Appliance Adventures

A Free RPG by David Best
Created for http://www.1km1kt.net/
On the topic of "Mr. Toaster needs a soul"

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Introduction

Introduction

Appliance Adventures is a story-oriented role playing game where the players take are newly-intelligent household appliances.

Appliance Adventures was designed to be played by all ages, including younger children.

This document, some writing implements, some colored tokens for each player, and a handful of six-sided (d6) dice is all you you need to begin adventuring in the world of Appliance Adventures.

Setting

The World

The world of Appliance Adventures is very similar to our own world, advanced fifteen years into the future. Science has made great strides in the field of simulated intelligence. True artificial intelligence beyond the level of simple animals has evaded researchers to this point, but futurists and pundits (ever a reliable source) think that it is right around the corner.

Latest Advancements in Appliance Technology

The current trend in home automation is the "conversational kitchen" - a kitchen stocked with simulated intelligence (SI) gadgets. These gadgets are capable of basic conversation, typically revolving around how dark you want your bagel toasted, or how much coffee should be made. Due to the dropping cost of battery components, it is expected that most appliances will be able to operate for a few minutes at full operation on battery power. In a reduced function mode, they can remain active for days.

The most advanced SI in the trendiest kitchen is the AutoMaid, a force for organization in the kitchen. The AutoMaid is a mobile device with telescoping wheels and arms that organizes pantries, keeps an eye on food expiration dates and quantities, makes shopping lists, and if necessary, keeps the other appliances in line.

Tone

Games of Appliance Adventures are exercises in teamwork, improvisation, and exploration in a world full of unseen wonders. The Player Appliances (PA) tend to be naive explorers, combat is rare (how do two toasters fight, anyway?) and almost never lethal.

The Magic Of Science

What caused the player appliances to gain intelligence? Are they alone, or are all the appliances waking up? The answer to the first question is beyond the scope of the game, and can be attributed to "the magic of science". The second question will be answered in the "Running Appliance Adventures" section.

Teamwork And Improvisation

A group of appliances that has decided to go exploring will be ill-equipped to handle the real world. That is not a hindrance, but a call to creatively engage the world as a group that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Appliance Creation

Overview

Creating a player appliance for Appliance Adventures is a simple process containing the following steps:

     1. Make up a Name and Personality
     2. Choose an Appliance Type
     3. Choose Special Features
     4. Choose a Quirk
     5. Calculate Soul Points

To ease creation, we will step through the process and create an appliance. The a sheets for all the example appliances are located in the sample character section.

Make up a Name and Personality

How are you known to the rest of the appliances? Are you the grumpy but protective Keeton? Or the adventurous and free-spirited Murphy?

Chris wants to play a character that gets the group into trouble, but always does his best to get them out of it. He loves going on adventures and wants to see as much of the world as he can. Chris writes down "Adventurous and free-spirited" as his personality, and decides on the name Murphy.

Choosing an Appliance Type

The appliance type you choose determines what you can do. To help choose a type, you should ask yourself these questions:
- Do you need to be mobile, or are you willing to rely on others to carry you around?
- What sort of unique traits do you want?
- What are the other players choosing?

The game will be more difficult to play if everyone decides they want to play the same type of appliance, or if no one picks an appliance that can move.

Toaster

Description: The toaster is a master at heating bread and bread products. A toaster tends to be somewhat adventurous after it realizes it can use its ejection mechanism to make small hops (no more than six inches vertical). Due to the amount of noise they make when moving, toasters are rarely considered sneaky.
Features:
- Toasting(2)
- Talking
- Small Hops

Coffee Maker

Description: The coffee maker heats water, makes coffee, and talks. The coffee maker absorbs plenty of caffeine, making it the most excitable and talkative appliance. It also tends to hear the most gossip and human-speak, even if it doesn't know what it means.
Features:
- Making Hot Water and Coffee(2)
- Talking
- Performing

Blender

Description: The blender crushes ice, blends drinks, and scares small animals with a great roar. Blenders aren't usually big talkers, but they love intimidating and scaring others with their whirling blades. Blenders can move slowly by utilizing the vibration of their blades spinning.
Features:
- Blending(2)
- Talking
- Vibrating

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Vacuum Cleaner
Description: The vacuum cleaner is the resident clean freak. Vacuums, like blenders, can use their engine noise to scare and startle those around them. A vacuum, as one of the true movers in the group, can be a vital backbone to the party of appliances.
Features:
• Vacuuming(2)
• Talking
• Rolling

Lamp
Description: With an unrivaled flair for the dramatic, a lamp can shed light onto situations, blind foes, and be a beacon in the darkness. Like the coffee maker, the lamp has no way to propel itself, but makes up for it with the gift of speech.
Features:
• Lighting(2)
• Talking
• Performing

AutoMaid
Description: The AutoMaid is a relatively new innovation in housewares. Its purpose is to manage the kitchen and act as an interface between the family and the appliances. The AutoMaid can be bossy, but was designed to be a leader. Being relatively new technology, the AutoMaid isn't as proficient in its abilities as the other appliances.
Features:
• Lifting
• Organizing
• Talking
• Rolling

The appliance types given here are just examples. The Narrator should feel free to create other appliances as needed.

Continuing with the adventurous theme, Chris likes the idea of a hopping toaster. Chris checks with the rest of the group to make sure no one else is playing a toaster, or at least that someone is playing a vacuum or an AutoMaid. He gets the go ahead from the group, so Chris writes "Toaster" in the appliance box, and copies down the toaster's features.

Choosing Special Features
Every player gets three points worth of Special Features. Special Feature points can be spent in three ways:
• New Features
• New Areas of Knowledge
• Adding to existing Features

New Features
Special Features are features that differentiate your appliance from every other appliance. For example, a lamp could use a point to gain Small Hops to give it some ability to move. A Special Feature should be a justifiable change to the appliance. Adding a gun to a toaster (or any of these appliances for that matter) would not make sense. Adding wheels to a toaster would be odd, but if the player can sell it to the Narrator as a viable feature, then should work. Adding a new feature

Areas of Knowledge
Special Features could also be areas of knowledge. Knowledge of an area of town could be useful for an AutoMaid. A lamp might

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gain Knowledge of Police Procedures by watching too many police dramas on TV.

Adding to Existing Features

Special Feature points can also be used to boost existing features, taking a unnumbered feature to to a (2). (4) is the maximum value for a numbered feature.

Murphy the Toaster is shaping up nicely. To give him a little more uniqueness, Chris needs to spend his Special Feature points. Chris sees Murphy as being a bit hyperactive, so he spends his first point upgrading Small Hops to Small Hops(2). This means he can use his hopping to get other people out of trouble, which Chris feels is important. For the second point, Chris adds a Flashlight to his list of features. Finally, Chris adds Knowledge of Great Outdoors to his list, as Murphy loves to try and catch glimpses of the television from the kitchen when nature programs are on.

Choosing a Quirk

Simulated Intelligences are not the most stable systems. An appliance's quirk is manifestation of this fact. A quirk should be a small or uncommon thing; if it was severely annoying the appliance's owner would have exchanged it for a less irksome unit. Some sample quirks:
• A lamp that pulses its light as it speaks.
• A blender that is excessively polite.
• An AutoMaid that is afraid of heights.
• A vacuum that hums to itself when no humans are around.
• A blender that blends when it gets scared.
• A toaster with an encyclopedic knowledge of bread products who continually suggests new ones to the owner.

These quirks, when played well, can result in benefits for your character.

None of the example quirks were what Chris was looking for. After talking it over with the Narrator, Chris decides that he wants Murphy to have an "Adventure Voice". Whenever Murphy goes out of the house, or does something he considers adventurous (like toast a waffle) he switches from his normal voice to a more bombastic hero voice ("Never fear, m'lady, this magnificent waffle will be toasted to perfection!")

Calculating Soul Points

A PA has a number of Soul Points equal to five minus the highest level Feature it has. Soul Points can be spent help out in a dire situation.

Chris has created a well-rounded appliance without any high attributes. Murphy's highest attribute is just two, so Chris rights three in the box for Soul Points.

System

Conflict Resolution

The Encounter mechanic is the core mechanic for Appliance Adventures. An encounter is made of several phases:
• Narration
• Formulate a Plan
• Skill Selection
• Roll Resolution
• Last Chance
• Encounter Resolution

Narration

The Narrator describes the scene, states which PAs can be involved in the encounter, and begins role playing the conflict. He also decides how difficult this encounter will be.

If this is not the first round for this encounter, PAs who failed in the last round do not get to participate this round.

Mike the narrator starts. "As Murphy, Claire, Keeton, and Chuck sneak out of the house, they run into their first problem. Standing before the group is a enormous dog. He growls and lets out a big bark..."

Kyle, who is playing Chuck the Nervous Blender, interrupts. "Ahh! Bzzzzzzz Bzzzzzzz Bzzzzz. Sorry."

Mike continues. "Not expecting that response, the dog backs away a bit. Not much, however. Murphy, Claire, and Chuck can act, but keep in mind that you are riding on Keeton at the moment."

Mike previously planned on this encounter being a four success encounter, but after they breezed through the last one, he secretly decides to push this one to a six.

Formulate a Plan

Through role playing, the PAs gain knowledge of the scene and formulate a plan of action.

Andy, who is playing Keeton asks "Can we get around the beast?"

"You could probably try to book it, but you are loaded down with the others. You will drop at least one of them if you move too quickly." Mike the narrator answers.

Keeton: "Fine mess you've got us into, Murphy. Any ideas, folks?"

Chuck speaks up: "Sure didn't like the blendering. Let's spook him."

"Fab-u-lous. Let's wow this mongrel" says Claire.

"My fault? You love it! I'll get around behind him." says Murphy.

"Okay," says Andy, "We're ready."

Skill Selection

Going around the table, in order of ascending quantity of Soul Points, each player describes what skill they would like to use this encounter. If the player has a relevant skill, they put a number of their colored tokens into the center of the table equal to the skill level. Once everyone has declared, everyone simultaneously rolls a die.

Keeton used a Soul Point on the previous encounter, so he has the fewest, with one. Andy says he will use Vacuuming (2). Next is either Nicky playing Claire, or Kyle. Nicky elects to go first, and declares Claire will use Performing (3). Kyle says he will use Blending(3). Finally Chris declares that Murphy will use Small Hops(2).

As each player chooses their skill, they put their skill tokens into the pot. In order, Andy puts in two, Nicky puts in three, Kyle puts in three, and Murphy puts in two.

Everyone rolls. Andy rolls a four, Nicky rolls a six, Kyle rolls a two, and Chris groans as he rolls a one.

Roll Resolution

The storytelling begins. Go around the table in the order descending die rolls. Each player with a die roll equal to six succeeds automatically. They describe what they did. Each player who failed their roll must now try to pass by using points from the center pot. The points of each player in the pot can not be split. A player can claim sets of tokens from the pot to add them to his die roll. Points used from the center can not be used again in the encounter. Each set taken from the center must be narrated in the context of the story.

If any player who rolled a one ends with a success (without using any Soul Points) he scores a resounding success, and gains one Soul Point immediately.

Any player appliance that does not succeed this round can choose to spend a Soul Point to automatically succeed, or fail and skip the next round.

If, at the end of this phase, the party has not gained enough skill points to defeat the encounter, start a new round at phase one, Narration.

Nicky starts this round. "I turn on my brightest light, start singing a show tune, and do my best to keep the light in the dogs eyes."

"Where are you?" asks Mike.

Nicky replies, "I'm staying right where I'm at, on top of the vacuum."

Mike adds one to the success count.

Andy goes next. "I put the vacuum in reverse and start blowing dust, revving the engine and approaching the dog." Andy doesn't want to take any tokens from the pool, but he is down to one Soul Point. If he wants to stay in the encounter, he

needs to succeed. He reaches into the pool and takes out Chris's tokens, which will put him at six, a success.

Andy narrates Murphy's help: "With a loud ker-CHUNK, Murphy's ejection mechanism sends Murphy loudly off the back of Keeton." Andy looks over at Chris, who nods. Chris could have, if he didn't like what Andy suggested, amended the statement.

Mike adds one to the success count, bringing the total to two.

Kyle is up next. Looking at the token pool, Kyle sees both Chuck and Murphy can't succeed, without using Soul Points. "Oookay." Kyle starts. He reaches for the pile and pulls out Claire's points. "Spotlight, on me, baby! Chuck starts blending, and sliding down Keeton's body. While sliding, Claire pulls the light out of the dog's eyes and uses it to make Chuck look big and scary."

Mike asks, "Anything else?" Chuck only has a five, so he will fail if he doesn't pull any more tokens.

"Nope. It's to Murph." Kyle sits back, hoping to see something cool from Murphy.

Chris grins, "This is going to be neat." He pulls the two remaining sets of tokens from the pool. This will give him his roll of a one, plus three from Kyle, and two from Keeton; a total of six. A resounding success!

"As Murphy leaps from Keeton's back, he feels an extra push as Keeton pushes him off by inflating his dust bag. Right before Murphy lands, Chucks stops blending. Making Murphy's crash landing extra audible. Murphy keeps hopping, as he moves to get behind the dog."

Chris makes a note on his character sheet that he now has four Soul Points.

Mike adds one success, bringing the total to three. The party is half-way done.

"Kyle, as Chuck was sliding down Keeton's back, he caught a fold in the bag and fell off. He is laying on his side, next to Keeton. You guys haven't scared this thing off, yet."

System

Encounter Resolution

When the party ultimately succeeds or fails at the encounter, you exit the loop of rounds, and enter the Encounter Resolution phase. Success is defined as meeting or beating the number of successes the Narrator set as the threshold at the beginning of the encounter. Failure occurs when the group gives up, or when the entire party is out of Soul Points or misses a turn.

If any player stood out as playing their appliance exceedingly well, or narrated their part of the story very well, they can be rewarded with a Soul Point. This should not be done frequently.

"The dog yelps and makes a break for the street. Clearly, it didn't know what it was up against. Where to next?"

Running Appliance Adventures

Structure of a Game

A game of Appliance Adventures is broken up into encounters that the PAs must overcome. A typical adventure is made of between four and seven encounters.

Encounters

An encounter starts with a bit of description, and a chance for the players to ask questions about the scene. After everyone is satisfied they know what is happening.

Adventure Design

The easiest way to write an adventure for the game is to create a flow chart of the encounters you wish to include. After creating the chart, you should be able to determine success and failure conditions.

Encounter Design

An encounter is made of four primary pieces of information.
• Setup
• Difficulty Rating
• Success Condition
• Failure Condition

Setup

This is the bit of role playing and exposition that sets the scene for the PAs heroics. It is important that you give the players enough information to come up with a solution, but not enough to force them into a corner or a single course of action.

The setup should also give the players some since of the difficulty of the encounter. It is recommended that the Narrator not tell the party how many successes are needed.

Difficulty Rating

The difficulty rating of an encounter can roughly correlate into number of appliances in the party multiplied by one for easy, two for medium, and three for hard.

Success State

This is the outcome of the encounter, if the appliances succeed. The state should include a bit of exposition, and point the way to the next encounter.

Failure State

Not every encounter is a success, but failure of an encounter should not be the same as failure of the adventure. Failure should open up a different avenue that could still lead to success.

Sample Adventure

Where Did Keeton Go?

This is a sample adventure making use of the sample appliances. Keeton, the curmudgeonly vacuum cleaner has wandered off, and it is up to the rest of the group, to come to his rescue. Clancy, the AutoMaid is distressed by Keeton's absence. He is heading up the search party.

Collect Clues

(Easy Encounter) Keeton's current location can be determined by asking the other appliances, scouting out his closet, or even just discussing what Keeton likes. Eventually, the party will figure out that Keeton is at the Junk Yard at the edge of town.

Sneak Around Town

(Difficult Encounter during the day, Medium encounter at night) Sneaking around town will require the party to acquire cover, or wait until night fall. If they go during the night, they will be forced to face the guard dogs at the junk yard.

Find Keeton at The Junk Yard

(Medium Encounter during the day, Difficult encounter at night) Gaining access to the junk yard isn't difficult during the day, but the guard dogs will make life difficult during the night. Once they get in, they will need to find Keeton.

Convince Keeton To Come Back

(Easy Encounter) Convincing Keeton to come back isn't all that difficult. He wanted to make a difference when he heard about the junk yard, but now he realizes he is better suited to the work at home.

Getting back home can be a whole other adventure.

Sample Appliances

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points	Appliance Adventures
Keeton	Vacuum	2	

Features

- Vacuuming (2)
- Talking (3)
- Rolling
- Knowledge of Surrounding Area

Personality

Grumpy and protective of his "family".

Quirk

Tends to wander off when not in use.

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points	Appliance Adventures
Murphy	Toaster	3	

Features

- Toasting (2)   · Flashlight
- Talking
- Small Hops (2)
- Knowledge of Great Outdoors

Personality

Adventurous and free-spirited

Quirk

Adventure Voice

Sample Appliances

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points
Chuck	Blender	2

Features
- Blending (3)
- Talking
- Vibrating (2)
- Latin Dancing

Personality
Workaholic who wants to fit in.

Quirk
Excitable, starts blending if scared.

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points
Claire	Lamp	2

Features
- Lighting (2)
- Talking
- Performing (3)

Personality
Loves (being) the limelight.

Quirk
Talks like a rich, old, female movie star.

Sample Appliances

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points
Clancy	AutoMaid	2

Features

- Lifting
- Rolling
- Organizing (3)
- Talking
- Knowledge of Spanish Operas

Personality

Neat and studious, hates disorder.

Quirk

Sings opera when no human is around.

Name	Appliance Type	Soul Points

Features

Personality

Quirk