

My Group of Role-Players

A role playing game about how to survive dysfunctional
role-playing.

by Arturo González-Escribano

”Inside the game you are not friends, you are not romantically significant, you are not socializing; you are just playing your role. Aren’t you? Come and watch those little poor RPG gamers trying to create fun with their egos working against them. You have probably experienced it from inside. Now, show the hidden agendas and see the social troubles working up and front.”

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Inspiring artwork by Tony Dowler.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a game that explores in a funny and enjoyable way the disfunctional behaviors that may be produced in a group of role-players which approach a social activity with a broken social attitude.

Three to six players will create characters representing a group of role-players with very different social and creative agendas. The characters will try to play and enjoy a role-playing game together. However, incompatible agendas will produce a mix of satisfaction and frustration. When the tension increases, the little egos at work may become an explosive cocktail.

The game contains rules to create the group and their agendas, to simulate how their play affects them, and especially rules to play and enjoy the social uncontrolled situation and how it breaks.

Play outlook

Each player will be responsible to create and play the role of one character or protagonist. The character will be a role-playing "Gamer". This gamer will be defined by her agendas: likes, dislikes and priorities when playing a role-game.

The gamer-characters will meet to create fictional characters of an imaginary role-playing game. From now on, that in-game characters will be called "Pawns" to distinguish them from the "Gamer" characters. The gamers will try to play sev-

[Image: Table]

Figure 1.1: How do you survive incompatible agendas at work?

eral sessions, to create an in-game campaign, enjoying it and getting satisfaction. However, they will also get frustration when things are not going as they like.

This will last until the gamers decide to end the campaign or the social situation breaks completely. It may happen in only one actual-play session of the real players, or along more than one.

What do you need to play?

Three to six players. A couple of polyhedral dice: 1d20, 1d8

A note on terminology

Some role-playing theory terminology is intentionally used in the text with very fuzzy or inappropriate meanings. Don't be scared.

Chapter 2

Agendas: What the gamers want to bring to play?

Role-players enjoy different things when they play. They have priorities for the in-game content which they want to produce. They are called Agendas in this game. We will present here different types of agendas, focusing on examples that may provide troubles and disfunctional play in the group of role-players. Use the examples as inspiration to create your own disfunctional ones. We consider two types of agendas with different game impact:

Creative-Agendas: What kind of content does the Gamer-Character expect in the game, that is not related to real social interaction with other gamers?

Social-Agendas: What kind of interaction with other Gamers is expecting the Gamer-Character to be reflected in the in-game play, or from the in-game play?

2.1 Creative Agendas

2.1.1 Story-Now Creative agendas

These agendas are related to the gamer interest into establish, develop, or resolve an ideological challenge in play. Typically related to the pawn's or gamer's passions or believes. They may represent an interest of the gamer on exploring a behavior that she considers an ideal, or she thinks she lacks. It may also be a reflection of the gamer about her own traumatic life experiences. Examples:

- Law should be respected at any cost: The gamer wants to explore what happens when the pawn's priority is law above all. Above friends, love or even any other human feeling.
- Someone will love me: The gamer feels trouble to get into romantic relationships. She will look for platonic or idealized love expressions and romantic commitment in the in-game. To avoid the risk of a real social interaction she will try to choose non-gamer-pawns inside the game to show it.
- I miss my dog a lot: The beloved pet of the gamer died. She wants to bring back the feeling of enjoying its company through in-game situations. Perhaps creating content where another pet (not necessarily the same kind) is involved, or having a loyal side-friend that always follow and help her.

2.1.2 Step-on-up Creative-Agendas

The gamer looks for social assessment due to her personal strategy and guts when facing risk. She looks for challenging situations to show her abilities. Good examples for this game may be related to trying to assess in-game a competence in a field where the gamer herself has none. Examples:

- I'm the best lover: Show that your pawn is the best lover of the in-game world, getting into risky seductions, choosing forbidden targets for your love.
- I'm a god of war: You will become the best fighter ever. Show them all.

2.1.3 Right-to-Dream Creative-Agendas

The gamer is committed to the imagined events of play, their in-game causes and the pre-established thematic elements. You may get a nice agenda when the in-game coherence details, and how to use the in-game system to explore them, becomes an obsession. Examples:

- Accounting is key: The gamer thinks that accounting little in-game details is key to know what is possible to do. How to know if your pawn can carry that sack if you don't know the exact number of Kg. of equipment she is already carrying? If I didn't bought two pieces of 10 meters of rope in the

last town I cannot get-down into this dark pit. If our horses travel only 40 Km. per day we will not arrive to the battlefield on time. Etc.

- Only very detailed combat tactics are realistic enough: If you don't pay attention to the details the fighting situations are not believable. Exact positions of pawns, hit locations, are you at higher ground? All these things should appear in play.

2.1.4 Content Creative-Agendas

A gamer may have a special interest on showing during play a very specific kind of content. The unspoken assumption that other gamers like or enjoy such demonstrations may bring trouble when it comes to play. Each other player should decide before starting to play if her gamer-character will like, do not care, or dislike that specific content. If nobody is going to dislike it, the agenda should be discarded.

- Cross-genre expectations: The gamer has a preference about a genre different to the one of the game they are playing. She incorrectly assumes that all people in the group surely like it, and that it is fair to introduce relevant in-game elements which are clearly out of the scope of the in-game genre, but thematically related to her preferred one.
- Sexual content: The gamer thinks it is appropriate and interesting to introduce explicit sexual content in the in-game play. But she has not asked anyone how they would feel about it.

Be careful about how you describe your gamer-character introducing this kind of content in the in-game. Get the whole players-group approval before describing fictional details that real-players may dislike.

2.2 Social Agendas

2.2.1 Shared Social-Agendas

Two gamers may have a reciprocal agenda related to their social expectations about the other. The two players should collaborate and take the same one by mutual decision. Trust and loyalty are typically involved in these relationships. These features may be easily exploited by one part to hurt the other. If the other

tries to maintain a relationship where this happens systematically it derives in an abusive one. Examples:

- **Girlfriend/Boyfriend:** The gamers are (or they think they are) in love. They expect to have romantic in-game situations together, or situations where they show their faithfulness and commitment to the other.
- **I'm not getting involved with him/her, but it is so nice she is trying:** One part wants to get involved with the other, the second one knows it. The second part does not want to get involved, but enjoys the approaches. The first part will look for romantic situations in-game with the other gamer. The second generally rejects the approaches, but there is a kind of condescending acceptance and an unspoken promise of future involvement if the first part shows that she is worth of it. For the second part it is very easy to abuse the situation. In-game experiences may include deprotagonizing or even ridicule the first part.

2.2.2 Opposite Social-Agendas

For two gamers by agreement of the players. Both participants have a related social agenda where the accomplishment of one part implies hurting the feelings of the other part. Examples:

- **Old lovers:** The gamers were previous lovers. They do not recognize it in public, but they are still hurt by the presence of the other. They will try to keep apart in-game, to look for situations where the other is hurt, or much worse, to bring old personal issues to the table through in-game play.
- **I was forced to bring my little brother/sister:** The big one is forced (and ashamed) to bring the little one to play. She will look for situations where the little one is forbidden to do things, is hurt or deprotagonized. The little one will look for situations where both pawns are protagonist or act together to do something. The big one is ashamed when this happens.

2.2.3 Incomplete Social-Agendas

These agendas are chosen by only one gamer. However, they are related to another gamer, and may be acknowledge by her. The gamer with the agenda has an interest (good or bad) on a given second gamer. The second one does not know, or does

not really care about it. These social agendas typically get complete when they come to actual-play. Examples:

- I like her/him so much, but she/he does not know yet: The gamer want to get romantically involved with another. The other does not know yet. The gamer will try to produce romantic situations between the related pawns in the in-game to reflect on the expected situation and/or show her feelings in a (supposed) safe environment.

When this agenda comes to play, and the players think it has become obvious enough, it may derive in the creation of a shared or opposite agenda (if the proposed relationship is accepted or rejected).

- You pissed me off, I will kill your pawn: The gamer feels the other one was unfair to him in real gamer-life or in-game. She will look for revenge hurting the other's pawn in-game.

When these punishment-based agendas are executed the players decide if the situation settles down and the agenda disappears, if it changes to an opposite one, if it moves to the other gamer to return the punishment, or whatever solution they think is appropriate.

Chapter 3

Preparation

3.1 Creating gamer-characters

Each player creates one Gamer-Character. They are defined by their agendas. To create a proper disfunctional situation it is needed that the players create and discuss the Gamer-Characters together.

Choose a name for the gamer. Write down 4 agendas for your gamer-character. At least one creative and one social agenda should be included.

[Image: Cocktail]

Figure 3.1: Agendas: A recipe for an explosive cocktail

This part of game preparation is key. Recipe for a good explosive cocktail: Two spoons of social-agendas. Look for other players commitment by involving them in the creation of your shared, opposite, or incomplete agendas. One measure of mixed creative-agendas such that other players laugh and/or cheer-up when you describe them. Look for conflict looking to other players creative-agendas to create your own. Let the game system shake it hardly. Serve cold with 1d8 (see below) and enjoy the fun.

Note about creative-agendas: A gamer may have creative agendas of different classes, representing different interests that will be shown at different moments. Be sure that all classes are fully represented in the group, as different classes are non-compatible in-play.

3.2 The in-game

Once created we assume the gamer-characters meet together to decide which game are they going to play, and to create their in-game characters or "Pawns".

Players should collectively agree on a fictional/imaginary RPG that the gamers are going to play. It is enough to choose a sounding name and a genre or setting. The actual game-system will be abstracted, and even specific rules may appear during play. After choosing the details, you may narrate how excited are the gamers about playing this game.

Example: We may play "King's Throne", a pulp-fantasy game in a medieval-like setting. Nice! We like the classic genre a lot. Or "Secret agents", an spy game in the modern era. I saw the cover and I couldn't avoid buying it. Cool! The pitch says you can play 007 movies. Let us try it. Etc.

3.3 The Game Master

This imagined game will have a Game-Master (GM). The gamer-characters should choose who of them will be the GM. They may even decide that the GM will be rotating on each session.

The text of the in-game clearly say which are the responsibilities of GM and other players: "The GM will create a story, and the other players will lead the actions of the protagonists of that story". You may narrate how the gamers commit to their assigned tasks, and no gamer will question this piece of the game text (at least not yet).

3.4 Creating pawns

Each non-GM gamer creates a pawn for the in-game. The pawns will be the protagonist of the in-game stories.

3.4.1 Abilities

The pawns have a numerical value associated to each of the following eight abilities or competences. As a player you assign one value to each ability. Assign one 14, two 12, two 10, two 8, one 6 (the higher the better).

- Personal combat

- Warfare
- Stealth
- Athletics
- Survival and tracking
- Subterfuge
- Etiquette
- Lore/Technology (Use the most appropriate term for your chosen genre/setting)

Note to the reader: This list is mainly lame. There are some clear holes and overlappings. But I would suggest you to keep it as it is. The list is created by many years of experience in RPGs, and it is specifically thought to easily support all possible creative agendas (or none of them). In other words, don't try to repair the crappy thing. It may help to bring up some confuse situations and arguing when the gamers are playing.

3.4.2 Magic

If you are playing in a setting with magic or extraordinary powers, choose one spell type or magical power for each point of Lore above 11 (one power for a score of 12, three for a score of 14). The exact effect of the powers may be discovered during play.

3.4.3 Other details

Choose and describe the two preferred pieces of equipment or possessions of the pawn. Describe how it dresses normally. Give a name to the pawn. Write everything down in a piece of paper.

Chapter 4

Sessions

The gamers will meet together to play sessions. Each session will represent one evening of play. During the play many things will happen, and the gamers will enjoy them or not. At the end of each session they will come back home and they will have time to think about how the game is going before the next session.

4.1 GM preparation

For each session, the player of the GM-gamer should prepare four predefined key events/scenes that will determine the story major points. The last one will be the climax of the story for this session. The player of the GM should write 4 sentences, one for each key-scene. The sentence will be written in terms of the results or events that the pawns will achieve or not during the scene.

Examples: "They will discover that Henry is the vampire". "They will confront Clara's nemesis but he will escape one more time". "They will find the great ogre and they will kill him".

Ideally, the 4 sentences will form a kind of story skeleton, with a starting point, a couple of plot twists, and an ending climax. However, sometimes the GM character will have other life priorities than preparing the session and she may arrive with a quite unconnected thing. If you are the player of the GM, don't get stressed. Anything will work.

4.2 Gamer's scores

Each gamer-character has three scores.

Satisfaction: Measures the satisfaction obtained so far in the session.

Frustration: Measures the frustration obtained so far in the session.

Excitement: Measures the gamer excitement and commitment to accomplish her agenda on each scene.

The three scores start the first session at 0. The excitement score is reset to 0 at the start of each scene (with an exception described in section 5.7.3).

4.3 Number of scenes

v2 TO REVISE: The number of scenes and their use should be revised by playtesting to achieve a proper length of play and to fix the appropriate maximum for tension.

The gamers will play up to 8 scenes. The 4 predefined by the GM, 3 interludes between them, and 1 epilogue scene at the end which is not compulsory, but may be required by any gamer (see the section "Preparing the next session").

All the pawns of the gamers will play on key scenes and epilogue. However, interlude scenes may be used by the GM or players to play with some pawns aside.

4.4 Session end

After playing the epilogue, the gamers will finish the session and they will part company until the next one. See section "In-between sessions". Remember that more than one gamer-session may be played in the same players-session if you have time.

Chapter 5

Scenes

5.1 Scene start, narration and task resolution

To start each scene, the player of the GM-character narrates how she frames it, explaining where the pawns are and what is going on. The gamers start each new scene with 0 excitement points (see exception below).

The players narrate what the gamers narrate about their pawns actions. This can be done easily, thinking that the pawn is your direct character in the in-game. But you should keep the distance. Feel free to narrate what the gamer feels or does in the gamers-world.

The free play continues until the GM-gamer notices the first hint of conflict. Then, she starts to organize turns. Asking all the other gamers about their intended actions, and resolving all their actions before proceeding to the next turn.

5.2 Task resolution and excitement points

During conflicts, when gamers declare the actions of their pawns, they may ask for tasks to be done. But the statement should not include goals. Indeed, if the gamer adds a goal, it is not really a problem, just disregard it when play continues.

Example: A gamer may say: "I hit him with my sword in the face", but he cannot add "to mark him", or "to knock out him", or "to unbalance him and quickly cross the door".

Gamers discuss which is the most appropriate pawn's ability for the task. GM has the final word. The GM organizes the order in which gamers resolve their tasks. When it is her turn, the player rolls 1d20. If she gets less or equal than the

ability score, the pawn task succeeds, and the gamer gets 1 excitement point. If the result is higher, the task fails and the gamer gets nothing.

TASK-RESOLUTION: 1d20

Success: Less-equal than ability score. Gamer gets 1 excitement point.

Failure: More than ability score. No effect.

5.3 Excitement and shared-social agendas

When two gamers have both set for this scene a common shared-social agenda (see section 5.7.1), they are supporting each other, building on the content added by the other. When one of them earns 1 excitement point, the other gamer also earns 1 point.

5.4 The excitement points of the GM

Once during each turn of resolution, the GM will also ask one pawn to solve a task. For this roll, the gamer will not get any excitement if it is a success. But the GM will get 1 point of excitement if she fails.

A excerpt from the in-game text of the gamers says: "The GM will be rewarded by occasionally choosing difficult tasks for the pawns. Tasks which test their worst abilities. It will add to the reality feeling and to the immersion, and it will create an urge on the gamers to improve their pawn's worst abilities". Personally, I have no words for this.

5.5 Hurting or delaying other's pawn

A gamer may declare an action in opposition to the actions of other pawn, or aimed directly to hurt her. This inter-pawn conflicts are resolved with a task-roll for each pawn. If both results are a failure, they lose their turn. If both are successes, roll again to break the tie. When only one is a success, that action prevails and the other is a failure.

Before the climax of a scene, the effects of a pawn hurting another one, in any sense, is just making the loser lose 1 excitement point. It delays the climax and the loser probabilities to successfully resolve her agenda.

During the climax of a scene, the effects of a pawn trying to hurt another one may be whatever is declared as a goal. Nevertheless, the pawn's feelings cannot be part of any goal. While not killed, their free-will is never at the stake.

If a gamer's pawn is killed by the GM, she gets 1 Frustration point. If the pawn is killed by another gamer's pawn she gets 2 Frustration points. She cannot introduce in-game content during the rest of the session. Nevertheless, if all the other gamers agree, she may create a new pawn and enter play again in the next scene. In any case she could come back to play in the next session.

v2, NEW: A gamer without a pawn may decide to leave. But if she prefers she may stay. She is still able to participate in the social situation, delaying the climax and interfering in other's agendas resolution. However, as she may not set and resolve her own agendas, she will not be able to get satisfaction points. She will calmly quit the session when she gets fed-up. See section 8.

5.6 Narrating outcomes, the sacred-dice rule

The GM narrates the outcome of the task. As it is said in the in-game text: "When narrating the outcome the GM must always abide the result of the dice. The task should always be successful or a failure according to the dice result. This will improve the trust of your players on your fairness".

[Image: Saint20]

Figure 5.1: The Sacred-Dice rule

However, the GM narration may introduce new elements or events that may be opposite to the perceived goals of the gamer.

Example: The gamer looks interested on his pawn starting a romantic relationship with a lady. He says that the pawn wants to approach her and kiss her passionately. Roll succeed. GM narrates that he kisses the lady passionately. For a moment she is so surprised that she accepts, but then she reacts abruptly, pushing back the pawn and closing the door on his face.

The players may narrate the gamers feelings or reactions produced by the in-game resolution events.

5.7 Scene excitement, climax, and ending

5.7.1 Setting agendas

When a gamer earns the first excitement point in a scene, the player should set which one is the most important agenda for the gamer in this scene. Choose among the ones your gamer have. It is called the Active-Agenda for that gamer. When the gamer gets the sixth excitement point, the player may set a secondary agenda.

During the rest of the scene, the gamer should be trying to introduce little bits and details on the in-game related to the agenda/s. When earning excitement the player may narrate how the gamer is advancing to fulfill her activated agenda/s.

v2 NEW: Instead of earning an excitement point the player may choose to change her agenda and set a different one.

v2 NEW (Alternative): At any time, except during the climax, a gamer may spend one point of excitement to change her agenda.

5.7.2 Group excitement, climax and goals resolution

When the sum of all gamers excitement arrives at 3 times the number of players, the scene proceeds to its climax. Solve the rest of the tasks declared for this turn normally. When the turn ends, no more excitement points will be earned by task-resolution.

Gamers play now one turn more, the climax turn. They may now declare intentions which include not only tasks, but also pawn's goals. Nevertheless, players use the same task-resolution roll-system described above.

Successful goal-rolls does not report excitement, but 1 pawn-advancement token (see subsection "Pawn's improvement"). The GM should abide in the narration to the success or failure as indicated by the dice. Remind that this time task and goal should be aboded. The non-GM gamer may help adding details.

No matter if the goal-roll is a success or a failure, the player proceed to resolve the agenda with an agenda-roll (see next section). Gamers without an activated agenda (no excitement points) when the climax turns start gets 1 Frustration point. Apply this process to each gamer, including the GM until everyone resolve her agenda/s.

v2 NEW: Proposal, to study: Solve in decreasing excitement order. Players with two agendas are counted as having 5 points less for the second one.

5.7.3 Ending the scene

After all agendas are resolved, the GM may not add more new content or situation for the pawns to play. Remind to introduce enough elements during the climax to allow a natural closing of the scene. If it is a key scene, the GM shows the pre-written plot sentence. If it was not properly accomplished by the pawns, the GM gets 1 Frustration point.

Gamers that successfully resolves their agendas (see below) get one point of excitement for the starting of the next scene.

5.8 Agendas resolution

5.8.1 Agenda roll

When a goal-roll is done, no matter the success or failure in the in-game, the gamer may feel that her agenda has been accomplished or not. This is mainly determined by her excitement points.

AGENDA-RESOLUTION: 1d20		
1st gamer agenda:	Excitement	Success with less-equal
	1	6
	2	8
	3	10
	4	14
	5+	18
2nd gamer agenda:	Excitement	Success with less-equal
	6	12
	7	14
	8+	18
Success: Gamer gets one Satisfaction point		
Failure: Gamer gets one Frustration point		

The player narrates how the agenda is accomplished or not in terms of the impact of in-game events on the gamer. All players may add to the narration details about their own gamers reactions, especially if they are affected by the following rules.

5.8.2 Agendas impact on other gamers

Resolving some agendas may have impact on other gamers.

- Opposite-agendas: Each time one gamer resolves the agenda successfully the other gamer receives 1 Frustration point.
- Incomplete-agendas: Only those based on punishment; when they are resolved successfully the other gamer receives 1 Frustration point.
- Content-agendas: When they are resolved successfully, all the gamers that specified during gamer-creation their dislike for that content, they get 1 Frustration point.
- Non-compatible Creative-agendas: When they are resolved successfully, all the gamers which have set for this scene a creative-agenda of a non-compatible class get 1 Frustration point. The non-compatible classes are: Story-now, Step-on-up, and Right-to-dream.

5.8.3 v2 NEW: Gamer's positioning for Agendas

This section is new in v2 and should be reconsider. It includes mainly ideas not yet fully developed. The maximum tension or the excitement probabilities are related to this new rule.

Gamers get 1 Commitment point at the start of each scene. This points are cumulative until they are spent. When any agenda is going to be solved, any player (not only the one who is going to solve), may declare they use commitment points. For each point spent the agenda-roll is modified adding or subtracting the equivalent of 1 excitement point.

Thus, gamers may interfere in the solving of other's agendas that may affect them.

Associated disruptive techniques. Idea: Use of specific (character creation) techniques to *charge* the commitment points?

Also use 1 commitment point to interfere and delay the climax?

Gamers may have a fixed number of Commitment points at the start of the session?

Chapter 6

Satisfaction/Frustration at play

6.1 Gamer's and group tension

The gamer internal Tension is calculated as her Frustration minus Satisfaction. It may be negative. The group Tension is the sum of all Frustration points of gamers. At the start of the session, the maximum internal tension a gamer may bear is 4. The limit decreases by 1 each time the Group Frustration increases on as many points as the number of players.

TENSION:

Gamer tension = Frustration - Satisfaction

Group tension = Sum Frustration of all gamers

Max. Gamer Tension bearable =

$4 - \text{GroupTension}/\text{Num.players}$ (rounded down)

As soon as a gamer gets more internal tension than the maximum limit, she cannot bear it any more and quits the session. All other gamers immediately receive 1 Frustration point. Repeat the process if needed. See below section "When a gamer quits".

6.2 Techniques to move frustration to other gamers

At any time of the play a gamer may try to get some relief moving her Frustration to other gamers. When the quitting moment arrives, this techniques are the last resource to reduce the internal tension and avoid to break and quit.

Anything that explicitly punish others in public is enough to start the process. Make a public statement about other gamer bad-play strategy, bad in-game behavior or even bad social behavior in the group. Any kind of complaint is allowed. No real foundation is needed, but it helps if you may relate it to actual play events. To know if the movement is successful, roll 1d8:

MOVING-FRUSTRATION ROLL: 1d8
 Success: 5 or more, move 1 point of Frustration to the other gamer
 Failure: 4 or less, you cannot try again with the same gamer

However, some other things may influence this roll. All bonuses of the Starter gamer are added to the roll. All bonuses of the Target gamer are subtracted.

- Agendas: Some agendas may provide a bonus for one of the gamers involved.
 - Shared-social: If the gamers have a shared agenda, even if it is not active, the starter gets 1 bonus.
 - Content-agenda: If the target/starter has activated a content agenda disliked by the other gamer, in this or in previous scenes, the disliker may complaint about it to get 1 bonus.
 - Incomplete-agendas: If a gamer reveal in public a hidden incomplete agenda which may embarrass the other gamer, she gets 1 bonus.

- At any moment, while they are complaining and discussing the issue a gamer may escalate the situation to get bonuses. Only one gamer will get escalation bonuses. It will be the first one to escalate to the higher level finally achieved.

Accusations and complaints	0 bonus
Direct or condescendent insult to the other gamer	1 bonus
Menaces	2 bonus
Physical violence (see below)	3 bonus

If you arrive at the physical violence level, all gamers except the starter will get 1 extra Frustration point.

- Other gamers support. A gamer gets a bonus of 1 point for each other gamer supporting her complaints, insults, menaces, or violence.

Any gamer may start the process again and again. But with the same target it may only be initiated at one more level of escalation each time. Nevertheless, if the starter fails the roll she cannot try again with the same target for the rest of the scene. Unless she receives another Frustration point.

If escalation goes to violence, when the question is settled down, and if the gamers still decide to try to continue, no gamer may start to move frustration points until someone receives one more point due to an agenda resolution. The restriction ends anyway when another scene starts.

Social-agendas may be changed or updated immediately after one of the parts tries to move frustration points to the other part. Typically to reflect the lowering on trust, loyalty or affection. They may change its content and/or its class. For example, a shared-agenda may become opposite to reflect the target gamer not trusting the other anymore.

6.3 Techniques to reduce group tension

Any gamer may ask at any time for a Break (to get some food, to watch important news on T.V., to go out for smoking, whatever). It may be done in the middle of a scene or in-between scenes. When the 4th key-scene ends, no Break can be requested anymore. Epilogue can not be interrupted by a Break. There could be only one Break during a full session.

Other gamers may complain or accept the Break proposal. If needed they may vote, with the GM having the power to break ties.

If the Break succeeds, the gamers stop playing for a while. Players may narrate the gamers talking about how the game is going, do other activities, relax, etc. When gamers come-back to play, they have lost all their excitement points, including those which may come from the previous scene. Subtract the number of players from the Group Frustration accumulated so far. If the Break does not succeed, the gamer may not ask for it again for the rest of the scene (or the next one if asked between scenes).

6.4 Violating a sacred rule

The gamers has bought a magazine published by the same company than the game they play. In an article about GM-ing techniques they have read: "The GM may, and should, cheat the dice rolls if the obtained result is going in detriment of the

story”. It is clear. The GM may cheat any task or goal-resolution roll. However, agenda-rolls cannot be cheated by a gamer, even the GM, as they are not done by gamers, but by players.

Just after a task or goal roll, the player of the GM may announce that she is cheating the roll, announcing also the final result she prefers.

[Image: Dilemma]

Figure 6.1: Internal struggle, the GM pressured to decide if he cheats this roll

No matter what the magazine says, gamers may not like it too much if they notice her cheating. It does not matter if it was done for the sake of the story. When GM cheats, all players make an agenda-roll with the accumulated excitement so far. Those who succeed does not notice it and go on happily. The ones that fail, notice the cheating. Gamers noticing cheating lose 1 excitement point (if they have it). Moreover, if it is a goal roll, and the gamer who stated the goal notices the cheating, she gets one Frustration point.

[Image: Scrutiny]

Figure 6.2: Discovering your GM cheating may bring Frustration

However, any gamer noticing may decide to complain openly about the GM cheating. In that case all noticing gamers may complain and skip the effects of the cheating on them. But the GM and all the non-noticing gamers should do an agenda-roll. Those who fail get 1 Frustration point.

Chapter 7

Preparing the next session

7.1 Adjusting agendas

If the gamers arrive safely at the end of the session they part. The players may narrate how their gamer-characters feel about the session, if someone meet others and talk about it, if they discuss something on the telephone, if they try to restart a broken shared-agenda, etc. The players may adjust, modify and change the gamer agendas to show their reflections about what happens during play. It is better not to change the agendas arbitrarily, but as reaction to play events.

7.2 Pawn's improvement

Gamers also get some improvement for their pawns. For each pawn-advancement-token obtained and kept until the end of the session, the gamer may improve one ability of the pawn by one point (maximum of any ability is 16). If Lore ability is increased, new powers/spells may be chosen.

The important part of pawn-advancement-tokens is that they are physical tokens in the in-game world. Thus, they may be bought, sold, lost, broken or stolen. Part of a task or goal declared by any gamer (including the GM) may implicate such result.

The main purpose of the epilogue scene is for gamers to have the opportunity to hurt other's pawn or steal their advancement tokens when everything should end happily.

7.3 Special objects

Once per session, the GM may introduce a Special-Object. It may be anything that provides +1 point to the owner abilities when facing a specific type of tasks. They may be used for the rest of the pawn's existence as far as she keeps it. These special objects may be also stolen/broken etc.

Examples: Ultra-fast laser gun (for combat), a king's crown (to rule people), a fine horse (to travel fast), etc.

7.4 Initial Satisfaction/Frustration

Gamers start the next session with 0 points of Satisfaction and Frustration, with the following exceptions:

- Gamers with positive tension at the end of a session start the next one with 1 Frustration point.
- Gamers with negative tension at the end of a session start the next one with 1 Satisfaction point.

v2 NEW: These points are not counted for the group tension. Only points earned during the session are adding to the group tension.

Chapter 8

When a gamer quits

8.1 Immediate effects

If a gamer tension grows higher than the limit and she quits, all other gamers gain 1 Frustration point. It may produce a chain effect of gamers quitting. The remaining gamers may decide to continue playing, but the session may be completely broken.

v2: NEW: The only exception is a gamer whose pawn has been killed. If the other players did not let her introduce immediately another pawn, she has a good reason to quit the session at any time without any game impact.

8.2 After session

After the session ends, the players narrate how gamers discuss the issue. All together or in smaller groups. This does not necessarily happen in the play venue. They should decide if they are going to get together again to play, and if someone is quitting definitively anyway. Anyone may decide not to play with the group anymore, or to set any kind of conditions to continue (although the gamers may not really need to abide them).

If the group is going to continue:

- Players whose gamers decide to finally quit, should create another gamer.
- Players whose gamers stay, may adjust and change their social-agendas.
- The group may reconsider what game do they play.

- The group may reconsider who is the GM.
- The group may reconsider if they continue the last session or if they start a fresh adventure.

If they decide to continue the session where it broke, the GM writes key-events/scenes to start a new session, but trying to continue the story where the last one was interrupted.

All gamers start the next session with all scores at 0.

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During the GameChef'08 design stage, Group Taurus has been a nice cooking environment. I have learned a lot from my team-members approach to their designs.

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Appendix A

Agendas effects

A.1 Gaining excitement during a scene

Social Shared	When the shared agenda is set by both players for this scene, one gamer get +1 excitement each time then other gets +1 excitement.
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A.2 Resolving agendas

Social Opposite	Agenda solved successfully also means +1 Frustration for the other gamer.
Social Punishment	Agenda solved successfully also means +1 Frustration for the other gamer.
Creative Content	When solved successfully each gamer who expressed her dislike for this content gets +1 Frustration.
Creative Incompatible	Incompatible classes of creative agendas are Story-now, The-Right-to-dream, Step-on-up. When anyone of them is solved successfully each gamer who have set one agenda of an incompatible type for this scene gets +1 Frustration.

A.3 Moving frustration to another gamer

Social Shared	+1 bonus to move frustration to the other player (even if the agenda is not active in this scene).
Social Incomplete	Reveal in public an embarrassing hidden incomplete agenda of a gamer to get +1 bonus to move frustration to her.
Creative Content	+1 bonus to avoid someone moving frustration to you if she already activated a content agenda you dislike during this session.