

A Lonely Knave

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This rules supplement allows you to play Knave, created by Ben Milton, as a solo roleplaying game, being both player and your own Game Master (GM). You will need the original Knave rules to play.

How To Solo Play

Knave is ideally suited to solo play because of its class-less/profession-less structure. When you are the only hero in your story adaptability are important.

Solo role play replaces the Game Master [GM] with a few random tables. You imagine your character going through their story until one of two situations arise.

Firstly, a conflict covered by Knave's rules comes up. In this case, you use the standard Knave rules to resolve the conflict or challenge.

The second case is when you would have asked the GM a question to clarify your situation. Peering around a corner, you want to know if there are any guards, you may want to know if there is a horse you can steal or how surly the Sheriff's men look. For these questions, use the rules in this pamphlet. In this case, a single d20 roll could give you something like a yes-no answer. If your question is more like 'what does the diary say?' or 'what is in the chest?' there is another tool that you can use. The first is called a closed question, and the second an open question.

One option for solo playing Knave is to make all the dice rolls player facing. Foes do not save against your magic, but you roll to affect them. They do not roll to hit you, but you roll to defend against them. If you haven't used this option before, I suggest you consider using it as a

way to help simplify combat for solo play. This will be important in solo playing Knave and should become your default method for solo conflict resolution.

Closed Questions

Closed questions use game mechanics you are probably familiar with.

1	No, and...
2-5	No
6-9	No but...
10-11	Shakeup
12-14	Yes but...
15-19	Yes
20	Yes, and...

In many ways, the 1 and 20 results are the critical fails/successes from Knave. No, and... means not only is the question you asked a no, but it is the most extreme form of no. This does not have to be a bad thing. If you asked if there were any guards in the street, no and... could mean that a shout of alarm has come from the market and all the guards run off to answer the call, thus saving you a lot of bother.

Yes, and... is the natural opposite. The most extreme form of yes, Yes there are guards and they are conducting a house to house search... sort of thing.

If and... is the most extreme form of answer, the but... modifier tones down the yes-no to make it more subtle. Yes there are guards, but they are talking amongst themselves, yes there is a horse you could steal, but it looks more like a cart-horse than a warhorse.

Shake Up

Shakeups are really important for solo games.

A shakeup is a plot twist pivots on the question you just asked. They are an opportunity to introduce a new NPC or bring back an old one, to increase the stakes in the story or force a change of plan. At the very least, a shakeup should make the question you asked out of date. Are there any guards? You look round the corner, and your ex-wife is there with two bailiffs. Is there a horse

you can steal, as you look someone throws a saddle on the horse in the next stall, looking over you lock eyes with your arch enemy...

Likely/Unlikely

Not everything is equally likely to be yes or no. Lonely Knave uses the standard Advantage and Disadvantage rules from Knave. If an answer is more likely to be yes, such as looking for guards in a castle or orcs in an orchard you roll 2d20 and take the highest result.

Unlikely questions are rolled with disadvantage, rolling 2d20 and choosing the lowest result.

Open Questions

Open questions are used when the answer cannot be answered with a simple yes-no. What's in the Box? What are they talking about? What does the diary say?

The way that you answer them is with a short little prompt. These are intentionally vague. It is the context of your adventure that fills in the important detail.

You will roll a d20, d8 and d6 and consult the next three tables, stringing the results together into a strange little sentence.

Action

1. Recruit
2. Persecute
3. Gratify
4. Truce
5. Dominate
6. Break
7. Return
8. Bestow
9. Release
10. Harm
11. Kill
12. Agree
13. Spy
14. Trick
15. Refuse
16. Trust
17. Passion
18. Failure
19. Punish
20. Change

Subject

1. Emotions
2. Tension
3. The Law
4. Success
5. Misfortune
6. Dangers
7. Magic
8. The People

How

1. Boldly
2. Badly
3. Happily
4. Safely
5. Jealously
6. Selfishly

Your Answer

Roll your three dice and gather your words. For example, I rolled...19, 4, 2, giving Punish Success Badly. Now I will apply that to the three example questions.

What's in the Box? It is a folded wanted poster. The person on the poster is one of those people who has outlived their usefulness.

What are they talking about? How a colleague was punished for being better than their boss.

What does the diary say? The person is pouring out how they feel they can never be good enough, and always being made to feel like a failure.

What these little phrases mean are intentionally open to interpretation. There are 20x8x6 (960) potential combinations, but each one can have countless possible meanings even if the same answer came up twice in the same game session. A child being punished is very different to a revolutionary.

Improvisation Prompts

Answering these questions is intended to be prompt or guide your improvisation. The roll may say Yes, but.. and you will have to think what does that extra part mean? Yes, there is a horse you can steal but... what? That 'What?' is going to be different for everyone. What has your adventure been so far? What sort of game do you want to have? A game of dark fantasy would have one kind of caveat; another game of stylised fun fantasy would be completely different.

NPC Reactions

Knave has a simple one roll reaction table. (reproduced here)

2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12
<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Talkative</i>	<i>Helpful</i>

This is used when the reactions are not obvious. When you think their reaction should be obvious roll a closed Closed Question. Ask the question in the most suitable format. If you wake an innkeeper up at 4 am and ask is he pleased to see you, that is going to be a disadvantaged roll!

The point with this is that the closed question can, and will, throw up some unexpected results. People who should be friendly may be unexpectedly hostile. It is down to you to rationalise why that is.

Always try and think in terms of what could have happened to make them react that way to you now.

Plots

Plots should naturally evolve from the combination of shakeups and unexpected answers. The way that you rationalise those will often necessitate adding new elements to your story.

Keeping track of plots uses a Progress Clock. When you have identified a plot, side quest or loose end in your story, draw a circle and divide it into segments. The more complex you imagine the plot to be, the more segments you create for the clock. As you accomplish parts of the adventure, you fill in the segments and can earn the experience for those accomplishments.

For example, You arrive at a roadside tavern and ask if the host is pleased to see a knave such as you. The result is yes, and... you decide that they need the sort of help that only a knave can provide. An open question roll comes up with Punish+The Law+Happily. You decide that the local squire has been getting out of hand and the locals are scared but need help freeing themselves from this mans tyranny. You then decide that this is a simple adventure, so create a four-segment clock. The four

segments being find the squire, show him the error of his ways, free any villagers arrested on trumped up charges and finally convince the knight owning this region that his chosen squire was a dishonourable bully and needs replacing.

As you progress through the stages you can award yourself experience depending on how arduous each stage turned out to be.

Journaling

I recommend that you keep a journal. It can be as brief as just bullet points, but record the questions you asked and the answers you got. When you create a plot draw the circle and jot down the steps. Before each solo session glance down your journal to bring yourself up to speed with your adventures so far.

What If...

You can do fun things with solo play. If you character dies, you can go back up your journal and find what you think was a defining moment and then play on from that point again taking a different 'alternative universe' path.

Get Set, Go!

Don't start your adventure sat in a tavern, start it like a movie, high intensity, high drama. Maybe you are being chased out of town? You on the roof of a burning tower? About to go over a waterfall in a canoe? Start big and the adventures are more likely to flow.

Three Strikes

Don't ask too many questions. No more than three consecutive questions and try to take less than 20 seconds to deliberate on the meaning. Cannot decide on a meaning? Just go with what you wish you had rolled!

