

Tricksters



A Roleplaying Game by Kurt Potts

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Credits

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Special Thanks

Kate

For all the hours spent
talking about games.

*What sordid tales
these mortals tell
of our bizarre
interventions.*



Tricksters

Become a trickster charged with protecting a small village. Teach the villagers lessons and chase after your worldly desires. See what sordid tales these mortals tell of your bizarre interventions.

Getting Started

Tools

You'll need some things to play this game. Most importantly, 2-5 humans. Then grab some scraps of paper or notecards, a few dice and something to write with. If you're feeling fancy you can print out the character sheets.

What's my role?

Most of you will take up the role of a single character, but one player designated as the facilitator will portray all the other characters. They are usually the person reading this, but if you're not sure, choose that player now.

Creating The Village

Next, let's create the village. The facilitator should ask these questions and any other questions they need to get a full picture of the village.

- ***What time period is it?***
- ***What does the village look like?***
- ***Where is the village located?***
- ***Who lives there?***
- ***What is the village's defining feature?***
- ***What threatens the village?***

As you answer questions about the village write down geographical elements on note cards and put them on the table.

Tricksters

Create Characters

To create characters answer the questions on the character sheet (See also next page). You're all tricksters, but you aren't all the same. What makes you different? You all protect the village but why is up to you. Why do you protect the village? Work with the group so you don't end up with the same tricks or desires unless everyone thinks it's a good idea.

When you create villagers and enemies add them to the notecards on the table. If a good place doesn't exist yet talk about what place best represents them. Write that place on a notecard and then add the character to it.

Once you've answered all the questions on the character sheet go grab a physical thing to represent your trickster (or an image if you're playing online). It can be a paperclip, a block of wood, or a miniature figurine. Just make sure you can tell it apart from all the others. One of the players that aren't the facilitator, grab your hunk of character, put it on one of the notecards and answer one of the following questions:

- ***What rule did I break here and who just caught me?***
- ***What is here that I desire and who's preventing me from getting it?***
- ***Why did my Favorite Villager just get in trouble here? What can I do to help?***

Tricksters are a common archetype in myth and legend. They include figures like Loki, the Norse god of mischief, Reynard the anthropomorphic fox, Anansi the spider of West Africa, Kitsune (fox) of Japanese lore, and Coyote, a god to many indigenous peoples of North America.

Your trickster can be any manner of being including fairies, animals, anthropomorphic animals, or minor deities. Whatever you chose, take care when portraying figures important to a particular culture. Do so in a way that is both respectful to said culture and the other people at the table. If all else fails, be something unique.

Tricksters

Character Questions

Name

Give your character a name. They probably need a human name too, but that's up to you.

Pronouns

What Pronouns does your character use? They can be different.

True form

What is your true form? Are you an animal, a fairy, a spirit? Are you scary, cute, perfectly ordinary?

Human Form

All tricksters have a human form. When you change what do you look like? What is your gender presentation? How old are you?

Favorite Villager

Make a villager. Who are they? What do they do? Why do you favor them? How do they feel about you?

Enemy

Who is your enemy? They can be a villager, a supernatural creature or maybe another trickster. Don't choose another player.

Tricks (create two)

Your tricks are the things you are the best at. Is shapeshifting one of your tricks? All Tricksters can change their form to an extent but are you the best? Is Lying one of your tricks? Are you the best liar around?

Desires (create two)

Desires are things you desperately want even when you probably shouldn't. Do you desire cherry pie, gold, companionship? It's hard to resist them and you unlock **Cheat Fate** when you get them.

Tricksters



*“Lord, what
fools these
mortals be!”*

Puck, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Playing the game

Congratulation you’re already playing the game! By placing a character in an interesting situation you’ve already begun. Next, let’s look at setting and dressing scenes so we can keep things interesting and build a better picture of this world.

Setting Scenes

Scenes in Trickster don’t need to be exhaustive or chronological. To start a scene pick a character or characters and put them in an interesting position. Be clear about what is at risk and ask what the characters are doing about it. Follow the action until the tension breaks or you find a good cliffhanger.

Dressing Scenes

Usually, the facilitator will do the heavy lifting when dressing scenes, but anyone can add details. Start by describing the most interesting thing in the scene, then throw it to the other players to add more details. Let them take turns each adding a detail. Remember the senses. How does this place Look, Sound, Smell, Feel or Taste?

Having a Conversation

Scenes in Trickster work like a conversation. Each participant adding details, speaking in character, describing their actions and wants until the outcome is uncertain. Anytime you’re not sure what happens next, roll the dice.

Tricksters

Rolling Dice

When a course of action is uncertain the player taking that action will roll a pool of six-sided dice (d6) and compare the highest die to the tables below.

Build your pool

Start with **1** die for free

+1 If you have help. (More than one person can help but only ever gain 1 help die.)

+1 if you are using a Trick

+1 if you are helping your Favorite Villager

-1 if your Enemy is involved or you're trying to resist a Desire. (If both, only lose 1 die.) If you would roll 0 dice roll 2 and take the lowest.

Next, determine if you are **Teaching a Lesson**, **Fulfilling a Desire** or **Testing Fate** and use the results tables that follow.

Teaching a Lesson

A tricksters primary goal is to protect their people by teaching them lessons. When you try to teach a lesson, say what the lesson is and what could go wrong if it's misunderstood? Check Running the game for more on lessons.

6: The lesson rings true. They'll not soon forget it.

4-5: The lesson is muddled. You're able to sway their actions, but there is some unintended consequence. Perhaps they gain a superstition or strange custom that does nothing.

2-3: The lesson is misunderstood. Whatever could have gone wrong does.

1: The whole thing blows up in your face and the villagers are left much worse off than before you meddled in their affairs. Perhaps they write a song about how you can't be trusted.

Tricksters

Fulfilling a Desire

When you attempt to fulfill a desire, say what you want and what you are willing to risk to get it? If you get what you desire, unlock that desire.

6: You get what you desire. You may lose what you were willing to risk. If you do, the desire will hold no sway over you (Do not lose a die) for the remainder of the session.

4-5: Choose: Get what you desire but the risk is realized **or** walk away empty handed.

2-3: You can't get your desire this time and you've lost whatever was at risk.

1: Your desire proves unattainable. You lose what was at risk and something or someone stands between you and your desire. You'll need to deal with that before you can try again.

Testing Fate

Sometimes an action will be uncertain but doesn't teach a lesson or fulfill a desire. When you Test Fate, roll a single die.

Even: You do it.

Odd: You fail.

Cheat Fate

After rolling dice, if you have an unlocked Desire slot you may take one of the dice rolled and place it in the Desire slot. If there was a die in that slot you instead swap the dice.



Tricksters

Facilitating the game

Creating Dilemmas

When creating dilemmas look first to the tricksters' favorite villagers. What struggle are they having that the tricksters will need to help them overcome? Greed, Hubris, Jealousy, Unjust laws, Outside oppression, Carelessness. How are the tricksters' enemies involved? How do the tricksters' desires put them in conflict with their goal of teaching the villagers to overcome these dilemmas?

Dilemmas and Lessons in play

Dilemmas will look different depending on the characters, but let's look at an example dilemma that threatens the whole village.

An outsider has come to the village selling instruments and stirring up trouble with a capital T. He's pointing fingers at their favorite pastime and convincing them that it's dangerous to their children in the hopes that he can offer them a new pastime...for a price. Without the tricksters' intervention, they may sink their savings into trombones they don't need and can't play.

How could the tricksters prevent the villagers from falling for this fast-talking music man? Let's look at some lessons.

They may want to show them the lack of value of a trombone by offering something they want, but can't afford, after they've purchased their trombone. The lesson could be Brass Bands don't Buy Butter or Never Buy a Backup Trombone.

They may also decide to try and swindle the music man to give him a sense of what he's done. The lessons might be Thieves Sing Sour Songs or Selling Lies is Never Wise.

Tricksters

Transitions

If you are familiar with more traditional games which track linear time the transitions between scenes may feel odd. Use phrases like *Meanwhile* or *Back at the Ranch* or describe the camera flying out the window then describe the whole village before zooming back in on the next scene.

Don't be afraid to have meta discussions between scenes about what the players want for their character, ask if anyone has a scene in mind. Just make sure that the next scene picks up with the action.

Break Glass in case of Lull

Despite your best efforts some scenes may fall flat or fizzle out. Try these steps to punch up the excitement.

Introduce a complication.

Are they trying to help? Bring in a character's desire or enemy. Are they up to no good? Bring in their favorite villager or an authority figure.

Ask what they want

Ask the player what their character want's. Would that trigger a roll? If so, roll and see what happens. If it doesn't trigger a roll give them what they want and transition to another scene.

Move along

If a complication doesn't make sense and the players don't know what they want. Jump to a transition. You can always come back to that scene when it's more clear what the players want and what is at risk.

Ending the game

Morals and Expressions

At the end of the session, look back at the lessons the tricksters tried to teach and the desires they risked everything to attain. What was the moral of your story and what expression will the people use to remember it?

Now is a great time to call out your favorite moments and check in on any players who processed heavy emotions or themes during the game.

Tricksters

Name

Pronouns

True Name _____

Human Name _____

True Form

Favorite Villager

Human Form

Enemy

Tricks

Desires



