

Savagery
A RPG of Life, Love, and Strife
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What's the Best Way to Hurt You?

RPGs and Violence

If you haven't encountered a Roleplaying Game (RPG) then a quick summary is that you work with other players, acting out characters of your own design to enjoy a fictional world of someone else's design. The rules of the game are there to help guide you in having fun. But the important part is that you focus on making sure you're not the only one enjoying themselves. And of course one of the most common ways to have fun in an RPG is to get into a fight. Not a real fight, an imaginary fight, since they're easier to get into and less trouble if you lose.

Now if you know all about RPGs then this shouldn't be any news to you. Especially the fact that most RPGs lean towards combat as the major form of excitement. This is the "violence inherent in the system". Now you can debate all you want on the subject, but violence pretty much seems here to stay. And this game isn't trying to change that.

But at the same time, Savagery doesn't have physical violence in any real way. Because more common than physical violence is the violence of words, of emotions, and of beliefs. That is big piece of human savagery and that is the point of this game. So consider yourself warned, this isn't just a game about hurting people, it's a game where the wounds don't ever really go away.

As an aside, the photographs you see in this game are all from the morgue file: <http://www.morguefile.com/>, a wonderful source for public domain photographs.

Joining the Club

The characters in *Savagery* are pretty much normal people. They love, they argue, they get frustrated, and they do stupid things. They are much like you and I. What makes them stand out is that each of them has found their way into the same little club. It doesn't even matter what that club might be. It could be a sewing bee, a veterans support group, or a model railroad club. All that really matters is that the characters find themselves together, and that somehow they have each arrived at the conclusion that it is time for a change.

Because of this shared background the first things to decide when preparing to play *Savagery* is what is the club, and what kind of change is in store. The choice of club should be decided by the players, if necessary by a vote. It is then each player's responsibility to make sure that their character would reasonably attend the club. The choice of what sort of changes will occur is more confined: the characters could be improving themselves; the characters could be simply seeking change; or the characters could be on the road to self-destruction. This choice, between the upward spiral, the horizontal change, or the downward spiral should be made prior to the game. Unlike the choice of club, this choice will directly influence the mechanics of the game. And remember once you make this decision, it's pretty much fixed there for the rest of the game.

Scene after Scene

Unlike many RPGs, *Savagery* has a basic structure to the different scenes occurring within a session. Broadly speaking *Savagery* has two types of scenes: Club scenes and Trigger scenes. Sessions begin and end with club scenes, with the intermediate scenes alternating between trigger and club.

A club scene occurs during a meeting of the club members. Often this scene is meant to discuss each of the character's current situation. Sometimes emotional conflicts will occur during a club scene. This only occurs if the two players involved agree to participate in a sparring version of emotional combat. These combats serve as practice for the real ones occurring in the trigger scenes.

Trigger scenes are based around one character, triggered by one of his or her drives. In this scene, the character is faced with an emotional combat hinging on the triggered drive. Failure here means a loss of that drive, success could mean strengthening, or in the least staying afloat for another day. Only the focal character is present, but the remaining characters may give advice and use certain abilities to aid the combatant. In essence this is a manifestation of their advice and support. Trigger scenes are where things can become resolved, and changes can actually happen. They are also where characters are in the greatest risk of permanent damage and defeat.

Everything Else

Since both club and trigger scenes focus on emotional combat, there doesn't seem to be much room in *Savagery* for anything else. And this is precisely correct. *Savagery* is a game about emotional conflict and the violence inflicted in them. Writing reports, driving cars, and beating people with baseball bats are largely unimportant activities.

But sometimes these things matter anyway. In that case just do the simple thing. The most likely outcome will happen. The rough and tumble bar brawler will mop the floor with the puny paper pusher. The better driver will win the race. And so on. If things are too even to tell then just decide randomly. Whatever you do, get it over quickly. That way you can get back to the fun.

Finding Who You Are

When creating a character in Savagery you should have already decided on the basics of the club, and the type of game (upward spiral, horizontal change, or downward spiral). Only when you've finished those steps, should you start making a character. That way you can make sure your character fits the club and the game style.

The first step in creating a character is to give a basic description. This is done by writing three sentences, one about your character's past, one about his or her present circumstances, and one about his or her dreams for the future. Then come up with a name. This description will give you a basis for later parts of creating your character, especially drives and fighting styles.



Windows to the Psyche

The second step is determining your starting Psyche ratings. There are five ratings for the Psyche:

- **Ego** - sense of self and self-worth.
- **Empathy** - ability to connect with others.
- **Ideals** - expectations of self.
- **Libido** - passion and desire.
- **Reason** - rationality and grounding in reality.

You allot 23 points between those five ratings. No rating can start lower than two and none can start higher than seven.

The third step is to determine your character's drives. Drives are the focus of Savagery, because they cause the trigger scenes to occur. You have 13 points to allot to drives, although no Drive can start above five. Each drive is unique to your character. It could be *Become an Artist*, *Sleep Around*, or *Keep My Job*, but it should always relate to your character's past, present, or future. For each drive you must also list three to five people, places, or things related to that drive. Try to include at least one person, as they will likely be a frequent opponent in trigger scenes.

1. Basic Description

- (a) Write Past, Present, and Future
- (b) Choose a Name

2. Assign 23 points to Psyche ratings (Max of 7, Min of 2)

3. Assign 13 points to Drive ratings (Max of 5)

- (a) Name each Drive
- (b) List 3-5 details
(including a person)
- (c) Assign d6 points of Guilt or Passion

4. Assign 5 points to Fighting Styles (Max of 3)

Once you assigned ratings to all of your drives, go through each again, choosing either guilt or passion, depending on your character's predominant feeling about that drive

right now. Then roll a six-sided die (d6) and list that many points of guilt or passion, followed by a 'G' or a 'P' respectively.

The last step of creating a Savagery character is to select your fighting styles. These will determine what maneuvers you have and how well they work. Also fighting styles each have a way to influence other character's trigger scenes. You may choose up to five points of fighting styles, with a maximum starting rating of three in any one style. A list of fighting styles can be found in the next chapter.

Laying Down the Hurting

Savagery is a Roleplaying Game of emotional combat. Players will spend almost as much of their time involved with emotional combat as they do portraying their characters. For this reason, Savagery uses an unconventional approach to dice rolling. Don't be alarmed, you'll get the hang of it quickly.

The Roll

Savagery uses only two dice types: six-sided dice (d6) and eight-sided dice (d8). However, most of the time you'll be rolling one of each of these dice at the same time and adding the result. This is just called the Roll. Often once you've made a Roll, you will need to consult the two dice involved independently as well. For example, some maneuvers will use d6 to determine damage and the d8 to determine which Psyche rating has been hit. Of course neither of those are relevant unless the Roll is high enough to hit.

Maneuvers

Maneuvers are the basic actions of Savagery. Combat is broken down into a series of bouts. At the beginning of a bout, each combatant chooses a defensive maneuver, and whether he or she will attack. If a character chooses not to attack their defensive maneuver gets a +2 bonus. Then in descending order of Ego, the attacking combatants choose an offensive maneuver and attempt to harm the combatant of their choice.

The result of each attack is determined by adding any fighting style maneuver bonuses, the offensive maneuver's psyche rating, and any other bonuses to a Roll. The defender adds any fighting style maneuver bonuses, the defensive maneuver's psyche rating, and any other bonuses to 8. If the attacker beats the

defender's total then the attack hits and effect is determined by the individual dice in the roll, based on which maneuvers were used. Some defensive maneuvers can also affect the attacker if an attack fails to hit.

The next page is a list of the core maneuvers, separated so that it can be used as a reference sheet.



Taking the Defense

Maneuver List

Defensive Maneuvers

- **Counter** (*Reason*) - You are ready to shoot down whatever anyone says to you. If an attack against you fails, deal the d6 in damage to the Psyche rating of the attacker's offensive maneuver. If you choose this defensive maneuver you cannot attack this round and you gain no defensive bonus from not doing so nor may you use this bout to flee.
- **Deflect** (*Libido*) - You blind yourself to your opponent's position. If an attack against you misses, you gain +2 to defend against that opponent next bout.
- **Evade** (*Empathy*) - By anticipating your opponent you avoid your most vulnerable topics. Choose one offensive maneuver, you get +4 to defend against that maneuver this bout.
- **Guard** (*Ideals*) - By withdrawing you protect yourself from the worst. Reduce damage from successful attacks by 2.

Offensive Maneuvers

- **Beat** (*Ideals*) - You beat aside defenses with the power of your beliefs. If you hit, you get +2 to hit that opponent next bout. **Damage:** the d6, **Location:** the d8 - 1-3 = Ideals, 4-5 = Empathy, 6-7 = Ego, 8 = Reason.
- **Brutalize** (*Empathy*) - You identify your foe's weak points and go right for them. **Damage:** the d8, **Location:** the d6 - 1-3 = Opponent's Lowest Psyche Rating, 4 = Empathy, 5 = Ideals, 6 = Ego.
- **Distract** (*Empathy*) - You change the subject, shifting to unfamiliar ground

for your foe. If you hit, you get +2 to defend against that opponent on their next attack. **Damage:** the d6, **Location:** the d8 - 1-2 = Reason, 3-4 = Empathy, 5 = Ideals, 6-8 = Ego.

- **Entice** (*Libido*) - You draw your opponent out with suggestiveness. If you hit, your next attack does +4 damage against that opponent. **Damage:** the d8 / 2 (round up), **Location:** the d6 - 1-2 = Reason, 3-4 = Ideals, 5-6 = Ego.
- **Feint** (*Reason*) - You trick your opponent into a flawed defense. Gain +2 to hit this opponent next bout (regardless of the success of this attack). **Damage:** the d6 / 2 (round up), **Location:** the d8 - 1-4 = Ego, 5 = Libido, 6 = Ideals, 7 = Empathy, 8 = Reason.
- **Grapple** (*Reason*) - You debate your opponent into a standstill. **Damage:** the d8 +2 for each successful grapple in a row, **Location:** the d6 - 1-2 = Ego, 3 = Libido, 4 = Ideals, 5-6 = Empathy.
- **Stifle** (*Ideals*) - You reflect your foe's aggression right back. **Damage:** the d8, **Location:** the d6 - 1-2 = Libido, 3-4 = Empathy, 5-6 = Psyche rating used on opponent's offensive maneuver this bout (or Ego if no offensive maneuver).
- **Strike** (*Libido*) - You lash out at your foe. **Damage:** the d8, **Location:** the d6 - 1-2 = Ego, 3-4 = Ideals, 5-6 = Empathy.

Fighting Styles

At the simplest, fighting styles are ways of interacting with people. Some may seem more pleasant than others, but they share a common goal, to defeat your foes in emotional combat.

The first rating in a fighting style gives access to a group of maneuvers, sometimes including special maneuvers. These maneuvers are listed with modifiers, and those modifiers are based on the rating for that fighting style. Remember, you may only use one fighting style during a bout, although you may freely change between bouts.

Fighting styles also give one additional ability, called assists. These are only used during other player's trigger scenes. You may use an assist once per session for each point in that fighting style.

- **Basher** - You are direct and vicious.
Deflect + Rating
Guard
Beat + Rating
Brutalize
Strike + Rating
Assist: Ally deals +2 damage on a successful attack.



Bashing Away

- **Debater** - You prefer to trap your foes in tangles of logic.
Counter + Rating

Guard
Brutalize
Feint
Grapple + Rating + 2
Stifle

Assist: Add or subtract one from a die used for location.

- **Intimidator** - You put others in their place.
Counter
Deflect + Rating - 1
Beat + Rating
Distract
Entice
Stifle
Dominate (Ego) - You crush others with your force of will. **Damage:** the d8 +2, **Location:** always Ego.
Assist: Ally gets +2 on an offensive maneuver for a bout.



Dominate

- **Listener** - You are receptive, allowing you to control the fight.
Counter
Evade + Rating
Brutalize + Rating
Distract + Rating
Feint
Stifle
Assist: Allow an ally to change defensive maneuver during a bout.

- Seducer - You are manipulative and conniving.
Deflect + Rating
Evade
Brutalize
Distract
Entice + Rating + 2
Assist: Provide Entice to an ally, or give an ally +2 on an Entice maneuver.



Seducer

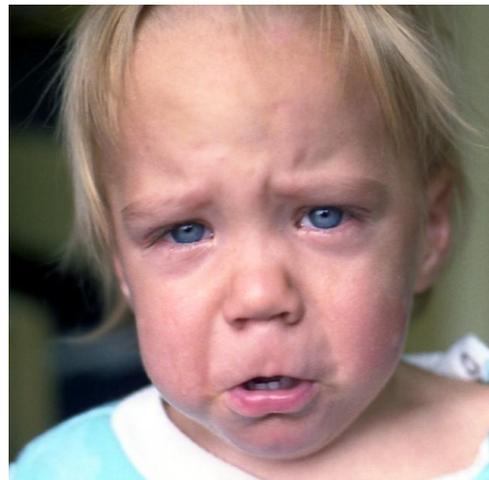
- Sneak - You are underhanded and tricky.
Counter + Rating - 1
Guard
Distract
Feint + Rating
Stifle
Backstab (*Reason*) You betray your foe when least expected. You must have not attacked in the previous bout to use this maneuver. **Damage:** the d8 + 4, **Location:** the d6 - 1-2 = Ego, 3 = Reason, 4 = Empathy, 5 = Libido, 6 = Ideals.
Assist: Ally gains benefits of a successful Beat, Distract, Entice, or Grapple, even if the attack misses.
- Stalwart - You are calm and difficult to hurt.
Counter
Deflect
Evade + Rating
Guard + Rating

Brutalize
Grapple
Stifle + Rating - 1
Assist: Reduce the damage dealt to an ally by 2.

- Whiner - You have taken complaining to a fine art.
Counter
Deflect + Rating
Distract + Rating
Entice
Feint + Rating
Stifle
Assist: Ally gains +2 against one attack.

Ending the Fight

Emotional combat can end in one of two ways. Either the combatants choose to stop, or a combatant is too wounded to continue.



Should Have Tapped Out

The former happens when the combatants mutually agree to stop. This is called a tap out in a club scene. In a trigger scene this happens when one combatant flees a fight. Fleeing requires the combatant to only defend for three bouts. Who ever taps out or flees loses the fight, but manages to avoid permanent damage.

The later happens to combatant who has received enough damage to a Psyche rating to disable it. Each Psyche rating can sustain wounds up to five times the rating. After that that rating is injured and the combatant is no longer able to fight. The reasons may vary:

- Ego Injury - Causes depression and self-loathing.
- Empathy Injury - Causes disassociation.
- Ideal Injury - Causes anxiety attack.
- Libido Injury - Causes regression.
- Reason Injury - Causes temporary delusions.

In addition, an injured rating is immediately reduced by one. When all but one combatant is injured, or the fight ends by mutual agreement, all current wounds are removed. However this is not all that happens when a fight is won or lost. Emotional combat can have other long term effect on participants, some of which depend on what style of play you've chosen.

Triggers of Guilt and Passion

Trigger scenes require special preparation by the GM. Antagonists must be written and the basic situation for each trigger scene can be quite different. Thus the GM usually determines who will receive a trigger scene, and on what drive it will be based.

However drives do not remain static. By building up guilt or passion, the drive can be adjusted. Once a drive has ten guilt or more on it, its rating is reduced by one, and the guilt is reduced by ten. Likewise, once a drive has ten passion or more its rating is increased by one, and the passion is reduced by ten.



The Guilty

Passion and guilt can be gained in two ways. First, each time you assist an ally you may add one guilt or passion to a drive of your choice. Second, the outcome of a Trigger scene can add guilt or passion to the drive the scene hinges on.

- If you win via injury you gain five passion.
- If you win via a fleeing opponent gain two passion.
- If you lose via fleeing gain two guilt.
- If you lose via injury gain five guilt.

If you add passion to a drive with guilt on it, first cancel passion for guilt on a one for one. Any remaining passion is added to the drive. Guilt likewise cancels passion before being added to a drive.

Moving On

Even before creating characters, your group decided on a style of play. What happens when you win, lose, or tap out in a fight is based on exactly that choice. One of the typical benefits among the different styles are Victory Points (VP). You usually gain VP by winning fights, and those VP can be expended to enhance your character.

- 2 VP increases a Psyche rating by one.
- 5 VP increases a Fighting Style by one.

Each style of play also comes with an objective, which may or may not end the game. It is suggested that this be an overall group goal.



On Your Way Up

Upward Spiral

If your group chose to play an upwards spiral type of game, then you gain 2 VP when you win a trigger scene. You also win 1 VP when you win a sparring combat during a

club scene. Other than guilt you gain no additional penalty from loses.

If you want to play for final objective, then the objective is to have every character bring two drives to a rating of ten or higher.

Making a Change

If your group chose to play a horizontal change type of game, then you gain 1 VP when you win any combat. When you win a trigger scene, you may add guilt equal to the amount of passion you gained to a different drive. You also may spend 3 VP to gain a new drive at a rating of 1, without any passion or guilt.

If you want to play for a final objective, then the objective is to have every character bring two initial drives to zero, and bring two new drives to a rating of at least seven.



On Your Way Down

Falling Down

If your group chose to play a downward spiral type of game, then you gain 1 VP from winning club scene combats only. You also cannot flee or tap out. If any Psyche rating is ever reduced to zero, that character gains a borderline psychotic version of an injury of that rating (see above), and that rating can

no longer be raised. However that rating is also immune to damage.

If you want to play for a final objective, then the objective is for each character to permanently go insane, with one of their Psyche ratings dropping to zero.

Playing Without a Net

Unlike many RPGs, Savagery doesn't always provide the GM very much to do. Sure he or she can make the antagonists for trigger scenes, and the GM is usually called to referee, but other than that, this game doesn't really require a GM.

Many players are often wary of RPGs which don't have a GM, but if you're willing to take that plunge here's how to do it.

First, decide how your group will resolve conflicts and disagreements. A vote is often a good way, but other approaches exist, such as simply picking an impartial judge for the group, or deciding randomly.

Second, use the following rules to make and play random antagonists:

If this character is mentioned as a detail on a drive, then determine his or her Psyche ratings by a $d8 + 1$. If not then determine them by a $d6 + 1$. Random antagonists get only the following two maneuvers, and use them each bout.

- **Defend** (*Second Highest Psyche Rating*) - Only Random Antagonists can use this maneuver. Gain a +1 defense bonus, and reduce all damage by 1.
- **Attack** (*Highest Psyche Rating*) - Only Random Antagonists can use this maneuver. Evade only gives a +1 bonus verses this maneuver. **Damage:** the $d8 + 1$, **Location:** the $d6 - 1-2 =$ Ego, 3 = Reason, 4 = Empathy, 5 = Libido, 6 = Ideals.

Third, triggers should be activated for each player character in turn, with a chance for a club scene in between. This can be done by putting each character's name on a piece of paper and drawing these papers one at a time, until they have all been drawn. When a character is picked, that player chooses which drive is triggered. Then the player describes the scene, any new antagonists needed can be created using the above method so that combat can begin.

The Good Fight

Chandra Micheals is a computer repair tech at a law firm. Recently she has joined a Women's Rifle Club, to try to become more assertive. Of course the first place she needs to assert control is at her job.

This is Chandra.

Name: Chandra Micheals

Club: Women's Rifle Club

Past: When she was growing up, Chandra always wanted to be a writer.

Present: She repairs computers at the Law Firm of Gary, Abel, and Fine.

Future: What she wants more than anything right now is a stable relationship.

Psyche:

Ego - 4

Empathy - 6

Ideals - 4

Libido - 3

Reason - 6

Drives:

Love Life 3 - 3G

Boyfriend, Roses, Ex-Girlfriend

Great American Novel 4 - 2P

Melissa, Summer Vacation, Father

Must See TV 2 - 4P

Survivor, Carol (roommate), Big Screen TV

Keep Your Job 4 - 6G

Cubicle, Danny (boss), Broken Computers

Fighting Styles:

Debater 2

Listener 2

Stalwart 1

And this is her boss.

Danny

Psyche:

Ego - 6

Empathy - 3

Ideals - 5

Libido - 4

Reason - 3

Fighting Styles:

Basher 2

Intimidator 3

Whiner 1

Now lets see them fight.

In setting the scene Chandra's player says that Danny is coming to yell at Chandra for another broken machine. It's not her fault, but he doesn't really care.

First Bout

Danny chooses his defense as Deflect (using his Intimidator style). This gives him a total defense of 8 (base) + 4 (his Libido) + 2 (from his style) = 14. Chandra chooses Counter (using her Debater style) as her defense giving her 8 (base) + 6 (her Reason) + 2 (from her style) = 16.

Danny gets first crack and chooses to use his special Dominate maneuver. His total bonuses are just 6, from his Ego. Since he's an antagonist, the GM rolls for him and gets a 9. This gives him a 15, not enough to beat Chandra's defense. Since Chandra chose to Counter, Danny takes damage to his Ego equal to the d6 rolled, in this case 6. Likewise since Chandra chose to counter, she forfeited her attack.

Second Bout

Danny chooses his defense as Deflect once again. This gives him a total defense of 14 once again. Chandra chooses Evade (using her Listener style) as her defense giving her 8 (base) + 6 (her Empathy) + 2 (from her style) = 16, she chooses Dominate as the offensive maneuver to protect against, giving her a 20 defense against that maneuver.

Danny goes first again and chooses to use the Beat maneuver. His total bonuses are 5 (his Ideals) + 3 (from his style) = 8. The GM rolls for him and gets an 11. This gives him a 21, beating Chandra's defense. His d6 was a 3, and his d8 was an 8, so he inflicts 3 damage on Chandra's reason as she tries to grasp what he could possibly be thinking.

Chandra then chooses to use the Brutalize maneuver, striking back at Danny's sore spots. Her bonuses are 6 (her Empathy) + 2 (from her style) = 8. Her player then rolls a

13. This easily hits Danny. Since she rolled a 6 on the d6 and a 7 on the d8, she deals another 7 damage to Danny's Ego.

At the end of this bout, Chandra has taken 3 wounds on her Reason, but Danny has taken a total of 13 wounds to his Ego. Fortunately for him, with an Ego of 6, he can afford to take up to 30 wounds to his Ego before injuring it. And considering his attack next bout will be getting a +2, Chandra might be in for some trouble.

Character Sheet

Name: Club: Player: Victory Points:	Description Past	
Psyche: Wounds Ego Empathy Ideals	Present Future	
Libido Reason	Drives: Name	
Fighting Styles	Rating	G/P
	Details	
	Name	
	Rating	G/P
	Details	
Notes:	Name	
	Rating	G/P
	Details	
	Name	
	Rating	G/P