

Coming of Age

A RPG of Realizing Your Potential

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December 11, 2006

Introduction

Coming of Age is a roleplaying game (RPG), where each player takes on the role of someone who is more than he or she appears. As you play Coming of Age you will build the story of these characters discovering their potential. Unlike many RPGs, Coming of Age does not come with a specific setting. Whether you are unemployed actors looking for your big break or schoolgirls who must stand against a dark conspiracy, a game of Coming of Age focuses on confronting adversity, and discovering that you are more capable than you first thought appears.

The first step in starting a Coming of Age game is for all the players to decide roughly what setting to use. Do you want sword and sorcery? Perhaps you want modern crime drama? Or maybe school children fighting zombies? There are many options, but several factors are essential. First, the protagonists need room to grow. So teenagers fighting crime works well, but special ops teams don't work well unless they are completely out of their element. Second, the characters should all have reasons to know each other, even if its because they all live in the same town, go to the same school, or work in the same bar.

Once you've chosen the setting, choose roughly how long a game you want to play, called the pace. A short game has a pace of 1, while longer games might have pace of 3 or 5. Especially long games might run to longer paces, but 5 is usually the upper limit. This describes how easily adversity is overcome, and how quickly the characters grow. Once you've done this, its time to build your characters.

Titles and Opposition

Characters can be described in many ways. Names and basic descriptions are part of this, but since Coming of Age is a game about potential, player's characters are described in two other ways. First, the titles by which they might one day be called. Mafia Don, Archmagus, or Protector of the People all suggest at accomplishment. They also can imply many things, who you know and what you can do. These represent your character's destiny. Each character has five titles, rated by dice¹.

The highest is a d20, indicating the most important title describing what your character will become. The d12s are meant to flesh out the core of that future career. Destiny as a great general is one thing, but it has a different connotation if you will also be destined as a fair judge, a skilled swordsman, or a famous lover. Finally, the d8s add the last dimension, leaving room for final details, such as the general's musical talent or knowledge of engineering.

Avoid doubling up the titles, each should be distinct. Also, consider referring to specific places, people, and things. Protector of the Southside, suggests that Southside will play a role in the game to come, likewise Husband of Lady Margaret, indicates that Lady will feature in the course of the game. These sorts of titles can be more flexible, as exactly what happens in Southside, or what being a husband to Lady Margaret might entail can be developed during play.

Once you've considered who your character will become, now consider what personal failings stand in their way. Choose three faults or problems which become your character's opposition. Opposition in this case, unlike adversity, is an internal difficulty for your character. Cowardice, ignorance, shyness,

¹Dice are described in this game by the "d" notation. Specifically a 6-sided die is a d6, a 20-sided die is a d20, and so on.

depression, inexperience, or an unhealthy obsession are all examples of opposition. Opposition can be more physical, such as bad vision or frail. They might be more social as well, such as distrusted or second class citizen.

You will overcome opposition over the course of the game, but at first they will dominate your character's actions, leading to failures and complications. But these complications will enable your character to grow, as the adversity they encounter forces them face their own problems and grow out of them.

Antagonists and Actions

Once you've built your character each player gets 10 story points to use in collaboratively building the antagonists for the story, and in helping each other overcome those antagonists. Antagonists are also describes as dice, and are purchased by one or more players using their story points. You should place an antagonist sheet in the middle of the table to record these dice, and the steps taken to overcome them.

There are two types of antagonist dice. First, Fixed dice represent persistent aspects of the setting, a treacherous forest or difficult school work. The important thing about these dice is they cannot be won, only avoided. This means they act as backdrops for the other dice, Goal dice. Goal dice represent specific people and situations that present trouble for a character, and can be overcome.

Fixed dice cost their highest value in story points, up to a d12. Goal dice cost half that value, up to a d20. You can purchase new dice or raise an existing die at any time, and can even bring a goal die back from being overcome by raising its size. However, you should discuss and purchase a few antagonist dice to begin with, to get things flowing.

Once that is done you are ready to play. You take turns, going around in a circle, each time letting one player's character make a significant action. Usually this involves trying to confront one or more antagonist dice using an appropriate title. Take the title die, the antagonist dice, and any opposition dice that aren't explicitly irrelevant (which usually means all of them), and then roll them all at once.

If the title die beats all the antagonist dice, you gain a story point. If at least one antagonist die equals or exceeds the title die, then add a step to the highest (or one of the highest rolling) opposi-

tion dice. Once you've done this you can describe the outcome of your action:

- If your title die is above all other dice you are successful. Describe how your attempt succeeded. Add a step to any antagonist die in your roll. You may describe the achievement or overcoming of the goal only if you have added the last step to the goal die.
- If the title die is equal or less than an antagonist die, you failed to beat the external adversity. Describe how you failed, but learned something in the process.
- Otherwise, you beat your antagonist, but were beaten by your opposition, so describe how you failed in your attempt, due to your inner failings. Specifically the highest (or one of your highest) opposition dice. Usually in this case you, make the situation more complicated.

When a roll is completed, any other player may choose to spend a story point to give you another chance to roll. Both outcomes apply, treat this as a refocusing of your efforts, a sort of extended screen time. You should do this for other players as a reward for an interesting action, after all you are paying to see more.

Steps and Pace

Pace describes how long the story lasts. Pace roughly translates into the number of short (2-3 hour) sessions required to play through the game. Pace defines how many steps are needed to win goals or overcome obstacles, during your actions.

On a goal die, you can add steps up to the pace. Once you reach that last step, the goal die is won, and the player adding that last step gain an additional story point. If the goal die is won and then repurchased then it returns with no steps. However, if it is only raised without being won, then the steps remain.

On an opposition die, you add steps up to the pace as well. Once you reach that last step, the opposition is reduced from d12 to d8, from d8 to d4, or finally from d4 to 0. Each time it is reduced start the die over again with no steps. In this way, over the course of the game, you will remove the opposition and your character will discover his or her true potential. When this happens you should resolve the remaining goals, and conclude the story.

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Name: _____

Group Concept: _____ Pace: _____

Titles:

_____ d20

_____ d12

_____ d12

_____ d8

_____ d8

Opposition Dice:

_____ Steps: _____ d12 → d8 → d4 → 0

_____ Steps: _____ d12 → d8 → d4 → 0

_____ Steps: _____ d12 → d8 → d4 → 0

Rules Summary:

Titles - Title dice represent your character's destiny. They are the titles by which he or she will someday be known. Titles tell you what you are capable of, even if you haven't gotten to that point yet.

Opposition - While titles are your potential, opposition dice are what holds you back. These are the parts of your character that stand in the way of realizing your potential.

Antagonist - Titles and oppositions are part of your character, but antagonist dice represent the outside forces of the world that cause you trouble, but also teach valuable lessons.

Significant Actions - Decide what your character is going to attempt. Take a title die based on the attempt. Take your opposition dice and any antagonist dice as chosen by you and the other players, and roll them.

- If the title die is above all your antagonist dice gain a story point, this happens regardless of whether you won the roll.
- If your title die is above all other dice you are successful. Describe how your attempt succeeded. Add a step to any antagonist die in your roll. You may describe the achievement or overcoming of the goal only if you have added the last step to the goal die.
- If the title die is equal or less than an antagonist die, add a step to the highest opposition die, if there is a tie for highest opposition die, you may choose which gets a step. Describe how you failed, but learned something in the process.
- Otherwise (meaning you beat your antagonist, but were beaten by your opposition) describe how you failed in your attempt, due to your highest (or one of your highest) opposition dice. Feel free to make things more complicated.

Pace - Pace determines the speed of the game. Whenever you accumulate steps on a die equal the pace, do the following:

- Opposition Die - Reduce the die size by one.
- Goal Die - Cross out the die and gain an additional story point.

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Antagonist Dice

Group Concept: _____ Pace: _____

Story Points: Every player starts with ten story points to buy antagonist dice. Before the game and between any attempt, any player can add, by paying the cost, or raise, by paying the difference in costs, any antagonist die. When a goal die is crossed out, players may add the same goal die back at a higher value to the antagonist dice by paying the cost to raise it. You may also spend a story point to give another player a chance to roll again on their turn. This doesn't replace previous rolls, instead it means you want to hear more about what she or he is doing.

Fixed Dice: cost = size d4 = 4, d6 = 6, d8 = 8, d10 = 10, d12 = 12

_____ Value _____

Goal Dice: cost = half size d4 = 2, d6 = 3, d8 = 4, d10 = 5, d12 = 6, d20 = 10

_____ Value _____ Steps: _____

_____ Value _____ Steps: _____