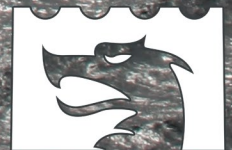


FRUSTRATION TO FREEDOM

LEGENDARY SOLO ROLEPLAYING ADVENTURES

MASTER SOLO ENGINES

**GAIN COMPELLING ADVENTURES BY ASKING,
AND ANSWERING, THE CORRECT QUESTIONS**



Solo Roleplayer

Kenny the Solo Roleplaying Sage

Frustration to Freedom: Legendary Solo Roleplaying Adventures
How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

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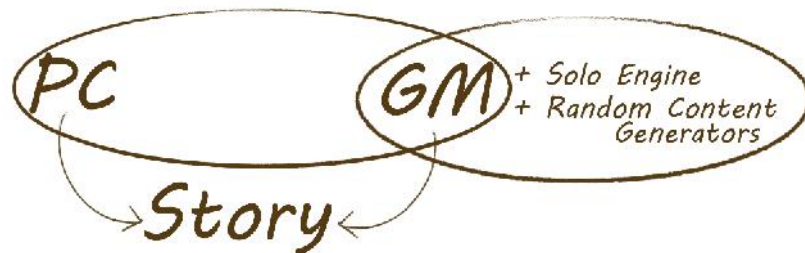
BEFORE YOU START: BACKGROUND AND A NOTE ABOUT NOMENCLATURE

Social roleplaying works when Players and GM create a story together.



The reason it's 'Story' not 'Adventure' is roleplaying, at its best, draws you into the world. In other words it draws you into a story.

Solo roleplaying works like the following.



As you can see your head (that's the left circle) covers both PC and GM aspects of roleplaying. To the right there's another circle outside of your head. It contains Solo Engines and Random Content Generators.

The term Games Master Emulator could lead people to believe that the Solo Engine takes all the GM control out of your hands. The bottom illustration shows that a Solo Engine doesn't remove full GM control. A Solo Engine takes a portion of control away.

A problem with Solo Engine is it makes it harder for people to stumble upon solo roleplaying. Much like I did when I brought Mythic Games Master Emulator.

GM AND PC TURNS

When you're solo roleplaying you've got to keep track of the 2 sides of roleplaying: the GM and the PC. This is the hardest part of solo roleplaying to understand. It's also behind most of the problems that soloists come across.

What's about to be introduced is a framework. It will help guide your choices and clarify how, and when, to use your chosen Solo Engine. This framework is the GM / PC Turn.

GM Turns

In a GM Turn anything external to the PC is covered.

This includes:

- NPCs
- Monsters
- Weapon Effects
- Skill Effects
- Scenery
- Weather

These can be mapped into 3 these elements:

1. Action
2. Dialogue
3. Description

Whichever of these elements you use they should move the game forward. Colour and mood descriptions also occur within the GM Turn. Descriptions are important and should be used as they add depth which helps keep you immersed. If the game doesn't move forward, or adds depth, in the GM Turn add an event to force the story onwards.

A GM Turn also covers the use of:

- Solo Engines
- Random Content Generators

Everything in the GM Turn phase happens outside the PC¹. This includes NPCs actions, the result of what the PC puts into action, and the effects of the PC's skill use.

Using the Senses

Whilst playing a social game you wouldn't like it if your GM tells you what your character is feeling or thinking. Resist any attempt by your GM Mind telling your PC Mind what they're feeling in your solo

¹ This 'hard and fast' rule can be broken. Magic, psionic, and alien infestations are all 'external' events that can occur within the PC.

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How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

game. A good GM can influence you, and by extension your characters, thoughts and feelings by using good descriptions.

During the GM Turn the PC should be invisible. Their presence fills the GM Turn but the PC themselves shouldn't be directly mentioned.

The best way to figure out what's part of the GM Turn is to look at the details that come up during the GM Turn. These details should be concrete. That is what both you and a person alongside you would both experience.

These details are:

- Sight,
- Sound,
- Touch,
- Taste,
- Smell, and because we often play in genre worlds
- Extra-Sensory Senses such as Magic or Psionics.

Example: Dean Salisbury (GM Turn Descriptions)

Dean is heading towards a pub via a park.

The street lights were covered by the trees that lined the path. The light reflected from the damp tarmac pavement. Shadows chased the light across the ground where the wind rustled and moved the branches. Other than the rustling branches it was silent. The damp in the air gave the wind a chilly bite like that of death.

In the example Dean is invisible. It's through his senses, emotions, and thoughts we see the park at night.

Another character might notice other things in the park. One might see the bench where they had their first kiss. Another where they sat next to their beloved over the years. Someone else might see the shadows on the moon. Yet another might stamp in the puddles and watch as the ripples fade like they had never been there.

PC Turns

During the PC Turn all internal events occur.

This means that within a PC turn the following occurs:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Actions

The ideal PC Turn keeps the game moving forward and deals with whatever the GM Turn throws at them. So the PC needs to act and create an effect on their world. This is in fact what happens within a social session. The GM lays out a scene and the player reacts in such a way that they drive the story forward.

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How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

That is unless you're in a moment of colour building. These moments of colour enhance the world and your immersion in the world by showing how your PC reacts to the description.

A PC Turn also covers Game Mechanics that deal with the PC:

- Skills
- Combat
- Healing

It's important to note that though skills are covered in the PC Turn the results occur in the GM Turn.

Most PC Turns will take at most seconds. Sometimes they can be shorter or longer depending upon what the PC is doing.

PC Actions

In a PC Turn the PC will do, in order, any mix of the following:

1. Instinctive Action
2. Feel Emotions
3. Think Thoughts, and
4. Take Action or Speak

The reason the above actions are in that order is down to how our brains work. A part of our brain forces our body to move before we can think in certain situations. Following that the next fastest part of our brain controls our emotions. These then colour our thoughts and actions afterwards.

Most of the visible game actions occur at 1 and 4. 2 and 3 that give depth to your character and so shouldn't be ignored or overlooked during your game.

Example: Dean Salisbury (GM and PC Turn Walkthrough)

This example shows how GM and PC turns can be used as building blocks to build a scene within a story.

GM: *It was a small pub, barely a window and a door wide. The door was closed and the lights were dimmed. In the distance a crowd of giggling students passed by.*

PC: *It looked closed, unwelcoming, and grotty. A type of pub that Dean seemed to spend so much time in. Why did bad guys never go to nice pubs? He pushed opened the door.*

GM: *The bar was quiet, not just quiet, but almost dead. Behind the counter stood a young, and grumpy, barman staring into space.*

PC: *Dean glanced around at the few inhabitants of the bar. It was much too quiet for a city centre on student night. She was there, like he'd been told she would be.*

GM: *She was sitting in the darkness of the corner. A beautiful lass, with long black hair, over a bright summer dress. She was staring at the bottle of Diet Pepsi she was cradling in her hands.*

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PC: *He glanced around and saw no signs of trouble. Everyone seemed to be in their own little world. Dean looked back at the girl: another time, another place she'd be a pleasure to meet. If she was human. Tonight, though, was business. His hand brushed his pocket checking for the comforting weight of the knife. He walked over to her.*

GM: *The girl looked up as Dean reached her. 'So you've come for me then. I heard you were after me.'*

PC: *'I know it wasn't you. I just want to know who it was.'*

GM: *She looked at Dean, 'I can't tell you. You may kill be but it's nothing as to what he'll do to me if he knew I talked.'*

SOLO ENGINES

What's a Solo Engine?

A Solo Engine takes some choices out of your hands and randomises the answers you get. Solo Engines work by answering questions that require a Yes or No answer. Most Solo Engines also have an odds feature which changes the chance of an outcome occurring.

There are 4 major Solo Engines:

- Mythic Games Master Emulator
- The Covetous Poet's Adventure Creator and Solo GM Guidebook
- CRGE: Conjectural Roleplaying Gamesmaster Emulator
- Fate Solo

Each of the engines have a Yes/No chart. This chart may have outlier answers: different levels of Yes or No (Yes, and; Yes, but; No, and furthermore). They might also have an odds scale which makes answers more, or less, common. There could also include an option to generate random events.

Each of the 4 engines have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Mythic GME is the standard by which all Solo Engines are rated. However there is book keeping required and until you get used to the oracle table it can be confusing.

Covetous Poet (CP or Cov. Poet) has an adventure generator, NPC engine, and large lists of genre-specific details. There can be large amounts of book keeping required and there is no graduated Yes/No answers.

CRGE is a quick and simple system with only a little amount of book keeping required. The problem is that there is no sliding scale for making a result more or less common.

Fate Solo, my Solo Engine, is a small and quick system. As Fate Solo is designed for Fate it is best if used with 4 Fate dice and it hasn't got the depth that some other systems have.

To be kept up to date on any new Solo Engines visit: <http://soloroleplayer.com/solo-rpg-resources-tools/>

Solo Engine Questions

There are 5 factors about asking questions of the Solo Engine:

1. Yes / No answers
2. Leading questions
3. Elements involved
4. Depth of questions
5. Amount of questions asked

All the questions you ask need a Yes or No answer.

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These questions are from Dean's walk back to his car when he's back at the park.

Is the park empty? (Good)

Is the curry house open? (Not so good. What curry house? Who cares? Does it matter right now? Colour building possibility.)

Do the bushes part and a vampire leap out to attack me? (Bad. Leading question.)

If you want something to happen make it happen. Don't ask a question to make something happen by altering the odds in your favour. There are times when you can ask leading questions.

Earlier you learnt about the 3 elements that occur within a GM Turn. The best questions focus upon these 3 elements.

They are:

1. Action

Does the vampire run away when Dean holds his own against him? (Good. It could be that they're after a simple feed.)

2. Dialogue

Does the vampire try to engage in conversation with Dean about his sire? (Good. It adds depth to the story. It could also mean that the vampire wants to betray his sire...)

3. Description

Is the vampire acting nervously? (Good. If he is why?)

Questions asked of the Solo Engine are set on a sliding scale of depth.

Shallow questions skirt around the edge of an issue, or add colour or mood to game. These questions slow the game and add depth, mystery, tension, or immersion to a game.

Is the vampire wearing clan colours? (A shallow question that adds colour to the game.)

Multiple Questions

You can ask as many questions as you need to clarify the scene in your mind. Asking 3 or 4 questions about the vampire can be important because they add to the vampire. Each question needs to provide colour or mood; or, most important of all, drive the story forward.

Is the vampire alone?

Is he holding a weapon?

Is he looking around furtively?

(Those 3 questions gives you more information about the vampire and helps move the story along without forcing lots of needless dice rolling and questioning.)

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How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

The deeper the question the fewer questions need to be asked. A deep question (see below) should stand alone. Shallow questions can be supported by other shallow questions or a single deep question.

Asking questions for the sake of asking questions is wasteful. If your questions are unimportant and wasteful then the answers are unimportant and wasteful.

If you ask questions that add little, or nothing, to the game stop. Give yourself a maximum of between 2 and 5 (d4+1) shallow questions you can ask within a single GM Turn. A deep question uses up all your questions that GM Turn.

Once you answer your last question finish your GM Turn as quick as you can. Then go through the PC Turn with the details you've gathered from the answers. If your PC doesn't act on full information that's okay. How often do you act with full information?

Deep Questions

The advice about questions above deals with shallow questions. Deep questions change the rules.

Deep questions cut to the core of an issue and are able to change the direction of campaign. These questions speed the game up, cut through complicated issues, and clarify mysteries.

Is the vampire wanting revenge against his sire? (A deep question. It may seem a bit leading, and it is, and Dean wouldn't know the vampire's motivation. Then again by having a conversation with the vampire, a simple dialogue task, Dean can find out the answer.)

If an event seems like it could happen but you're unsure ask a leading question.

Does the vampire want to give Dean the location of the vampire's den? (This is a leading question. It makes sense in this situation because it guides the direction of the revenge of the vampire against his sire.)

Guidelines for asking questions of a Solo Engine

Questions are not unimportant: they need to drive the story forward,

Unless the question enhances the mood or colour of the adventure, campaign, or world.

Every question needs a Yes or No answer; an answer that can be described using the PC's

Senses in a concrete and objective manner.

The PC needs to know the answer or be able to find out the answer by doing a task.

Remember these are guidelines and can be broken, or ignored, if they need to be. They're there to give a framework for using questions in the best manner possible during play.

Answering Solo Engine Questions

Asking the right question is an important step in getting a good answer. Once you have the answer then you can figure out what that means in the context of the adventure.

Each Solo Engine provides some guidance as to what the results mean read the advice and add it to the advice given.

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How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

An important point to mention is that context is *everything*. You need to know what the PC is trying to do and use that information to answer the question. Another important point is time: you need to answer the question as quick as possible.

Example: Dean Salisbury (Interpreting Answers)

Dean is sneaking into a vampire den. There could be a number of reasons why he's doing this. Such as:

1. Picking off the vampires 1 by 1
2. Scouting out the vampire den for a future raid
3. Getting an important item out of the den
4. Rescuing an innocent trapped within the den

For each the question '*Does Dean come across a vampire within the den?*' will have different answers. This is apparent for the simple Yes or No but is even more important in the outlier answers.

For *Yes, and* some examples could be:

1. A vampire is arguing with a mate that they don't see Dean until it's too late.
2. A vampire is alert and guarding the entrance to the den.
3. Dean stumbles across a group of vampires who have the item. When they see Dean the vampire guarding the item runs off sounding the alarm.
4. Dean senses a vampire and when he attacks is surprised to find it's the person who he's come to rescue. When shocked further vampires come.

For *No, and* some examples could be:

1. There are no vampires because they've all been killed already.
2. Dean manages to get a good idea, and map, of the den without being spotted. He even manages to get an exact count of all the vampires inside.
3. Dean finds the item and manages to get out without being spotted.
4. The innocent managed to free themselves and was escaping when Dean arrived.

ADVANCED CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

Answering Solo Engine Questions by Listing

Most Solo Engine's advice tell you to go with the first answer that comes into your head. For speed of play this is good advice. For creative play it's bad advice. Listing is a more creative way to answer questions.

Listing answers is slower but more powerful. It forces you to come up with answers and creates more nuanced results.

When listing speed is still important. Make a quick list of between 5 to 10 answers. This should take no more than a minute or two.

Don't stop once you get a good answer carry on until you've finished your list. If you get stuck push on. If no new answers come stick with what you have.

Once you have your list pick the idea that seems:

1. the most interesting,
2. fits in with your game best, and
3. drives the game forward best.

Listing becomes even stronger when combining multiple answers. This leads to answers that are deeper, more interesting, and stronger. When combining answers speed is important too. Don't spend lots of time crafting the perfect answer.

Over time you'll get quicker and get more varied and interesting ideas.

Example: Dean Salisbury (Listing Answers)

In this example another advanced topic, Idea Generators, will be used for clarity.

Dean infiltrated the vampire's den, rescued the prisoner, and is in the process of escaping when something bad happens. 2 random words: Hamstrung Rhinoceros

It would be easy to say that Dean (big tough guy = rhinoceros) suffers from a leg injury (hamstrung). Interesting but there could be more interesting things that can occur.

In this situation, as there's more than a single word or outcome (for outlier answers: the *yes* and the *and*), you have 2 ways to do the Listing:

1. Together
2. Apart

Together is when you take the complete entity to come up with random outcomes.

Hamstrung Rhinoceros:

1. Dean suffers a leg injury

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2. While running out someone slips and hurts their leg
3. They run right into a trap
4. A hurt vampire limps in as they're leaving
5. Dean's car doesn't start
6. Something stops them leaving the den
7. Come across something else they have to do
8. Dean is held back because the prisoner isn't as able as possible
9. Vampires in the den are unknowingly blocking Dean's exit
10. A wounded animal

When adding elements together don't add them following each other unless there's a flow. Dean can't suffer a leg injury, come across a wounded vampire, and then his car wouldn't start.

What can happen is Dean stops because the prisoner slips. Allowing a group of vampires to come back to the den and block Dean's escape route. In finding another way out Dean comes across another vampire who's just coming in. This vampire was hurt and took his time to come back to the den coming in just as Dean and the prisoner was escaping.

In the second example there is a flow; a cause and effect. One problem causes another which leads to another. In the first example it's just problem following problem with no logical reason why.

Apart is the parts of the random entity are separated, Listed, then combined.

Hamstrung:

1. Injury
2. Held up
3. Limp
4. Disadvantage – probably physical
5. Hampered

Rhinoceros:

1. Big, tough
2. Charge
3. Success
4. Thick skin
5. Horn

In this result 4 answers are put together to form 1 single answer: Dean is *held up* from escaping (*success*) as the prisoner wants to do something to *hamper* the vampires (*big, tough*).

Listing Solo Engine Questions

Asking the right question is often the best way to stop asking lots of irrelevant questions.

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How to Use a Solo Engine and the Power of GM and PC Turns

Write 5 to 10 questions down about the situation your character finds themselves in.

Go through your list of questions and ask the question you most want answering. It might be possible to combine some questions together. If you can do this go ahead.

Example: Dean Salisbury (Listing Questions)

Dean has escaped from the vampire den with the prisoner. Now he wants to know what will happen next.

Instead of a simple: *Do the vampires come after the prisoner?* List a few questions. You should notice the later questions move your story in new and interesting directions.

1. Do the vampires come after the prisoner?
2. Does the traitor vampire come after the prisoner?
3. Does the prisoner want to be let out as soon as possible?
4. Does the prisoner want to go somewhere special?
5. Does the prisoner want to contact someone special?
6. Does the prisoner want to be taken to the authorities?
7. Does the prisoner want to meet up with the traitor vampire?
8. Does the prisoner request help?
9. Does the traitor vampire appear and offer to take the prisoner somewhere safe?
10. Is the prisoner a relation to the vampire?

Putting a couple of the above questions together leads to this question: *Does the prisoner want to stop at a pay phone to contact the traitor vampire for help in getting free of the vampires?*

If you like your created twist enough you can go with it instead of asking if it's true.

Using Idea Generators

Idea Generators are tools designed to make your mind think in different directions. Mythic GME contains an Idea Generator within. If you don't have Mythic GME Rory's Story Cubes are another popular Idea Generator.

You can create your own Idea Generator. Create a list of what makes your setting special. Next create a list of random, yet associated, words. Each of these lists should be either 12, 20, or 100 long for ease of use of rolling upon them with dice.

In the example above, Hamstrung Rhinoceros, was created from injuries and animals.

Asking Questions

To use an Idea Generator to ask a question get your Idea, List it to find the core of the question, and then frame the question around the core.

Example: Dean Salisbury (Idea Generators and Questions)

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Dean has left the prisoner with the traitor vampire. He's worried that he's not seen the vampires come after him. So he goes back to the den to see what's happening.

Idea Generator: Cut Cat

Listing:

1. Licking wound
2. Solitary and withdrawn
3. Dangerous
4. Lashing out
5. Matted Fur

Core of the question: Want to be left alone to recover.

Question: Are the vampires withdrawing into their den to recover from their loss?

To speed things up when answering the question use the same List and pick from there. If the answer is yes then the vampires would gather round the den (*licking wound, solitary and withdrawn*) and if they see Dean they'll *lash out* to force him away. If the answer is no then they'll be stalking (*dangerous*) Dean ready to pounce when he's alone (*solitary and withdrawn*).

Answering Questions

Idea Generators help you to answer questions by guiding your thoughts down different paths. The example of answering questions using Idea Generators is above in *Listing Answers*.

PUTTING THE LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Main Tasks

1. Create a cliché character.
2. Do a brief roleplaying scene using GM and PC turns.

Do not use game interactions or dice rolling.

3. Use this simple Solo Engine.

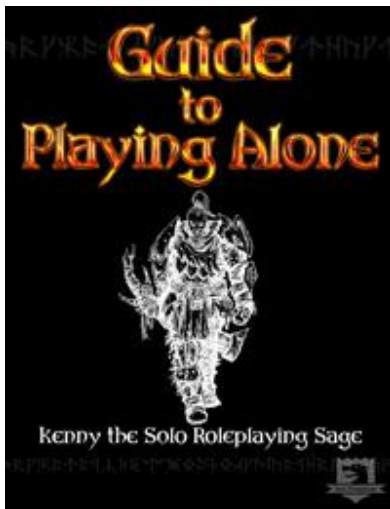
Roll on the table for each question. If something is unlikely to occur roll 2d8 and pick the lowest dice. If something is likely to occur roll 2d8 and pick the highest dice. If the odds are about even roll 1d8.

1	No and something bad occurs
2-3	No
4	No but something good occurs
5	Yes but something bad occurs
6-7	Yes
8	Yes and something good occurs

1. Ask 3 questions to move the story you started forward.
2. Ask 1 question that colours the campaign world or story.
3. Ask 1 question that reinforces the mood.
4. Ask 1 shallow question.
5. Ask 1 deep question.

Optional Tasks

1. Use the Advanced Creative Methods with the above Solo Engine and questions.
2. Research Solo Engines using <http://soloroleplayer.com/solo-rpg-resources-tools/> as a starting point to discover what Solo Engine you'll like to start using.



GUIDE TO PLAYING ALONE

There are three key elements to exploring solo roleplaying:

1. Know Roleplaying
2. Know Thy Self
3. Know Thy Toolbox

In this introduction to Solo Roleplaying you'll explore all three and get guidelines on how to start roleplaying alone.

Available on RPG Now, Drive Thru, and Gumroad

The Top 5 Essential Solo RPG Tools

THE TOP 5 ESSENTIAL SOLO RPG TOOLS

Starting solo roleplaying has just got easier...

You may've been put off from solo roleplaying because you're unsure of what you're meant to do, or what tools to use.

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