

You are My Destiny – Wrestling the Fates

Ronnies, April 2011 entry. Guy Shalev, keywords: Lust and Chains.
Words not used: Queen and Amazon.

Alpha version 1.5 – Clarifying and adding to certain lacunas.

Concept:

This is a game where you play teenagers, teenagers given awesome powers, these awesome powers perhaps are manifesting their emotions, driven by their desires, focused on another person, or perhaps it is not the emotions that manifest the powers, but being given those powers creates the emotional craving (as if they were some odd variety of vampires).

Using those powers, they try to gain control of their object of desire, they try to fulfill their wishes. Their emotions both chain them, limiting what they can think of, as if they were halts on their eyes, and manifest as powers, the ropes with which they will wrest control of destiny, bring down the moon and take control of it. As they exert their power over others, they too are manipulated by those emotions – until you cannot say who pulls and who pushes.

The game will require several ten sided dice (d10s) per player, as well as several index cards, writing utensils and friends.

For the social dynamics in the game to truly work I think you'll need at least 4 players. To play with three you'll need to have "The Entity"'s responsibilities shared between the other players. I think with more than 6(7?) players things might be a bit too chaotic.

Tender Saplings:

Author To-do: Write in these sections a description of each position, and then "If you're X, do Y", to make it easier to parse or to summarize later.

You are going to play a character who's a teenager, they are aged somewhere between 14 and 17. They are most likely in high school, or will soon enter it, or recently graduated, or dropped out. This is your character, and most of your peers will also be of the same age.

Take a sheet of paper, write your character's name, gender and age at the top. Write a couple of sentences on how the character presents itself to the world, they can be a groupings of two-three words, several resonant keywords, or free prose. They can include physical looks, behavior or just about anything (Timid, outspoken, loud, freckled red-headed prankster...). These will help portray the character as they begin.

Write down what your character desires, by form of a **Desire/Emotion**, a **Person/Group**, and a **Number**. You can also write a sentence underneath describing it.

An **Emotion or Desire** would be something such as: Love, hate, despair, greed, envy, protect, teach. Emotions are highly preferred, and I'd suggest shying away from Desires the first few times as you play them. The raw emotion that is the cause of a desire, its distillation, would serve you better.

Suggestion: Many Desires would stem from an Emotion. An Emotion might be more fitting for a short and narrow game (*Author Note: Playtesting experience is key here. And of course people could be very creative with very narrow Desires as well. Just a suggestion.*)

The **Person** could be a name or unique descriptor of whom the emotion revolves around, such as father, my teacher, Dave – the boy next door, the six fingered man who killed my father, etc. Parents or another couple of people are so closely related could serve instead of a Person.

A **Group** can only be chosen if a Desire was, a group could be your co-workers, your students, your extended family, the other members of your visual media analysis club, etc. A group can only be chosen if those characters who form it will be formed out of either player characters, or characters for whom other players have their desires oriented

Suggestion: I suggest picking a **Person** for the most part, making those things *personal*.

The **Number** would be the strength of the desire. Simply put, no one who had been *chosen* to receive this gift would have had a subdued emotion, or perhaps, no one who had received this gift can keep having weak emotions. An emotion goes 1-10 for a normal person. The characters can begin with an emotion no weaker than 3, and for the game to have some space to develop, it must not be set higher than 7 when the game begins.

Leave some space next to the number for it to be crossed out and replaced with its new number, as it changes during the course of the game, for it invariably will.

A note on terminology: *From now on, wherever you see the term “Desire” in this paper, I mean “Emotion” in the game term, it’s just that it’s simpler to use “Desire” as something more tangible, on the word level. Will need to think of how to address it.*

*The **Person** your Desire revolves around will be referred to as the **Desired**.*

One player does not make such a gifted teenager. They will play the Entity, who will often, but not always, come in the shape of a person (even though they often aren’t truly), who had either offered, unlocked, or pointed out to the characters their new powers, their new fate, and had set them on the course which they now walk.

Each player, but the Entity’s, takes another small sheet of paper, and writes on it the name of the character for whom they have their emotional desire, or two sheets if two characters, or an additional one if it’s a group (see above, they should already be mentioned elsewhere), and passes it to their left after writing their “Concept” in one sentence (who they are, and their relation to you). Skip this step if the character for whom you have your Desire (or around which, etc.) is another player character.

Each player picks up the sheet they had been handed, adds a couple of words of presentation to those characters, as is done for player characters, and passes it to their left.

Finally, each player picks up the sheet they’ve been handed, writes down a secret feeling this character has for another character (from all the characters created, in this manner or player characters), describes the character and the secret to all the other players, and will be playing this character from now on, when called on to do so.

Don’t count the Entity’s player when passing the characters to the left.

The Entity’s player, after the above step is concluded, creates one such character for every two player in the game, rounded up, except they write them on their own, and are not directly related to the other characters in the form of desires. They also create one such Chosen Child,

complete with an **Emotion**, a **Person** and a **Number**. The characters they create should be designed to bring the emotional kettle to a faster boil, clashing with others, even if via friendly competition. Their Chosen Child should be flat out adversarial to the other characters, either outright or set on a goal that will bring them into conflict once things are allowed to develop within the game.

The Entity receives more scenes because the player has a lot more roles and characters to cover – setting scenes with The Entity, even as a leitmotif in and of itself with no other characters or just NPCs; controlling a Chosen Child and several Collateral characters; having the unique ability to pick any Chosen Child and their Desired and place them in the same scene. The Entity’s goal is to keep things moving and coming to a head.

The Entity is somewhere between being a player character, a non-player character, and a plot-tool.

Finally, each character writes how they feel for each other characters they are familiar with, with 1-10, and more will be explained in the “Relationships” section of the next chapter.

Author’s Note: Using a Relationship Map could definitely help in this game. Could use a black/white token on directional arrows to denote positive/negative Relations, to tell at a glance the state of the interactions.

Corpus:

The stage had been set, and drama is sure to ensure, and here we will go over the rules that will set the course.

Scenes

The scene-setting begins with The Entity’s player, and proceeds to their left, clockwise. The first scene of the session will always showcase The Entity itself, either with player characters, especially the Chosen Children, or engaging in its mysterious business. This scene is “free” and doesn’t count for that cycle’s allotment.

Every player can set a scene where their Chosen Child, the character for whom they have strong emotions, or the character they were “passed” (and another has a strong Desire for) are in (henceforth, either supporting cast, or **Collateral**), but they cannot set a scene in which both their Chosen Child and the one the Desire revolves around are in the same scene – only the player controlling the character around whom the Desire revolves may do so, or the Entity’s player.

Setting scenes is up to the player, describing the situation, the setting, and either letting play progress from there or adding a situation that at least one of the characters is uncomfortable with, or which compels the characters to action is present in the scene. Please remember the setting and age of the game and characters and set the scenes accordingly – the scenes can change locations, going from the gym to the dormitories, and can contain anything from a school festival to chasing an underpants thief to daring one another to run through the cemetery when the bells toll for midnight.

The Entity gets to foreshadow, adding atmospheric descriptions after the player finishes setting a scene, and getting to describe someone who had observed the scene from a distance, or who muses on the subject, after a scene ends.

The Entity also gets to set a scene after every two players other than they set a scene, without the limitation on setting both the Chosen Child and the one for whom their Desire burns in the same scene.

Of course, anyone can set a scene in which one of their characters is present, and both a Chosen Child and their Desired, so long they control neither of those characters themselves!

Relationships:

Every two characters who are familiar with one another will have a **Number** written for one another. Write on your character's sheet the other character's name, and how *strongly* you feel about them, with 1 being only beginning to form your opinion, 4 knowing whether you dislike them or not, and 7 being either feeling strongly for them in a positive way, a strong friendship, or if negative – then detesting them, at the least.

Once a relation reaches 4, you must write down whether the relation is negative or positive, and play accordingly during scenes. Once a relation reaches 7, you cannot keep away from the other character, at least mentally, and must either interact with them in a scene, or at least opine to others or have an inner monologue segment describing your thoughts of what they are doing during the scene. A relation of ten and you are going to do *everything* for them, or due to them – you will go to great lengths to advance or hinder them, jail is a distinct possibility... either way! Once it reaches 7 you should probably add a **Desire**, but one without powers manifesting through it.

A note on terminology: Levels 1-3 will be called "Interest", 4-6 "Attraction", and 7-10 "Obsession". Perhaps 10 will be "Mono-mania", especially if you limit the characters to only having one relationship at 10, which I think is a good call.

When you meet another character, and interact with them, for the first time, write down their name and the Number 1 next to them. This is a new relation.

So long a relation is equal to 3 or less, whenever you interact with them in a scene, or they do enough in a scene for you to form an opinion on their actions, roll 1d10. So long you roll above your current Relation to them, increase your Relation by 1.

Once a Relation gets to 4, you do the same, except you need to roll over the Relation twice.

Mark a minus (-) next to the number, and whenever you roll over the Relation again, increase the Relation.

Once a Relation reaches 7, in order to increase, you need to mark twice (forming a plus sign +) before the third roll advances the Relation.

A Relation which reaches 10 can advance no more. Each character may only have one Relation at the level 10.

Chosen Children always begin Relations at 4. The strength of their emotions drives them, it is the furnace that gives them strength, but can allow them no respite. Remember to play them accordingly – it is not that they cannot be timid, but if they are timid, then they are timid like

characters in a play or a soap – amazingly so. Their timidness is the stuff characters in books are designed around.

~~In order for a Relation to be changed from a Positive to a Negative, or vice versa, a player must fail to increase it for 2 times if it's higher than 4 and lower than 7, or 4 times if it's 7 or above. After which the relation retains its strength, but is reversed. Should during this attempt (which must be announced, for tracking to commence), the Relation mature from 4-6 to 7 or above, it needs to fail to advance a total of 4 times.~~

~~A relation of strength 10 can never be reversed.~~

(Author Note: Leaving this here in case I have some bright idea later on. What mechanical consequences, if any, should the positive/negative aspect of relationships have?)

A Relation can be changed from positive to negative every time the Relation increases in level or suffers damage.

(Author Note: Maybe positive relations have an easier time resisting taking damage, and negative ones help damaging others? Man, will have to think over those things some more.)

Only one check for relation advancement can occur per scene, ~~ever~~ per relation. (Author: I think this needs to be per relation? Only one would require looking at the most meaningful relation during the scene, doesn't feel natural, and will slow things down considerably)

Chains to Wrest Away the Moon; to Wrestle Destiny and the Gods Themselves:

Perhaps you were born special, perhaps you were given a power. But you are special now, you have the power to change things, the power to take over and fight for what you believe in. The nature of the power may be vampiric powers, a creature that is a manifestation of your spirit, a demon given to fight for you, for your wish, for your desire. But you and the other Chosen Children have a tool you can use, and which you must use, to gain what you desire.

Your Desire and Relation with the object of your Desire are the same – the more strongly you desire them, the more you feel for them. The more strongly you feel for them, the more your Desire for them grows.

Except, these relations and desires are the stuff of legend, you need 3 successes to gain a level when it's 4-6, and 4 for 7-9 (because when it advances from 9 it hits 10).

As above, only one check of advancement can occur per scene, ever.

Should you find a way for you to advance your Desire – get the one you love to love you, or sacrifice your own feelings for them to get what they want, for you love them wholly, or perhaps advance in your quest to find the one who had murdered your whole family, you get to roll your Desire in a form identical to the Relations above, but every scene in which you use your Desire so is added to the Relation/Desire advancing.

When you succeed in this roll, by rolling *under* the number needed, then you describe how you use your overtly supernatural (could be by way of super-science) gift advances your cause, with it being more pronounced, more powerful, the higher your Desire goes.

If you have a chance to get closer to your goal and you do not wish to use your gift in order to get closer to it, you must roll your Desire and roll over it. The more your Desire burns within you, the more it controls you. Should they succeed in so resisting, they do not need to test again for this issue unless circumstances change (“Let it Ride”).

Should you roll *over* your Desire, then you've failed to use your gift to attain your goal – either you failed, or you didn't even manage to get your gift to manifest, perhaps due to not believing in it, or some innate weakness.

If you fail the roll, your Desire is marked by one level of **damage**. Should the levels of damage reach the level of your Desire, then it will be lost forever, and should it be someone whom you love, then the Entity should describe them dying or betraying you forever. And your character is a husk to leave the story.

However, when you fail the roll, you can try and fight another Chosen Child, so *their* Desire will take the damage instead of yours'.

During such a fight, which should come with all the splendor and horror as if the gods themselves were fighting (even if amidst the gutters), each player rolls one d10, with a roll under their Desire being a success. The winner has the other side take the damage. More than two participants can engage, in which case they form into two sides, and either the original attacker or the defender has to take the damage.

The loser can gain additional dice by drawing on their relationships, damaging them. A relationship rated 7-10 takes 2 damage and adds 2 dice, a relationship rated 4-6 takes 1 damage and adds 1d10. Relations ranked 3 and lower cannot be drawn upon in this manner. A Relation with the Desired adds an additional die, and can only be the last Relation drawn upon.

Those dice and their successes are added to those from previous rounds, and each time the loser – be it the same player or another, can keep drawing from their relationships until they can draw no more.

A relationship's maximum level is 10 minus the amount of damage it had taken, which cannot be repaired.

Should there be a tie, the player who had used less dice must draw from another Relation. Both players must draw from an additional Relation should they tie in that aspect as well.

After such a fight, you must always have a montage, showing how the relationships, the emotions, or the well being (say with Vampires) of the damaged relations fall-out. This is to be narrated by the players of the Chosen Child and those with whom they have relations.

Players can also initiate fights between Chosen Children, where the loser suffers damage, without having to first shunt said damage from another source.

Summary of Rolls:

1. When you interact with a character you have a Relation with, roll 1d10. A result over the current Relation level is marked, and when enough successes are had, the Relation advances one level (Relation levels 1-3, 1 success; 4-6, 2 successes; 7-9, 3 successes).
 - a. Note each character makes these rolls, which could lead to asymmetrical Relation levels.
 - b. Desires are as above, except you need 3 successes for level 4-6, and 4 for 7-9.

2. When a Chosen Child wishes to use their powers to get closer to achieving their Desire, they need to roll under their Desire on a 1d10. A failure on this roll damages the Relation, unless they attempt to push the damage onto another Chosen Child's Desire.
3. When a Chosen Child encounters an opportunity to use their power to get closer to their Desire, but does not wish to employ their power in this manner, they must roll over their Desire on a 1d10.
 - a. Should this roll fail (they rolled equal or under to their Desire), then they must employ their power as normally under section #2, where success gets them closer and Failure will damage their Relation.
4. Chosen Children who fight roll 1d10, with each result lower than their Desire being a success. The loser can draw upon additional Relations to add additional dice, going back and forth until both players pass.

The End is The End:

When only one Chosen Child remains in play, they attain their Desire, unless the player of the one who plays the character it revolves around deems that their actions during the game had pushed this goal out of their reach – a loved one choosing to die or kill their mind rather than be with you. Regardless, a moment should be taken to describe the ruin left in your wake.

A character can only reach their goal by being the last Chosen Child remaining. Otherwise they will only get closer to their goal each time, or think they have achieved it for a while, only to find out it was a lie/fake.

Finally, The Entity is seen moving elsewhere, gathering a new bunch of teenagers, and beginning the game anew.

Inspirations/References:

Shock:/Trollbabe for the D10 Mechanic Inspiration.

Bliss Stage and Apocalypse World for going around the table, making and presenting the characters (though also The Friendship Game).

Bliss Stage probably had a lot to do with harming emotions and using relationships as fuel.

Mai-HiME anime was very much of my mind as it was written, and slightly Puella Magi Madoka Magica (also an anime).

When you think of The Entity (the character, within the game), think of Professor Oak from Poke'Mon, or Lestat, or the stranger in DnD taverns giving the characters missions. There's a definite sinister overtones and undertones though.