CHANCE ENCOUNTERS

A 24 HOUR ROLE PLAYING GAME

BY

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WELCOME

Chance Encounters was written as an entry to the 24 hour RPG event, where you have to create a complete game within 24 hours. Chance Encounters – CE – is a game intended to be played as a "one-off": you start and complete the game in the same evening, or at the most over a couple of sessions. You can play it again, but you can't make an ongoing game out of it.

WHAT YOU NEED

To play the game you'll need a handful or two of six-sided dice, and pens and paper for note taking. To read the text, you'll probably need a basic understanding of what role playing games are, as the text skips a few of the classic explanatory first steps.

> *Notes*
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> *The 24 Hour RPG event can be found at www.24hourrpg.com.*
>
> *24 hours is a tough time limit, and the text is very raw at points, but I hope I get the main gist of the idea across.*
>
> *Happy reading – comments are welcome!*

WHAT IS THE GAME ABOUT?

The thematic inspiration for CE comes from films such as Magnolia, Happiness, and Lost in Translation, where a selection of characters go through dramatic, personal events, often with profound changes as the result. Sometimes, the characters hardly know each other at the outset, but their initially disparate storylines entangle and collide as new relationships are formed and old ones reawake.

The game's procedures and mechanics are inspired by – some might say stolen from – the recent wave of "indie RPGs" that explore the fertile ground of gaming focused on collaborative storytelling and shared ownership of the story and strive for an almost board game-like integration of rules and procedures with the storytelling itself.

YES, BUT WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

More than anything else, the game is about exploring a cast of characters. Initially, you create very sketchy information on this cast, but as the game progresses, you will get to know the characters better: defining them through play rather than in a separate, typically up-front, character creation activity.

There is no preparation needed for the game. Everything you need to do is built into the game procedures. The stories told often have simple and well known plots: what is interesting is how *these* unique characters behave under *these* specific circumstances. All the characters will have flaws, and by constantly challenging these, you get to see the characters struggle – and perhaps grow. That is the real point of the game.

CE's rules – while fairly light – are designed to support and encourage this style of play. They are designed 1) to help you be creative by focusing you on specific character and story questions, 2) to guide the game flow by structuring the overall gaming activity, 3) to introduce an element of chance into the story through dice rolls,

and finally 4) to provide a very simple "meta-game" layer of alternative ways to influence the story.

EVERYONE'S A PLAYER

Unlike most other RPGs, there is no game master in CE: everybody participates on equal terms as players. While everybody has primary ownership over one of the main characters each, different players will at different times take control over other characters, describe the setting and story events. The role of "main storyteller" is passed from player to player as the game progresses.

Notes:

The most important game influences are probably Primetime Adventures, Universalis, My Life with Master, and Dogs in the Vineyard. I have actually never played Universalis, MLwM, or Dogs, and only PTA once, but I have skimmed the books and browsed the indie RPG newsgroups. The main catalyst that actually led me to write this has been playing (after a long break) with Peter, Per, and Thomas.

Both as a player and a GM, I have often felt that all my careful preparation of characters – pages of background, detailed psychological considerations – was near to useless when the game actually started.

CE is meant to make the whole play experience about getting to know the characters – i.e. character creation. I think this plays to the strong sides of the collaborative storytelling games: they are good at creating interesting situations and provoking exciting outcomes, and less good at detailed plots (e.g. "investigation) that require a web of details and clever facts to fit together.

THE GAME'S STRUCTURE

This section will give a quick overview of the main game flow. It won't go into any details, so it's likely to leave you with a few questions, but later sections will answer them. It's a good reference to return to when you want to see how everything fits together.

* **The Premise**. The first thing to do when starting a game is to decide on what kind of game you want to play. Maybe you want a specific theme, maybe there are certain things og tones you want to avoid. You discuss that up front and then create a small number of locations where the story will play out. You give each location a few traits to reflect what kind of atmosphere it has.

* **The Characters**. After setting up the premise and the general setting, each player sketches their main character. They create traits, issues, and problems for them – just enough information to have a starting point for the story.

* **Introduction Round**. With the characters ready to be set loose, the players take turns telling a short scene with their character in it. These first scenes are not meant to be terribly intense, nor is conflict required; they are more there to introduce the characters to each other.

* **Scene Rounds**. Once the introductions are done, the real game starts. The players take turns at telling scenes, with the other players challenging them, incorporating their characters (and other characters), and introducing connections between characters. During scene rounds, players also have an extra resource called story dice to affect the story with.

* **Epilogue Round**. At the end of the story, everthing is rounded off with small epilogues, similar to the introductions, but looking forward for the characters.

The premise, the characters, the introductions, scene rounds, and epilogues, as well as the story dice will be covered in more detail in the next chapters.

DIVIDING THE GAME INTO ROUNDS...

Most of the game takes place in rounds: in turn, each player assumes the main storytelling role, while the other players contribute to and support the story. This guarantees that every player gets some time in the limelight, and also keeps the story moving. It can also give players a little "breathing room" when the focus is taken off their character and moved to someone else.

How many scene rounds you'll play will depend on the ambition of your game, but you should play at least two. If you need breaks, it's best to take them between the rounds. Likewise, once a round is over, you should stop the game for a moment and decide how you want the overall story to go ahead – e.g. whether you need to change the pace, start wrapping up, or introduce some new complication.

...AND ROUNDS INTO SCENES

Each player gets to be the main storyteller for one scene every round. A scene plays out a continuous chunk of time for one or more characters, and has a specific focus – something it's supposed to be about or that's supposed to happen. In play time, scenes can last from a minute or two and upwards, depending on your style.

Every scene – apart from introduction and epilogue scenes – contain some kind of challenge that will force the character owned by the storytelling player to struggle with some part of himself. These challenges are put forward by the other players at the beginning of a scene, and a suitable challenge for the scene and character is selected.

> *Notes:*
>
> *Sometimes, you buy a game book, eagerly read it, and afterwards realize that you still have no idea how to actually play it. I was trying to avoid that with this section.*

THE PREMISE

At the outset of the game, you need to establish the game's premise. To do this, you start with an informal discussion of what kind of overall setting you want to play in, and what kind of tone you'd like the game to have, and then you follow this up with the creation of the game's specific locations.

OVERALL SETTING

There's no specific setting for CE: the game could be set in the present, in an earlier era or even in a completely different, fantastical universe. The easiest thing to do is to pick a period you are all familiar with. It's difficult to invent a new setting on the spot, and you run the risk of getting bogged down in world creation and communication problems when different people have imagined things differently.

You should narrow down the setting to a specific overall place and time, just to help everybody imagine what it's like there and put some bounds on the story – these kinds of constraints tends to help people be creative.

> **The present day, in a large, industrial city, in the summer**. This is going to be the setting for our sample game. Lots of working class people struggling to make a living. Dirty factories on the edge of town. People barbecuing with friends in their backyards. Dogs and frisbees.

This is also the time to discuss the tone of the game. Funny? Serious? Make sure you're all on the same page with regards to what kind of experience you want to have.

> **Let's keep it sober**. For our example game, we decide to keep the atmosphere sober and a bit nostalgic. While we can sneak in the odd clever joke, we'll steer clear of slapstick and outright silliness, and we also agree that we'll keep violence under control.

Of course, at any time during the game, anyone can call a quick timeout if they feel the tone of the game is running away from them and they are not having fun.

CREATING LOCATIONS

You now need to create a handful of locations for the game. You could in principle have just one, but having a few to alternate between often gives a better dynamic. The same number of locations as players is probably a good rule of thumb, but two to four should work for any game.

The process of creating locations is intended to be a brainstorm. If you want to structure it slightly, appoint one person to be the chair. Begin with an informal discussion, and when a location is beginning to take shape, the chair should make sure everyone agrees on and buys into the location. Try to pick at least one ot two locations that are easily accessible, so characters can come and go.

> **The diner**. One of the locations for our game is going to be a diner on the outskirts of town. A kind of old-fashioned place, with a jukebox and a slot machine in the corner.

There's no hard and fast rule for the size of a location: the requirement is instead that the entire location has the same atmosphere. This atmosphere is quantified by giving each location one to three traits, each summed up with a word or a short sentence.

> **The diner's traits**. We're going to give the diner two atmosphere traits: "everybody gets along" and "old memories resurface".

Remember that you're describing the *atmosphere* of the location, not the location itself, and make sure that all players agree on the traits of the locations, and what's meant by them. A location's traits will come into play when challenges are played out there. The traits also give you a good guideline for how other characters will behave in that location. Make sure you jot down the traits so you don't forget them.

> *Notes:*
>
> *Part of the point of this kind of premise discussion is to make sure everybody is on the same page, not just with regards to setting, but also when it comes to "what kind of fun" the game should be.*

If half the people want a silly comedy, and the other half a serious political drama, wouldn't you like to find out at the start so you could decide to play something else (if at all), rather than nobody having fun when the different players' aspirations collide? I would.

With enough locations, it is in principle possible to play a game and never have the main characters meet each other. With fewer locations, you're more likely to make them bump into each other. Both styles are completely valid, although I think it's a bit dull if they never interact directly.

Another thing you can experiment with is to add some kind of external event or interesting situation to the mix. This can provide a good backdrop for the characters' stories, and might also be a motivator.
If you're interested in not having the characters interact with each other's stories much, I think it's a good idea to provide this kind of backdrop to tie the stories together – e.g. "the moon landing through very different eyes."

THE CHARACTERS

Whereas everybody worked together when creating the premise – setting and locations – that is not the case when creating characters. Here, every player has to create their main character, and as long as they stick to the agreed upon premise, they can design that character completely by themselves.

The process of creating a character is to first get a basic idea for a character, concretize this in four traits that describe the character's personality (we're not going to bother with skill-oriented traits at all). Then you mask one of the traits to give it a different expression, you figure out what the character's issue is, and add a problem – typically a current manifestation of the more general issue the character is struggling with.

TRAITS

Every character has four traits. The traits should describe *what the character is like*, not what he does professionally or what he is skilled at. Preferably, the traits should be something you can communicate – through look or behavior – as that makes for more vivid scenes. A few more guidelines for creating traits:

* **Nobody's perfect**. When creating traits, make sure you have a mix of positive and negative traits. Traits need not be strictly positive or negative: whether they are one or the other can depend on the circumstances (for example, being single-minded).

* **Pick different traits**. Make sure that the traits you pick can be distinguished from each other and communicated separately from each other. If your character is 1) cynical, 2) sarcastic, and 3) aggressive, you're probably better off collapsing them to one trait.

* **Avoid clichés and contradictions**. Build a character that is a bit unique. This can be as simple as taking a stereotype and changing or adding one trait. Also,

be sure you're not assigning traits that outright contradict each other (however, some tension is obviously fine): if the character is both passive and aggressive, "highly temperamental" is probably a better description.

★ **Don't overdo the quirks**. Quirks are great, and they help add little details to a character, but they are no replacement for solid traits. Feel free to add little quirks to the character, but they don't count as traits.

As with location traits, quantify the traits as single words or short sentences, and jot them down so you don't forget them.

> **Abel**. One of the characters for our game is going to be a young adult guy – maybe 23 – called Abel. He's still living at home, with his religious parents and his sisters, but spends most of his time at work or drinking beers and wasting time with his friends. We give him the following traits: "Christian values," "more follower than leader," "gets emotional when drunk", and "can't figure out his future."

A Mask, an Issue, and a Problem

With the basic traits in place, it's time to complicate matters. Since part of the game is about challenging the characters to see what they will do and if they will grow from the experience, we need to make sure they've got something to struggle with:

★ **A mask**. Pick one of the traits of your character – a side the person is not proud of and doesn't want to show to other people. Now, mask it so it's not visible. It's still there underneath, but it's much less visible to other people. There are many ways of masking a trait. For example: the character can flat out lie and pretend to be something else than he really is (pretending to be happy when he's really not) – or he can mask one less acceptable side with a similar, but more acceptable (covering up fear of commitment by being a workaholic

with no free time). A key point here is that the character is well aware that he is covering something up because he's not comfortable with it.

* **An issue**. An issue is a longer-term, deep struggle within the character. He might not be aware of it at all. The issue is often related to the mask, but not necessarily 1:1 – a mask could be a symptom, and the issue is the real deal. Look at the character's traits and mask, and decide on what the person is really struggling with. This is the thing that the character needs to confront and work on to grow. Some times, characters directly resist doing that, but the game is going to set up situations that the person will just have to deal with. Example issues could be: lack of confidence, runaway life, feeling worthless, struggling with loss, or being unable to trust people.

* **A problem.** The issue can manifest itself in many ways. To make sure the character will have something to concern himself with right from the start of the game, you create a problem – a specific case of the issue affecting the character right now – that the character is already caught up in. It's not strictly required to bring this into play, but it's likely to come in handy. Examples: if the issue is lack of confidence, you might set the problem to be an upcoming job interview that the character is really nervous about. If the issue is controlling your runaway life, the problem could be a school reunion where you're expected to show how good you're doing. If the problem can be made to relate to the game's locations, that's a great thing.

Write down a few notes on the mask, issue and problem. You don't need to detail them too well, just enough that you feel ready to use the elements in the game. When creating characters, it's often a good idea to discuss them with each other as you'll want a good set of different people. It can also help the creativity a lot. Listen to the other players' ideas and comments, but don't agree to play a character you're not comfortable with.

Abel's mask. Abel's Christian background doesn't go down too well with his friends: it's just not cool to be religious. We decide that his mask is going to be the fact that he pretends the religion is "just for his old folks", and he doesn't give a damn about it. This double act is the cause of quite a bit of inner turmoil for Abel.

An issue. The issue for Abel is his inability to stand up for what he believes in. When out with his friends, he hides his religious beliefs and moral, which leaves him full of guilt inside. When home, we decide, he never speaks about his life with his friends (drinking, sex, etc.), because he knows his parents won't approve. Abel needs to stand up for himself if he is to grow.

The problem. We create a specific situation that will cause Abel to struggle with his issue: last night, a friend of his got drunk, drove around, and in his stupor hit a person: the pastor from Abel's family's church. The pastor is in the hospital, in a coma, the police have close to no clues, and the friend is looking to cover up any tracks that might lead back to him. How will Abel deal with this situation, his conflicting loyalties and internal struggles?

Make sure you describe the issues, masks, and problems to each other, as everybody will need to know them to pose good challenges.

Notes:

The problem where you just create quirks and forget to give character's fundamental personalities is sometimes called the "Ally McBeal syndrome".

Other players will create radically different characters from Abel – say, Beth, a peppy businesswoman who is stopping by the neighborhood and Carl, a old guy in town for a funeral, each with their own issues. The challenge is now to get these characters involved with each other – have their paths cross.

THE SCENES

With the premise and the characters ready, the story can begin. As mentioned earlier, everything is played out in rounds of scenes, with the main storytelling responsibility moving from player to player. You can either go around the table in a circle, or you can pick some other order that suit you better.

THREE TYPES OF SCENES

There are three types of scenes: introductions, story scenes, and epilogues. Introductions and epilogues happen at the beginning and end of the game, and are simplified, short versions of story scenes, which are the real meat of the story.

* **The introduction round** is the first thing to happen after character creation. Each player frames a short scene with his character in it, and narrates a minute or two of action. The other players' characters do not participate in the scene, nor can the other players interfere with the scene. The purpose of the scene is to introduce everybody to the characters and bring them alive.

* **The story scene rounds** have a more complex structure. Again, each scene focuses on one main character, but this time, the other players get to – and are required to – interfere. The main storytelling player decides on a scene, and then the other players get to insert a challenge into it, spend story dice to change the scene, and if their characters are in the scene, they get to role play them. They can also be asked to role play other characters in the scene. At some point during the scene, the challenge is resolved through dice rolls, and the outcome is played out. (All this is covered in more detail below.)

* **The epilogue round** is almost identical to the introduction round. Once again, we follow only one character per scene, and the other players can't interfere.

The purpose of the epilogue scenes is to close off the characters and show where they are heading from here.

HOW SCENES PLAY OUT

Introductions and epilogues are really just small freeform narrative bits. The only real rule is to keep them short and not involve other characters from the main cast. Story scenes, however, have more structure. This is how a story scene is played out:

★ **Hand out story dice**. Every player except for the main storyteller of this scene gets one story dice. (More on story dice later.)

★ **State the scene's agenda**. The main storyteller says, in a sentence or two, what he intends the overall agenda of the scene to be.

Example: "I want to tell a scene where the police are looking for witnesses to the hit and run last night."

★ **State the challenge**. With the agenda in mind, the other players now get to propose a challenge to the main character of the scene. The challenge takes the form of some kind of conflict that the main storyteller has to work into the scene, and how the challenge actually pans out will be determined by dice rolls during the scene. The players can discuss the challenge and propose different ideas to each other until they are happy with it. The main storyteller can participate in the discussion, but he has no authority over what challenge is in the end selected.

Example: "In the scene, the challenge will be for the main character to struggle with telling a difficult lie to the police."

★ **State the setting**. After having considered the challenge for a few seconds, and decided on how he wants to work it into the agenda, the main storytelling

player briefly outlines which location the scene takes place at, what time of day it is, and which characters are present.

> **Example**: "It's at the diner, during the lunch break. Abel is there, and so is Beth. Other characters are a policeman, Manny the bartender, and some local workers on their break."

* **Play the buildup**. Now, the role playing starts. Players assume their roles, and the main storyteller guides the general action ahead. You play up to the point where the outcome of challenge needs to be resolved.

* **Resolve the challenge**. At this point, the dice are used to work out which way the challenge goes. All the details of challenges are covered in the next chapter.

> **Example**: will Abel tell the difficult lie and cover for his friend out of loyalty, or will he give in and reveal something he shouldn't have?

* **Play the outcome.** Role playing resumes, again with the main storyteller driving the scene and other players controlling select characters. The point is to depict the effect of the outcome – how does everybody react.

ARBITRATION

Except for any changes resulting from the use of story dice (see later), the main storyteller has final control over the scene: only he can e.g. invent new characters for the scene. The only thing he can never control is other players' main characters. If they are present in a scene, they will be played by their owners.

Other characters in the scene are by default controlled by the main storytelling player, but it is recommended that he hands out control of these to any players whose main characters are not in the scene. When he does this, he can add a few words about how he'd like that character to behave.

> **Example**: the policeman character is handed out to a player whose main character is not in the scene. When he hands him out, the main storyteller adds,

"The policeman is going to try to find a witness or any kind of gossip about the crime - I'd like him to be really aggressive and pushy".

MOVING THE STORY AHEAD

Scenes can drag out if you're not careful. Most games are better with more short scenes than with fewer longer ones, so keep the pace up. Start the scene as late in the action as possible, and end it as early as is good.

Example: don't start the scene with a long bit about the policeman arriving, jump right into when he comes over to question and put pressure on Abel.

Between story rounds, make sure you discuss whether there's any kind of general turn you want the story to take: is it time to start wrapping up? Should we introduce some external pressure on the characters? Are we moving as planned?

Climax happens on two levels: for each character and for the story overall. Since the story is really just the sum of each character's story, you'll ideally want the characters' climaxes to happen all in the same round, ideally with several characters in the same locations, so they can easily be involved in each other's scenes.

Notes:

If you want to experiment with playing scenes out of order in time, I think it's best to just rigidly enforce that any scene has to slot nicely into whatever story has already been told.

CHALLENGES

Every story scene contains one challenge. This is a challenge from the other players to the main storytelling player: you have to include this in the scene. Challenges are meant to make life hard for the main character. They bring up a difficult dilemma, and force the character to struggle with it.

If the challenge has a no-brainer clear-cut answer *for this character*, it's not a real challenge. This rules out most standard "pick between good or bad"-situations. What you typically want is a choice where both sides are good and bad, but in different ways.

> **Example**: pick between choice A, which is the easy way out for now, but is bad in the long run, and choice B, which is difficult now, but probably better in the long run.

> **Example**: hurt person A and please person B – or hurt person B and please person A.

In situations where there is a good outcome and a bad one, the main character should have real trouble selecting the good outcome because of his personality.

> **Example**: do A, which you are really afraid of doing, but is good for you, or do B which is easy and safe, but bad for you.

The challenges aren't meant to be physical challenges. Instead, they should be internal, psychological struggles for the main characters. The challenge is loosely decided at the beginning of the scene, and the the scene is played out up until the point where the dilemma in the challenge needs to be addressed.

RESOLVING CHALLENGES

At this point, the dice come out. To resolve a challenge, you stack up dice on both sides of the dilemma. The more dice on a side, the higher the probability that this side will

"win" and be the outcome. More dice does not guarantee success, though. The procedure is:

* **State the two sides of the dilemma**. This is done just to make sure everyone understands the two possible outcomes.

  Example: the challenge is whether Abel will overcome his insecurities and tell Beth that he is in love with her, or whether he chickens out and hides it.

* **Allocate dice based on location traits**. Look at each of the traits of the location. For each of the traits: If you all agree that a trait pulls the outcome towards one of the two choices, add a dice to that choice.

  Example: Abel and Beth are at the lake location, which has the trait "beautiful and romantic". All the players agree that this trait weighs in favor of Abel revealing his love. A dice goes to that side of the outcome.

* **Allocate dice based on the main character's traits**. As with the location traits, now go over the main character's traits, and decide if they have an influence on which side he's likely to pick. (They really should – otherwise the challenge probably isn't that relevant to him.) Each trait relevant sends one dice to a side of the conflict. Treat the masked trait and the mask as two separate traits, but don't allow them to send two dice to the same side of the dilemma, only one. If the mask and the masked trait go to opposing sides, that's fine: send a dice to each side. Again, players should agree on which traits are relevant.

  Example: Abel's trait, "more follower than leader," means he has a difficult time taking charge. All players agree that this trait goes against him opening up.

* **Allocate dice based on other characters directly involved in the dilemma**. Repeat the process for any other character directly involved in the dilemma. There will rarely be more than one other character involved. The question to

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ask of the traits is whether that trait will affect the main character's ability to choose. Only main characters have traits, so only they count here.

Example: Beth has the trait "a good listener", and that will give one dice to the side of Abel opening up.

* **Contribute story dice**. Each player can contribute with up to one story dice to the challenge. This is a way to directly steer the outcome in the direction you prefer. (More on story dice later).

* **Roll the dice**. With all the dice for each side allocated, roll that number of six-sided dice. Roll the two sides apart. The winning side is the one that has most of a kind, with higher number of eyes on the dice winning a tie. In the case of a straight tie (say, four 5s versus four 5s), remove those dice from both sides and look at what remains. If everything is tied, right down to the last dice, roll again.

Example: outcome A (Abel opens up) has a total of 7 dice. Outcome B (Abel avoids the issue) has a total of 6 dice. We roll. A: [1 2 4 4 4 5 5]. B: [1 2 2 4 4 4]. The longest run (i.e. most dice) for either side is three 4s. Since that's equal, we discard those, and look at the rest: A: [1 2 5 5]. B: [1 2 2]. A's longest run is now two 5s, which beats B's two 2s. Option A wins the dilemma.

* **Play out the outcome**. The dice are now put aside, and the role playing resumes.

The "softest spot" in this process is to get to agree on whether a trait is relevant. Don't get bogged down in a long discussion. Allow the arguments for either case to be stated, and if there's disagreement, just do a quick vote, or leave the trait out.

PLAYING THE OUTCOME

How much freedom do the players have to interpret the outcome? As long as they stick to the sides as they were stated at the start of the challenge, they should be

allowed room to play. Don't try to cheat and play out what the dice didn't support, though. This might mean getting the character into more trouble, failing at something, or complicating the matters otherwise. That's all fine. We're here to get to know these characters, not to give them an easy way out.

Normally, there's no "life or death"-consequence of a challenge, so they are rarely endpoints – more branching points where the story can surprise you and turn an unexpected way.

SAMPLE CHALLENGES

It can be hard to wrap your head around the whole challenge thing and come up with good challenges. The best advice is probably to look at the characters and work out what they really wouldn't want to have happen, and then make that happen. Here are some examples of challenges to give you inspiration:

* **Go against the popular opinion**. The character has to stand up to the masses, go against the flow, and do it in a way that's visible to everyone present.
* **Take responsibility for something bad**. The character has to admit his involvement in something bad, clearing his conscience, but getting into more trouble that way.
* **Be generous towards an undeserving other**. Someone else needs something that the character has to give, but the other person doesn't really deserve it. Will the character be generous anyway?
* **Tell a difficult lie**. Some kind of difficult lie needs to be told. The character feels bad about doing it, but feels he needs to act that way.
* **Interfere with other people's business**. The character is challenged to go from "innocent bystander" to actually get involved with other people's business.

- ✶ **Refrain from doing the right thing for personal reasons**. The character holds back from doing what is expected of him, or morally right, for personal reasons.
- ✶ **Reveal a hidden side**. The character has to reveal a side of his personality that he normally keeps under wraps.
- ✶ **Make a difficult choice that affects other people**. The character is in a position to make a choice that might have little effect on himself directly, but affects other people strongly.

Notes:

I originally had allowed two story dice per person, but in the end I felt that that might make it too easy to control the outcome.

The whole thing about players having to agree on which traits are relevant is a bit of a cop-out, but I couldn't come up with a mechanical solution.

STORY DICE

Story dice are a special resource that the players can use to directly influence the story: not through the characters in the world, but by adding to or changing the world. As mentioned before, every player except for the main storyteller is awarded one story dice at the beginning of every story scene.

> **Example**: it's Abel's player's turn to be the main storyteller, so he's not awarded a story dice, but Beth and Carl's players are. When the scene finishes, and the main storytelling responsibility moves to Beth's player, only Abel and Carl's players will get story dice.

HOW TO USE STORY DICE

All use of story dice is optional. You're never forced to use them, but they are a great way of spicing up the game. You can use story dice in the following ways:

✶ **Influence a challenge roll**. This has already been mentioned in the chapter on challenges. When you're stacking up dice for a challenge, you can contribute one story dice to one of the sides of the dilemma.

✶ **Introduce a new character to the scene**. If you're *not* the current main storyteller, but want to introduce a new character into the current scene, you can do so by paying two story dice, and bringing the character into the scene.

> **Example**: in the diner scene with the police man, one of the other players feels that the policeman should really have a partner. He pays two story dice to invent the partner and bring him into the scene.

✶ **Introduce an existing character to the scene**. In the same way, if you're *not* the current main storyteller, but want to introduce an existing character into the current scene, you pay one story dice to do so.

Example: a player could pay one story dice to make the policeman appear in another scene later in the game.

* **Introduce your main character to the scene**. If you're *not* the main storyteller, and your character isn't in the current scene, you can bring him there by paying two story dice. You can't force other players' characters into a scene unless you're the main storyteller.

Example: Carl's player really wants to interrupt Abel and Beth's picnic at the lake, so he pays two story dice to have his character appear.

* **Create a fact about someone or something**. Again, this only costs if you're *not* the main storyteller. You can pay one story dice to add a fact about someone in the scene. The fact can not be a relationship with another character (see below for that), but must concern one character only. You can't add facts about the main characters.

Example: a player could pay one story dice to add the fact "he's drunk" to the policeman in the diner scene.

* **Create a relationship between two characters**. The cost of this depends on whether the relationship involves main characters. You pay to create some kind of relationship – family, love, friendship, animosity, and so on – between the two characters. See the table below for the costs.

Example: a player could pay three story dice to introduce a relationship between the policeman and Abel: "the policeman is Abel's cousin."

* **Create a new location**. You can pay three story dice to create a new location. For each trait you give the location, pay another story dice. You can invite other players to add traits as well, but there is still a maximum of three traits for a location.

> **Example**: Carl's player pays three story dice to create a new location: the hospital. He pays another dice to add the trait "frantically busy" and invites other players to add more. Abel's player pays one story dice to add "everyone turns cynical here".

You should not create nonsensical relationships or facts about characters. If someone feels that another player is being destructive to the game, he should speak up. Use common sense on this point.

WHEN TO USE STORY DICE

Story dice can be used at any time during a scene, right from the moment when the main storyteller is describing the setting and who is present, and right up to the end of the scene. They can not, however, be used "right in the middle of a sentence" to disrupt play and surprise everybody by e.g. adding a fact that completely changes the situation. When you want to spend story dice, just wait for a natural pause in the narration, and do it then.

COUNTERING STORY DICE

If a player is trying to use story dice to affect the story in a way that's perfectly valid, but you just don't like, you can choose to counter his action. To do this, you must declare that you want to counter right after the other player spends his story dice and before the action has continued.

To counter, you pay a number of story dice equal to what the other character spent, and the action is nullified. You can't counter the main storytellers free actions (the ones with a cost of 0 in the table).

> **Example**: continuing the example above, Beth's player really doesn't want Carl to show up and ruin the picnic. She immediately counters and spends 2 story dice to nullify the action. Carl doesn't show up.

STORY DICE COST CHART

Story dice use	Cost for main storyteller	Cost for other player
Influence challenge roll	1	1
Introduce a new character to the scene	0	2
Introduce an existing character to the scene	0	1
Introduce your main character to the scene	0	2
Create a fact about someone or something	0	1
Create a relationship (character to character)	0	1
Create a relationship (character to player character)	2	2
Create a relationship (player character to player character)	3	3
Create a location	3+	3+

Notes:

The rules and costs for story dice came out more complicated than I had hoped for, but it's manageable. If used "in the right spirit", I think story dice can be a great way to complicate the story and move it ahead.

I kept countering fairly simple above. If you want more of a mini-game, you can let it escalate: once countered, the original player can add more story dice to his proposal which will then have to be matched as well to keep the thing from happening. If you do this model, you should let all players contribute not only to countering, but to the story dice proposal itself.

CONCLUSION

There are no more rules or procedures. You now know all sides of the game mechanics, how the game plays out, and what kind of character and story the game can help you explore. A few final tips:

* **The game will only work if you want it to**. It's easy to break the game: move the characters away from each other, avoid tough challenges, be destructive with the story dice, insist on a specific plot direction. To make the game work you have to be willing to put these characters through tough situations and "go with the flow" when it comes to where the story takes you.
* **Your responsibility is to the game and story as a whole, not to your character**. Do what's best for the story – don't focus on protecting your character or "winning". Make sure everybody has a good time with the game.
* **You need to pace the story**. It's unlikely that the story will automatically move towards a good climax. You need to communicate outside the game itself – player to player – about how the story is moving, what the next overall step should be, and when it's time to start wrapping things up.
* **If there's anything you don't like, change it**. This is not a holy book with all the answers. If you have variations on the rules that you prefer, or extra elements you want to add to the game, by all means do so.

Good luck – happy gaming – have fun!