

# ONE BY ONE

The storytelling RPG  
of survival horror

Free Quickstart  
Edition



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# INTRODUCTION

*Crazy Ralph: You're doomed! You're all doomed!*  
-- *Friday the 13th* (1980)

*One by One* is a storytelling roleplaying game of survival horror. In this game, you'll take roles as actors in your favorite horror stories, struggling to survive as something kills you off one by one. You tell the story as you play, improvising scenes and details as you go along.

You begin by picking a script that explains the setting and the crisis where your characters find themselves at the start of the game. Then you create characters using tables listed in the script. Once finished, you take turns roleplaying scenes, either regular scenes or flashbacks, using your character's motivation and the setting as guides. Throughout the game, a monster is trying to kill all of the players' characters. These are killed off one by one until either the monster is defeated or only one character survives ... but you won't know who survives until you finish the game.

Will you be the sole survivor, telling your tale to incredulous police and doctors? Or will you be just another nameless victim?

If you are new to roleplaying games, please read the sidebar titled, "What's a RPG?" Otherwise, continue below.

## WHAT'S A RPG?

RPG stands for "role-playing game". It's a game, but instead of using a board or cards, you play by talking and making stuff up as you go along. Everyone plays a character in the story. Sometimes you roll dice to decide what happens; other times you just improvise what you want to happen in the story. It's a combination of improv theater and telling tales with friends.

Here's how your typical game will progress:

- ◇ First, everyone agrees on a **script**. This establishes the setting, sets options for creating characters, and explains what kind of monster is trying to kill the characters.
- ◇ Then everyone uses the script to create their **characters**.
- ◇ Play begins roughly halfway through the story at a **crisis scene** featuring all the characters. Everyone plays their characters in this scene.
- ◇ Next, everyone takes a turn creating either a **continuing** or **flashback** scene with their character as the focus. At least one other character must be there too.
- ◇ In each continuing scene, either that other character or yours will die.
- ◇ Once everyone has had two turns, the game ends. There will be only one survivor!

## HOW THIS GAME IS DIFFERENT

If you're reading this book, chances are you've played RPGs before. But *One by One* is a bit different from other roleplaying games.

First, there is no GM. Perhaps better put, everyone is the GM when they are playing. Instead of one person being responsible for NPCs, describing scenes, and so on, everyone can play NPCs, add details to scenes, and all the other GM duties.

Second, this game is designed to be played in one night. In fact, every character save one will be killed off during the game -- and even that one can die. (There's a reason this game is called *One by One*.)

Third, this is a story-based game. That means you'll be using a lot of literary and screenplay terms, such as lead character, supporting character,

extras, etc. While this game doesn't force you into playing some high-brow literary experience -- you can still do that if you want! -- you can keep the game light and silly. The one style you'll probably not use is the hack-n-slash dungeon crawl.

Characters in this game have motivations, and they usually don't revolve around looting bodies and leveling up.

## NEEDED TO PLAY

To play a game of *One by One*, you could get by with only a script (four are in this book) and

three to six players -- but it is helpful to have the following:

- ◇ A copy of the *One by One* character sheet for each player (found in the back of this book or at [happybishopgames.com](http://happybishopgames.com)).
- ◇ Some pens and/or pencils.
- ◇ Three dice: 1 four-sided, 1 six-sided, and 1 eight-sided (d4, d6, and d8).
- ◇ Paper, index cards, or sticky notes.

How long a game lasts really depends on the players, but it can go anywhere from one to three hours. Shorter or longer games are possible if you work at it.

# SETTING UP THE GAME

*Brent Norton: Now listen people. We are experiencing some kind of disaster. I don't know whether it's man-made or natural, but I do know that it's definitely not supernatural. Or biblical. And no offense Mrs. Carmody, but the only way we're going to help ourselves is to seek rescue. We're going out.*  
-- *The Mist* (2007)

There are many kinds of stories out there that can be called “survival horror”. Movies like *Friday the 13th*, *Resident Evil*, *The Cabin in the Woods*, *Scream*, even *Aliens* can all fit. But a character from *Friday the 13th* won't work in *Aliens* and vice versa, which is why you need to pick a script before playing.

A *One by One* **script** creates the setting of your game. For example, the script “Camp Chippapuok” sets the game in an abandoned summer camp in the early 1980s. Meanwhile, “Cold Dark Space” is a science fiction tale. You need the setting to know what to include and exclude when you roleplay your character. (You won't be introducing laser guns in 1980s summer camp.)

But scripts do more than that. Each script includes the following:

- ◇ **Background:** A brief explanation of the setting, including why all the characters are in the same place.
- ◇ **Monster:** What thing (things???) is going to kill your characters one by one.
- ◇ **Connections:** The relationships that connect your character with those played by the people on your left and right.
- ◇ **Motivations:** What drives your character and shapes his response to this horror.
- ◇ **Special abilities:** Out-of-game powers that let you affect the story's course.
- ◇ **Flashback Resolution Table:** Complications that arise at the end of a flashback scene.

- ◇ **Continuing Resolution Table:** Further complications, but more importantly, which character dies!

## SCRIPTS

Which script should you pick? Obviously, the one that everyone wants! Talk to the other players and decide which sounds most fun. Because you generate new characters, connections, motivations, and resolutions each game, you can play the same script repeatedly and have a different story every time!

This book comes with four scripts:

1. **Arkham County:** Massachusetts, 1923. You received a letter from an old colleague, begging you to come to Arkham County to help him protect its residents from some unnamed horror. Your friend had dabbled in the occult and read many ancient, strange books, but you have never heard him so disturbed. People have been disappearing in the county, and now whatever is taking them is after you.
2. **Camp Chippapuok:** In the early 1980s, a group of teenagers are looking for a place to party. Someone mentions the old, abandoned Camp Chippapuok upstate. Hey, why not? No one's there right now, not after all those kids died decades ago. It's the perfect place to drink some beer, smoke some weed, and maybe even get lucky! But the thing that killed those kids is still there, and it's not happy to find all these teenagers in its camp.
3. **Cold Dark Space:** The deep space exploration vessel Henry Hudson surveyed planet HN-112 as ordered. The scientists, crew, and Marines found the planet to be Earth-like, full of life and

ripe for colonization. Samples of the local flora and fauna were taken as per regulations, and now the Hudson is on route back to Earth. But something from HN-112 killed the captain, and that thing is loose somewhere on the ship. Are you next?

**4. Whitechapel Vigilance Committee:** Jack the Ripper is terrorizing London's Whitechapel neighborhood. Ladies of the evening have not only been murdered, but mutilated as well. With the police unable to protect the people or find the killer, volunteers have formed a "vigilance" committee to patrol the evening streets. But tonight, something is hunting the hunters--the volunteers are now being killed by this mysterious Jack.

More scripts can be found online at [happybishopgames.com](http://happybishopgames.com). You can also make up your own. (And if you make your own, please send an email to [wjmacguffin@gmail.com](mailto:wjmacguffin@gmail.com) and tell us about it. We may be able to help lay it out and host it online.)

Once you've picked a script, let everyone read the information about the background (which explains how the characters got together) and the monster (which explains what's trying to kill them). Once that is done, it's time to build some characters.

*Example: Adam, Dorene, Evan, and Emily talk about what kind of horror stories they like and dislike. Adam loves Friday the 13th, but no one else does. Evan and Emily love Cthulhu stories, and Adam and Dorene are okay with that, so the group picks Arkham County as their script.*

## DICE AND CHOICES

Before going into the script, you should have three dice in front of you: a d4, a d6, and a d8. (If you don't have enough for everyone, no problem. You can share or download a free dice-

rolling app.) These will be needed to help make choices in the three parts of character creation: connections, motivations, and special abilities. Soon, you will assign one die to each of these three parts. For example, you could assign the d4 to connections, the d8 to motivations, and the d6 to special abilities. Or that four-sided die could go to motivations, or to special abilities--your choice. But each die can only be used for one part. You cannot roll a d8 for both connections and motivations, for example.

Why select one die over another? Generally, the higher options on those tables have more powerful or interesting choices. For example, look at this table of connections from the script Whitechapel Vigilance Committee:

1. Working class
2. Addictions
3. *The Ten Bells*
4. Other
5. Middle class
6. Criminal underground
7. The Royals
8. Whitechapel District

If you want a chance to play a royal or a someone who lives in Whitechapel, you would need to assign your eight-sided die to connections. (It's not guaranteed as you could still roll a 1, but you have zero chance if you don't use a d8 for this part.) But assigning that d8 to connections eliminates the higher options from motivations and special abilities.

No choice is bad. But you will have to think a little about what choices you want available.

Note: Connections includes a second roll that ALWAYS uses the four-sided die. Using the d4 here does not mean you cannot use the d4 again! This is a special thing.

*Example: Adam doesn't really care about the special abilities--he's more interested in character--so he assigns his d4 to that. Between motivations and connections,*

*he's more interested in his character's motivation, so he assigns his d8 to motivations and the d6 to connections. That gives Adam connections d6, motivations d8, and special abilities d4.*

## CREATING CHARACTERS

Now that you have assigned your dice to the three parts, you are ready to create your character.

You should have either a blank copy of the *One by One* character sheet (found in the back of this book or online at [happybishopgames.com](http://happybishopgames.com)) or something you can write on, like a piece of paper or an index card. As you make your character, you'll be writing things down like your name and connections to other characters.

Before you do anything else, look at the players to your left and right. Your character will have a connection to both of their characters. And that's how we start character creation.

## CONNECTIONS

**Connections** are the relationships between characters. They can be romantic relationships (like husband-wife), familial relationships (like father-son), or just about anything that connects two people. The connection doesn't have to be strong, and it can be downright toxic, but there must be something between the two characters. This helps generate drama during the game and gives you a better understanding of how to play your character.

You will be creating the connection between your character and the character belonging to the player on your right. That means the player on your left will be creating the connection between her character and yours.

To begin, pick the die you assigned to connections and roll it. Look up the result on the **General Connections** table (the one with eight options) to see the general connection between the two characters. Then, grab the d4 (even if you assigned it to another part--this is a special thing)

and roll on the relevant **Specific Connections** table (the ones with only four options). If you were using the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee script and rolled a 4 on your d8, you get Medical and would roll the d4 on the Medical table.

Again, this establishes the connection between your character and the one used by the player on your right. The player on your left will do the same for her character and yours.

You'll notice the specific connection has one or more questions to be answered. These need to be answered before moving on! Talk to the players and decide upon the details collaboratively. You can stick with just the player on your left or right, or you can involve the whole group--it's your call. As you make decisions, write them down on your character sheet, piece of paper, or whatever you chose. That way, you can easily reference these details during the game.

No one has to go first -- everyone can do this together.

*Example: Dorene is sitting to the right of Adam, so he will be rolling for the connection between their characters. Since Adam had assigned his d6 to connection, he rolls that and gets a 5. Using the general connections table in the Arkham County script, that means Adam and Dorene's characters are connected by "Crime". Adam rolls a d4 (which is always used for the specific connections roll) and gets a 3 -- "Bad cop and bootlegger".*

*Adam and Dorene talk about the details. They decide Adam's character is the crooked cop and Dorene's is the bootlegger. After a bit more talk, they decide that the cop is on the take because his mother is sick and he needs money for her medical bills, whereas the bootlegger is doing this simply to get rich quick. The two have actually become friends over the past year and even drink together at the local bar*

from time to time.

Both players make some notes about all of this on their character sheet so they can remind themselves of the details later on.

## RESOLVING CONNECTIONS

You make the connection for the player on your right, and the player on your left makes the connection for you. That gives you two connections -- and sometimes they conflict. How can your character be both a bad cop and a priest? Or a beggar and a nurse?

There are two ways to resolve this conflict:

**1. One connection is from the past, the other is current.** If your connections give you two jobs, you worked one, quit it, and started a new job. You used to be a bad cop and now you're a priest--or you used to be a priest and now you're a cop.

**2. Both connections are current, either secretly or openly.** If your connections give you two husbands, either you are a secret bigamist or one of your relationships isn't officially a marriage (but might as well be). You are a nurse, but thanks to an opium addiction, you are always broke and beg for money.

In other words, use any conflict between your two connections as an opportunity to further define your character. If you cannot think of a way to resolve two connections, talk to the group. If everyone decides the two just cannot be reconciled, then you can roll again on the tables to pick a new connection.

Yet sometimes the two connections will work just fine together. If you roll "Lovers" for the connection on your right, and the person on your left rolls "Rival scientists", you have a romantic relationship with the character to your right and a professional rivalry with the character on your left.

## CAN I MAKE UP MY OWN CONNECTIONS?

Of course -- assuming everyone playing is okay with your connection. If at least one player objects, then you have to either come up with a new idea or stick with rolling on the tables.

Since specific connections usually have two choices (such as bad cop or bootlegger), sometimes you can resolve a potential conflict by choosing the less problematic option for your character.

Once you have two connections, make sure you write them down, including any pertinent details. Then you can choose your motivation.

*Example: Emily is sitting to the left of Adam, and she rolls "Priest and parishioner". Since Adam already chose to be a bad cop, Emily and Adam decide his character should be the parishioner because he can be both a bad cop and a parishioner--no conflict. Emily's character will be the priest.*

## MOTIVATIONS

In the script, below the connections tables, you'll find a table with eight **motivations**. You need to roll your assigned die to see what drives your character in this story. These motivations are meant to help give direction and structure to your character. In other words, they help answer, "What does my character want to do?" If you're ever stuck trying to decide what your character would do in a scene, use your motivation.

As with having two connections, you might need to resolve an apparent conflict between your connections and your motivation. This is an opportunity to further define your character! Create a backstory, details, or what have you to explain why your character has this motivation.

Again, feel free to roll again if you cannot make it work.

That said, don't feel compelled to decide all of the details yet! Many can be defined as you play the game by introducing things into the story as you tell it. For example, if your motivation is to pay back a debt, you could decide during character creation what that debt is and who it is owed to -- or you could wait to see if anything makes sense while playing the game.

*Example: Adam assigns the d8 to motivations and rolls a 7. In the Arkham County script, that means his character's motivation is "Prevent an ancient prophecy from coming true". His character is a bad cop and a parishioner, so Adam needs to explain what the prophecy is and how his cop/parishioner discovered it.*

*After discussing it with the other players, Adam creates a short backstory. His character feels guilty about being on the take, so he routinely helps with repairs at the church. One day, he discovered an old book hidden under the floorboards that contained the prophecy about the end of the world. Adam isn't sure what that prophecy should be about, so he decides to make it up during the game.*

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

As with connections and motivations above, you roll your assigned die and write down the relevant information on your character sheet. However, this power is used out-of-character, meaning it's a way for you to affect the game as a player, not your character. You do not need to explain anything in terms of your character!

You can only use your **special ability** once per game (yes, as in the whole game). Use it wisely. But because this is an out-of-character ability, it can be used regardless of whether your character is in a

scene or not.

*Example: Since Adam assigned his d4 to special abilities, he rolls and gets a 2 -- "Add minions (small monsters) during a scene". This means that, once per game, he can force the story to include minions for a scene, even if his character is not present. What that exactly means is really up to the players in the scene, i.e. the ones with characters in it, but you force the scene to change with this ability.*

## OTHER DETAILS

Your character now has two connections, one motivation, and one special ability. You should fill out the rest of the character sheet and decide the details such as gender, ethnicity, age, and any other facts you think would be pertinent to the game. These will likely not have any affect on the game, but it helps knowing a character's gender or age when roleplaying a scene.

Once you are done with this, your character is finished and you are ready to play!

*Example: Adam thinks about his bad cop/parishioner who must prevent an ancient prophecy from coming true. He pictures the character as a bitter middle-aged man named Michael (after the archangel). Adam puts Michael's age at 35 and makes him a typical white New Englander with a strong accent.*

Scripts also come with two more tables:

### **Continuing Resolution** and **Flashback**

**Resolution.** These are not used in character generation, so they can be ignored for now. When the game begins and you finish a turn, you will be rolling either a d4, d6, or d8 on these tables to see how your scene resolves. That's why you need to keep your script handy!



## TURN ORDER

The last piece of setup you need to worry about is turn order. The person with the highest die assigned to special abilities (usually the d8) gets to go first. If more than one player did this, they should roll those dice and the player with the highest result goes first--reroll any ties.

As we said above, all characters start the game

together at the Crisis Point scene. After that, play begins with the first player and continues clockwise until everyone has had two turns.

*Example: Adam and Evan put d4 into special abilities, so they're not going first. Dorene and Emily both used their d6 for special abilities, so they roll. Dorene gets a 2; Emily gets a 5. Emily will go first once the Crisis scene is complete.*

## SYNOPSIS

- ◇ Pick a script everyone can enjoy
- ◇ Make sure everyone gets what the script is about
- ◇ Assign a d4, d6, and d8 to connections, motivations, and special abilities
- ◇ Roll and compare results to the relevant tables in the script
- ◇ Talk through any potential conflicts with the results
- ◇ Write down the results on your character sheet
- ◇ Come up with other details like gender and age
- ◇ Highest Special Ability die goes first (roll for ties)

# PLAYING THE GAME

*Ripley: They cut the power.*

*Hudson: What do you mean, "They cut the power"?  
How could they cut the power, man? They're animals!  
-- Aliens*

The basic unit of play, the "turn" in *One by One*, is the **scene**. When it is your turn, your character will be the focus for one scene. You get two turns per game, so your character will be the focus of two scenes. (You can be in others scenes too, but that's not guaranteed.)

What is a scene? Think of your favorite movie or TV show. You'll probably be able to identify chase scenes, love scenes, dream scenes, and so on. Scenes are discrete parts of the story. Put a bunch of scenes together and you got yourself a story.

Whenever your character is in a scene, you play her similar to how an actor plays a character. There are big differences of course--you don't need to get up and walk around, for example--but the core concept is the same. Talk like your character. Use her motivation to decide what she will do and how she will react to things, then verbally act it out. You can always drop out of character to describe what's going on. This is especially true when it is your turn. You will need to get out of character to describe the scenery and explain what's going on.

## THE CRISIS SCENE

Every game of *One by One* begins with the **crisis scene**. This scene is set roughly halfway through the game's story, and all characters are present. This means no one is the lead or supporting character -- everyone is equal. It also means your character has encountered the monster already, and things are getting very dangerous -- it really is a crisis!

Crisis scenes also have two central questions already made up, and they are the same for every game regardless of your script:

1. What do we know about the monster?
2. What is our plan to defeat the monster?

For the first question, you and the other players need to start defining the monster that's after you all. The script does this to some extent. For example, Whitechapel Vigilance Committee explicitly names the monster as Jack the Ripper. But is Jack targeting prostitutes? Do you know how he is killing his victims? Are there any clues as to his identity? As you can tell, you shouldn't create all of the details--just what your characters know.

For the second question, you and the other characters (not players!) need to come up with some sort of plan for how you can defeat the monster--even if that plan is just to run away! But now that you figured out what everyone knows about the monster, your characters can use that to decide what to do next. This helps give structure to continuing scenes and explains why your characters are doing something instead of just sitting around.

Once you have collaboratively answered these questions, the scene is over and regular turns begin, starting with the player who won the turn order during setup.

*Example: Everyone's character is in the Crisis scene, and according to the Arkham County script, the characters are in the local university library after an encounter with some minions went bad. Through roleplaying their characters, the players establish that they are researching the minions in the university's infamous occult stacks. As far as the characters know, none of the minions followed them there.*

*As the scene progresses, Adam, Dorene, Evan, and Emily keep roleplaying their*

characters and adding details about the monster and their characters. Eventually, they decide the characters have discovered the following:

*The monster is called the World Dreamer of Mthuggoth; it lives in another dimension but speaks to humans through dreams; Dr. Cyril Hall, the mutual friend who brought everyone to Arkham County, recently came back from Antarctica with a relic called the Sleeping Stone; and a cult (the minions) arrived to steal the relic and bring the World Dreamer into our universe.*

*The plan is to find and destroy the Sleeping Stone. This will not only stop the cultists plan, it will give them no reason to stay in Arkham County.*

## LEAD AND SUPPORTING

Scenes always involve at least two characters: the **lead** character and the **supporting** character.

The lead character is the focus of the scene. When it is your turn, your character is the lead. That means your scenes will focus on your character.

The supporting character does just that -- he supports the lead in the scene. But “support” doesn’t necessarily mean help the character succeed! It just means she helps the lead carry the narrative load. When it is your turn, you must name one other player’s character as the supporting character.

Other characters can be included in the scene, but the focus is never on them. Such additional characters are called **extras**.

*Example: When it is Adam’s turn, his character Michael is the focus of the scene. Adam decides that he wants a scene with Father Gilman, the priest played by Emily.*

*Michael’s motivation is tied to an ancient book he found in the church, so he wants a chance to explore how that will affect the relationship between bad cop Michael and priest Father Gilman.*

## CONTINUING VS. FLASHBACK

When it is your turn, you get to roleplay one of two scene types: **flashback** and **continuing**.

Flashback scenes are just that--flashbacks to before the crisis scene began. Characters are usually not killed in a flashback scene -- how else did they act in the crisis scene? -- but when you make a resolution roll at the end of a scene, you will add complications to either your character, the supporting character, or both. Because flashbacks happen before the crisis scene, you can introduce extras such as weapons or vital information to the game and make them available in future scenes. For example, if your character finds a gun in a flashback scene, she can have it in future scenes because she already has it!

Continuing scenes take place after the crisis scene (and by extension, after all flashback scenes). Either the lead or the supporting character is killed in a continuing scene, and that’s decided by the resolution roll.

You have two scenes in each game in which you are the lead, which means you will create two scenes per game. **One must be a continuing scene.** The second can be either continuing or flashback, and you can use either for your first turn. (Unless your character dies before he can get a chance for a continuing scene. Then both of your scenes will be flashbacks.) But you can put them in any order--you can start with a flashback or a continuing.

*Example: Adam decides this scene would work great as a flashback scene. It will probably establish the two characters (Michael and Father Gilman) as either friends fighting against evil or bitter enemies, so Adam wants that decided*

*before they create more of the story. Either way can make for a good game!*

## THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Before you begin the scene, you must create the **central question**. This is the scene's purpose; what will be explained by the scene, or how the scene will advance the story's plot. This will be answered by roleplaying the scene, and when the answer becomes apparent, the scene and your turn ends. For example, if you are playing "A Cold, Dark Space", you might want a flashback scene showing characters on the alien planet. Sounds cool, but what is the scene about? The central question is what that scene is about.

To help create a central question, try to find the intersection of the game's script and your character's motivation. If you are playing A Cold, Dark Space and your character's motivation is, "Protect the company's secrets to gain a promotion", then one possible question would be, "How can I destroy the evidence linking the company to the alien monster?" (Of course, you'll need to have found the evidence first, maybe in a flashback scene.) The only thing off-limit is to avoid questions that end the game by destroying the monster--that's handled during the game's climax scene (see below).

The best questions are open-ended, meaning they cannot be answered with a yes or no. "How", "Where", and "What" are great ways to begin your central question, because it makes sure that there's a lot for your character (and the other players' characters) to do. Compare "Will Jennifer escape from the asylum?" with, "How will Jennifer escape from the asylum?" Which question give you more to play with?

Open-ended questions also lead to something interesting happening. When you answer the question "Is the monster following Marco?", what will happen? Technically, the monster can be stalking Marco without anything important happening. That's why open-ended questions like,

"How will Marco deal with the monster following him?" are usually better.

That said, a closed-ended question sometimes works just fine. "Will Rosa be caught by the evil cultists?" works because there's plenty of lead up to the answer, e.g. describing how Rosa deals with the cultists trying to catch her. Just make sure it's interesting. "Can Andre fall asleep?" won't exactly produce a riveting scene. (Unless poor Andre is about to enter a really messed up dream world ....)

You should also try to avoid multipart questions such as, "When will Det. Driscoll realize his wife is really a monster, and what will we do when he finds out?" There's too much to answer in that question, and you will either rush through the scene too fast or the scene will take too long.

If you are unsure about whether your central question works, ask yourself if you'd like to watch a movie with this scene in it. If yes, go for it! If you realize you'd probably head to the bathroom when this scene hits the screen, try a new question. Since you have a supporting character, you can always ask for help or advice from that player--but ultimately, the rights and responsibilities belong to you when it is your turn.

## SAMPLE CENTRAL QUESTIONS

### Arkham County

- ◇ "Where is the monster hiding?"
- ◇ "How deeply has the cult infiltrated the local police force?"
- ◇ "How will Patrick and Ambrose avoid being captured by the minions?"

### Camp Chippapuok

- ◇ "How is Paul going to try and get Lori to sleep with him?"
- ◇ "What will the killer do if he finds Chad and Mary in the boathouse?"
- ◇ "How will Sheryl react when she finds the dismembered bodies of her friends?"

## A Cold, Dark Space

- ◇ “How quickly can the monster move around the spaceship?”
- ◇ “What is the monster’s weakness?”
- ◇ “How far is Lt. Bradley willing to go to protect his Marines?”

## Whitechapel Vigilance Committee

- ◇ “Does Scotland Yard have more information about the killer than they’ve admitted?”
- ◇ “Where has Dr. Scovell disappeared to each night?”
- ◇ “Who will be Jack’s victim tonight?”

*Example: Since Adam’s character Michael found an evil book in a church where Father Gilman works, Adam thinks a good central question would be, “Why was this book in Father Gilman’s church?” Maybe Father Gilman is secretly worshipping the World Dreamer of Mthuggoth, or maybe not. We won’t know until the scene is played.*

## SCENE STRUCTURE

All scenes have the same structure: framing, beginning, middle, and end. But unlike the game’s turns, you don’t need to make these concrete, separate parts of a scene. It just helps to think of scenes as having these parts as you roleplay through them.

You start with the **framing**, which is where you set some (but definitely not all!) of the scene’s details. Where is the scene taking place? What does it look like? What time of day is it? Who is there? All of this is answered when you frame a scene. You always frame your scenes, i.e. the scenes you get on your turn.

In the **beginning**, you establish what’s going on through roleplaying. You can spend time as

## CAN I END A SCENE WITH A VAGUE ANSWER TO THE CENTRAL QUESTION?

In a word, no. Sometimes you might be tempted to have a vague, unclear answer to a scene’s central question. “How will Andrea react to the death of her partner?” is a great question, and it might be interesting to describe the character never fully reacting. Is he angry? Happy? We don’t know!

And if you don’t know, the scene isn’t over. Until Andrea’s reaction is clear, other players won’t know how to roleplay when their characters interact with her. And remember, a clear answer to the players is not necessarily the same as a clear answer to the characters. Andrea’s reaction might be to remain outwardly calm while raging deep inside. That’s a great answer!

Keep playing until something shakes out.

a narrator or director (“My character, Michael, walks slowly past the dead body as if he doesn’t see it.”), or you could establish everything through dialogue. Your goal is to make it clear what’s going to happen. Everyone in the scene can participate in the beginning, but it’s mostly done by the lead.

The **middle** is the heart of the scene. This is where the action happens, be it literal action (running away from the monster, a car chase, fighting bad guys, etc.) or figurative action (a powerful debate, finding the body of a lost friend, falling in love, etc.) Remember that each scene has a question that must be answered. The middle doesn’t have to be completely about this question, but it does need to center on it. Most of your turn will be spent in the middle of a scene.

In the **end**, the action stops. The car chase must end, or the debate must finish. More importantly, the scene’s question must be clearly answered in

the end. If the question is, “Why is the monster trying to kill everyone in town?”, then in the end, you must clearly answer why the monster is killing everyone. (This answer can be contradicted later in the game, but it still needs to be clearly answered here.) But the end is also home to the resolution roll, where you will add complications to characters or even kill them off! See below for more information.

Some players will want a minute or two to think about how these parts might look; sort of pre-planning the scene. That’s fine, but be prepared to accept curve balls thrown by the other players. And don’t take too long either--the game’s started!

*Example: Adam starts by framing the scene. It’s the day before the crisis, and Adam says his character Michael is working at the church as he does on Saturdays. It’s late, and Father Gilman is the last one in the church besides Michael. They are together in the church near the altar.*

*Then Adam takes a minute to see how he wants the scene to unfold. The beginning will be some small talk, but soon the middle will start and Michael will demand to know why the evil book was in the church. The rest depends on how Father Gilman reacts, so Adam doesn’t plan any further.*

## NARRATIVE CONTROL

When it is your turn, you have some control over the scene. That means you decide how to frame the scene and, to some degree, what occurs. You must still push towards answering the scene’s central question, and you can always take suggestions from players (even ones without a character in the scene), but it is your right and responsibility to make this scene when your character is the lead. This is called **narrative control**, since you have

control over the story.

With that power comes the responsibility to not be a jerk about it. For example, another player might say, “Hey, let’s make the alien creature be able to take human form! Like in *The Thing*, it could look just like us!” If you don’t like that idea, you can cancel it. But should you? Think twice before using your narrative control. This is a collaborative game, after all.

That said, this scene is your turn and you have that power. If someone introduces a detail or idea that you really, really don’t like, then politely refuse it. The goal with this rule is to make sure your turn remains your turn, and not the turn of whomever is the loudest.

This can be a heavy responsibility. But it’s also one of the most rewarding parts of this game; to create a scene and direct it while roleplaying your character in it.

*Example: Adam starts the scene. Emily and he roleplay some small talk between Fr. Gilman and Michael, talking about church attendance and an upcoming wedding. Dorene doesn’t have a character but chimes in, saying, “Wait, what if Michael is the one getting married? Maybe that’s why he’s so upset over finding that evil book in the church!” Adam thinks about it but decides his character already has plenty of reason to be upset with just finding the damn thing in a church. “I think Michael loves his church, and finding the evil book here is enough to make him upset. Putting a marriage in the mix will complicate things too much for my taste.” Dorene’s suggestion does not get into the game.*

## REWRITES AND CUTS

There are two exceptions to the rule of narrative control: rewrites and cuts. Both can only be used once per game, and never in the climax scene.

**Rewrites** force the current player (the one whose character is the lead) to change something she just introduced into her scene. You decide what the replacement will be like, not the lead's player. You only have one rewrite per game, and rewrites can only be used when your character is the supporting in the scene.

**Cuts** force the current player to change something. However, you cannot dictate what the change will be. It must be substantively different than what's being replaced, but the current player decides what the change will look like. Any player can use this at any time, but you only have one cut per game.

In either case, you need to clearly explain what you want changed. No one can refuse rewrites or cuts, and as such, they cannot be used on each other. If you call a cut on a particular action, no one can call a cut or rewrite on the new action replacing it.

Because you only get one cut and one rewrite for the entire game, use them judiciously.

*Example: Adam and Emily continue to roleplay their characters. Michael finally shows the book to Fr. Gilman, starting the middle of the scene. Emily doesn't want her character to be a secret cultist, so Fr. Gilman claims to have no idea what the book was doing in his church.*

*Evan doesn't like that, so he calls, "Cut! If Fr. Gilman has no clue what's going on, that doesn't sound fun. It also doesn't answer the central question, so figure something else out." Emily must think of something else. She thinks about it a bit, and then roleplays a contrite Fr. Gilman explaining that the church was once home to an evil cult. He thought he got rid of everything, but this book must have slipped through the cracks.*

*Michael's not sure whether to believe him*

*or not, so he orders Fr. Gilmore to burn the book right then and there. Dorene calls, "Rewrite! Fr. Gilman can't bring himself to burn the book. Instead, he's too curious about what's in it, so he starts reading it instead." Emily roleplays just that, making Michael think Fr. Gilman is evil after all.*

*Evan and Dorene had a lot of say in that scene, especially considering they have no characters in it, but they can only do something similar one more time in the entire game. But the central question is answered -- the book is there because an old cult once used the church -- and the scene can proceed to the end.*

## RESOLUTION ROLLS

When the central question was answered through roleplaying, it's time for the **resolution roll**. The lead's player picks one of his three dice (d4, d6, or d8) and rolls against the script's resolution table (either continuing or flashback). The higher the die type (i.e. the closer to d8), the more likely something positive (or at least not negative) will happen to the lead character.

After rolling, the current player gives the rolled die to the supporting character's player, who in turn gives one of her three dice to the current player. This exchange of dice does not have to be equal; if you give your d8, you can get a d4 in return.

This means your choice of die carries some strategic importance. Generally, the lower the die roll, the more likely the lead will be negatively affected -- and maybe even die. But as soon as you choose your d8 for a scene's resolution roll, you hand that over to the supporting player, who could very well hand you a d4 in return. But if you use a d4, that goes to the other player, loading him up with low dice. Choose wisely.

Sometimes a resolution fits perfectly at the

end of a scene. Other times, the players need to roleplay a bit to make the resolution fit. Either is fine, but the resolution must happen.

*Example: the central question to Adam's scene was, "Why was this book in Father Gilman's church?" After roleplaying with a cut and a rewrite, everyone agrees the answer is, "The church was once used by a cult who left it behind." Although Fr. Gilman's role is still up in the air, that's not necessarily part of the central question. And even if Fr. Gilman is lying about his role in the cult, the fact is now established that the cult left the book behind accidentally years ago.*

*It's time for the resolution roll. Since this is a flashback, Adam and Emily look at the script's Flashback Resolution table. Since this is the first scene of the game, both Adam and Emily have a d4, d6, and d8 available. After thinking about it, Adam decides he wants to roll well, so he picks a d8. He rolls and gets an 8! That means Fr. Gilman, the supporting character, isn't even human and hasn't been for years. Emily is a bit grumpy, so she gives Adam a d4 for his d8. Now, Adam has a d4, a d4, and a d6, whereas Emily has a d6, a d8, and a d8.*

*Since the resolution says nothing about revealing not being human, Adam and Emily agree to keep it a secret. But Michael is now suspicious of Fr. Gilman, and in continuing scenes later in the game, any player can reference this resolution.*

## SURVIVAL ROLLS

When a continuing scene resolution table calls for a **survival roll**, the lead's player and the supporting player roll one die each. The lead's player must

use the same die he just rolled for the Continuing Scene table, whereas the supporting character's player can pick any one of the three dice she currently has.

The higher roll wins, meaning that character survives and the other one dies. In case of a tie, the higher die type wins (d8 beats d6). If the die type is the same, the lead wins.

Why picking one die over another is obvious -- a d8 is more likely to beat a d6--you have to be careful. After the roll is resolved, the two players swap the dice they rolled. That means if you use your d8 in your first turn, you give that up. If another player brings your character in as a supporting character in a continuing scene, you don't have that d8 to use anymore. And since the player you traded dice with earlier likely lost his character thanks to you, which of his dice do you think he gave you? You could easily wind up with three d4s, making your character's death very likely.

Note that, if your character dies, you can still play in flashback scenes as the lead character, a supporting character, or as an extra. However, you cannot play in any new continuing scenes. If your character dies before you had a chance to play a continuing scene, then both of your scenes will be flashbacks.

*Example: Emily's turn is next, and she starts a continuing scene with Dorene's character, a money-hungry bootlegger named Dan O'Shea. Since this is a continuing scene, either Fr. Gilman or Dan is going to die in the end.*

*The central question is, "Who has the Sleeping Stone now?" After roleplaying an investigation in several towns, Fr. Gilman and Dan discover the stone is in the house of Lady Hobart, a rich widow. Since the question is answered, the scene comes to an end, and it's time to make a resolution roll.*



*Emily has two d8s and one d6. She really wants to survive this scene, but she wants to save the big dice for later, so she rolls her d6. She gets a 3, which means her and Dorene must make a survival roll to see who lives with a moderate injury -- and who dies.*

*Since Emily chose a d6 for the resolution roll, she has to use that die. Dorene has d4, d6, and d8 left, so she picks her d8 for the roll. The two roll. Emily gets a 5, while Dorene gets a 2. That means Fr. Gilman survives and Dan dies.*

*This doesn't quite fit with how they ended the scene, so Emily and Dorene roleplay a small bit where the cultists find them and attack. Fr. Gilman's arm is broken in the melee and abandons Dan to the cultists, who make short work of him. But thanks to flashback scenes, Dorene is still in the game.*

## THE CLIMAX SCENE

When every player has been the lead for two scenes, there is one last scene -- the **climax**. In this scene, the last surviving character is the lead, and other players' characters cannot be included as supporting characters or extras. (They're all dead.) As with the crisis scene, there are two pre-written questions to be answered:

1. Will the monster be defeated?
2. Will the last character survive?

The player otherwise roleplays the scene as normal. Other players can roleplay extras (just not their characters since they're dead), but rewrites and cuts cannot be used in the climax scene.

Does it matter if your character survives or not? Not really. You've already won the game so to speak, so the most important thing is to come up with an ending that's fun for everyone. It's still your scene, so you have narrative control. But like we said above, be wise with your power.

## SYNOPSIS

- ◇ All players start together in a crisis scene.
- ◇ Your character is the lead; another is the supporting.
- ◇ You get two scenes per game. One must be continuing, the other is either continuing or flashback. One character dies in each continuing scene.
- ◇ Each scene has a central question that must be answered.
- ◇ Rewrites force specific changes; cuts force unspecified changes
- ◇ Pick one of your three dice to make a resolution roll. Use that same die for a survival roll if necessary. Lead and supporting players exchange the dice they use.
- ◇ When only one character is alive, that player plays through a climax scene.

# ONE BY ONE CHARACTER SHEET

Character name: \_\_\_\_\_ | Age: \_\_\_\_\_ | Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Player name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Connections ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

### Left Connection

Character name:

Connection:

Notes:

### Right Connection

Character name:

Connection:

Notes:

Motivation: ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

Special ability: ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

# ONE BY ONE CHARACTER SHEET

Character name: \_\_\_\_\_ | Age: \_\_\_\_\_ | Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Player name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Connections ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

### Left Connection

Character name:

Connection:

Notes:

### Right Connection

Character name:

Connection:

Notes:

Motivation: ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

Special ability: ( d4 / d6 / d8 )

## A note on the One by One quickstart edition

This version of the game is **absolutely free**. If you got this without paying for it, good for you! (And if you did pay something, please let me know, because no one should be charging for this.)

I wanted to release a quickstart version of this game so everyone could freely download and share it. Not only do I hope to build some momentum before going into a Kickstarter and eventually selling this game, I always hate it when I play an RPG and only one guy has the rules. Anyone who wants to play *One by One* can should a copy of the core rules, don't you think?

That's why you'll notice this document is a bit sparse. There's no artwork, and while the layout works, it's a bit spartan. None of that is necessary to play the game, so I'm saving the art and whatnot for when I publish the proper game sometime around **late Q2 of 2015**. There's also no scripts in this document, and while those are technically not necessary to play, you kind of need them. I'll be putting a free one up on my website ([happybishopgames.com](http://happybishopgames.com)) as soon as possible, which will also be free to download and share.

You can get a taste for how the game works, and if you like it, you can back our Kickstarter or buy a copy when we release it properly.

Since this is still a work in progress, I'd love to hear what you think about the game! Be it suggestions for rule changes, layout ideas, or anything about the game, feel free to email me at [wjmacguffin@gmail.com](mailto:wjmacguffin@gmail.com). We've playtested it a few times already, but more feedback is always better than not enough. Tell us what you think!

And if you have one of those RPG review sites or podcasts, you are likewise welcome to review this quickstart edition despite it being a preliminary version of the finished game. That's because these are likely to be the rules moving forward. As we said, they've been playtested and survived. (Which is more than can be said about the players' characters.)

Thanks for taking the time to read this PDF, and again, send me an email if you have any questions or ideas. More importantly, I hope you enjoy *One by One*!

WJ MacGuffin  
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