

# MorTV

A “[TRO] Game-fu challenge 3” entry.

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## Introduction

It all began on the world of Mort. The so-called 'world of progress'. Dark and smoky, a dystopia ruled by a monolithic corporation that provided everything and nurtured the cultures dark heart. Life was cheap, but bullets expensive. New invention was stopped, secrets were kept and horrors unleashed in the streets.

A world of grime, secrets, hopelessness - and televised serial killings to keep the masses quiet.

But that dystopia ended.

Despite its name being intended as irony, progress was made.

The internet came about. A utopian dream of individualism and amateur creation.

The Reputation economy! Whuffie! Smart fabrics! Wearable computing! Flash mobs!

And it all turned out to be true. The corporation crumbled, its secrets forgotten, and every dream of an economy run by individuals turned out to work.

Decades passed. Freed of any need to find investors and turn a profit, hobbyists invented incredible technologies.

Gleaming silver spires, crystalline technologies, teleporters and even hyperdrives.

Those with drive and ambition left the planet to explore the grand sights of the galaxy.

Those who remain are the lazy, the unambitious - and those who prey on them.

Those who remain are the people who want to watch murder-TV.

And those who produce it...

She was running down an alley, panting – the puddles I'd placed splashed perfectly.

The dogs... Where were the dogs? Shit.

Glancing left I could see mister snow cursing as she ran past his hideyhole. He started to pursue. Maybe we could make this a chase scene instead?

Pain, as something tore at my leg. Behind me, the handler was torn to shreds – I drew my pistol and laughed as I realised that we were filming horrorshow afterall.

# The Game

Play is about thirty minutes; which you spend (pretending to) produce a three minute TV spot, as your crew tries to become famous. Followed by that three minute recap and a little bit of upkeep.

You will need some paper, something to write with, a few counters and six dice. (Normal six sided ones.)

One player takes the role of the GM and needs to read all of this, the others can skip over the rules and the 'GM advice' bit.

## ***Mechanics***

Here follows a glossary of terms (thankfully short) and then the resolution system.

Following this we have character creation and gameplay.

Last comes character advancement.

## **Terms : Aspects**

The basic system of this game is based on 'Aspects' as seen in Fate and many other games.

As a quick overview of terms:

- **Tag.** An aspect can be 'tagged' - which means that you get some dice to roll. (You can only tag an aspect if you can describe how it is usable in the current situation)
  - An aspect can be tagged for its full score when it's directly applicable.
  - It can also be tagged for half of its score (round down) in its penumbra.
    - For example "Beating people up (3)" is good for 3 dice of beating people up. But it's good for 1 die of "Who beat you up?" questioning, 1 die of "Finding thugs for hire" and so forth.
- **Compel.** An aspect can be 'compelled' - which means that the player is offered a bribe in exchange for acting in accordance with the aspect.
- **Invoke.** Invoking aspects works a little differently from other games. You can invoke an opponents aspect in order to make a task more difficult for yourself, in the hopes of earning more when you succeed.
- **Want.** Your main aspect describes something that you want to get. Something you don't have, and will do stupid things to get. Your 'want' aspect is widely applicable for tagging and is your main motivation.
  - This should be something that you can get, have and lose. A physical object is an obvious choice; intangibles such as "Love" can work - but you have to be sure they can do everything the system needs from them. (Mainly, be acquired - leading to wanting something more; and be lost again)
- **Got.** When you acquire the object that you 'want', you get a new 'got' aspect (See: Advancement) Whilst you possess your thing, you can tag it for a single die. You can be compelled to show it off or to use it.

## Terms : Other

- **Crew.** The characters, all got together in one place, ready to make a film.
- **Fame.** A rating of your success and popularity. Fame opens doors and gives access to better stuff.
- **Kittens.** (In character) For small denominations, pictures of cats doing and saying funny things has become the de-facto currency. You'll not normally need to keep track of this, it's just colour.
- **Kittens.** (Out of character) These are rewarded for doing stuff, and spent on each other to succeed. Other games call these 'bennies' or 'style'. The use of live cats is not recommended.

## Resolution : Or 'Can I do it?'

You've decided to try and do something difficult? Here's how to work out whether you succeed with flying colours, or fall down in the mud.

The GM sets the basic difficulty by deciding how famous (or infamous) an act it will be.

The GM should **also** decide whether or not it is dangerous, and tell you. A dangerous act is one where failure can kill your character off.

The GM should not normally make risks dangerous unless the episode was framed as potentially dangerous. (The 'if we fail' part.)

## Difficulty Levels

Difficulty levels are listed by fame.

Fame	Who is his famous?	What does it mean?
0	You never need to roll this. It's the sort of thing any couch-potato can do.	Changing channels on the TV, going to the corner shop, sleeping in till two.
1	You're just starting, or ending, your career.	Take pictures of kittens, take the dog for a walk, cook food.
2	Some people out there have heard of you. Maybe a dozen.	Shoot someone, put a car together from a kit, convince a bouncer to let you in.
3	You've got a following of hundreds.	Winning a brawl, win a race, design a new car.
4	If there was national news, you'd be on it.	Herd cats, execute intricate plans, execute people who have bodyguards.
5	Super mega rockstar.	Jumping out of a plane on a motorbike. Play a concert in front of thousands.
6	No-one.	Stuff that the surviving rockstars know not to do. Set up a government, blow up the plane you're standing on, cancel a concert.

You can RAISE this difficulty (and maybe make the task dangerous) by invoking the opposition's (be it an NPC or the environment) aspects.

*Player2 (spending a kitten):* He's mister sneaky!  
*GM:* Ok, that's 2 dice.

Now you need to have aspects tagged to get some dice. The other players remind the viewers at home why you're going to manage it.

Note that each aspect can only be tagged once for a given action.

*Player:* I'm going to nick his wallet and run.

*GM:* Ok, he's a nobody - fame 1 risk.

*Player (spending a kitten):* But he's got a gun!

*GM:* You're right. fame 2 and dangerous.

Ok, if you have exactly one die after all the other players have stopped spending on you; you can spend kittens to get yourself more. This is very costly. It costs 2 kittens for the second die, three kittens for the third (for a total of 5) and so on.

Dice	Total Kittens
2	2
3	5
4	9
5	14
6	20

If you have at least as many dice as the difficulty, then you succeed. Yes, this means it's really hard to fail a difficulty 1 task.

On the other hand, if you only have one die (and the difficulty is higher than one); or no dice at all - you fail! Muahahaha!

On the gripping hand - you've got less dice than the difficulty but at least two - You're going to have to roll.

Roll those dice. If at least one die rolls the difficulty number or higher then you succeed.

Now, describe what happens. Whether you succeeded or failed, it's up to you to say what the audience sees.

## Consequences

First, the good:

The GM should hand you one or more kittens as the audience appreciates the action. Whether you succeed or fail doesn't affect this payout, just how great your description is.

Then the bad:

If you fail at a normal risk then that's it. Your only difficulty is that whatever you were trying to do is not done. You'd better do something else if you want to reach your goal for the episode.

If you fail at a dangerous risk then your character is going to die.

To avoid this, in character, hold a quick audience vote. "What do you think folks, should we save him?"

Beg for your life! If someone else is involved, get their opinion too - everyone is willing to interrupt their murder for a quick TV spot.

Mechanically, to mitigate a death; kittens must be spent - one per die - enough to raise the number of dice to the fame number.

The person about to be killed can, if they need the kittens, sell an aspect.

Probability Of Success

Need	2 Dice	3 Dice	4 Dice	5 Dice
3+	89%	96%	99%	99%
4+	75%	87%	94%	97%
5+	55%	70%	80%	87%
6+	30%	42%	52%	60%

GM - use this to control the kitten economy. You want, roughly, each player to have two or three kittens.

As a guideline;

- You should give kittens if they use something that's already been described.
- Give kittens if they **add** something that other players can use.
- Give kittens if they stay in the style of the world.
- Give kittens if they do something overly difficult.
- Give **lots** of kittens if it's really great fun.

If they have one, they must sell the 'got' aspect first. Find some way that the item is lost or destroyed that saves them.

Since you don't have the item, you can't tag or invoke that aspect any more until you get it back (or another one) - but you can still have it compelled. The compel takes the form of either trying to use it (and realising, again, on camera, that you don't have it; or similarly to a 'want' to try and get a new one.

You don't get to take a replacement 'want' aspect.

A sold aspect nets six kittens, enough to save your miserable little life.

## ***Compelling***

At any time, if the GM so wishes, they can offer you a kitten, in exchange for compelling you to obey one of your aspect (they say which). You can turn it down, and they can increase the bid. If you accept, you have to do whatever foolish thing they asked; but you get to keep the kittens.

Players shouldn't be compelling each other. (You can change this rule, but doing so can lead to out-of-game trouble)

## ***Kitten Economy***

### **Gaining kittens in the first place**

Each session, every player starts with as many kittens as their current fame. They can get kittens by being compelled by the GM.

At the end of an episode, any spare kittens are lost.

## First Session

First: Players and GM together, decide what level of fame to start at.

Each level of fame is higher and higher maintenance.

At low level of fame, you are either going to play a short game of hopeless dreams or a long game of an inexorable rise to power.

At a high level of fame, you are looking at either a short game of "We are superstars, we can do anything; fear us!" which can easily devolve into insane amounts of gory violence.

Alternately, a longer game describing a fall from grace and clutching at straws.

To maintain a high level of fame you need to have a unique schtick and to continually create more and more-extreme shows.

The default game is fame 3. Just beginning to get a decent audience, with some way to go before superstardom; but also some way to fall if you mess up.

Second: Everyone except the GM needs to create characters.

Choose a role to define your character.

You might be the cameraman, the anchor, the straight-man, the daredevil - whatever you can think of. You might be scriptwriter or sniper; joker or anchor, bus driver or inventor.

Now the other players can introduce you to the camera.

Go round the table, each character in turn providing a little spiel and giving you one of:

- (Nick) Name (Anything you like)
- A Tag (Some skill you think they should have)
- A Compel (Some habit that skill leaves you with)

If you don't like the combination provided then you can reject it. If someone ELSE wants to take it then they can. ("Hey, what're you talking about! That's me!")

This aspect is rated at 2.

Lastly, choose your 'want'. Put as many words in as the group's current fame; this is its rating.

This means that starting characters have two aspects, rated 2 and (fame, by default 3)

Once you've got a character, try and stay in your characters voice as much as possible. Whilst setting the stakes for the episode, or deciding on your crew's name, keep it in character. You're filming this for the inevitable 'making of' docum drama.

Third: Come up with a name and theme for your crew.

This can be pretty much anything. Just make sure the players agree on it.

## Example Crews:

*"Mister Sniper" (He'll blow you away, mister sniper)*

He wears a night-suit and speaks through a distorter. Mostly, the channel just shows what he's looking at through a scope from a couple of kilometres away.

People tune in because... you can never be quite sure what he'll do next.

Sometimes he phones his victims up and makes them dance for the camera. Sometimes he sends warning shots, sometimes he shoots their TV; or their remote control so that they're watching him watching them watching him.

And sometimes he just takes the shot.

*"There's Kitty". (Not all kitties, but kitties all the time)*

The only guarantee this clique makes is that there's a kitty on the screen.

About half the time they're playing "Where's Kitty", and the other half...

The most innocent was the pran of running into a restaurant and throwing cats over the counter.

The least innocent was feeding them small vials of nitroglycerin and chasing them across roads.

Once a day there's a photo taken from orbit, with a picture of the earth. This is either a cop-out or a demonstration of orbital strike capability...

*"Margo" (Crumpets, Cake, Killings...)*

Old world charm as a little old lady private investigator stalks a serial killer. People die off in the most unlikely ways all around her, as she remains untouched. Every episode ends with her gathering everyone into a room and announcing her latest theory as to the murderer. The accused inevitably dies.

Dedicated viewers live for the moments when she slips up and they can work out how she's doing it.

*"Death Race" (Racing to the kill...)*

Voxpops style; the presenter collects four or five random people – and then set them a target to kill. Of course, these would-be killers are mostly just couch potatoes who get mocked as they fail – and distracted by the presenters inane questions of their opinions on every little thing that pops into their heads. Still – whichever of them gets to the kill first (and it's always far away – in recent programmes as they became more famous various sports cars have been provided) wins a prize.

The show is, unusually, broadcast live. So sometimes the target has tuned in and is waiting for them...

## Each Session

**Characters** set the stakes for an episode.

In character voice, the players decide:

- What they want to do this episode.
- What reward they seek.
- What will happen to them if they fail.

The more famous your crew is, the bigger the thing you are trying to do is.

You should also decide where the action is going to take place. Either choose an example area or go round the table with each player adding a sentence or two of description until everyone is happy.

GM: Characters can argue, for a while - but don't let it become a problem. Remind them that they are on camera and if they banter too much they might lose viewers! Do encourage some balancing – if they're looking to steal the audience of another crew then the risk should be comparatively high. If they just want to make another filler episode, the risk can be quite low. Remember, if you don't like what they think they are going to do that episode that you can always use the compels to encourage them to do something more interesting. But don't let your idea of fun completely override your players!

## Sample Neighbourhoods

### *The kipples*

Broken down old tenements, crumbling hotels – rusty fire escapes and sparking electrics. Papers blowing in the streets and dead trees lining the walks. Most apartments are empty; the few occupied rooms are those that have a television set and a food dispenser. Think the old hotel from 'Blade Runner'. If anyone does any useful work here, it's in the dark alleys and on the rooftops

### *The spires*

Gleaming silver and chrome, glowing neon blue symbols, moving walkways and soaring bridges. The height of cybertech, populated by punks and skaters. Everything here is designed to provide a spacious environment for showing off in – a thousand dance-floors connected together to make a mega-mall. Style counts for more than effect, here.

### *The forge*

A massive underground factory, entirely run by robots where molten metal is splashed around and great structures are created. The factory seems to take no notice of its human occupants, except to occasionally present long incomprehensible documents which propose a new word to describe what the factory is making. The occupants are about half frustrated inventors, who try to force the machines to create the objects they desire, and about half classic mole-people, huddling for warmth and shelter from the dangers of the world above in the known dangers of the world below.

### *The corporation*

Hundreds of floors of several skyscrapers – once the headquarters of the corporation which ran the world, now a crumbling relic which clings to the form even in the absence of any useful function. Large parts of the buildings lack any lights or power – the false ceilings have been stripped and strange things skitter in the air-ducts.

Other parts run incomprehensible cults based around synergy and cannibalism.

# **Advancement**

## ***Group Advancement***

Did the characters manage to get what they wanted from the episode? Or if more abstract (usually 'become famous') did they manage the 'What we want to do' part within the time-limit?

If so, they get to keep that reward.

If not, they'll get the 'what happens if we fail' result.

## ***Individual Advancement***

Let's say I had the aspect "(Want) Gun - 1"

Now, in game, I manage to get ahold of a gun.

Great!

My old aspect becomes '(Got) gun - 1'.

But, well, it's not what I really wanted. It never is.

I choose my new aspect: "(Want) sniper rifle - 2"

One word longer - when this is tagged, it's worth two dice. (If I had had a three word 'want', I would take a new four word 'want'.)

"Got" is always only worth one die when tagged. Even "Got multibarreled auto gyroscoped laser sighted sniper rifle".

"Want" can be worth more.

When you gain a second 'got' aspect, lose the previous one. You can only have one 'got' aspect at a time.

## ***Individual Reduction***

You've lost your item? Well, you can't invoke your 'got' aspect any more until you get a new one.

That's all. You can still invoke your other aspects, and you can invoke the 'got' aspect again as soon as you re-acquire a suitable item.

## ***Group Reduction***

Fame can go down, as well as up...

One notable temporary way to lose fame is to split up. If you try to go solo, or split the crew into two parts... then both parts have **no** fame.

It's possible to pursue a solo career. It's just so stupendously unlikely to do anything other than flop that I'll not give you any rules for it.

## **Group Fame**

The GM adjudicates how your fame goes up and down. It should go up if your crew mostly succeeded at risks above their fame level, and go down if they mostly failed at risks at or below their fame level.

If they mostly succeeded at low risks, or mostly failed at high risks then the fame should stay the same.

## **GM Notes**

Be dismissive about the stuff they've **got**. "Yeah, sure, you get your jet. What now?" After all, it's just one die.

But play up the potential of the stuff they **want**. And, especially, stuff that other people already **have**.

The rule about: If you have as many dice as the difficulty then don't bother rolling? This makes difficulty one "Do you have an aspect you can invoke"

Although this means that only high difficulties 5/6 are really worth rolling - because the players have to beg for kittens to get enough tags even for the easy stuff, it's still worth setting rolls.

Just don't go overboard and have the players roll for walking down the street.

Encourage the players to add things to the world - there's plenty of room for as much stuff as you want.

One thing you might want to add:

### ***True-Utopia mode***

An ambient AI system guarantees everyone's safety.

The worst harm that can be inflicted without your consent is the two-minute it takes for the system to register actual brain-death.

For some reason, people tend to refer to this as being boggled.

With this piece of setting in place, you can laugh off the violence and deaths in a more cartoonish fashion.

Of course, if you do, expect the players to become even nastier, to compensate.