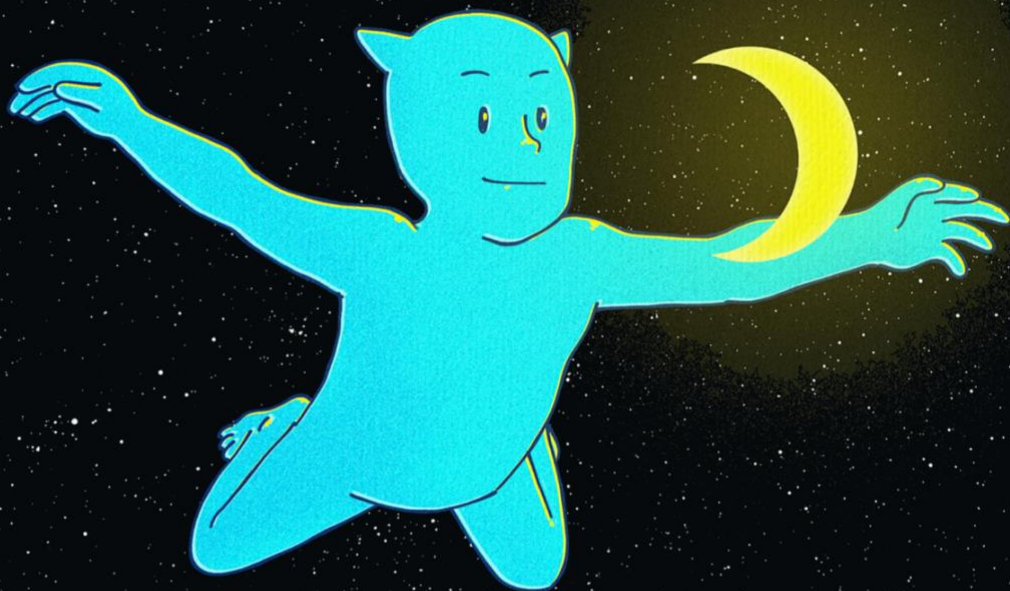


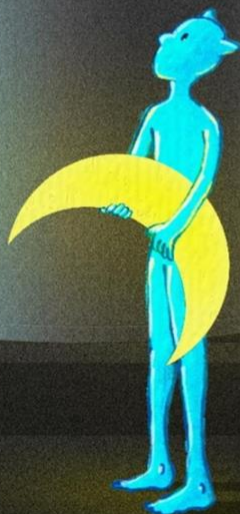
Figment

Rock, Paper, Scissors, Imagination!



By Jake Eldritch & Cheza Luna

- **Figment** is an ultra-lite-rules story game in which you make your own characters to play through the events of fairy tales, myths, movies, books, comics, and more!
- Only “Rock-Paper-Scissors” is needed to play; no dice, numbers, lengthy character sheets, tables, gewgaws or gimmicks!
- Create a shared story to entertain children or explore unique settings with friends!



Figment

By Jake Eldritch & Cheza Luna

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Version 1.1 (2/8/2022)

Dedicated to Lucas
Let's play this someday!

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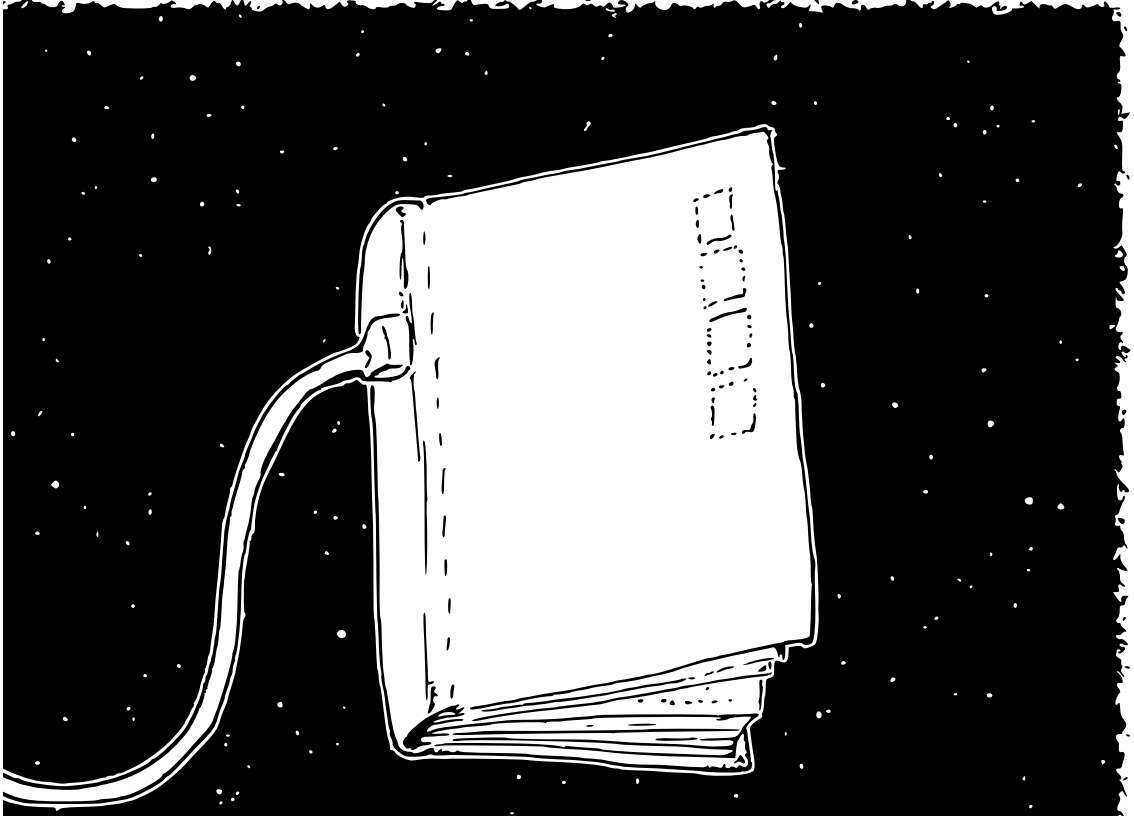
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INTRODUCTION

*"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells.
Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life
through the wrong end of a telescope.
Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."*

— Dr. Seuss





Figment is a simple story-game mainly intended for play with or by children. As an “ultra-lite” game it relies only upon rock-paper-scissors to settle matters of fate and requires almost nothing in the way of preparation. The story can be your own or drawn from your favorite fairy tales, myths, bed-time stories, movies, animation, etc. You only need a Storyteller, some Players, and boundless imagination!

The Storyteller

This book is for aspiring Storytellers, who get to run the make-believe world the story takes place in. The Storyteller will start the story, find a place for the Players within it, and keep it moving along. They will settle arguments and know the rules as well as play the “bad guys,” obstacles, friendly faces, and bystanders. Most importantly, the Storyteller will describe a setting the Players can explore without getting hung up on their own notion of what the story should be.



The Players

These are the active participants in the game, anywhere from one person to as many as the Storyteller thinks they can handle. The Players get to play the part of a character they make in a story they may or may not already know. The recommended Players are usually several children ages six and up, but this game is for all ages. There is no real way to “win” this sort of game. A Player’s goal should instead be to take part in the story and help the others do the same.

The Runcible

This is a small token that helps make it clear who is taking their turn and has the spotlight. Pass it to the current acting player or storyteller to the next only when making a Throw (p.14) – at other times you will not need to worry about it. As you might guess from the name, a **Runcible** can be just about anything. We recommend using a stuffed animal no one is overly attached to, however.

The Story

This can be anything the Storyteller thinks the Players would enjoy. While you can make up your own story, this game assumes you will be playing out the events and setting of your favorite fairy tales, comics, cartoons, books, or movies. The following are three ideal stories to start with, as they are very well known and have simple plots.

The Three Little Pigs: a set of chase scenes to escape the Big Bad Wolf; with the straw, stick, and brick houses as stops in between. Storytellers should expect to play any spare pigs and the Big Bad Wolf. This story features in the example of play (p.20).

Little Red Riding Hood: a dark tale with lots of social play and deception. Players can act as little red riding hood variants or as out of place guest characters, The Storyteller should prep to play the big bad wolf and maybe the hunter to step in if things go awry.

Jack and the Beanstalk: a straightforward smash-and-grab adventure story not unlike what you would find in traditional fantasy role-playing games. Storytellers should expect to play Jack's mother, the cow, an old man who buys it for magic beans, a giant, a goose that lays golden eggs, and a magical talking harp.

This list favors shorter stories, which is good as you will find that they can and should go seriously astray upon contact with your Players. Stories with serious themes or complex narratives may not mesh well with this game. Alter these or substitute your own, especially if your own culture has beloved stories that could be great adventures.

The Rules

Rules add a gaming element, help prevent arguments, and ground the story. When necessary, settle the outcomes of uncertain actions by Rock-Paper-Scissors, with ties going to the side with the advantage. Players may even affect the story beyond the actions of their character by using "and" or "but" to make things more interesting.

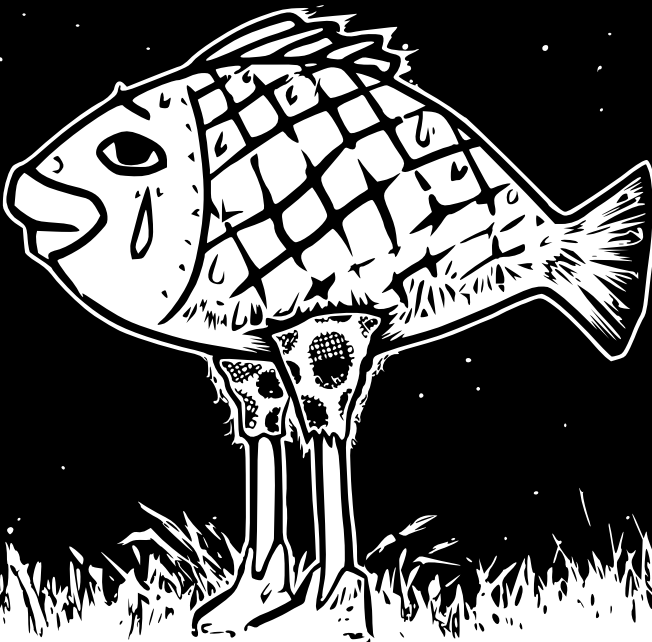
Figment also handles taking turns and defeating foes without numbers. While children can be quite good with numbers, leaving them out makes the game more accessible and easier to play with no prep.

CHARACTERS

*“When children pretend, they’re using their imaginations to move
beyond the bounds of reality.
A stick can be a magic wand.
A sock can be a puppet.
A small child can be a superhero.”
- Fred Rogers*



Ask each Player to think up a character they want to play. They may base this upon themselves or from TV shows, movies, mythology, books, fairy tales, internet memes, etc. Either way, all they need is a **Name** and three of their main features or **Figments** (p.10) and their character is ready to go. They may want to write these down, but these are usually short enough to remember.



Name

The Name is usually easy, especially if drawing the character from popular entertainment. Its only purpose is to keep track of what to call that character. If two Players want to play the same character from a popular story, let them, but have them think of their own Figments for the different versions.

Figments

Three *Figments* are all it takes to form a character, whether a giant robot or a magical princess. These are free-form descriptions of their powers, personality, strengths, weaknesses, or unusual features. Figments are not meant to exhaustively describe the character, merely to provide anchors or cues to aid in playing them. They can even do several things, as long as they fit a theme. For example, an Ice Princess might have “*Ice wand of infinite snowballs,*” and a transforming robot might have “*Turns into a robot or a fighter jet.*”

A good way to come up with these is to first ask what the character looks like, then how they behave, and then anything else for the third. This is by no means a rule and even the examples below break it in places. Figments may change often between or even during games (p.27) so don't worry about making a poor choice.

If a Figment calls for a reasonable prop, like a magic wand, talking snowman, or a motorcycle, don't sweat the details. Assume they have it on them unless something happens to say otherwise.

Examples

The following are just a few examples of the kinds of characters that your group can create and play using Figments. You will likely make up your own, but these give a good idea of how to go about it. For an example, see below:

Storyteller (James): So, who would you like to play as?

Ellie: I like the name Seamus!

Storyteller: What does this Seamus look like?

Ellie: Umm... he is a shadow but alive... with a top hat!

Storyteller: Cool. How does he act?


Ellie: He is... very polite! I mean really polite to the point that it is actually a problem.

Storyteller: Ha-ha! Ok, what else? One more thing...

Ellie: He has a little cat that is very rude. It's made of shadows too.

Amazingly, at this point the Character is complete enough to play! The Storyteller should repeat the three Figments to the Player to make sure they have the right idea. A more developed version of Seamus is presented below as well as a few other example characters.

SEAMUS

Figment	Name: SEAMUS
	Figments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shadow man with a shadow hat• Very polite, maybe too polite• A rude curly-tailed shadow cat

Seamus is a very polite shadow with a matching cat. He can do all the stretchy and elusive things a shadow can but is afraid of bright light and total darkness. The cat has the opposite personality and a very sharp tongue, even making fun of Seamus.

STINK BOSS

Figment

Name: **STINK BOSS**



Figments:

- Loud & Proud leader of the Trashbots
- Smells awful but doesn't believe it
- Can turn into a giant robot or a garbage truck

The awe-inspiring robot leader of the Trashbots and an all-around great guy. Smells terrible to everyone else but he has no nose so...

MOTH PRINCESS

Figment

Name: **MOTH PRINCESS**

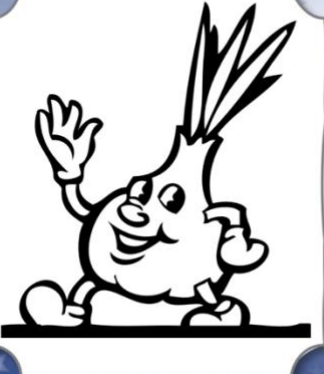


Figments:

- Questing princess from a mystery land
- Can fly and cause sleep with her Moth-winged cloak
- Loves those little juice boxes with straws

Moth princess needs normal life experience out in the real world before she is eligible to be queen. Armed with the royal advantage of a magical cloak, a snooty attitude, and a famous face, she probably won't get it. Who really wants to be queen anyway?

ONION BOB

Figment	Name: ONION BOB
	<p>Figments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength of an onion and "onion-sense" • Tells an aimless and unlikely origin story • Actually garlic, is living a lie

Onion Bob has a very long origin story that he never gets tired of telling because it is completely different every time. Sometimes he was created by a wizard, or an onion bitten by a radioactive teenager, or an alien sent to guard humanity, etc. Don't be fooled, though, he's not even an onion. No one knows what his real game is.

Got the idea? Send in your own creations to Planarian via any of the social media links below. If we like them, we may include them and credit you in a future version.

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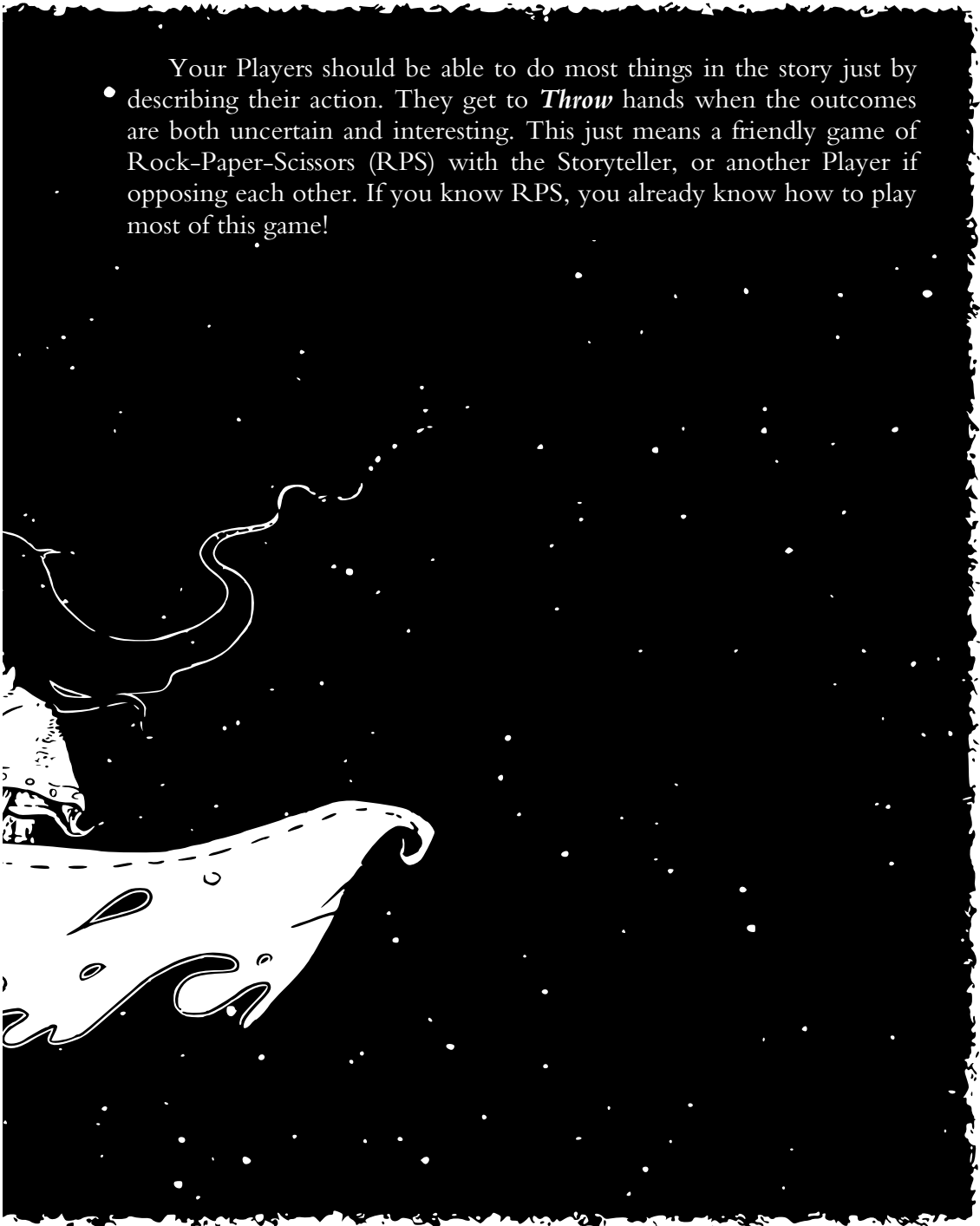
THROWING HANDS

*"Look, that's why there's rules, understand?
So that you think before you break 'em."*

— Terry Pratchett



Your Players should be able to do most things in the story just by describing their action. They get to **Throw** hands when the outcomes are both uncertain and interesting. This just means a friendly game of Rock-Paper-Scissors (RPS) with the Storyteller, or another Player if opposing each other. If you know RPS, you already know how to play most of this game!



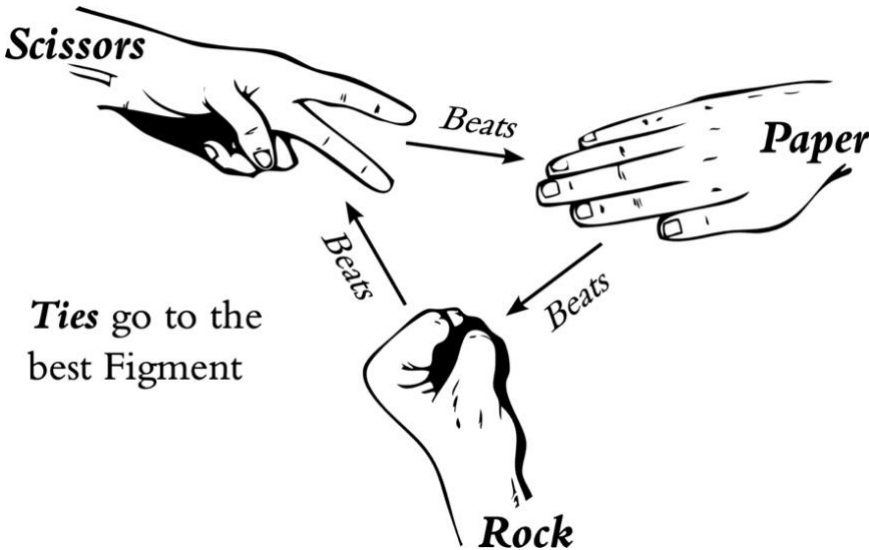
Actions

When a Player or Storyteller wants their character to do something risky, they state what they are doing and what Figment they are doing it with. If this action seems too easy, impossible, or just boring based on that, skip the resolution and narrate the result instead. If it still seems fun and risky, go ahead with the Throw.

The person making the **Action** is known as the **Actor**. You will know the Actor because they are holding the Runcible. The target of the action is the **Reactor**, as they are responding to, resisting, or defending against it. These terms just help keep things straight in the text below; you don't need them for actual play.

The next step is just like a regular game of RPS: The Actor and Reactor face each other, each puts their hand into a fist and swings it down three times to the count of one, two, three. On the third swing, they reveal their chosen hand to each other:

- Rock (fist) beats Scissors
- Scissors (two fingers) beats Paper
- Paper (flat hand) beats Rock.



If the Actor wins, they do what they set out to do. If they lose, they do not, and the story moves forward in another way. The quality of the

result is up to the narrative, which depends on the situation and how well the Figment fits the task. Afterward, they then choose who gets the Runcible to take the next Action (see Turns, p.18).

On a tie, the Active character wins if they have the **Tiebreaker** and loses if they do not. The Tiebreaker goes to the side the Storyteller sees as having the advantage due to the Figments used or the situation. For example, using a “*Wielder of Summer’s Flaming Sphere*” Figment to melt a “*Living Snowman*” would get the Tiebreaker. A Tie also means the Runcible and thus the next Turn goes to the Reactor (see Turns, p.18). If there is no Reactor, the Storyteller may instead narrate a twist or complication to spice up the story.

Any Throw will fail at least a third of the time, so an Action that has no chance of success or failure should be left to narration instead. Some likely Thrown Actions and results are below:

Attack: Success means the Reactor is Down (p.18) and can only Rally.

This can be a hit, surprise, distraction, dismay, grapple, etc.

Charm: Success means the Reactor comes over to the Active character’s side or sees things from their point of view.

Know: Success means the Storyteller may answer an Actor’s question, if their character would be able to figure it out.

Make: Success means the Actor makes something that will feature in the story, assuming they have the time, ability, and materials.

Move: Success means the Actor overcomes an obstacle, such as leaping over a wall, chasing a deer, climbing a mountain, etc.

Rally: A character taken Down by an Attack Action may only Rally (p.18). Success means they are no longer Down and may act again when next chosen. One may Rally another with their Action.

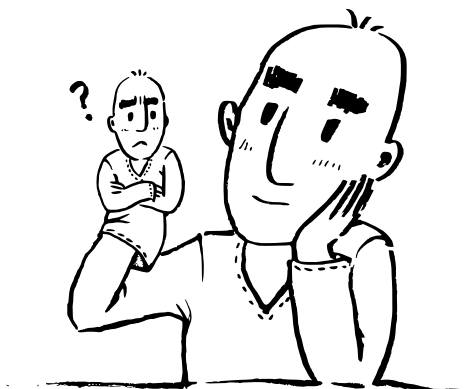
Take: Success means the Actor takes something from another, such as disarming a foe or swiping a key from a guard.

These are just broad examples or “recipes” for how some Actions could work. For others, try to listen to what your Players want to do and find a way to make room for it.

Andorbut

Instead of their normal Action, a Player may use their imagination to change the scene itself. As the name implies, an *Andorbut* adds an “and...” or “but...” to the story. This gives the players some control over the narrative but costs their Action to prevent overuse. For example, using the Three Little Pigs story again, a player may “and” a fourth pig, or “but” that the straw from the straw house got in the wolf’s eyes when it blew down, etc. Taking a cue from improv theater, the Storyteller should be very permissive with these, only saying no to those that are hurtful or just not fun for the group.

While a great tool for spurring creativity from your Players, *Andorbut* is more advanced and optional than the other rules in this game. If you feel like the story would get out of hand in ways that you do not want to deal with, you should either not bring it up as an option or say no to it upfront. The game will play just fine with or without it.



Down and Rally

Down is a common result of the Attack Action and just means that the character is out of action for a while, at least until they manage to Rally back into it. This can be for any reason and is a bit cartoonish; rule-wise, becoming obsessed with a puzzle or wiping off a cream pie counts as being Down in the same way as being hit by a bus does. The difference will lie in the narrative description. More mature groups may be stricter about the narrative consequences of harm.

Players Throw Rallies to get back in the action against the Storyteller. Rallies should almost always get Tiebreaker unless the story suggests they would be difficult to recover from.

Storyteller characters Throw Rallies against a Player chosen by the Storyteller. If a Storyteller character is not central to the story, like a minion, mook, henchman or other cannon-fodder, they should just skip the Rallies and say they are out of the conflict.

Turns

Figment - *Throwing Hands*

The Player or Storyteller who declares they are starting a conflict simply goes first. Settle arguments with a Throw. After they take their character's **Turn**, they pass the Runcible to another Player or the Storyteller, who then gets to go next, and so on. The only exception is that if the Actor tied, they must choose the Reactor to go next. It does not matter if they had the Tiebreaker or not.

After acting, Players may not pick their own character to go again. They may have to choose from an enemy or Storyteller character if there are no allies around. This should be a rare event, as Players can always choose Downed allies so they can Rally back into action.

A Storyteller cannot choose their same character to go twice in a row either, but they will likely have more to choose from. If they must pass their Turn to a Player, they should choose one who has not had a chance to act recently. This helps keep everyone engaged and makes sure they get a chance to shine.

Teamwork

Before the Throw, the Acting character may choose to bring an ally into what they are trying to do. If they each have a Figment that suits the Action, they both get to make their Throws at once against the Reactive character's single hand. Tiebreakers can use either or both team member's Figments to judge advantage.



The drawback of this tactic is the next turn always goes to the Reactive character, tie or not.

Example

As the Storyteller, James is partway through a session of the *Three Little Pigs* with two Players, Noah and Ellie. Noah is playing Stink Boss and Ellie is playing Seamus, both shown in the example Characters section starting on page 10, above.

Storyteller (James): ok, so the Big Bad Wolf just blew down the straw house, what do you do? (passes Runcible to Ellie)

Seamus (Ellie): Hey let's just go right to the brick house. We know how this goes.

Stink Boss (Noah): Yeah, hop in I'll take you there!

Seamus: It stinks, but I am too polite to say it. I grab onto the back. My cat holds his nose.

Noah: Wait, my guy is even called "Stink Boss" how is it that he doesn't believe it? Does he not know what that word means?

Storyteller: Mysteries abound. Good thinking Ellie, but the Big Bad Wolf isn't just going to let you drive off. He jumps onto the back of the truck and tries to grab the handles – it looks like he wants to come with! What do you do?

Seamus: I want to wave my noodly arms to scare him away or mess up his jump, something like that.

Stink Boss: I want to help by swerving around to shake him off.

Storyteller: Ok, both of you then... 1...2...3... Throw!

(The Storyteller throws Rock, Stink Boss throws Scissors, and Seamus throws Rock. As this was a Teamwork Throw, the best outcome is taken, which in this case is the tie between the Big Bad Wolf's Rock vs. Seamus's Rock. The Tiebreaker must be decided.)

Storyteller: A tie! So, let's see... the Big Bad Wolf versus noodly arm-waving and swerving... Let's say all that distraction is just too much for his grip and he falls off the back. It's his turn now though.

(Ellie passes the Runcible back to the Storyteller. It was the Wolf's turn anyway, either from the tie or the Teamwork option.)

Storyteller: The Big Bad Wolf gets up and tries to Huff and Puff but he is too far away. He gets a big whiff of Stink Boss's garbage though.

(The Storyteller decided no actions were possible at this point, so the Big Bad Wolf ends the scene for now. He'll be back.)

Stink Boss: Ha ha!

Seamus: Heh... wait... he might track us down with that scent...

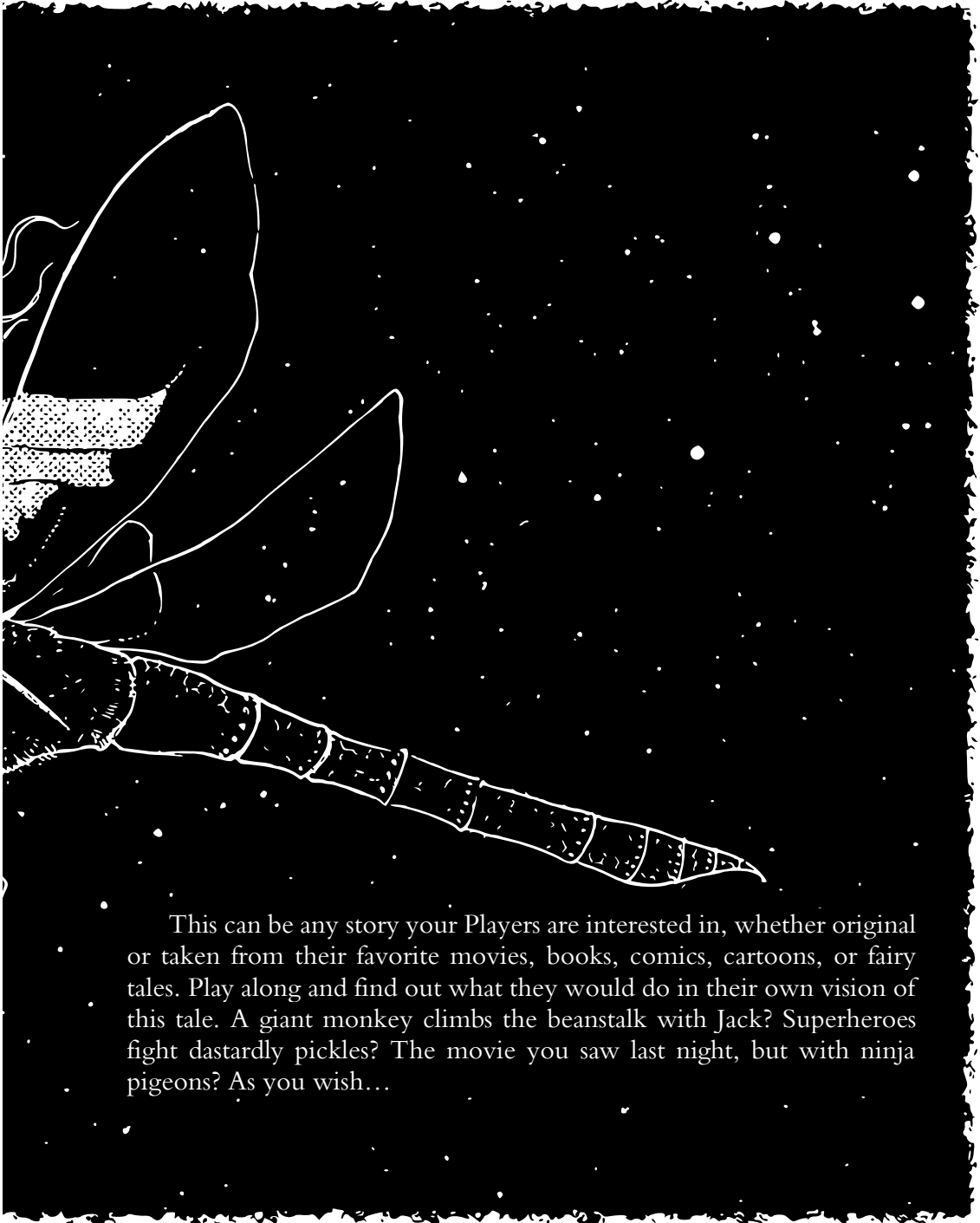
Storyteller: Maybe! You get to the brick house, but the Big Bad Wolf might still be coming for you. Their door is closed, and it sounds like someone is having a party inside.

What do you do...?

STORYTELLING

*"Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten."
– Neil Gaiman (paraphrasing G.K. Chesterton)*





This can be any story your Players are interested in, whether original or taken from their favorite movies, books, comics, cartoons, or fairy tales. Play along and find out what they would do in their own vision of this tale. A giant monkey climbs the beanstalk with Jack? Superheroes fight dastardly pickles? The movie you saw last night, but with ninja pigeons? As you wish...

Preparation

As mentioned earlier, you can easily start up a game of Figment just by having your Players enter a well-known story from the beginning or at any later interesting point in the plot. They can then play their characters however they please, as in or out-of-place as they may be. When the story reaches a point that seems like a good ending, even if that ending is far different than the original, draw it to a close.

As the Storyteller you will play many allies, enemies, and background characters. Working out what sort of Figments each has can seem daunting, but only if you take them too seriously. Instead, you can often get away with describing your own characters loosely and just accepting your Players best guess at their Figments. This way, your Players do the heavy lifting when they interact with the Storyteller character.

Precautions

While this game is very simple to run and play, there are other things to be mindful of when starting up. It's important for a Storyteller to consider their audience, whether it is their own children, siblings, friends, or other relations. The original versions of some fairy tales are grisly affairs, and you may choose to run them that way or tone them down a bit. While children can surprise you with what they can handle, they can also surprise you with what they cannot.

Whatever tale you are basing your story on, this game assumes you are not trying to traumatize your Players. At a minimum, ask them if there is anything they really do not want to deal with before starting and encourage them to talk with you if they have trouble with it later. On the plus side, this also gives you a chance to ask what they really enjoy seeing in a game or a story. This helps you tailor your game to your audience and give them some memories to treasure.

Finally, some Players deal badly with losing at Rock-Paper-Scissors, especially when tied to consequences in the story. There is little to do about this but to make sure they understand and agree to follow this rule beforehand. To make the loss less painful, try to play out failures as ways for things to move forward in a fun way, just maybe not in the way the Player intended. For example, failing to sneak a key out from under a giant's pillow without waking her might mean they have to sing a lullaby to put her back to sleep, rather than having the giant discover them outright. Above all, avoid being harsh or discouraging.

To sum up; before playing you can ask questions like:

- What are some things you want to see in this game?
- What are some things you don't want in this game?
- Will you accept the Rock-Paper-Scissors result, even if you lose?

Optionally, it may be helpful to use one of the many system-neutral RPG “safety tools” made available by other publishers. These help you stay off topics your group does not enjoy and give them some control if they stray there. These are evolving and change with the times, so it falls on you to do what is best for your group.

Obstacles

It can be a bit anticlimactic if major Storyteller characters go Down after losing a single Throw. It is often better to give them some “plot armor.” This comes in the form of obstacles for the Players to overcome before being able to challenge them properly. These will cause Throws to fail outright until discovered and dealt with.

For example, a werewolf foe might require the party to get silver weapons to hurt them, a politician might need his supporters to abandon him before the players can overthrow him, a giant robot might need its weak spot uncovered, an angry lioness might need the thorn out of her paw before the party can befriend her, etc.

To keep the game from becoming frustrating and confusing, the Storyteller should be plain about what the Obstacles are. If they want to play one up as a trick or mystery, they should just reveal it slowly. For example, on the first Throw the Storyteller does not reveal why it fails. On the second they give a solid hint, and on the third the foe will gloat and spill the beans on why they are undefeated.

A secret is no good if only the Storyteller ever knows it.

Highlights

At the start of each new game session after the first, Players who were in the prior session get a chance to talk about a **Highlight** from it. The Storyteller should start with something to the effect of “*What was your favorite thing from last game?*” This should be a single thing they thought was fun or cool, and most Players will talk about something their own character did. If a Player is shy or having a hard time, the Storyteller can ask other Players to remember something for them or give their own suggestions. If the Player decides to fondly recall a Highlight that was disruptive to the game or hurtful to others, the Storyteller may allow it but should use this chance to discuss what behavior they would rather have in a game.

A Highlight serves several purposes. It reminds everyone what they did last game, what they enjoyed about it, what the Players are looking for more of, and gives Players a chance to talk about something they are proud of from their own perspective.

In terms of the game rules, it also gives them permission to ignore being Down once, and only once during the coming game session. This serves both as an incentive for good play and to represent an experienced character’s importance and durability.

Their Biggest Fan

There are tons of books, websites, and other resources to help you run a role-playing game. Fortunately, a good game is near certain if the Storyteller just remembers *to be a fan of the player characters*. This is sage advice given in many prior role-playing games, and all other good Storyteller practices may stem from it. If it is not hurting anyone else’s fun, just encourage them. Talk them up, make it about them, let them revel in their victories and bemoan their defeats. They are the stars so make sure they know it. If you do something that gets in the way of that, do better next time.

Changes

Players will often want to change or tweak their Figments between games, which is fine, and you should let them. As mentioned earlier, they are just there to give them form. Sometimes that form shifts. This can even lead to a great moment where that character grows and changes with their experiences in the story.

Nonsense

Often when playing with kids (and some adults) they will take Actions that lead nowhere. For example, a musketeer might do their usual dramatic swing on a chandelier, but just keep swinging each round ignoring whatever else is going on. You may not understand it but try to keep an open mind. They are having fun at least and maybe eventually they will get more into the main events. As far as the game rules go, it is not entirely a waste as it is a great distraction. This gives other players a Tiebreaker against foes as puzzled by it as you are.

Disabilities

Some Players may want their characters to have Figments like illnesses, wheelchairs, hearing aids, fears, and anxieties. Fortunately, the value of any Figment depends on the situation. There is no distinction in these game rules between those that are widely considered advantages or disadvantages. For example, blindness is usually a challenge but can also protect entirely against the petrifying gaze of a medusa! Resist the urge to use their disabilities against them too often and let your Players discover how to use them to their advantage.

Sometimes these Figments will stem from the Player's own life experiences. If not, be sure to check that they plan to treat these topics respectfully and not as an insult or cruel joke. Make sure you treat them respectfully too. Learn something about it when you can, even asking those who have that disability what it is like. This may seem like a lot of work, but it is honest work, and you will not regret it.

If all is on the level, a more subtle point that you may want to keep in mind is that people with disabilities, whether as the Player or a character, may not want to be "fixed" or "cured" so try not to guide the story in that direction unless they are taking it there themselves.

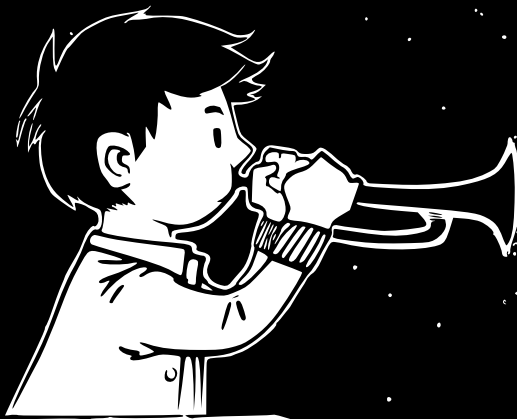
FEEDBACK

I'd like to think of this as an evolving project and am seeking out *constructive* feedback. If you have played this game and want to tell me how it went, what worked, and what didn't, leave your observations on one or more of the following:

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