To Make a Murder

a narrative solo mystery framework

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rough draft one

There's one big thing you need to know about this framework, right up front.

This is a rough draft and it's not play-tested. At all.

Expect balance issues. Expect glaring mistakes. Expect unclear directions.

Expect, if you play through, for all sorts of problems to crop up that you'll need to solve.

That's how things like this improve, of course.

For the best experience, use a reasonably modern, standard pdf viewer. Set your pdf view so you can see about half a page at a time. It will be helpful to know what keystrokes go "back".

Try this VIEWER TEST and see if you get a hover pop-up or a usable jump link. If not, you'll need to search for "<name of category> <number of suspect>" to get the hidden Fact when the rules tell you to.

Read Chapter 1, completely, then follow the instructions under **How to Play**. No peeking ahead or looking at the secrets!

*This ROUGH DRAFT document was last updated **February 23, 2017**. If this date is more than two weeks ago, you should check the website for an updated version.*

https://exposit.github.io/katamoiran/rpglets.html

SETUP

1.1 BEFORE YOU PLAY

To Make a Murder is strongly narrative, with loosely scripted scenes and plenty of room for you to explore what will be your story. Remember that if something doesn't "fit" with the narrative, you can always discard it or change it to make it fit better.

Choose the system you want to play. Almost any will work, but to take full advantage of the rules below, it should have a way to increase (advantage) and a way to decrease (disadvantage) your odds of success on a roll. If it has resources for generating NPCs, crimes, and locations, feel free to use those instead of or alongside the ones provided here.

Use whatever solo oracle you prefer.

Make your hero. Social skills will be useful.

Keep in mind that most of the flavor text is just a suggestion; one that assumes a fairly standard real world setting with a fairly standard detective mystery.

Print out the 1.5 with the Actor Tracker and Plot Callback List or something similar.

1.2 HOW TO PLAY

As you play out each scene, follow the mechanical directions in the left most column, while keeping the narrative directions in the right hand column in mind. Roll on the flavor tables if you wish. Add any interesting events, conversations, and twists to the Plot Callback List.

Seek to establish Facts, about the current pivotal Clue, about the Actors, and about the situation in general. Facts are pieces of information established in play through mechanics rolls, oracle questions, and narration. Enter Facts into the Plot Callback List as they are discovered.

When you would logically discover or establish a Fact in play about one or more Actors that fits in one of the Clue categories, and that Fact is not already revealed in the Actor Tracker, look up the number for that Actor (or Actors) in the Clue category and fill in that box with the answer, then use that Fact in the narration.

When you establish a Fact in play that correlates to one of the Clue categories but the Actor is unknown or uncertain or the truth of the Fact is in doubt, add that Fact to the Plot Callback List with a ? unless you can deduce who it belongs to by looking at Actor Tracker for a match. Periodically check both the List and the Tracker to see if you can make any new deductions.

Any time the narrative points towards an Actor's innocence or guilt or your hero makes a deduction (by adding to the Actor Tracker) that leads him to think one party might be innocent or guilty, adjust any affected Scores up or down by a d6.

Begin at THE BEGINNING.

Table 1.1: Clue Chart

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Hobby	Hobby	Hobby	Hobby	Hobby	Hobby
2	Transport	Transport	Transport	Transport	Transport	Transport
3	Vice	Vice	Vice	Vice	Vice	Vice
4	Emotion	Emotion	Emotion	Emotion	Emotion	Emotion
5	Motive	Motive	Motive	Motive	Motive	Motive
6	Weapon	Weapon	Weapon	Weapon	Weapon	Weapon

1.3 CREATING ACTORS

Give the Actor a first impression, and a suitable name, and put them in a random empty slot in your Cast list.

Roll 7d6 for the new Actor and write the face values down, in order, in the Actor Tracker on the row with their name.

The "Score" box reflects how guilty they appear. Remember, the one with the highest Score is the one who looks the most guilty, but they are not necessarily the actual criminal.

As you play, you will be called on to create new Actors as part of the rules and as they naturally come up in play. Don't bother adding minor NPCs to the Actor Tracker, but do add them to the Plot Callback List.

When an Actor dies, keep them in play, but ignore them if they come up again in random results in a nonsensical way. If a Fact is established and they are the most likely target, roll a d6; on a 4- it's from before they died and on a 5+ ignore them and look for the next more likely actor.

1.4 RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES

When you form a Relationship with a Actor, write that Relationship down. Once per scene, if you can invoke a Relationship on a roll, gain advantage on that roll.

A Relationship can be adversarial, a love affair, a friendship, mutual respect, hunter and prey, or really any connection between two human beings. Relationships are never lost, only changed when the rules or narrative say they are.

Resources work the same way but reflect things like money, gear, power, social leverage, and the element of surprise. Resources are used up or lost when the rules or the narrative say they are.

Table 1.2: Setting

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	office	store	alley	mansion	boudoir	hilltop
2	clearing	lake	field	roof	garden	nightclub
3	conference	golf course	morgue	derelict	shantytown	army base
4	forest	camp	torched car	brownstone	apartment	riverbank
5	driveway	retreat	restaurant	truck stop	bathroom	road
6	squatter's camp	burned house	hunting lodge	halfway house	country estate	suburban home

Table 1.3: Where to Next?

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-2	contact	pawnshop	cop friend	morgue	diner	library
3-4	co-worker	boss	next door	store	residence	relative
5-6	enemy	frenemy	rival	lover	mentor	partner

Table 1.4: Actor First Impressions

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	surly	taciturn	quiet	thoughtful	frantic	shrewd
2	foolish	wise	spendthrift	miserly	brave	kind
3	in love	lost	careless	determined	no nonsense	childish
4	greedy	needy	selfish	player	gambler	ambitious
5	grifter	classy	gauche	naive	innocent	worldly
6	friendly	cold fish	cruel	savvy	hard-eyed	bitter

Table 1.5: Bad Things

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-2	water	fire	ice	dirt	crush	pieces
3-4	blood	poison	drugs	lost	hot	bomb
5-6	rope	impact	hole	fall	throat	natural

1.5 PLAY SHEET

Table 1.6: Actor Tracker

	Name	Hobby 1	Transport 2	Vice 3	Emotion 4	Motive 5	Weapon 6	Score
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								

Create actors by entering a name in a random slot, then rolling 7d6 and entering one die into each box in that row.

Table 1.7: Relationship Tracker

	Name	Actor 1	Actor 2	Actor 3	Actor 4	Actor 5	Actor 6	Hero
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								

Table 1.8: Plot Callback List

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

Add interesting events, conversations, and twists to the Plot Callback List, along with unverified Facts and minor actors.

Scenario

2.1 THE BEGINNING

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Create an Actor. They're dead.
There's a dead body here.
Answer: why are you here?
Answer: are you supposed to be?
Create an Actor and put them on stage as you arrive; set their Score to 7.
Answer: what's the likely cause of death?
Create a third actor; they arrive just after you do.

the usual [status quo] *then*
someone tells me [the lesson]

work smarter, not harder • violence isn't the answer • use my mind, not my body • luck won't always carry me through • good must act against evil • redemption is possible

but I don't get it
the CATALYST *requires the* CHOICE [to continue]

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Now play to find out how the Clue is relevant and how it relates to the situation. Play to find out more about the Actors.

If you gather a Resource, add it to your Inventory. If you make a Relationship, add it to your Relationships.

Update the Plot Callback list.

Go to the INTERLUDE.

2.2 INTERLUDE

Set the scene with flavor text here.

This is a break from the action, a breather, a rest.
Bring in an NPC, from your past or from the present, or a sympathetic Actor.
Gain a Resource or Relationship.
Answer: what is it?

subplot [take a break] *when the*
mentor • professional • friend • rival •
peer • lover
tells me THE LESSON again [I still don't get it]

Go to EXPLORE THE PREMISE.

2.3 EXPLORE THE PREMISE

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Choose or roll a scene focus from the list at right.
Add a new Actor.
Add a Resource or a Relationship or both.

promise of [explore] the genre
expect someone to be [repeatedly]

shot at • hit • seduced • interrogated • chased • threatened

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Repeat this sequence as many times as you wish. When you are done:

... if the difference between your two highest Actor Scores is ten or more and the Actor with the highest Score isn't with you, go to MIDPOINT A

... if the difference between your two highest Actor Scores is ten or more and the Actor with the highest Score is with you, go to MIDPOINT B.

... otherwise, go to MIDPOINT C.

2.4   MIDPOINT A

Set the scene with flavor text here.

There's a new dead body; it's your most
likely suspect.
Don't change their Score.
Answer: how did they die?

...ends in MIDPOINT
[where everything is great or everything
is awful]

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is.
Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Go to COLLAPSE.

2.5 MIDPOINT B

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Pick a living Actor who isn't with you.
They're dead now, and the most likely suspect has an airtight alibi; they were with you.
Don't change their Score, but reduce the most likely suspect's Score to 7.

...ends in MIDPOINT
[where everything is great or everything is awful]

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Go to COLLAPSE.

2.6   MIDPOINT C

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Confront the most likely suspect, the living Actor with the highest Score.
Startling new information is revealed. Answer: what is it? How is it revealed? Set the Score of the living Actor with the highest Score to 0.

...ends in MIDPOINT
[where everything is great or everything is awful]

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Go to COLLAPSE.

2.7 COLLAPSE

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Roll a Threat.
Roll on your Actor Tracker for a Fact.
If you knew what it is, erase it and roll up a new one. Reveal it.
If this Fact matches another Actor's, discover evidence of a conspiracy.
Roll or choose a disaster from the right-hand column.
Lose all Resources.
Lose a Relationship to betrayal, lies, or death.
Answer: what else can go wrong?
Answer: how did my flaws cause this?
Answer: what have I lost?

a major setback [attack] *ruins everything as*
a Threat *puts us in a* BAD POSITION

the wrong person is accused • someone is badly hurt • I've lost what I wanted • crucial evidence is destroyed • my self-confidence is shaken • danger strikes

failure [make it hurt] *ends in* LOSS

prize • illusions • part of self • social standing • mentor • lover

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Choose a living Actor at random and then go to DESPAIR.

2.8   DESPAIR

Set the scene with flavor text here.

The Actor you chose? They die or betray you or both.
Answer: how do they betray you?
Answer: how bad is your position now?
Answer: can it get any worse?

utter failure [mourn]
leads to CHOICE [to try again]
because of

inspiration • love • the lesson • stubbornness • duty • the greater good

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

Go to FINALE.

2.9 FINALE

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Pull out all the stops.
This is the room full of suspects waiting for you to unmask one of them or the white-knuckled chase across the moors.
This is the final showdown.
Answer: what will you risk for victory? To see justice done?

[plan] *use your new* approach [main plot] and context [subplot] *as*

you're trapped • they've set someone up to take harm • there's unintended consequences • it was all a distraction from the real target • they wanted you to find out • an ally isn't really an ally

turns out [cruel twist] *someone you trusted*

was using you • is in it for profit • knows your secret • set you up to take the fall • wasn't trustworthy • will try to take the credit

Roll a d6 and look at the Clues chart; the column you rolled indicates what the scene Clue is. Whatever it is, it's pivotal in this scene.

...on a 1 or 2 or if you are confident you have identified the guilty party, go to REVEAL A.

...on a 3 or 4, or if you suspect there's more than one killer, go to REVEAL B.

...on a 5 or 6, or if you have doubts about the guilty party's motives, REVEAL C.

2.10 REVEAL A

Set the scene with flavor text here.

The killer is the Actor with the highest Score.

the killer expresses [self-interest]

regret • justification • bargains • an attack • escape • hostage

self-preservation *kicks in and* the killer

attacks directly • springs a trap • attempts suicide • makes a run for it • arranges an accident • destroys evidence

Answer: can you prove it?

Answer: can you survive once they know you know?

Answer: can you bring them to justice?

Go to EPILOGUE.

2.11 REVEAL B

Set the scene with flavor text here.

The killer is the living Actor with the highest Score.
But one of the victims was killed by someone else.
The second killer is the Actor whose Score is the second highest.

the killer expresses [self-interest]

regret • justification • bargains • an attack • escape • hostage

the hidden killer wants to [twisted]

protect • hide • profit • blackmail • obsess • torment

self-preservation *kicks in and* the killer attacks directly • springs a trap • attempts suicide • makes a run for it • arranges an accident • destroys evidence

Answer: can you prove it?

Answer: can you survive once they know you know?

Answer: can you bring them both to justice?

Go to EPILOGUE.

2.12 REVEAL C

Set the scene with flavor text here.

The killer is the living Actor with the highest Score.
The killer is being manipulated by someone else..
The puppetmaster is the Actor whose Score is the second lowest.

the killer expresses [self-interest]

regret • justification • bargains • an attack • escape • hostage

the hidden master wants to [twisted]

protect • hide • profit • blackmail • obsess • torment

self-preservation *kicks in and* the killer

attacks directly • springs a trap • attempts suicide • makes a run for it • arranges an accident • destroys evidence

Answer: can you prove it?

Answer: can you survive once they know you know?

Answer: can you bring them both to justice?

Go to EPILOGUE.

2.13 EPILOGUE

Set the scene with flavor text here.

Wrap things up.
Answer: are you better off?
Answer: are you wiser, sadder, relieved, rejoicing?
Answer: was justice served?

Answer: what did you lose? What did you gain?

THE END

someone is lost forever • someone comes out better off • someone is defeated • an at-risk resource or ally is spared

Final Image [how things have changed]

3

SECRETS

3.1   Hobby 1

Sports

3.2   Transport 1

Car

3.3   Vice 1

Sex

3.4 Emotion 1

Anger

3.5   Motive 1

Inheritance

3.6   Weapon 1

Improvised weapon

3.7 Hobby 2

Books

3.8 Transport 2

Train

3.9   Vice 2

Drugs

3.10   Emotion 2

Fear

3.11 Motive 2

Blackmail

3.12   Weapon 2

Drugs

3.13 Hobby 3

Social

3.14 Transport 3

Bicycle

3.15   Vice 3

Gossip

3.16   Emotion 3

Resignation

3.17 Motive 3

Revenge

3.18   Weapon 3

Poison

3.19   Hobby 4

Games

3.20   Transport 4

Van

3.21   Vice 4

Another Actor, roll for which.

3.22   Emotion 4

Sadness

3.23 Motive 4

Reputation

3.24 Weapon 4

Blunt object

3.25   Hobby 5

Cooking

3.26   Transport 5

Truck

3.27   Vice 5

Gambling, bad investments

3.28   Emotion 5

Resentment

3.29 Motive 5

Owes money

3.30   Weapon 5

Accident

3.31 Hobby 6

Outdoors

3.32   Transport 6

Jogger

3.33   Vice 6

Blackmail

3.34   Emotion 6

Passion

3.35   Motive 6

Greed

3.36   Weapon 6

Projectile weapon

3.37 VIEWER TEST

If you are reading this, you have a suitable viewer.

Use your back button and finish reading the preamble.