Loner - Core Rules 3rd Edition

Version: 3

Table of contents

Loner - Core Rules 3rd Edition 1
What is *Loner*? 1
Choose a Genre or Setting 3
Creating Your Protagonist 4
Everything is a Character 8
Descriptive Tags 9
Before the Adventure 11
Start Your Game 11
Keep the Action in Motion 15
Identify Your Expectations 16
Consulting the Oracle 18
Interpreting the Oracle 23
Sibylline Responses 28
Twist Counter 29
Determine the Twist 30
Conflicts 32
Harm & Luck 37
Determine the Mood of the Next Scene 41
Open-Ended Questions & Inspiration 43
When the Story Ends 45
Loner Together 47
The Adventure Maker 48
Afterword 57
Credits 58
Appendix A: Loner Diceless 59
How It Works 59

Appendix B: Resolution Matrix 62
Appendix C: Loner Cheatsheet 63
License 65

Loner - Core Rules 3rd Edition

What is Loner?

Loner is a minimalist solo role-playing game. It is designed for a single character — your Protagonist — who will navigate an unfolding story driven by your choices and an unpredictable Oracle.

Unlike structured solo adventures with pre-set paths, *Loner* allows you to shape your own narrative dynamically. Instead of choosing from pre-set outcomes, you ask the Oracle questions, interpret its cryptic answers, and weave unexpected twists into your journey.The game is improvisational, emergent, and surprising.

Every session of Loner is a blend of structure and unpredictability.You make choices, test assumptions, and occasionally find that the world has different plans than you expected. When that happens, it's time to adapt — and let the story take you somewhere new.

Loner follows these design principles:

1. **Portable** – All you need is a few six-sided dice, a way to write things down, and your imagination.
2. **Rules-Light** – With just one core mechanic, *Loner* is easy to learn and quick to play.

3. **Tag-Based** – Characters, events, and objects are defined descriptively rather than numerically.
4. **Emergent & Open-Ended** – There are no pre-written stories; every session generates its own narrative.

The game is designed for quick, fluid storytelling without tactical complexity or number crunching. You can play as a lone wanderer in a ruined world, a spy on the run, or a rogue AI navigating cyberspace. Loner adapts to your vision.

What is a role-playing game?

A role-playing game (RPG) is a storytelling experience where you take on the role of a character and make decisions that shape their journey. Typically, RPGs are played with more than one person and a game master (GM) who creates challenges and controls the game world. However, in a solo RPG like Loner, you play the role of both the player and the storyteller.

How Loner Is Different

Unlike other RPGs or gamebooks with predefined choices, *Loner* is an emergent narrative game. You create the story as you play. Instead of following a script, you ask the Oracle closed questions (Yes/No), which makes the story more uncertain and surprising. This creates an unpredictable story.

The game world isn't set in stone from the start; it responds to your character's actions, motivations, and circumstances as the game progresses. You set the stage, the Oracle twists fate, and together, they shape a unique adventure every time you play.

Playing Safely

When you play alone, you have complete control over your experience. *Loner* lets you explore any story, but you also set

the limits. Some themes might be intense or emotionally challenging. If they are, adjust them as needed. Take breaks, change the focus, or step away if something feels uncomfortable. The game exists to help you express your creativity; it's not trying to make you feel distressed.

Since you're the only player, you don't need formal safety tools like in group RPGs. Instead, follow one simple rule: **If a scene makes you uncomfortable, change it.** You can rewind, reframe, or step back entirely.

The goal of Loner is to enjoy the journey, not force yourself through anything that doesn't feel right.

What You Need to Play

To play *Loner*, you only need a few basic tools:

- **4 six-sided dice** (d6s) – two pairs of different colors.
- **Paper and writing tools** – a scrap sheet and a pencil work fine, but index cards or sticky notes can help.
- **Character sheet** – use the one provided at the back of this book or a simple notecard.

Optional but useful:

- **Notebook** – *Loner* isn't a journaling game, but you might want to jot down notes about characters, locations, and ongoing storylines. This helps keep things consistent when you play more than once.

That's it! There is no rulebook to memorize, no stacks of materials — just a handful of dice and your imagination.

Choose a Genre or Setting

Every *Loner* adventure takes place in a different **imaginary world**. You get to choose the world before you play. This can be:

- A setting from your **favorite TV series, book, or RPG**.

- A genre you already love or one you're curious to explore.
- A world built from **randomly generated tropes**.

If you need inspiration:

- **Look up trope lists** (search online for common themes in fiction).
- **Use the Adventure Packs** found later in this book.
- **Let your character shape the world** — define them first, then build the setting around them.

There's no right or wrong way to do it. The story will take shape as you play, whether you start with the world or the character.

Creating Your Protagonist

Your character — the **Protagonist** — is the most important part of your story. They don't have statistics; instead, they are defined by descriptive traits that shape how they interact with the world.

Step-by-Step Character Creation

1. **Choose a Name** – Pick a name that fits the tone and setting of your story.
2. **Define a Concept** – Summarize your character in a short phrase.
3. **Select Two Skills** – Unique abilities or expertise.
4. **Choose a Frailty** – A weakness, flaw, or personal struggle.
5. **Pick Two Pieces of Gear** – Specialized equipment relevant to the setting.
6. **Set a Goal & Motive** – Define what your Protagonist is trying to achieve and why.
7. **Identify a Nemesis (Optional)** – A rival, enemy, or opposing force.
8. **Start with 6 Luck** – it's your ability to avoid failure and resets after conflicts.

What Makes a Good Concept?

A **Concept** is like a label for your character. It tells you what they are in just one sentence. The best concepts are evocative and concise, giving an immediate sense of personality, role, or history.

✅ Good 📌 Examples:

- *Cunning Bounty Hunter* – suggests expertise in tracking and deception.
- *Haunted Scholar* – suggests knowledge, but also a burden.
- *Exiled Warlock* – hints at power and a troubled past.

❌ Weak 📌 Examples:

- *Strong Fighter* – too generic. What makes them unique?
- *Heroic Person* – not specific enough. What do they actually do?
- *Jack of All Trades* – vague, doesn't provide a strong identity.

Think of the Concept as your elevator pitch — it should tell you, at a glance, who this character is.

What Makes a Good Skill?

Skills in *Loner* are qualitative rather than numerical. Instead of bonuses or stats, a **Skill** is a descriptor that grants **narrative permission** — it tells you what your character is capable of doing.

✅ Good 📌 Examples:

- *Engine Whisperer* – suggests a deep, almost intuitive understanding of mechanics.
- *Shadow Walker* – implies stealth and movement in darkness.
- *Tactician's Mind* – allows for strategic thinking and planning.

❌ **Weak** 📌 **Examples:**

- *Strong* – too broad; what kind of strength?
- *Smart* – vague; in what area?
- *Combat* – doesn't indicate a specialty or style.

When choosing a Skill, ask: **How does this change the way my character interacts with the world?** If it's too broad, refine it to something more specific.

Why Goal, Motive, and Nemesis Should Emerge from Play

These three elements are closely related to the story and so it's best to choose them based on the **game's context** instead of picking them from a random list.

- **The Goal** defines what your character is actively working toward.
- **The Motive** explains why they pursue it.
- **The Nemesis** is what stands in their way — this can be a person, an organization, or even an abstract force.

Since *Loner* is an emergent storytelling game, these should be chosen **based on the setting, tone, and first moments of play** rather than from a random generator.

✅ **If chosen organically:**

- The story unfolds naturally, and the Goal is driven by in-game events.
- The Motive has weight because it emerges from play.
- The Nemesis grows into a real antagonist with personal stakes.

❌ **If chosen randomly:**

- Your character might have a *Goal* that feels disconnected from the setting.
- The *Motive* might be unclear or unimportant.

- A *Nemesis* that doesn't fit the world weakens the tension of the story.

Approach	Outcome
✅ **Organically**	The Goal, Motive, and Nemesis evolve naturally from in-game events, making them more meaningful and immersive.
❌ **Randomly**	These elements may feel disconnected from the story, weakening character depth and narrative stakes.

📌 Example

Zahra Nakajima Concept: Witty Street Cat
Skills: Streetwise, Nimble
Frailty: Merciful
Gear: Knife, Low O2 Supplement
Goal: Obtain unknown technology to save her planet
Motive: She feels responsible for her home's survival
Nemesis: The Naturalist Order, a group that seeks to suppress technological progress
Luck: 6

Here, Zahra's *Goal* and *Nemesis* aren't arbitrary — they come from the world and story she inhabits. Her *Motive* ties into her personality, creating **emotional stakes** that make the journey meaningful.

If you're unsure about your Goal, Motive, or Nemesis, start playing! Let the first scenes shape these elements instead of deciding everything upfront.

Everything is a Character

In *Loner*, anything that plays a meaningful role in the story — whether a person, a spaceship, or an ancient curse — is treated like a **character**. This means the same descriptive approach used for your **Protagonist** applies to everything that matters in the game world.

Living Characters (NPCs, Foes, Organizations)

Any person, creature, or faction that has a **distinct role** in the story follows the same structure as the Protagonist:

- They have **a Concept** that defines their identity.
- They may have **Skills and Frailties**, just like the Protagonist.
- They may have **Goals**, **Motives**, or **Nemeses**.
- They interact with the world through **Tags**, influencing how scenes unfold.

📌 **Example**

Caine Trask Concept: Ruthless Lawman
Skills: Tracker, Quick Draw
Frailty: Bound by Honor
Gear: Plasma Revolver, High-End Surveillance Drone
Goal: Capture fugitives and criminals at any cost
Motive: Believes justice is absolute, no room for negotiation
Nemesis: The Shadow Syndicate, a criminal network that always slips through his fingers
Luck: 6

Non-Living Characters (Objects, Vehicles, Curses)

Not everything in *Loner* is alive, but if something **actively influences the story**, it is treated as a character. Unlike living beings:

- They have a **Concept**, **Skills** and **Frailties**.
- **They don't have Goals, Motives, or Nemeses.**
- They are defined by their **function and impact** on the story.
- They still use **Tags** to shape how they are used or overcome.

📌 **Example**

The Century Skylark

- **Concept:** Spacecraft in bad shape
- **Skills:** Hyperjump Drive, Camouflage Circuits
- **Frailty**: Midlife Courier
- **Luck:** 6

Descriptive Tags

Tags are **short descriptive phrases** that define and shape the game world. They don't use numbers or stats — just **words that matter** in play.

Everything in *Loner* — characters, places, objects, and events — can have Tags. These tags help determine how situations unfold and whether a character has an **Advantage or Disadvantage** in a scene.

Types of Tags

Tags generally fall into three broad categories:

- **Character Traits** – Describe a character's **skills, flaws, goals, or motives**. These shape what they excel at and what holds them back.

  📌 *Examples: Veteran Marksman, Haunted by the Past, Driven by Revenge*
- **Details** – Define the **environment, objects, or situational features** that could influence the story.

  📌 *Examples: Dimly Lit Corridor, High-Security Vault, Crumbling Bridge*
- **Conditions** – Represent **temporary or lasting effects** that change how a character acts or what they must overcome.

  📌 *Examples: Wounded Leg, Feared by Locals, Wanted by the Law*

How Tags Affect Play

Tags provide **context**, not math. They don't work like stats or bonuses; instead, they determine whether a character has an **edge or a setback** in a given situation. If a Tag is relevant, it might grant **Advantage or Disadvantage** on a roll.

✅ **Good Use of Tags:**

- The vault is tagged *High-Security Vault* — this makes lock-picking harder, so the player rolls with **Disadvantage**.
- A Protagonist with a *Veteran Marksman* Skill is shooting in a duel — this gives them **Advantage**.

❌ **What Tags Are NOT:**

- A numerical rating or score (*+2 Strength* is not a Tag).
- A passive trait that never impacts play (*Nice Person* isn't a strong Tag unless it changes outcomes).

Think of Tags as **narrative signposts** — they describe things in a way that directly affects the unfolding story.

Before the Adventure

You can jump straight into the game, but it's a good idea to take a little time to **set the stage**. This can make your adventure more immersive and interconnected.

Build a Web of Connections

- **Your Nemesis is an NPC** – If you've defined a Nemesis, you've already created a key Non-Player Character (NPC). Write down their details separately — you'll likely cross paths again.
- **Allies and Contacts** – Does your Protagonist have friends, mentors, or rivals? List them out with a short description so they can appear organically during play.

Preparing in advance will help your world feel more realistic and connected as you play.

Track Your World

Beyond characters, consider noting:

- **Important Locations** – Places that might be revisited, such as a criminal hideout, a hidden temple, or a war-torn city.
- **Major Events** – Significant events that shape the story, such as a rebellion or an impending disaster.

These don't have to be fully detailed — just quick notes that give you something to draw from when the story takes unexpected turns.

A little preparation goes a long way, ensuring your world feels rich and interconnected as you play.

Start Your Game

Every great adventure begins **somewhere**. In *Loner*, you define the **starting scene** by deciding where your Protagonist is **right now** and what immediate challenge they face.

There are **two main ways** to begin:

1. Drop into the Action (Dramatic Scene)

Start in **the middle of a tense, dynamic moment** — your Protagonist is already **escaping, fighting, negotiating, or uncovering a secret**.

✅ **Builds momentum immediately** — the story starts **in motion** rather than in planning.

✅ **Easy to improvise** — the scene itself suggests the next logical actions.

📌 **Example:**
> Your Protagonist is **running through a neon-lit alley**, gunfire behind them. A rival bounty hunter is closing in — **do they find cover in time?**

This technique is borrowed from fiction and film, where **beginning with action** hooks the audience. Imagine the opening of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*: Indiana Jones **is already inside the temple**, dodging traps. **Much more engaging than starting with him reading a book at home!**

💡 **Tip:** A dramatic opening doesn't need combat — it just needs tension, urgency, or a **clear conflict to resolve**.

2. Frame the Adventure First

If you prefer structure, use the **5W+H method** (Who, What, Why, Where, How, plus Obstacle). This gives you a **mission framework** before jumping into the story.

Ask:

- **Who?** *(Who initiates the story?)*
- **What?** *(What mission or task is at hand?)*
- **Why?** *(Why does the Protagonist care?)*

- **Where?** *(Where does the adventure take place?)*
- **How?** *(How does the story begin — what sets events into motion?)*
- **Obstacle?** *(What immediately stands in the way?)*

D6	Who? Proposer	What? Mission	Why? Incentive	Where? Target	How? Starting Point	Obstacle?Complication
1	Authority	Rescue	Help	Person	Casual encounter	Opposition
2	Organization	Protection	Fortune	Group	Old acquaintance	Deception
3	Ally (friend, relative)	Exploit	Coercion	Treasure	Rumors	Environment
4	Mentor	Explore	Impulse	Location	Capture	Disguise
5	Helpseeker	Escape	Ambition	McGuffin	Mishap	Time
6	Blackmailer	Pursuit	Revenge	Confession	Object (map, letter)	Space

✅ **Gives a concrete premise** — your Protagonist has a clear **goal** from the start.

✅ **Helps with structured play** — you know **what's at stake** before the first scene.

Who? Mentor
What? Exploit
Why? Help
Where? McGuffin
How? Rumors
Obstacle? Time

Tobias Wethern took Zahra under his wing when her parents died. That's why she can't say no to him now. Tobias wants Zahra to **steal a datapad** from the Leton Corporation's subsidiary. He doesn't know exactly where it's stored, but in **24 hours, security will move it to another location** — so there's no time to waste.

Which One Should You Use?

📌 **Dramatic Scene:** Best if you want to **jump right in** and discover the story as you play.

📌 **Framed Setup:** Best if you want **a structured mission goal** before the first scene.

You **don't have to choose just one** — you can **combine both**:

1. **Use a frame to set up the mission.**
2. **Then, start with a dramatic scene.**

📌 **Example:** You **frame** a mission (*steal a data drive from a rival hacker*) — but instead of starting at the planning stage, you **drop into the action** (*the Protagonist is already inside the hacker's apartment, alarms blaring!*).

Both methods serve **different play styles**, but together they create a **strong opening for any adventure**.

Let the Story Unfold

Once you've set up the **first scene**, start playing! The Oracle will guide what happens next, shaping the twists and surprises along the way.



Keep the Action in Motion

A game of *Loner* is made up of a series of scenes. Each scene is a different moment in time where something meaningful happens.

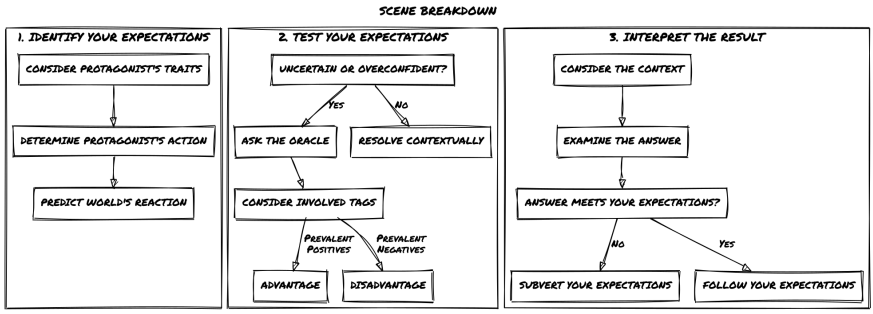
Each scene has a short-term goal. A short-term goal is a single action, challenge, or discovery that moves the story forward.

The Three-Step Scene Flow

Every scene follows a natural rhythm:

1. **Set Your Expectation** – What does your Protagonist want to achieve? Look at their **traits, goal, and motivation** to determine their action. How do you expect the world to react?
2. **Test the Uncertainty** – If an outcome isn't obvious (or if overconfidence tempts fate), consult the Oracle with a **Yes/No question**. Use **Tags** to determine if the Protagonist has an Advantage or Disadvantage.
3. **Interpret the Result** – The Oracle's answer may confirm your expectations or subvert them. How does this outcome reshape the scene? What new possibilities emerge?

At first, you may want to follow this structure deliberately, but with practice, it will become second nature — allowing the story to flow naturally.



Identify Your Expectations

Your Protagonist's **traits, goals, and motivations** shape how they interact with the world. In any given scene, you will naturally have expectations about **what makes sense** based on these factors.

Expectations help guide the story, but they don't always require a roll. If an action has an **obvious and logical outcome**, let it happen. However, when there's **uncertainty, risk, or the chance for surprise**, it's time to test that expectation by consulting the Oracle.

When to Ask the Oracle

- **If the outcome is obvious →** No need to roll; the scene unfolds as expected.
- **If the outcome is uncertain or risky →** Ask the Oracle a Yes/No question.
- **If you want an unexpected twist →** Ask even when you're fairly confident — sometimes reality doesn't behave as expected!

📌 Example 1: No Roll Needed

Zahra sneaks into the Leton Corporation subsidiary. She knows from prior surveillance that security is **lighter at night**. Since this aligns with logic and expectations, the scene plays out: Zahra **gets inside undetected** without needing to ask the Oracle.

📌 Example 2: Asking the Oracle for Uncertainty

Zahra crawls through the ventilation ducts, expecting them to be unguarded. But what if there's a **security alarm** hidden inside? That's uncertain — so she asks the Oracle:

"Is there an alarm in the ducts?" and rolls.

📌 Example 3: Asking the Oracle for an Unexpected Twist

> Zahra makes her way to the server room. She **knows** from a stolen security map that the door **requires only a simple override** — but what if she's wrong? She asks the Oracle:
>
> **"Is the security system exactly as expected?"**
>
> The answer is **No, and...** The lock has been **upgraded recently**, requiring **biometric clearance** — and the real surprise? Security has just started their midnight patrol.

Consulting the Oracle

Whenever you face **uncertainty** in the story, you'll ask the **Oracle** a **Yes/No question** and roll to determine the outcome.

What You Need

You'll need:

✅ **2d6 in one color** (*Chance Dice*)

✅ **2d6 in another color** (*Risk Dice*)

How to Roll

When you consult the **Oracle**, roll **one Chance Die and one Risk Die**, then follow these steps:

Step 1: Compare the Dice

- **Is the Chance Die higher?** → **Yes** (*Success*)
- **Is the Risk Die higher?** → **No** (*Failure*)
- **Are both dice equal?** → **Yes, but...** (*Success with a complication, +1 to the Twist Counter*)

Step 2: Check for Modifiers

📉 **Are both dice <= 3?**
→ Add **but...** (*Something goes wrong or adds tension.*)

📈 **Are both dice >= 4?**
→ Add **and...** (*Something extra goes in your favor.*)

Resolution Breakdown

🟢 **Chance Die > Risk Die → "Yes"**
✅ **Both dice <= 3 → "Yes, but..."** *(Success with a drawback)*
✅ **Both dice >= 4 → "Yes, and..."** *(Success with a bonus)*

🔴 **Risk Die > Chance Die → "No"**
❌ **Both dice <= 3 → "No, but..."** *(Failure, but something positive happens)*
❌ **Both dice >= 4 → "No, and..."** *(Failure with extra consequences)*

⚖️ **Both Dice Equal → "Yes, but..."** *(+1 Twist Counter!)*

📌 **Example: Breaking In**

Zahra wants to **force open a security hatch** without triggering an alarm.
She asks the Oracle: **"Does Zahra manage to force the hatch?"**

🎲 Rolls: **Chance Die (5), Risk Die (4)**

✅ **Chance Die is higher** → The answer is **Yes** (*she succeeds*).
✅ **Both dice are >= 4** → Add **And...** (*something extra goes her way*).

Outcome:
Zahra forces the hatch **without setting off an alarm**, and **she also finds a map of the facility inside**.

If the Risk Die had been **3** instead of **4**, the answer would have been a plain **Yes**, without the extra benefit.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Sometimes, the situation or a **Tag** will grant an **Advantage** or **Disadvantage** when consulting the Oracle. This reflects how **favorable or challenging** the circumstances are for the Protagonist.

How It Works

- **Advantage** → Add an **extra Chance Die** 🎲 (positive circumstances, useful skills, favorable conditions).
- **Disadvantage** → Add an **extra Risk Die** 🎲 (hindrances, complications, difficult conditions).
- In both cases, **roll all dice of that type and keep only the highest one**.

📌 📌 **Example of Advantage:**
> Zahra is attempting to **charm a suspicious merchant** into revealing illegal goods. She has the **Tag: Smooth Talker**, so she **rolls with Advantage** (two Chance Dice, one Risk Die).

📌 📌 **Example of Disadvantage:**
> Zahra is **hacking a corporate databank** under pressure, with no expertise and a security system against her. She **rolls with Disadvantage** (two Risk Dice, one Chance Die).

Important!

⚠️ **Tags are not numbers!** Use them **intuitively**, not as rigid bonuses or penalties. The goal is to **keep the game flowing**, not to overanalyze every situation.

Instead of treating Tags like numerical modifiers, **think narratively**:

- *Does the situation genuinely give an edge or impose a challenge?*
- *Is the character leveraging a skill, trait, or circumstance that logically grants an advantage?*
- *Does an obstacle, flaw, or environmental factor impose a disadvantage?*

Rules for Multiple Tags

⚠️ **You can never roll more than two Chance or two Risk Dice per roll.**

✅ **If multiple positive or negative Tags apply, they do not stack further.**

✅ **If both positive and negative Tags are present, they cancel out.**

Tag Situation	Dice Roll
One or more positive Tags (net of negatives)	**Advantage** (roll 2 Chance Dice, 1 Risk Die)
One or more negative Tags (net of positives)	**Disadvantage** (roll 2 Risk Dice, 1 Chance Die)
Positive and negative Tags cancel out	**Neutral** (roll 1 Chance Die, 1 Risk Die)

📌 Example: Hacking the Datapad

Zahra is attempting to **hack a secure corporate databank** to retrieve **classified information**. However, she is **not a skilled hacker**, and the security system is highly advanced.

Evaluating Advantage and Disadvantage

🔹 **Tags Favoring Her:** None (*She has no relevant hacking skills or tools*)

🔹 **Tags Against Her:**

- *No Hacking Skills (Negative Tag: 1 Disadvantage)*
- *Highly Protected System (Negative Tag: 1 Disadvantage)*
- **Total: Two Negative Tags → She rolls with Disadvantage**
- **Disadvantage means rolling Two Risk Dice and One Chance Die**

Rolling the Dice

🎲 **Chance Die (5)**

🎲 **Risk Dice (3), (4) → Keep the highest (4)**

📌 **Results:**

- ✅ **Chance Die (5) > Risk Die (4)** → **Yes** (*Success!*)
- ✅ **Both dice are 4 or higher** → Add **And...** (*Something extra goes Zahra's way!*).

🚀 **Final Outcome:**

> Zahra successfully hacks the databank **and...** she also stumbles upon an **encrypted transmission** revealing an upcoming **covert corporate operation**.

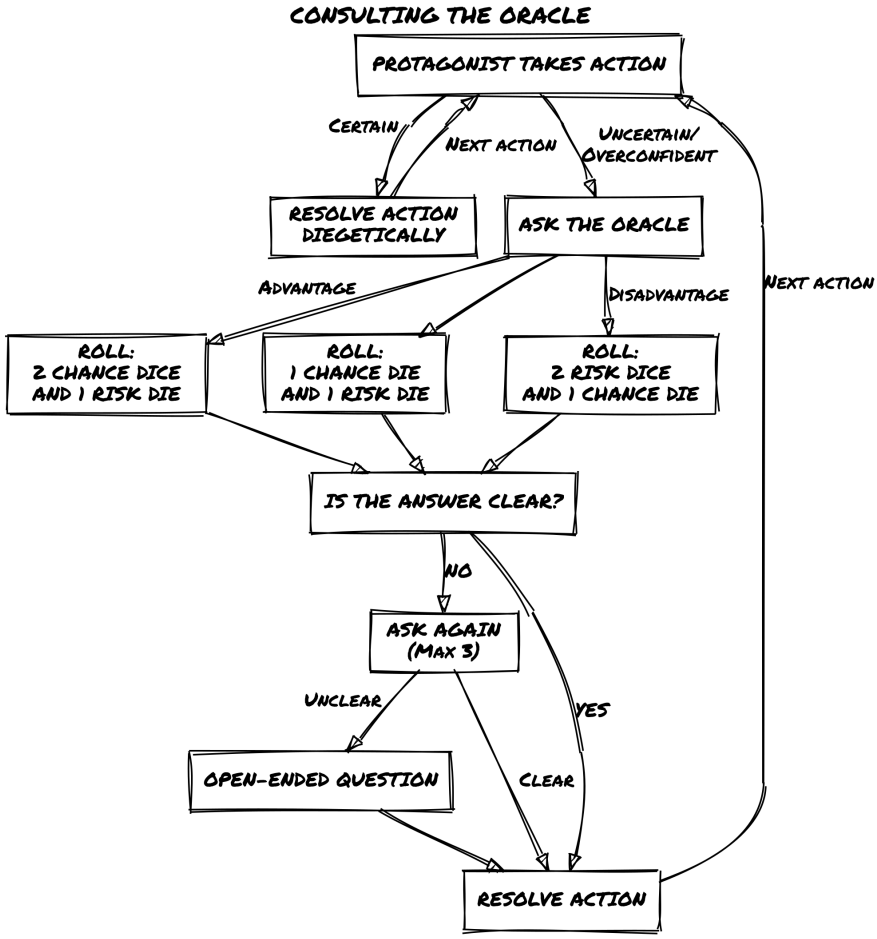
Why This System Works

✅ **Keeps rolling simple** – No need to track excessive modifiers.

✅ **Encourages situational storytelling** – Instead of stacking

numbers, Tags describe why a situation is easy or difficult.

✅ **Prevents excessive stacking** – One strong Advantage or Disadvantage is enough to shift the outcome.



Interpreting the Oracle

The Oracle provides **a simple answer**, but **your interpretation** is what brings it to life. Instead of treating the Oracle as

just a mechanic, use it as a **narrative driver** that pushes the story forward.

Answer	Outcome
Yes, and...	You get what you want **+ an extra advantage**
Yes...	You succeed in your action
Yes, but...	You succeed, **but** at a cost
No, but...	You fail, **but** you gain a small compensation
No...	You fail
No, and...	You fail **+ something makes it worse**

Making the Results Interesting

✅ **Straightforward answers** (*Yes/No*) are useful but can feel flat — use them when the story needs momentum.

✅ **Modifiers (*but.../and...*)** add layers of complexity and should push the scene in **new, engaging directions**.

✅ **Tie the answer back to existing story elements** — NPCs, locations, or unresolved threads.

By actively **interpreting Oracle results** rather than just taking them at face value, you ensure that every roll **adds tension, depth, or intrigue to the game**.

Methods for Interpreting the Oracle

There's no single way to read an Oracle response. Depending on **the context of the scene**, you can **interpret the result in different ways** to shape the outcome dynamically.

1. The Oracle as Intensity

Instead of reading the response as a **binary success or failure**, treat it as **a measure of how well or poorly things go**:

Answer	Intensity of Outcome
Yes, and...	**Major success** (Overwhelming advantage, unexpected bonus)
Yes...	**Moderate success** (Standard outcome, things go as expected)
Yes, but...	**Success with consequences** (Partial victory, unintended complication)
No, but...	**Failure with compensation** (Misses the goal, but something useful happens)
No...	**Moderate failure** (Things go wrong as expected)
No, and...	**Major failure** (Catastrophic mistake, unexpected setback)

📌 **Example:** Zahra is sneaking past a security checkpoint.

- 🎲 **Yes, and...** → *Not only does she slip past unnoticed, but she also finds an access key on the floor.*
- 🎲 **Yes...** → *She gets past the checkpoint without being seen.*
- 🎲 **Yes, but...** → *She gets through, but the guards start a random sweep of the area.*
- 🎲 **No, but...** → *She gets caught, but the guards assume she's just lost rather than an intruder.*
- 🎲 **No...** → *She's spotted, and the alarm is raised.*
- 🎲 **No, and...** → *She's spotted, captured, and now the security system is on full lockdown.*

2. The Oracle as a Twist Generator

Instead of a simple success/failure reading, let the Oracle **introduce a new element** that wasn't part of your initial expectations.

📌 **Example:** Zahra tries to hack into a corporate mainframe.

- 🎲 **Yes, but...** → *She gains access, but the files are heavily encrypted, requiring another step.*
- 🎲 **No, but...** → *She fails to hack in, but she learns that the mainframe is vulnerable to an external backdoor.*
- 🎲 **No, and...** → *Not only does she fail, but she accidentally trips a silent alarm, alerting security.*

3. The Oracle as Momentum Control

You can also use the Oracle to determine **whether the scene's tension rises, falls, or stays steady**:

Answer	Scene Momentum
Yes, and...	**Drives the scene forward with a major development**
Yes...	**Moves the story in a predictable direction**
Yes, but...	**Adds a complication that slows progress**
No, but...	**Shifts the focus to an alternative path**
No...	**Brings the scene to a roadblock**
No, and...	**Escalates the stakes significantly**

📌 **Example:** Zahra is interrogating an informant.

- 🎲 **Yes, and...** → *The informant cracks immediately and spills everything — and even offers to help.*
- 🎲 **Yes...** → *He gives Zahra the information she wants.*
- 🎲 **Yes, but...** → *He talks, but some details are unreliable or missing.*
- 🎲 **No, but...** → *He refuses to talk, but his reaction suggests he knows something crucial.*
- 🎲 **No...** → *He refuses to talk completely.*
- 🎲 **No, and...** → *He shuts down and alerts someone to Zahra's presence.*

This interpretation helps **control pacing** — *Yes, and...* moves the game forward rapidly, while *No, and...* forces a dramatic shift.

📌 **Example: Expanding the Story with Interpretation**

📌 **Scenario:** Zahra is sneaking into a research facility.

📌 **Question:** *"Does she make it inside unnoticed?"*

📌 🎲 **Oracle Answer: No, but...**

Instead of a **simple failure**, let's apply different interpretations:

✅ **As Intensity:** She's seen, but **only by a single distracted guard, not the entire security team**.

✅ **As a Twist:** She's caught, **but the person who finds her is an old ally instead of an enemy**.

✅ **As Momentum Control:** She's detected, **but instead of triggering an alarm, the guards begin searching, giving her a brief window to hide**.

💡 **By using flexible interpretations, the Oracle doesn't just dictate what happens — it guides the story in meaningful ways.**

The Oracle as a Narrative Tool

✅ **Don't treat Oracle results as binary.** Instead, use them to add nuance to your game.

✅ **Use context to shape interpretation.** A *No, and...* in a combat scene will feel different than in a conversation.

✅ **Experiment with different methods.** Try using the Oracle as **intensity, momentum, or a twist generator** to keep your story fresh and dynamic.

Sibylline Responses

Sometimes, the Oracle's answer **won't make immediate sense** in the context of your scene. Instead of getting stuck, follow these steps to keep the story moving.

How to Handle a Confusing Answer

1. **Don't Overquestion It** – Avoid asking too many follow-ups to force a "logical" result. Three Yes/No questions should be enough — if you're still unsure, move on.
2. **Reframe the Answer** – Think about the broader situation. Could this result **introduce a hidden complication** or **suggest a deeper truth**?
3. **Use an Open-Ended Question** – If you're still lost, roll on an **inspiration table** or ask something like:
   - *"What unexpected factor is at play?"*
   - *"What does this reveal that I didn't consider?"*
4. **Default to "Yes, but..."** – If nothing else fits, treat the response as *Yes, but...* and introduce a **minor complication** that makes the answer work.

📌 Example: Dealing with a Strange Answer

Question: *"Is the informant still at the bar?"*

🎲 **Oracle Answer: No, and...**

❌ This doesn't make sense — why would they suddenly leave? Instead of getting stuck:

✅ **Reframing the Answer:**

- *Maybe someone tipped them off to danger?*
- *Maybe they were kidnapped?*
- *Maybe "No, and..." doesn't mean they left — maybe they were never real to begin with?*

Final Interpretation:
The informant is gone, **and... the bartender nervously avoids eye contact, suggesting at foul play.** Now the story moves forward with **a new layer of intrigue**.

Twist Counter

The **Twist Counter** represents **rising tension in the narrative**. Every time you roll **doubles** (both dice show the same number), you:

✅ **Add 1 to the Twist Counter.**

✅ If the **Counter reaches 3**, a **Twist occurs** and resets the Counter to **0**.

If the Counter is **below 3**, treat the result as **"Yes, but..."** instead of triggering a twist.

📌 Example: A Ticking Tension

> Zahra is trying to **decrypt stolen files** to uncover evidence against a powerful corporation. She asks the Oracle:
>
> **“Do the files contain evidence of illegal activities?”**
>
> 🎲 **Rolls:** (4) [4] → **Doubles!**

✅ The answer is **“Yes, but…”** → The files do contain illegal activity…
✅ **+1 to the Twist Counter** (which was already at **2**) → The **Twist triggers!**

> **Twist Triggered:** The Counter resets to **0**, and we roll 2d6 on the **Twist Table**…

🎲 **Twist Roll:** (1, 5) → **“A third party” + “Changes the goal”**

> **Interpretation:** Zahra now has the evidence — but suddenly, **a corporate agent contacts her with an offer**: *“You can expose us… or take a deal that changes your life.”*

Determine the Twist

When the **Twist Counter reaches 3**, roll **2d6** on the table below:

D6	Subject	Action
1	A third party	Appears
2	The hero	Alters the location

D6	Subject	Action
3	An encounter	Helps the hero
4	A physical event	Hinders the hero
5	An emotional event	Changes the goal
6	An object	Ends the scene

Interpret the **two-word result** within the context of the current scene. Twists should **shake up the story**, forcing the Protagonist to adapt.

📌 Example: How a Twist Changes the Story

> **Scenario:** Zahra is infiltrating a high-tech facility to steal corporate secrets.
> She asks: **"Can she reach the secure server unnoticed?"**
>
> 🎲 **Rolls:** (3) [3] → **Doubles!** → **Twist Counter reaches 3 → A Twist occurs!**
>
> 🎲 **Twist Roll:** (4, 2) → **"A physical event" + "Alters the location"**

Interpretation: Just as Zahra nears the server room, **an explosion rocks the building**. Security scrambles, alarms blare — **but now the mission has changed**. Instead of sneaking in, she needs to **escape the collapsing structure with whatever data she can grab.**

Why the Twist Counter Matters

The **Twist Counter** keeps *Loner* full of **surprises**, ensuring no two stories play out the same way.

✅ **Builds tension naturally** — the more doubles you roll, the closer a twist becomes.

✅ **Prevents predictable storytelling** — forcing the game world to react dynamically.

✅ **Encourages creative interpretation** — every twist reshapes the adventure in unexpected ways.

Conflicts

A **Conflict** occurs whenever **two or more forces oppose each other**, whether through **combat, competition, persuasion, or resistance**.

Conflicts are not limited to **physical fights** — they also include:

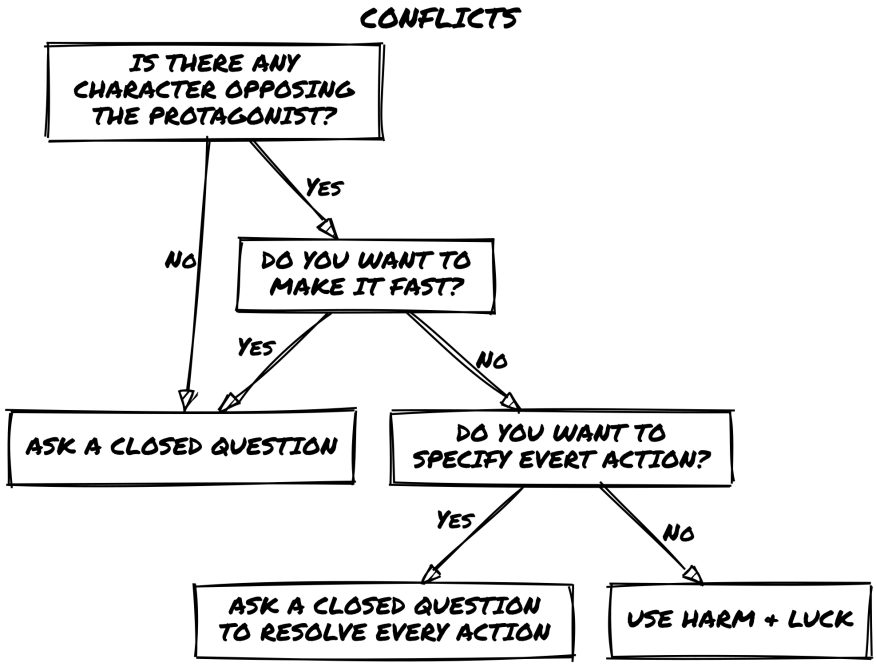
- **Verbal duels** (*intimidation, negotiations, debates*)
- **Tactical contests** (*chases, sabotage, heists*)
- **Mental struggles** (*resisting psychic influence, enduring torture*)
- **Vehicle battles** (*dogfights, ship-to-ship combat*)

Ways to Resolve a Conflict

There are three approaches to resolving conflicts, depending on how much detail you want:

1. **Single Yes/No Question** – Ask the Oracle whether the Protagonist succeeds or fails.
2. **Series of Yes/No Questions** – Break the conflict into key actions and resolve them one by one.
3. **Harm & Luck System** – Track Luck loss to determine when a character is overcome.

⚠️ **The Twist Counter does NOT apply to Harm & Luck!** The Oracle still drives unexpected outcomes, but Luck-based conflicts rely on direct dice rolls.



Resolving Conflicts by Key Actions

Instead of using the **Harm & Luck** system, you can resolve conflicts through a **series of closed Oracle questions**, determining the outcome of **each key action** in the scene.

This method is a **middle ground** between:

✅ **A single-question conflict resolution** (*"Do I win the fight?"*), which can be too abrupt.

✅ **The Harm & Luck system**, which introduces **attrition-based resolution** but may feel too structured.

How It Works

1️⃣ **Describe each action as a distinct moment** and ask the Oracle whether it succeeds or fails.

2️⃣ **Use the result modifiers ("but..."/"and...")** to introduce twists and consequences.

3️⃣ **Let the outcome shape the next step in the scene** — without needing to track Luck loss.

📌 Example: A Firefight in an Abandoned Factory

> Zahra is caught in a gunfight inside a **dilapidated chemical plant**, exchanging fire with a bounty hunter. Instead of tracking Luck, she resolves the battle action by action:

🔹 **First Action:**

🗣️ *"Can I take cover behind the wall?"*

🎲 **Yes, but...**

✅ *She reaches cover, but her line of fire is obstructed — giving her a Disadvantage.*

🔹 **Second Action:**

🗣️ *"I aim at the opponent, can I get the first shot in?"*

🎲 **No, but...**

❌ *She misses — but the bounty hunter is forced to move, breaking his own line of fire.* (Now Zahra gains an Advantage.)

🔹 **Final Action:**

🗣️ *"I shoot a slag container above him. Do I hit it?"*

🎲 **Yes, and...**

✅ *The shot lands perfectly — the container crashes down, knocking the bounty hunter out cold.*

Why Use This Method?

✅ **Creates cinematic, fast-paced encounters** — each action **unfolds dynamically** instead of tracking damage.

✅ **Encourages creative solutions** — instead of **hit point attrition**, players find **ways to shift the fight in their favor**.

✅ **Adds unpredictability** — since **each move is a separate Oracle roll**, conflicts can take unexpected turns.

When to Use It

Use this approach when you want **fluid, improvisational conflict resolution**, focusing on **tactical decisions and momentum** rather than a structured back-and-forth fight.

It's especially great for:

- **Chases and heists** where every move shifts the stakes.
- **Tense negotiations** where each argument changes the power dynamic.
- **Battles where the environment plays a major role.**

This system **keeps conflicts fast, reactive, and engaging**, making every choice matter **without tracking Luck points**.

🚀

Handling Conflicts with Multiple Opponents

Not all conflicts involve a **one-on-one confrontation** — sometimes the Protagonist must face **multiple adversaries** at once. How this plays out depends on **narrative context** and the desired level of complexity.

Option 1: Treat the Opponents as a Single Entity

📌 **Best for: Mobs, Minions, or Coordinated Groups**

One simple way to manage multiple opponents is to **treat them as a single "character"** with:

- **A shared Concept and Skills** (*Elite Mercenary Squad, Swarm of Cultists, Riot Police Formation*).
- **A single Luck pool** that represents **their overall strength**.
- **A Fragility** related to their **numbers** — the larger the group, the harder it may be to coordinate their actions effectively.

✅ **Pros:** Keeps the encounter fast-paced and prevents excessive dice rolling.

❌ **Cons:** Doesn't emphasize individual threats — treats the opposition as an abstract challenge.

Option 2: Handle Opponents as Separate Entities

📌 **Best for: Named Villains, Small Groups with Unique Roles, Rival Teams**

If each opponent is distinct, **resolve their actions individually**, using:

- **Separate Luck pools** for key adversaries (*a commander, a rival bounty hunter, an elite duelist*).
- **A mix of conflict resolution methods** — you might resolve the **mooks** as a single entity but use full Harm & Luck for the **boss fight**.
- **Oracle rolls to dictate group behavior** (*Do they fight as a unit? Do they break formation?*).

✅ **Pros:** Creates a more tactical, cinematic encounter.

❌ **Cons:** Can slow down play if not streamlined.

📌 **Example: A Fight Against a Mercenary Squad**

> Zahra is **ambushed by five corporate mercenaries**. Instead of rolling for each one separately, they are treated as **a single unit** with the Concept *Tactical Strike Team* and Skill *Coordinated Maneuvers*.

🎲 The Oracle determines their **strategy**: *Do they fan out to surround her? Do they immediately open fire?*

As the fight unfolds:

✅ Zahra's attacks **whittle down their shared Luck pool**.

✅ If she exploits their **Fragility (poor coordination under stress)**, she can **force them into disarray** instead of fighting to the last.

Why Use These Methods?

✅ **Keeps group encounters manageable** — rolling separately for a large group can slow the game down.

✅ **Maintains narrative flow** — players can focus on the **tension of the scene** rather than excessive mechanics.

✅ **Gives flexibility** — whether treating enemies as a unit or separate threats, the system adapts to the situation.

The key takeaway? **Conflicts should serve the story, not bog it down.** Whether you treat opponents as a **swarm, a unit, or distinct characters**, the goal is to **keep the action moving** while making the challenge feel real.

Harm & Luck

If a **conflict involves risk and attrition**, you can track **Luck loss** to determine the outcome.

🎲 **When engaging in a conflict:**

- Roll as normal to determine if the Protagonist **gets what they want**.
- If they succeed, they deal damage. If they fail, they take damage.

📉 **Luck represents resilience, endurance, and fortune.** A character who runs out of Luck is **defeated** — but what that means depends on the context:

- In a **brawl**, they might be knocked out.
- In a **verbal duel**, they might concede the argument.
- In a **chase**, they might lose their target.

How Luck Loss Works

Use the following table to determine how much **Luck damage** is inflicted:

Oracle Result	Luck Damage
Yes, and...	Deal **3** damage to opponent
Yes...	Deal **2** damage to opponent
Yes, but...	Deal **1** damage to opponent
No, but...	Take **1** damage from opponent
No...	Take **2** damage from opponent
No, and...	Take **3** damage from opponent

🛑 **Reaching 0 Luck means the character has lost the conflict!**

At **0 Luck**, the **story dictates the consequences**, like:

- Are they **captured**?
- Are they **severely injured**?
- Do they **retreat and regroup**?

📌 Example: Alley Fight

> Zahra faces a **thug in an alley**. The thug has the Tags *Martial Artist*, *Hand-to-Hand Combat*, *Feline*, and *Short*.

🎲 Zahra **attacks with a knife** and rolls **(5) (6) [4]** → **"Yes, and..."**

✅ **She succeeds and deals 3 damage!** (Thug's Luck drops from 6 to 3)

🎲 The thug **counterattacks with a kick** and rolls **(3) (2) [2]** → **"Yes, but..."**

✅ **Zahra takes 1 damage!** (Her Luck drops from 6 to 5)

Who will win? The fight continues!

Why Use the Harm & Luck System?

✅ **Keeps conflicts dynamic** – Instead of just Yes/No answers, Luck loss adds a **progressive sense of tension**.

✅ **Flexible outcomes** – Losing a conflict doesn't always mean death; it means the story takes a new turn.

✅ **Scales to different scenarios** – Whether it's a duel, a chase, or a negotiation, **Luck tracks when a character is pushed beyond their limits**.

Luck and Narrative Consequences

Luck does not function as a **health bar** — it represents a **character's ability to evade misfortune, manipulate fate, or endure challenges**. When Luck runs out, it signals **a shift in the story**, not necessarily **injury or death**.

What Happens When a Character Reaches 0 Luck?

📌 **Losing all Luck doesn't mean immediate death** — instead, it signals a dramatic turning point. The Oracle and story context should guide what happens next.

- **In Combat?** → The character might be captured, knocked unconscious, or forced to flee.
- **In a Chase?** → They lose their target or get cornered.

- **In a Debate?** → They are outmaneuvered and must concede or face consequences.
- **In a Heist?** → They trigger an alarm or leave behind crucial evidence.

The moment Luck reaches **zero**, stop rolling — **the conflict has reached its conclusion**. Now, ask: **What makes sense for the story?**

📌 Example: When Luck Runs Out

> Zahra is **dueling a bounty hunter** in the ruins of an abandoned station.
>
> 🎲 The fight escalates, and Zahra's **Luck drops to 0**. The Oracle will no longer determine small exchanges — her fate is sealed.
>
> ✅ Instead of dying outright, she is **disarmed and pinned against a bulkhead**. The bounty hunter smirks, dragging her toward his ship — **now the real challenge begins: how does Zahra escape?**

🛑 **This keeps the story moving instead of ending with a simple "you lose."** Running out of Luck is not the end — it's a turning point.

Embracing Luck as a Story Mechanic

✅ **Luck keeps conflicts cinematic.** Instead of tracking minor injuries, it builds tension until a **definitive outcome** occurs.

✅ **It ensures conflicts don't drag on forever.** Once Luck is depleted, the story shifts direction.

✅ **It allows for unexpected twists.** Losing Luck can

introduce new **obstacles, bargains, or unintended consequences**.

When using the **Harm & Luck** system, think less about **"how much damage does this do?"** and more about **"how does this moment change the story?"**

Determine the Mood of the Next Scene

At the end of a scene, you might already know where the story is headed. However, if you're unsure, roll **1d6** to determine the overall **mood and focus** of the next scene.

🎲 D6 Roll	Next Scene Type	What It Means
1-3	**Dramatic Scene**	Raises stakes, adds new obstacles or dangers.
4-5	**Quiet Scene**	A pause to recover, reflect, or make plans.
6	**Meanwhile...**	Shifts focus to a different perspective or subplot.

Types of Scenes Explained

🔴 Dramatic Scene (1-3)

The **action and tension continue**. The situation worsens, new obstacles emerge, or an unexpected event forces the Protagonist to adapt.

✅ Use when:

- A villain makes their move.
- The environment introduces new dangers.
- The Protagonist's plans start to unravel.

🟢 **Quiet Scene (4-5)**
The **calm before the storm**. The Protagonist can **rest, regroup, and prepare** for what comes next. Conversations, character development, and small discoveries take center stage.

✅ **Use when:**
- The Protagonist needs to heal, gather intel, or plan.
- Relationships deepen or shift.
- The world reacts to past events without immediate conflict.

🔄 **Meanwhile Scene (6)**
The **focus shifts away** from the Protagonist, cutting to **villains, allies, or unseen forces** at play. This adds **depth to the world** and introduces **new threats or opportunities** before the Protagonist learns about them.

✅ **Use for:**
- A villain's next move (*the assassin gets their orders*).
- A subplot progressing (*the rebellion plans its next strike*).
- A shift in the world (*a storm brews on the horizon*).

📌 **Example: A Twisting Narrative**

> Zahra **accepts a corporate agent's offer**, but what happens next? She rolls **1d6 → 6**: **Meanwhile...**
> Instead of following Zahra, the scene shifts to **Tobias Wethern, her former mentor**, who is **hiring a hitman to eliminate her.**

The **"Meanwhile" scene builds tension** — Zahra doesn't know she's being targeted, but the **player does**. This creates dramatic irony and shapes upcoming conflicts.

Why Use This System?

✅ **Keeps the pacing dynamic** – Not every scene needs to be action-packed or slow-paced; the roll ensures variety.

✅ **Adds depth to the world** – A *Meanwhile* scene makes the world feel alive beyond the Protagonist's actions.

✅ **Encourages organic storytelling** – By following the roll, you introduce twists you may not have considered.

Open-Ended Questions & Inspiration

Not all questions can be answered with a simple **Yes or No**. When you need unexpected inspiration, or want to **generate fresh ideas**, roll **1d6 on each table below** (Verb, Noun, and optionally Adjective) to create a prompt.

This method helps when:

- You need a **plot twist** but don't know what it should be.
- The Oracle gives a vague answer, and you want to **expand on it**.
- You're looking for **unexpected connections** between story elements.

🔹 **Roll at least a Verb and a Noun.** Add an Adjective for more nuance.

🔹 **Interpret freely** — the result doesn't have to be literal!

Verbs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	inject	pass	own	divide	bury	borrow
2	continue	learn	ask	multiply	receive	imagine
3	develop	behave	replace	damage	collect	turn

Verbs	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	share	hand	play	explain	improve	cough
5	face	expand	found	gather	prefer	belong
6	trip	want	miss	dry	employ	destroy

Adjectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	frequent	faulty	obscene	scarce	rigid	long-term
2	ethereal	sophisticated	rightful	knowledgeable	astonishing	ordinary
3	descriptive	insidious	poor	proud	reflective	amusing
4	silky	worthless	fixed	loose	willing	cold
5	quiet	stormy	spooky	delirious	innate	late
6	magnificent	arrogant	unhealthy	enormous	truculent	charming

Nouns	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	cause	stage	change	verse	thrill	spot

Nouns	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	front	event	home	bag	measure	birth
3	prose	motion	trade	memory	chance	drop
4	instrument	friend	talk	liquid	fact	price
5	word	morning	edge	room	system	camp
6	key	income	use	humor	statement	argument

📌 **Example: Seeking Help in Desperation**

> **Question:** *"Does Zahra have friends who can help her against the hitman?"*
>
> 🎲 **Rolls:** 2-4 (**multiply**) and 3-2 (**motion**) → **Multiply Motion**

✅ Interpretation: Zahra **must move quickly** to reach a trusted contact before it's too late.

> **Final Outcome:** She rushes to **Melina Reade, an underworld hacker** who might provide crucial intel — but getting to her in time won't be easy!

When the Story Ends

Every adventure reaches a **natural conclusion** — but how do you know when it's time to wrap things up?

Signs That Your Story Is Ending

✅ **The Protagonist has achieved (or failed) their goal.**

✅ **A major revelation has changed everything.** (Victory, loss, or a new status quo.)

✅ **The conflict has reached a satisfying resolution.** (An enemy is defeated, a mystery is solved, a journey ends.)

✅ **The story's momentum slows.** (If you're struggling to find the next big scene, it might be time to end the adventure.)

Once the story concludes, reflect on how the experience has changed your Protagonist.

Post-Game Character Growth

At the end of the adventure, **modify your Protagonist** to reflect what they've learned. You may:

- **Add a new Skill, Gear, or Frailty** based on the events of the story.
- **Introduce a new Nemesis** if the adventure ended with lingering enemies.
- **Modify an existing trait** to show growth or transformation.

📌 **Also update:**

- **NPCs, Locations, and Events** that may return in future adventures.

📌 Example: Growth Through Conflict

> Zahra secures the datapad and hands it over to the authorities, **framing both Wethern and the Leton Corporation**. Wethern is arrested, but now she has a **powerful enemy working from the shadows**.

Post-Game Updates:

- Gained **Skill:** *Wannabe Hacker* (*Melina Reade might mentor her!*)
- New **Nemesis:** *The Leton Corporation* (*They won't let this slide...*)

Future Adventures

Even if one story ends, your Protagonist's journey **doesn't have to be over**. Use your updated character sheet to start a new session with:

- **A fresh mission tied to past events.**
- **A revenge arc or lingering consequence.**
- **A brand-new setting, using past allies and enemies.**

This ensures that every adventure leaves a **lasting impact**, making future stories richer and more connected.

Loner Together

While *Loner* is designed for **solo play**, its mechanics can be adapted for **group sessions**. Since the game is derived from **Freeform Universal**, there's nothing stopping you from playing it with others — if you really want to.

There are two main ways to play *Loner* in a group:

1. Without a Game Master (GM-less Mode)

- Each player controls their own **Protagonist** and asks questions to the **Oracle**, just like in solo play.
- The **Oracle's answers and world reactions** are interpreted by the player who asked the question.
- A **Facilitator** (either a rotating or fixed role) helps **moderate**, **remind players of rules**, and **settle disputes** if needed.

- Questions affecting the **whole group** should be discussed collectively.

2. With a Game Master

- The **GM does not roll dice** — only the players consult the Oracle.
- The GM interprets Oracle responses and presents the **world's reactions**.
- The GM also acts as a **facilitator**, guiding the flow of the story and helping resolve questions.

Should You Play Loner in a Group?

While these modes work, *Loner* is fundamentally built for **solo play**. If you're looking for a multiplayer experience, you may find **Freeform Universal** better suited to structured group storytelling.

But if you insist on adapting *Loner* for a group — go for it. Just be prepared to tweak things as needed.

The Adventure Maker

Sometimes, you might **struggle with inspiration** or want to **experiment with an unexpected setting**. The **Adventure Maker** helps you generate a **unique world and adventure premise** using simple dice rolls.

Use this tool when:

✅ You **don't have a setting in mind** and want a fresh, random world.

✅ You want to **challenge yourself** by playing in a genre or theme you wouldn't normally pick.

✅ You need a **quick framework** before diving into your *Loner* session.

How to Use the Tables

Generate a Setting

🎲 **Roll once on each of the following tables:**

1. **Settings Table** → Defines the world's broad **theme or environment**.
2. **Tones Table** → Determines the **atmosphere and mood** of the setting.
3. **Things Table** (Roll twice) → Introduces key **elements** that define the world.

Generate an Adventure Premise

🎲 **Roll on these tables to create the backbone of your adventure:**

1. **Opposition Table** → Identifies the **main antagonist or challenge**.
2. **Actions Table** (Roll twice) → Determines **what needs to be done**.
3. **Things Table** → Adds a **unique object, mystery, or event** to the mix.

📌 **Important:** The **adventure premise** is **not the initial scene** — it's just the **framework** for your story. You'll still define how it starts when you begin playing.

📌 Example: Generating an Adventure

🎲 **Rolls:**

- **Setting:** *Sword and Sorcery Adventure*
- **Tone:** *Eerie and Paranormal*
- **Things:** *Vast Empires, Different Factions*
- **Opposition:** *(Roll was unclear, so let's interpret based on the setting — perhaps a Secretive Cult?)*

- **Actions:** *Seek + (Second action roll was unclear, let's assume Uncover?)*

✅ **Result:**
> The story takes place in a **mystical land of vast, crumbling empires**, where **hidden factions maneuver for power in the shadows**. The Protagonist, a wandering mage, is on a **quest to seek out ancient knowledge** — but in doing so, they will **uncover the truth about a secret cult pulling the strings of history**.

Why Use the Adventure Maker?

✅ **Instant inspiration** – No need to plan in advance; just roll and go!

✅ **Encourages creativity** – Helps you explore new settings and stories.

✅ **Keeps the game fresh** – Every adventure will feel different.

Use it **as a starting point**, then shape the story as you play. *Loner* thrives on **emergent storytelling**, and the Adventure Maker is just the spark to get you started.

Table 1: Settings

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Post-Apocalyptic Wasteland	High Fantasy Kingdom	Medieval War and Intrigue	Cyberpunk Megacorporation	Futuristic Space Colony	Supernatural Noir City

	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Alternate History	Pirate-Filled Seas	Wild West Frontier	Dark Fantasy Realm	Futuristic Dystopian City	Ancient Greek Mythology
3	Space Opera Adventure	Samurai-Era Japan	Zombie Survival	Superhero Metropolis	Cold War Espionage	Modern Crime Syndicate
4	Magic School for Young Mages	Horror-Filled Asylum	Epic Fantasy Quest	Cybernetic Organisms and Androids	Lovecraftian Cosmic Horrors	Sword and Sorcery Adventure
5	Urban Fantasy Underworld	Abandoned Space Station	Colonial America	Mythical Creatures and Legends	Martial Arts Action	Horror-Stricken Carnival
6	Underwater Adventure and Exploration	Jungle-Covered Planet	Steampunk Victorian Era	Time Travel Paradoxes	Intergalactic Starfighter Battles	Survival in a Savage Land

Table 2: Tones

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Dark and brooding	Melancholic and poetic	Lighthearted and humorous	Quirky and absurd	Gritty and realistic	Violent and brutal
2	Epic and grandiose	Majestic and inspiring	Suspenseful and thrilling	Fast-paced and chaotic	Mysterious and enigmatic	Philosophical and introspective
3	Action-packed and adventurous	Heroic and daring	Romantic and whimsical	Tragic and melancholic	Horror-filled and terrifying	Oppressive and claustrophobic
4	Technologically advanced and sleek	Optimistic and utopian	Grungy and dirty	Bleak and hopeless	Gothic and ominous	Cosmic and unknowable
5	Surreal	Psychedelic	Futuristic and dystopian	Cynical and	Nostalgic and	Folkloric and

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	and dream-like	and hallucinatory		satirical	timeless	mythical
6	Eerie and paranormal	Unsettling and uncanny	Martial and disciplined	Cold and detached	Gracious and elegant	Ceremonial and ritualistic

Table 3: Things

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Magic	Monsters	Ancient relics	Medieval castle	Futuristic technology	Spaceship
2	Ancient ruins	Forbidden knowledge	Secret society	Dangerous quest	Band of adventurers	Unseen forces
3	Hidden treasure	Dark magic	Mystical creatures	Supernatural powers	Epic battle	Intriguing plot
4	Suspicious characters	War-torn land	Dangerous wilderness	Political intrigue	World domination	Suspenseful journey

	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Dark secrets	Forbidden love	Intense conflict	Death-defying stunts	Powerful artifacts	Epic journeys
6	Unpredictable twists	Dynamic characters	Different factions	Vast empires	Epic heroes	Legendary creatures

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Post-apocalyptic wasteland	Steampunk cityscape	Dragon-infested skies	Haunted mansion	Futuristic metropolis	Intergalactic trade routes
2	Lost city of gold	Artificial intelligence	Pirate's cove	Time-travel paradox	Espionage	Extraterrestrial beings
3	Underwater kingdom	Epic sea voyage	Superheroic powers	Time loops	Alternate realities	Virtual reality simulation
4	Intriguing mystery	Mutant uprising	Advanced biotechnology	Futuristic society	Alternate history	Cyberpunk dystopia
5	Extensive lore	Unstoppable virus	Enchanted forest	The unknown	Advanced robotics	Secrets of the universe

	1	2	3	4	5	6
				frontiers		
6	End of the world scenarios	Telekinetic abilities	Futuristic weapons	Dimension hopping	Techno-sorcery	Super-powered conflict

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Lost civilization	Decaying metropolis	Gothic horror	Wild west frontier	Futuristic cyberwarfare	Space exploration
2	Political uprising	Artificial lifeforms	Mercenaries and assassins	Time-traveling adventures	Espionage mission	Alien invasion
3	Underwater adventure	Epic siege	Magical abilities	Time anomalies	Alternate timeline	Virtual reality nightmare
4	Intriguing conspiracy	Mutant insurgency	Cybernetic enhancements	Futuristic utopia	Historical reimagining	Cyberpunk rebellion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Extensive world-building	Unstoppable monster	Enchanted kingdom	The final frontier	Robotic revolution	Secrets of the ancients
6	End of the era scenarios	Psionic abilities	Futuristic battlefields	Interdimensional portals	Technomancy	Superpowered diplomacy

Table 4: Actions

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Cast	Battle	Free	Explore	Upgrade	Pilot
2	Decipher	Seek	Infiltrate	Complete	Join	Uncover
3	Find	Master	Tame	Harness	Win	Unravel
4	Interrogate	Navigate	Survive	Influence	Overthrow	Endure
5	Guess	Pursue	Resolve	Perform	Acquire	Embark
6	Anticipate	Develop	Ally	Expand	Become	Slay

Table 5: Oppositions

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Dark wizards	Savage beasts	Malevolent spirits	Arrogant noblemen	Dangerous traps	Ruthless bandits
2	Undead armies	Corrupt politicians	Sinister organizations	Vicious monsters	Treacherous terrain	Despotic rulers
3	Powerful artifacts	Merciless assassins	Dangerous creatures	Ancient curses	Complex puzzles	Powerful spells
4	Ruthless mercenaries	Dark forces	Terrible secrets	Insidious plots	Vicious predators	Unforgiving elements
5	Lethal poison	Ancient prophecies	Irresistible temptations	Powerful enchantments	Ruthless warlords	Unseen dangers
6	Terrible curses	Devious traps	Sinister conspiracies	Dangerous illusions	Malevolent entities	Ruthless factions

Afterword

The third edition of *Loner* keeps the rules **unchanged**, but completely **refines their presentation**, making them

clearer, more accessible, and supported by practical examples.

This marks a **significant improvement** from the **rigid and overly technical tone** of the first two editions. While previous versions were well-received and appreciated, some players found their **presentation too dry or difficult to fully grasp**.

With this new edition, my hope is that *Loner's* **unique storytelling paradigm**—so different from traditional RPGs—will be **easier to understand, embrace, and enjoy.**

Credits

- Recluse Engine (CC BY 4.0) by Graven Utterance and Tiny Solitary Soldier Oracle for the main resolution and scene mechanics.
- Freeform Universal Roleplaying Game (CC BY 4.0) by Nathan Russell as an inspiration of the whole game and the character traits.
- Harm mechanics are from 6Q System (CC BY 4.0) by Marcus Burggraf.
- Tana Pigeon for Mythic and clarifying for me the mechanisms of expectation and testing.
- S. John Ross for Risus and to have taught me the beauty of clichés and that not all conflicts are combat.
- The Adventure Maker setup is inspired from *The Instant Game* by Animalball Partners (2007). None of its content is used here.

With deepest thanks to :

- Shane Conner for proof reading and revision of the text of the First Edition.

- The Loner Facebook Group and r/LonerRPG for constantly pushing me to improve and extend the Loner framework with new ideas and settings.
- Ruolatori Solitari for their support on the development of the second edition.

Appendix A: Loner Diceless

This version of *Loner* removes dice from the resolution process, relying instead on **character abilities, narrative circumstances, and resources** to determine outcomes. By applying a **structured decision matrix**, you ensure **consistent and logical** resolutions without randomness.

How It Works

1. Setup

Before resolving an action, establish the criteria that will influence the outcome:

- **Does the character have a relevant skill or ability?**
- **Are the circumstances favorable or unfavorable?**
- **Has the character prepared or gathered resources?**

These factors will determine the result using a **decision matrix** instead of rolling dice.

2. Resolution Process

🟢 Step 1: Ask the Question

The player poses a **closed question** requiring resolution.

📌 📌 *Example: "Is the door unlocked?"*

🟡 Step 2: Evaluate Factors

Assess **character traits, situational context, and available resources**:

- **Does the character have a relevant skill or ability?**

- **Are the circumstances beneficial or challenging?**
- **Has the character gathered special tools or knowledge?**

🔴 **Step 3: Apply the Decision Matrix**
Using the answers from Step 2, consult the **decision matrix** to determine the final outcome.

⚠️ **Step 4: Track Twists**
If the answer is **"Yes, but..."** add **1 point to the Twist Counter** as usual.

3. The Decision Matrix

Player Factor/Action	Influence	Outcome
Relevant Skill/Ability Present	**High**	**Yes**
Relevant Skill/Ability Absent	**Low**	**No**
Favorable Circumstances	**Medium**	**Yes, but...**
Unfavorable Circumstances	**Medium**	**No, but...**
Exceptional Resources/Preparation	**High**	**Yes, and...**
Lack of Resources/Preparation	**Low**	**No, and...**

✅ **The more factors working in favor of the character, the stronger the success.**

❌ **The more obstacles, the greater the chance of complications or failure.**

4. Guidelines for Interpretation

📌 **Step 1: Check for a Relevant Skill or Ability**
- If the character **has a related skill**, lean toward **Yes**.
- If they **lack the skill**, lean toward **No**.

📌 **Step 2: Assess Circumstances**
- **If the situation is favorable**, lean toward **Yes, but...**.

- **If it's unfavorable**, lean toward **No, but...**.

📌 **Step 3: Consider Resources and Preparation**

- **If the character has special tools, intel, or allies**, lean toward **Yes, and...**.
- **If they are ill-equipped or rushed**, lean toward **No, and...**.

5. Resolution 📌 Example

🔍 **Scenario:** Zahra is trying to pick the lock on a **corporate lab door** while being pursued by security.

🗣️ **Question:** *"Is the door unlocked?"*

✅ **Evaluating Factors:**

- **Character Factors:** Zahra **does NOT have lockpicking skills** (*Relevant Skill Absent* ❌).
- **Circumstances:** The door is **reinforced and high-security** (*Unfavorable Circumstances* ⚠️).
- **Resources/Preparation:** She has **basic tools but no advanced hacking device** (*Lack of Exceptional Resources* ❌).

🎯 **Decision Matrix Outcome:**

- *Relevant Skill Absent* → **No**
- *Unfavorable Circumstances* → **No, but...**
- *Lack of Resources* → **No, and...**

📌 **Final Decision:** *"No, and..."*

> Zahra **fails to unlock the door, and... security drones activate, detecting her presence.**

6. Why Use the Diceless Oracle?

✅ **Removes randomness** – Outcomes are based purely on **character choices and world conditions**.

✅ **Encourages strategic play** – Players must **plan ahead**, using skills and resources wisely.

✅ **Keeps the narrative flowing** – No need for dice; just **apply logic and move forward**.

This approach allows *Loner* to be played with **pure story-telling mechanics**, making each challenge feel like **a direct consequence of past choices** rather than a random roll.

Appendix B: Resolution Matrix

Risk Chance	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist	⚠️ Yes, but...	⚠️ Yes, but...	✅ Yes	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
2	⚠️ No, but...	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist	⚠️ Yes, but...	✅ Yes	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
3	⚠️ No, but...	⚠️ No, but...	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist	✅ Yes	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
4	❌ No	❌ No	❌ No	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist	⭐ Yes, and...	⭐ Yes, and...
5	❌ No	❌ No	❌ No	⭐ No, and...	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist	⭐ Yes, and...
6	❌ No	❌ No	❌ No	⭐ No, and...	⭐ No, and...	🔄 Yes, but... +1 Twist

Appendix C: Loner Cheatsheet

🎲 Core Mechanics

- Ask the **Oracle** ❓ Yes/No questions to resolve uncertainty.
- Roll **1 Chance Die** 🎲 **& 1 Risk Die** 🎲:
  - ✅ **Chance > Risk → Yes**
  - ❌ **Risk > Chance → No**
  - ⚠️ **Both < 4 → Yes, but... / No, but...**
  - ⭐ **Both > 3 → Yes, and... / No, and...**
  - 🔄 **Equal → Yes, but... +1 Twist Counter**

🛠️ Character Creation

1. 📛 **Name & Concept** – Who they are, in a short phrase. (*Rogue Bounty Hunter*).
2. 💡 **2 Skills** – Unique talents or expertise. (*Shadow Walker, Crack Shot*).
3. ⚡ **1 Frailty** – A weakness or flaw. (*Haunted by the Past*).
4. 🎒 **2 Gear** – Specialized equipment. (*Plasma Pistol, Lockpicks*).
5. 🎯 **Goal & Motive** – What they seek and why. (*Find lost relic to clear name*).
6. 😈 **Nemesis (Optional)** – Their main opposition. (*The Syndicate*).
7. 🍀 **Luck = 6** – A buffer against failure (resets after conflicts).

⚖️ Advantage & Disadvantage

- ⬆️ **Advantage** → Roll **2 Chance Dice**, keep highest.
- ⬇️ **Disadvantage** → Roll **2 Risk Dice**, keep highest.

- 🚫 **Never roll more than 2 Chance or 2 Risk Dice.**

🎬 Scenes & Gameplay Loop

1. 📍 **Set the Scene** → Where are you? What's happening?
2. ❓ **Ask a Yes/No Question** → Resolve with the Oracle.
3. 🧐 **Interpret the Answer** → Adjust story based on result.
4. 🔁 **Repeat Until Conflict or Resolution**.

🔄 Twist Counter

- 🎲 **Doubles on Oracle Roll** → +1 Twist Counter.
- **At 3, a Twist occurs!** Roll **2d6**:
  - 1️⃣ **A third party** → Appears
  - 2️⃣ **The hero** → Alters location
  - 3️⃣ **An encounter** → Helps the hero
  - 4️⃣ **A physical event** → Hinders the hero
  - 5️⃣ **An emotional event** → Changes the goal
  - 6️⃣ **An object** → Ends the scene

⚔️ Conflicts & Luck

- ⚡ **Option 1: Oracle Resolution** → Ask a single Yes/No question for the entire conflict.
- 🎭 **Option 2: Action-Based Oracle Rolls** → Ask multiple Yes/No questions for each step.

- ❤️‍🔥 **Option 3: Harm & Luck System**:
  - ✅ **Yes, and...** → Cause **3** damage.
  - ✅ **Yes...** → Cause **2** damage.
  - ✅ **Yes, but...** → Cause **1** damage.
  - ❌ **No, but...** → Take **1** damage.
  - ❌ **No...** → Take **2** damage.
  - ❌ **No, and...** → Take **3** damage.
  - 🩸 **At 0 Luck → Conflict lost**, interpret consequences.

📖 Determining Next Scene

- 🎭 **1-3** → Dramatic Scene (stakes increase).
- 🌿 **4-5** → Quiet Scene (recovery, planning).
- 🎥 **6** → Meanwhile Scene (cut to another perspective).

🏁 When the Story Ends

- 🏆 **End when** the **Goal is achieved**, a **major revelation occurs**, or the **momentum slows**.
- **After an adventure:**
  - 🆕 **Gain a new Skill, Gear, or Frailty** reflecting events.
  - 🔧 **Modify an existing trait** (e.g., improving expertise).
  - 😈 **Introduce a new Nemesis** if relevant.
- 🗂️ **Update NPCs, Locations, and Events** for future stories.

🎲 Open-Ended Questions

- 🎲 Roll **1d6 on each table** (Verb, Noun, Adjective) for inspiration.

License

Loner v.3.0

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