

# LONER

ANOTHER SOLO RPG

**Loner** is a freeform Solo RPG designed to play with a solitary character in "narrative" mode. You'll guide your character through the story that will unravel during the game, asking closed questions to an oracle who will assume the role of Game Master. Every now and then the game will surprise you when an unexpected plot twist happens!

## **What is a Role Playing Game (RPG)?**

A role-playing game (RPG) is a type of game in which players assume the roles of fictional characters and act out their actions and decisions within a narrative or imaginary setting. The outcome of these actions and decisions is often determined by a set of rules and game mechanics, such as dice rolls or statistical attributes of the characters. Players may also collaborate to create a shared story or narrative through their characters' actions and interactions.

## **What is a Solo RPG?**

In a solo RPG a single player takes on the roles of one or more characters, while also simultaneously managing some elements of the game world. These games typically involve the use of a rule system and game mechanics to determine the outcome of actions taken by the player-controlled characters. Unlike a gamebook (such as the Fighting Fantasy, Lone Wolf, and Tunnels & Trolls series) a solo RPG is not a form of interactive, forked narrative in which outcomes are pre-determined and limited by the author's choices.

Through the interaction of player, oracle, tools, and prompts, the character's actions will build an emergent narrative within whose boundaries anything can be attempted, without predetermined limits.

## **Safety Tools**

You will play alone, but be sure to play in an environment that is comfortable for you, without overexerting yourself, and reserve the option to stop as soon as you feel uncomfortable for any reason, physical or emotional. Don't be afraid to tackle new themes, but do so in full awareness of your boundaries.

## Minimum Requirements

To play *Loner* you will need:

- **4 six sided dice** (also known as d6s): two pairs of different colors
- **Paper and writing tools:** at least a sheet of scrap paper and a pencil, but index cards or sticky notes are a fine addition
- **Character sheet:** you may use the provided sheet at the back or a simple index card.
- **Notebook:** *Loner* is not a solo journaling game, you can easily play it in the "theater of mind". But you can keep track of your game if you feel the need!

## Choose a genre or setting

A *Loner* adventure takes place in a well-defined imagery that you will have to choose from: your favorite TV series, a book saga you are reading, an RPG setting you like, a genre you are familiar with or instead want to start exploring.

You can also consult lists of tropes (google them) to generate randomly and then choose!

Or you can use the Adventure Packs found in the second part of the volume.

You can also generate the character first, based on randomly chosen tropes, and once it is defined, you can follow the genre that emerged at this stage.

## Make Your Protagonist

Once the setting is established, now is the time to create your Protagonist.

Your Protagonist is described by some fixed traits:

- **Name:** the name should be iconic and consistent with the tone and setting of the story
- **Concept:** A concise description of the character's profession, background, and abilities. The best are adjective-name pairings, like "*Venturous Smuggler*" or "*Child Prodigy*".

- **Skills** (x2): abilities not necessarily character-specific but not characteristics common to all. "*Smart*" is not a skill, "*Engine Whisperer*" is.
- **Frailty**: something that could potentially get in the way of the character, either physically, mentally, or socially.
- **Gear** (x2): particular equipment supplied to the character in coherence with the setting. Everyday items are taken for granted and do not fall under this trait.
- **Goal**: the long-term objective.
- **Motive**: what drives the pursuit of the goal.
- **Nemesis**: a person or organization that hinders the protagonist. It can emerge during the first game sessions, it may or may not be the direct antagonist of the story, ready to appear to make life even more difficult
- **Luck**: 6

## Example

**Zahra Nakajima** Witty Street Cat. Streetwise, Nimble, Merciful.

Knife, Low O2 Supplement.

She wants to obtain unknown technology to save her planet from atmosphere collapse.

**Nemesis**: The Naturalist Order

**Luck**: 6

## NOTE

Traits are used to give depth and frame to the character. They are a qualitative representation of character traits. **They are not quantitative measures.**

## Everything is a Character!

In *Loner* Non-Playing Characters (NPCs), Foes, Organizations, Monsters, and even relevant objects like vehicles are characters too!

A **Living Character** follows the same rules of generation as the Protagonist. **Non-Living Characters**, instead, do not have a goal, a motive, nor a nemesis.

## Example

The Century Skylark Spacecraft in bad shape. Hyperjump Drive, Camouflage Circuits, Midlife Courier. Shields, Turrets. Luck: 6.

## Before the Adventure

You can start directly to play your adventure, but it may be worthwhile to make an extra effort.

By defining your Protagonist's Nemesis you have already identified an **NPC**! Write down their sheet and keep it aside.

Think about whether your Protagonist has allies or friends and throw down their sheets as well.

Jot down these NPCs in a list, which you will consult when they need to be recalled as a result of a [Twist](#).

Also, it might be useful to jot down interesting **Locations** that serve as settings for your Protagonist and keep a list of major **Events** that happen during the game.

## Start Your Game

To begin an adventure in Loner you will need to determine the initial scene:

1. You might think of a dramatic situation and start the game in the middle of an action scene. This will push events forward, allowing you to build the story as you go.
2. Otherwise, if you prefer to define a framework for the adventure you can answer the classic questions, Who? What, Why? Where? How? Add also an Obstacle to overcome.

If you find it difficult to answer any or all of the questions, the following table provides prompts on which to build your adventure.

D6	Who? The pro- poser	What? The mission	Why? The in- centive	Where? The tar- get	How? The seed	Obsta- cle? The compli- cation
1	Authority	Rescue	Help	Person	Casual en- counter	Opposi- tion
2	Organiza- tion	Protec- tion	Fortune	Group	Old ac- quaintance	Decep- tion
3	Ally (friend, relative)	Exploit	Coer- cion	Treas- ure	Rumors	Environ- ment
4	Mentor	Explore	Im- pulse	Loca- tion	Capture	Disguise
5	Help- seeker	Escape	Ambi- tion	McGuf- fin	Mishap	Time
6	Black- mailer	Pursuit	Re- venge	Confes- sion	Object (map, jour- nal, letter)	Space

## Example

**Who?** Mentor

**What?** Exploit

**Why?** Help

**Where?** McGuffin

**How?** Rumors

**Obstacle?** Time

Tobias Wethern took Zahra under his wing when her parents died. That's why she can't say no to him now. Tobias wants Zahra to steal a datapad from the Leton Corporation's subsidiary. He doesn't know precisely where it is stored, but that in 24 hours it will be taken from the company's security corps to be transferred to another location.

## Keep The Action In Motion

A game in *Loner* is a succession of scenes. A scene is a unit of time in which a certain action takes place in pursuit of a certain short-term goal.

In *Loner* at each scene:

1. **Identify what you expect from the scene.** Compared to traits, goal, and motivation determine the Protagonist's action. What might be the reaction of the game world?
2. **Test your expectations.** When you are uncertain (or overconfident) about the reaction to your actions, [ask the Oracle](#) a closed question (answer is Yes or No), considering the factors involved to determine if there is an [Advantage or Disadvantage](#).
3. **Interpret the result.** Is the Oracle's answer in line with your expectations? If not, in the context in which the scene takes place, how should an answer that subverts them be considered?

This sequence will come to you naturally after some practice. Use it as a guideline the first few times.

## Identify expectations

The Protagonist's traits characterize their behavior within the fictional world and suggest the possible actions they takes in the situational context of the scene.

Based on this, you can expect the world to react in the most logical way, and you will formulate a question that tests this expectation.

An expectation does not necessarily automatically lead to a question, which you need to ask only when there are concrete risks or you want to be amazed. In other cases, simply let events happen.

### Example

Zahra sneaks into the Leton Corporation subsidiary. The expectation is that the place will be well guarded during the day and less so at night. To escape an inevitable head-on collision, Zahra decides to act at night and enter

through the ventilation ducts. You don't expect there to be an alarm but maybe it's worth asking the question!

## Consulting the Oracle

When you need to test your expectations you'll ask the Oracle a closed question.

You'll need 2d6 in one color (**Chance Dice**), and 2d6 in another (**Risk Dice**).

To resolve a closed question, roll one **Chance Die** and one **Risk Die**:

- If the Chance Die is highest, the answer is **Yes**.
- If the Risk Die is highest, the answer is **No**.
- If both are low (3 or less), add a **but...**
- If both are high (4 or more), add an **and...**
- If both are equal, add a point to the **Twist Counter** (see below).

Dice Value	Chance Die > Risk Die	Risk Die > Chance Die
Both < 4	Yes, but...	No, but...
Both > 3	Yes, and...	No, and...
Mismatched	Yes	No
Equal	Add 1 to the Twist Counter	

### Example

You ask, "Does Zahra manage to force the hatch?" You roll one Chance Die and one Risk Die and get (5) [4]). The answer is **Yes**, because the Chance Die is higher. You also add **And**, because both rolls are 4 or higher. If the Risk Die had come up as [3], it would have been a plain **Yes** instead.



## Advantage and Disadvantage

If circumstances or positive traits grant an advantage, add a **Chance Die** to the roll. Otherwise, when hindrances or negative traits cause a disadvantage, add a **Risk Die**. In both cases keep only the higher die of the added type when you check the roll.

Consider traits **intuitively and not quantitatively**, using the context of the situation at play. It is important to keep the flow of play fast and not accounting for advantages and disadvantages numerically!

### Example

You ask, "Does Zahra hack the datapad?" You roll one Chance Die and two Risk Die, as Zahra does not have any advantage in hacking and the datapad is the mission goal, compromising it would cause the mission to fail. You get (5) [3] [4]. You discard the lower Risk Die [3] and keep (5) and [4]. You obtain a **Yes** and add a **And** since they are both 4 or higher.

## Interpreting the Oracle

Always interpret the Oracle's answer in relation to the context of the game situation:

- Answers without modifiers are straightforward answers without uncertainty. They are also the least interesting to continue the story.
- Answers with modifiers (but.../and...), on the other hand, require you to make the effort to identify what new situation triggered the consultation.

## Example

The datapad is hacked *and...* the information contained is not just about illicit activities of the Leton Corporation... There is more!

## Sibylline Responses

The Oracle might sometimes give answers that don't make sense in the context of the scene. Don't be tempted to detail the answer with too many questions in sequence. Three questions should be sufficient. If you're still stuck, try using an open-ended question to unlock yourself or interpret the answer as "Yes, But..." and move the story forward.

## Doubles and the Twist Counter

The Twist Counter is a measure of the rising tension in the narrative. At the beginning is set to 0. Every time a double throw (dice are equal) happens, add 1 to the Counter. If the Counter is below three, consider the answer as "**Yes, but...**". Otherwise a **Twist** happens and resets the Counter.

## Example

You ask if the datapad contains sensitive data about Weth-ern's illicit activities. You roll (4) [4]. The answer is "Yes, but...". Zahra finds a note about a scapegoat to frame for the theft. Could it be her? You also add 1 to the Twist Counter. But the counter was already at 2, so also a twist happens! The counter resets to 0.

## NOTE

The Twist Counter does not apply to Conflicts resolved by Harm & Luck rules. Instead, it is used regularly if the Conflict is handled with closed questions.

## Determine the Twist

Roll 2d6 and consult the following Twist Table to determine what kind of twist happens.

D6	Subject	Action
1	A third party	Appears
2	The hero	Alters the location
3	An encounter	Helps the hero
4	A physical event	Hinders the hero
5	An emotional event	Changes the goal
6	An object	Ends the scene

Interpret the two-word sentence in the context of the current scene. Twists will keep the plot and events going in unexpected ways.

### Example

Now Zahra knows the content of the datapad, but you roll 1 and 5 on the Twist Table "*A third party*", "*Changes the goal*". An agent of the Leton Corporation appears before Zahra with a proposal....

## Conflicts

Conflicts can be resolved in different ways depending on preferences and context:

1. Ask a single closed question. The Oracle's answer determines the outcome of the conflict.
2. Ask a series of closed questions to resolve current single actions.
3. Use the rules of Harm & Luck below.

## Harm & Luck

The conflict is resolved in turns alternating between the player and NPCs. When you fail your defense, reduce your current Luck according to the table below. NPCs also have a Luck trait. If you attack in any form, reduce the targets Luck according to the table below.

When your Luck runs out you face mortal danger and the next attack will take you out of the conflict.

The final outcome depends on the context. Do you get caught? Are you seriously injured? You may even die if that fits the narrative.

Answer	Do you get what you want?	Harm
Yes, and...	You get what you want, and something else.	Cause 3
Yes...	You get what you want.	Cause 2
Yes, but...	You get what you want, but at a cost.	Cause 1
No, but...	You don't get what you want, but it's not a total loss.	Take 1
No...	You don't get what you were after.	Take 2
No, and...	You don't get what you want, and things get worse.	Take 3

## Example

Zahra confronts a thug in an alley. He is "Martial Artist", "Hand-to-Hand Combat", "Feline" and "Short". Zahra tries to hit him with the knife, you throw (5) (6) [4] ("**Yes, And...**", causing a Luck loss of 3 to the thug). The thug throws a roundhouse kick at Zahra (roll (3) (2) [2], "**Yes, but...**", causing a Luck loss of 1 to Zahra). Who will win?

## Determine the mood of the next scene

At the end of the current scene sometimes you will be clear about the direction to take, other times you may need to determine the general mood of the next one. In this case roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

D6	Next Scene
1-3	Dramatic scene
4-5	Quiet Scene
6	Meanwhile...

- A **dramatic scene** does not break the tension of the previous scene but carries it further forward, introducing further obstacles or difficulties.
- During a **quiet scene** there is time to take a breath, to heal, to make plans for the next steps and to deepen relationships.
- A **meanwhile scene** takes place somewhere else, other than where the hero is. It cuts to villains or other plot-important characters.

## Example

Zahra accepts the proposal, you now roll for the next scene: 6, *Meanwhile scene*. In the following scene, Tobias Wethern hires a hit man to kill Zahra...

## Open-Ended Question or Get Inspired

To answer an Open-Ended question, roll 1d6 once on each of the following tables (roll at least a verb and a noun, adjectives are optional).

Verbs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	inject	pass	own	divide	bury	borrow
2	continue	learn	ask	multiply	receive	imagine
3	develop	behave	replace	damage	collect	turn
4	share	hand	play	explain	improve	cough
5	face	expand	found	gather	prefer	belong
6	trip	want	miss	dry	employ	destroy

Adjectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	frequent	faulty	obscene	scarce	rigid	long-term
2	ethereal	sophisticated	rightful	knowledgeable	astounding	ordinary
3	descriptive	insidious	poor	proud	reflective	amusing
4	silky	worthless	fixed	loose	willing	cold
5	quiet	stormy	spooky	delirious	innate	late
6	magnificent	arrogant	unhealthy	enormous	truculent	charming

Nouns	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	cause	stage	change	verse	thrill	spot
2	front	event	home	bag	measure	birth
3	prose	motion	trade	memory	chance	drop
4	instrument	friend	talk	liquid	fact	price
5	word	morning	edge	room	system	camp
6	key	income	use	humor	statement	argument

## Example

You ask: "Does Zahra have friends to ask for help against the hit man?". You roll 24 and 32: *multiply motion*. Zahra needs to move quickly to reach Melina Reade, a hacker with contacts in the underworld who might be able to help her!

## When the story ends

At the end of the adventure you may add another trait to the character. It is better that this is related to how the story just ended and can be either a Skill, Gear, a new Frailty, or even a new Nemesis! You can also modify an existing trait to better represent an enhanced expertise.

Also note the list of contacts, enemies and any events, people or objects that may show up again in future adventures.

### Example

Zahra secures the datapad in the hands of the authorities, framing both Wethern and the Leton Corporation. Wethern is arrested, but she has gained a powerful enemy working against the Corporation. She gains "Wannabe Hacker" to her skills. Maybe Melina can mentor her!

## Credits

- [Recluse Engine](#) (CC BY 4.0) by Graven Utterance and Tiny Solitary Soldier Oracle for the main resolution and scene mechanics.
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# License

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