



Thereby Hangs a Tale

A Software Development Storytelling Game

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Directions

- Turn over a situation card.
- Deal out persona cards, one per player.
- The first player turns over an event card, and starts telling the story as their persona.
- After they tell a small part of the story, they "pass" and the storytelling continues with the next player.
- If they say something specifically to another player, that player may respond with dialog.
- When a player feels stuck, they turn over the next event card.



Tips & Twists

Alternative ways to play the game:

- Tell the story backwards: “Before that...” rather than “And then...”
- Anyone can call “halt,” rewind the story a few minutes, swap roles with someone, and restart in a different direction.
- At intervals, debrief the story. Facilitate all the players contributing what they noticed.
- Create new cards as you play.
- If something isn't working, change the rules.



Situation

A large international bank
with a stodgy reputation
rooted in the 18th century



Situation

A startup that's 2 weeks away from burning their remaining cash, and needs to make a big splash to attract new funding.



Situation

An "Internet of Things"
company that's introducing
innovative modifications to all
sorts of ordinary kitchen and
laundry appliances.



Situation

A Software-As-A-Service company that is rewriting their flagship application in a new technology. The requirements are “make it work like the old app, but fix all the bugs and be more user friendly.”



Persona

Alicia Automator is outnumbered by the programmers, and audaciously attempts to keep up with automating checks of the functionality.



Persona

Marvin Manager doesn't quite understand the process of creating software, but his heart is in the right place. He really cares about the development team, as long as things progress smoothly. When things go wrong, his behavior is a bit unpredictable.



Persona

Pauline Programmer is very thorough. She will check her design carefully before coding. She will check her code carefully before checking it into version control. She hates to be rushed or to be interrupted.



Persona

Pieter Programmer is very fast at writing code. He'll stay up all night if he needs to, and his code usually does at least 90% of the desired functionality.



Persona

Peggy Maureen the Product Manager is a veritable fount of new ideas. She's very proud of every idea she has, and is quite sure that each one is the perfect solution for whatever is the current problem.



Persona

Theresa Tester is very cautious about reporting bad news. She's been ridiculed before for alerting to situations that someone already knew about, and had quietly decided wasn't a problem.



Persona

Thomas Tester is an expert. He considers himself the final word on what is a bug and what is not.



Persona

Ulysses S. User is enthusiastic about new features, even though he generally misunderstands their intent and how they were meant to be used. Expect the unexpected from him.



Event

Production server crashed at 03:00



Event

It's 16:54 Friday, and deployment is
scheduled for 18:00 tonight.



Event

Monday morning, 09:05.

Marvin Manager announces that there is new news, and the development team is to drop everything and start a completely new project.

(Story continues with *Marvin Manager*)



Event

A programmer checks in new code.

Fifteen minutes later, another programmer checks in new code.

Two hours after that, one of the automated checks fails, the first of a long series of intermittent failures.

(Story continues with the next programmer)



Event

A tester calls *Ulysses S. User* about a reported problem that they can't reproduce.

(Story continues with the next tester)



Event

The testers have found no anomalies
in the product for over a week.



Event

Two hours pass without anyone
saying anything.



Event

A tester discovers that the application supports a first name, middle initial, and last name. The product manager is happy with this.



Event

Ulysses S. User calls *Peggy Maureen*
and asks for a new feature.

(Story continues with User or Product Manager)



Event

After a long day of work, your
computer crashes irrevocably.
All data is lost.



Event

You receive an anonymous note in the mail thanking you for your work.