

Under my Skin

who do you love?



Under my Skin *who do you love?*

A role playing game
by Emily Care Boss



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Introduction ♣



What will the heart do when love is on the line?

What we love the most is what we most fear to lose.

ABOUT THE GAME

UNDER MY SKIN is a game about faith, love and commitment. In the game, you play characters in relationship that become drawn to someone who is not their partner. The players explore the fears their characters experience about loss and betrayal, and navigate, in character, the tricky issues of openness, trust and communication that all relationships are challenged by at one time or another.

In this game, the players work together to create the group of friends and acquaintances whose lives are changed by new love and attraction. They then act out what those characters do in a series of scenes, much like an improvised play. One player may take the role of Director by not playing a main character, but rather helping the others act out their stories.

This game asks the players to address serious emotional issues within the game. Please play advisedly, and have some dangerous fun.

OVERVIEW OF PLAY (10 MINUTES)

In **UNDER MY SKIN**, the players take the roles of characters who examine the boundaries of their relationships and the needs of their hearts.

Who are the Characters?

Some characters begin the game as a **COUPLE** in a committed relationship, but in each there are stresses, issues and **LINEs** that may not be crossed lightly. Other characters may be **SINGLE** and looking for love in their lives.

Each of the characters has a **CORE ISSUE**. An emotional challenge that has been with them throughout their life. It presents problems that inform their life and loves and arises in various **AREAS** of the character's life.

Each character has a **FRIEND** from among the other characters, some have a romantic **PARTNER**, and some have a **BEST FRIEND**.

From among these characters, a **NEW FLAME** will be chosen, someone not the character's original Partner, with whom they become entranced. This sets in motion the chain of events that are played out in the game.

Playing the Game

The events of the game make a story arc that takes place in **SCENES**. Groups of related Scenes take place in various **STAGES**.

First, the players **SET THE STAGE** in which we gain insight into the characters' lives and the original state of their relationships. In the **INITIATION** stage all the characters are together and the new flirtations arise. The new couples **FOLLOW-THROUGH** and meet alone for the first time. After this, in **DEVELOPMENT**, we see how the original couples are faring. In **ESCALATION**, the new couples approach a Line, and decisions are made to choose the new or honor the old. In **REVELATIONS**, fallout happens from the decisions made. And in the **DENOUMENT** the characters look back on what has happened and give us a taste of the future of these relationships.

In each stage of the game, **FLASHBACKS** are played out, scenes from the characters' pasts that help us understand them better through tying in their Core Issues with events from their lives.

The number of players determines the time needed to play. Allow 4 hours for a four or five player game. Six hours are needed for a six to eight player game. Recommended times are included for preparatory steps of the game. Stick to these times to allow plenty of time to play out the story. Note: Character creation may take longer with six or more players. Also, tabletop version in development, where the action is described rather than acted out, can be found in **OTHER WAYS TO PLAY** (pages 40-44).

Guidelines



GUIDELINES FOR PLAY (15-20 MINUTES)

In *UNDER MY SKIN*, we explore the boundaries of relationships and trace the connections between the jealousies in a relationship and our own personal fears. As we skirt the edges of our own issues and lives, through the presumably safe venue of the fictional characters, follow these guidelines for before and during play to help keep communication clear among the players, especially when things become intense.

Begin the game with *INTRODUCTIONS* and *DISCLOSURE*, in which the players share about their own real world relationship status. Agree about the level of *TOUCH* in the game. If desired, *LINES*, *BOUNDARIES* and *VEILS* may be specified to agree that certain topics will be avoided and how to handle sensitive topics, such as sex, in play. Become familiar with the concepts of *BRAKING* and *GOING SLOW*. Players can ask for a break in play, or to lessen the pace to help them deal with overwhelming or upsetting aspects of the game. Discussing the concepts of *PLAYING CLOSE TO HOME* (incorporating the players' own issues and elements of their life into the game) and *POLYAMORY* (loving more than one person at a time) give the players tools and ways of thinking about the events of play that can deepen the experience.

GUIDELINES FOR THE GAME

BEFORE PLAY BEGINS

UNDER MY SKIN is a game that raises many hard hitting, potentially awkward and even explosive questions about relationships. Since events are acted out, the emotional impact of play can be very strong. For these reasons, it is good to establish some common understanding among the players before starting the game.

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND DISCLOSURE

Begin the game by sitting in a circle. Make introductions. Have the player say their name and share their relationship status, saying as little or as much as the player is comfortable sharing. They may wish to simply say they are in a relationship or single, or may wish to tell the group that they are in an open marriage with various secondary partners, or happily involved in a monogamous long-term relationship.

Sharing this information prior to what could be intense in-character flirtatious play, helps clarify real life relationship boundaries before blurring the in-game ones. It also helps everyone to understand something of the history and experience that each person brings to play.

2. TOUCH IN THE GAME

Before playing, establish how comfortable the group is with physical touch among the players. During the course of play, it may make sense for Partners to embrace, or New Flames to flirt etc.. If the players are open to it, have some physical contact between the players before the game starts. Have people hug or shake hands with everyone in the group after the Introductions. If players request there be no touch, be sure that all players are aware of this boundary.

Cultural and group social customs vary greatly from place to place. Be sensitive to the needs of the individual group and the physical setting of the game. The context of play will greatly determine what may be comfortable: a group of friends playing in one of their homes will likely have different boundaries about touch and expression of affection in play than would a group playing the game in a public area at a convention.



Various concepts used in the play of games with intense or sensitive topics may be useful to your group. These may be agreed upon at the start of the game or used during the course of play to help give people a shared terminology to be able to talk about things that come up for them during play. These include LINES and VEILS, and BRAKING and GOING SLOW.

4. PLAYER LINES, BOUNDARIES AND VEILS¹

These are techniques which may be agreed on ahead of time, or invoked during the course of a game to provide agreement about how to depict intimate or difficult events. Note: this line refers to the needs and feelings of the *players*, and is distinct from the in-character Lines to be found on page 18 of the CHARACTER CREATION section.

PLAYER LINES refer to limitations on the content of scenes. For example, a player may say that rape is a line for them. It is disturbing or has real world ramifications for them, so they want to avoid having their character enter into a situation where this comes up. Or they may want to avoid having the issue addressed altogether in the game. The group can discuss this at the start and come to a common understanding that this will be avoided.

Sometimes, however, raising the issue can bring it into everyone's minds, so care must be given to be sure that everyone understands that if a line is drawn it is not a challenge or dare to bring this up. Instead it is a signal that other issues should be high-lighted and explored.

A variant of a line is a BOUNDARY². This is an issue with strong resonance for a player that they wish to approach with care. Boundaries can be approached and explored, but perhaps the person who expressed the initial concern can be given lead on where the explorations go and how the issue is addressed.

A VEIL is the level or type of description given to events. A strong Veil indicates that little or no detail will be given. A light one or no veil opens the door to detailed description or in depth play to occur. For example, if it is understood that two characters are going to have sex, playing out the scene with a strong Veil could entail a cut at that point, essentially "fading to black" as is done in the cinema. A moderate Veil could involve describing some of

¹ For more on Lines and Veils see Ron Edward's game *Sex and Sorcery*, (Adept Press, 2003.)

<<http://www.adept-press.com>>

²Boundaries comes from a discussion on the forum Cultures of Play.

<<http://www.culturesofplay.com/>>

what occurs e.g. they enjoy themselves, they come together awkwardly, or they don't connect. A light Veil would allow for description, and with no Veil anything goes. When acting out a scene the Veil can be indicated by how much emulation of action occurs. Do the players dance or embrace to mimic sex, or do they just say "things get steamy"?

5. BRAKING AND GOING SLOW

If the action hits on issues that are extremely emotionally charged, or if someone has a strong reaction to what is going on, you can ask people to "put on the brakes." Putting on the brakes means that the action should go slower, or the intensity should be lessened somehow. This is used in some Northern European live action role playing traditions to let others know that something is happening to the players that is affecting their ability to continue with the game.

In many live action communities moving from talking in character to describing the action is frowned upon, but this is an excellent way of emotionally distancing the action. It may allow someone enough emotional space from whatever has come up for them to be able to continue with the scene.

6. CUTTING A SCENE

Calling "Cut!" means to end the scene, or to take a break from it for a time. Calling cut is a normal way to end a scene, if the action has been resolved or all that can be explored has been dealt with, or if the players have come to a satisfying (or tantalizing) place to end the scene. Calling cut in this context would be done by a player who is experiencing issues with the fiction, and might then be followed up by some discussion of the effects it was having on them, and some brainstorming about either how to deal with it, or where to go next. Continuing a scene that shows the aftermath of a violent or disturbing scene could be adequate, so that the events themselves are not shown, but the consequences can be explored.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

7. PLAYING CLOSE TO HOME

In the Scandinavian school of role playing called Jeep Form which is a great influence on this game, there is a concept of playing "close to home." That is, to choose to play out issues and difficulties, or things desired or loved, that come from the player's real emotions. When playing close to home, rather than choosing to create distance between what the player feels and what the character does, a player uses the resonance of what happens in the game to explore their own emotions and reactions. In **UNDER MY SKIN** one can

choose issues for the characters to explore that relate to your own experiences. This is (relatively) safe space to explore what might be very risky to do in one's own life. But by choosing particular details that draw upon real feelings, fears and hopes, more information and a deeper experience are possible.

8. MONOGAMY AND POLYAMORY

Faith and faithfulness mean different things to different people. In many relationships love or sex outside of the primary relationship is a betrayal. In a monogamous relationship one of the primary agreements of the relationship is sexual exclusivity between the partners. Those in non-monogamous or polyamorous relationships may embrace a philosophy that love is not a scarce commodity, and open their relationship to include more than one other person. Polygamy, or marrying more than one person, is illegal in the United States, but many times the realities of relationships within the law are more complex than the legal code can reflect.

Different types of commitments have different agreements and boundaries drawn. Love of many types can be extended to others: erotic attachments, deep intimacy of understanding and friendship, commitments of raising children or shared projects can tie people together over time. However, even when a relationship is open to include multiple sexual partners or having other long-term commitments, issues of jealousy and fear about losing a partner can surface. In this game, the places that these difficulties can arise are represented by Character Lines. These are agreements, explicit or implicit, in the relationship that there are lines that cannot be crossed without repercussions. They are actions that if done with someone outside of the relationship constitute a betrayal of trust.

Sex is the default line in all relationships in the game, but the players may choose to cross that line off if it is not an issue in the relationship, and replace it with something else. Examples of other lines are: going to eat at their favorite restaurant, showing someone else the book you are writing, kissing, or having sex in *your* bed. It may be in fact that these Lines point to other issues. There may be real fears that they symbolize or other deeper issues that are too difficult to put into words. But the Lines are the areas where anger and insecurity come to light and are the flashpoints for conflict.



Characters



THE STEPS OF CHARACTER CREATION (45 MIN.)

The players collaboratively create characters who make up a group of friends and acquaintances. Gather the group around a table or central place where they can write up their characters and share information. Parts of the process are done together. For others, the players work together in pairs to flesh out their characters' relationships. All the information is then shared with the group and the characters are put into play in their complex and tangled emotional webs. Be aware of the length of this process in order to leave plenty of time to play. Larger groups may take longer.

HOW TO CREATE CHARACTERS:

1. Individually: Choose Core Issues and Areas, p. 13
2. As a Group: Assign relationships among characters, p. 15
3. In Pairs: Create Connections (Intimacy, Passion and Commitment), p. 16
4. By choosing Connection Levels, p. 17-18
5. If in a Couple go to, p. 18
6. Couples Choose Lines, p. 18-19
7. Singletons make Best Friends, p. 19
8. All characters have a Friend, p. 19
9. As a Group: Share information, p. 20
10. As you do so, make Locations, p. 20
11. Then choose New Flames, p. 20

1. CORE ISSUES AND AREAS

Each player creates a character. Choose a name and a Core Issue.

CORE ISSUES: These are problems, areas of focus or weak spots for the character. It is an aspect of their life that has brought the character grief or heartache in the past and may still do so in the present.

EXAMPLE CORE ISSUES:

*Neglect, abandonment, fear, anger, honesty,
insecurity, superiority, control, sacrifice, inferiority,
madness, depression, attachment, loneliness,
commitment, intimacy, hate, rage, apathy.*

Each player chooses an Issue on their own and writes it on their character sheet. The word alone is fine. More information will be added by the rest of the group in the next step.

Players may wish to choose something that they personally feel troubled by or have experience with in their own lives. This is completely optional, and if done need not be shared with the other players. (See **PLAYING CLOSE TO HOME**, page 10)

Next, the other players choose **AREAS** of life that the Core Issue deeply affects for each character.

AREAS: These are activities, personality traits, related concepts or some other way that the Core Issue could manifest in someone's life. The other players suggest five Areas in total for each character. So if there are more than five players, not all players need to provide an Area for a given character.

The player writes the Areas on their character sheet below the Core Issue.

EXAMPLE CORE ISSUES AND AREAS:

Neglect: *alone, children, poverty, housework, emptiness.*

Anger: *temper, driving, internet, arguments, intolerance.*

Sacrifice: *career, children, silenced, caretaking, martyr.*

Tip for Play:

For each player, create a name tag with their character's name on it. Write the character's Core Issue on it as well.

THE ROLE OF CORE ISSUES IN PLAY

The Core Issues are underlying motivations for the characters as well as themes for play.

Players can keep the Core Issue in mind while acting in character. It will color the character's experience of the world and influence the choices they make. See where it leads you as you play. Does the character remain tied down by these emotions? Do they remain the same?

Scenes may be framed using the Core Issues as a jumping-off point. For example, Flashback Scenes specifically illustrate a character's Core Issue (See FLASHBACK SCENES page 25). Scenes in the present can involve the Areas and Issues directly by placing the characters in a situation that evokes them.

The Director and the other players can mirror and echo events or details from the flashback scenes in the present of the game. How do the events of the past continue to influence the present?

Overall, use the Issues as inspiration and allow parallels to arise naturally. The Core Issues are the framework upon which the character is formed. Listen to one another and follow each others' lead.

MORE ABOUT THE CHARACTER

Use the Core Issues and Areas to suggest details about the character. What do they do for a living? What hobbies do they have in which these issues play out? What might their family of origin be like? What aspects of their personality can you now envision?

Loose ideas are best at this stage. These ideas will be shared with the group and fleshed out with the help of other players in the next few steps.



2. CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

As a group, assign all the relationships. Once this is completed, break up into pairs to allow players to create the relationships among their characters together.

The characters have relationships with one another. Some have a Partner, some have a Best Friend, all have a Friend. There may be Single characters in the game and the number of couples varies. The configurations of relationships among the characters depends on the number of players:

RELATIONSHIPS TYPES AND NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

Four players: two singletons and one couple.

Five players: two couples and one singleton.

Six players: two couples, and two singletons

Seven players: three couples and one singleton.

Eight players: three couples and two singletons

First, choose the COUPLES: Some characters are in long-term, committed romantic COUPLE relationships. These characters are each other's PARTNER. Characters not in a Couple are Single.

Then choose BEST FRIENDS: Single characters, called SINGLETONS, each have a BEST FRIEND. This is an important person in their life that they rely on and open up to about matters of the heart. If there are no Singletons there are no Best Friends.

Then choose FRIENDS: Everyone has a FRIEND among the characters who is not their Partner or their Best Friend.

Assigning Couples: by Choice or Randomly

To assign by choice, the group talks about which characters make sense as couples, based on their Issues or Areas and other information that the players have created about their characters.

To assign randomly, flip a coin or use a die to choose which characters go with which. Those not matched with another are single characters.

As a default, it is recommended to **choose** who will be in the Couples.

3. CONNECTIONS: INTIMACY, PASSION AND COMMITMENT

Connections are aspects of the characters' relationships. They are used to guide the players in making up the shared lives of the characters.

They fall into three categories:

THE THREE TYPES OF CONNECTIONS:

INTIMACY: understanding of one another, or shared history

PASSION: sexual attraction and compatibility

COMMITMENT: important shared goals and activities

Each type of Relationship has a certain number of Connections associated with it. They also have Levels which are described on the next page.

TYPES OF CONNECTIONS FOR RELATIONSHIP TYPES:

Couples share Connections of all three types:

Intimacy, Passion and Commitment.

Levels: One is High, one is Moderate, one is Low.

Best Friends share two of the three:

Intimacy and Commitment.

Levels: Intimacy is High, Commitment is Moderate or Low.

Friends have one Connection:

either Intimacy or Commitment.

Level: The connection is High, Moderate or Low.



CONNECTION LEVELS:

Each Connection is HIGH, MODERATE or LOW. These mean different things for each type of Connection.

FOR INTIMACY:

High means the characters know each other very well. For example, they may be old friends from childhood, or were college buddies. In a Couple relationship, it may mean that these two have been through a lot together, or are extremely open with one another.

Moderate means they know each other fairly well. Perhaps they have worked together for a while, or are friendly neighbors. In a Couple relationship, it may mean that they have been together for just a few years or are perhaps beginning to take each other for granted.

Low means the characters don't know each other well. This may be because they have a shallow relationship, or because they have lost touch with who the other is over time. Perhaps they know each other from work, but don't get together socially. They might be a brand new couple, still getting to know one another. They may also be very unaware of themselves and one another.



FOR PASSION:

High means the characters have a strong desire for one another. They can't keep their hands off of one another and sparks fly.

Moderate means they are attracted to one another and have a comfortable sexual connection.

Low means the characters are not connecting sexually. Either they are mismatched or have lost their desire for one another over time.

FOR COMMITMENT:

High means the characters share three specific commitments (see the list of examples on the next page). Their lives are deeply intertwined and they need one another for many things important to them.

Moderate means they share two specific commitments. There is a lot of overlap in their activities.

Low means the characters share one specific commitment. They have one thing that brings them together regularly.

EXAMPLE COMMITMENTS:

Home and Household: *live together, own a home, have children, paying off debt, inherited a delapidated Victorian home, adopting a child together, have a parrot, building a house, are remodeling, putting kids through college, breed bulldogs, garden together, jog, have a rent controlled apartment, have stocks.*

Work: *are lawyers in the same law firm, own a publishing business together, run a bodega (grocery store) together, are colleagues at a research University, operate a farm together, are a taxi driver and their dispatcher, work in the same office, teach at the same high school, work at Staples, landscape together.*

Creative Endeavors: *writing a book together, a painter and their gallery owner, research wetland ecology together, a sculptor and model, create lavish decorative gardens, write and publish games together, make quilts, bowl in a league together, hike the Appalachian trail, are running for office, run larps.*

Write the appropriate number of Commitments down on the character sheet.

4. COMPLETING RELATIONSHIPS

Once the Connection Levels have been chosen the players come up with details about their characters' lives. Use the following steps for each type of relationship: Couples, Best Friends and Friends.

COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS:

Based on the Connections, answer questions about the characters such as: Are they married? Living together? How long have they been together? Do they have children? What do they do for a living? Who is the main bread winner?

And answer some questions about the relationship: Why is the low aspect low? The high, high? What does it say about their sex life or how well they know each other? Are they new to the relationship, or have they grown apart? What are the things they can't let go of? What keeps them together? What do they enjoy? Make notes of the key elements on the character sheet.

Choose LINES: Lines are things that are sacred, or sore spots, in the relationship. They are things unique to the relationship that if done or shared with someone else would be extremely hurtful. See examples on next page. Only Couples have lines.

EXAMPLE LINES:

have sex, go to the park with kids, read out loud to one another, kiss, sleep in their bed, play tennis, write together, go to a special restaurant, fish, hold hands, tell dirty jokes, walk in the cemetery.

Choose three Lines for each character. They are different for each member of the Couple—what would feel like a betrayal is unique to each person based on their past history and sense of what is precious and important about the relationship. Two characters may happen to have the same line, but they should not all be the same. Write them on the character sheet.

Having sex is a default line for Couples. It is written in already on the character sheet as one of the lines. So for most Couples each player will have to choose two for their characters. However, sex is not a required line for the characters. Whether it is a Line or not is a defining feature of a relationship. To play a Couple in an open or polyamorous (see discussion of Polyamory in GUIDELINES FOR PLAY section, page 11) relationship, cross “sex” off of the Lines section and replace it with some other form of physical or emotional intimacy that would cause hard feelings if shared with someone else.

Tip for Play:

LINES will be used to set events in motion that will tempt characters and test relationships. Choose things that seem true to the character, or *play close to home* and choose things that have been an issue for you. Find your own comfort level. Be daring. Explore.

BEST FRIEND AND FRIEND RELATIONSHIPS:

Answer some basic questions about the relationship: How do they know each other? Do they work together? Did they meet through a Partner or live near one another? What is the nature of their friendship?

Based on the Connections, answer some further questions about the characters: If they have a high intimacy, are they old friends? From how far back? Did they live together, back in the day? And if so, what was that like? What are their Commitments? What do they share? For example, do they co-moderate a popular internet forum? Design games together? Do ritual? Co-own a house?

Record major points of this information on the character sheet.

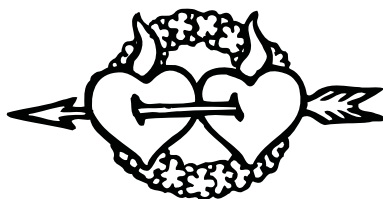
5. SHARE INFORMATION AND CREATE LOCATIONS

After all the players have spoken with each person their character has a relationship with, bring the whole group back together. Go around and share the information gathered so far. Clarify relationships throughout the group: who works with whom? Who knows who? Is there something that pulls this social circle together? Perhaps they all work together, or know one another from college. There may be intersecting social circles that cross with one or two people.

Create LOCATIONS: As you share information, looking at the commitments, jobs, interests, and Lines created, make a list of locations where scenes may take place. Brainstorm up to about a dozen locations. Write this up on paper or board and post where all may see. These will be places where scenes will occur. A few may become central to the plot and be used again and again. Having a list can inject fresh ideas if inspiration is needed during the game.

6. CREATE NEW FLAMES

The last step of character creation is the step that throws the game into motion. From among characters, choose pairs of **NEW FLAMES**.



These are characters who will gain a strong, new attraction to one another during the Initiation stage. They may be Friends, but must not be Partners or Best Friends already.

The New Flames gain a High Passion Connection. If they already have a Friend relationship, this is created in addition to their existing Connection.

To choose New Flames, begin with any Singletons. They must always be part of a New Flame pair with someone in a Couple. Choose randomly, using dice or names drawn from a hat, which character will be their new love interest. When the Singletons have been accounted for, choose a remaining Partner randomly and then assign them a New Flame, and so on.

Please Note:

- With an odd number of players, a character may be left out.
- In a game with four players there is only one valid choice to be made: the Singletons pair with the member of the couple who is not their Best Friend.
- Throw out results that match two Singletons or two Partners from the same Couple. Modify results to avoid two Partners being left at the end.

Things are getting hot! Now take a short break and in a few minutes come back to start playing the game.

Playing the Game ☀



STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

To play the game, the players tell a story by acting out what their characters do. The action takes place in a simple SET, similar to what might be used for an improvised play. The players collaborate on creating interesting situations inspired by a story arc given in the game. One player may act as the DIRECTOR who helps the other players play out the unfolding drama.

The game takes place in STAGES that form a story arc. Each Stage is made up of individual SCENES. Some are Scenes set in the present and some are FLASHBACKS. The Flashbacks are Scenes from the characters' pasts that tell us more about how they have come to be the way they are, and how their Core Issue informs their life and loves.

1. ROLES OF PLAYERS AND THE DIRECTOR

THE PLAYERS

The players have several roles in this game. Their primary role is to play out the actions and words of the character they made during character creation. They may also play other characters if needed during other times when other players' characters are the focus of the action. At other times, when not in a scene, players watch other players do these things.

An important part of playing this game involves paying attention to what the other players do and say as their characters. This is both when a player is participating in a scene, and when they are just watching. Watching and listening during a scene makes it easier for a player to be able to build on the other players' actions, and makes for more enjoyable play and more interesting scenes.

Paying attention while being in the audience keeps the players informed of what is going on for the other characters in the game. This helps each person be able to make connections between their stories and the others, making the whole story more coherent. This can also give a player more ideas about what they will do when in their own scenes and provides an opportunity for them to help each other out by making suggestions if needed. Watching other scenes is quite fun, and listening carefully shows respect for the other players.

THE DIRECTOR

One player may take the role of a Director in the Game. To do so, they do not play a character and assume responsibility for various tasks that are needed to keep the story flowing. The tasks are **CALLING FOR SCENES**, **CALLING FOR FLASHBACKS**, **ASKING QUESTIONS**, **MAKING SUGGESTIONS**, and **ENDING SCENES AND FLASHBACKS**. They are described in the next section.

There may be two directors if desired, especially if there are many characters. Alternatively, there may be no specific Director, and all the players can assume responsibility for the tasks of Directing, discussed in further depth on the next page (see **Everyone Directs** in **OTHER WAYS TO PLAY** section, p. 38). Having a Director can be especially helpful the first time a group plays.

The Director's responsibility is to help the game run smoothly. They should be familiar with the rules and bring materials needed for the game. They also keep track of time and pace the activities to allow enough time for all to be completed. The Director may share these responsibilities and ask others to take responsibilities, but the bottom line is that if no one else does something needed, they are there to step in and make it happen.

TASKS OF DIRECTING: CALLING FOR SCENES (SEE PAGE 25)

The game is made up of many Scenes. The Director chooses which characters' scenes happen in what order within the Stages. There is a flow to how these take place: for example, starting a Stage off with a scene that promises to be conflict-ridden can start things with a bang. Or choosing a scene that is cheerful or hopeful can provide contrast when things have gotten intense and overwhelming. Try to balance screen time for players. If a scene has additional characters and a player hasn't been in a scene lately, the Director may suggest that this player be cast in them, or that their character be involved.



CALLING FOR FLASHBACKS (SEE PAGE 25)

Flashbacks happen intermittently within each Stage. Directors choose which character has one, and when they occur. For Flashbacks ideas, ask for player suggestions and look to what the characters have been discussing in their other Scenes. Focus on the character's Core Issue.

ASKING QUESTIONS

If a player is unsure of what to do, the Director or any player may prompt them by asking questions. Ask questions that stir up Core Issues, or problems made up in character creation. Or that help us understand more of what the character is thinking or feeling. For example, "Do you always do the dishes?" "Didn't he tell his last girlfriend that?" "What did you tell the kids they could do?"

MAKING SUGGESTIONS

Directors, and others, may also suggest things to incorporate into a scene. Suggest that the children join the parents for example, or that a favorite song to suddenly play on the radio. The suggestions are intended to give the players more to work with in the scene, to increase the pressure or to add something to the scene.

ENDING SCENES AND FLASHBACKS

The goal of each scene is for us to be able to understand how the characters feel and relate to one another. Some scenes will have major conflicts, others will be simple vignettes of moments in the character's lives. As discussed in the description of scenes, end scenes promptly when they have fulfilled their purpose. The Director is responsible for watching for satisfying moments to complete a scene, as well as for allowing them to go on long enough for the players to really dig into their characters.

2. ARRANGING THE SPACE

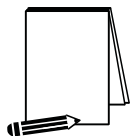
When playing, you may wish to have a space that is free of other activity and noise in which to run the game. This will allow the players to be able to concentrate on the action and to hear one another better. It will also provide privacy which may be desirable given the potentially adult content of the game. If no separate space is available, a quiet corner of a large shared space will be adequate, especially for a smaller group. Being able to hear each other can become an issue, however, and making sure everyone is close enough to be able to listen will be important.

Designate areas of the space as the AUDIENCE AREA and the SET. Have the Audience Area face the Set. Place enough chairs there to allow those who are not involved in a given scene to be able to sit and watch. Place the audience close enough to the Set to be able to easily hear what is said by the acting players. If people want to converse or discuss what they will do in an upcoming scene, they may wish to move to a different area so they will not distract others.

The Set should be a fairly spacious, open area that will be used to represent the various places where the story of the game takes place. The Set should be large enough to accommodate all the players during times when all are present. Clear the area of extraneous objects, putting bags and character sheets in the Audience Area or elsewhere where they will not be disturbed.

Have several chairs and a table or two to use as props. The players will use them to represent the setting. For example, two chairs next to one another could be a sofa. With a table they could be used for a booth at a diner. Simple symbolic props may be used, such as a pen for a rose or a pillow for a child. But no special costuming or set decoration are needed.

Playing the game can be a thirsty job. If possible, provide water for the players. Having snacks on hand or food to eat at the end of play is also recommended. Name tags for the players, extra paper, tape and markers will be useful for posting things for all to see and refer to during the game.



3. SCENES AND FLASHBACKS

SCENES

A **SCENE** is a sequence of events much like those in a scene of a film or a play. The players interact with each other in character and explore the situations that the characters find themselves in.

For each of the Stages there are certain rules about how to frame the Scenes, such as deciding where the Scene takes place and who is present. The Escalation Stage has a special role for other players to take in the Scene, tempting or warning off the characters from crossing Lines. The specific rules for each Stage are given in the section where they are described.

During a scene when a player's character is not present they watch the others act, from the audience area. They may also opt to play another character who is needed in a scene to support the other players.

Watch for a good moment to end a Scene. It may be when a telling remark has been made or when decisive action has taken place. End the scene while it still sizzles with tension, rather than allowing it to fizzle out. End it there and leave us hanging, allowing the action to move on to the next set of characters.

Since there are many players and many Scenes to be played out, balance the time devoted to the various Scenes. As a rule of thumb, if a Scene is going longer than 10 minutes, it may be time to end it.

FLASHBACKS

FLASHBACKS are special types of Scenes that involve playing out an episode from a character's past. Choose a situation for the character to be involved in that highlights their Core Issue. You may connect it to events in the Scenes from the present by playing out something that has been mentioned. For example, if a character with an Abandonment Core Issue has a tense scene where their partner accuses them of being like their father who ran off on their family, they could then play out a Flashback involving the father. Perhaps it would be the last time the character saw the father, or a time when the character saw him later in life and confronted him.

During each Stage, have just one or two Flashbacks. This allows the players to explore the character's past, while keeping the main focus of the story on the present issues of the characters. Ideally, all characters get to have one.

End a Flashback when the situation naturally comes to a close, or when the reason why the Scene relates to the Issue is made abundantly clear.

4. THE STAGES OF THE GAME

SETTING THE STAGE: Partners in their daily life: simple stresses and joys
Singletons with Best friend: looking for love

~Flashbacks for Singletons

INITIATION: (Group Scene) everyone is together and the New Flames ignite

FOLLOW-THROUGH: the New Flames alone together

If a character is Left Out, have scene with Friend: how is life?

~Flashbacks for Left Out or any character

DEVELOPMENT: back with the Partner, how is this going to work?

Singletons, scene with Best Friend: what is happening? with who?

~Flashbacks for any characters

ESCALATION: New Flames negotiating lines of their relationships. Will they cross them? Angel and devil prompt characters during scenes.

REVELATIONS: how do they find out? what is like to be with their old Partner now?

~Flashbacks for any character

RESOLUTION: (Group Scene) the whole group is united, what has been lost? What can be saved?

DENOUMENT: Looking back on the events of this game from the future

The Stages form the arc of a story:

~ People live their lives, either in couples dealing with the issues of life and the changes their lives have undergone, or singly seeking love and companionship.

~ They meet someone who they become madly attracted to or fall for someone they already know (who is not their mate).

~ The new love interests talk and see what there is between them, and then go back to their partner or good friend and talk about what the new interest has brought up.

~ The new potential relationships escalate, and an opportunity comes to take a step that would cross a line in their current relationship. What do they do?

~ This decision, full of doubts and desires, has fall-out on their life. They face the consequences or reap the benefits, and life goes on.

~ At the very end, the characters speak from a future point, showing us how these events have shaped their lives, or faded away from memory.

STAGES OF THE GAME

I. SETTING THE STAGE

In the first stage, Couples have scenes where they interact together, giving all the players insight into the relationships as they exist at the start of the game.

Singletons have scenes with their Best Friend where they reflect on their single status and what relationships and other issues are important in their life.



FRAMING THE COUPLE SCENES:

Each couple gets a scene together. These players choose a Location, and a non-involved player chooses an activity for the characters. Pick an activity that relates to one (or both) of the character's issues.

During the scene, the players interact in character, to get a sense of how they relate. The Director and other players may ask questions to help the players in the scene get into the characters or move the scene toward juicy things that were discussed during character creation.

For example, they could ask one of these questions: Who always does the dishes? How do you feel about that? What are your pet names for one another? Who do the kids listen to? When did you last have sex? This should be done judiciously, but can be helpful, especially if the players have a hard time getting into a groove with one another.

FRAMING THE SINGLETON SCENES:

Singletons have a scene with their Best Friend. These players choose a Location, based on their Connections and what they know about their relationship with their friend. The Friend should ask the Singleton about relationships and how they feel about being alone.

FLASHBACK SCENES: After the scene is done, one or both Singleton players frame a flashback from the character's past that has to do with their core issue. Raise relationship issues if possible. Any player with an idea may suggest what the scene is. If there is a Director, it's their responsibility to solicit suggestions or make one that can be used.

II. INITIATION

In this Stage, the characters are all together, brought together by some event or social gathering. All players are involved. If there is a Director, they may watch, or involve themselves in the scene by being another guest, waiter providing hors d'oeuvres or whatever may make sense for the situation chosen by the group.

FRAMING THE GROUP SCENE: The group decides what event it is that brings all the characters together. It may be a party, or a wedding, perhaps a concert or a funeral. Whatever fits for this group of friends. This scene is played out in a larp style, which is to say, all action happens at the same time with no one sitting aside and watching. The players interact in character with one another and mingle amongst one another throughout the set.

During the scene, the New Flames will meet one another and strike up a flirtation. Friends may cover for one another by talking to the other partner, or people may break off into another room for a tete-a-tete. At the start of the scene, Couples are together and Singletons enter alone. During the scene, the New Flame pairs get together and sparks fly. Once the New Flames are finished and all couples have come back together, end the scene. A bell or chime may be used to let people know when they should start thinking about wrapping up their interactions.

III. FOLLOW-THROUGH

In this scene, the New Flames have a chance to follow up on what began at the Initiation Stage. Players will have scenes in New Flame pairs and if a character has been left out of the new pairings, they get a Flashback Scene.

FRAMING THE NEW FLAMES SCENES: Each set of New Flames has a scene together. A non-involved player chooses where they meet. The players in

the scene choose how or why they get together (by accident, someone calls, they drop by work etc.). During this scene the characters test out the boundaries of their attraction and may talk about how the other partner would feel about it.



FLASHBACK: If there is a character who is left out of the New Flames, play out a Flashback from the character's life that involves their Core Issue.

IV. DEVELOPMENT

In this scene, we see the original Couples together again. We get to see how the development of the flirtation is affecting their relationship. Singletons talk with their Best Friend about the possible relationship. Follow or intersperse these scenes with a Flashback Scene or two.

FRAMING THE COUPLE SCENES: The original couples are together. Time has passed and they have been in further contact with the New Flames. The players choose something they are doing together that relates to one of their Commitments. Do they tell each other they are falling in love with someone else? Do they ask to be able to pursue this? Does the other suspect? Do they ask suspicious questions?



FRAMING SINGLETON SCENES: The Singletons get together with their Best Friend again and talk about their New Flame. The players choose the setting. The Best Friend can talk about pros and cons, or ask compelling questions. This may also bring up potential complications if the Best Friend knows the New Flame!

FRAMING FLASHBACK SCENES: Any character may have a Flashback Scene. Do one or two at some point throughout the Stage. Players may request one for a character, or the Director should do so. The player who calls for it may suggest a situation, or ask for suggestions from the others about what it should be.

TIPS FOR PLAY:

The players may wish to confer with one another before doing a scene together, to come up with ideas for what they will do in the scene, or what the characters would think is important. This is not required, but some players may benefit from this kind of collaboration.

Also, pay attention to what your fellow players say about their characters. Bring up loose ends or dark secrets from their past that will help put pressure on them in the scenes. Poke at the sore spots. And also, be gentle. These may be issues the players have dealt with themselves, or watched in ones they loved. Approach dealing adversity with a caring attitude, and be open to when others return the favor. We bring these into the game to help each other examine them from the inside out.

V. ESCALATION

In this scene, everyone's mettle is tested. The New Flames meet again, this time with something at stake. Their new relationship has developed to such a degree that they are approaching a turning point. Some Lines in relationships between Partners are in danger of being crossed. Almost everyone will get involved in figuring out whether this happens.



FRAMING THE NEW FLAME SCENES: The players of the Partners of the New Flames say where the scene takes place, and how the characters are coming close to crossing a Line in the original relationship. The players get to show how their characters act in this situation. How are they together?

During the scene, other players take part—not as their usual character, but as “ANGELS and DEVILS”. Devils encourage a New Flame to follow their desires and disregard common sense and their Partner’s wishes. Angels encourage them to be cautious and think of how others would see things.

There is an angel and devil pair for each New Flame who has a Partner. The player of the Partner gets to play either the devil or the angel—that player’s choice. Another player plays the one not chosen. These players stand on either side of the character they are focusing on and tempt or cajole the player into either crossing the Line or respecting it. The whole arsenal of the character’s makeup, all the fears and hopes, the needs and desires, the Core Issue and Commitments are all fair game.

Very important Tip for Play: allow time for the Flames to listen, respond and talk. Having three people talking to you all at once can be overwhelming. Take pauses.

Meanwhile, the New Flames are playing out their Scene, interacting with one another while listening to what the angels and devils say. They are considering what they should do and the ramifications it will have on their life and relationships. Singleton New Flames are free to tempt the other.

When a New Flame player makes a decision about what to do, they end the Scene by taking the hand of either their angel or their devil. This indicates the course of action the character will take: to cross the Line or not. If there are two sets of angels and devils, the New Flame may first take the other Flame’s hand, to give them a chance to choose at the same time, if they wish.

VI. REVELATIONS

In this Stage, the fallout from the Escalation Scenes is felt. The Couples have scenes together, and Singeltons have a moment to reflect with a friend or alone. Partners may now find out about what has been going on. Or it may just be obvious that the dynamic between the characters has changed in some way. Play a brief scene that gives a taste of what change this experience is bringing to the characters' lives.

FRAMING THE VARIOUS SCENES: Each pair of Couples has a scene together. Choose a situation that shows something about what happened in the Escalation phase. Highlight whatever has been changed or lost, or regained. Singletons have a scene with their Best Friend or a Friend. Or perhaps they have a scene alone where they reflect on what has occurred. The players in the scene choose where the scene takes place and what the characters are doing.

In a four player game, or if a game is running long on time, this Stage may be omitted.



VII. RESOLUTION

In this scene, the group is reunited, and but things have likely changed. Brought together again by some event, they can express their feelings to the others, or show their new relationship off to the group. Or they may come into contact with the potential lover and have to deal with the awkwardness of past rejection. Arguments and retributions may occur. Noisy outings of private affairs. Or quiet recognition of how things can change and yet stay the same. Bring it all to this scene.

FRAMING THE GROUP SCENE: All the characters are present. The players decide what event will bring the characters together once more. Perhaps it is related to the Initiation Stage scene: the party celebrating a successful political campaign launched in the earlier scene, or another wedding caused by the first. Fall out from the climax takes place. Follow up conversations happen between characters. Relationships are shored up or abandoned.

End the scene when all the players have had their opportunity to gain closure on their character's story. The Director may call the scene, or if the event has a natural end, someone may suggest that it come to a close by saying that happens. Decide on a signal, like a raised index finger, for players to use to say, "I need more time." End when all are ready.

VIII. DENOUMENT

In the Denouement, we have a last look at the characters, after time has passed since events in the game. Play out short scenes that show what is new in the character's lives and perhaps what perspective the characters have gained.

FRAMING THE SCENES: Players choose a Location and a situation for their characters, set some time in the future from what occurred in the Resolution Stage.

Which characters will be in the Scenes depends entirely up on what has happened in the Escala-



tion and Resolution Scenes. If Couples stayed together, they have a scene together. If New Flames came together, they do instead. For example if two New Flames have left their partners and gone away together, the scene could involve seeing them settling in to a new home together, showing the baggage they bring to both home and relationship as well as what they've found in one another—or how it has faded. Or, if a broader partnership including more than just two has emerged, let us see how they are together, what their new life is like walking a different path.

Former Singletons may be involved in Scenes with their New Flames. If not, have a Scene with a friend—it may not be the old Best Friend anymore—talking about their experiences and saying what their plans are for the future.

The characters are changed by their experiences, even if they choose to remain in their old relationships—they are different. What is it that has changed? What questions have been answered for them? What new directions have they found? What has been lost? What has been gained?



Endings and Resolutions



FINISHING THE GAME

Set time aside at the end of play to talk about the game and **DEBRIEF**. Give the players time to hear about each others' experiences and to reflect on what their characters did during the game. Answer some questions together about what it was like to play the characters and ponder why they made the choices that they did.

DEBRIEFING

Debriefing together gives time for players to gain closure with the game. When determining the time needed to play, allow for time at the end to share about the experiences each person has had. This is particularly useful if the players have opted to play close to home. Being able to talk to others who took part in the same experiences is a valuable way of coming to terms with the events. Also, others may have valuable insights to offer about how they saw the character, their strengths and weaknesses, or what they imagine about the future of the characters after the game.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What changed for the characters during the course of the game?

What surprised you about what they did, especially your character?

Why did they make their choices?

How did their Core Issues make a difference?

What was it like for you to play?

REFLECTING ON THE CORE ISSUES

Give yourself a chance to reflect on the character and if you wish, share how playing out the Core Issue felt. Was it one that related to your life? Was it one that you've seen in others that you were curious about? Do you have more insight into what it is like to feel that way?

The Players may ask each other to give them feedback on what it was like to interact with their character. What was it like to be married to a controlling spouse? How did the characters' issues fit together? How did they pull them apart? What kept them together in the end, or what were the reasons for them parting? What about the New Flame offered the greatest temptations? What held the characters back?

Remember to think about both sides, the strong points and the frailties in the characters and in their relationships. The characters' weaknesses can be as illuminating as their strengths. Many times, the Core Issue such as fear, insecurity or loneliness is what makes a player decide not to leave the safety of the initial relationship, even in the face of differences or lack of fulfillment. Also, the events may highlight the bonds of loyalty and appreciation that the characters hold for one another, and for their own choices in life. Look at the complexities of change that have occurred.

Other Ways to Play



VARIATIONS ON THE GAME

There are other techniques that can be used to play this game. Experiment with different ways to play. Also, a table-top role playing game variant.

MORE TECHNIQUES FOR THE MAIN GAME:

1. Everyone Directs, p. 36
2. Internal Monologues, p. 37
3. Re-play scenes, p. 37
4. More Flashbacks, p. 37
5. Doubling, p. 38
6. Expressionistic play, p. 38-39
7. Simultaneous Scenes, p. 39

TABLE-TOP VERSION OF UNDER MY SKIN, p. 40-44

1. Insight Points, Drama Points, and Desires, p. 40
2. Lines, and Insight and Drama Dice, p. 41
3. Triggering and Outcomes, p. 42
4. Stages of the Game, p. 42-43
5. Stages of the Game, Setting the Stage and Follow-Through, p. 43
6. Development, Escalation and Denouement, p. 44
7. Ending the Game, p. 33

1. EVERYONE DIRECTS

The role of the Director is to help the players keep the story flowing, and to tease out the meaty issues the characters express. This can also be accomplished by having all the players work together to take on the responsibilities of Directing. For example, if the whole group Directs, the sense of flow of scenes is stewarded by everyone. Each person is responsible for watching for ways to keep the action moving and the tone varied and compelling.

The following are two variants that may be used if there is no Director. One is to pre-plan when Flashbacks will occur. The other is to have Players not in a given Scene be the ones who Direct. These may be combined.

PRE-PLANNED FLASHBACKS

Instead of choosing ad hoc when Flashbacks will occur, at the start of the game, the players can choose when to have their character's flashback. This can then inform the framing of scenes, since they will know when theirs is coming up, they and others can keep that in mind and lead scenes to intersect with the character's Core Issue. Order can also be given to when other scenes are played out. A generic order can be given (e.g. this couple always goes first, then that couple, then the Singletons etc.)



OUT PLAYERS DIRECT

In this variant, Players who are not playing in a scene take more responsibility for Directorial tasks. For example, they may jump in at an appropriate pause and ask "Is this scene done?" or call "Cut!" They may end a scene that has reached an appropriately rich moment. Or they may suggest who does a flashback based on how a scene was played. People who are not in a scene have more leisure time to think about these issues, and also are feeling the scene as a whole so they can give the players input and feedback. And everyone will have a chance to do so since scenes will rotate among the players.

3. OTHER TECHNIQUES FOR THE MAIN GAME

There are more neat tricks that can be used in playing a game like this to give the players different ways to explore the characters and gain insight into what they are thinking. After playing the game through once, players may wish to experiment with including one or two of these other techniques. These are used in Jeepform play and many more may be found online at: <http://www.jeepen.org/>

INTERNAL MONOLOGUES

During a scene when their character is present, a player may signal everyone that they will do an Internal Monologue. This is an in character speech that gives insight into what the character is thinking or feeling at this time. The player may signal this by raising their hand and stepping out of the scene, facing the watching players and addressing them directly. These may occur at set times, for example at the end of each of the opening scenes in the Setting the Stage phase, or immediately following a flashback sequence. Internal monologue may also be given by a separate player for a given character. See Doubling, on page 40.



RE-PLAYING SCENES

At the end of a scene the Director or a player may ask to Re-play a scene. They may do this if a scene didn't quite gel and they players would like another opportunity to get the characters right or to go further than they had the first time. It may also be done to take a different spin on a scene—it could be that they play out how the character wishes something had gone. A player in the scene could even give direction to other players if this is the case, leading them to play out a character's fantasy or darkest nightmare. Or, a scene can be replayed, with the same actions and general words used, but played with a different slant, to show how different characters saw the events. In this case, a player could start out the other players with direction for their motivation ("you really don't want to have sex with me any more" or "you're actually thinking of your new Flame right now"). Which is the "true" interpretation is up in the air. What is the truth in any situation when two people see things differently?

MORE FLASHBACKS

Characters may have multiple flashbacks. Some could be from their long past or early childhood, relating to why their Core Issue was formed. They could be from earlier parts of their relationship, giving everyone insight into how the relationship had changed, what was lost or gained. They could be from

the character's imagination of what might have been, or what others dreamed about their life, but which did not come to pass. This is recommended for games with fewer players, or in the tabletop version. Games with up to 8 players tend to run long, so this might add too much time onto the game.

DOUBLING

In Doubling, two (or more) players portray one character. They may be expressing internal vs. external aspects of the character e.g. what the character shows to others vs. what they feel inside. Or they may be embodying different aspects of the character's personality, their fears vs. their hopes. They may represent different phases of the character's life, e.g. the character as a child commenting on what they do as an adult. Or as in one playtest, two characters played the more male or more female aspected parts of a character who was in the process of transitioning their gender from male to female. Also, the Angels and Devils in the Escalation Stage are a form of Doubling combined with Internal Monologue.

EXPRESSIONISTIC PLAY

In any given scene, elements may be introduced to how the scene is played out that reflect and heighten how the emotions of the characters are expressed, especially ones those concerning Core Issues. For example, if a character is feeling overwhelmed or crazy, the other players in the scene might reflect this by talking faster and faster, or having their words tumble over one another. If a character is feeling isolated, a scene could be played out with the spaces between characters exaggerated—the main player being located a long distance away from others in the scene.

Or, the internal state of a character could be represented externally by the player. For example, if a character is feeling lost or regretful, the player might play the character curled up in a ball on the floor, saying their lines as best they may, while the other characters interact with them as though they were standing or sitting and going about their lives normally.



Doubling may be used to allow someone to represent the internal state of a character while someone else plays out what is shown to others, for example, one character talks normally to others while another player portraying their feelings, perhaps angry, frightened or desperately sad.

Care should be taken to apply these techniques in functional ways. For example, the Angels and Devils from the Climax phase can easily overwhelm the player they are focusing on if don't give that player a chance to listen and react to each in turn. However, in other scenes, having dialogue overlap and become overwhelming may illustrate what the character is experiencing. Be sure to match techniques to what is needed for the scene, and attend to player needs. Don't be afraid to call a break, or to direct players to give each other space if a player is having a hard time reacting to what is played.

SIMULTANEOUS SCENES

Scenes between characters may be conducted at the same time. Useful for a game running long, this condenses the time needed for scenes. Especially in games of 6 or more players, this may be necessary. Stages this may be done with are Follow-Through, Development or Revelations. If possible, play scenes simultaneously in only one Stage. Being able to watch each other gives the other players information about the characters which they may need for later scenes.



TABLETOP VERSION OF UNDER MY SKIN

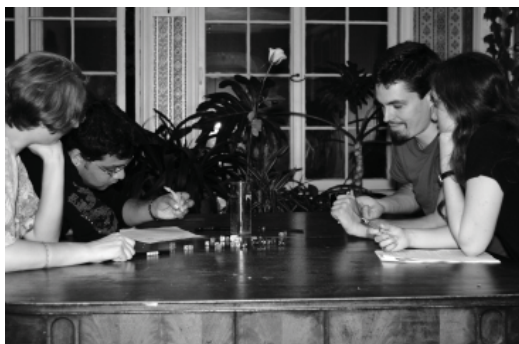
An alternate form of the game.

Number of players: 4 or 6

Length of time to play:
approx. 4 hours

Dice size: Six-sided

Use pencil to fill out sheet.



If instead of acting out the story of these relationships changing and going haywire, a group wishes to play a tabletop version in which the players simply describe in words what happens, use these rules modifications of the main game.

This version of the rules is in the process of development. For the most up to date version, please visit: <www.blackgreengames.com/ums.html>

1. Create characters as in the main game, except there are no Singletons. Also includes three additional aspects of the characters and modifications of others:

A. **INSIGHT POINTS:** These represent areas of knowledge that the character (or at least the player) has about the character and their relationship. This number of dice may be used in Scenes after Setting the Stage, to *Respect Lines* and potentially *Gain Desires*. Start with one.

B. **DRAMA POINTS:** These represent areas of tension for the character in their relationship with their Partner, or in their daily life. This number of dice may be used in Scenes in Follow-Through, Development and Escalation to *Gain Desires* and potentially *Respect Lines*. Create during Setting the Stage.

C. **DESIRES:** Something the character wants from or to do with their New Flame. Character tries to GAIN DESIRES (see page 45). These express the attraction they feel for the other character. May conflict with the original Couple's Lines. First Desire for each pair is *to have sex*. Two others are created over the course of play. When Desires are Gained, new levels of Connection are created between the New Flames.

D. LINES: Lines in this game represent areas of the relationship that are RESPECTED or not Respected by a Partner or Friend. Players will play out scenes in which they try to Gain Desires while Respecting Lines. If Lines are not Respected, Connections between the Partners (Intimacy, Passion, Commitments) erode and levels are taken away between the Partners.

Lines are also established between Friends. Choose one to start and may add two more during Friend scenes. Not respecting them can degrade these relationships. At any time, if a character crosses the Line of a Friend, the player of the Friend can point out what was done and reduce a Connection between them by one Level (High to Moderate, Moderate to Low, Low to None). If reduced to None, this relationship has been destroyed and they may not have Friend Scenes together. **Friends cannot be New Flame.**

2. At the end of scenes in the Follow-Through, Development and Escalation Stages, roll dice to determine what the outcomes of the scene are. Players must choose whether to roll Insight Dice or Drama Dice.

USING INSIGHT DICE: Play out a Flashback (as in Main Game) for your character in order to use Insight Dice. Add one die to your Insight score. Roll that many dice. If roll two Successes in a given category, you may Respect a Line or Gain a Desire (see next page). Dice count once only.

Insight Outcomes:

- 1-2 Failure
- 3-6 Success: Respect Lines
- 5-6 Success: Gain Desire

USING DRAMA DICE: During the scene act in a way to flaunt the wishes of others or to express your emotions in a strong and selfishly direct way. Roll dice equal to your character's Drama points to Gain Desires or Respect Lines. Must have three or more successes. At end of scene, gain 1 Drama.

Drama Outcomes:

- 1-2 Failure
- 3-6 Success: Gain Desire
- 5-6 Success: Respect Lines

May roll dice equal to the Drama Dice of *another character* by TRIGGERING that character. Use Drama Outcomes, but now Respect Lines only on a 6.

Note: Dice can count only toward one success. To gain success in both categories, two separate sets of Successful dice are required.

TRIGGERING A CHARACTER: In the scene, have your character act aggressively or manipulatively toward this character in a way that will bring their Core Issue or Drama levels into play. All players may make suggestions about how this is done. Player of character being Triggered has final say on how this occurs. Normally a player can Trigger only one character per scene.

OUTCOMES OF INSIGHT OR DRAMA ROLLS:

RESPECTING A LINE

Success: The character respects the relationship and does not do whatever would make their Partner feel betrayed. If both Partners Respect their Line in a given Stage, they may increase the level of one Connection by one step (Low to Moderate, Moderate to High). Describe what this means for them.

Failure: The character crosses a Line important to their partner. Reduce one Connection (Intimacy, Passion or Commitment) by one level. (High to Moderate, Moderate to Low; cannot be reduced below Low) Other players (not players of this Couple) choose which Connection goes down. Describe what this means.

GAINING A DESIRE

Success: The New Flame does something the character wants (e.g. rely on them, open up etc.), or they are able to do something together (e.g. have sex, kiss, talk, etc.). If either or both of the New Flames Gains a Desire, increase the level of either Intimacy or Commitment between the New Flames by one level.

Failure: The character does not get what they were hoping for. Connections remain the same.

3. Play Scenes in these Stages:

SETTING THE STAGE — A scene between the original Partners in which they are dealing with some contentious issue between them. *Drama points may be gained.*

FOLLOW-THROUGH — The New Flames are alone together. *FLASHBACK* may be played out to gain another Insight Die.

OPTIONAL FRIEND SCENE — Character talks with their Friend about life. *Insight point may be gained.*

DEVELOPMENT — Original Partners together again. *FLASHBACK* may be played out to gain another Insight Die.

OPTIONAL FRIEND SCENE — Character talks with their Friend about life. *Insight point may be gained.*

ESCALATION — Scene with Original Partner and New Flame. *FLASHBACK* may be played out to gain another Insight Die.

DENOUMENT — Final scenes with the characters reflecting the changes in relationships.

4. Playing out Scenes using the following rules:

I. SETTING THE STAGE — The players of the characters in the scene choose where their characters are. The other player suggest a conflict that may be occurring between the characters. Interact in character based on what has been chosen during Character creation. Based on the events of play, each player may choose to gain an additional Drama Point, and if half or more of the other players so chooses, each character can gain a third Drama Point at the end of this scene.

New Drama Points are recorded on the character sheet. For each new level add an additional area of tension in the relationship or the character's life inspired by events in the Scene. Write this on the character sheet. Player or players who gave the character the new points in this Scene describe it.

II. FOLLOW-THROUGH — The New Flames now have a scene together. In it they discover their attraction for the other.

FRAMING THE SCENE: The players of the New Flames choose where their characters meet. The player of the Partner of each character that is in the scene picks a Line to be in question. This means that there is a chance the character will cross this line at the end of the scene. Once this is chosen, play out what the characters do in this situation.

When the characters arrive at the decision point about whether they will cross the line or not, players roll dice to determine what happens. Each chooses to roll either the Drama dice or Insight Dice in order to see whether Lines or Desires are respected or gained. In this Stage, before the Roll choose an additional Desire and record it on the character sheet.

III. DEVELOPMENT — Scenes between the original Couples. We get to see how they deal with what the new relationship has brought up for each of them. Choose a Desire that the character is angling for in the scene. No lines will be crossed, but if Roll is unsuccessful, Connections are Reduced as when Lines are not Respected.

FRAMING THE SCENE: Partners choose setting and what characters are doing.

Roll for outcomes as in the Follow-Through Stage at the end of the scene.

IV. ESCALATION — Everyone is together and conflicts break out into the open. Original Partner and New Flame are present each Scene, or all characters may be present.

FRAMING THE SCENE: players choose Location together. Players of original Partners chooses which Lines are in danger of being crossed.

Roll for outcomes as in Follow-Through Stage with changes: *multiple characters may be Triggered in Escalation Stage*. However, for each additional person beyond one Triggered, an additional 6 is needed to successfully Respect Lines. For example, if two are Triggered, four 6s need to be rolled; if three, five 6s and so on.

V. DENOUMENT — Play out final scenes with the characters reflecting the changes in their relationships. No rolls.

VI. Optional Friend Scenes — Player may choose to have one after Follow-Through and after Development. These are scenes where Friend characters get together and talks about their life, their feelings and what they are doing. Gain an Insight Point. May not have this type of scene if relationship with Friend is destroyed.





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A game about passion, fidelity and definitions of love. Exploring monogamy, polyamory and all places in between.

A group of friends get together and secret loves and passions erupt. Partners and lovers have to face up to their fears and jealousies as they find that time has taken its toll on their relationships. Passions rage and lovers have to see whether their relationships will last or crumble under the pressures of temptation and potential new love.

People learn about themselves and what love really means.

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Players take the roles of people who fall in love with their friends and deal with the fallout this entails. Create tangled webs of lovers and friends, with their hopes and dreams and shared lives on the line.

Mature themes. Adults only, please.



Character Name: _____

Core Issue: _____

Areas: _____

About the Character:



RELATIONSHIPS:

Partner

Best Friend

Friend

New Flame

CHARACTER NAME

CONNECTIONS:

Player Name

Intimacy

☐ ☐ ☐☐ ☐ ☐☐ ☐ ☐☐ ☐ ☐

Passion

☐ ☐ ☐☒ ☒ ☒

Commitment

☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____☐ _____
☐ _____
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☐ _____☐ _____
☐ _____
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TABLETOP ONLY

TABLETOP ONLY

Lines

have sex

Desires: *have sex*

About the Relationships:

TABLETOP VERSION ONLY: INSIGHT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/	/	/	/	/	/

TABLETOP VERSION ONLY: DRAMA

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/	/	/	/	/	/