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Based on "Rose Tattoo" song by Dropkick Murphys



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You lived without compromise, though adapting was never your strong suite. You have a few good traits, and boy, you can be damn sure, that you have many not-so-good ones. You were giving your best, showing your worst. You laughed loudly, and cried silently. You played for high stakes, and you lost. You lost bad. Defeated and lonely, yet not broken. Tempering ambitions, just to live trough yet another day. Still possessing that something, not letting you spiral into despair. You have it here- signed and sealed in blood -in a rose tattoo.

Topic / mood

Rose Tattoo is a story-focused scenario consisting of a sequence of consecutive scenes played in real-time. The events of this freeform constitute of about one to two hours taken from the characters regular day. Besides role-playing current events, the players are creating a story for every person in the group, with its rises and falls, which led to the current situation. In each case, the character's story will also consist of some personal, important thing that keeps him on course, represented by his tattoo – an anchor (important thing in life) or a rose (true love). As for this freeform's aesthetics – it's about ugliness, tiredness, and the unforgotten, but exhausting ability to beauty.

The game starts during one of the characters meetings – in a pub or place where they are currently living. It ends, while they are going home, or to sleep, after one more day of their journey – but this time being "on their way", as a result of a created story.

Scenery

There is only one condition for scene for Rose Tattoo – it needs to suitable for group of 3 to 5 persons with rich life experience, who not gain the main prize in modern world rat contest. Place of this story, as much as its represntation in real world, can be picked by the game master**.** It just need to be a right place for lonesome, life-tired outcasts.

Here are some propositions:

Private house or flat – a place where characters stay or are regularly meeting.

Pub, bar – in which the characters are having a few pints after work.

Bus stop, train station – en route to the next destination.

Industrial site – a place where characters work and live. Sardine processing plant in Iceland. Oil rig in the middle of the North Sea. Car Factory in Detroit, in the middle of a shutdown process.

Warehouse - Cargo ship on which the characters are travelling to start anew in another country. Temporal accommodations for skyscraper construction workers in Dubai.



Representation

Rose Tattoo can be played in a wide range of representation levels – from a blackbox or stage, to 360 degree illusions in a working pub or warehouse. Choose which one suits you and your players best. We are encouraging you to play it "for real" with representation as accurate, as possible. If you don't have time for preparation, or the players are not ok with literal playing, adjust the level of representation accordingly. What's important is, Rose Tattoo can be played without preparation at all. You are sitting with your mates at a bar and have a spare hour? Explain the idea, take their keys, mobile phones and wallets (more about this further) and start playing. Just don't forget to ask the bartender to play Dropkick Murphys once in a while.

Representation of scenery and props are one thing, representation of interaction between players is another. Choose with your players one of following approaches:

No touch

Interaction between players cannot lead to physical contact. This one is good for... ok, I cannot find a reasonable example. Use it if at least one of your players has objection against physical contact.

No pain

Interaction cannot lead to inflicting pain. Touching and other forms of physical contact are allowed, including playing brawls, as long as it's not causing physical pain. In this approach, for example, bar fights can be played, but each hit needs to be **acted.** We think that this is an optimal solution, while it is allowing visually attractive playing of some mild violence, it's not shifting the players focus to physical confrontation.

Full touch

Every physical interaction between characters needs to be literally represented by players, including violence and sex. This game includes scene of a brawl between characters, so in the "full touch" approach it means that players would actually hit themselves. This can greatly improve players immersion, but it's also shifting their focus. Playing with "full touch" rules will create a potential threat of physical aggression, which will be present in players cognition. You may find it interesting and attractive, but if you haven't played full touch larps before, Rose Tattoo is not a good game to start with. We suggest that you could use this approach if you, and your players, are confident with it. Of course, in such a case you need to have a safe word which can be used by any player to stop a scene.

Bittersweet

Characters in Rose Tattoo are rough, bitter, non-conformist. Falling into the mundane and vulgar, key parts of this setting. Tough men and woman with scars, not all of which are healed. Don't be afraid to push players in this direction – this aspect should be balanced, not smoothed.

On other hand, each character has something that is keeping him on course. Feeling, memory, or goal. Or at least – some personal place in the back of his mind, which is giving him comfort. Create it and expose it with your players – and superficial bitterness will work as dark canvas for a bright pattern. Contrast is key in Rose Tattoo.

Don't be afraid of comicality. Playing social outcasts will create some comical scenes and elements. Drunken adventures, funny habits – it will fit perfectly. Don't cut the funny scenes – if the overall impression will be too comedic – just add some more serious elements in the next scene. Contrast, and dynamism will work great, mediocrity and melancholy – not so much. There are no scenes of sad, lonesome drinking in Rose Tattoo.

Character creation

Characters for Rose Tattoo are created in four steps, which are adding new information about its story and personality. Player's gender isn't very important, this freeform is putting conditions on characters' life story, not gender. Apply the same guides for all characters, avoid focusing on stereotypes and cliches for both genders.

Name

The player is choosing a name, or nickname, for his character. If it's a nickname, create a story behind it, by asking the player: how he or she had earned it?

Now, each players is taking out three personal items which he will almost certainly have on him at the beginning of the game.



Wallet

The player is putting his wallet on the table. Everything, from inside of it, should be removed from the game, or have an in-game explanation. Items which are left – like money, girlfriends picture, debit card, business card of a temporal work agency, will remain in-game, defining the character.
At this step few questions should be answered – what is the story behind each of the wallets contents? Why does the character have this amount of money? You may prepare additional props to insert into players wallets, matching the chosen scenery.



Keys

Leave only one or two keys in-game. Where is the matching lock? What is that place? Is it where the character is living? Or is it some distant place to which he hopes to return? Tell the story behind each key left in the game.



Mobile phone

Add one, fictional number in the phone's contact list. Add its name. What will it be? “Mom”? “Tracy?”, “Lil’ Bobby”? Who is this person? The only one, that will answer your call – that’s for sure.

During play, only this one number can be “dialled”, and the character can act the dialogue only with this one chosen person.

Scene and background story

During a short briefing with players, draft a scenery and circumstances of the game. What is the place in which the characters are meeting? What is the reason for the meeting? If it's a bar crawl after the workweek – where are they working? If it's a train station – where are they going? At this point, don't focus on details, give the players enough information to start creating characters.n't focus on details, give a players enaugh information to start creating characters.

I will tell you your story

The most important aspect of Rose Tattoo is a joint creation of a story. The "I will tell you your story" rule means that all information about a characters past, said during play, is true and becomes an element of a player's story.

*Let's take **John** as an example. After the briefing we know his name. Also, we know that he is, as well as the other players, a dockworker in Anchorage, Alaska, who is meeting with his mates in a bar after work. We know that he has twenty bucks in his wallet, keys in his pocket are marching a lock to his small and rather filthy apartment, and his mobile phone has only one important number – to a retirement home where his father lives.*

This is all the information about John at the beginning of the game. However, if another player, for example **Nancy** will tell something about his past, like:

"Calm dawn John, quitting this job before the end of contract will cost you more than both your divorces!"

The two divorces are becoming elements of John's past. There is no discussion about it, all following play will be treating this as a well known fact.

Grudges, shortcomings, and mistakes, can be put into the characters history during arguments or brawls. In such a case both players can point out such past actions of the opposite player, making his story more bitter. Don't hesitate to allow players to do so – in effect, they will end up with complicated, rough stories written by failed challenges and missed opportunities.

Scenes

The scenes listed below are adding new elements of play, focusing players on certain aspects of the story, or pushing the action to certain events. They don't need to be treated separately. You can play this freeform on a stage, with separated and explained in a short briefing scenes, but that's not the only option. Rose Tattoo can be played in a "seamless" way, as one, two hour long scene. In such a case, you just need to give players a short sentence – the name of the scene and describe in one or two sentences what should it include.

Before the game, tell players what the scenes will be, so they can "think in advance", consciously directing the story.

1.This life had many shades

In the opening of the freeform, the characters are meeting with each other. Beside starting the social event, players are adding first elements to their stories.

2. Ace of spades

The players are playing poker or any other game, with low stakes, but still real money. Except in-game gambling, they are recalling their past, most risky decisions, stakes which could be won, and how much was lost during the attempts to win them.

3 One who raised me

Childhood and parents are added to the characters background.

4. Sacrifice and bravery

In this scene, player are recalling one moment when they stood up for something, sacrificed something valuable, and lost.

5 Its been a long time coming

In this scene, a long held grudge against another player will come to surface, resulting in a brawl.

Are you playing in a bar, with regular customers? Act, like your character would act. Take the thing outside, or let other people, or security, separate the brawlers, and most likely, cast you out of the bar. I think that would be a remarkable memory from a larp, but remember that you are doing it on your, and your players responsibility. I am not encouraging you to start a real fight in a bar, Just... do it!

6. Anchor for my every choice

The most important elements of the players life, which still are giving them direction and motivation to go on.

7. Rose Tattoo

One beloved person, whose name is tattooed in a rose on each characters body. Who was she/he? What happened to her, or to his relationship. Why is it still the most important thing in the characters existence?

8. I will be on my way

In the ending scene, the characters are leaving the meeting. Are they coming back to the same lives, which they had before play? Or do they have some new goals? Are any of them trying to set more goals? Or will she try to, one more time, reach something, that was not yet accomplished?