Whitecollar Punks

The first rule of Fight Club is - you do not talk about Fight Club. The second rule of Fight Club is - you DO NOT talk about Fight Club. Third rule of Fight Club, someone yells Stop!, goes limp, taps out, the fight is over. Fourth rule, only two guys to a fight. Fifth rule, one fight at a time, fellas. Sixth rule, no shirt, no shoes. Seventh rule, fights will go on as long as they have to. And the eighth and final rule, if this is your first night at Fight Club, you have to fight.
 - Well, I think you know where this one came from

fight for salvation!

This is a Ronnies game for the October contest. Rules are: make a 24h game Ron Edwards wants to play, and win some respect and dough. Except, you have to use two and only two of four terms: **fight**, **pain**, **cosmos**, **sphere**. Should be obvious which ones this game's using. Hey, nobody said that it has to be innovative.

And yeah, I wanted to name the game *My Fight Club Game*, but didn't have the balls.

overview of the game

You're playing average, middle-class people of your urban industrialised country of choice. You suffer of ennui and the system is pushing you down, man. You could be more than you are, you think. During the game we'll see you seeking outlets for your frustrations, getting nervous breakdowns, suffering berserk rages, and perhaps channeling your frustration constructively. The narrative aesthetic here is about romantizing the primitive and violence among perfectly normal people.

If we can't pass our own judgment, then who else will do it for us? Teachers? Parents? The police?
- Ai Tokiwa, GTO

Otherwise the game's pretty normal rpg fare - you frame scenes that're somehow relevant to your character's story, you roleplay people, then you roll dice to fight it out and so on. The goal of the game is to suffer, and through suffering find the strength to change your life.

The game's supposed to take one session to play. These are fast and furious stories. I'll say it here before I forget (you don't think I'm revising this text and all that, right?): I first thought to make this 2-3 session mini-campaign optimized thing with players writing their own frustrations. Instead I plagiarize *Under the Bed* with the frustration cards and general philosophy of game construction. I owe you one, Joshua. I'd mention Paul Czege at this point, too, if it wasn't completely redundant.

- *Eero Tuovinen*, the designer

character creation

Take the deck of frustrations (the cards are at the end of the file) and draw three. Those are your character's frustrations that make him/her gather up Frustration tokens every day. Create your character around the frustrations, because he/she has to be such as to get frustrated by these things on your cards. In other words, tell the other players of the game what social position and personal history of your character is like, being that these things bother him/her so much. They must be a central part of his life...

If you don't really like your frustration cards, trade with other players. You can also either discard one or draw one extra, if you're an old hand with the game. I wouldn't bother with that for the first game, though.

For each of your Frustrations, create a NPC

I helped build missiles. I helped protect this country. You should be rewarded for that. But instead they give it to the plastic surgeons, you know they lied to me.
- Bill Foster, Falling Down

and assign another player to be the player for the NPC. These NPCs are called your *Connections*, and your character has some tie of duty, love or other proactive interest in their well-being. The chosen player will play the Connection through the game. You cannot assign several Connections to one player, you have to spread them out. You can share connections with other players.

Your character is composed of his frustrations, Connections, Frustration tokens, Pain tokens and Retirement tokens. You get a Frustration token whenever your character has to deal with the source of the frustration, they represent your failed ambition. You get Pain tokens whenever you suffer for real, they represent your experiences. You get Retirement tokens when you fold before challenges, they represent your flagging will. At the beginning of the game, take tokens equal to the number of your frustration cards in each type.

stakes

The rules of the game will refer to stakes a lot. They're just anything that somebody wants to see happen in the fiction of the game. Like "the stakes is, will your character lose his job". If you get the stakes, you get to decide whether or not the stated thing happens.

Whenever you *lose* stakes, you might get pain: any one or several other players may choose to *give you one Pain token* each, if they feel that your character suffered personally through the loss of the stakes. This is the only mechanical effect of losing stakes, has to be awarded immediately, and can't be asked for. (If you do, you get nothing.)

chargen overview

1. Draw three frustrations, trade, discard, draw more if you wish. Create character concept.

2. Create Connections and appoint other players to play them. One per frustration.

3. Take Frustration, Pain and Retirement tokens equal to the number of your frustration cards.

6

your turn

Play goes in turns. When it's your turn, the group plays out a day or so of your character's life. Each turn you have to do the following things, in order:

morning wakeup

Take one Retirement token, and tell the other players how you despise your dreams.

confront frustrations

For each of your frustations, the player of the corresponding Connection frames a scene for you to confront the frustation. You can pick the order of frustations. The scene will include a *stake* you will gain or lose.

The framing player sets the situation. Any NPCs are given out to other players as necessary. The framing should take, like, fifteen seconds and no

Our high school guidance counselor used to ask us what you'd do if you had a million dollars and you didn't have to work. And invariably what you'd say was supposed to be your career. So, if you wanted to fix old cars you're supposed to be an auto mechanic.
Peter Gibbons, Office Space

longer. These are short snippets of your everyday life.

You have three options as regards the scene. Make your call and play the scene accordingly. The framing player may make any calls outside character intentions as regards the narration.

◆ You can *shirk* the frustration: you lose the stake, whatever it was.

◆ You can *submit* to it: you gain the stake, but also gain a frustration token.

◆ You can *fight it out*: pay out Pain equal to your Retirement, discard the frustration, it's destroyed and no longer a part of your life.

Fighting

Next, you get to fight. You can try to offend the other players or something, but they'll have to choose to fight you. When somebody does, he can bring other players if they want to. If you want to *provoke* a fight, you can: frame a scene with another player's character, name a stake, and ask him to decide whether or not to fight. If nobody

fights (other players may choose to enter the scene, too), he loses the stake but your turn ends with nobody fighting you.

If nobody wants to fight you, you gain one Frustration token and the phase ends. Next player to play is the one to your left. Tell the other players how you hurt innocent people and break things because they won't fight you.

Here's how the fight goes:

1. The person who first decides to fight frames the scene (it's you only if you provoked the fight) and sets the stake.

2. Each player takes a secret amount of tokens (any type) in hand, telling the others how his character prepares to fight. The fighters may opt for two handfulls of fighting.

3. The framing player counts to three, and all participants point at one or two other players with their fists at the same time. This is who they're going to fight.

4. The tokens are revealed, and the fight resolved (see below).

5. Each player takes a secret amount of tokens (any type) in hand, telling the others how his character maneuvers in the lull of battle. The fighters may opt for two handfulls of maneuvering.

6. The framing player counts to three, and all participants who want to fight more throw their fists to the air (again, one or two).

7. The fists are opened, and the follow-on is resolved (see below).

Resolving the Fight

After a round of fighting you should have two or more players pointing their fists with tokens towards other players. This is how you interpret the results:

If a player pointed at another player who didn't point at him, it's a *beating*. The other player gains one Pain token. The contents of the player's fist don't matter. However, if both players point at each other, the following results apply:

♦ If a player has Frustration tokens in his fist, he loses one of them and his opponent

gains Pain equal to the number left. **The fight is hard and real.**

♦ If a player has Pain tokens in his fist, they are considered Frustration tokens for the above purposes. In addition, the player loses a Pain token. The Party who has more Pain tokens in his fist doesn't take Pain from the opponent. **The fight causes damage to outsiders and property.**

♦ If a player has more Retirement tokens in his fist than opposing Frustration, the opponent gains Frustration tokens equal to the number, but otherwise the character himself gains one Retirement token. **The character acts weak or cowardly in the fight.**

After applying the effects of the fight, check the following conditions:

♦ If a character has Pain over Frustration, he's *injured* and has to spend a Frustration token for each fist staying in the fight from now on. (Just put the tokens in the fist before throwing it in the air.) If Pain is over double

the Frustration, the cost doubles, and so on for tripling and quadrupling.

♦ If more Retirement than Pain was used in the last round, the police or other authorities are trying to *break up the fight*. Each player has to spend a Pain token for each fist staying in the fight from now on. (Just put the tokens in the fist before throwing it in the air.) As the fight continues this result is cumulative.

♦ If a character has more Frustration than Retirement tokens, he goes into a *berserk rage* and raises two hands for fights and follow-ups, even if the player can't pay the requisite tokens (he has to if he can). To retire from a fight with the character a player has to actually throw up a fist in step five and include a Retirement token, which is spent. Such a character is removed from the fight regardless of the follow-up (see below), even while his fist is considered normally.

Resolving the follow-up

After the fighting is resolved, the players fist tokens to determine the follow-up. At this point there should be a number of fists up in the air, with tokens. If there's two-fisted votes, any player with no fist may now change his mind and adopt a fist. Here's how you interpret the results:

◆ If there's only one willing fighter, the player is the winner of the fight. He loses one Retirement token. **The character is the last to leave the field.**

◆ If there's as many fists as there is willing fighters, they go back to step 1 and fight again; the player with the most frustration in their fist frames the scene and sets the stakes for the second round. **After a breather they're at it again.**

◆ If there's more fists than willing fighters, the extra fists cause Pain to a player of their choice equal to the number of Pain tokens in the fist. Highest Pain has precedence when figuring out which are "extra fists",

13

except willing fighters can't of course have two "extra fists". **Escape happens, but only after a beating.**

♦ If there's no fists, the fight ends with nobody winning. **Everybody is scared.**

Anybody who doesn't want to fight might take a few lumps from extra fists, but they are otherwise out and cannot return to the fight in later rounds.

End of turn

After the fight ends, there should be a winner chosen. If there was no fight or it ended with everybody retreating, the "winner" for our purposes is the player to the left of the current player. The winner will take the next turn after this one.

But before that is the last phase of the turn. Check for following conditions for the active player:

♦ If you have more Frustation than Retirement+Pain, you suffer a *nervous breakdown*. Take one extra Retirement token and one extra frustration card and tell the other players how the breakdown period

changes your life to the worse. If you have more Frustration than the other players combined, you're *insane*. Move immediately to Endgame, below.

♦ If you have more Pain than Retirement+Frustration, you are *bed-ridden* (equals a loss of stakes). If you have more Pain than other players combined, you're *dead*. Move immediately to Endgame, below.

♦ If you have more Retirement tokens than Frustation+Pain, you *cause trouble* for all the other participants of this turn's fight (give them to the cops or teachers, for instance, or other underhanded revenge): they gain Frustration equal to your Retirement. If you have Retirement at 10 or more, you're *ground down*. Move immediately to the Endgame, below.

If you're not at Endgame yet, you get to spend Pain. You can spend any amount of Pain for the purpose of *bettering the world*: each token you spend, you explain to the others how your new-found strength of will helps your Connections or otherwise

changes the world. Write down all the things you change. It's most significant that you can also make these statements be about future, which is useful when you might die any day. You can also pay several tokens to support a single statement, which becomes important in the endgame, when the statements fight each other for survival.

If a player wants to contradict another's Pain-statements later on, they'll have to spend an equal amount of Pain to remove the earlier statement. Mere narration may not ultimately contradict these statements.

Endgame

People should not be afraid of their governments, governments should be afraid of their people.
- V, V for Vendetta

When a character becomes dead, insane or ground down, the game is at an end and all other players go through the "end of turn" phase as well, in case there's other deaths or Pain statements still coming. There is a funeral scene or the equivalent with all the characters gathering together, narrated by the player of the character who

triggered endgame. All the characters end their violent ways for some reason, and never fight again.

The final task of the game is to find out which Pain statements proved lasting and true, and which didn't. Number the Pain statements of the game. Players each pick Pain statements (their own or not), by numbers and reveal simultaneously. The highest value one is true, the others are narrated out of existence by the winner. In case of a tie all are false. The process continues until all statements have been tested once and determined true or false. (If two players choose the same Pain statement, it's just less competitors this turn.)

The Frustration cards

I myself prefer to have cardstuff in plain text, so's I can figure myself what size of cards I'm printing. That's why I'm not laying these out for you. Easier to make a table to roll out of from these, too, if you're just testing the game out and don't want to make cards.

Even though I'm no more than a monster - don't I, too, have the right to live?
Dae-su Oh,
Old Boy

Women	Dating	Drugs
Men	Medication	Shopping
Sex	Siblings	Music
Service trade	Old buildings	Machines
Publishers	Geology	Intelligentsia
Academia	Animals	Hoi polloi
The Boss	Vegetation	Criminals
Bullies	Customers	Writing
Stamp Collecting	Bums	Daydreaming
Children	Greek people	The Office
Spouse	Relatives	Pressure groups
Machines	Parents	Work
School	Bad radio	Sports
Harassment	Heavy traffic	Shortages
The Farm	The Weather	The Car
Cancer	The Pool	Ideology
Cowardice	Investments	Bad coffee
Politics	Finances	Colleagues
Media	The Army	Renovation
The Church	Constant lying	Stuttering
Animals	Constant rush	
Roleplaying	Rumors	