

Ronnies Award Entry – 24 Hour RPG – Ingredients: “Hatred” and “Girlfriend”

Nathan Paoletta

Hamsterprophet Productions

<http://www.hamsterprophetproductions.com>

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She's...

A Role Playing Game for Men

By Nathan Paoletta

Intro – The Game

This is a role playing game with a very specific structure. It shades heavily into the “collaborative storytelling” genre of role playing, and is designed to ideally be played in one evening. It's a game for four **male** persons. That's right. It should be played by a group of men. It's about a woman, but its written by a man, and playing the game should say some interesting things about gender roles and how men and woman interact in the social arena. Of course, I have no control over who plays and why, but I feel like a woman playing this game would have some choice things to say to me. Though, if that does happen, I'd love to hear them.

Premise-wise, this game centers on the efforts of four men to win the heart of a woman. When you sit down to play, you guys should decide exactly in which context this will play out. High school? 20-Somethings? Old folks in a home? Superspies from different countries who run into each other again and again? Knights and a maiden? Choose something that you all think will be interesting. Keep in mind that this game is written with a fairly modern conception of gender, so games set in more archaic times will be that much more interesting. The text is written with something contemporary in mind, but that's by no means a constraint to your actual play.

When you actually sit down with your friends to play, be comfortable. All you need is paper (and/or printouts of the character sheets) and a deck of cards. Snacks (pretzels) and drinks (beer) are highly encouraged.

Character Creation

Character creation is a collaborative, but competitive, process. During this phase, the four of you will be creating five characters – the Girl and four Guys. You'll make the Girl first. Have everyone sit in such a way that the Girl's character sheet can be oriented with one edge clearly facing each player.

Choose someone (if you can't do so peacefully, this defaults to the oldest player) to shuffle and cut a normal deck of playing cards, no jokers. He'll deal each player four cards. Now, look at the Girl's character sheet. You'll see that along each edge is a Role, and a track of ten boxes numbered from 1 to 10. Below each track are the words Hatred and Love, also in boxes. Orient the sheet with the Girlfriend Role towards the dealer.

Now look at your cards. Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, each player may play one card. Don't start character creation until you read all of this phase! Immediately below is a quick list of terms and what they mean in the game.

Terms

- **Role:** The four ways in which the Guys experience the Girl. The Roles (and associated suits of cards) are: Girlfriend (Hearts), Hot (Diamonds), Bitch (Clubs) and Frigid (Spades).
- **Value:** The numerical score associated with each Role (i.e. the Girls Bitch Value is 7). Between 2 and 10.
- **Hatred:** The Role Value that triggers strong negative emotion in the Girl. This is not always bad.
- **Love:** The Role Value that triggers strong positive emotion in the Girl. This is not always good.
- **Suave and Sincerity:** The two Guy Values.
- **Draw:** This means draw a card from the deck, or your stored card from Conflicts if you have one.

- **Conflict:** Not a great word, but the situation where different people in a Scene have different Stakes. Conflicts are resolved by Drawing.
- **Scene:** The basic unit of gameplay.
- **Stakes:** What someone in a Scene wants, that they won't get unless they win the Conflict.
- **Orient the Sheet:** This means to spin the Girl's character sheet in a certain way, usually to orient a given player to a given Role.
- **Active player:** The player who's Guy is currently in a Scene with the Girl. This starts with the dealer, and moves to the left around the table during play.

Creating The Girl

- Look at your four cards. Starting with the dealer, choose one of the following options.
- A non-face card (a card numbered between 2 and 10) may be played on a Role that has not yet had a card played on it. When this is played, it sets the Value of that Role to the number of the card (so playing a 5 will set the track to 5, etc.) Discard that card and move on to the next player to the left. You may reset a value if you play double or more the existing value (i.e., if you have a 6, you may only reset a value to six if the existing value is 2 or 3).
- If the card is red, you have the option of setting that Value as the Love Value for that Role. Draw a line from the word Love to the corresponding Value. Orient the sheet so that that Role is towards you. Discard that card and move on to the next player to the left. You cannot set Love and Hatred to the same number.
- If the card is black, you have the options of setting that Value as the Hatred Value for that Role. Draw a line from the word Hatred to the corresponding Value. Orient the sheet so that that Role is towards you. Discard that card and move on to the next

player to the left. You cannot set Love and Hatred to the same number.

- You may play a face card (Ace, Jack, Queen or King) to block the play of another player, including if they have just played a face card. They discard the card they played without effect, and move on to the next player to the left of that player. Discard your card.
- You may play a Queen in order to orient the corresponding Role (see above) towards you. If you do this, the sheet may not be reoriented for the rest of character creation, though the others may still assign values with cards.
- Keep going until each Role has its Value as well as its Hatred and Love correspondences set. If everyone runs out of cards without these all being set, the dealer chooses an unassigned Value, draws a card, and assigns that number to the Value. Redraw if you draw a face card. This repeats until all Tracks have all three Values set. If the Girlfriend Value is at 10, the dealer redraws until he draws a non-10 Value, and resets it to that Value.

Whenever you play a card for the Girl, you have to include a detail about her or her life that reflects whatever you played. When you play a Face card, you have to say “Except that...” and explain why whatever the last person said doesn't apply.

Once the girl has been created, each guy makes their character. First, write a few-word description on the top of your Guy's sheet. Below are some ideas, but feel free to come up with your own. The labels have no mechanical effect, but should describe your character as you see him.

- Hunky Jock, Smart Nerd, Gay(?) Best Friend, Non-Threatening But Nice, Admirer From Afar, Genuinely Nice Guy, Valedictorian, Bad Boy, Unstable But Attractive.

Guys are defined by two things: Sincerity and Suave. They are defined in contrast to the Girls Role that you face at the end of Girl creation.

- If you are facing Frigid or Bitch, your Suave is equal to her Love, and your Sincerity is equal to her Hatred.
- If you are facing Hot or Girlfriend, your Suave is equal to her Hatred, and your Sincerity is equal to her Love.
- You may adjust the scores slightly if you wish. You may raise one by one if you drop the other by one. (So if you have Suave 4 and Sincerity 7, you could make Suave 3 and Sincerity 8, or Suave 5 and Sincerity 6).

That's pretty much it. Other, minor, characters will move in and out of the story, but they are purely background and color, with no mechanical weight. You should all be sitting around a table (or something), with the Girl sheet filled out with the three Values for each Role, and each Guy sheet filled out with his description and his Sincerity and Suave. The dealer now collects all of the cards, shuffles them, and places them in the center of the table.

Playing This Game

Like many role playing games, this one progresses through a series of Scenes, like in movies or books. Unlike many role playing games, how things are decided is an extremely structured process. Each Scene will center on the interaction between one Guy character and the Girl, in whichever Role is facing that Guys player. Before getting too heavily into how Scenes should work, I'm going to give a quick rundown of resolution – that is, how you decide who's agenda for a given Scene gets fulfilled, and the fallout from this decision.

Whenever a Scene gets to a decision point – Conflict for short, though this implies a level of adversity that isn't really accurate - you need to decide who gets what they want, if they get it at all. Look these mechanics over in full before playing. They are presented in progressive order, though Draw Mechanics and Role Switching occur inside the overall Scene Mechanics.

This game has a goal, and that goal is to get the Girl. Whenever the Girlfriend Role hits 10, whoever is facing it wins the game, and everyone else owes him a beer (or soda, or whatever).

Anytime the deck runs out of cards, reshuffle the discard pile to restart the deck.

Scene Mechanics

- Whoever is facing the Girlfriend has the first scene of the game. This is the active player. At the end of each scene, the person sitting to the left has their scene (becomes the active player). You can give up your scene to the person to the left, if you want.

- The active player needs to frame a scene involving their Guy character and the Girl, in whichever Role that the player is facing. The player across the table from the active player plays the Girl, using the third person (“She does X, she says Y”). The guys are encouraged to use first person (“I do X”, “Y”), but this is not required.
- The two Guys not involved in the scene may insert themselves at any point. If the active player is facing the Girlfriend or Hot, it costs one Sincerity (lower it by one). If he is facing Frigid or Bitch, it costs one Suave. That Guys player then frames him into the scene.
- When it becomes evident during the scene that someone wants something that someone else doesn't want them to have, or that multiple people want things that they can't all have, then you draw. These somethings are Stakes. It helps to clearly elucidate the Stakes for everyone involved. All scenes must have Stakes resolved before the scene can end.
- Go through the Draw Mechanics. Once each draw is clear, each player involved narrates what happens, based on that result and what Role they were drawing on.
- Once Stakes have been resolved, finish up the scene. At the end of the scene, go through Role Switching (below, after the Draw Mechanics).
- Move on to the next person on the left, who is now the Active Player.

Draw Mechanics

- Whenever you draw, you will be drawing on one of the Girls Values (Girlfriend, Bitch, Hot or Frigid). For the bullets below, things on top trump those below (so if you draw exactly the Love number, but it's below the Value number, ignore the lower result and just do the one for equaling the Love number).
- If you are drawing on Hot or Girlfriend [brackets for Frigid or

Bitch]:

- If you draw a non-face card (2-10), compare it to the actual Value number.
 - If it is exactly the Love [Hatred] number, you get two successes. Take a card from the discard pile (or the bottom of the deck if there is no discard pile yet) and put both cards face-down in front of you.
 - If it is exactly the Hatred [Love] number, you lose a success, if you have any. Discard this card and a card that's in front of you. If you do not have any, you lose your stakes. Nobody needs to draw anything more.
 - If it is exactly the Value number, you get one success. Put the card face-down in front of you, AND increase the Value number by 1.
 - If it is below the Value number, you get one success. Put the card face-down in front of you.
 - If it is above the Value number, you get nothing. Discard the card.
- If you draw a face card:
 - If you draw a Queen, the Girl wins her stakes. The contest is over. Place this card face-up in front of you.
 - If you draw a Jack, the Guy wins their stakes. The contest is over. Place this card face-up in front of you.
 - If you draw a King, you get a success. Put the card face-down in front of you.
 - If you draw an Ace, you get nothing. However, you must place it face-down in front of any other participating player as a Success [you must discard it, and discard one of another player's Successes from in front of them, if they have any].
- Once you have completed your first Draw, you may Draw on your Suave and Sincerity, once each. This is entirely optional.
 - If you are facing Hot or Girlfriend [brackets for Frigid or Bitch]:
 - If you draw a non-face card (2-10), and it is above your score, you get a success. Put the card face-down in front of you.
 - If you draw below your Suave [Sincerity] score, you lose a success, if you have any. Discard this card and a card in front of you, if you have one.
 - If you draw exactly your Suave [Sincerity] score, you get two successes. Place this card and a card from the discard pile (or bottom of the deck, if there is no discard pile) face-down in front of you.
 - If you draw below your Sincerity [Suave] score, nothing happens. Discard this card.
 - If you draw exactly your Sincerity [Suave] score, you get one success (place this card face-down in front of you) AND you may choose to remove one success from anyone else's pile.
 - If you draw a Face card, you get a success. Place this card face-up in front of you.
- Once all cards have been drawn, compare the number of successes that each side has (unless someone has won their Stakes by drawing the Queen or Jack, or lost them by losing all their successes). Whoever has the highest number of successes wins their stakes – if there's a tie, the Girl wins. If there's a tie between Guys, the highest face value wins (Ace, numbers, Jack, Queen, King). If that's also a tie, compare these in order until someone wins: highest Sincerity, then Suave, then play Rock-Paper-Scissors. Keep these cards in front of you.

Role Switching

At the end of each Scene, some or all of the players who were involved with Conflicts will have a pile of cards in front of them.

- If nobody has cards, then begin the next scene, with the player to the left of the old active player as the new active player. Do

not re-orient the Girl sheet.

- If only one person has cards, they may re-orient the sheet by discarding those cards, one card for each step, in either direction.
- If multiple people have cards, then (keep in mind that higher items trump lower items):
- Everyone must shuffle their face-down cards (if they have more than one). Then, everyone may spend cards from the top of their stack on a one-for-one basis to shift the score of the Girls Value that they are facing up or down by one. You may retain one card, face-down, that will count as the first card you Draw in your next conflict. You may discard cards without spending them. Do this before any re-orienting of the sheet.
 - Anyone with a Queen must reorient the sheet so that they face the Girlfriend role. If multiple people have Queens, then they trump each other in this order: Hearts trumps Diamonds trumps Clubs trumps Spades trumps Hearts. Discard all Queens.
 - Anyone with a Jack must reorient the sheet so that any other player is facing the Girlfriend Role. Suits trump each other in the same manner as above. Discard all Jacks.

Designer Notes

3:46 PM: I want this game to be subtitled “A Game For Men”. It's about being a woman. I'm not a woman, so this is very meta – it's a game about women, by a man, for the purpose of helping men understand more about women.

3:58 PM: Looking at my thought dump, this is going to have to be a pretty tightly framed game. Very Forge. It's about social relations between a group of 4 guys and the girl that they want to score with. Part of play is determining the color – is this high

school? 20-somethings? Old folks in a home? Etc.

9:16 AM, Tuesday: This is definitely drawing some stuff out of another project with the card drawing mechanics and going into some of my “standard tracks”, especially about parallelism. Self censoring: there can be no purely helpful metamechanic pool! Everything has consequences.

9:45 AM: The whole Girl only spoken of through third person is key. It sets up this whole question about object/subject and perceptions of others that should become conscious over the course of play. There may end up being a rule that you can never talk about what the Girl is thinking or feeling. You only experience her through the lens of the Guys.

2:46 PM: An hour to go. Reward system almost pulled together. I'm really happy that I realized that face-up/face-down is where I can get more complexity without more complication. That's turning into the design theme for this game: complexity without complication. I wish I was more confident about the play experience.

3:32 PM: Shit, I need, like, one more hour. Well, hopefully I can whip up a quick character sheet and hope that I didn't miss anything important. This game badly needs an example of play, a section on how to relate mechanical results to stuff that happens in the game world, and an editing/layout passthrough. But it came together in my head, which is something.

Hot

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Love

Matred

Love

Girlfriend

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Matred

Matred

Bitch

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Love

Matred

Love

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Frigid

