



The Spirit of Small Gifts



Somewhere in the vast multiverse, there is a post office box. It looks like all post office boxes in all parts of every world, and sits on the corner of any-or possibly every--street. Inside are many levels, inhabited by small spirits whose sole tasks are to ensure that the tiny pieces of every metaphorical puzzle arrive where they are needed before someone needs them. You are one of these spirits. Perhaps someday, you will rise to become a deity.

INTRODUCTION AND GOAL

The Spirit of Small Gifts is a solo-journaling (+ writing to friends) meta-Role-Playing Game (RPG). You will write a journal about the development of a Spirit of Small Gifts, and write letters to send potentially useful items to friends playing other games.

Up front, the goals of this game are these: To get people talking to their friends about their RPGs, foster some creative problem solving, and give you an excuse to put some letters in the mail. The goal of this game is explicitly not to override, pressure, or force anyone running a game playing along with your fiction.

Compatibility: The Spirit of Small Gifts can be used with any existing RPG system that your friends may be playing--provided you have their consent to rope them into this experiment, and permission from their Game Master (we will use "GM" as a generic term for any player who facilitates an RPG session for their friends) to impact the game.

WHAT YOU NEED

- ▶ A book of stamps
- ▶ Envelopes (5x7 are ideal, but you can work with 4x9)
- ▶ Somewhere to track your Spirit's progress and Lore
- ▶ Paper, pens, or a printer
- ▶ Some random small objects (or Index Cards work too)

CREATING YOUR SPIRIT

This is where you create your character for this game. Record the following on a character sheet, or an online document.

1. What is your spirit's Name? You will sign your small gifts with this name, so make sure it's something you're cool with sending to a variety of people. Avoid a name that would make someone else uncomfortable--these are your friends, after all.
2. What is your spirit's Nature? Are you a trickster? A spirit of fate or fortune? A bargainer, or one who bestows favors? Choose a Nature you would be comfortable writing letters as.
3. What is your spirit's Goal or Belief? Are you seeking power for yourself? Do you just want the ability to help people? Do you believe that the Multiverse is in chaos, and it is your duty to set people right? This will mostly influence the tone of your letters.
4. What is the World you operate in like? Which world have you chosen to focus the bulk of your attention on? Is it modern, like the one you live in now, or more pastoral? Does magic exist, or has it been crowded out by technology? Are you in competition with other deities and spirits, or are you one of the few that exist here?
5. Set your Faith and Postage to 0.
6. Create a journal, or space in your document to record Lore, which your friends may send in return for your Gifts.

HOW TO PLAY

What I wouldn't give for a stick of bubblegum right now...

Throughout play, remember that you are a small spirit: When a player asks "is it possible that I have _____ in my inventory?", and a GM has to consider whether they might have picked it up somewhere, that is the space where a Spirit of Small Gifts operates. You're probably not going to happen to have notarized documents that prove who the Orphaned Monk's parents truly are, but you might give them the lump of wax they need to recreate a missing key to get into the next room.

1. Talk to a friend about their current RPG campaign. As you talk with them, try to listen for situations they are concerned their Player Character (PC) will face, or are in the midst of facing. Do not mention your Spirit during the conversation, but if possible, try to identify one small, tangible problem that your Spirit can solve by the end of the conversation. "Small" and "tangible" are fairly vague and relative terms, but you want something that a simple, household item could fix.

Keep Talking: If you haven't thought of anything specific for this friend's character, you could speak with another friend, or simply select a random object that could exist in their game world for the next step.

2. Find an item in your house that will fit into a 5x7 envelope with a letter. This should be an item that could exist in your friends' RPG world, and should be relatively inexpensive.

3. Place that item in an envelope. If this is an item that you cannot part with, draw and/or describe it on an index card and place that in the envelope instead.

Write the character a letter as your true self, a Spirit of Small Gifts. Do not explain what you think the object could be used for. Do explain that you have listened to their needs and have provided for them.

A Note About Notes: Included with this game is 'A Note to GMs' which explains the intent of the game further for any GM whose campaign your Spirit's actions might influence. Remember, this is not designed to overrule or override any GM's decision.

4. Put a stamp, your friend's address, and your mortal return address on the envelope. Seal it.



5. Place your envelope in the mail. Mark 1 Faith and the amount of Postage (One postage per currency spent; so one US Cent = 1 Postage, for example), for the stamp on your sheet.

- ▶ If your friend or their character thanks you for the letter, mark 1 more Faith.
 - ▶ If their GM allows your friend to use the item in game, and they pass an obstacle using it, mark 1 more Faith.
 - ▶ Optional: If you, with permission, send this to an Actual Play (AP) podcaster or streamer, and they at least mention your letter and this game (even if they don't use the item), mark 3 Faith.
- Just don't be too pushy; this is a game you are playing

6. Ask your friend to write out up to three scraps of Lore, and mail them back to you (email is fine, but letters would be better). These should be pieces of your Spirit's story in their world. Ideally, two to three sentences long (although there is no express limit). Add

Weaving a Story: Between letters, you may rearrange Lore scraps into a narrative of your Spirit's actions on the various planes it has taken an interest in.

these scraps to your Spirit's Lore section.

7. Find some more friends, and repeat the process.

WEAVING A STORY

While much of this game is designed to get you to send mail, take some time learning about your character through the Lore journal. Think about your Spirit's home World. There may be adventurers on other planes who need your help, but there are common folk and lords alike who could also use the right thing at the right time.

When you are not writing letters, spend some time writing tales of minor deeds you've done: A farmer who discovers she had enough butter knives for the big family dinner after all, after finding an extra stored in an envelope for safety; a baker who receives a much-needed packet of yeast from a "distant friend" with nearly illegible handwriting; a political figure is about to give a speech, and finds the perfect analogy written--in their own hand--on a scrap of paper that floats across their floor.

What about people who did not use your gifts, what happens to them? Perhaps include a time that the Miller threw out a set of nails intended for a repair in his mill; or that author who ignored your suggestion for a resolution to a plot hole. Were these people alright, or did ignoring you end poorly for them?

Use your Journal to expand upon your spirit's Lore, and to figure out what kind of an entity you are: Are you a bargainer--offering power now for a greater reward later? Or perhaps a trickster--giving rewards to those who entertain you or solve your riddles? Are you a straightforward granter of wishes--who lets the consequences fall where they may?

Growing in Faith: You may add 1 Faith for each of these minor tales. You may earn up 5 Faith between writing letters.

EMPOWERING YOUR SPIRIT

Your spirit earns Faith, and Postage each time you mail a letter. You can use Postage to improve your letters, and Faith to work toward Ascendence.

POSTAGE UPGRADES

Might as well do something with all that Postage you're collecting, eh?

- ▶ 30 Postage - use a 4x9 envelope instead.
- ▶ 60 Postage - use a Padded envelope instead.
- ▶ 120 Postage - send a second item of equal or lesser value.

ASCENDANCE

A spirit can become a god. Is this something you desire, or do you wish to support a greater power than yourself?

As you gain Faith, you can become a more powerful entity. Consider the type of spirit you have been with your early letters, and write about what you've learned from them before you make any decisions. Did your gifts influence a player, and if so, how? Review your Lore. What stories have you heard about your letters?

Use the following numbers as a guideline. You should probably have at least that much Faith before you begin thinking about Ascending but if you're hearing stories from friends that describe a

higher tier, perhaps you have done enough work to justify moving up early.

- ▶ 15 Faith - A Named Spirit of Small Gifts: You are no longer an unknown entity, there are people who know your name. Perhaps even whisper it when they reach into their pouch for an envelope. You're still a superstition, but that's a start.
- ▶ 30 Faith - A Divine Emissary: You are viewed as a divine--be it angelic or demonic--entity. Perhaps people believe you are working on behalf of a larger force, or perhaps they believe you are trying to gain power yourself. You're a sometime deus ex machina.
- ▶ 60 Faith - A Lesser God: One or two people are starting to follow you, make offerings to you. They are paltry things, bits of string and mateless socks, which you can redirect to others who need them. Perhaps someone has set up a small shrine with your name, or perhaps you were called upon in a great battle. You know how to influence people in such a way that they're never entirely sure you were there--and you have the text to prove it.
- ▶ 150 Faith - A True Divinity: Someone has built you a church. You have a message, and it is beginning to spread. People have heard of you, or at least have heard of things you are credited with doing. Within your Lore, there are countless examples of people who have benefited from your intervention. Even when you arrive in a new World, your influence does not take long to grow.

NOT ENOUGH MAIL?

You may have few friends interested in RPGs that you're comfortable sending your physical address to, or you may only know one or two people in an active campaign. That's fine! This game encourages you to mail something to someone, so here are some alternatives:

- ▶ Speak with a friend who's making a PC for an upcoming campaign. Or who might create one in the future. Or just for fun. Your Gift is in their starting inventory.
- ▶ Chat with a GM who's worldbuilding for a campaign. Mail them notes they can distribute to their players (unless you also know the players, in which case send them directly) or to some Non-Player Characters (NPC).
- ▶ Talk with an online friend and send the details of the Gift by email or a Direct Messages. Mail a friend or family member a nice note (which does not have to be from your Spirit).
- ▶ Send a donation to a charity, or find an organization that sends letters to people who could use a pick-me-up (such as the elderly). Tuck the Gift into a folder to use in a campaign in the future or send to a friend. (Take 3 Faith for putting good in the world).
- ▶ Mail someone a copy of this game! It's designed to be folded up in an envelope.

Not Enough Stamps? While the stated goal of this game is generating mail to benefit the US Postal Service, if you can't buy Postage for any reason, feel free to hand-deliver notes or send emails, or whatever you can do to put positivity in the world. (Gain 20 Postage per note).



Dear Game Master,

If you're reading this, someone in your player party has been visited by a Spirit of Small Gifts, and was offered a small household item to use in their campaign. If the player asks "Is it possible that I would have _____ in my inventory?", that's the space that a Spirit of Small Gifts operates best in. This item has neither magical nor technological benefits, and has negligible financial value. This gift was intended as a potential plot device to help the player creatively solve a single puzzle.

However, you are not required to play along. If you choose not to allow this item in your game, the Spirit has still succeeded in the game's original mission. This Spirit of Small Gifts is a game created as part of a Game Jam designed to encourage people to mail things to each other and talk about their RPGs together. It is not designed to override or overrule the GM of any campaign.

If you choose to play along: thank you for participating in this goofy little experiment. Either way, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read this note. If you would like more information about the Spirit of Small Gifts, visit <https://theinstagrahame.itch.io/>.

—Grahame, creator of The Spirit of Small Gifts





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