

A History of Moments

A Roleplaying Game

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THOMPSON
59

THOMPSON

HOWE
SADDL

PASSMORE

BAR

1864

Introduction

Welcome to a game about exploring characters!

I designed this as a collaborative way to explore the memories of a character you intend to play for a TTRPG campaign. Both I and those I play with often felt that it took a few sessions before you really got to know your character. The idea behind this game is to cut down that time by delving into what your character experienced before your first session. It invites us to explore pivotal moments in your characters background as a way of understanding and fleshing out that character as a person so that you as a player can more easily inhabit them. It also invites us to be collaborative and take the lonely work of writing a background to a shared space, where another player's ideas can provide creative tension.

In a nutshell you will take a character or character concept, explore as many important moments in their life as you want and then either flesh out those memories or just jump into the first session of your campaign. It is a creative, free space where you can experiment and find your voice as the character.



Playing the Game

To play this game you need two players and at least one character as well as a 1d100. What a character means is up to you, you can bring a fully statted-out character or just the loose idea of one. But you need something, this game won't help you make a character - only explore their memories. I would recommend that each player has a character concept so that you can take turns delving into their memories, fleshing out both characters through collaborative storytelling.

The game has the structure of back-and-forth in a conversation. That is, one player will say something and then the other player will say something. What you say shouldn't be more than one or two sentences - this is not a game of long prose or deep description, it's a game of quick, smooth conversation that creates tension and drives the scene forward.

The two players have slightly different roles. Player A is the one whose character plays the main role in the scene, it's their memory we are experiencing. As such, they get to decide when things are added to the scene and who takes what actions. Player B is the one creating tension, taking the scene in unexpected directions. They get to twist the details and describe how things turn out when someone does something. After playing a scene you switch roles and explore the memories of the other player's character.

Setting the Scene

A scene is something that takes place in a single location. It can be a few spoken words, a series of actions or one big thing happening. Think about how film does scenes, we're working with the same principle. When you need to move from one location or jump forwards in time, the scene has ended.

Player A will begin by rolling 1d100 on the Prompts table. If they don't like a prompt they may reroll twice (for a total of three rolls). Keep in mind though, this game is designed to bring unexpected things into play, so take the leap even if you don't like a prompt - you can always just edit the memory later.

After getting the prompt Player A will set the scene by deciding on three things:

A location - this is the place where the scene happens. Be specific, but don't use more than one sentence when describing it. For example, the pond where I used to go and look at frogs.

Something happening - this is what is going on when the scene begins. You can draw directly on the prompt if it works or just decide on something inconsequential. For example, I am squatting by the pond, looking at my own reflection in the water.

Someone or something with you - You aren't strictly alone but you don't have to be with another person. Highlight another character or something meaningful in the environment. For example, I'm squatting right below the tree where me and Kyle carved our names.

Player B will then add one detail to the scene. This should be something small that gives some color to the scene. For example, you can hear the rustle of wind in the trees above you.

Playing the Game

Player A

When you narrate something in the scene, you pick from the following.

Adding Something New

Adding Something New is just what it sounds like. You are adding something entirely new to the scene. It can be a person, a thing, something happening or anything else you can think of. What it can't be is someone Asking a Question, Giving an Answer or Taking an Action. If they do that, see below.

When you add something new, you want to describe what it is and how they enter the scene. It can be something already in the scene, which might sound strange. But imagine that Player A adds a ringing phone. That phone was probably already in the scene, it just wasn't important until now. To borrow film jargon, think of it as cutting to a close-up of something we as an audience overlooked.

Taking an Action

As Player A you are the only one who can make someone do something. When you do, say what they do and describe how they do it. You can only Take an Action with a character in the scene.

An action is one discreet action (taking a sip, drawing a gun, saying "hello") but it's perfectly fine to describe a character doing more things as part of that action. What we focus on is the meaningful, important action that conveys something. For example, you can say "Amy draws a gun" or "Amy pulls out her gun, points it at you and cocks it with a menacing smile.". Both of these descriptions establish that Amy is ready to do violence or is threatening someone, and that's the action we focus on. Just keep in mind that you want to limit what you say to a sentence or two.

If you want a character to say something, it should be a statement - not a question or an answer.

Player B

When you narrate something, pick one of the following.

Twisting Something

To twist something is to change that thing from what it was intended to be to something slightly different. You can twist actions or things in the scene. When you twist something, say what and describe how it is twisted.

When Twisting Something you are adding tension. You are describing how something doesn't quite turn out like expected. For example, someone taking a sip of wine might take a gulp or a light turned on might cast long, creepy shadows.

Twisting Something is not Taking an Action. When Amy draws the gun, you can't say "Amy doesn't" but you can say that the gun misfires or that Amy forgets to click off the safety.

Playing the Game

Describe What Follows

By Describing What Follows you are focusing on what follows logically from an action or something being added to the scene. Say what follows and describe how.

It can be a detail in the environment or an emotion in a character or something else, but it must always follow the fictional logic. For example, a knight walking down a castle hallway might hear their footsteps echo but they can't suddenly hear the voice of their mothers ghost.

Asking and Answering Questions

Both players can have characters ask or answer questions. But Player A can only have their main character (the character whose memory we're experiencing) ask or answer questions while Player B can only have other character ask or answer questions.

When one player has a character ask a question, the other player should answer it. Keep in mind though, that an answer might not always be spoken.

Ending the Scene

Player A decides when the scene is resolved. You can end on a tense moment or a resolution, that's up to you but it's always a good idea to leave some questions to be answered later. A good indication on when to end a scene is when you have trouble taking an action or adding something new without changing location or drastically changing the feel of the scene.

Write down a summary (or a detailed description, up to you) of the memory and then switch roles.



Prompts

Roll a d100

1. A love
2. A death
3. A betrayal
4. A new perspective
5. A profession
6. An obligation
7. A funeral
8. A fight
9. Blood spilled
10. A responsibility
11. A tradition
12. A sleepless night
13. Confusion
14. A failure
15. A success
16. A show of courage
17. A display of cowardice
18. An independence gained
19. An opportunity
20. Protection
21. A home
22. A home away from home
23. A warning
24. A run in with the law
25. A disaster
26. A connection made
27. An experience in nature
28. A discovery
29. A scene
30. An arrival
31. A departure
32. An introduction
33. A contribution made
34. A generosity
35. A work done
36. A misreading
37. An outrage
38. A reluctance

Prompts

39. A time you survived
40. A breakdown
41. An illness
42. A helping hand
43. A burden
44. A cause found
45. A hospital
46. A belonging
47. A rejection
48. An award
49. A realization
50. A lie told
51. A fire
52. Something enchanted
53. Something careful
54. A ship
55. Control lost or gained
56. A fork in the road
57. A theory proved right or wrong
58. A drink shared
59. Something rotten
60. Wandering
61. A murmur
62. A painstaking accomplishment or failure
63. A scene or stage
64. Something or someone banished
65. A gaze
66. A division mended or extended
67. An embrace
68. A locket
69. A verdant place
70. A waste
71. Something or someone abrasive
72. Frantic
73. A break
74. An island
75. Ignored
76. Something scrawled
77. Something lucky
78. Something unlucky
79. Something or someone elegant

Prompts

80. A star or stars
81. A party
82. Something scattered
83. A memorable drive
84. An illustration
85. Something or someone towering
86. A miscreant
87. A storm
88. A garden
89. Something or someone guarded
90. Education
91. A flash
92. Insects
93. Mould
94. Something thoughtless
95. A fire
96. An attraction
97. Something frightening
98. A blade
99. Cobwebs
100. Clouds

