The poison of suspicion

A story game about life and forgiveness
by Esteban Manchado Velázquez
Designed and written by Esteban Manchado Velázquez for the R.I.S.K. † 2019 game jam.

† Rollespill.infos Intensive Spillskaper-Konkurrансе
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This is a short story game about forgiveness, and what makes life worth living. It's designed for two players, and it takes about one hour to play. One of the players takes the role of a person who gets poisoned and will maybe die. The other takes the role of the person who poisoned the first. You need sixteen dice to play: four 4-sided dice, four 6-sided dice, four 8-sided dice, and four 10-sided dice. But you can make do with one of each type, and keep the count of the dice on the character sheet itself.

Setup

The players choose who will play the poisoner, and who will play the victim. Then they discuss the story setting (contemporary? historical? fantasy? science fiction? does magic exist? are the characters human?). Once the two players agree, the poisoner chooses the fate number, a number between 10 and 15. The higher it is, the harder it will be for the poisoner to get forgiveness, and the harder it will be for the victim to survive. The fate number is secret: for most of the game, the victim player doesn’t know its value.

Each player takes two sets of four dice (a 4-sided die, a 6-sided die, an 8-sided die, and a 10-sided die). In total, each player will have eight dice. The first set is called scene dice, and the second opposition dice.

Scenes

The two players alternate scenes: the victim has scenes showing how she was, and what made her life worth living, while the poisoner has scenes showing why she thinks it was justified to poison the victim, eg. showing bad things the poisoner knows the victim did. The scenes should last about a couple of minutes and should develop the characters and the story. The character sheet has a list of questions for inspiration, but their use is optional.
Before each scene, the player who will narrate it (the **active player**) must say what the scene is going to be about, and each player must choose and roll a die. The active player chooses a die from her scene dice, and the other (the **opposing player**) chooses from her opposition dice. After this, those dice are used up and out of the game. If the active player gets the same or higher result, she wins the scene. If the opposing player gets higher, the opposing player wins.

If the active player wins the scene, she narrates it as normal, **and** wins as many points as her die showed (**the victim has hope points**, and **the poisoner has righteousness points**).

If the opposing player wins the scene, the active player must introduce some doubt in it, eg. the victim must mention some bad memories together with the good ones, or the poisoner must mention something positive about the victim in a scene that was meant to show her negative sides. The opposing player can suggest things, but the active player has the last word. In any case, the active player doesn’t get any points for that scene.

**How to make good scenes**

A good victim scene shows interesting sides of the victim, and builds the character. When losing the scene, the victim’s player would show why the reason to live wasn’t that strong after all.

A good poisoner scene shows how the poisoner attempts to justify herself. When losing the scene, the poisoner’s player would show why the bad thing the victim did wasn’t that bad after all, or was inevitable, or not the victim’s fault.

Ideally, victim scenes would inspire the poisoner scenes, and vice versa.
Structure of the game

The first players that have an idea for a scene starts. After that, they alternate scenes between them. Each player will have four scenes (as many as scene dice). After the eight scenes, the poisoner will reveal the fate number.

The victim will survive if she has at least as many hope points as the fate number. The poisoner will get forgiveness if she has at least as many righteousness points as the fate number. That is, the poisoner will carry the burden in her conscience if she doesn’t have enough righteousness points, but will not feel guilty about her deed if she does.

Example

The first player chooses the poisoner (a woman called Fiona) and the other, the victim (a man called Oscar). The poisoner chooses the fate number (13), writes it on the sheet, and folds the sheet to hide it. She has an idea for a scene, so she starts. She chooses “What do you imagine will happen when the victim dies?” from the list and they choose dice: the active player in this scene (Fiona) chooses a 4-sided die (rolls 3). The opposing player, Oscar,
chooses a 6-sided die (rolls 4) and wins the scene, so it must have a contrast. Both dice are out of the game now. The active player starts explaining the scene:

Fiona receives a letter that confirms that she has access to her stepfather’s funds, and starts daydreaming about the free life she will have from now on. [...] The opposing player suggests a contrast: that Fiona has stepsiblings and she doesn’t want to share the money with them. The active player accepts it.

Then, the victim’s player becomes the active player. He chooses “Who makes you smile?” from the list, and wins the scene. His die showed 5, so he wins 5 hope points, and the scene doesn’t need any contrast. He narrates:

Olav holds hands with the woman that would become his wife. They are in a park and she insists on arranging small stones to draw his initials. She does it eight times. He remembers because she counts out loud as she giggles. [...] Due to this, he smiles every time he sees the number.

The poisoner becomes the active player again. She chooses the question “How did someone learn about your plans?” and wins the dice rolling. Her die shows 4, so she gets 4 righteousness points.

They continue with scenes until they have used up all dice, and compare hope points and righteousness points against the fate number (13 in this case): the victim has just 10 hope points, so he will die; the poisoner has 12 righteousness points, so she will not get forgiveness.

Now they both narrate what will happen with the victim and the poisoner in a kind of epilogue, and the story (and the game) ends.
Colophon

This game was designed and written by Esteban Manchado Velázquez.

This document uses the font “Anaktoria”, which can be downloaded from https://fontlibrary.org/en/font/anaktoria-textfonts.

The illustrations were taken from the British Library Flickr account: https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/.
Poisoner

تصفية

- What do you imagine will happen when the victim dies?
- Why do you (or whoever else benefits) deserve the outcome?
- How did someone learn about your plans and why didn’t they stop you?
- What do you imagine will happen if the victim survives?
- What clue made the victim realise who the poisoner was?
- How did the victim show their cruelty?
- Who will be relieved about the victim dying, and why?
- Who would have done the same anyway if you had not done it first?
  - What is their motive?
- Which of your enemies also hated the victim, and why?
- What did the victim always put before other people?
- When did the victim’s refusal to help end in someone’s injury or death?
- What is the victim in denial of?
- What does the victim think people think of them (but the victim is wrong about)?

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Victim

تصفية

- Who makes you smile?
- Who can you trust?
- What are you proud to do well?
- Who did you mentor?
- What is your most vivid child memory?
- What would stay unfinished if you die?
- Who would not get what they deserve if you die?
- Who will you tell about the poisoning first, if you survive?
- How does another person depend on you?
- Who would be heartbroken if you die?
- Who proved that you can be loved despite your flaws, and how?
  - Which flaw?
- Who will be in trouble if you die?
- What do you think of when you go to sleep?