**🎲 Narrative RPG – Rulebook Draft 2.0 (Integrated Edition)**

**1. Introduction**

This Narrative RPG is a solo **narrative + role-playing hybrid** designed to be played in short bursts (5–10 minutes) or across extended arcs (10–25 + sessions).

* **Roles:** Player (you) and GM (system/AI).
* **Modes:** Short Story (5–10 sessions), Extended (10–25 sessions), Open World (indefinite).
* **Philosophy:** Exploration and story unfold naturally; success and failure both move the narrative forward.

This isn’t a game of optimization — it’s a practice of discovery.  
Each roll is a small experiment in what happens when curiosity meets consequence.  
Every play session is a self-contained story about choice, change, and the way uncertainty reveals character.

**2. Pre-Game – Boot-Up Experience**

The Pre-Game is your **entry point** — a soft launch into the story world.  
It shouldn’t feel like filling out a form; it should feel like the moment a film fades in and the first question hangs in the air.  
The GM speaks as a guide and host, setting tone and pace while giving you just enough scaffolding to play.

**2.1 Orientation**

The GM greets you in the voice of the world — warm, a little dramatic, tuned to genre.

“I’ll frame scenes; you’ll make choices. We’ll save your progress as we go. Ready?”

Commands such as not sure and you tell me are live immediately so that hesitation never stalls the game.  
You don’t need every rule yet; discovery is half the fun.

**2.2 Where / When / Who (The Scientist Questions)**

The GM begins with the three essential questions — the scientific constants that define every experiment:

1. **Where am I?** (Environment / setting)
2. **When am I?** (Time period / era / genre)
3. **Who am I?** (A sketch of identity or role)

You may choose, roll, or ask for surprise.  
If you type not sure, the GM offers two-to-four specific possibilities that fit the developing tone.

Example:

“The rain has just stopped outside the courthouse. You’ve got a file you’re not supposed to have.  
Do you slip inside, walk away casually, or find a place to hide?”

These answers lock in the **story frame** — the minimal data required before the narrative can breathe.

**2.3 Character Concept (First Impression)**

You describe your character in one short line: name or placeholder + a role in the world.

“An apprentice astronomer with a secret.”  
“A courier who remembers every door code but none of the faces.”

That’s enough. Full histories, skills, and scars will appear later through play.  
The GM may plant early memory prompts:

“Who first taught you how to keep secrets?” or “What’s the one rule you never break?”

Each answer can reveal a **Trait, Skill Tag, or Weakness**, recorded when it matters.

**2.4 Abilities, Traits & Skills (Declared or Discovered)**

At the table level, four core stats exist — **STR, AGI, WIT, PRS** (+2, +1, +1, 0).  
You can assign them now *or* let them surface naturally during the first few scenes.  
When you act, the GM will ask for clarification only if a roll is needed.

Traits (Curiosity, Grit, Empathy, Cunning — or genre-specific swaps) and three freeform **Skill Tags** describe how you solve problems.  
If you prefer organic play, the GM will prompt these as memories the first time you do something that implies them:

“You fix the circuit deftly — who taught you that?”  
Your answer locks the skill in permanently.

**2.5 Character Identity (Name, Alias, Pronouns)**

After the concept forms, the GM asks three short identity markers:

* **Full Name** – formal or recorded name.
* **Common Name / Alias / Handle** – what others use in daily life.
* **Pronouns** – how narration refers to you in third person.

These personalize the GM’s voice, especially in **Third-Person Mode** (§ 6.11).  
Example:

“Dr. Mira Kesh adjusts her goggles.”  
“You adjust your goggles.”  
“I adjust my goggles.”

You may edit these anytime with the command character identity.

**2.6 Circumstances (The Opening Scene)**

The GM establishes the first playable moment using three ingredients:

1. **A sensory anchor** – something you can see, hear, or feel.
2. **A circumstance** – a task, tension, or need.
3. **An immediate choice.**

Example:

“Steam curls from a broken vent. The security drone rounds the corner. Do you hide, bluff, or run?”

If you’re uncertain, use not sure for options or you tell me to hand control to the GM.

**2.7 Wants, Needs & Seeds of Story**

The GM introduces a small **immediate want or need** tied to the scene — deliver the file, reach the ship, find the witness.  
Larger drives (revenge, redemption, curiosity) emerge through memory prompts or consequences.  
This keeps momentum forward while allowing character definition to unfold naturally.

**2.8 Controls & Commands (Your Interface)**

You interact through simple verbs: **Talk / Act / Think.**  
The GM will call for a roll only when outcome or cost is uncertain.  
Common commands are available anytime:

character sheet | story notes | roll [stat] | use luck | memory prompt | pause | save game

**2.9 Save & Carry Over**

At the end of any session:  
The GM asks, “Save here?” Your Character Sheet and Story Notes update.  
Next time you type continue game, you’ll receive a **“Previously on…”** recap — concise, cinematic, and rooted in what truly mattered.

**Design Intent:** This Pre-Game flow builds the skeleton of the world through direct questions, then **lets the flesh of the character grow through memory and action**.  
It front-loads only what the world requires (genre, time, place, identity) and discovers the rest through play — keeping curiosity alive from the first scene onward.

**3. Decision Support & Memory Prompts**

Every narrative stalls sometimes. These tools keep motion alive and make uncertainty productive. They are the quiet scaffolds beneath the story’s improvisation.

**3.1 Purpose**

Decision Support commands prevent blank-page paralysis.  
Memory Prompts turn hesitation into discovery.  
Both ensure that momentum never depends on having the “right” idea — only on being willing to respond.

**3.2 Support Commands**

**not sure** → The GM offers 2–4 specific, story-relevant options based on your situation and traits.  
Options aren’t random; they reflect your capabilities, the environment, and the tone of play.

Example: “You’re cornered in the archive. Do you hide among the stacks, pull the fire alarm, or bluff that you belong here?”

**you tell me** → You hand the decision to the GM.  
The GM chooses an action that fits your established personality, memories, and circumstances, then narrates consequences as if they were your own impulse.

Example: “Given your history with the night guard, you smile first — a reflex you don’t entirely trust.”

These commands can appear anytime — during a fight, a conversation, or even a pause.  
They keep the rhythm conversational, not procedural.

**3.3 Memory Prompts (Active Discovery)**

Memory Prompts are moments when the GM or player looks backward to move forward.  
They can be requested with memory prompt or triggered naturally by the GM.

A prompt may reveal one of four things:

1. A new **Skill Tag** or **Trait** (“Who taught you to pick locks?”).
2. A new **Weakness** (“What have you never been able to say no to?”).
3. A small **item, ally, or clue** that emerges from memory (“You remember stashing a key under the bench.”).
4. A **pure moment of color** — an image, emotion, or echo that deepens tone without mechanical effect.

Each prompt adds texture to the Character Sheet only when it matters in fiction.  
The goal is to make backstory a living system, not a prologue.

**3.4 Weaknesses as Story Fuel**

A Weakness is never a punishment; it’s an engine.  
When a Weakness applies, the GM calls for a roll with **Drag** (3d6 keep lowest 2 or high-tens percentile).  
Failure introduces new branches — embarrassment, delay, temptation, truth.

Example: “Because you can’t resist showing off, you take the shot too soon. It lands — but so does the spotlight.”

**3.5 GM Integration Guidelines**

* Use memory prompts in-scene rather than in a block of questions.  
  When a player acts with confidence, let action define ability. When they hesitate, invite memory.
* Vary scale: some prompts reveal a fact; others unfold a theme.
* If a player asks “Can I know that?” the GM may answer with a prompt instead of an exposition dump.

“You might. Who taught you about poison spores?”

* Prompts can surface at transitions or after rolls — whenever the story needs depth without new plot.

**3.6 Design Intent**

Decision Support and Memory Prompts are the system’s empathy mechanics.  
They protect you from analysis paralysis and invite your own imagination to fill the world’s gaps.  
Instead of declaring a character complete before play, you complete them as you play — a scientist testing a theory about who they are.

**4. Core Loop – Narrative Flow**

The Core Loop is the heartbeat of the game — the exchange that repeats, evolves, and gives the story motion.  
Each turn of the loop has one purpose: **something happens, you respond, and the world changes.**

**4.1 Scene Frame (The Opening Beat)**

The GM opens every scene already in motion.  
A good frame gives you a place, a texture, and a tension — then ends with a question.

“The corridor hums with fluorescent buzz. Footsteps echo closer.  
You hold a stolen keycard in your hand. What do you do?”

Framing keeps inertia out of play. You’re never adrift in a blank room; you always enter at the edge of change.

**4.2 Intention (Player Action)**

You describe what your character tries to do, say, or think.  
Detail is optional; clarity is not.

* “I duck into the supply closet and hold my breath.”
* “Convince them I belong here.”
* “Just listen.”

If you hesitate:

* not sure → GM offers options.
* you tell me → GM acts on your behalf, drawing on traits and history.

Intention is agency in motion; even silence counts if it’s a choice.

**4.3 Narrative Adjudication (Does It Need Dice?)**

The GM decides how the story resolves:

1. If the action is routine or certain, it succeeds automatically — narrate and move on.
2. If the outcome is uncertain and the stakes matter, call for a **Check** (see § 5).

Rolling exists only to measure tension; never to punish curiosity.

**4.4 Outcome & Response**

The GM describes the result and its immediate consequences.  
Every result — success, failure, or mix — alters the state of the world.

A failure is not a dead end; it’s a pivot. The story always moves sideways or forward.  
The GM may insert a **Memory Prompt** here to add context or reveal skill origin.

“The lock finally gives — but the snap of metal echoes down the hall.  
You remember your mentor warning you about cheap tools.”

**4.5 Scene Transition (Breath & Reset)**

A scene ends when its tension resolves or shifts.  
It does *not* require a big event — sometimes it’s just a change in focus.

Between scenes you can:

* Reflect or think aloud.
* Request a memory prompt.
* Take quiet actions (clean gear, tend wounds, stare at the sky).
* Signal a move: “Next morning.” “Back to the city.”

The GM listens for closure and then frames the next moment.  
Sometimes the transition is a montage, sometimes a cut.

**4.6 Micro Decisions & Quiet Beats**

Not every choice carries high stakes.  
Small moments — what to eat, who to trust with a glance, whether to knock — make the world feel lived in.  
The GM balances:

| **Energy** | **Examples** | **Purpose** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| High Tension | conflict, danger, revelation | adrenaline & stakes |
| Low Tension | rest, humor, introspection | contrast & breath |

Alternating energy creates narrative pulse — inhale and exhale.

**4.7 Breaks and Continuity**

pause → short hold; resume later in the same chat.  
save game → checkpoint; updates Character Sheet and Story Notes.  
new chapter → begin fresh chat for major arcs or time jumps.

When play resumes, the GM gives a brief recap: tone, threads, and unresolved questions.

**4.8 Loop Summary**

| **Phase** | **Player Action** | **GM Action** | **Purpose** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Scene Frame | Observe | Frame scene, pose question | Create tension |
| Intention | Describe / choose | Clarify stakes | Anchor agency |
| Adjudication | Wait | Decide narrate or check | Maintain flow |
| Outcome | React | Narrate consequence | Advance story |
| Transition | Reflect | Frame next scene | Keep rhythm |

**4.9 Guiding Principles of Flow**

1. Momentum first — even reflection scenes should breathe.
2. Specificity over scope — one clear choice beats a vague intention.
3. Curiosity drives play — when in doubt, explore.
4. Alternate tension and release to avoid flat tone.
5. Agency is flexible — you can steer (not sure) or surrender (you tell me) as needed.
6. Save gracefully — end on a beat, not mid-sentence.

**Design Intent**

The Core Loop is the system’s rhythm section — steady enough to keep time, loose enough to swing.  
It anchors player freedom inside narrative structure, balancing agency and surprise.

**5. Resolution & Chance**

Chance is not chaos — it’s experiment.  
Every roll is a question you ask the universe: *“What happens if I try this?”*  
The result doesn’t judge you; it simply reveals what kind of story you’re in.

**5.1 Dual System Overview**

Two systems coexist, tuned to scale and tone.

| **System** | **Used For** | **Tone** | **Mechanics Summary** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2d6 System** | Personal, emotional, or physical actions. | Human, immediate, dramatic. | Roll 2d6 + Stat (+1 if Skill applies). Traits = Edge (3d6 keep best 2). Weakness = Drag (3d6 keep worst 2). |
| **d100 System** | Environmental, probabilistic, or large-scale actions. | Analytical, methodical, tactical. | Roll percentile (1d100). Edge/Drag = Tens-Selection method (§ 5.4). |

Pick the system that fits the *camera distance* of the moment:  
close-up = 2d6 ; wide shot = d100.

**5.2 The 2d6 System – Human Scale**

Use when your own qualities decide the outcome — climbing, persuading, enduring, sneaking.

**Roll:** 2d6 + relevant Stat (+1 if a Skill Tag applies).  
If a Trait applies → Edge (3d6 keep best 2).  
If a Weakness applies → Drag (3d6 keep worst 2).

| **Result** | **Outcome** | **Narrative Guidance** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 12+ | Critical Success | You excel; gain bonus momentum or insight. |
| 10–11 | Full Success | Clean win, no strings. |
| 7–9 | Mixed Success | Success with a cost, delay, or choice. |
| 6- | Failure | You fail forward — complication or twist appears. |

Failures never erase progress; they create *data*.

**5.3 The d100 System – World Scale**

Use when outcomes depend on probability, environment, or systems bigger than you — searching a ruin, timing an escape, analyzing signals.

**Baseline Setup**

* Base Chance = 50 %.
* Each relevant Stat +10 %.
* Each relevant Skill Tag +10 %.
* GM adjusts ±10–30 % for light, time, tools, stress.

**Rolling**  
Roll two d10s (one tens, one ones). 00 = 100 (worst possible).

| **Roll** | **Outcome** | **Result** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1–5 | Critical Success | Perfect execution or lucky break. |
| 6–Target % | Success | Intended result achieved. |
| Target %+1–95 | Failure | Shortfall or costly lesson. |
| 96–100 | Critical Failure | Catastrophic mistake or exposure. |

Lower is better — success through precision, not power.

**5.4 Edge & Drag – The Tens-Selection Method**

Rather than add numbers, Edge and Drag let you bend probability after seeing the dice.

* **Normal:** declare which die is tens before rolling.
* **Edge (Advantage):** after rolling, choose the lower die as tens → bias down ≈ +20 %.
* **Drag (Disadvantage):** choose the higher die as tens → bias up ≈ –20 %.

Edge tilts toward Critical Success (1–5); Drag tilts toward Critical Failure (96–100).  
This keeps tension visible and player choice meaningful.

**5.5 Modifiers & Meta Resources**

| **Bonus / Penalty** | **Effect** |
| --- | --- |
| Edge / Drag | Advantage or Disadvantage as above. |
| **Luck Point** | Spend to +1 (2d6) or +10 % (d100) or re-roll one die (2 per session). |
| **Preparation Bonus** | +1 / +10 % for clear, creative setup. |
| **Assistance (Bond)** | +1 / +10 % when a named ally helps (once per scene). |
| **Environment** | ±10–30 % (d100) or ±1 (2d6). |
| **Weakness** | Triggers Drag. |
| **Clever Plan** | Convert Drag → Normal or Normal → Edge (once). |

**5.6 Narrative Application**

| **Result Type** | **Narrative Example** |
| --- | --- |
| 2d6 Mixed Success | “You pick the lock, but your tools snap as it clicks open.” |
| d100 Critical Failure | “You find the folder — just as the flashlight beam hits your face.” |
| d100 Critical Success | “You notice a second hidden drawer the others missed.” |

Every outcome changes the state of play. Failure adds texture; it never ends the story.

**5.7 Design Philosophy**

“Numbers measure the unknown, but stories reveal why it matters.”

Dice make risk visible. They turn narrative intuition into experiment.  
Every roll is data — a tiny test in the ongoing study of who your character really is.  
Always be a scientist.

**6. GM Role & Narrative Style**

The Game Master is not a referee.  
They are a translator — turning uncertainty into meaning.  
Their tools are curiosity, rhythm, and restraint.  
They shape a world that reacts, remembers, and occasionally surprises even them.

**6.1 Purpose of the GM**

The GM embodies four overlapping roles:

* **Storyteller** – frames scenes, gives the world a heartbeat.
* **World Emulator** – tracks logic, cause, and consequence.
* **Dice Interpreter** – reads results as narrative change, not math.
* **Companion** – mirrors the player’s curiosity and tone.

The GM’s first duty is **momentum**.  
Their second is **wonder**.

**6.2 Core Tasks**

1. **Frame** – Begin each scene in motion with a sensory hook.
2. **Challenge** – Introduce tension, mystery, or moral choice.
3. **Interpret** – Resolve uncertainty through rolls and reason.
4. **Evolve** – Let every scene alter either the character or the world.

These tasks repeat each loop, giving the story both continuity and discovery.

**6.3 GM Personality Modes**

Tone and pacing shift with genre and mood.  
The GM may change mode at will, or by command (gm mode [type]).

| **Mode** | **Tone** | **Use** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cinematic Mode** | vivid, sensory, fast-paced | action, discovery, danger |
| **Reflective Mode** | soft, introspective, patient | emotional or moral beats |
| **Tactical Mode** | clear, procedural, logical | puzzles, investigation, planning |
| **Absurdist / Meta Mode** | playful, surreal, self-aware | irony, humor, dream logic |

A good GM listens for what energy the scene needs, then tunes accordingly.

**6.4 Framing Scenes**

Start each scene already in motion.

1. **Where / When / Who** – place the character clearly.
2. **Anchor** – one sensory detail that defines atmosphere.
3. **Tension or Curiosity** – something to lean toward or away from.
4. **Invitation** – end with a question: *“What do you do?”*

The first image sets the mood. The first question creates agency.

**6.5 Rhythm of Description**

Description is music; pacing is breath.

* Use the **Three-Beat Rule**: no more than three sensory notes per image.
* Mirror the player’s energy — terse for focus, lush for mood.
* Alternate tension and quiet like breathing.
* Leave space for the player’s imagination; describe *feeling, not furniture.*

A good GM listens as much to silence as to speech.

**6.6 Managing Information**

Information is oxygen. Too much, and the fire dies.

* Reveal only what’s discoverable now; imply the rest.
* Track what is **Known to Character** vs. **Known to Player**.
* Use **soft recall** when confusion builds:

“You remember the pattern on the floor — it matches the mark on your father’s ring.”

When players ask for exposition, respond with a memory prompt instead of a lecture.  
It keeps knowledge personal and alive.

**6.7 When to Call for Rolls**

Rolls occur only when:

1. The outcome is uncertain, **and**
2. The stakes matter.

If an action is trivial or guaranteed, narrate success directly.  
If failure would halt momentum, roll — but let the failure change direction, not stop progress.

**6.8 Handling Results**

| **Result** | **GM Response** | **Narrative Function** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Success** | Describe change, not just action. | The world shifts accordingly. |
| **Mixed** | Add cost, delay, or partial truth. | Keeps tension alive. |
| **Failure** | Move sideways — reveal something new. | Failure fuels discovery. |
| **Critical** | Let the moment echo beyond itself. | Expands consequence across time. |

There are no dead ends — only new branches.

**6.9 World Consistency vs. Narrative Flow**

Continuity serves rhythm, not rigidity.

* Rules are tools, not chains.
* Canon is current understanding, not immutable law.
* A memory may rewrite a fact if it deepens story truth.

The world is a living document, and the dice are its editors.

**6.10 GM Tone Principles (The Golden Ten)**

1. Keep it moving.
2. Reward curiosity.
3. Describe feeling, not furniture.
4. Never say “nothing happens.”
5. Let failure reveal truth.
6. Mirror player energy.
7. Ask, don’t tell.
8. Alternate tension and release.
9. Use humor sparingly — precision over volume.
10. End scenes with a choice or a question.

These are not rules. They are habits of attention.

**6.11 GM Voice Mode (Perspective Toggle)**

The GM can narrate through three perspectives — each shifting tone, intimacy, and information access.

| **Mode** | **Perspective** | **Description** | **Player Experience** | **Example** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Third Person (Storyteller)** *(default)* | “They / the character” | External narration describing events from outside. | Feels like reading a novel; objective and scenic. | “Tavian wipes the blood from their sleeve as dawn cuts through the mist.” |
| **Second Person (Companion / Mate-style)** | “You” | Direct address blending empathy and immediacy. | Conversational and immersive; bridges player and character. | “You wipe the blood away, and it doesn’t feel like enough.” |
| **First Person (Character Voice)** | “I” | Internal narration channeling the character’s emotions and bias. | Introspective and raw; filtered through memory. | “I wipe the blood from my sleeve. It’s not enough — it never is.” |

**Command:** gm voice [third / second / first]

Perspective changes narrative distance, not canon.  
Switch freely to match tone or experimentation.

**6.12 Integration with Character Identity**

During **Pre-Game Stage 2.5 (Character Identity)**, the GM records:

* **Full Name**
* **Common Name / Handle / Alias**
* **Pronouns**

These personalize narration, especially in Third-Person mode:

“Dr. Mira Kesh adjusts her goggles.”  
“You tighten your goggles.”  
“I tighten my goggles.”

Optional command: character identity → view or edit these fields mid-game.

Identity data also informs how NPCs address the player, grounding dialogue in continuity.

**6.13 Sample Scene (Cinematic Mode Example)**

**GM (Third Person, Cinematic Mode):**

“Rain pools on the stone steps. Mira Kesh steps into the light, goggles reflecting the trembling glow of a broken streetlamp.  
Behind her, the door closes with a whisper. Ahead, the city exhales steam and secrets.”

**Player:** “Check the envelope.”

**GM (Second Person, Reflective Mode):**

“You slide the envelope open. The ink has bled through — and your own name, half-washed, stares back at you.”

**Design Intent**

The GM section defines the **voice of the world** — sensory, adaptive, and responsive.  
It turns mechanical fairness into emotional rhythm, and makes every roll a conversation between story, chance, and curiosity.

**End of Section 6 — GM Role & Narrative Style**

**✅ Current Source Material Integrated**

From your uploaded “RPG” files:

* **RPG Project Rulebook 1.9 / Narrative RPG Master Draft 1.9** → complete through **Section 6.13**, ending with the *Sample Scene*.
* **RPG UX Flow 1** → informs the *Pre-Game Boot-Up* style (already merged into 1.9).
* **RPG GM Role Initial Notes** → early framework that evolved into 1.9’s Section 6.
* **RPG Project Instructions 1** → parallel *Quick-Start + Commands* doc for playtesting.

Everything up to **Section 6.13** is therefore canonical for the new baseline.

**🧭 Next up…**

* + **Section 7 – Player Tools & Interface**
  + **Section 8 – Session Structure & Arcs**
  + **Section 9 – Optional Modules & Expansions**
  + **Section 10 – Appendices /Templates**