

The Divided Heart

by Sylvia Schlüter

Detective Roleplaying Game in Victorian England

Private Eye

What is a role-playing Game?

A role-playing game is an interactive game, in which the players adopt imaginary personae (or characters) and narrate their way through a story (or an adventure) together.

A game master moderates the game, keeping an eye on the rules and describing locations, events and any minor characters that the players encounter during the course of the adventure. In other words, he creates the situations that the players have to face. The players engage in these situations by acting through their characters. Their properties and skills are represented in a rules system through terms like strength, climbing, etc. and have a specific value assigned to them. Anybody who has a strength of 90 on a scale of 1-100 is a Hercules, and vastly stronger than a character with a strength of 40. While playing their characters, the players do not only react to the current situations, but are also influenced by regard to their individual backstories and their skills. The success or failure of these fictitious encounters is also determined by the rules and by die rolls, which adds suspense to the game.

Through the interaction between the game master and players, the story is developed. Often times, role-playing adventures are set in fantasy worlds, which is where the expression 'Fantasy Role-Playing Game' originates. In Private Eye, however, the players are detectives in Victorian England around 1875-1895. While they will not encounter Sherlock Holmes, they do have the chance to become famous detectives in their own right. The game master should be familiar with the story, as detective adventures usually do not follow a linear course. Instead, the detectives are presented with clues, evidence, locations and witnesses. How and when they discover and analyse these clues is determined during the game itself. In the end, hopefully, the case will be solved.

Quick Rules

- Dice needed: d100 (= 2 d10)
- Bonus = increase value; Penalty = decrease value
- Critical Success = a result of 1-3
- Critical Miss = a result of 98-100

Property Trial

-> Lower than/equal to property value

Skill Trial

- > Lower than/equal to skill value
- If no corresponding skill stat for a particular action is present: roll a trial for an appropriate property stat instead

Combat

Combat skills: Fistfight, Melee Weapons, Firearms, Throwing

- Attack: lower than/equal to Attack Value (AV) of the corresponding combat skill
- Defence: lower than/equal to Defence Value (DV) of the corresponding combat skill

Wounds

Loss of life points (LP = Life Points)

- Blunt Weapons
1d10/2 (minimum 1LP; critical success: - 1 further LP)
- Sharp Weapons/Firearms:
1d10 (critical success: - 2 further LP)
- LP equal to/lower than 0: Death

Regeneration

- Unconsciousness: Hours, equal to LP lost
- Injuries by blunt weapons: Days, equal to LP lost
- Injuries by sharp weapons/Firearms:
Weeks, equal to LP lost

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A case for Private Eye

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Detektives

Inspector Paul Bernard (Police Officer)

You have recently been promoted, and now you want to show your superiors that you deserved it. You are pulling out all the stops when it comes to police work, even in physical confrontations. You are also open to new methods what matters are results and getting the felons behind bars.

Properties: Strength (91), Skill (71), Constitution (89), Intelligence (65), Charisma (54), Education (56)

Skills: Law (70), Fistfight (79), Firearms (Revolver, 70), Tracking (69), Interrogation (84)

LP: 18

Dr. Emily Dubbons (Coroner)

Women haven't been able to work as a doctor for long, but you have managed to get a job at the famous *Guy's Hospital* in London. Like your male colleagues, Scotland Yard often consults with you, but unlike them, you have to fight to get the recognition you deserve for your work.

Properties: Strength (51), Skill (94), Constitution (54), Intelligence (89), Charisma (50), Education (83)

Skills: Law (54), Lock Picking (43), Forensics (80), Perception (94), Science (Medicine, 90)

LP: 11

Dr. Peter Fry (Criminologist)

They call you 'The Fly' (when they think you're not listening). You buzz around the crime scene

until it has revealed every trace and clue to you, and you examine every piece of evidence meticulously. Yes, there is a reason why you keep a folding cot in the lab.

Properties: Strength (60), Skill (87), Constitution (62), Intelligence (93), Charisma (46), Education (88)

Skills: Forging (50), Law (62), Forensics (92), Science (Biology, 85; Chemistry, 84)

LP: 12

Miss Lina Pycroft (Journalist)

You write for the renowned *Daily News*. Well researched and serious coverage are very important to you. And it works! More than once you managed to get your story on the title page, under the pseudonym 'Mr Bottom', as women in journalism often earn odd looks.

Properties: Strength (49), Skill (67), Constitution (57), Intelligence (90), Charisma (92), Education (76)

Skills: Psychology (95), Acting (93), City Knowledge (86), Interrogation (69), Perception (94)

LP: 11

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Background

An ambitious, industrialist family lives in a middle class house in the heart of London. The master of the household, Robert Allen, owns a small, but profitable weaving mill outside London, which he had fitted with highly modern looms that only require few workers. They are powered by a steam engine, and have the advantage of increasing productivity and thus lowering the price of the products. As successful as his business is, he has been very unfortunate in his private affairs.



His wife, Eleonore, is very ill and has a weak heart that has already suffered two heart attacks. The marriage is childless. To ensure that his wife receives the best possible care, Robert Allen has hired a nurse. She lives with them and sees to the needs of the lady of the house, day and night. In the course of time, a friendly relationship has developed between Emma Brighton, the nurse, and Robert, which has culminated into a passionate affair. Of course they try to keep their relationship a secret, which has worked so far.

Emma is in her mid-thirties, blonde and slender. Apart from them, the following people live in the house:

- Lizzy Taylor, the maid, 19 years old, blonde and pretty.
- Adam Boom, the butler and factotum of the family, 70 years old, yet wiry and healthy. Eleonore brought him into the marriage.
- Molly Oliver, mid-forties, cook, a large woman with rosy cheeks who is an excellent cook.

The Scene of the Crime

On the afternoon of Sunday, the 23rd of August 1896, Scotland Yard sends the detectives to an alley in the city of London where a body has been found. One of the cabs that has been parked there contains the body of a young blonde girl in a maid's uniform. Judging from the marks on her neck, she has quite obviously been strangled. She is lying face-down in a somewhat twisted position, but due to the rigor mortis, she is stiff as a board. Since it is August and therefore quite warm at night, which accelerates the onset of rigor mortis, her death must have occurred about 6 hours before, which marks the time of death at about 7am.

The detectives have a hard time keeping the curious bystanders, who found the girl and alerted the nearest policeman, away from the cab. At this point, they notice a crying girl in the crowd, who appears to have known the deceased. When questioned, she reveals that her name is Olivia Saunders and that she works nearby at *Mill's Greengrocers*. When about the body, she says it is „Lizzy Taylor, the maid of the big house over there.“ Olivia lives in the house behind the shop and found the dead body when she was taking out the garbage.

If the Detectives search the dead girls pockets,

they find:

- medicine
- a receipt from a pharmacy

If they examine the cab, they find a necklace. It consists of a silver pendant in the shape of half a heart on

leather. The engraved on other half is The pharmacist around pharmacist maid well, first customer morning at



(this particular pharmacy opens early on Sundays) and picked up the heart medicine for her mistress, Eleonore Allen. Apparently, her mistress had suffered an attack during the night and had used the last of her medicine.

Visiting the Allens

The master of the house has not visited his factory this morning, because his wife is very ill. He is urgently awaiting the maid and is very displeased that the „silly thing“ appears to have run away with the money for the medicine.

The nurse appears to be competent and genuinely concerned for Eleonore. The lady of the house is weakened, but after a short rest she can be questioned by the detectives. She will say that she liked Lizzy and that she was very happy to have her, as „Good staff is hard to come by, these days.“

The butler, who opens the door upon the arrival of the detectives, leads the visitors to the salon, where the master of the house will receive them after a few minutes. When he rings for the maid, the cook will appear and bring tea and biscuits.

During the visit, one of the detectives will observe a moment of intimacy between Robert Allen and Emma Brighton. As he stands in the hall, he or she hears a kiss and sees Emma Brighton leaving the study. She looks around, but does not see the detective and heads towards the kitchen. Moments later, Robert Allen leaves the study and goes to his wife's bedroom.

The Testimonies

Robert Allen is angry with his maid, but when he learns that Lizzy has been murdered, he is genuinely shocked and cannot imagine who would do such a thing. He does not know anybody who would be capable of this crime. Lizzy was usually very reliable and diligent and never did anything wrong.

Emma Brighton thought Lizzy was nice and got along very well with her, but only in a work-related way. Privately, they had little to do with each other, as Lizzy was very quiet and shy and did not talk about private matters. Also, the age difference was an obstacle to any actual friendship between them.

Adam, the butler, knows a little more: Lizzy had a sweetheart, a boy from the neighbourhood. He cannot tell who exactly he is, but describes him as tall and strong with curly, dark hair. He had seen him sneaking around outside the house on the previous evening and had witnessed his attempts to look in through the windows. He was gone before Adam could confront him about his behaviour, though.

The cook doesn't know anything. She was up late cleaning the kitchen and perfecting her Sunday roast recipe.

According to the residents' testimonies, the main suspect is the boyfriend of the deceased. But who is he, where is he and what was his motive?

The Results of the Autopsy

Death by strangulation. The larynx is fractured, the eyes are bloodshot and the marks of strangulation leave no doubt about the cause of death. She died at approximately 7am. She has some defensive wounds (scratches and bruises on her arms). Her twisted position in the cab can be ascribed to rigor mortis. Lizzy has not been raped, but she was 10 weeks pregnant.

The Suspect

The cab in which the body was found leads the detectives to the suspect. It belongs to one of the Allen's neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Fridge. They always let the stable lad park the cart there, but he

hasn't shown up to work today. His bed has not been slept in, and the lady of the house has reported him missing to Scotland Yard. Using the description given by Adam the butler, the detectives can obtain a drawing of the stable lad from Scotland Yard's artist, Mr Pears. Most people in the neighbourhood will recognise the Fridge's stable lad. His name is Steven Crane. If the detectives go looking for him, they will find him at a nearby pub, the *Adam & Eve*, in a state of advanced drunkenness. He looks desperate and is constantly fiddling with a necklace. Upon questioning the landlord, Robert Gilbert, the detectives find out that Steven



Crane has spent the best part of the morning drinking and claiming that 'the bitch betrayed him', which caused the landlord to assume that his girlfriend has been seeing someone

else. If the detectives arrest him, Steven Crane doesn't resist but is far too drunk to walk unaided. Otherwise, he will turn himself in to the police two days later.

The Progression of Events

If the detectives arrest Steven Crane, he has to be taken to the Yard and sober up in the drunk-tank before he can be interrogated. Once he is sober, he will quickly admit to everything.

This is his version of the story:

Steven Crane wanted to pick up his girlfriend Lizzy Taylor from work and spend the evening with her. They had been meeting in secret for a year. If their masters had known of their relationship, they would both have lost their jobs. However, ever since he knew Lizzy was pregnant, he had been thinking of ways to ask for her hand in marriage. He wanted it to be a special moment.

Steven had been hiding near the wall where Lizzy usually met him, but she did not show up. After a while he began to worry, as it wasn't like Lizzy to keep him waiting. It was dark by this time, and all the lights were on in the house. To his great dismay he saw how the master of house, Robert Allen, was embracing Lizzy in the study and kissing her pas-

sionately. For Steven, his world collapsed. Maybe the child was not even his. Granted, he had only seen the blonde hair and the slender figure, but this was enough evidence for him. No surprise she hadn't shown up. Steven Crane left and spent the night wandering the streets, plotting his revenge. Early next morning he returned to the house and watched Lizzy, who left in a hurry with a worried expression on her face. When she returned from the pharmacy, he grabbed her and pulled her into the alley. At first, she was surprised but happy to see him; nevertheless she tried to get away to return to her employers. She claimed the mistress was ill. Ha, what an excuse! Surely she had gone to the pharmacy to obtain something to get rid of their child, now she was involved with the master. Lizzy began to fight and to shout. He had to stop her, no one must know of this disgrace... shut up, Lizzy! Shut up, shut up, shut up...

Lizzy? Oh my god, what had he done?

Handouts



Eleonore and Robert Allen



Steve Crane



Molly Oliver



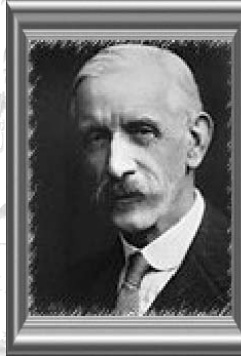
Emma Brighton



Lizzy Taylor



Adam Boom



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