORE

183 by Sara Williamson and James Stuart.

Two clairvoyants know they will have a relationship for 183 days. Tomorrow is their first date.

<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/144510/183-Days>

1001 NIGHTS by Meguey Baker. *Play members of the Sultan's Court, whiling away the sultry nights by telling pointed stories to advance your own ambitions.*

<http://nightskygames.com/welcome/game/1001Nights>

14 DAYS by Hannah Shaffer and Evan Rowland. *A game about balancing the responsibilities of everyday life when you don't know what tomorrow will bring.*

<http://makebigthings.com/14-days-a-game-about-life-with-migraines/>

THE BEEKEEPER by Mel Leverich. *Letters from the beekeeper and their beloved.*

<http://pneumaprint.press/index.php/Detail/objects/G2>

BELOVED by Ben Lehman. *A solo adventure about rescuing your beloved, or is it?*

<http://www.tao-games.com/beloved/>

THE DANCE AND THE DAWN by Dev Purkayastha. *A fable of three Ladies who came upon the Ice Queen's court and danced with four Lords, all in the pursuit of the One True Love.*

<http://ndpdesign.com/the-dance-and-the-dawn/>

DOUBT by Fredrik Axelzon and Tobias Wrigstad. *Doubt is two stories about each other. A life and a play. About daring to love and daring to move on.*

<http://jeepen.org/games/doubt/>

DREAM ASKEW by Avery Alder. *A game that queers the post-apocalyptic genre.*

<http://buriedwithoutceremony.com/dream-askew/>

#FEMINISM: A NANO-GAME ANTHOLOGY edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark and Anna Westerling. <https://feministnanogames.wordpress.com/>

GOLDEN SKY STORIES by Ryo Kamiya, translated by Ewen Cluney. *A heartwarming, non-violent game about animals with magical power helping others and becoming friends.*

<http://starlinepublishing.com/our-games/golden-sky-stories/>

GROUP DATE by Sara Williamson. *A game about disparate (and, at times, discordant) personalities looking for love*

<http://www.goldencobra.org/pdf/Group%20Date%20-%20Anthology%20Edition.pdf>

GROWING UP by Anna Westerling. *A freeform larp of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility.*

<http://jeepen.org/games/growingup/>

GXB (GIRL x BOY) and BXB (BOY x BOY) by Jake Richmond and Heather Aplington.

Teens at Atarashi high school, eager to fall in love for the first time.

<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/108158/G-x-B-Girl-x-Boy>

<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/108159/B-x-B-Boy-x-Boy>



<p>HOT GUYS MAKING OUT by Ben Lehman. <i>A game for anyone who loves intense, passionate, dramatic stories about beautiful men kissing each other.</i> http://www.tao-games.com/hot-guys-making-out/</p>
<p>IN RESIDENCY by Lizzie Stark. <i>A game about the relationship between trauma and art, and about the weird atmosphere of artists' colonies.</i> http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/133724/In-Residency</p>
<p>I SAY A LITTLE PRAYER by Tor Kjetil Edland. <i>Follow the lives of 5 young gay men during the early years of the US AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.</i> https://scenariofestival.se/archive/scenarios-2014/i-say-a-little-prayer/</p>
<p>KAGEMATSU by Renee Knipe and Danielle Lewon. <i>A wayward ronin comes to a village in peril, young women conspire to win his affections and steer him to defend their village.</i> https://sites.google.com/site/creamaliengames/Home/kagematsu-the-rpg</p>
<p>LES PETITES CHOSSES OUBLIÉES by Sylvie Guillaume and Christoph Boeckle. <i>Confronted with the opportunity to erase hard memories and start a new life, will you seize it?</i> http://www.limpromptu.net/?page_id=556&lang=en</p>
<p>MONSTERHEARTS by Avery Alder. <i>Sexy monsters, teenage angst, personal horror, and secret love triangles.</i> http://buriedwithoutceremony.com/monsterhearts/</p>
<p>MY GIRL'S SPARROW by Troels Ken Pedersen. <i>A quiet science fiction drama about sex, love and alienation.</i> http://alexandria.dk/english#mygirlssparrow.</p>
<p>THE OTHER PLACE by Banana Chan. <i>Two spirits trapped in a mirror seek to escape.</i> http://www.goldencobra.org/pdf/2015/theotherplace_BananaChan.pdf</p>
<p>PASSERINE by Jackson Tegu. <i>A collection of touching and ephemeral story games.</i> http://www.photographsoflightning.com/passerine/</p>
<p>QUEER GAYMES edited by Jacqueline Bryk and K.N. Granger. <i>A collection of games by queer people about queer experiences.</i> https://www.amazon.com/queer-gaymes-collection-people-experiences/dp/1534770496</p>
<p>SCREWING THE CREW by Elin Nilsen and Trine Lise Lindahl. <i>Exploring questions about monogamy, open relationships and sexual relations</i> https://chambergames.wordpress.com/2010/12/18/screwing-the-crew/</p>
<p>SLASH by Glenn Given, Meg McGinley and Dan Brian. <i>Compete to create the best romantic fan fiction pairing.</i> http://www.gamesbyplaydate.com/slash/</p>
<p>SUMMER LOVIN' by Trine Lise Lindahl, Elin Nielsen and Anna Westerling. <i>Stories about who did what and with who during a big, summer music festival.</i> http://jeepen.org/games/summerlovin/</p>
<p>THERE'S A FANFIC FOR THAT.... by Kat Jones. <i>A game about creating live action "fan fiction" stories.</i> http://www.goldencobra.org/pdf/Fan%20Fic.pdf</p>

