

A Role-Playing Game About The Cute, Disturbing Adventures Of Cute, Disturbed Little Girls

By Ewen Cluney



Distant Star Games Presents Moscot-ton

http://dsg.neko-machi.com/

thanks to

My real-life friends, a.k.a. the Neko Machi-gumi, or failing that, "The Group."

The RPG.net Forum Community: For making RPG.net a very cool place to lurk, and for katanae (not to mention Snake Gandhi, d02, and a few other... interesting things).

The 4chan Community: ZOMG Rei!!!!11!1! This site has been a never-ending source of entertainment, and the place where I first encountered many of the mascot girls.

Credits

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Chapter 7: introduction

In Japan there's this weird phenomenon that's been constantly growing among the otaku that's now called *gijinka* (擬人化). Literally it means "personification^{*}," but in practice it means taking inanimate objects, organizations, and even abstract ideas, and making cute girl characters as "mascots" of them. I have a Japanese otaku pen pal (and unlike you, he's fortunate enough not to be able to read this), and in a discussion of this phenomenon he outright said, "This country's getting weird." The most famous mascot girls are probably DiGi Charat and the OS Girls, but all kinds of things have been subjected to *gijinka*. There are some obvious ones like video game consoles, and some weird ones like cigarette brands. I've seen a web site by a train fanatic with detailed information on each model of train used by Japan Rail, and a mascot girl for each[†]. I've also seen a page of girl versions of Kamen Rider characters[‡], which is kind of surreal considering that Kamen Riders are known for their exaggerated manliness.

Anyway, now it's your turn! This whole game is based around *gijinka*. It's about mascot girls having little adventures that are cute, wacky, and occasionally violent and disturbing (but still in a cute kind of way). The question of why exactly you're going to play a roleplaying game where all the player characters are cute, mentally disturbed girls named after inanimate objects is not something I can answer for you, but I suspect you guys must have nothing better to do. That's how this game got written in the first place.

Keeping in with the flavor of mascot girls, you can in fact do an ongoing campaign, the long-term goal of which is to become as popular among the weirdoes on the internet as possible, by making them feel that warm, fuzzy, fetishy feeling known as *moé*. And you thought *you* had problems with coming up with good long-term goals. Anyway, that means that in order to advance your character you have to be endearing to the internet audience by doing cute things and taking part in bizarre jokes, simultaneously if you can manage it. Tapping into their weird (but still cute) fetishes doesn't hurt either.

This game is also really cynical, sarcastic, and self-deprecating in tone. If you're not sure whether something's sarcastic, you probably should just assume it is. There's also Japanese text sprinkled here and there, mainly because I'm majoring in Japanese and damn it, I'm going to use it somewhere.

^{*} There's now a Wikipedia article on this phenomenon: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moe_anthropomorphism

[†] http://rail-g.net/

^{*} http://www.geocities.jp/kazuu_hp/

What the Heck is -tan?

In Japanese you usually refer to other people with some kind of suffix after their name. Members of certain scholarly professions (most notably teachers, but also writers) get *-sensei*, and most people get *-san*. There's also a diminutive name suffix, which is *-chan*; it's usually used to refer to cute animals or cute girls (a boy over the age of 8 or so would probably resent it). Never daunted by the limitations of language or common sense, Japanese otaku have devised a second-stage diminutive suffix; *-tan* (or $\hbar c h$ if you want the Japanese writing) is a baby-talk version of *-chan*, and the preferred name suffix for mascot girls.

-tan is *not* pronounced like the color that's a sort of light brown and rhymes with man. The letter *a* in romanized Japanese always has an "ah" sound. *A* like in "father." Got it? Good.

What's a Roleplaying Game?

It's something cool people do, using their imaginations and stuff. You should try it out some time. Preferably with some other game, in which the author actually bothered to put in one of those "What Is A Roleplaying Game?" sections.

tools of the trade

This game is a little unusual in that you don't actually need dice. You'll still want the usual pencils, paper, this book, friends, and imagination, but provided you don't mind putting up with a resolution mechanic that involves playing Rock-Paper-Scissors (it's *FLAVOR* damn you!) you can get by without dice. If Janken (as they call it in Japan) isn't your thing, you can use six-sided dice instead. You may also want something to use as tokens to track Moé.

Notable Mascot Girls

Here's some info (and links) on some of the most famous mascot girls. Wai.

DiGi Charat

DiGi Charat appears in anime, manga, video games, and a ton of merchandise (a metric ton, naturally), but Dejiko (as she is nicknamed) was conceived as a mascot for the Gamers retail chain and designed by manga artist Koge Donbo. She and her unwanted yellow ball thing companion Gema were named from the phrase "Digital Character Gamers," and she's accompanied (harassed) by her younger sister Petit Charat, her rival Rabi~En~Rose, and her enemy Pyocola Analogue III. The official DiGi Charat web site (in Japanese) can be found at:

http://www.broccoli.co.jp/dejiko/

OS idols

As of this writing the OS Idols are one of the most popular and widespread groups of mascot girls. Each of them represents a version of Microsoft Windows; Me-chan is a cute girl in a sort of maid out fit who's really stupid, 2000-chan is a serious girl with glasses (albeit dressed rather oddly), and so on. There's an excellent and thorough article about them and their history on Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OS-tan

Ecoco

Ecoco is unusual among mascot girls in that she was originally an official mascot. This little penguin girl started off as an official mascot for the Tohoku Electric Power Co.'s "Eco-Ice" line of air conditioners. Ecoco (as the fans named her) was far more popular than the actual air conditioners, plus there were lots of pornographic doujinshi published about her, so Tohoku decided to retire the character... But the fans still haven't forgotten her. The **ecoice pure** fan site has some good info on Ecoco in English:

http://ecoicepure.tripod.com/

Habanero-tan

Unlike Ecoco, Habanero-tan is in an *unofficial* mascot for a particular product, namely Tohato brand habanero-flavored snacks. Habaneros aren't the spiciest food in the world, but they're about as spicy as you'll find in nature 5 to 10 times as spicy as your average Jalapeno. Tohato was content with Boukun Habanero, a big pepper with a grinning jack-o-lantern face, but a fan artist called Shigatage took it on himself to make his own version, which caught on. She's a little girl with fiery red hair with a green stem sticking out of the top, red eyes, and a short red dress. Wikipedia has a brief article with some links:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habanero-tan

Binchou-tan

A relative newcomer, Binchou-tan is the mascot for a Japanese game development studio called Alchemist. She's a teeny-tiny orphan girl (awwww...) who lives in the mountains of Japan and has a piece of charcoal on top of her head at all times; she uses it to do little chores around the neighborhood (like sitting in a rice cooker to make the rice taste better or sitting in a bottle to clean the water). She has several little friends, most of whom also have something stuck on top of their heads, and all of them now appear in an anime series, narrated by Narration-onee-tan (seriously; it's in the credits). The sites below (in Japanese) have some information and plenty of pictures of Binchou-tan and her friends:

http://www.alchemist-net.co.jp/ http://www.picata.net/bincho.htm

Other inspirational Stuff

Although not necessarily having mascot girls as characters per se, the following are some titles which in one way or another have some of the same general tone as *Mascot-tan*.

Anime

Angel's Tail Binchou-tan Bottle Fairy Chobits Dragon Half Earth Defender Mao-chan Excel Saga Galaxy Angel Galaxy Fraulein Yuna Idol Project Keroro Gunsou (a.k.a. Sgt. Frog) Kodomo no Omocha (a.k.a Kodocha) Magical Pokan Nurse Witch Komugi-chan Pita-ten Puni Puni Poemi Tiny Snow Fairy Sugar

manga

Kami-chama Karin Negima! (Mahou Sensei Negima!) Yotsubato!

Webcomics

Girly (also CuteWendy) <u>http://go-girly.com/</u> Our Home Planet <u>http://gdk.gd-kun.net/</u>



Chapter 2: Character Creation

Step 7: Name

Pick a name for your character. It can be anything you want, anything at all. Just as long as it's some kind of object or some other random thing, followed by *-tan*. If the GM's feeling really creative he might make up a variant rule that lets you have a name that's an object or some other random thing followed by *-chan* or maybe even *-san*, but don't count on it.

The GM may want all of the players to come up with characters based around a common theme (home appliances, video game consoles, vegetables, etc.), or they could be a random assortment just to mess with people's minds. You might want to try and come up with some explanation as to why Dresser-tan, Subaru Impreza-tan, and Tomato Soup-tan are hanging out, but there probably isn't much point.

Step 2: Girl Type

Okay, so you've got "Tissue Paper-tan" or whatever written down on the character sheet. But that doesn't tell us a whole lot; the next step is to get a better idea what kind of girl it is that's going to be behind the name. Thus you pick a Girl Type, or maybe two or three, but any more is probably pushing your luck. These are blatant stereotypes with no actual effect on the game mechanics, so feel free to make up new ones. However, keep in mind that certain features (like wearing certain uniforms or being a catgirl) may count as Gimmicks (see p. 11).

Airhead

You're the lovable idiot, and probably clumsy too.

Angel

You're an angel! Or at least you have the wings and maybe the halo. Actually acting "angelic" is purely optional, and angel wings are sometimes vestigial in the first place. Cute little devil girls are seen from time to time too.

Bimbo

A Bimbo is a lot like an Airhead, but also really sexy.

Catgirl

Catgirls, or *nekomimi* in Japanese, are girls with the ears and tail of a cat. Wearing big squishy paws is optional, but sure as hell doesn't hurt. There are other types of animal girls around here and there, but catgirls are by far the most dominant.

Gothic Lolita

The world is a dark and lonely place. Maybe that's why in spite of being young and cute you go around wearing frilly dresses in red and black, and possibly carry around a partially mutilated teddy bear. Maybe you're even a vampire or something...

Kimono Girl

Kimonos aren't everyday wear anymore, but seeing a woman in a kimono on the streets of Tokyo isn't at all unusual. A kimono-clad girl character will usually be very refined and cultured (relatively speaking anyway). Kimono girls tend to go in for more traditional hobbies, like sipping tea, flower arrangement, and going berserk with a katana.

maid

For once we come to a fetish that sort of has a following in the U.S.; girls in French-style maid outfits. Whether you wear it because you're actually a maid, or as a fashion statement is up to you.

Mecha Girl

Part girl, part machine, all cute. "Mecha" girls can be androids, cyborgs, or just decked out in lots of high-tech gear.

Meganekko

You wouldn't think that wearing glasses would be that big of a deal, but the mind of the Japanese otaku works in mysterious ways. *Meganekko* tend to be the studious, serious type, but we won't force the issue.

miko

Carrying on the tradition's of your family's Shinto shrine (or maybe just working at a shrine as a part time job), you wear the garb of a *miko* or shrine maiden, consisting of red *hakama* and a white shirt with long swinging sleeves. Some miko were supposedly mediums with the power to speak with the dead. Spooky, huh?

nurse

Like maids, nurses wear a uniform that's been fetishized. You don't have to necessarily be a nurse to wear one, but it's likely, and will give you access to needles and such, which have their uses.

Schoolgirl

Without getting into social commentary on Japanese society let's just say that otaku like schoolgirls, especially ones in sailor fuku uniforms, a lot.

School Swimsuit

Although they're somewhat out of date in terms of real schools, the school swimsuit has become fetishized to no end. The standard school swimsuit is a navy blue one-piece, usually with a white rectangle across the chest in which the wearer's name is written. Fandom has also started a trend of characters in white versions of this design. Also, although not quite as popular as they used to be, the Japanese girls' P.E. uniform, consisting of a white T-shirt and bloomers (usually red or blue) also has a following.

tsundere

Tsundere (if you're having trouble pronouncing it... screw it) is a character archetype that's become popular with otaku. A *tsundere* girl starts off all *tsuntsun* (bitchy) and later goes all *deredere* (meek, loving, gooey).

Step 3: Characteristics

Characteristics are how good your character is at doing things. For player characters they're rated from 1 to 4, though NPCs can have them as low as zero or as high as 6 sometimes because life just isn't fair. If you want to know how Characteristics work in the game, see p. 15 under "Doing Stuff." But for the time being just divvy up 10 points among the 4 Characteristics; you have to put at least 1 in each, and can't more than 4 into any one Characteristic. Choose wisely because they won't get better with time. If you want to be able to do more and cooler stuff, work on getting more Moé.

Broadly speaking, a rating of 1 is Kinda' Crappy, 2 is Fair, 3 is Good, and 4 is Excellent.

Athletics

Your Athletics characteristic represents your overall physical ability. Considering this is a game about mascot girls, a high Athletics has more to do with agility and general fitness than strength. So having an Athletics of 4 means a character is very fit and quick and agile, but she's absolutely not going to be muscular. Get over it.

Cuteness

Cuteness is probably your most vital characteristic (which says something about this game). Cuteness doesn't just represent how cute a character looks; it's also how well she can use it to get what she wants. Be afraid.

Determination

Sheer bloody-minded determination is often an important trait for a mascot girl, and this is the characteristic behind it. Determination lets you keep on going against the odds, lets you outlast opponents of weaker will, and generally lets you stick to whatever you're doing.

Smarts

Intelligence isn't required or even actively encouraged among mascot girls (and it's surely *not* last just because the author is anal-retentive and alphabetized the list), but it definitely has its uses. A high Smarts will give you a measure of book learning, but in *Mascot-tan* it's more likely to be used for cunning.

Step 4: Gimmicks

Gimmicks are special abilities and features of a character. Pick up to four of them. If you want less than four that's fine, but you won't get anything for it. This isn't anywhere close to being the full range of possible Gimmicks, so GMs should feel free to invent new ones on the fly. Or you could even do it in advance. We won't tell anyone.

Catgirl

You're a catgirl! Meow! This doesn't have any specific benefits, but if you work it right you can get lots of extra Moé points. Try to act cute and catlike, but don't overdo it. If you want, you could be another type of animal girl; bunny girls are pretty popular too, and dog girls have a following as well, but you can be whatever kind of animal girl you want with this spiffy Gimmick. You don't necessarily have to have the animal features be a part of you – you could be wearing ears or whatever instead – but if you have this Gimmick it means that it's part of your standard outfit.

Flight

You can *fly*! How you do it is up to you; angel wings, a jet pack, levitation powers, lots of balloons, or just twirling bunny ears like helicopter blades (we never said it had to make *sense*). It doesn't really help you get places much faster, but it does let you occasionally reach places you couldn't otherwise.

Glasses

You wear glasses! There's a certain segment of the fandom that finds girls with glasses attractive, you know. You're probably nearsighted, but not so much so as to be horribly blind without your glasses. On the other hand you're probably the studious type, and either really shy or really serious.

minion

You have some kind of ally, pet, or lackey to do your bidding. Most of the time a Minion will take whatever abuse you dish out (otherwise you'd have driven them away a long time ago), but once in a while you might push things too far. Minions are rated at around 1 in all four Characteristics, though they might have a 2 in a single Characteristic. They also *might* have a single Gimmick if the GM is feeling particularly generous.

Minion Swarm

Instead of just one minion, you have a bunch of them. The catch is that they're next to useless individually, and only have any actual value when they're all working together. And even then don't count on it.

Sexy

You've got sex appeal on your side. While most mascot girls tend more towards the cute side, you're curvaceous and busty.

Special Attack

You have some special ability or item that lets you whip out a powerful attack. This could take the form of a gun, a sword, magic spells, or even the infamous Eye Beams.

Speech impediment

Wait, you suddenly cry, *having a Speech Impediment costs me points?!* Well, *yeah*. Remember what kind of game this is?

teeny-tiny

The character is very small; not merely short, but outside of normal human proportions (or whatever passes for such

in the type of anime inhabited by mascot girls). This is sort of a mixed blessing; Teeny-Tiny characters are easily overlooked and tend to move slowly compared to full-sized people, but they can also get into small places, have an easier time hiding, and can get a lot of mileage out of looking adorable by interacting with full-sized objects.

transformation

A character with this Gimmick can actually transform into whatever it is she's a mascot of (and back again, thankfully). How exactly this works is left up to the player and GM to work out, but *Mascot-tan* takes place in the kind of world where an inanimate object that's also a character would still be able to talk and move around, even if the latter is just awkwardly hopping around.

twins

There are actually two of you, though you can only barely be told apart. Although there are two bodies, they function more or less as one character, having the same thoughts and motivations at the same time, the same abilities, and getting bonked a the same time when a fight happens. Twins should have names that are cutely similar, and only a slight difference in appearance (such as each having a single pigtail on opposite sides) to tell them apart.

Uniform

You habitually wear a uniform that the fans particularly like (which potentially means more Moé points for you). Uniforms can include sailor fuku, P.E. uniforms, school swimsuits (*sukimizu*/スク水), or the outfit of a maid, miko (Shinto shrine maiden), waitress, bunnygirl waitress, etc.

Very Young

You're extremely young, probably under the age of 6. There are certain kinds of fanboys who go for that kind of character, but the main advantage is that a lot of people will pamper you and be more forgiving when you misbehave or act outright strange.

Step 5: Moe

All characters start with one point of Moé. That's right, at the start you suck and barely anyone's even heard of you, much less feels any Moé over you. What're you going to do about it? (Hint: Read the section on Moé in Chapter 3, p. 20, to find out how to get more).

What the Heck is "Moe"?!

Even in Japan they're still trying to work out what the hell *moé* actually means, so don't feel too bad if you don't get it. The word comes from the verb moeru (萌える) which means "to bud," which also happens to be a homonym with the word 燃える ("to burn"). Moé can mean an aesthetic that caters to otaku, with characters that are young, cute, innocent, and energetic. It can also mean playing to the audience's fetishes or just fanservice in general. According to Toru Honda's book *Denpa Otoko* moé is the feeling of love that exists between otaku and their favorite 2-D characters.

For the purposes of this game, Moé represents popularity with those freaky otaku on the internet, and Moé points are a character's star power.

Step 6: Looks and Thoughts

Sure you could spend a long time writing a detailed character history, but for a game like this that's just stupid. There are just two things on the character sheet, and a sentence or two will suffice for each.

Looks is a quick description of what the character looks like. We already know she's a cute anime girl, so concentrate on more important things. You know, like whether or not she wears glasses.

Thoughts is a quick peek into her tiny little mind. What does she believe, and what does she aspire to? This part doesn't have to make sense – in fact it probably shouldn't.

Disadvantages?

Mascot-tan's game mechanics do not include Disadvantages, Flaws, Faults, Hindrances, Crosses, Burdens, or whatever else they're calling them these days. As you know from the text on the cover, this is a game about characters who are pretty messed up to begin with. If a *Mascot-tan* player character had something so messed up about her as to stand out from her peers enough to be worth some extra points, she would be rendered unplayable in the first place. No disadvantages. Deal with it.

Besides, you'll *want* your character to have some faults anyway; the trick is finding faults that'll be endearing to the audience and thereby boost your Moé during play.

Chapter 3: Adventuring

This chapter gives you the basic rules of the game, and also explains a bit about how to go about running the game.

Doing Stuff

The default method for resolving success and failure in *Mascot-tan* is by playing Janken (a.k.a. Rock-Paper-Scissors). If for some reason you don't like this carefully reasoned and thoroughly playtested method, which isn't the least bit cumbersome, there's an alternate rule that allows for using six-sided dice instead (see p. 18).

If you don't know how to play Rock-Paper-Scissors... Jeez! Where have you been? Okay, two people each pump their hands three times and then do one of three hand signs. Rock is just a fist, Paper is a flat, open hand, and Scissors is with only the index and middle fingers extended, like a peace sign but sideways. Rock beats Scissors, Scissors beats Paper, and Paper beats Rock. Two of the same sign is a tie, and since life isn't nice, you have to break ties by going again until someone wins.

Sign	Beats	Is Beaten By
Rock (Guu)	Scissors	Paper
Paper (Choki)	Rock	Scissors
Scissors (Paa)	Paper	Rock

For the purposes of this game a "round" of Janken is however many throws it takes to have a clear winner and loser one time. As you'll see below, when a character tries to do something, it usually involves one to four rounds of Janken, and each of those involves as many throws as it takes to have a result that isn't a tie.

In some games taunting your opponent is looked down upon. In *Mascot-tan* doing so is not only allowed, but encouraged. It helps maintain the atmosphere of confusion and abuse this game is meant to foster.

Even if you *have* been paying attention and already know how to play Rock-Paper-Scissors you might take a look at the Wikipedia article for information, variants, and even strategies:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_paper_scissors

Unopposed Actions

When a player attempts an action where the outcome is in doubt, she and the GM play rock-paper-scissors a number of times equal whichever of the character's Characteristics is most appropriate to whatever she's trying to attempt. Every time she wins, she gets a Success. Most of the time a single success is good enough to accomplish something, but the GM may decide that the player is trying something really weird or stupid or hard and demand multiple Successes for the character to actually succeed.

Example: Watermelon-tan is trying to climb a tree to rescue Grape-tan, who got stuck up there. The GM decides this will use Athletics, and he and Watermelon-tan's player start doing Rock-Paper-Scissors. Since Watermelon-tan has Athletics at 2, two rounds of Rock-Paper-Scissors. The first time Mr. GM gets a Scissors to her Paper, but the second time she manages a Scissors to his Paper and nets a Success. The GM has decided that this isn't too difficult of a task, so the one Success is good enough.

Opposed Actions (One on One)

When two characters are competing with each other rather than just facing the environment, things get a little tricky, but *hopefully* a lot exciting. When both characters have the same rating in the relevant Characteristic, they just do that many rounds of Janken; that way one player takes a Success out of each round played. Whoever has the most Successes wins, and if they get the same number of Successes the outcome is a tie.

When the two characters' ratings are different, things get a tiny bit tricky. The players do a number of rounds equal to the Characteristic of the higher-rated character, but the inferior character only plays normally for the initial rounds up to her rating. For the remaining rounds the inferior character is **defending**; if she wins, she doesn't get a Success, but she does at least prevent her opponent from getting one.

Example: Keitai-tan (a cell phone girl) and Glockenspiel-tan are arm wrestling. By now we know better than to ask why, but it's probably just to provide you with an example. Don't you feel special?

Anyway, Keitai-tan has an Athletics of 2, and Glockenspiel-tan has an Athletics of 3. The players Janken three times, but since Keitai-tan only has a 2, she can only score during the first two rounds. On the third time she'll be defending and thus won't gain a Success if she wins. Keitai-tan wins the first round, and Glockenspiel-tan takes the second. The contest is tied, but Keitai-tan has already done the two throws her Athletics of 2 allows. For that third round she'll be defending. As it turns out she wins; she doesn't get a Success, but neither does Glockenspiel-tan, so they remain tied one to one. The GM declares that the two of them strain against each other but don't get anywhere, and tells them to have another go at it.

Competitive Actions (3+ Characters)

But wait, you ask, what if more than two people are competing to do something? Man, you're a smartass. Luckily, multiplayer Janken is easier than you might think. With three or more people, everyone throws at the same time. If either all three signs or only one sign are played, it's a draw, and as usual you go again until someone wins. If only two signs are played, everyone who played the winning sign wins gets a Success, and everyone who played the losing sign loses.

Example: Steak-tan, Porkchop-tan Rib-tan, and Bacon-tan have been assigned to stand outside of the butcher's shop and hand out flyers, with a special bonus for whoever

hands out all of theirs first. The GM decides this will be a Cuteness-based Competitive Action. All four of them have a Cuteness of 3, except for Bacon-tan who has 4.

The first round Steak-tan and Bacon-tan throw Paper against Rib-tan and Porkchop-tan's Rock and each of them gets a Success. The second round Rib-tan is the only one who gets a success when she gets a scissors against three papers. The third round takes fully five tries as they keep winding up with one of each sign, until finally Bacon-tan and Rib-tan both get Successes. On the fourth round only Bacon-tan can score and the rest are defending; sadly, she gets trounced three to one with rocks against her scissors. In the end Bacon-tan and Rib-tan both have two Successes, so it looks like they've tied.

Sudden Death Elimination

You probably thought this header was about something really crazy... It's not really. Sorry to disappoint. Anyway.

Sometimes a situation really requires that there be a single clear winner. When a tiebreaker is necessary, it's time for Sudden Death Elimination. Everyone who tied does a single round of Janken, and the winner takes the lead. If more than two people win, keep doing more rounds until there's only one.

Example: Continuing the above example, the GM informs the players that a tie just won't do; the butcher has set up the security camera, so he's going to have it be a photo finish if he has to. Bacon-tan and Rib-tan psyche themselves up for Sudden Death Elimination; they do one round of Janken, winner-take-all. They tie twice before little Bacon-tan brings out a scissors to Rib-tan's paper and wins!

Success tokens

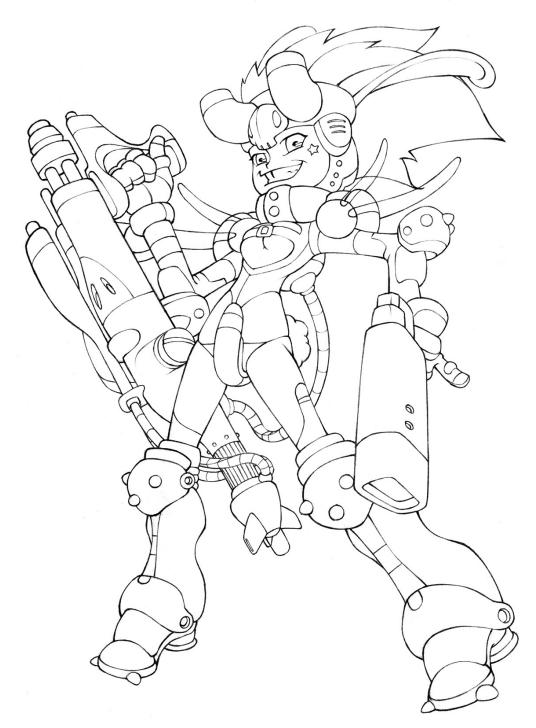
Doing many rounds of Janken in rapid succession can get annoying and confusing when you need to track Successes at the same time. One way to get around this is to use Success Tokens. The idea is to have small something-or-others (different from whatever you might be using for Moé of course) to pass to a player each time she scores a Success. That way you get a tangible representation of the number of Successes, and don't worry about having to try and remember if it was two Successes or three that 1040EZ-tan had before that hellish string of five draws happened.

initiative

Sometimes you might want to know who goes first, whether for a fight (see below) or maybe even for something that's actually important. "Initiative" order (as they call it in those games that take combat seriously... *hah!*) is in descending order of the characters' current Moé. As usual, if you need a tiebreaker for some reason, it's time for Sudden Death Elimination.

Fighting ... Sort of

Mascot girls live in a world where combat tends to be very simple and silly. If you were expecting detailed combat rules, with a realistic and lethal damage system... you should have your head examined. That kind of combat system is usually longer than this whole game. Mascot-tan takes place in the kind of wacky anime world where attacks either miss or totally incapacitate (but only until the next scene).



Doing Stuff With Dice

Instead of that Janken nonsense, just roll a number of six-sided dice equal to the character's relevant Characteristic; each die that comes up as a 4 or higher is a Success. For opposed and competitive actions, the players just roll individually and compare the number of Successes. If Sudden Death Elimination is called for, the players each roll a die and whoever rolls highest wins.

Example: Sun-tan (What?) and Moon-tan (Now you get it...) are having a staring contest. The GM decides that this will be an opposed action using Determination. Sun-tan and Moon-tan both have Determination at 3, so they each roll three six-sided dice. Sun-tan gets a 2, a 4, and a 6, while Moon-tan gets a 1, a 3, and a 5. In the end Sun-tan has two Successes and Moon-tan has one Success. Sun-tan wins the staring contest.

Dice Madness

If you're a big fan of randomness you might want to throw open the gates of hell and use this optional rule. Every time a die comes up as a 6 the player not only gets a Success but gets to roll another six-sided die to see if it will come up as a 4 or higher, and on a 6 not only do you get the Success but yet another die is rolled. And if the additional die happens to come up as a 6... Guess what? Another die gets rolled. So theoretically a player could potentially wind up accumulating a virtually unlimited number of Successes.

The trick here is to make it so that excessive Successes start to backfire; broadly speaking, if a character gets more than 4 Successes, the action succeeds a little *too* well. Trying to look cute and influence a person earns a stalker, an attack meant to knock someone out levels buildings, and whatever else seems funny at the time.

Example: Cola-tan is trying to wheedle her way into getting a discount at the convenience store. The GM decides this is a Cuteness-based action. With her Cuteness of 2 she only gets two dice, but both of them come up as sixes! She rolls another two dice and gets a five and a six. She rolls yet another die and gets another six. She rolls another die again and only gets a four. So in the end she's scored a stunning SIX Successes! The convenience store clerk not only gives her the stuff she wanted to buy for free, but gives her so much other free stuff besides that she can't even hope to carry it all, and he starts following her around his every waking moment, and no amount of discouragement (even with a baseball bat to the face) will deter him.

moe

Moé is a measure of how favored the character is with the audience. Characters start off with just one point of Moé, but they'll be gaining and spending them all throughout the game. Moé points can be tracked however you want, but we recommend having some kind of physical counters to track Moé.

Competition or Cooperation?

In *Mascot-tan*, players have an important choice to make: Are they going to work with the other players and try to have their characters all reach great heights of fame together, or backstab and sabotage to do whatever it takes to be on top as an individual? If the game's going to be about being vicious and mean to each other, it's probably best for everyone to agree to it in advance. As far as what actually works for gaining Moé, either approach can potentially succeed or backfire.

Gaining and Losing Moe

There are lots of different ways a character can gain Moé... but they all ultimately come down to "whenever the GM feels like it." The GM can give or take away one to three Moé points whenever it seems appropriate. Keep in mind that the audience is surprisingly forgiving of viciousness; like pro-wrestling fans they seem to only really be put off by boredom or direct insults.

introductions

At the start of the game characters have just *one* point of Moé. The GM may opt to give each player a chance to gain some more by doing an introduction for her character. This is a quick monologue where the character introduces herself to the world at large. I recommend setting a time limit and using a stopwatch to enforce it.

trends

The annoying thing about Moé is that trends change all the time. This shouldn't come as too much of a shock, considering that the audience is mostly a bunch of antisocial Japanese weirdoes. There's always a certain segment of the audience that will go in for anything you could name, but different things go in waves, so the GM is under no obligation to be consistent with Moé rewards. In fact, he should be an annoying bastard and be totally whimsical about what results in bigger or smaller Moé awards.

Overdoingit

On the other hand, there's such a thing as too much of a good thing. Fans might go for catgirls, glasses, angel wings, school uniforms, and school swimsuits separately, but a bespectacled angelic catgirl wearing a sailor fuku top over a school swimsuit just looks tacky.

Moe By Association

One of the things about being in a group is that when one character looks good it sometimes helps the group as a whole look good. Even if the characters who are "in a group" completely hate each other. In game terms this means that when one character earns a really big Moé award, her friends might get a teeny tiny one just on general principle.

When it wears thin

Sometimes something just gets old. If a character tries to abuse something too much, it'll start to become a burden, and she'll start losing Moé every time she tries to push it too hard.

Extra Credit

Moé can also be awarded for players who put in some extra effort, whether it's buying snacks for the GM, drawing pictures of the characters, or anything else generally cool and helpful. If a cute girl is playing (hey, it *could* happen) and decides to cosplay as her character, she should get a hefty Moé bonus. On the other hand a guy who insists on doing the same should probably be penalized and OH GOD MY EYES! PUT ON SOME PANTS DAMN YOU!!!

Using moe

Now we come to the part where your efforts to become popular start to pay off. Being popular gives you influence and confidence; sometimes it manifests as displays of sheer, bloody-minded willpower, and other times as contrived conveniences of the type one expects of a character who's pulling favors with the director.

For all uses of Moé, the player has to describe what she wants to have happen in the game; you *never* just spend a point and add a bonus to an action. If this seems strict, keep in mind the setting and tone of *Mascot-tan*; you could easily get by describing a character's burning passion as she poses in front of Mt. Fuji with dramatically leaping waves around her in exchange for spending a point on a +1. Most games have never even heard of Hokusai^{*}, much less allow you to do something so implausible and cinematic.

There are five basic ways you can use Moé.

Contrivance

Contrivance is your ability to make good stuff happen to your character. This can be used in a couple of different ways, but the most basic is to spend 1 Moé to give a character +1 to a single Characteristic for one action. There's a catch though (aside from the fact that you still have to succeed at Janken for it to get you a Success); you have to explain to the GM's satisfaction something happening in-game that would give your character some kind of advantage.

^{*} The famous Japanese painter, who amongst about a million other pieces did the famous *Great Wave Off Kanagawa*. Who said you can't get culture from a roleplaying game? Don't answer that.

The other kind of Contrivance lets a character make something happen to help her. This can be a weird coincidence, a handy prop, or whatever else the player's imagination can conjure. The GM has final say over whether a particular Contrivance is allowed in the game, and sets a Moé cost (usually 1-5). If the player is unwilling or unable to spend the full amount, she has the option of spending only a portion of it, but the results won't be as good.

Gimmick Boosting

Usually, Gimmicks are meant to be kind of stupid and useless. Any time you want to make a Gimmick be *really* useful, you can spend Moé to make it actually do something.

Sabotage

The opposite of Contrivance is Sabotage, the ability to use Moé to make bad stuff happen to others. Sabotage can put a penalty of –1 onto someone else's Characteristic for one action. This can put a character's Characteristic as low as zero, but of course they can spend Moé to raise it up again if they want. It can also be used to create coincidences and such that cause problems for others.

Spotlight

Sometimes you can grab the spotlight naturally. Other times you have to force the issue. If you spend Moé on a "Spotlight," you get to hog the scene for a little bit, doing a monologue, a brief song, or just posing to show off a cute outfit.

Counterattack

Sometimes you just want to stop someone else from having their way. That's why one of the things you can use Moé for is to stop others from using their Moé. At any time you can spend a Moé point to negate someone else's Moé point. However, if you do, she can counterattack your counterattack... And so on.

Setting

The setting of *Mascot-tan* is whatever you want it to be. The game is geared towards everyday situations injected with that special element we like to call "being completely freaking nuts," so you can think of planning out the setting of your game much like setting up a sitcom. The characters don't have to like each other, but they do have to be forced to deal with each other on a regular basis. The *DiGi Charat* anime did this by having the characters work together in a retail store (and the RPG Girls in Chapter 4 have about the same setup, but with more in-jokes).

Stuff to Do

The question of where the characters live and why they're stuck together is up to you to answer, but here are some ideas.

Adventuring

Not all mascot girls are content to live bizarre satires of normal lives; some feel the need to have bizarre satires of epic adventures. This could be in a setting much like a typical fantasy world only sillier (not unlike in *Dragon Half*) or just a road trip in a more contemporary setting.

Being idols

What with the importance of Moé in this game, it can be fun to make the competition for fame something that happens in-game. Idols will have managers who try to boss them around, vicious rivals who try to insult and sabotage them at every turn and fans who can be outright scary. The life of an idol is also a busy one, with concerts, TV appearances, acting, commercials, public appearances, photo shoots, and a million other things, and if they don't take up your every waking hour then your career's probably in trouble. AAAAAH!

Living

Everyday life has more possibilities for cute adventures than you might think. This is the ultimate sitcom setup, where a bunch of mascot girls live close to one another, as roommates, in the same apartment building, or as neighbors.

Quarreling

Some mascot girls have a habit of fighting among themselves, or competing tooth and nail at the merest excuse. Unlike most RPGs, *Mascot-tan* actively encourages player characters to work against each other, though of course NPCs can get into the fray too.

working

Apparently life is hard, because some mascot girls have to work, even when in theory they should be underage. Work is a great way to force characters together, and since it's likely to be retail there's also endless wackiness that can be exploited from weird customers coming in.

People to meet (MPCs)

NPCs have basically the same stats as player characters, though some of them will have a Cuteness of zero, or have it replaced with Coolness.

Master

One way to structure the game is to have a central male character that all of the characters are forced to deal with on a regular basis. He might be someone the girls all want to please, but it would be more in keeping with the general tone of *Mascot*-*tan* if they considered him a jerk and a loser and his popularity (if any) is mostly in his own mind. If you want to satire love simulation games, he should be a tall, slender teenager with white hair that *always* overshadows his eyes. Assuming he actual *has* eyes...

Rivals

Especially if the girls are actively trying to build their Moé in-game, NPC rivals can be a great way to mess with them. Rivals are usually fellow mascot girls looking for trouble. A rival mascot girl might have a vendetta against one or more of the player characters (probably over something *completely stupid*), or she might just see "defeating" the PCs as a good way to boost her own fame.

Other rivals might not even be the traditional mascot girls. Although they're very rare, one does occasionally come across the "mascot-kuns," mascot characters who are handsome guys instead of cute girls.

Strange People

It seems to be the fate of all mascot girls to have to deal with people who are not only complete idiots, but total weirdoes to boot. Secondary characters encountered by mascot girls tend to be *weird*. Don't even bother trying to make them rational; put every ounce of effort into making them as strange as you can. Blue skin? No problem! Obsession with cat ears? Come on down, we have a winner!

Chapter 4: RPG Girls

This chapter outlines a sample campaign, complete with player characters, NPCs, and some adventure ideas, intended to play a dual role as an example and as an excuse to throw a bunch of stupid in-jokes into the game.

Gamings is a small but popular and well-liked gaming store in the mall. What keeps people coming back? The fact that Jim, the manager, is a really nice guy helps, not to mention the convenient location and good selection of games, but there's more to it than that. Apart from Jim himself, *all* of the employees are cute girls. They're kind of strange and quirky, but most people find their faults amusing.

What only a few of the customers realize is that these girls are each an anthropomorphic personification of a particular game system. Four of them represent major systems, and there's also this fifth girl who's really strange and hardly anyone likes. They spend their days trying to keep the store clean and well-stocked, organizing demos of games, and doing whatever strange promotions Jim has thought up that day.

Disclaimer

This chapter is a silly parody of RPG gaming; taking it too seriously would be a good way to get yourself pissed off about stuff that doesn't matter. We happen to be of the opinion that it doesn't matter what the hell game you're playing as long as you're having fun. So there.

If you're wondering why they all have funny names, it's because we opted to take the anime route in avoiding trademark infringement; make up something goofy that sounds close. Like how in anime a character will have a Sany (or Pony, Sonny, Suny, etc.) CD player, go see a certain Austrian guy playing a killer cyborg in "The Thermilor," and almost get run over by a Daihaku brand truck on the way home.

Player Characters

Twenty-tan

Representing the newest iteration of the most successful roleplaying game ever, Twenty-tan is the most popular of the RPG Girls, and she's definitely let it go to her head. She has a definite preference for solving problems by violence, and is seldom willing to listen to her "inferiors."

Twenty-tan has a Minion Swarm called the OGL Horde; no one has ever managed to count them, but they're a swarm of tiny (about a foot tall) chibi girls, each representing a different Twenty-tan variant. Realistically there's too many of them for her to control, so they tend to run amok most of the time, rising up as one to answer threats to Twenty-tan when they feel like it.

She also has a special Gimmick (which counts as two Gimmick selections) called Irrational Popularity; there's a significant number of people who prefer her over the other RPG Girls, or who have never even heard of the others, for no particular reason. This has a flip-side of course, since there are also those who hate her solely because she's the most popular, or for other equally meaningless reasons. As a result Twenty-tan is always walking the razor's edge; any time Twenty-tan would gain or lose Moé, the amount she gains or loses is doubled.

Girl Type: Elf Girl

Looks: An elf-girl with medium blonde hair. Wears a short-skirted sort of medieval outfit with light, kind of spiky armor. Wields a mace with a red icosahedral gem as its head, named Moderator.

Thoughts: Don't hate me just because I'm better than you. It's just network externalities and all that. Hey, SHUT UP! I'm gonna whack you one with this mace of mine!

Characteristics: ATH 16 (+3), CTE 14 (+2), DET 17 (+3), SMT 14 (+2)

Gimmicks: Irrational Popularity, Minion Swarm (OGL Horde), Special Attack (Twenty-Sided Mace, "Moderator")

Moé: 20

Platinum-tan

Platinum-tan comes from a gritty game of post-apocalyptic science fantasy horror, with ninjas and giant robots thrown in for good measure. She's the kind of person some people find really fun to hang out with and others find really annoying. She likes to have fun, but tends to overreact to criticism.

Girl Type: Mecha-Girl

Looks: Has messy red hair and glowing blue eyes. Wears high-tech body armor in red and blue (at ALL times), and wields a gigantic plasma rifle.

Thoughts: Rock on! It's time to kick some <u>MAJOR ass</u>! Shut up, I'm talking here! I'M NOT <u>OVERREACTING</u>!!!

Characteristics: P.A. 3, P.C. 1, M.E. 4, I.Q. 2

Gimmicks: Flight (Jet Pack), Go Psycho, Special Attack (Giant Plasma Rifle), Special Defense (Body Armor)

Moé: 12

Generic-tan

An emissary of the first major universal RPG, Generic-tan is the most intellectual of the girls; although she's not without a fun side, she likes intelligence and realism, and the faults of the other girls grate on her more than most.

Girl Type: Meganekko, Office Lady

Looks: Prim and proper and bespectacled. Short black hair, an office lady dress in black with red and blue highlights. Wears two six-sided dice in her hair. Always carrying some books.

Thoughts: There's a proper way of doing things... And then there's the way most of the girls like to do things. But I won't let it get to me; I'm too smart for that. Why is that, you ask? Fnord.

Characteristics: AT 1, CT 3, DT 2, SM 4

Gimmicks: Glasses, Know-It-All, Special Attack (Blow To The Head With RPG Books), Uniform (Office Lady)

Moé: 9

Story-tan

Story-tan comes from a modern punk-gothic horror that revolutionized the industry with an emphasis on roleplaying over hack-and-slash. At least that's what she'll tell anyone who asks, in spite of the fact that she carries two katana (of course, the proper plural is *katanae* you know^{*}) around and likes to brag about how her character can kick anyone's ass with his swords.

Girl Types: Goth Girl, Wolf Girl

Looks: Has the ears and tail of a wolf (white of course). Dresses gothic-punk style (including makeup). Has a massive sword strapped to her back.

Thoughts: You know what the problem with this hobby is? Too many numbers, not enough story. Luckily I'm here to fix that. With my katanas if need be.

Characteristics: Athletics •••, Cuteness ••, Determination •••, Smarts ••

Gimmicks: Angst, Special Attack (Katanas), Special Attack (Wolf Bite) Moé: 12



* No it isn't.

Mascot-tan-tan

A strange and unlikely addition to the RPG Girls is the girl version of *Mascot-tan*, the very game you have in front of you. Not only is she the mascot of a weird little indie game, but her odd, recursive nature, not to mention the fact that she has *-tan* in her name *twice*, have made her become... strange. Most of the customers seem to want to avoid her, but there are a few of... discerning taste for whom she's the favorite of the bunch. Why that might be the case we couldn't say, but apparently Gamings has a lot of customers who have nothing better to do.

Girl Types: Catgirl, Meganekko, School Uniform, School Swimsuit, Angel

Looks: Mascot-tan-tan's appearance is an example of why this game's Moé rules include a section on Overdoing It. She has pink pigtails, huge cat ears, glasses (not an affectation; she's practically blind without them), and angel wings. The wings are huge and have a way of knocking things over, but don't actually let her fly. She wears a sailor fuku top, a school swimsuit, and oversized boots.

Thoughts: No one likes me. Why am I even here? I'll just do my best and try to keep out of the way. I don't suppose anyone wants to play Janken? No? Okay. I'll be over here if you need me.

Characteristics: Athletics 2, Cuteness 3, Determination 1, Smarts 3

Gimmicks: Catgirl, Meganekko, Uniform (Sailor Fuku), Uniform (School Swimsuit)

Moé: 2

Others?

Just as the OS Girls find themselves joined by the likes of Mac OS-chan and Linuxtan now and then, other RPG girls could figure into the game. BigEyes-tan, DeadTan, Fudge-tan, Risus-tan, and Hero-tan are just a few of the possibilities. For that matter the girls might have close relatives representing different flavors of the system. Generic-tan has a baby sister called Generic-tan Lite, Twenty-tan has, in addition to the OGL Swarm, Modern-tan as a younger sister, and Story-tan has Solar-tan, a rambunctious younger sister who's into wuxia and has one gigantic sword instead of the two katanas. Take whatever systems you know and run with them. And of course there's also the possibility of encountering mascot girls from other kinds of tabletop games...

npcs

jim

Jim is a veteran gamer who opened up Gamings a decade ago and has continued running it as a labor of love. He's chummy and single and thirty-something, so even though he knows better he can't help but feel a bit tempted by the presence of five cute girls in his store. For the most part he's pretty laid-back, but when he does finally get ticked off Gamings is not a good place to be.

The Customers

Gamings is in a mall, but it also attracts a lot of hardcore gamers. If you don't know what hardcore gamers are like, go find a message board on the internet, preferably one that's only about one of the really popular games, and look for threads where the page count goes into the double digits and it's all flaming death vitriol. It won't give you an accurate picture of what gamers are like in person, but at least it'll make you feel better about yourself for not getting into that kind of crap.

The other customers are a mix of more casual gamers, mallrats, and other people who wandered in but don't know what the store is about. Since these people usually aren't very interesting, the GM is encouraged to come up with the most irrational weirdoes he can devise. Here are some examples:

- **Bob** (at least, they *think* is name is Bob) is an older guy who always comes in wearing a smelly trench coat. He never offers conversation to anyone, and tends to go and hide whenever a person of the female persuasion is brave enough to try to talk to him.
- **Phil** actually works at the Warslammer store at the other side of the mall, but because of greater demands for company loyalty he's been forced to go to ever greater lengths to come to Gamings secretly.
- **Ryan**, a guy who, as far as anyone can tell, lives in the air ducts in the store's ceiling. Supposedly he's gotten a bit messed up in the head and is in the habit of stopping by his parents' house to buy booster packs. Rumor has it his parents have started stocking them just so they get to see him once in a while.

Adventure Seeds

Here are some ideas for *RPG Girls* episodes. They're certainly not the full range of possibilities, but then if you run a campaign that goes for longer than six sessions... *damn*.

Haterizing

Jim is usually good about keeping the girls from arguing about game systems too much, mainly because it never ends well, and for that matter never actually changes anything other than perhaps how long everyone has to stay after closing to clean up the store. But one day while he's out for lunch two customers start arguing game systems; Twenty-tan and Story-tan are sorely tempted to get into it. Will the others be able to hold them back, or will chaos reign once again?

Allegiances

Kevin is kind of unusual among Gamings' customers in that he's handsome, stylish, and trendy. This exterior belies the fact that he's one of the most hardcore gamers in town, and one of the store's best customers. RPGs, miniatures, CCGs, board games; he does it all. And he just got a new girlfriend. The problem is that even though she's nuts about Kevin, Jessica can't stand geeks. She's going to do her best to attempt the impossible task of "reforming" Kevin, and that won't sit well with the girls. On the other hand he's so oblivious and far gone that it's probably useless anyway.

Tabletop Gaming Girls

The RPG Girls apparently aren't the only representatives of tabletop gaming out there; there's also the likes of Magick-tan, Warslammer-tan, and Chess-tan, a threesome who come in search of both jobs and better representation of their respective genres of games. The RPG Girls have trouble on their hands; Jim doesn't need any more employees, so if any of these other girls get hired, some of them would have to be laid off. Will they work together and sabotage the new applicants, or (more likely) resort to backstabbing to try and get rid of whichever coworker has been annoying them?

Mother

Twenty-tan's mother, Dungeon-obasan^{*}, comes to Gamings for a visit. Dungeonobasan is something of an old curmudgeon; she barely tolerates her daughter's newfangled habits, and regards the other RPG Girls as a waste of skin. Jim considers Dungeon-obasan an old friend, and is completely blind to her faults.

^{*} "Obasan" is something like "auntie" in Japanese. It's a good idea not to mix it up with "obaasan," which is more like "granny."

Dawn of the Diceman

Who he is and why he wears a giant hollow icosahedron on his head is a mystery, but the Diceman cometh, and he wants dice. Lots of them. And if he isn't satisfied with the selection in the store (and the session would be boring otherwise, so you just know he won't be satisfied) the store will taste some of this lunatic's terrible wrath.

Black Gamings

The Tabletop Gaming Girls are back! And this time they have a new plan; they've opened up a game store of their own just across the way. The grand opening of "Black Gamings" could be the death knell of Gamings... Unless our heroines can do something about it! But considering that Black Gamings seems to be offering lower prices and better customer service, they'd better think of something quick. But why is it that even the most loyal Gamings customers seem to be coming back to Black Gamings every single freaking day? Something fishy is going on here...

Appendix: Random Crap

This is the part of the book where I ramble a bit and plug other people's games. You'll probably want to skip printing out this part.

inspiration

I came up with the idea for this game (and for that matter started writing it) at GenCon SoCal 2004. Memento Mori, Wicked Dead, and a couple of other indie RPG types had set up a booth to sell various games, and I wound up picking up most of what they had to offer, which included stuff like *octaNe*, *Shadow of Yesterday*, *Inspectres*, *Fastlane*, and *Run Robot Red*.

They impressed on me the idea that an RPG didn't have to be a big, grand production, or even necessarily something you'd keep playing regularly. The only thing an RPG has to be is fun, which is of course subjective as hell. *Mascot-tan* is a game that's short in length, small in scope, and probably has a microscopic audience. But more importantly it was incredibly fun to write, and involved trying out some things I wouldn't have bothered with normally.

As for what RPGs specifically helped inspire stuff in *Mascot-tan*, a partial list would go along the lines of *Enemy Gods*, *Toon*, *RandomAnime*, *Fudge*, and of course *Risus*. An anime series called *Genshiken* helped inspire some of the customers from RPG Girls.

Anything-tan: The Mascot RPG

So maybe *Mascot-tan*'s minute system doesn't do it for you. Short of free-forming it, the only system that I can recommend as an alternative with full confidence would be *Risus: The Anything RPG* by S. John Ross. Writing up a Mascot-tan character in terms of Risus' clichés would be pretty easy, and for that matter porting Risus' dice mechanics into *Mascot-tan* with the existing stats (i.e., rolling a number of six-siders equal to the Characteristic being used) would be pretty damn simple too. Risus can be found (for free no less) at:

http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm

Risus-tan, on the other hand, is right here. Isn't she beautiful?

Risus-tan

Little Cartoon Bast-, Uh... *Girl.* (4) Elegant Wacky RPG Mascot (3) Purple Risus Green Colored (2) Irish Shinto Minotaur Astronaut Freemason (1)

