

# MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

**A PART-BAKED GAME FOR GAME CHEF 2012**  
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Based loosely on the following threads:

<http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=529.0>

<http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=27778.0>

<http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=20145.0>

<http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=29602.0>

## INTRODUCTION

You need:

- BATTLE CARDS (supplied)
- Poker chips or other tokens in three colours or types
- Your high school yearbook
- A source of fire and somewhere safe to burn things
- Some friends willing to wade into your emotional trauma

You play yourself... almost. You are imprisoned. Why? Who can say. You find yourself in a place of psychological torment, your keepers telling you only that it's for your own good -- that you're crazy, you need to be locked away for everyone else's sake.

You experience suffering beyond your wildest dreams. Your reality becomes too hard to face, and so you slip away, to a phantasmagorical world, where -- perhaps -- you can put your own emotional trauma into a form you can engage with, and try to make it out the other side.

You'll only need to play this game once, because once you're done, you will have put all your demons to rest -- or maybe just proved to yourself that you will never get past them.

## PARTICIPANTS

This game calls for at least three participants, but around five is ideal. One player (that's you!) is the **protagonist**. You play yourself -- just yourself, trapped in a psychologically destructive and hellish asylum. Every other participant is both a GM and a player; the rules should be administered and conflicts resolved by a consensus of everyone but you. Each other player will have a specific identity as a **memory**; that'll determine the character they play. One other player will also have a special role as the principal; pick either the player that you're closest to or who you hate the most, but don't tell them which.

## SETUP

Get your yearbook out. You're about to destroy it.

First, choose the **memories**. Pick out some individuals from your yearbook that held a particular significance to you, or to whom is attached for you some strong memory or association - especially if it was an emotionally traumatic one.

Pick as many memories as there are players other than you. You're aiming to match each person from your past to a player - if there's similarities between the yearbook photo or their personality and a player, assign them based on that. *Tear the photo out of the book and hand it to them.* Describe them a bit to the other player, from your memory.

Tell the player who's going to be the principal that you picked them. The principal's job (on top of a few other procedural things) is to decide what you did to be imprisoned, and, in the end,

whether you overcame your traumas.

**SIDEBAR:** The other players should use your description and the picture they have to hand to portray a heightened, caricatured version of the classmate. Additionally, if the photo is accompanied by quotations, description or other text, take what it implies about the person's character, blow it up 1000%, and play that to the hilt. If they were voted Most Likely To Be A Politician, play up to that.

Then, select your **achievements**. Find up to five things you personally accomplished which are reflected directly in your yearbook. (Didn't accomplish five things that got recorded? Guess you're outta luck.) *Tear them out too and put them in front of you.*

Finally, build the **phantasmagoria**. You've retreated to an illusory reality cobbled together from your own traumatic memories of high school. It's a world of conflict and conspiracy, where nothing is as it seems and everything is illusory. It's also baroque and operatic, because that's how these things work, isn't it? Here's how you flesh it out:

**Name of the World:** The principal should decide on a slight modification of your school's name.

**Stages:** Name a few places you hung out, either in the school or outside it, along with a one-sentence description. The memories get to elaborate on them when they come up to turn them into elaborate operatic setpieces.

**The Inevitable Conspiracy:** One of your school colors plus your mascot. Some (but not all) the memories should claim allegiance to it in play.

**The Conflict:** The principal picks any page they like out of the yearbook, tears it out, and decides on what it says about this world. In the phantasmagoria, everyone's actions are motivated by their iron-clad stance on this conflict and their relationships to the other memories and the protagonist -- nothing else.

**Flair:** Each memory (including the principal) tears out another page and picks something on it -- that's local color for the setting now.

**SIDEBAR: Hardcore Mode:** Play with one person from your high school, who plays themselves. Make them the principal. Reveal something to them in the course of play that they didn't know before. Write out their postcard and hand it right to them.

## HOW TO PLAY

The game follows a pretty simple procedure of play:

### *Prelude*

- Principal introduction

### *Act One*

- Conspiratorial Whispers
- Interplay
- BATTLE (if appropriate)
- Trauma

### *Acts Two+*

- Repeat Act One Structure

### *Climax*

- Battle the principal

### *Denouement*

- Principal Judgment

Here's how these scenes work.

## PRINCIPAL INTRODUCTION

You and the principal play out a scene. You're in the asylum, and you don't know why. A person comes to talk to you -- they aren't the high school memory assigned to the principal player, but they remind you of that person so much you get them confused. Maybe it's a psychologist, maybe it's a jail warden, maybe it's a CIA agent -- only the principal knows at this point. The two of you talk to set the stage: you can ask whatever questions you like about where you are and why, and the principal can drop hints, but ultimately you're not going to learn much here. What you want to establish here is how the principal runs their asylum and what kind of awful torments they'll subject you to. When this scene is over, you slip off into your own delusions...

## CONSPIRATORIAL WHISPERS

Every act starts with two or more of the memories speaking amongst themselves: about the nature of the phantasmagoria setting, the protagonist's action, or the core conflict. The first time, it should establish that the protagonist just arrived, and how. Later on, it should reference what's happened so far and flesh out the memories and how they interact with each other.

## INTERPLAY

This is the meat of the game: scenes between the protagonist and the memories. You find yourself in this strange world and you need to understand how it works -- because understanding it is key to your survival. The memory players play their characters (as narratively appropriate) as well as any throwaway NPCs. You, as the protagonist, explore the world, meet

the other memories, and learn about how they interact in the phantasmagoria. Each interplay scene should be a single scene of no more than 5-10 minutes, driven by the protagonist; when it's over, either battle if you've built up to one, or move on to trauma.

## **BATTLE**

You need to battle every memory once, and you need to battle the principal last. After each interplay scene, if you built to a conflict point where you're ready to battle, you do so; otherwise, you move onto the next act.

It's important to remember in the battle scenes especially that you're in an imaginative, illusory world. Every battle action is both social and physical; every action is exaggerated and hyperbolic; every result is both metaphorical and literal. Cutting off someone's head might be how you convince them to stay by your side; making an overly-honest point about their attitude might be how you destroy them forever. What happens to a memory after a battle should be based on the narrative logic of the conflict you built up with them.

Battle are resolved using Tokens and Battle Cards.

## **BATTLE CARDS!**

Each card has a name. Each card is interpreted **both** as physical action; and socially, as part of a heart-to-heart conversation, or argument.

Cards have:

- a token cost (say: three red, four blue)
- an effect
- a description for combat narration
- a description for conversation narration

Some definitions:

- Your **hand** is the cards you are currently holding. There's no limit to how many cards can be in your hand, but you will always start each turn with at least five.
- There's a **deck** and a **discard pile**. The cards are all face down in both.
  - If at any time there's not enough cards in the deck for whatever you need to do, shuffle the discard pile and add it to the bottom of the deck.
  - Unless a card lets you, you can't look through the deck.
  - Unless a card lets you, you can't look through the discard pile.
- When you **draw** a card, you take the top card of the deck and add it to your hand, showing no-one but yourself.
- When you **reveal** a card, you show it to all players, then return it to your hand
- When you **play** a card, you place it face up in front of you so everyone can see, and pay its costs, perform its effects and narrate accordingly.
- When you **discard** a card, you place it face down in the discard pile.

There are three kinds of cards: **Initiative**, **Attack**, **Defence**.

- **Initiative** cards tend to add to your token pools, and let you draw new cards. They represent you reframing the conflict by taking a new stance, shaping or changing the

- field of combat, or switching up the momentum.
- **Attack** cards tend to reduce and/or modify your opponent's token pools, and/or mess with their cards. They represent straightforward aggressive actions.
- **Defence** cards tend to mitigate, alter or reverse attack cards.

There are also Finisher cards. These are cards with high or otherwise difficult token conditions, which when played cause you to win the battle. ***When you draw a Finisher, you must reveal it immediately, unless the card says otherwise.***

Your goal in battle is to frustrate your opponent's progress towards their Finishers, while seeking your own.

Build a deck with:

- Two copies of each finisher
- Two copies of every attack
- Four copies of every other card

## TOKENS

Tokens can be poker chips, in three colours. We assume in this text and the cards that they are red, blue and yellow, although they can be other colours or other objects as you have available or desire.

### The Basic Structure of the Battle

The player of this memory should set the stage. Pick one of the stages established upfront and elaborate on it with elements related to the memory.

At the very start, both players should draw five Battle cards, and discard and redraw as many as they like, up to a maximum of three discard and redraws. You'll be aiming for a starting hand that gives you some good options going forward and plays to your strengths.

The memory player starts with two tokens, of a colour suitable to their nature:

- if they were mostly very smart, an academic rival, or put you down and made you feel stupid or small - yellow tokens.
- if they were mostly popular and/or attractive, a crush or an ex, or made you feel ugly, unloved or unpopular - blue tokens
- if they were mostly very athletic, sporty or tough, a sports rival or a bully, or if they ever hit you - red tokens

The protagonist starts with no tokens. At any time, however, you can burn one of your achievements for two tokens of a color appropriate to the achievement:

- academic achievement: yellow
- social or popularity-based achievement: blue
- physical or sports achievement: red

Take the torn-out achievement and set it on fire. Work a reference to the achievement in question into your narration when you do.

You take turns. The memory player goes first, and then the protagonist, in strictly alternating

order until someone wins.

At the start of every turn: if you have less than 5 cards, draw up to five Battle cards into your hand.

Then:

1. you may play an Initiative card from your hand. Pay its cost in tokens and then resolve its effects. Narrate according to the description on the card
2. you may play an Attack card from your hand. Pay its cost in tokens, if any, and then resolve its effects.
  - Your opponent may play a Defence card in response to an Attack card; if they do so, they should declare it after you have played the attack card but before the attacks effects are resolved.
  - Narrate according to the description on the attack card. Your opponent should narrate the defence if they played one.
3. After you have played these cards, your turn is over. Discard any played cards. Keep any remaining cards in your hand.

### **Narration**

As each card is played, you must narrate it in character. There are two components to the narration:

- a physical action in a fight: punches, kicks, dodges etc.
- an action in a conversation; insults, stonewalling etc.

You have to fulfil both elements of the narration when you play the card. Each card contains text which should prompt and inform the narration as to its content - see the cards for details.

Any players not involved in this combat judge your narration to keep you honest. Narration should be judged on:

- awesomeness
- emotional truth

If the players not in the combat feel you have not sold them on the emotional truth or awesomeness of the narration, appropriate to the card you are playing, they can say so, in which case you must either withdraw the card and play another one, or narrate better. If you can't narrate well enough to satisfy them, you can't play that card!

### **TRAUMA**

Trauma is where you play out the fallout of the previous act. If you didn't have a battle, spend thirty seconds enacting your suffering in the asylum -- either at the principal's hands or your own.

If you won a battle, tell a short story about the person in the memory and how that trauma is behind you now. If you lost a battle, the memory takes a minute to narrate about how everything they ever thought about you is true after all. Also, whatever the result of the battle, it is time to achieve some real life catharsis and closure.

The character you were fighting was based on a real-life person. So you're going to get in touch with that real life person, and tell them what happened in the game. We suggest you write it on a postcard and mail it to their address, if you can find it. If not, post it to their Facebook or something.

*"Hi Duane, you represented my sense of self doubt because of how you used to tease me in gym class. I decapitated you with an uppercut in my imagination, so there!"*

*OR: "Hi Duane, you represented my sense of self doubt because of how you used to tease me in gym class. In my imagination you tore out my heart, so I guess I'm still not over that."*

Write this message immediately after the combat is over, while you're still riding on the emotional high (or low) from the victory (or defeat).

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### **REPEAT**

You repeat the act structure over and over until the phantasmagoria is completed -- that is, until you've battled every one of your memories and revealed the meaning of the dream.

### **Climax: BATTLE THE PRINCIPAL**

Whatever else happens in the game, you always battle the principal last. The principal holds the secret behind the narrative logic of both the phantasmagoria and the asylum. When you battle them, the former should be laid out: what the conflict means, and why you need to overcome the principal to finally free your mind from your trauma. Everything you've done so far builds up to this.

As such, the principal gets a couple advantages. They can pull in resources (two tokens of "appropriate" color) from each memory you lost to, and during the fight, they can use your yearbook against you: find pages that might embarrass you or drive home your flaws and traumatic experiences, and tear *them* out (up to three times) for two tokens each. Of course, you have your own advantage here: two tokens for each memory you successfully defeated and put behind you. (And any achievements, if you saved them this long.)

Whether you win or lose against the principal, the phantasmagoria is over; you've learned its secret, gathered up all your trauma in one place, confronted it, and either been victorious -- or been crushed.

### **Denouement: PRINCIPAL JUDGMENT**

When you emerge from the phantasmagoria, there's just one thing left to do. Back in the asylum, the principal comes to meet with you one more time. Now that you've worked through all your trauma, it's time for them to pass final judgment on you. They should tell you -- with the full knowledge gained during the game informing them -- why you were imprisoned and what they've observed about your behavior... and then, decide on whether or not to release you. This won't *always* follow whether you defeated the principal in the phantasmagoria or not -- what's important is the principal's judgment of *how* you confronted your trauma. Once they've judged you, you can play out the scene a bit more, but then you're done -- either to walk away free or be kept imprisoned forever.

Your yearbook is probably pretty mutilated now! As a consequence of play you have probably removed all references to you, and the people who most affected you, from it. So now it's pretty useless to you! Burn the whole thing, with one exception: if you lost to the principal, keep their picture.