

= My Life with Master =

My Life with Master is an independently published role @-@ playing game written by Paul Czege and published by Half Meme Press (it was first released at the 2003 Gen Con gaming convention) . My Life with Master is a game about role @-@ playing the servants or minions of an evil Master or Mistress .

The game is still in print (as of May 2012) , and is available in printed book format or as a PDF file download from the publisher .

= = Gameplay = =

The prototypical setting of the role @-@ playing game is in an unspecified Central European country in the early 19th century . Players in the game portray the Igor @-@ like minions of an evil Master (or Mistress) who preys on the nearby Townsfolk .

Like most role @-@ playing games , there is a Gamemaster (GM) . In this case the GM plays the part of the Master . However , the GM and players together are supposed to " design " the Master , in terms of defining his " Wants " , " Needs " , " Aspect " , and " Type " . These traits have no explicit mechanical effect , but are used to define the desires and mannerisms of the Master and how he interacts with the Townsfolk and his minions . Masters have two game statistics , " Fear " (a measure of his power over minions) and " Reason " (how much minions and Townsfolk can resist the Master 's control over them) .

In contrast , the Master 's minions , the characters portrayed by the players , are defined (in terms of game statistics) by their levels of " Weariness " and " Self @-@ loathing " , and the connections of " Love " that they have (successfully or unsuccessfully) tried to make with the Townsfolk . Self @-@ loathing is a measure of the power that a minion has to intimidate the Townsfolk , while Weariness limits their abilities to complete their tasks . Love allows minions to resist their Master and his demands on them .

Gameplay is generally resolved through a series of " scenes " . A player describes what their minion is trying to do , be it carrying out their Master 's wishes or trying to resist him , interacting with the Townsfolk , attempting an act of Love (which could result in increasing their " Love " trait , or increasing their " Self @-@ loathing " if the attempt fails) , etc . A series of dice rolls are used to determine success or failure , and then the scene is played out according to that outcome .

Unlike other role @-@ playing games that may have long campaigns , My Life with Master games are typically designed to end after a small number of playing sessions . As one reviewer stated , My Life with Master " strives to tell a story , and stories have endings . " Usually , a game culminates with the death of the Master at the hands of one (or more) of his minions . Sometimes , the Master dies because the Townsfolk are " sick of his predations " and " storm his domicile -- pitchforks in hand and torches aflame " . Some or all of the players ' characters might also meet their end in the hands of the Townsfolk , or the Master kills them as they try to resist his commands and suffer the consequences of their failure .

= = Critical reception = =

My Life with Master won the 2004 Diana Jones Award . In addition , it also won the 2003 Out of the Box Award for Best Sui Generis RPG and the 2003 Indie Roleplaying Game of the Year .

Steve Darlington , in his review , stated that " even if you never play this game , you will be smarter simply for having read it " since " it quickly becomes hard to distinguish [Czege 's] choice of attributes from a high @-@ level academic deconstruction of the character tropes in gothic horror films at a level which could easily be found on a college reading list . " He also said that it is " one of the very few horror games that may actually need disclaimers , and maybe even safe words too " for its " darker subtext " about escaping from abusive relationships .

According to Heather Barnhorst " Czege writes with wit and doesn 't fear to let his understanding of game theory shine through . Colin Theriot 's illustrations evoke exactly the right mood for the setting

and are enjoyable as stand @-@ alone art . "

Reviewer Matthew Pook warned that " Despite the simplicity of the [game] mechanics ... they are not as clearly written as they need to be ... The GM will need to make a close read of the otherwise well @-@ written text to help grasp how the outcome of a scene will alter a minion 's statistics . " He concluded his review stating " although not going to be everyone 's cup of tea , My Life With Master is the most interesting roleplaying game released this year [2003] and perhaps the most challenging . "

Game designer Greg Costikyan has praised My Life with Master for the way it " evokes emotions and feelings rare in games " , and considers it to work in part because the Gothic horror theme has " a defined narrative arc : hubris and terror , followed by a fall " .