Rest

A Dream Sequence Game

When the day is done, we rest, and we dream. Memories, thoughts, and ideas blur together to form strange stories in our minds, taking apart the things we know and putting them back together in unexpected ways. When morning comes, the dreams we've had do not change the waking world, but they can have a profound effect on how we interact with it. Our unconscious mind can lead us to new ideas, help us find closure, or bring to light feelings we never even knew we had.

What is Rest?

Rest is a dream sequence generation game, designed to create moments of revelation for fictional characters. It is a game-within-a-game, played between sessions of a traditional tabletop role-playing game when characters find themselves with time to sleep. Using a

character from this existing game, The Writer and Player work together to create the story of a meaningful dream that that character experience during this downtime, and to decide what revelations they take from it.

Digitally Enhanced Analog Gaming

Though played with characters and elements from a traditional tabletop RPG, Rest is played online through a sharable word file (like a google doc, or an emailed .rtf file.) Using this technology, the Writer and Player can both participate at their leisure, continuing the story together even when distance or busy schedules prevent the group from meeting. Easy digital editing allows the dream to remain flexible, giving the Player permission to change pieces of the narration to better suit the subconscious of the character they're playing.

Dreams and Nightmares

During a dream, the Player will track the mood of their character. Some dreams will carry the dreamer gently to sunrise, but when the story turns in a darker direction, they might wake up before it's through. Whether the character reaches the Sunlit or Moonlit ending, they will have a chance to reflect on what their dream meant, and what they will take from it into the waking world.

Writing a Sequence

Before a dream can be played, it must be created. A dream Sequence is a stand-alone interactive story, often (but not always) built with a specific character in mind as its protagonist. Like real dreams, dream Sequences are often somewhat surreal or disjointed, taking pieces

of the world and putting them together in unusual or nonsensical ways. A written sequence should provide inspiration for revelation, while leaving its exact interpretation up to the Player.

SEQUENCE OVERVIEW

A Sequence contains five or more **scenes**, all written in advance, each one contained within a single page of a word document. A scene in a dream is much like a scene in a movie or play: a brief sequence of related, continuous events that occur in one place and time. Scenes usually begin with **narration**, text created by the Writer to describe what is happening. The Writer also creates **prompts**, specific questions that the Player will answer for their character. Between the two, **variations** are sections of narration text that the Player is allowed to modify, or leave alone, as they see fit. Finally, the Writer can choose to add **bells**: specific instructions for how the player should raise their character's Alarm level, which determines whether or not they wake up before the dream ends. This will determine whether the player finishes the sequence with the **Sunlit** or **Moonlit ending scene**.

WHO WRITES A DREAM?

By default, Rest assumes that the Writer is the game master running the campaign that Rest is enhancing, but that doesn't have to be the case. Players can write Sequences for one another, or non-playing observers can contribute to the game by creating dreams between sessions. You can even write a Sequence with no specific character in mind, and share it online for anyone to enjoy.

SCENES

Though dreams don't always make much sense, the scenes of a Sequence should flow together in some logical way. It's a good idea to quickly jot down your plans for the entire dream before you start writing the scenes, so you know where you're going. Unlike in a live game, player actions will not be able to drastically change later scenes, so try not to include any choices that would unavoidably create branching paths.

While planning, remember that each should be no more than one page long, including the player's additions. Try to keep things simple, and allow the player to fill in details with their imagination. Having an idea of what emotions your dream will inspire can be helpful, but keep the dream open to interpretation.

Formatting: every scene should be in a separate page of your word document. At the end of your scene, add three asterixis, followed by a page break. Aim to include no more than 300 words of written content in a scene, though you are welcome to include far less.

Emma is writing a dream for a character who has just experienced a tragic loss. She aims to capture some sense of helplessness, but wants to leave open how the player will deal with that feeling. She jots down a quick plan for what the dream will look like:
~ The character comes across a spooky tower.
~ Inside, the character finds a King on a throne. He says something ominous.
~ The tower falls apart, the character is helpess.
~ Floating in nothingness, a memory resurfaces.
~ The character reappears where the tower used to be, now just a field of rubble.

NARRATION

The player is introduced to each scene through narration: plain text written in second person that tells the story of what's happening. Narration is the only part of a scene that's set in stone, so any details that need to remain consistent for future scenes to work should be included as narration.

Whenever possible, try to keep narration writing short, crisp, and evocative. When GMing a regular tabletop RPG scene, you need to give players enough detail so they'll all imagine roughly the same thing, but in a Rest scene, you only have one audience member. It's okay if the Player's interpretation of your scene is a little different than what you first had planned. However, do include details that will be relevant to future scenes up front, so your Player doesn't need to change their interpretation later: if you plan to have the character stare out the cottage window to the seashore beyond in scene 3, make sure you mention the ocean in scene 1 when they're viewing the cottage from outside.

Formatting: narration should be written in plain text, with no special formatting requirements.

Emma begins constructing her first scene, keeping in mind the details she wants to use for later.
"You are standing in a vast field, with no end in sight. In front of you stands a regal tower made of cold stone. It stretches up and up towards the heavens, up beyond the clouds and into the distance. You know, staring up at it, that it goes on forever."

Prompts

Prompts are short questions your Player will be required to answer during play, which allow them to interact with or reflect on the story. The Player must answer all prompts before continuing on to the next scene, so make sure they have all the information they'll require to answer available. If you'd like to include a prompt that requires information from the next scene to answer (say there is travel between scenes 1 and 2, and you'd like your player to describe how it occurs) it's better to include the prompt in the later scene.

The Player also needs enough information to make a relevant choice. If you'd like a scene to be set somewhere very comfortable to the character, make sure you describe the environment as calm and welcoming before you offer a prompt to define exactly where they are. Thoughtfully given prompts allow the Player to inject their character's subconscious into the dream in a meaningful way, making the dream's story more personal.

There are four types of prompts used during regular scenes:

[Name] prompts ask the player to give a name or identity to a person, place, or thing.
Who is the Empress? What village are you in?

[Act] prompts ask the player to describe how their character is acting upon the world.
How do you get to the top of the tower? What do you say to the Empress?

[Feel] prompts ask the player to describe what their character is feeling or thinking about.
Do the Empress's words hurt you? What does the town remind you of?

[Place] prompts ask the player to describe the environment around their character.
What time of day is it? What does the box look like?

> ### PROMPTS AND NARRATION
> When you'll need to refer back to someone's [Name] answer, try giving the named thing a title: The Empress, The Crying Figure, The Empty Town, etc. This will let you reference it quickly later, and also adds a nice sense of symbolism.

Formatting: Prompt questions are written in **bold** text, with the type of prompt added in **[square brackets]** at the end.

Emma adds two prompts to her first scene, to help the player get into character and start imagining the environment.
What does the sky above look like? [Place]
How does the infinite tower make you feel? [Feel]

Variations

Between narration and prompts, there are variations. Variations are sections of narration which the player is invited to edit. A variation provides a "default answer" in the text that's given, while still allowing the player to have input if something doesn't quite work.

Variations are especially useful when writing dialogue or actions for someone your player is defining with a [Name] prompt, as your player can then edit the words to best suit the person they've chosen to speak them. The same goes for describing the player character's actions, when you feel you'd like to narrate them but want the player to be able to edit your choices.

Formatting: Variations are written in *italic text*. Variations and narration can be placed in the same paragraph, simply italicise the part(s) your player can edit.

Emma decides her scene needs a segue into the next scene. Because she wants to describe the player's character's actions, she makes it a variation instead of more narration.
"Tearing your eyes away from the sky, you turn to the door of the tower, opening it slowly and stepping into the darkness."

Bells

Throughout a Sequence, Players will track their character's Alarm level, which begins at zero. If it reaches three before the final scene, the character wakes up, and the Player skips all further scenes and plays through the Moonlit ending scene immediately. Whenever their character is distressed, the Player will add an Alarm Point automatically, but you can use bells to create additional ways to raise alarm. When the conditions of a bell are met, it is "rung" and the Player adds an Alarm Point. A bell may also contain a small amount of narrative description, describing what happens if the bell is or is not rung.

You may include as many or as few bells as you would like, keeping in mind that numerous bells lower the chances of a character making it all the way through your dream. The last regular scene should not include any bells, as the player is no longer able to wake up any earlier than the end of the dream.

There are three types of bells you can use:

Chance bells ask the player to roll a die or otherwise generate a random number. Specify which results cause the bell to be rung.

Roll 1d6. On a 6, you hear a terrifying shriek, and the bell is rung.

Mechanical bells interface directly with the system being used to run the campaign that Rest is supporting. You can ask for a roll based on the character's statistics, or find some other means of interacting with the values or words of their character sheet.

Roll your speed attribute. If you fail, the boulder catches up and crushes you, and the bell is rung.

Narrative bells ask the player to choose whether or not the bell is rung based on how the narrative has progressed, or has changed their character. This should be more specific than general distress, which already causes a player to gain Alarm Points.

Does the Empress's question remind you of your past? If so, the bell is rung.

Formatting: a bell is written in **bold, underlined text**, and includes "**[bell rung][bell not rung]**" at the end for the player's convenience.

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ENDING A SEQUENCE

After the final scene, or after the Player accrues three Alarm Points, the character wakes up. Every Sequence requires two ending scenes: one to play if the dream takes the character through til morning, one to play if they are woken prematurely. These are the Sunlit and Moonlit ending scenes.

Like a regular scene, an ending scene can include narration and variations to describe how the dream transitions to the waking world. This should reflect how each scene is occuring: a Sunlit scene will have the character wake naturally, a Moonlit scene should describe the character waking up suddenly from a distressing nightmare. Since the character is already awake, it cannot include bells. Regular prompts can be used, but end scenes can also incorporate special [sunlit] or [moonlit] prompts, as well as optional [challenge] prompts.

[Sunlit] prompts ask broad, open-ended questions that shed light upon the dream's meaning, and the character's thoughts about the future.

What did the Tower represent to your character? What will your character remember most about the dream? Which scene held the most meaning for your character, and why?

[Moonlit] prompts ask broad, open-ended questions that shed light upon the character's fears, insecurities, and past.

What frightened your character the most during the dream? Did remembering the past make your character feel guilty? Has your character ever had a dream like this before?

[Challenge] prompts aren't questions. Instead, they prompt an extra creative project that the player can embark on. Challenges are completely optional for the player, and can be as simple or as complicated as you'd like.

Sketch a picture of the dream scene you found most memorable. Write a journal entry from your character's perspective after they wake up. Find a song that reminds you of how your character felt during a scene of your choice.

Formatting: the Sunlit ending should be the second-to-last page in your document, the Moonlit ending should be the last page. They should begin with "Sunlit Ending" and "Moonlit Ending" respectively, written in plain text.

Sharing Dreams

A Sequence is usually written with a specific Player and character in mind, but it doesn't have to be: finished Sequences can be posted online for anyone to enjoy. Shared dreams can be a helpful resource to other game runners, or to players who enjoy playing through dreams in their spare time. Before sharing a dream, however, you should take a few minutes to ensure it will be easy for others to find and use.

When posting links to Sequence documents on social media sites, you can use the hashtag **#RestRPG** to make your dream easily findable.

Title Card

A Title Card is a new page in your Sequence document, before your first scene. This will include all the information a potential user will need to decide if

the dream you've written is right for them, and should include:

A Title: this should match the filename of your document.

Your Name or Penname: optional, but useful if you want credit for your work! You can also include a website or email link.

A Summary: 1-3 sentences describing what your dream is about, or what feelings it intends to invoke. Try to keep this spoiler-free, for Players who are downloading dreams to play through themselves.

Mechanics/Setting Compatibility: If you use any mechanical bells, or make reference to things that won't be appropriate in all settings (such as including a computer in your narration, or referencing a magic system unique to your game setting) mention them here.

Content Warnings: If your game isn't appropriate for all ages, or contains content that might be upsetting to readers with certain backgrounds or experiences, please include warnings here.

Sharing Rights: If you would like others to be able to modify and share your dream again, include a

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SPOILERS

Sometimes, adding a complete summary, setting information, or content warnings could spoil key elements of your dream's story. In those cases, you can use white text on a white background to hide parts of your title card from the view of a casual reader. Add instructions above, such as "highlight below for more information, which may include spoilers".

disclaimer or license to that effect. You can use a Creative Commons license, a public domain license, or whatever other form of permission you choose.

Rest Link: In case your Sequence document gets separated from its context, include a link back to the Rest rules.

Playing a Sequence

Playing a Rest sequence lets you roleplay your character in between sessions of a traditional tabletop RPG. Just like at the table, you'll try to act as your character would, answering questions and writing in your character's voice. Each scene will give you a piece of the dream's story, and provide you with prompts or options for adding to it. You'll write your responses and changes directly into the dream document, producing a finished piece co-created by the dream writer and yourself.

Preparing to Play

If you can, set aside about thirty minutes of uninterrupted time to get through a standard Rest Sequence of five scenes. If if that's not possible, it's okay to leave a sequence mid-play and pick it up again later,

but it may be harder to stay in character.

Before beginning, find a scrap of paper and mark three boxes. These represent your character's Alarm - if all three boxes are filled before the end of the dream, your character will wake up early. You'll also want to have your character sheet handy, and access to some means of random number generation.

Scene by Scene

Every Sequence is divided into scenes, each contained within a single page. You must complete every portion of a scene before continuing on to the next, so read carefully and ensure you are happy with your responses before you continue. If you are playing on a mobile device, or any other device that displays page breaks as lines rather than full breaks, be careful not to scroll past one scene and into the next before you are finished. You will find three asterixis right before the page break, to make it more visible.

At the end of every scene, take a moment to assess your character's feelings about what just happened. If your character has become meaningfully stressed, anxious, afraid, or otherwise alarmed during the scene, mark a box to give yourself one Alarm Point. If you're not sure whether you should gain Alarm, pick whatever feels like more fun, or flip a coin to decide.

If you have three Alarm Points before the last regular scene (the third-to-last page of the document) your character immediately wakes up. Skip to the very last page of the document and play through the Moonlit ending. If your character does not wake up during the dream, you will reach the Sunlit ending (the second-to-last page) instead, and skip the Moonlit ending.

Rules of Play

Scenes will contain text formatted in several different ways. The formatting indicates what type of text you are reading, and whether or not you can answer or alter it.

Narration text has no special formatting, and it explains events that happen in the dream regardless of your choices. Leave these sections of text as-is.

Variation text is written in *italics*. Like narration text, it explains what's happening in the dream, but unlike narration text you can choose to change variations. Try to keep the gist of what's happening the same; if a variation describes your character looking up in awe at a statue, you shouldn't change it to say your character turns into a dragon and destroys the scene, but you might change it to describe your character looking at the statue in disgust, or trying to hit it with a sword. If you feel the variation is fine as-is, you don't have to change anything.

Prompt text is written in **bold**, with a prompt type written in **[square brackets]** at the end. You should write a brief answer after each prompt in bold text, based on the type of prompt you are answering:

[Name] prompts call for simple, short answers that name one person, place, or thing. Try to pick an answer that will be poignant or meaningful to your character.

[Act] prompts require a short answer describing how your character acts in a certain situation. Try to keep your answer appropriate to the rest of the scene being described.

[Feel] prompts as you to expand on how your character is feeling. Take your time with these, as they

provide a chance to dive deep into how your character thinks.

[Place] prompts ask you to provide more details to the dream's setting. You can use these to reflect your character's feelings too, by making the landscape of their dream match their inner mood.

As with variations, keep context in mind. Answers relevant to their context, rather than chosen at random, will make the dream meaningful to your character.

Bell text is written in **bold and underlined**, with [bell rung][bell not rung] included at the end. Follow the instructions of the text and decide whether or not the bell is rung. If it is, gain one Alarm Point. Delete either [bell rung] or [bell not rung], so only the accurate tag remains.

WAKING UP

At the end of a Sequence, you will play through either a Sunlit or Moonlit ending scene. End scenes will contain special prompts, which are usually more open-ended than standard prompts.

[Sunlit] and [moonlit] prompts will ask you for more details about your character's feelings and interpretations of the dream. You can answer these briefly, or expand with as much detail as you'd like.

[Challenge] prompts propose an extra creative project instead of asking a question. They are completely optional, designed to be skipped if the project they propose doesn't appeal to you, or if you don't have the spare time to try it.

AFTER THE DREAM

Once your dream is complete, it's up to you and your GM to decide whether to include it as canon in your campaign. If you're happy with the outcome, send the finished document to your GM, and if they agree the sequence can become a dream your character actually experienced in your campaign's story. You can then decide whether you'd like to send it to all the other players to read, or keep it private and reference it only through your character's actions during play.

If you don't want to add the sequence to your character's campaign story, or you feel some parts of it are wrong, talk with your GM about making changes or discarding it altogether. With the flexibility of writing and editing text, rather than speaking aloud and in turns at the table, nothing needs to become canon until you're happy with how it looks.

Sweet dreams!

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