



NINE STEPS AND A BLOODY HEART

(NSAABH)

Investigation Rules for your Solo RPG

ver 1.2
August 2017

by Riccardo Fregi



Nine Steps and a Bloody Heart by Riccardo Fregi
is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>)

Cover art by Riccardo Fregi

For more information about this game please visit <https://lostpangolin.wordpress.com/>

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a set of rules that shall be used in addition to your Solo RPG when you want to play a mystery adventure of any kind. Your character proceeds in the investigation in nine climaxing steps and neither your PC nor you know the truth until the grand finale.

The same adventure is replayable because there is less than 1% chance to get the same solution. You can also base your adventure on your favorite book or movie.

How? Basically you create an enigma and different solutions before playing, shuffle some cards, then you grab your favorite Solo RPG, make your Playing Character and start your adventure. During playing you draw some cards, maybe you throw a dice, drink a beer...things like that.

Confused? Hey, this is only an introduction, you can skip it and go to the rules.

Enjoy.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

- 1) A deck of poker cards (actually you need only 16 of them)
 - 2) An envelope
 - 3) Writing tools
 - 4) A solo RPG system of your choice
 - 5) Dices or other random generators as needed
-

MAKE A MYSTERY

'A writer is someone who can make a riddle out of an answer.'
Karl Kraus

Create an enigma to be solved, formed by 3 questions to be answered by the PC.

Associate each question with one suit from Clubs, Diamonds and Spades.

Make a numbered list of 5 possible answers for each question.

Make a numbered list of 3 possible Special Events. These are red herrings, plot twists, hostile actions or subsequent crimes committed by the villain (The "Surprise List").

FORM THE CLUE DECK

Form three stacks, each with the first five cards of the same suit (ace,2,3,4,5).

Shuffle each stack (Clubs, Diamonds and Spades).

Extract from each stack one card and put it in the envelope without looking (the 3 cards are the real solution).

Gather the remaining cards into a single stack (The "Clue Deck").

Add the Ace of Hearts (The "Bloody Heart") to the deck as a wild card.

Shuffle the Clue Deck.

NINE STEPS

When you use NSAABH the adventure is always formed by 9 steps, each step is a part of your adventure in which your character is able to find enough informations to discard a clue of the mystery and advance in the investigation.

PLAY THE GAME

'Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth.'
Sherlock Holmes-The Sign of Four

Create your PC and use your solo rpg system to play the adventure.

- 1) During the scene when your PC is ready to investigate, extract a card from the Clue Deck and put it aside to form the Discard Pile.
- 2) If the card drawn is the "Bloody Heart" card, in the scene enter the first special event not yet used of the Surprise List, then draw a new card.
- 3) If there are no more unused special events in the Surprise List then put the "Bloody Heart" card aside, otherwise put the "Bloody Heart" card in the Clue Deck again and shuffle.
- 4) Roleplay the scene to exclude the clue showed in the card. The Scene doesn't end until the clue is proven false, the PC is always successful.
- 5) In one of the first three scenes your PC must roll for a special investigation test using the rules of your RPG system, if the PC succeeds then you extract an additional card from the Clue Deck. You decide during the play when your PC tries this special test.
- 6) Repeat phases (1 to 5) for the 3 central scenes
- 7) Repeat phases (1 to 5) for the 3 final scenes
- 8) At the end of the last scene your PC must provide the solution of the enigma
 - If the Clue Deck is empty it means that your PC solved the enigma by deduction: check the discarded cards, the 3 missing cards are the solution
 - If the Clue Deck is not empty your PC is forced to use his intuition or luck: choose one of the combination of 3 undiscarded answers
- 9) Look at the clue cards in the envelope to get the solution.
- 10) Decide what are the consequences of the investigation

IF YOU HAVE TO STOP THE GAME

If you interrupt your game and continue later simply write down a list of the discarded clue cards (plus cards of Mr. Maybe's solution, if any), at this point you can pick up all the cards and reform the poker deck.

When you resume the game, form the Clue Deck and the solution again with the initial cards but without those that you had previously written down in the list.

ADVANCED RULES:

Special NPCs:

There are 3 types of NPC you can use to add flavor to the investigation, the names used are placeholders, the actual NPC can be every character, gender, profession, species you want :

- Mr.Wrong: An NPC usually with some authority, he investigate the mystery and he is the character who provides the first solution in the last scene but his solution is always wrong.
- Mr.Maybe: It is the NPC who provides the second solution in the last scene, his solution has been randomly chosen before the adventure begins. There is less than 1% chance he is right but if he does he takes all the merits even if your PC agree with him.
- Mr.Right: If your PC failed, this NPC provides the correct solution of the enigma at the very end of the story

Bloody Heart Bonus Test:

If your PC failed a Special Investigation Test, he can roll it again when an event of the Surprise List happens.

Evidence/Alibi Generator:

When you discard a clue card you have to improvise why that clue is not good or your PC has to demonstrate his hypothesis, you can use your imagination or use the oracle (random generator) of your Solo RPG. For a more specific generator you can roll 1d6 and check this table:

Evidence/Alibi Generator (1d6)

- 1 Witness
- 2 Trace
- 3 Different Time
- 4 Different Place
- 5 Document/Information
- 6 Special (i.e. Incapability)

Multiplayer NSAABH :

This gaming tool can be used in a multiplayer RPG adventure, instead of one PC there is a party. The GM uses NSAABH and follows the procedure during the game, revealing and describing to the players every discarded clue during the investigation. In a GM-less game the players draw the clue cards together or one for each step.

Reversed NSAABH :

You can also play the role of the guilty or fugitive character trying to avoid being discovered or caught by a investigator NPC.

This reversed game is particularly suitable for genres such as noir or espionage but it can be used in any investigative adventure where the suspect is in close contact with the investigators because it is under cover or can be aware of the actions of the investigators.

To do this, the game procedure is changed as follows:

Create your PC and the investigator NPC. Use your solo rpg system to play the adventure.

The Special NPCs Mr.Maybe and Mr.Right are not allowed.

Before the start of the game, draw or choose the three cards that represent the enigma and watch them. This enigma is the solution you must try to keep hidden from the investigator NPC.

- 1) During the scene when the investigator NPC is ready to investigate, extract a card from the Clue Deck and put it aside to form the Discard Pile.
- 2) If the card drawn is the "Bloody Heart" card, in the scene enter the first special event not yet used of the Surprise List, then draw a new card.
- 3) If there are no more unused special events in the Surprise List then put the "Bloody Heart" card aside, otherwise put the "Bloody Heart" card in the Clue Deck again and shuffle.
- 4) Roleplay the scene to exclude the clue showed in the card. The Scene doesn't end until the clue is proven false, the investigator NPC is always successful.
- 5) In one of the first three scenes your PC must roll for a special investigation confrontation with the investigator NPC using the rules of your RPG system, if your PC fails then you extract an additional card from the Clue Deck. You decide during the play when your PC tries this special test.
- 6) Repeat phases (1 to 5) for the 3 central scenes
- 7) Repeat phases (1 to 5) for the 3 final scenes
- 8) At the end of the last scene the investigator NPC must provide the solution of the enigma
 - If the Clue Deck is empty it means that the investigator NPC solved the enigma by deduction: your PC is exposed or captured.
 - If the Clue Deck is not empty: If it was discarded during the game, put the "Bloody Heart" card in the Clue Deck again. Shuffle the deck and draw one card, if the card is the "Bloody Heart" then the investigator NPC solved the enigma by luck or deduction, otherwise your PC is safe and avoids capture.






EXAMPLE OF SCENARIO

Scenario: "London, October 22 1885. Banker Archibald Worthwhiles was murdered in the study room of his house before dinner. A desk drawer has been forced"

Enigma:

- (Clubs) Who is the murderer and Why ?
- (Diamonds) What is the murder weapon?
- (Spades) What has been stolen from the drawer?

 Clubs	 Diamonds	 Spades
1) Wife(Jealousy)	1) wrong medicine	1) last will
2) Son(Money)	2) poisoned brandy	2) letter
3) Butler(Cover Up of a theft)	3) curtain track cord	3) key
4) Lawyer(Rivalry)	4) fire pit poker	4) precious fossil
5) Maid(Revenge)	5) pick hammer	5) photo

Surprise List
1) Gardener disappeared
2) Blood in the cellar
3) House dog poisoned

Mr. Wrong: Inspector Lestrade

Mr.Right: Sherlock Holmes




NSAABH

Blank Sheet

Scenario:

Enigma:

- (Clubs)
- (Diamonds)
- (Spades)

 Clubs	 Diamonds	 Spades
1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)
4)	4)	4)
5)	5)	5)

Surprise List
1)
2)
3)

Mr Wrong:

Mr Maybe:

Mr Right: