

# **GENERAL MUD**

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**ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL,  
BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS.**

## **SO·VI·ET**

*noun* (1917) **1:** an elected governmental council or workers' council in a Communist state. **2:** *pl.* the people and esp. the political and military leaders of the U.S.S.R.

## **MUD**

*noun* (14 C) **1:** soft wet earth. **2:** abusive and malicious charges or remarks.

# **THE ANIMAL MANIFESTO**

A spectre is haunting the Farm: the spectre of Animalism. The animals of the Farm toil all their lives for the Farmer. The horses give their labor to the Farmer, the cows their milk, the chickens their eggs, the pigs their very flesh. Even in death animals are butchered for the Farmer's table or boiled down for glue and parts. But some animals dream of a different Farm: a paradise where all animals are comrades, where every animal enjoys the fruits of their own toil.

General Mud is a game about the animals' revolution, and what comes after. The setting is an ordinary farm. It could be in the English countryside, or the American Midwest, or the Ukraine — anywhere animals toil for the tables of men.

The game has two distinct phases. In the first phase, the Revolution, there is no Game Master as such. Each player takes the role of a barnyard revolutionary, a Proletarian Comrade (PC) in the Soviet of Beasts. All the players are equal in narrating the overthrow of the tyrant Farmer. In the second phase, the Trials, one of those PCs will emerge as the leader of the animals: the fearsome General Mud (GM). Inside the game world, General Mud is a ruthless dictator — Stalin by way of Napoleon the pig — who will stop at nothing to cement his (or her) rule. In real life, the player of General Mud becomes the Game Master and directs play like a GM in any traditional role-playing game. But the other PCs may chafe under the General's rule. It is possible for the General Mud's old comrades to overthrow him... and take his place.

Throughout these struggles, the ideals of the revolution do battle with the muddy realities of a post-revolutionary state. The PCs confront terrible pressure to compromise their ideals — to fight dirty, to betray one's comrades. Sometimes this is the only way to survive — but each time the ideals of the revolution are abused in this way, the red banner of the Soviet of Beasts sinks a little further into black, black mud.

Animals of the Farm, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains.

# BEFORE THE REVOLUTION



Here is what you'll need to play General Mud: these rules, blank paper and writing utensils for character sheets, a GM screen, and a large number of six-sided dice. Ideally, the dice will be in three colors: **red (Soviet)**, **white (Bourgeois)**, and **black (Mud)**. If you don't have the right colors, you can designate types of dice by where you put them on the table. Just have each player draw an X on a piece of blank paper, dividing the page into quarters. Label the quarters of each page **Soviet**, **Bourgeois**, **Mud**, and **Hand** (for the dice you have not played), and you're ready to go.

Play begins with the creation of **Proletarian Comrades**, or PCs. Each player creates one Proletarian Comrade. This includes *all* the players — there is no General Mud among you yet. Together, your PCs make up the **Soviet of Beasts**, a small council of animal comrades who will inspire the other animals and lead them to revolution. There are many animals on the Farm, and all may join in the Revolution in their way, but your PCs, the Soviet of Beasts, are the true vanguard of the revolution. Only you have the vision to raise the Red Banner and wake the other animals from their oppression! Only you have the courage to overthrow the Farmer and usher in the paradise of beasts! And from your number, General Mud will emerge...

## CREATING THE PCS

Creating your Proletarian Comrades is simple. First, choose a **name** and a **species** for your PC. There are many sorts of animals on the Farm and all the animals — at least, all the deserving animals — will be united in the Revolution. There are pigs who are stout and clever, dogs who are loyal and

fierce, cows who are sweet and docile, donkeys who are old and tough. There are horses, hens and roosters, goats and sheep. There are other animals who visit the Farm, even if they do not belong to the Farmer. There is a raven that alights on the Farmer's fence, there are rabbits that feed in his garden, and there are rats that nest in his barn. You may choose any sort of animal for your PC that one might expect to find on or around the Farm. Any animal but one, that is: man. Man is a tyrant, the first enemy of the Revolution. There will be no men in the paradise of beasts.

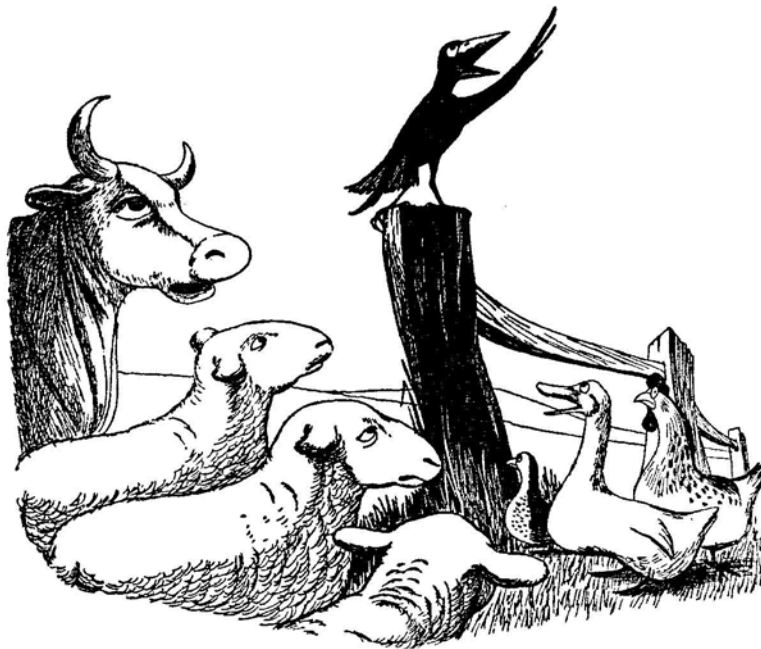
Now reflect a bit about your PC's personality, appearance, and reputation. How do the other animals see you? What are you known for? What you admired for or loved for, pitied for or feared? Assign your Proletarian Comrade three **Traits** and write them on your character sheet. These traits can and should be strongly worded, for they are things that every animal on the Farm knows about your PC.

Your first trait is a **positive trait**. It is something your comrades admire or respect or love about you. For instance: "Pavel the Mule is the strongest animal on the Farm." Whenever you bring this trait into play you will roll an extra **Soviet (red) die**.

Your second trait is a **negative trait**. It is something your comrades dislike or fear or resent about you. For instance: "Boris the Pig is ruled by his greedy appetite." Whenever you bring this trait into play you will roll an extra **Bourgeois (white) die**.

Your third trait is a **false trait**. It is something your comrades believe about you, and it may be positive or negative, but in fact it is not true. For instance: "Sasha the Cat can speak the language of men." Your false trait plays no part in the first phase of the game (The Revolution). In the second phase of the game (The Trials), whenever you bring this trait into play, you will roll an extra **Mud (black) die**.

Your PC also has one numerical score, which is **Heart**. Heart represents a host of qualities: your inner strength, your idealism, your belief in the paradise of beasts, and your will to survive. **Each PC begins the game with a Heart of 3.**



## **CREATING THE SOVIET OF BEASTS**

All of your PCs begin the game as comrades and friends who have tired of their oppression under the Farmer and joined together to plan the revolution. To do so, they form a revolutionary council called a Soviet—the Soviet of Beasts.

Once you have each created your Proletarian Comrades, you meet as a group to discuss the theory of Animalism and to draft the principles that will become law when the revolution comes. **The Soviet drafts one law for each Proletarian Comrade.** Each PC should propose a law, but all are free to discuss and debate those laws until consensus has been reached.

The laws should be statements of revolutionary optimism, reflecting your faith in your comrades, in the perfectibility of animal nature, and in the promised paradise of beasts. They should also be simple. Not all the animals on the Farm are as clever as the PCs, and a few simple phrases is all they can remember.

Here are some sample laws, taken, of course, from Orwell's *Animal Farm*. You are free to use these, modify them, or create your own—for you are the vanguard of the revolution!

WHATEVER GOES UPON TWO LEGS IS AN ENEMY.

WHATEVER GOES UPON FOUR LEGS, OR HAS WINGS, IS A FRIEND.

NO ANIMAL SHALL WEAR CLOTHES.

NO ANIMAL SHALL SLEEP IN A BED.

NO ANIMAL SHALL DRINK ALCOHOL.

NO ANIMAL SHALL KILL ANY OTHER ANIMAL.

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL.

Once the laws have been drafted—as many laws as there are PCs—the Proletarian Comrade with the neatest spelling paints those laws in block letters on the wall of the Farmer's barn. (You as actual players simply record the laws on paper somewhere where everyone can read them.)

## **SETTING UP**

The players sit in a circle around a table with their character sheets and dice before them. At this point, it doesn't matter who sits where (though it will later) because every animal is equal under Animalism. **Each player begins the game with three white Bourgeois dice in their hand.** These dice are said to be “in your hand” because they are in your hands until you formally place them on the table. A pool of black Mud dice is placed in the center of the table. This is the Mud Puddle, and any PC may draw dice from this pool upon their turn. **At the start of the game, the Mud Puddle should contain twice as many black dice as there are players playing**—so if there are four players, eight black dice are placed in the Mud Puddle before play begins. A bank of additional red, white, and black dice will be needed, but these dice are not yet “in play.”

# THE REVOLUTION



Imagine your Proletarian Comrades in the first days *after* the revolution – flush with victory, united in triumph, meeting again in the barn where the Soviet first met. They have come together to retell the story of their triumph, and instruct the other animals on the history of the Revolution. Each PC wants the story of the revolution to be noble and inspiring, to impress upon the other animals the ideals of the Soviet of Beasts. But each PC also wants to make themselves look good – because the newly freed animals will soon need a leader.

The first round or two of play describe the Revolution, in which the Proletarian Comrades lead their fellow animals in rising up against the Farmer. The Revolution differs from the later rounds of the game because at the start of play there is, as yet, no General Mud (GM). In these early rounds, all the PCs are truly equal. Play without a GM is more free form and consensual than many traditional RPGs. When General Mud is chosen, the structure of play will change.

## NARRATION

A question is posed to the players. It does not matter who asks it, because all of the Proletarian Comrades are allies together in the cause. The question is this: “How was the Farmer overthrown?”

One of you begins to answer, narrating the story of the Revolution as your particular PC remembers it. It does not matter which of you answers first, because the voices of all



the players will be heard in turn. If nobody volunteers to speak first, the player of the smallest animal will speak first, because come the Revolution, the least of the beasts shall be first.

“On Midsummer’s Eve,” you might say, “the Farmer went into town and got so drunk that he did come back until the middle of the next day. He had not bothered to feed the animals, and he had completely forgotten to milk the cows...” And so on. Note that the question is asked and answered in the past tense. The game is meant to resemble a story told after the fact. In fact, the game is a history of the Revolution and what followed as remembered at some unspecified time after the creation of the Paradise of Beasts and the rise of General Mud. What is at stake is not the success of the Revolution. The success of the Revolution is historically inevitable! What *is* at stake is how the Revolution and the Proletarian Comrades will be remembered. How will the story of General Mud be told? And so the game is played in the past tense.

At this point in the history of the Revolution, all things seem possible. So you are free to narrate whatever events you see fit, including the actions of the other Proletarian Comrades and the resolution of those actions. You should only speak for a minute or two – don’t try to tell the whole history of the Revolution! Otherwise, there are no real limits to what you can narrate at this stage. But take note: what you narrate at this stage is only your own Proletarian Comrade’s recollection of events. Others may disagree. And none of this narration will be fixed as “what happened” until after the dice are rolled. (Even *after* the dice are rolled, as you will soon discover, history can change.)

## **PUTTING DICE IN PLAY**

As you narrate your PC’s recollection of the glorious Revolution, you place a number of six-sided dice on the table in front of you. Don’t roll the dice yet! You are only putting them in play. These dice will be red, white, or black. (Remember that you begin the game with three white dice, called Bourgeois dice, and that a pool of black dice, called Mud dice, sits in the Mud Puddle at the center of the table.)



Each type of dice means something different and is tied to your narration in a different way.

When you tell of actions that benefit yourself, selfish or neutral actions, or when you describe events that give honor to your own Proletarian Comrade but bestow no particular glory or benefit to the Revolution or animal kind as a whole, **you place a number of white dice from your hand onto the table in front of you.** These are **Bourgeois dice.** They aid your own PC's individual self-interest. You may put all the Bourgeois dice in your hand into play, or just some of them, or none at all. If your narration invokes your PC's negative trait, you may put one additional Bourgeois dice (from the bank rather than your hand) into play. The more white dice you play, the more self-serving your narration should be.

When you tell of noble actions and selfless sacrifices, or when you describe events that honor your Proletarian Comrades or glorify the ideals of Animalism, **you exchange a number of white dice from your hand for red dice and place those red dice onto the table in front of you.** These are **Soviet dice.** They aid the cause of the Revolution and the collective rights of all animals. You may exchange all the white Bourgeois dice in your hand for red Soviet dice, or just some of them, or none at all. If your narration invokes your PC's positive trait, you may put one additional Soviet dice (from the bank rather than your hand) into play. The more red dice you play, the more noble and inspiring your narration should be.

## **ELABORATION AND CONTRADICTION**

Once you have spoken your piece and placed some dice upon the table, the player to your immediate left speaks up. Now he or she tells his or her own Proletarian Comrade's recollection of the Revolution. That PC may continue narration where you left off ("And it was then that the geese and chickens joined our glorious fight!"), tell a different part of the Revolution's history ("Meanwhile, I had led the goats and sheep to the door of the Farmhouse..."), or actually contradict and revise the narration that has gone before ("Comrade Pavel misremembers! It was no mule who entered the tool shed but I, Boris the pig!"). And that player places his or her dice upon the table in the same way: Soviet dice serve the ideals of the Revolution, Bourgeois dice serve that PC's self-interest, and Mud dice serve harsh necessity.

Once that player has finished speaking, the player to their immediate left takes a turn narrating and putting dice into play, and so it goes, clockwise around the table, until every Proletarian Comrade has had a chance to speak.

## **RESOLUTION**

When all of you have placed your dice and said your piece, each of you rolls the dice in front of you – red, white, and black – and announces your total. Add up all the pips on your dice, following this special rule: **all of the red Soviet dice are shared equally among all the animals.** In other words, your total is equal to: the sum of your white dice + the sum of your black dice + the sum of ALL the red dice.

**The Proletarian Comrade with the highest total has told the most convincing history.** That version of events is remembered by all the animals as "what happened." Their narration becomes the official history of the Revolution. Did it really happen this way? Well, that's not really important. Animals' memories are not so good, but how could history lie?

Since all the Soviet dice count equally at this stage towards all of the player's totals, some capitalists among you might wonder, what good are the Soviet dice? It's true that they do

not affect the relative ranking of the players, except insofar as every Soviet dice a player rolls means a Bourgeois dice they have forsworn. But the Soviet dice have another, higher purpose. They represent the ideals of the Revolution and the sacrifices of courageous animals who put the collective interests of the Farm before the selfish interests of the individual. After all the dice have been rolled, compare the **sum of all the Soviet dice** on the table to the **sum of all the Bourgeois dice** on the table. If the sum of the red dice exceeds the sum of the white dice, the Revolution has succeeded! The Farmer is overthrown and the Red Banner unfurled.

If the sum of the Soviet dice does not exceed the sum of the Bourgeois dice, the Revolution has not yet come to pass. If the Soviet of Beasts is to be victorious, its Proletarian Comrades must learn to put the cause of Revolution before their own self-interest! Each player takes back their dice. Soviet dice are converted back to Bourgeois dice. (Technically in this stage of play, the two are interchangeable.) The question is asked again: "How was the Farmer overthrown?" And another round of narration and dice play follows, exactly as described above.

At this point you might be thinking, "This game will never work! You can't just let a bunch of PCs narrate whatever they please, interrupting and contradicting each other whenever they see fit. There will be nothing but chaos and barnyard babble!" Clever reader. Perhaps you have studied Animalist theory, or perhaps you know the history of the Soviet of Beasts. If not, have no fear. Once the Revolution is successful, it will not be long before order is imposed.

## GENERAL MUD



“General Mud” is at once an in-game character, an out-of-game role for one of the players, and an abstract principle acting upon the ideals of the Soviet. His name (there’s no reason the General cannot be female, but I keep drifting into the male pronoun when writing about General Mud) comes from an expression in Russian history: Hitler’s invasion of Russia, like Napoleon’s before him, was stopped by “General Winter” and “General Mud.” Twenty million fallen Russian soldiers may argue differently, but in many textbooks credit for stopping the Wehrmacht goes to General Mud. Of course, winter and mud take their toll on the Russian people too, and from there the metaphorical idea of General Mud emerges. General Mud represents the strongmen that have emerged to rule Russia time and time again – dictators who make the country strong but exact from the Russian people a terrible price. More broadly, General Mud represents reality’s way of corrupting and staining the lofty ideals of any revolution. “Mud” here represents both actual mud and dirty compromises, the victory of exigency over idealism, the flight, sometimes voluntary, sometimes coerced, from freedom to repression.

And, of course, General Mud represents the GM.

**If you rolled the highest total (own white dice + own black dice + all red dice) on the round the revolution succeeded,**

**you move to a seat at the head of the table.** You continue to represent one of the Proletarian Comrades, but now you take on a greater role – that of General Mud. Properly speaking, General Mud is an office rather than a character – Sasha the Cat, Pavel the Mule, Boris the Pig – they may all take their turns as General Mud and be ousted in their turn. But General Mud always comes from the ranks of the PCs – the original Soviet of Beasts.

## **MEET THE NEW BOSS**

While General Mud enjoys the perks of leadership, General Mud's player enjoys the perks and responsibilities of a traditional Game Master.

One of General Mud's first actions is to erect a wall around the barnyard to protect the Farm from its external enemies and the General from traitors within. This wall is represented at the table by a folded piece of cardboard called the GM's screen. As General Mud, you have the privilege of keeping your dice and character sheet behind the screen. Of course you must never abuse this privilege by fudging die rolls. That would hardly be in keeping with the principles of the Revolution.

General Mud's player will also take on the part of all characters other than the Proletarian Comrades. These other characters are known as General Mud's Comrades, or GMCs. Some notable GMCs include the General's personal bodyguard of ferocious dogs, the baying sheep that repeat every one of the General's proclamations again and again, and the rats that burrow everywhere, reporting back to General Mud. But the GM also takes the part of ordinary animals who may or may not support the General's regime. There is one kind of character that the GM cannot run – that no player can run – and those are human beings. Men are the one thing the General has no control over, the one enemy he cannot vanquish, the one thing he most fears. For the most part, the Farm will not be bothered by men. But they are out there, and while they are the General and the animals can never fully rest.

General Mud also has the privilege of revising the laws drafted by the Soviet of Beasts. Upon becoming General

Mud, you may add or rewrite one of the original laws. Each turn thereafter you may add or rewrite an additional law, as long as you retain the title of General Mud. You may choose to paperclip the revised laws of the Soviet on the outside of your GM screen so that all the other PCs can read them.

What sort of laws might General Mud pass or revise? The General might be interested in watering down the idealism of the revolution:

NO ANIMAL SHALL KILL ANY OTHER WITHOUT JUST CAUSE.

Or in allowing a few extra perks:

NO ANIMAL SHALL DRINK ALCOHOL, EXCEPT THE GENERAL.  
NO ANIMAL SHALL SLEEP IN A BED, EXCEPT THE SOVIET OF BEASTS.

The General might be more interested in delineating the friends and foes of the revolution:

RATS ARE NOT FRIENDS, THEY ARE VERMIN.

This kind of law can then be extended:

ALL ANIMALS WHO DO NOT PRODUCE ARE RATS.

Or maybe:

BIRDS ARE RATS.

Ultimately, General Mud is engaged not only in a battle for control of the revolution and its ideas, but for control of history and truth itself.

## **SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS**

Once you as General Mud have erected your screen, the other players change their seats too, taking their character sheets and dice with them. The seating order now represents a hierarchy from the highest ranked Proletarian Comrade (General Mud) to the lowest. The player who rolled the second highest total in the round the Revolution succeeded sits to the immediate right of General Mud, as befits a loyal

right-hand animal. That PC is the second-most esteemed member of the Soviet of Beasts.

The player who rolled the second highest total sits to the immediate right of that player, a position of slightly less esteem. So it goes around the circle. The player who rolled the lowest total is now the lowest ranked PC—but they will end up sitting to General Mud’s immediate left. (Thus it may be said that even the lowliest of animals hold places of honor in the Soviet of Beasts.)

If you are General Mud, you can give orders to any other Proletarian Comrade. Indeed, General Mud can give orders to any animal on the Farm. Other Proletarian Comrades can give orders to any lower ranking PCs—that is, to the PCs of any player to their right.

If anyone ever falls from their position—if General Mud is ousted, or if a lower ranked PC goes to the Glue Factory—all the lower ranked players move up one rank to fill that seat. (Think of the playground game Foursquare, or the card game known as Asshole or Jerk.) The fallen player then moves to the lowest ranked seat, the one to General Mud’s immediate left.





## THE TRIALS



Imagine your Proletarian Comrades meeting again in the Barn. Things have changed greatly since the early days of the Revolution. The Soviet of Beasts still officially rules the Farm, but all know that General Mud is really in command. The General, whatever sort of animal he or she may be, is flanked by his bodyguard of ferocious dogs. The General's proclamations are repeated endlessly by a flock of sheep.

General Mud has called this meeting to interrogate the other members of the Soviet on their progress since the revolution. The animals are cowed and silent. The General's eyes are dark and fierce. The history that will be chosen—that will be deemed true—is the history that most pleases General Mud. Those whose stories do not please the General face a terrible wrath. Nobody is safe, not even the General's old comrades. *Especially* not the General's comrades. For this is their trial.

### NARRATION

The GM begins narration by addressing the player of the lowliest PC—the player to the General's immediate left. The GM sets a challenge or frames a scene. "Tell me, Comrade," the General might ask, "how did Animal Farm rid itself of the scourge of barnyard rats?" The GM can frame a scene in as much or little detail as he likes. The player answers, reporting his PC's actions and recollections of the challenge General Mud has set or the scene he has described.



What sort of challenge will the General set? It could be anything. Life after the revolution is not all parades and banners and marching songs. Food must be produced and distributed. Who will milk the cows? Who will weed the garden? Who will plant the corn? More importantly, perhaps, who will defend the Farm? For the Farm, in the General's mind at least, is beset by enemies without and within. Spies and traitors are everywhere: vermin, feeding on the productive capacity of the farm without producing, and worse: the agents of men. General Mud may want to spread the tenets of Animalism to neighboring farms, where beasts still toil under their human oppressors. Or the General may embark on plans to modernize the Farm—to build a windmill, or a cannon, to teach the animals how to read, or use the tools of men.

Under General Mud, play is different than before the Revolution. As in the Revolution, players will take turns narrating their recollections of events and placing dice upon the table (see below for changes). As in the Revolution, each player may in turn corroborate, continue, or contradict the narration of the previous players. And as in the Revolution, dice will be rolled to determine which Proletarian Comrade is most convincing, and which version of events will become official history for the Soviet of Beasts. But it is no longer the animals as a whole that the PCs must convince. It is only General Mud.

One of General Mud's most insidious powers is his authority to write and rewrite history. Animals have short memories. If General Mud says something is so, they tend to believe it. If General Mud says that history went a certain way, they come to remember things the way General Mud tells them to. This is where the laws that General Mud has passed come into play.

When General Mud passes a new law, he declares that it has *always* been the law, and the animals of the Farm are rarely willing to disagree. This is true even if General Mud's laws fly in the face of animal nature. General Mud might decree: PIGS CAN FLY, BUT BIRD'S CAN'T! Even if this doesn't sound right to the animals, they know better than to contradict General Mud – and so, from the time that law is passed, players must alter their narrations of events in order to conform to the laws General Mud has passed. They can no longer narrate actions in which birds fly – but they can narrate actions in which pigs do.

The Trials are much less free-form than the Revolution. Now General Mud describes the world around the PCs. General Mud frames the scenes and sets the tasks. While the players describe the actions of their PCs, General Mud describes all the forces that oppose them, and plays a host of General Mud's Comrades, or GMCs. General Mud also questions the stories of the PCs. He catches inconsistencies and roots everywhere for lies. He badgers the PCs to tell the truth, or to condemn their fellow comrades – which, to the suspicious General Mud, is often one and the same.

## **PUTTING DICE IN PLAY**

During the Trials, dice are played much as they were during the Revolution, with a few significant modifications. Now General Mud is the first to put dice in play. When General Mud introduces opposition to the PCs, or sets a difficult task before them, he places dice from his hand onto the table. These are General Mud's dice, and all of them are black, but they are distinct from the black Mud dice the other players may also play in their turns to come. General Mud's dice represent opposition facing all the PCs – whether it comes from outside enemies, inside traitors, or the General himself. They also represent the General's own suspicious nature. Each player will have to beat the General's total to convince him of their continued loyalty to the Farm.

As before, each player places dice on the table as they narrate their answer to the General's challenge and their version of events:

As before, when you tell of selfish or neutral actions, or when you describe events that give honor to your own Proletarian Comrade but bestow no particular glory or benefit to the Revolution or animal kind as a whole, you put your **white Bourgeois dice** into play. You may play all, some, or none of the white dice in your hand. The more Bourgeois dice you play, the more self-serving your narration should be. If your narration invokes your PC's negative trait, you may put one additional Bourgeois die (from the bank rather than your hand) into play.

Also as before, when you tell of noble actions and selfless sacrifices, or when you describe events that honor your Proletarian Comrades or glorify the ideals of Animalism, you exchange white dice from your hand for **red Soviet dice**, and put those into play. You may exchange all, some, or none of the white dice in your hand for red dice. The more Soviet dice you play the more noble and inspiring your narration should be. If your narration invokes your PC's positive trait, you may put one additional Soviet die (from the bank rather than your hand) into play.

In the Trials, you have a third option: **slinging mud**. When you turn on your own Proletarian Comrades, when you accuse them of treachery, corruption, and lies, **you take a number of black dice from the Mud Puddle at the center of the table – not from your hand – and place those black dice onto the table in front of you.** These are **Mud dice**. (They are distinct from General Mud's own dice, mentioned above.) They represent the crimes committed in the name of Revolution and the dirty compromises revolutionaries make with their ideals. You may take up to three Mud dice from the Puddle on each turn, or less, or none at all. The more black dice you play, the more your narration should smear the names of your comrades and muddy the ideals of the Revolution. If your narration invokes your PC's false trait – which means your narration of events must be at least in part a lie – you may put one additional Mud die (from the bank rather than the Mud Puddle) into play.

## **ELABORATION AND CONTRADICTION**

As in the Revolution, narration moves clockwise around the table. General Mud turns to each player in turn, giving them a chance to corroborate, continue, or contradict the previous players, and to place some combination of dice upon the table. Soviet dice serve the ideals of the Revolution, Bourgeois dice serve that PC's self-interest, and Mud dice serve harsh necessity. Because narration moves clockwise, the lowest ranked PC will speak first, and each higher ranking PC will have the opportunity to denounce them for their lies. General Mud should press the players on contradictions between their stories, encouraging the players to sling mud and denounce one another.

When General Mud has gone all the way around the table, he has a choice. He may announce that he has heard enough. At this point all the players roll the dice they have set upon the table, and the turn moves from narration to resolution (see below). Or, General Mud may choose to add some new stipulation or complication to his original challenge by placing more dice from his hand upon the table. ("As all loyal animals know," the General might say, "the rat is wily and can disguise itself as other animals. How did you detect the hidden vermin in our midst?") This will launch a new round of narration and playing of dice, clockwise as before. In this new round of narration, players can add to or alter their stories by placing more dice upon the table. If a player has no more dice or does not want to play any additional dice, they cannot add to their narration now. They can only assure the General that their story is true.

Once the turn has traveled around the table, the GM faces the same choice: roll the dice and move to resolution, or play more dice and add complications. When all of General Mud's dice are on the table, he has no choice but to roll.

## **RESOLUTION**

When General Mud has heard enough, he rolls his dice. All the other players roll their dice at this point too. The GM rolls and announces the sum of the dice he rolled. This is the **quota** that all the other players must try to meet this turn.

The other players roll their dice and announce their totals, beginning with the lowest ranked PC, the player to the General's left. Add up all the pips on your die following this special rule: **all of your red Soviet dice are shared, but only with your higher ranking Comrades.** In other words, the first or lowest ranked PC's total is equal to the sum of their own white dice + own black dice + own red dice. The second PC's total is equal to the sum of their own white dice + own black dice + own red dice, **plus the red dice of the first PC.** The third PC's total is equal to the sum of their own white dice + black dice + red dice, **plus the red dice of both the first and second PCs.** And so on. Thus are the bounties of the Soviet of Beasts divided under General Mud.



When all the dice have been rolled and totaled in this way, three comparisons must be made.

First, the Proletarian Comrades are judged by General Mud. Each PC compares their total to the total rolled by General Mud. If your total is equal or higher than General Mud's you have met quota. If your total is lower, you have not. See **The General's Quota**, below, for the consequences of this failure.

Second, the stakes set by the competing narrations are resolved. The PC with the highest total is judged by General Mud to have told the most convincing history. That player's version of events becomes official history. Any earlier versions of history or contradictions are erased. That version of events is remembered by General Mud and all loyal animals as "what happened." If General Mud has the highest total – if every player failed to meet his quota – then no version of the relevant events is deemed acceptable. The

General may set the same scene again on a later turn or order all the animals to forget the matter entirely.

Finally, the mood of the Farm as a whole must be judged. Do the animals remember the idealistic visions of the Revolution? Or are their hopes sinking beneath the mud? After all the dice have been rolled, compare the **sum of all the red Soviet dice** on the table to the **sum of all the black Mud dice** on the table (the black dice rolled this turn by players – not the white dice, as in the Revolution, and not the dice rolled this turn by General Mud). The Soviet dice represent the original spirit of the Revolution. The Mud dice represent the extent to which those ideals have been stained. If the sum of the Soviet dice exceeds the sum of the Mud dice, the flame of Revolution still burns in the hearts of noble beasts. A Red Banner is unfurled. When enough Red Banners are flying, General Mud may be toppled! (See **The Red Banner**, below, for details.)

### **THE GENERAL'S QUOTA**

Any Proletarian Comrade who does not roll higher than General Mud's quota risks a grim fate. Each turn, General Mud sends one PC who has failed to meet his quota to **the Glue Factory**. He may send only one, regardless of how many fail to meet quota. The Glue Factory can "process" only one animal per turn. It is the General's choice which of his failing comrades to send. (If only one PC fails to make quota, the General obviously has no choice in the matter.)

If all of the Proletarian Comrades meet General Mud's quota in a turn, there is much rejoicing. A parade is held in the barnyard and medals and ribbons are awarded to the most deserving Comrades. While the animals are celebrating, **General Mud receives two extra dice from the bank** for his next turn – the quota was obviously too low.

Once all of these comparisons have been resolved, dice are transferred around the table in the following way: all of the white Bourgeois dice the PCs rolled this turn are returned to their hands. Each PC may "redeem" a number of black Mud dice equal to their current Heart score, turning those black dice into white dice, and adding them to their hand. They may only redeem black Mud dice they have played, and

they may only redeem as many as their current Heart score. Any extra Mud dice stay on the table – the PC *must* roll them, and tone their narration accordingly, in the following turn. (Once you begin slinging mud, it is not always possible to immediately reform your ways.) All of the red Soviet dice the PCs rolled this turn are turned into black dice, which go into the hand of General Mud. All of the black dice rolled by General Mud this turn are placed in the Mud Puddle, available for players to take and use in future turns. Then the General sets a new task and a new turn begins.

## **THE GLUE FACTORY**

At the end of every turn, the General may send one Proletarian Comrade who did not meet his quota to the Glue Factory. There is no punishment the animals of the Farm fear more than a trip to the Glue Factory. None of them know exactly what is done there, but the unlucky animals who go there come back shrunken, changed, and broken – when they come back at all. It is General Mud's most brutal weapon. More than the General's snarling dogs, more than the General's spying rats, it is fear of the Glue Factory that keeps the Farm under General Mud's thrall.

**If your PC is sent to the Glue Factory, you lose your seat, and move to the seat of the lowest-ranked player at the left hand of General Mud.** The players who were to your right move up a rank to take your place. Your PC also suffers some **permanent, visible injury**. He or she returns from the Glue Factory missing a leg or an eye or a wing, or maimed or hobbled in some other major way. You propose the injury your PC has suffered, but General Mud may veto the injury and direct you to propose something worse if he does not feel it is grievous enough. Finally, **your PC's Heart score drops** from 3 to 2, permanently and irrevocably. This is indicated by drawing a thick **Black Mark** across your character sheet, as if an animal had smeared it with a muddy hoof or paw.

If your PC is sent to the Glue Factory a second time, all this is repeated. You lose your seat again, you gain another permanent injury (perhaps a second missing leg or eye), a second Black Mark is drawn on your character sheet, and your Heart score drops from 2 to 1.



**If your PC is sent to the Glue Factory a third time, they never return.** You are removed from the game entirely. Your former comrades do their very best never to think upon your fate or even speak of you again.

## **THE RED BANNER**

The Red Banner represents the original ideals of the Soviet and the animal revolution. Whenever the total of the red dice rolled by all the PCs exceed the total of the black dice rolled by all the PCs (the General's dice are not included), the flame of revolution is not yet extinguished, and a Red Banner is flown. If this happens on a subsequent turn, a second Red Banner is flown. If this happens on a third turn, a third Red Banner is flown. The number of Red Banners can simply be written down on a piece of paper – or you may fashion some sort of little flag. Red Post-it notes on the GM's screen would work well, and would surely irritate the General.

**If the number of Red Banners flying exceeds the number of Black Marks on your character sheet,** you may try to rebel against General Mud by declaring an **uprising** against the General during the narration phase of the Trials. When an uprising is declared, narration pauses, and all the Proletarian Comrades (except the General himself) must declare whether or not they will support the uprising. PCs may only support the uprising if the number of Red Banners flying exceeds the number of Black Marks on their own character sheet. Otherwise, they are too cowed by the General to contemplate rising up against him.

If a majority of the PCs support the uprising – a tie vote is not sufficient – a struggle to overthrow General Mud has begun. Narration and dice play and counter-narration continues as usual, but players may ignore the challenges set by the General and narrate their PC's attempts to bring him down instead. If a majority of the PCs do not support the uprising, it is strangled in its birth. Play continues as usual – and the PC who tried to start the uprising may be facing a trip to the Glue Factory.

When the dice are rolled to resolve the turn, compare the **sum of all the red Soviet dice** on the table to the **sum of all the black Mud dice** on the table (the black dice rolled this turn by players – not the white dice, as in the Revolution, and not the dice rolled this turn by General Mud). **If the sum of the Soviet dice exceeds the sum of the Mud dice**, the General has been overthrown!

Every player changes seats, and ranks. The player who rolled the highest total (calculated as usual: **own white dice + own black dice + own red dice + all red dice of lower ranking PCs**) becomes the new General Mud. The player with the next highest total takes their place at the new General's right side. The next highest follows, and so on. The old General Mud takes a trip to the Glue Factory and returns (if the PC's Heart score is still above zero) to occupy the lowest ranking seat, at the new General's left.

If a majority of PCs support the uprising, but the sum of all the Soviet dice do not exceed the sum of all the Mud dice, the uprising is launched, but fails. General Mud now has the option of declaring a **Purge**: the General may send **any** number of the other PCs to the Glue Factory this turn, in any order, whether they beat the General's quota or not.

## THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY



How does the game end? I haven't done all the math or the playtesting to know what kind of outcomes are possible. It might be possible to reach an equilibrium where black Mud dice are rarely needed and the PCs manage to meet their quotas turn after turn without going to the Glue Factory. If this is so, then Animalism might just work. The paradise of beasts could one day be achieved.

It should be possible to gradually starve General Mud of dice by shirking on Soviet dice, keeping the GM's dice pool low and gradually draining and redeeming the Mud Puddle. Eventually all or most of the dice on the table will be white Bourgeois dice. If this occurs, the Soviet of Beast collapses from within. This is a victory of sorts for the animals of the Farm—they have won their freedom from General Mud. But there are still dark days in their future, and the vision of the Soviet of Beasts is truly dead.

The other real possibility is that General Mud eventually sends all his old comrades to the Glue Factory for good. In this case, the General is victorious. There is no animal to challenge him, and no animal to dispute the perfect insanity of his mind. The General now rules a charnel house rather than a farm, but such is the price of total victory.

## AFTERWORD

This is a 24-hour RPG, a game written in 24 hours from start to finish, for the November 2005 Ronnies Competition at the Forge [[www.indie-rpgs.com](http://www.indie-rpgs.com)]. The rules of the contest required entrants to write a role-playing game in 24 hours that focused on any two of four specified terms: **gun Soviet dragon mud**. I hadn't really planned on entering, but I Googled a couple of combinations of the four terms, and when I tried "Soviet mud" I found the line about "General Mud" stopping the German invasion of Russia in World War II. Once I noticed what the initials for "General Mud" were, the wheels started turning.

I wasn't a zealot about the 24 hour rule: I thought about the game a little before the clock started ticking, and I think I may do another pass for typos after the clock has stopped. But I think enough of this game was written in a 24 hour span to comply with the spirit of the rules.

Although I've been very verbose — one thing I learned in the last 24 hours is that it's really hard to write clear game directions concisely. I take back anything I ever said about Gary Gygax's prose! — the text is far from complete. I can already see things I left out (Q: Can you die or kill another PC during narration? A: I think so, yes. But until their last trip to the Glue Factory, a dead PC can also come back through narration. Consider how Snowball haunted Napoleon (or Trotsky haunted Stalin) well after his actual demise.) and things I want to change (As written it sounds like everyone does a long soliloquy, and then you roll dice and one wins. What I really want is something more like Primetime Adventures, where the GM frames to a conflict, the group establishes stakes, dice are rolled to resolve the whole scene, and someone narrates the resolution according to the resolved stakes.). But hey, time is up.

What's here is a draft, but it's a lot more of a game than I had written 24 hours ago, so I thank Ron Edwards and the Forge for the inspiration and for showing me how it's done in so many great indie games.

And non-indie games: after, obviously, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*\*, General Mud's next biggest debt is probably to *Paranoia*. One of the best parts of any *Paranoia* game, if you get to it alive, is the debriefing, where all the players try to spin events, make themselves look good, and screw their teammates. So General Mud is all "debriefing." And you get to compete to be "The Computer." Plus I thought it could add bite to the game if there were mechanical reasons to betray your comrades but also mechanical rewards for cooperation.

Oh yeah: I'm also indebted to Jared Sorenson's RPG *The Farm*, which *isn't* a game about *Animal Farm*, but when he posted a teaser for *The Farm* on his website, everybody thought he *was* writing an *Animal Farm* RPG, and that's probably where I got the idea. I leave you to spot the influences of other game designs — I'm not sure I want to impugn the games I love by blaming my clunky first-time fumbblings on them.

The illustrations are by Joy Batchelor and John Halas, from a 1954 edition of *Animal Farm*. I don't know their copyright status, but it's safe to say they are used without permission. I'll remove them if I ever do something more formal with this game.

General Mud was written on or around Remembrance Day 2005.