



# HEROINE'S HANDBOOK: Inclusive Gaming

# *Welcome!*

Table top and roleplay gaming can be an incredibly fun and immersive experience whether you're an experienced gamer or just starting out. It is a unique experience that allows one to experience new worlds, identities, and adventures while building community along the way. However, sometimes that experience has been a little less than welcoming to everyone.

In this handbook, we are going to look at ways that as Game Masters (GMs) we can create welcoming and inclusive spaces for everyone! Having an inclusive game space requires that the GM and players welcome anyone to the table regardless of how they might look, think, or what their background may be. In a community where we quickly accept dwarves, elves, spell casters, and dragons it's almost funny to think that there still exist issues in inclusion. Yet some still struggle with the concept of "other." The sad result is that players are made to feel uncomfortable, pushed out of spaces, and ultimately not being able to enjoy table top gaming.

Our goal is to change that by creating our own spaces, so thank you for joining us in that journey!

## *Getting Started*

### **PREPPING YOURSELF**

The first step in preparing yourself for a great gaming experience is deciding what kind of gaming experience you want. Who is your group? What is the dynamic? What are their interests? What are your interests? There are countless role-playing games that span from classic high fantasy to post-apocalyptic grunge to space faring sci-fi to accuracy-laced historical and beyond. Each is going to have its own quirks, joys, and set of kinks that may need to be prepared for. For example, in embarking on a historical RPG, it would be a good idea to consider how you want to deal with issues of gender or racial disparity. Familiarizing yourself with the content of the game you want to play is going to be invaluable as you embark on this journey.

Think about your values and your intention. You want to create a safe and inclusive space. That's why you're here, and we're so grateful to have you! Think about why that is. Dig in a little. Have you experienced gaming in a space you felt unwelcome? Do you want to learn to be a better ally? Thinking about your intention can help guide your focus.

From there, get to know your players. Are these people you are close to? Have you gamed with them before? Do they know each other? Creating a safe gaming space isn't and can't be a solo endeavor; it takes a collaboration of everyone being on the same page.

### **PREPPING YOUR PLAYERS**

Some of your player prep will depend on the background and composition of your players. If this is a familiar gaming group, you will likely approach it a bit differently than you would a brand new set of players. Either way, use the following as a guide to help get your players ready for a great session.

Allow everyone to introduce themselves to each other either in person or digitally via email or a chat app like Discord or Slack. Start by introducing yourself using your name and pronouns and welcoming everyone to the group. (For example, "Hi, everyone! I'm so excited to have you all onboard for our Night Witches run. As you all know I am Fox and I use she/her and will be GMing our run. I wanted to give everyone the chance to introduce themselves. Carolyn, could you start?").

Make it clear that everyone is to respect each other's identities and experiences as rule one. If you have someone at the table who refuses to identify an individual by their identifier, correct them quickly and matter-of-factly using the correct term. If they continue to identify incorrectly, keep reading as there is a section on Dealing With Difficult Players at the end of the Inclusive Gaming Toolkit.

Open conversation about expectations about the session(s). Be transparent about your intention with the gaming experience in that you want everyone to have fun, be comfortable, respect one another, and create a safe and welcoming space. Creating conversation beforehand will help everyone to be on the same page as they enter the space and allow dialogue about what would make the experience feel welcoming and safe for each individual. Listen to what your players say and encourage conversation. Collaboration will allow everyone to be invested, and that can start well before the game.

Just as you familiarized yourself with the game, make sure that your players are familiar with the game and its themes as well. Even if you are running a dark fantasy game, making sure folks are aware of themes and topics ahead of time will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to voice any concerns before the game begins. We will go into this further with the toolkit, so stay tuned! As a part of this process it is a good idea to allow your players to share certain themes that are definite 'off the table' topics for them.

For a more in depth and structured look at prepping your players, check out the following section on Session Zero and Communication.

## **STARTING THE GAME**

During a game, it's key to set ground rules and follow them. The most important ground rules are respect and consent. Starting at a basic place of respect means listening to your players so that they can rely on you if they need your help. Take everyone's concerns seriously, and work with your players to do the same. Collaborate to create universal consent around a game.

## ***Session Zero & Communication***

Good and effective communication skills will carry a GM through any difficult situation and cannot be undervalued. One of the best ways to establish good lines of communications is to have a Session Zero: a pre-game session the table dedicates to talking about what the expectations are for the upcoming game, laying groundwork for players to have connections to one another, and to find out what the players want out of the game.

## **PLAY STYLE & CHARACTERS**

You may discover that the types of characters your party are considering are not appropriate for the style of the game you are running, and this is the time to express those concerns. If you're hoping to run a high intrigue Game of Thrones style game and you have a player whose goal is to play the half-orc barbarian who kills all the things, you're going to need to have a long discussion about how that character is going to fit into this campaign. It is possible, but you should both go into the game eyes open and aware of one another's expectations.

Ways to discover what your players might want out of an experience is to have a questionnaire about their characters. Try a few key questions like:

- What was your greatest accomplishment?
- Who would you do anything for? Why?
- Who would you rather never see again? Why?
- What is one of your PC's life goals?
- How many siblings do you have? Is your family alive? What about your parents?

There are questionnaires out there that have dozens to hundreds of questions that may spark your interest. Try taking a look, as sometimes those larger lists will help you craft your personal favorites to ask your players. If you choose to use questionnaires, send them out before session zero and make sure both you and your players keep a copy so everyone can refer back to them. For the player, they help with character building and decision-making, and for you they can help in the creation of future storyline hooks and/or world-building. Player engagement and satisfaction will definitely improve your quality of game.

Another question to consider is how your players relate to each other. As the GM, you can establish this connection or ask your players for suggestions. You can ask your players to introduce their characters to everyone and start establishing connections between the characters. The game *Urban Shadows* has a great mechanic for this where players have debts to each other. Other games like *Dungeons & Dragons* leave it up to the GM and players to determine those connections.

## TABLE RULES

Establishing a shared set of rules can ensure that the game runs smoothly for both GM and players. Things to consider:

- What is the rating of our game? Should it be PG-13?
- What do you not want to see in our game? Things like torture and explicit descriptions of violence are often off the table for players.
- What rules are we using?
- Logistics - where should we play? When should we meet? How long will a session run?
- What level are we starting at?

Other rules to consider are related to diversity, inclusion, and respect. In our section on diversity and inclusion in gaming, we'll offer specific tips on how to ensure everyone has a fun time while being respectful and inclusive of all players. Make sure your players know your expectations on how you expect them to talk to each other in and out of game.

# *How to Teach Hidden Railroading*

## WHAT IS RAILROADING

Railroading is a term used to describe a linear plotline intended to get the players from Point A to Point D. It has a bit of a mixed reputation in the gaming community right now. When we talk about railroading, especially hidden railroading, we are talking about embedding a plot into your game while still allowing players to have autonomy and make choices about how they get there.

## THE ART OF HIDDEN RAILROADING

As a GM, you will have put time and thought into where you want or anticipate the story going. However, there is a delicate balance between your plans and the creativity of your players. Hidden railroading takes skill, creative thinking, and masterful artistry on the part of the Game Master to have the PCs arrive at Point D without recognizing that they were on the only storyline that existed. Nothing makes players angrier than feeling like their freedom to choose has been taken away from them, so at all costs, the GM must figure out ways to allow the PCs to do what they wish and still end up at the point the GM needs them to be at for the next part of the story.

For example, the GM wants the players to get to Oz after they finish the most recent adventure but doesn't want to tell the PCs that or the PCs could just flat out refuse to pick up on the GM's plan. The GM instead gives the PCs options: such as follow the highway, take an airship, or ride the train - with all roads ultimately leading to Oz, as it were. On the highway the PCs could find a very likable and compelling non-player character (NPC) who needs help getting to "Oz." Alternately the airship could have technical difficulties and must make an emergency landing in Oz. And the train? A train station change over at the major Oz station.

Whatever manner you choose, be matter-of-fact about the way things shake out for the PCs – always honor their choices but feel free to slip in a twist that makes it coincidental that they just happen to end up where you need them to be for the next part of your plan.

Another way this can also be used is by meeting people or finding tasty clues that lead to solving whatever the problem is. If the PCs ignore all of your bright neon signs that point them to the next leg of the adventure and want to talk to the non-plot related NPC in the tavern, respect that decision and quickly build up that NPC while making sure to take notes for later. That NPC can turn into a contact that you tried to give them earlier but they ignored.

## ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE THIS SKILL

Imagine that as part of your game, your party comes to a forest full of an encamped enemy army. Time yourself for three minutes and make a list of all the ways your players could handle this situation. Get creative! Then ask a veteran GM questions about times their players have surprised them. Not only will you get good tips on how to handle situations, the stories will likely be very funny!

# Imposter Syndrome

Interest in the term **imposter syndrome** has increased substantially since 2015<sup>1</sup> and is a buzzword found in many publications from blogs to New York Times articles. But what does it really mean and how does it show up in geek culture?

## DEFINITION

According to Jessica Bennett, author of *Feminist Fight Club*, imposter syndrome is “that nagging feeling that, even after you’ve just done something great, maybe you actually don’t deserve the praise.”<sup>2</sup> Everyone has probably had this feeling at least once in their lives, but according to Valerie Young, author of *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women*, imposter syndrome impacts minority groups disproportionately: women, racial minorities, the LGBTQ+ population. Why? We often have the pressure of being the first to do something or looking around a room and realizing we’re the only woman there. That kind of pressure can be daunting. However, we know you are amazing and have plenty of tips on how to show up and rock your first RPG session while slaying the imposter syndrome dragon.

## HOW DOES IMPOSTER SYNDROME SHOW UP IN OUR LIVES?

Have you ever felt imposter syndrome? Can you think of a time when it impacted your life? Nearly all of us have experienced it. Consider how the following have affected you in the past and how you can potentially approach imposter-inducing situations in the future.

### **Believing you’re going to fail**

Fear of failure is directly tied to imposter syndrome. Unfortunately in our society, failure is also seen as shameful. When we fail a test or make a mistake it’s not seen as a learning opportunity, but as some sort of character failing. However, we can’t learn unless we make mistakes. In something like tabletop role-playing games the purpose is to have fun and the environment should be a place where it’s okay to fail and make mistakes. If we can make mistakes while having fun it will help us all to get comfortable at failing in general. Failure is not shameful!

### **Feeling like a fraud**

Even when we feel like we know our stuff, sometimes it still doesn’t feel like enough. Getting caught off-guard by folks who think they know more (mansplaining, anyone?) can be a bit intimidating. Many times, though, we’re just scared that what we know isn’t enough. The age old “fake it til you make it” advice doesn’t feel like enough to get past this feeling, but it’s a good place to start. The great thing about RPGs is that, again, it’s designed to be a FUN experience. If anyone makes you feel like a fraud, they’re not making it a fun experience for you and you can shut that attitude down.

### **Underestimating your experience or expertise**

Tied into feeling like a fraud is devaluing your skills and knowledge. There are some folks who are encyclopedias of knowledge on RPGs and others who know the bare minimum to enjoy the game. Either way, your experience and skills are valuable, especially as a GM. If the encyclopedia across from you thinks he knows more about something, ask him to help out by looking thing up when questions arise. Or just make a call about how you want to handle the situation at YOUR table.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?q=imposter%20syndrome&date=all&geo=US>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fastcompany.com/40405364/seven-ways-ive-learned-from-other-women-to-fight-imposter-syndrome>

## HOW DO WE OVERCOME IMPOSTER SYNDROME?

### *Find your people.*

Get together with a friend or a group of fellow gamers and share your feelings. Not only will it be good to get things off your chest, but it can be an immediate confidence boost because your friends can squash those imposter syndrome thoughts.

### *Be kind to yourself*

A lot of times the reason we have imposter syndrome is because we make up a story about not being qualified enough. Take a minute to write down all the reasons you are qualified and you'll be amazed at how much you already know.

### *Shame vs guilt*

We often get into a trap of confusing shame and guilt. Brene Brown gives these examples: guilt is "I've done something bad/wrong" and shame is "I AM bad/wrong." If we make a mistake, it can be easy to spiral into creating a shame narrative. Rather than acknowledging the mistake and realizing we all make them, we turn inward and start believing we are bad. The best thing you can do is name your feeling and talk about it. Pick a friend, significant other, or your pet - just talk about your feelings out loud and then analyze it to see if you're feeling shame or guilt. Everyone makes mistakes - don't let them hurt your self-confidence.

### *Get pumped*

Whether that's getting a pep talk from a friend or reading a daily affirmation, give yourself a confidence boost. Read stories of other folks running games or sing your favorite song right before you start a session.

### *Visualize success*

Take a moment to envision how you want your session to run. While players will always surprise you, success can be defined as everything from "having the most fun ever" to "watching my players come up with creative solutions." Try imagining this outcome in your mind or even create a collage of your ideal session.

## WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

At the end of the day, even with all these great strategies, just remember that it's ok to still struggle with imposter syndrome. It's not an easy thing to overcome and it takes practice. You can always rely on the tips in this workbook and Super Heroines around the country to be cheering you on!

## *Diversity in Your Party*

Role-playing games are known for their immersive nature and wide number of characters and classes you can choose from. From elves to orcs to cyborgs to werewolves, the genre is built on diversity and choice. Unfortunately, many times the demographics of the players are less inclusive, leaning into more white, hetero, cis, male territory. Even with a table of wonderful allies it can feel a little daunting if not outright frightening for a new player who doesn't fit into that particular category. There may be unhealthy stereotypes that come from the GM or players that they don't even realize, and there have been some games that have been called out for problematic treatment of persons. Being aware of these issues can help to change the rules of the game so that play can be inclusive and welcoming for all.

### DEFAULTISM

A term that has gained a lot of popularity among minority advocates in gaming, **defaultism** refers to the idea that we as a culture fall back onto the "status quo" when something isn't specifically defined. That main character in a book hasn't been gendered or given an ethnic background? Most times a reader will automatically assume it is a white male. The same pitfalls happen in role-play gaming. While white Americans comprise a little under three fourths of the population, they still hold a vast majority of representation in media.

This tends to result in the assumption that many of the RPG worlds our players enter may be primarily white, which can lead to a less welcoming gaming environment for minorities as well as leave an entire vast, rich, and lush world of variety and possible cultures untapped.

As a GM, it could be intimidating to have non-playable characters (NPC) that are of a different representation than you (for example, if you are a white hetero female and you want an NPC who is an African queer male). It might also feel daunting to encourage your players to choose characters outside of their comfort zones. However, part of creating an inclusive space is designing opportunities for more representation.

### ROLE-PLAYING AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVE

With the rise in popularity of board and role-playing games, there has been a surge in new titles that not only address some of these issues but tackle them head on. In the game *Night Witches*, gamers play female Soviet bomber pilots during WWII. Based on a regiment of historical women, the game leans into the fact that they had vastly inferior planes than their male counterparts and less supplies, among many other logistical wonders that made their feats truly astounding.

Role-playing games are all about that: role-playing, so it is a unique opportunity to experience something different than one normally might. That said, of course, there is a not-so-fine-line when it comes to the putting on and taking off of minority identities - spoiler alert **don't do it**. The culture of individuals who have been historically marginalized are not costumes and should not be treated as novelties. However, in a safe gaming space, role-playing games can be a valuable tool for players to actually first handedly understand other experiences — and that can be incredibly powerful.

### Important notes for engaging in a character outside of your norm:

- **Treat that character with respect.** Rather than describe a character in *Night Witches* as “hot and busty” consider her having a “classic Hollywood-style glamour.” Both comment on the character’s appearance, but one is respectful (and extra points for being in the game’s aesthetic) and one is not.
- **Don’t default into stereotypes.** If you are going to play a character with Asian heritage and you are not of that background, don’t fall into stereotypes when describing or acting as your character.
- **Do some research.** If you know you want a certain character to have a certain identity, do some research. What were their lives like? What did they value? What did they wear? If you want the ruler of your kingdom to be a trans woman and you have not had that experience, learn more about that experience. Read articles, blogs, and...
- **Talk to someone.** This is a wonderful opportunity to learn some new perspectives while sharing something you love. If you want to make your ruler a trans woman and have the opportunity to listen to someone’s experiences, do it. A great way to start would be, “Hey, Shannon! I wanted to know if I could talk to you about a game I’m running. I really wanted to have the ruler of the kingdom be a trans woman. I want to do it in a respectful way, so I wanted to know if you would be willing to share some of your experiences with me.” If they say, “No,” respect that. No one has to share anything. But many times people are happy to share experiences, especially if it’s for something fun. As a bonus, this is a good opportunity to even invite someone to play!

### IT STARTS WITH AN INVITATION

Getting diversity around your table starts with inviting diverse people to play. If you normally play with the same group of people, try inviting two new people who are different from the rest of your group’s demographic.

Maybe you can think of a couple people off the top of your head who are expert level gamers that you just haven’t had the chance to play with yet. Perfect! Invite them. Maybe you know a couple people who have never gamed but you think might have fun. Perfect! This is a great opportunity to not only bring diversity to the table but to also introduce something you love to someone new. Explain ahead of time what the game is, how it’s played, the time commitment, and so forth, and extend an invitation.

**An important note in all of this.** While bringing diversity to the table is the basis for inclusion and having better representation in gaming, no one is a token. Do not invite someone as ‘your black gaming friend’ or ‘the Asian girl.’ The goal of this is not to have one person of diversity - be it ethnic minority, gender, orientation, religion, background, etc. - to check a box and feel better about having diversity in the group. The goal is to create change in the culture of gaming. To create spaces that not only welcome but actively and deliberately invite people of all identities to share in the things we love so that we can come together as a gaming community.

*We mentioned Night Witches above, but there are even more role-playing games that feature inclusion, diversity, and really interesting and complex themes. Check out the end of the Handbook for a list of SHE-approved games!*

# Inclusive Gaming Toolkit

## CREATING CONSENT

As we discussed earlier, think of consent in gaming as collaboration with your players. While you will craft the story, you can work with your group to determine what types of themes or topics you might want to include or exclude from the gameplay. The best question you can ask is: "Is there anything you'd like our game to avoid?" This question gives your players a chance to suggest anything which they believe is outside the tone of the game they'd like to play, for example murder and serious crime, or non-consensual sex.

## OOPS & OUCH

Part of creating an inclusive space is messing up. It's totally natural and bound to happen. If you say something that is hurtful or problematic and you realize it, you can say "oops" to acknowledge it and then try again. Alternately, if someone else said something harmful or problematic, you can say "ouch" which lets everyone know that there's something that needs to be discussed further. "Oops" and "ouch" don't have to be used. You can decide with your players if there are other words you would prefer, but make the decision as a group so that everyone is on the same page and has an accessible tool to use to help express if and when they encounter a situation that makes them uncomfortable. This is a great opportunity to call folks in rather than calling folks out.

## X-CARD

Created by John Stavropoulos, the X-Card is a tool that allows anyone in your game (including you) to address any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen until it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise.

At the start of your game, simply say:

*"I'd like your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way... [ draw X on an index card ] ...just lift this card up, or simply tap it [ place card at the center of the table ]. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X card to protect myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone. Thank you!"*

For full details on how and why to use the X-Card, visit <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>.

## O-CARD

The O-Card is similar to the X-Card, but instead of editing out content, it's a way to ask the GM for more of that content. As one blogger writes:

*"Having a tool like the X-card – particularly one with the opposing O side – at the table creates a specific kind of mood at the table. It says, "We're here together. If you need to stop, we'll stop. But if you want to keep going? Let's do this." It encourages a style of gaming that I had not really pursued before – a knees-deep, heart-pounding headlong run into emotional risk, but the best kind."*

The O-Card is best used in tandem with the X-Card. As the same blogger writes:

*"It might make people think – well, why not just have the O-card? That establishes that people are on the same page, right? Not really. It's easier to say more, more, yes, please! It's not as easy to be in a group that's saying yes! When you can feel yourself closing in and thinking, oh, please, no! That X-card is like a little unwritten rule. It says 'Everyone has boundaries. Anyone could need this. It's here for everyone.' It means I'm not alone."*

## CALL PLAYERS IN

When a player messes up, you need a way to talk to them about it effectively. After a player has an "oops" moment or another player calls an "ouch" moment, find a way to "call in" the player. Assume that everyone wants to do the right thing, they just need a bit of help getting there. Most people aren't trying to hurt other players. Calling someone in is a brave thing to do. No-one wants to do it because people often don't react well to being called in, but you can mitigate some of the bad feelings by ensuring that you call in people's words, rather than their intent.

As the GM, you can help create a space that is not only safe for your players but a place in which it is okay to make mistakes. Let everyone know that it is okay to misstep and apologize, and share the following on how to effectively apologize.

### How-to apologize when you mess up

- Listen to the offended person and try to understand their perspective.
- Demonstrate that you understand why what you did was offensive/wrong.
- Acknowledge the hurt you caused and the damage done.
- Take responsibility for the situation.
- Express genuine remorse.
- Make amends and ask how you can make the situation right.
- Promise that it won't happen again.
- Actively try and change your behavior.
- Say thank you to the other person for bringing the situation to your attention.

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PLAYERS

Sometimes you'll run into a challenging incident, conflict, or difficult player and it'll be time to put your mediation hat on. It's not easy or comfortable, but as the GM it is your responsibility to make sure all your players feel safe and comfortable, which can mean dealing with these situations head on. The following are some helpful tips to guide you as you maneuver stormier waters.

- **Start by making sure everyone is on the same page.** Making sure at the start of the game or campaign that everyone understands the game and the table rules is vital, what are acceptable behaviors and what aren't. A good time to address these are when talking over possible usage of some of the above methods, like the X-Card or the "oops" and "ouch" method. It's also important to let people know what will happen if these rules aren't followed. Will they get a warning? How many before there is a more serious consequence? Think about what feels right for you and your table and what you're willing to enforce, bearing in mind at the end of the day if someone is going to be outright toxic it will be your responsibility to remove them from your table, and that's okay.

- **Discuss the specific conflict/situation objectively.** In tense situations it's easy to get emotionally invested, especially if other players or the player in question is starting to get riled up. Step away if you need to. Take a breath. But come back and discuss things objectively: "Several times you have referred to Taylor as 'he' when her pronoun is 'she.' That goes against our rules of respecting identity at this table and is unacceptable behavior." Sometimes, it may be a legitimate mistake. Let the person have the chance to respond without interruption from the other players. If it is a mistake and they are having trouble, this is a good chance to discuss as a group how to help this person improve how they are interacting. Maybe gentle reminders from the other players. Maybe the player in question is toxic and refuses to appropriately use identifiers in which case a different solution will be necessary.
- **Ask why.** If a problematic player is acting out, ask them why. Maybe someone is having an off day and in a bad mood. Maybe they have deep-rooted issues they're lashing out at. If you give them the chance to explain themselves not only will you gain clarity on motivation (which can help you decide how to proceed), it will make them think about what is driving their behavior, as well. Maybe they don't want to be acting out in the way they are. In the above scenario, maybe they have never closely interacted with a trans person before and they confused. Whatever the reason, more information will always be helpful.
- **Use "I" statements.** A general rule of conflict mediation is to use "I" statements. The tendency of being hit with "You" did this, that, or the other is to respond with defensiveness. Using "I" will help start things on a disarmed foot, as it were. Instead of saying, "You always interrupt me when I'm trying to give this information," say, "I feel like whenever I'm giving this information I'm having to stop because you start talking...." Then say why that's an issue, "...which makes me feel really frustrated and disrespected." Using "I" statements is a very helpful tool also in that it gets you to focus on *your* part of the conflict as well. What is bothering you? How do you feel? If two of your players are having a conflict and you are having to mediate, ask them to use "I" statements as well.
- **Ask for a solution.** Once an issue has been discussed, ask what should be done. Ask the problematic player what a solution should be. Ask the table what a solution should be. While it's important to have levels of consequences for certain actions (for example, if a player decks another player, they should probably be removed...) working together to come up with solutions for different situations that arise brings in accountability and buy-in from everyone. Once everyone has come up with a solution, ask everyone including the player in question to agree that it will be implemented and what might happen if it is broken.

Dealing with difficult situations, conflicts, and problematic players is never easy, but neither is changing the status quo. However, you're not in this alone. Collaborate with your players, other GMs, friends, and us! You can do this.

# *Role Playing Games to Check Out*

## **NIGHT WITCHES**

Night Witches tells the story of the 588th Soviet Night Bomber Regiment, a WWII all-women historical regiment of 200 women and girls in their late teens and early twenties. Flying outdated biplanes from open fields near the front lines, they attacked invading German forces every night for 1,100 consecutive nights. When they ran out of bombs they dropped railroad ties. To each other they were sisters, with bonds forged in blood and terror. To the Red Army Air Force they were an infuriating feminist sideshow. To the Germans they were simply *Nachthexen*—Night Witches.

*For 3-5 players, who will take turns in the role of GM during the game. It can be played for a single two-hour session or expanded into a full campaign. Produced by Bully Pulpit Games.*

## **URBAN SHADOWS**

Urban Shadows is an urban fantasy roleplaying game where you'll play characters struggling to survive in a dark urban environment drowning in supernatural politics. The game focuses heavily on the gritty drama and tense violence that we see so often in works like *The Dresden Files*, *Angel*, and *Supernatural*, and asks questions about ethnic identity in an attempt to capture the diversity of cities.

*Produced by Magpie Games.*

## **MONSTERHEARTS**

Monsterhearts lets you and your friends create stories about sexy monsters, teenage angst, personal horror, and secret love triangles. When you play, you explore the terror and confusion that comes both with growing up and feeling like a monster. Based on the *Apocalypse World* engine, this is a game with emergent story, messy relationships, a structured MC role, and a focus on hard choices. It is known for its handling of sexuality and queer content.

*For 3-5 players with one to play the GM. Produced by Buried Without Ceremony.*

## **MONSTER OF THE WEEK**

Most people don't believe in monsters, but you know the truth. They're real, and it's your task to bring them down. This revised edition of *Monster of the Week* brings that adventure to life. A standalone action-horror RPG in which you can hunt high school beasties a la *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, travel the country to bring down unnatural creatures like the Winchester brothers of *Supernatural*, or head up the government investigation like Mulder and Scully.

*For 2-6 players. The game features an easy-to-use system based on the popular *Apocalypse World* RPG with a run time of 2-8 hours. Produced by Evil Hat Productions.*

## **GOOD SOCIETY**

On the surface a game about estates, balls, sly glances, and turns about the garden, just as in Austen's own novels the true story is about social ambition, family obligation, and breathtaking, heart-stopping longing. Create your own regency character, from a wealthy heir who falls in love with the aloof new arrival, to a charming socialite bent on ruining the reputation of their rivals. Exploit your advantages, connections, and family influence to achieve your secret desire – all while jealously guarding your good name.

*Produced by Storybrewers Roleplaying.*

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