

CONJECTURE GAMES PRESENTS:

TOSS

tales of significant situations

a miniature solo roleplaying framework by Zach Best

What is TOSS?

TOSS is a miniature framework for quick stories based on momentary events for a character in a roleplaying game (RPG). TOSS can work with any conventional tabletop RPG, but it shines in RPG's that use skill checks for various actions.

TOSS was designed for use in places where conventional roleplaying is generally not feasible – at the bus stop, at a lunch break, or while watching commercials. It's a way to create impromptu short stories on the fly. It can be used in a conventional tabletop setting, but is aimed for a solo player looking to add further stories to a favorite RPG or setting when there isn't time for a whole session.

Elements of TOSS

Character. The actor of the story is normally a player character (PC), but it can be any character or a group of characters. The most important aspect is that the character(s) must be able to act in the situation.

Situation. The situation is a moment in the life of the character that is worth exploring. Usually the situation is suited for something lasting only a few scenes in a roleplaying game. However, a protracted situation is feasible.

Good situations for TOSS are ones that are rarely explored in a group setting, such as, gaining supplies, healing wounds, creating a weapon, advancing abilities, or meeting a contact. The situation can also be randomly rolled using a situation creator.

Suggested situation creators are: Conjecture Game's BOLD, Rory's Story Cubes, and Zero Dice, as well as any setting situations found in your favorite roleplaying game books. Examples of these can be found at conjecturegames.com

Actions. The actions in TOSS are the conceivable actions that the character could take in the situation. They may be proactive or reactive, and it is best when they can be mechanically driven by the RPG system. Each of the chosen actions does not necessarily occur, but each action could occur in the narrative of the situation.

Obstacle. The trouble that results from at least one of the actions is the fulcrum to TOSS. This obstacle is caused by a narratively “dramatic failure” of one of the actions. Of all the actions that were described and could occur, one fails and does occur. This failure leads to the prime substance of the narrative.

A “dramatic failure” is not just failing an action, it is a repercussion by the universe for not succeeding. If a lock isn't picked, the police arrive. If a car thief isn't caught, a gang war erupts. If a spell isn't cast properly, a butterfly effect of magical consequence reverses back on the spellcaster. It is as if karma turns around and punishes the character for even trying the action. Of course, this isn't punishment; this is story!

Overcome. Once the situation, possible actions, and the obstacle are put in place it is time to overcome the obstacle. This is your chance to be creative and let the character shine while answering the question of “how is the obstacle resolved?” This should lead to some conclusion, even if there are cliffhangers and unanswered questions. This final portion is the essence of TOSS, and it is the part where your imagination goes wild coming up with more actions, obstacles, and characters to tell the tale of how the character overcame the obstacle. There are no mechanical restrictions for the overcome portion of TOSS.

Creating Tales of Significant Situations

Step 1: Choose a character.

Step 2: Place the character in a situation where a conflict could arise. Write 3-5 notes about the situation to provide some context for the following actions.

Step 3: Write down three actions the character could take in the situation.

Step 4: Roll the actions to determine their success. Assume an increased difficulty if possible. If all three actions succeed, randomly determine one that fails or use the roll that succeeded the least.

Step 5: Determine from the failed action(s) what significant obstacle occurs to get in the character's way (i.e., a dramatic failure).

Step 6: Creatively narrate how the character overcomes the obstacle.

Significant Situations Example

Step 1. I choose a *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* character named Haytham "Endless Ink" Anas. Haytham is a Silent Strider Ragabash werewolf (Egyptian-wandering "stealth" class), and he is loosely based on Liam Neeson's Ottway in the movie *The Grey*... if Ottway hunted vampires... in Cairo.

Step 2. Haytham is traversing through vampire-controlled territory in Cairo. Speed is of the essence, unfortunately, so Haytham can't really take his time. Given the war between the werewolf and vampires in Cairo, the streets are fairly well watched. Haytham's inky wolf form has become very well-known with the vampires.

Step 3. He would use stealth to get by some of the vampires watching the streets. Haytham would use the Gift Open Seal to get by a locked gate. He would use the Gift Sense Wyrms to mark any "Wyrms-tainted" vampires.

Step 4. I roll a stealth roll at difficulty 8 (vampire territory) to get 2 successes. For Open Seal, I get 3 successes. For Sense Wyrms, I roll at difficulty 8 for using this Gift while running through the streets to get 1 success. The Sense Wyrms roll gains the dramatic failure since it had the least successes. (I could have decided to roll a dice to randomly determine which successful skill check failed as well.)

Step 5. The dramatic failure to Sense Wyrms means Haytham runs right into an elder vampire.

Step 6. The two are so surprised at each other's close proximity that they both act entirely on instinct. Haytham acts first as his favored prey is vampire, whereas vampires can become pretty worried around werewolves. Haytham slashes the vampire's cheek with his klaive. Normally, the elder would laugh off this attack, but in this case Haytham's klaive (a D'Siah) deals aggravated damage to the vampire. The vampire realizes the insult (or danger), and rears up to full power. Haytham recognizes he is in over his head and flees. Using all of his Gifts, Haytham barely makes it out of vampire territory. The elder stops at some boundary between vampire territory and beyond not wishing to risk itself to chase Haytham.

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