THE TROUBLE WITH ROSE

The Trouble with Rose
by Todd Zircher (version 2.3)

Sigh, Rose has done it again and her father can stand it no more. As Rose's closest friends, will you comfort her, mend the damage, or perhaps pursue your own secret agenda?

The Trouble with Rose is a story telling and role playing game set in the frame work of a parlor game. The players, acting as friends and acquaintances of Rose, craft a story full of drama, tragedy, comedy, and betrayal. All that is needed is a deck of cards, a set of double six dominoes, and some writing materials.

Who is this Rose girl and why is she such a bother?

The character of Rose is decided by the players at the beginning of play. Usually, she is the daughter of powerful father or perhaps a wicked step mother who has been exiled, banished, set upon with great peril, or other dramatically fun predicament. Optionally, the players can grab one of the many play sets available and use the provided setting and characters included in it.

Rose is a non-player character. While she can be and is often part of many scenes, she's not exclusively played by one person. It is also not a requirement that she be present in each and every scene. It is quite possible that some characters may be plotting behind her back or perhaps she's been kidnapped.

Given that the setting for any TTwR game can be historical, fantasy, modern, or futuristic, it's quite possible that Rose may go by another name; Rosie, Briar Rose, the Android ROS-317, or even a Sakura are all possibilities. For that matter, Rose does not always need to be a damsel in distress. Perhaps famed Victorian explorer, Roswell Booker, may be in peril or Plutonium Rose the heavy metal rocker is on the run from the mob (and his groupies.)

For most of the examples in this game, I'll use Shakespeare's Rosalind (a Rose by any other name) and other characters from *As You Like It*. This play is a romantic comedy, but *The Trouble with Rose* can be used with a wide variety of genres from horror to adventure to situation comedy.

The Rules – The first eight pages of these rules are all you need to play *The Trouble with Rose*. The remaining pages give you extras for creating settings and play sets.

GM – Traditional role playing games have a Game Master that acts as a director. TTwR is GM-less in that each player takes turns acting as the director for their scene.

Players – These are the people that sit around the table and create the stories and the characters that live in them.

Audience – When it's not your turn, you're part of the audience and your vote helps to determine how many points a player earns.

Characters – They are the personalities that inhabit the story being told. There are two types: player characters (PCs) and non-player characters (NPCs.)

PCs – Each player at the table will create a character or pick one from a play set. Through their natures (both light and dark) they will craft the story about Rose and their secret agenda.

As You Like It's character of Orlando, who frequently interacts with Rosalind and gets a lot of stage time, would be a good PC.

NPCs – Rose and the supporting characters in a play are not owned by a single player. They are included like props on a stage, but they can be given lines and actions to do.

Charles the Wrestler, who only has a few scenes, is a good example of a NPC.

The Trouble with Rose - short form

Here's the game in a nutshell. We'll go into each step in more detail, but after a game or two, this is all you really need to keep in mind rules-wise.

1. Determine the setting by consensus, random draw of a card, or play set.

2. Each player is dealt a hidden agenda card (as determined by the suite.)

3. Create or choose characters that are related to Rose and/or each other.

4. Draw four (6-7 players) or five (3-5 players) hidden dominoes to form your hand.

5. Play begins with the owner of the dominoes or a willing volunteer.

6. The current player sets the scene and optionally adds other PCs and NPCs to act within it. Other players might be part of the scene in or out of character.

7. The player then reveals their hidden domino and acts out the scene attempting to invoke the character's natures as indicated on the pips. They're free to narrate, soliloquize, or play out a dialog with the other players.

8. At the end of the scene, the audience determines how well the player did in acting on their pips. The audience can also vote to embellish the scene.

9. Play passes around the table clockwise until all the dominoes have been played.

10. The players reveal their secret agendas. If the audience feels that they have accomplished their goal, the player is awarded a ten point bonus.

11. The player with the highest score wins the right to narrate the epilogue and wraps up the story.

12. Everyone takes a bow (optional, but highly encouraged.)

What is needed to play?

The Trouble with Rose does not need any special boards or miniatures. The game can be just as easily played around a coffee table or over the internet. Some writing materials for notes or characters is needed as well as a deck of regular playing cards and a set of double six dominoes. If you don't have any dominoes handy, you can always print out the included set or use a free online tool like Taebl or Vassal.

What are Play Sets?

Play sets allow players to quickly start up a game of *The Trouble with Rose*. Each play set describes a setting, several NPCs, and a few pre-generated characters to use.

Play sets can also introduce house rules that apply to a specific setting such as magical powers, crime and clues, or horror.

For example, in a horror play set there may be a restriction that you can't permanently kill the main threat of the story until the final act (the last round where everyone has one domino remaining.)

One of the neat things about plays sets is their replay capability. Because your hidden agenda is randomized and the players have so much directorial control, no two sessions of a game will play the same way even if you use the same play set.

1. Setting the Stage

At the start of the game, the players decide the setting for their play. In this phase, they work together to determine the time, location, and events that lead up to Rose ending up in deep water. This can be as simple as a few sentences, but if the players are in a creative and talkative mood, they're welcome to fill out the world with details, locations, play out key events, and provide characters relevant to the story.

If the players can't decide or are up for the challenge, they can draw a card at random to help determine the setting and nature of Rose's troubles. The players still have some room in interpreting the meaning of the draw. Drawing a heart can be a forbidden love, fleeing an arranged marriage, or chasing after a heart's desire.

To use our example play, *As You Like It*, imagine if Shakespeare drew the King of Diamonds and decides that a royal, Duke Fredrick, is worried that his niece is stealing the loyalty and affection of his daughter away from him. This Rosalind, daughter of the old Duke, needs to go. So, he trumps up some charges and says that Rosalind is exiled and must leave or die. Of course, as a classic example of bad parenting, things go downhill from there with adventure, romance, and comedy to unfold.

As part of setting the stage, the players can create other NPCs besides the central character of Rose, such as the Old Duke (Rose's father), court or authority figures, and other characters that would be present during the scene. These characters have no attributes or statistics in the traditional game sense, they are props for the players to manipulate as elements of storytelling and game play.

Another fine option, if everyone wants to jump straight into the game, is to use one of the many play sets that are available for *The Trouble with Rose*. The play sets contain seeds for stories, sample characters, NPC descriptions, and assorted locations to use.

The first player tasked with setting a scene (determined at the beginning of play) can start at the brink of Rose's trouble or shortly after the deed is done. They could also create a character establishing scene such as Orlando's first encounter with his brother, Oliver. In the play, this handily sets up his visit to court and meeting the soon to be exiled Rosalind.

Random Settings…

Ace	Space, the great frontier
Two	Deuce, a noir setting
Three	Three musketeers and blades
Four	Four winds of the Orient
Five	Pentacles and occult mystery
Six	Six guns and dust
Seven	A casino or gambling den
Eight	Chaos is at the gates
Nine	Nine to five at the office
Ten	Math, science, and secrets
Jack	Jack in to cyberpunk
Queen	Off with her head!
King	Weary rests the crown

Why Rose is in trouble…

Hearts	Forbidden Romance
Clubs	Defending Another
Diamonds	Shameless Theft
Spades	Murder or Framed for it

For more information, check out the Appendix: Settings and More.

2. Player Character Agendas

After the setting has been determined, the players create the characters which are the friends and acquaintances of Rose. Each player is dealt a playing card face down and this is their secret agenda.

♥ Hearts	The player is in love with Rose and seeks to win her heart.
♣ Clubs	You seek to defend Rose and perhaps clear her name.
♦ Diamonds	You're really in it for the money, fame, or power. Rose is your ticket for doing that.
♠ Spades	Fiend! You're secretly working for Rose's down fall (the reason is left to the player.)

3. Creating Player Characters

Making player characters for *The Trouble with Rose* is a snap. The first two items; your character's name and details, is very freeform. Since the players have already picked a setting or created one from scratch, you should have an idea of for someone that is either a friend to Rose or know someone close to her. TTwR does not put any limitation on race, gender, or any of those details. A warrior monk, plucky lizard, and a greedy heiress are all possibilities depending on the setting.

Each player gets to assign six descriptive attributes to their player character in addition to a name and perhaps a little back story. The first four of these attributes are generally positive traits that define the nature of the character. Each of these attributes or natures is assigned a number from one to four. The number assigned to each of the natures will become important during play.

Each player character also has two negative traits or strong personal oaths that they would be hard pressed to break even if it puts them at a disadvantage. When they appear in a scene, the character may be forced to choose a path they don't want to go down. The player is essentially playing to the audience and trying to generate drama, comedy, horror, or adventure. Putting your character at a short term disadvantage is a viable strategy.

Here's an example character:

Name: Celia, daughter of Fredrick

Details: Young and chipper, she's never worked hard her whole life due to a doting father.

- Respect for the family name.
- Loyal to the end.
- Courtly graces in unusual places.
- Fair of face.
- I am my father's daughter.
- I'd never betray Rosalind.

To offer a comparison between "Respect for the family name." and "I am my father's daughter", the first trait is one of Celia's positive attributes and reflects the power and respect that she is given as the Duke's daughter. The second trait is her darker side when blood is thicker than water and she carries some of Duke Fredrick's paranoia.

That's it for PCs. In a nutshell, they are a list of ideas for storytelling and a guide to play that role.

4. The Luck of the Draw

With a setting for the stage, hidden agendas dealt, and characters for each of the players in hand, we're ready to make the game and our story come to life.

Flip face down and scramble the dominoes, each player secretly draws five dominoes that they can look at and organize as they see fit. This will allow for three to five people to play. There are 28 dominoes in a set of double six dominoes. For a larger game with six or seven players, only draw four dominoes each. If you have a double nine set, just set aside all the tiles that have a value of seven, eight, or nine on one side. Only the blanks and values of one to six are used in play.

5. Going First

The play begins with the owner of the dominoes. However, the owner can pass the starting role to anyone at the table, if it is desired and accepted. Otherwise, it's their responsibility to get the gaming rolling along. Game play moves around the table in a clockwise manner from that initial starting position. There are pros and cons to going first. On one hand you get to set the scenes, story tempo, and you can create details before other players can contradict them. On the other hand, going later in the story gives you a chance to react and play off other scenes and characters.

6. All the World is a Stage

The current player describes the scene details including; landscape, props, weather, plus any number of PCs or NPCs that may be present. In addition to having the spotlight, they are also the playwright, directory, stagehand, and scene designer.

The amount of detail will vary from player to player as they try to set the atmosphere for their scene. It's entirely possible that scenes will be re-used and expanded upon by other players. That's okay, collaborative world building is part of the game. We want to have characters occupying the same spaces and interacting with each other.

A few words on framing a scene - The rules for *The Trouble with Rose* allow the player to use a large brush. With broad strokes they can create a grim and bloody battle-field or a dew kissed glade. With that kind of creative power, things can get out of hand. Here are a few guidelines to help:

The player (and audience) should only add props and characters to the stage if it improves the story. If you need for the character to be in Arden, it happens. That knife in the bodice, the horse waiting for your expeditious retreat, it's there. Just pay heed to where the story is headed. If the point of a scene is for the player character to be threatened by a dangerous wrestler, deciding that your character has a sword is probably the wrong choice.

Which voice/style to use? First person, third person, a playwright's script, or director's cut with running commentary? The correct answer is, "Yes!" When the player sets the scene, they can use any style they want. They can do their whole scene as a monologue or they can pull in members of the audience (anyone at the table) to play other characters or NPCs. Each player have their own preferences, sometimes they have the whole scene fleshed out in their head and other times they need that back and forth dialogue of other people. It's all good story telling.

7. The Challenge of the Reveal

With the scene set, the current player reveals one of their hidden dominoes that they have not used yet. Depending on what pips are shown, the player has to build upon the story being told based on their character's natures. The scene might follow right after a previous scene, happen in a different part of the setting, or even be a flashback.

If the player turns over a tile that is a double, it has some wild and possibly major effect on the story based on the indicated nature. For example, if the double matched "Ladies man", our play might end up with a woman on each arm and an ex-girlfriend kick down the door with a hatchet in her hands.

If the domino being played has a blank, it is treated as a wild card (it can match any pip) or even a completely random event. But, it's always narrated as a failure and the player character may even end up being hurt or disadvantaged in a major way.

If a player plays the double blank, that character is in for real trouble. They are usually taken out of the story in some tragic way; poison, prison, falling on a sword, betrayal, etc. But, as a double wildcard, the player pretty much has a blank check to bring as much drama and tragedy to the story as they want for their character.

It's still possible to 'win' the game with a double blank and get narrative control at the end of the game. A double wildcard at the end makes it easier to achieve your secret agenda and get some bonus points. Double blanks are normally played as the last domino in a player's hand, but that is not written in stone. Even if the character is taken out early, the player can still play their dominoes using flash back scenes or perhaps even as a ghost (something Shakespeare was fond of.)

Let's illustrate with an example; Our player, Ted, is playing the character of Orlando whose secret agenda is Hearts. It is the first scene of the game and Ted reveals a 3/5 tile.

Ted's character looks like this:

Name: Orlando de Boys

Details: Youngest son of Rowland, sometimes seen as ambitious and rash, but he has great potential.

In touch with the earth.

Too shy with the ladies.

Young and robust, toughened by field labor.

Natural gentleman.

I'll force my brother to educate me or he'll pay what he owes me.

The blood of Rowland de Boys runs in my veins.

Ted wants to start the game with a character establishing scene and describes the farm where Orlando labors and adds in Old Adam, the family's elderly man servant. Orlando bids Adam to hide while he confronts his older brother, Oliver.

Using the 3rd and 5th natures of the character, Ted describes how Orlando goes into a rant over Oliver's mistreatment and even lays hands on Oliver in an attempt to intimidate him. Ted can, at his discretion, pull in any of the other players from around the table to control a PC or NPC, they can add their own lines to the scene, but they do not have creative control until it is their turn. Can Orlando use "In touch with the earth" or "Too shy with the ladies" in this scene? Yes indeed, they are part of his nature, *but* they are not included for scoring purposes.

Scoring is determined by how well the player uses the natures associated with the pips on the domino played.

8. The Role of the Audience

Before the player's turn ends, everyone else at the table gets to act as the rowdy audience. The audience has two tasks; consequences and scoring.

Consequences: Often a scene will end just the way a player wants it (after all, they do have narrative control.) But, the audience does have the power to collaborate and embellish the scene or perhaps add a bit of a twist to the end. In theater terms, this would be "Yes, and..." or "Yes, but..." techniques. The audience can't radically change the player's scene or veto it, but they put a spin on it if the majority agrees.

By way of example, the audience decides that Ted did a great job of ranting at and threatening Oliver. They decide to add in a consequence to Orlando's bold act. They add in Oliver secretly plotting with Charles the Wrestler to get Orlando's neck broken.

Scoring: The audience also gets to act as a critic (no hissing or throwing of vegetables, please.) Based on the player's story, they decide if the player gets to keep the tile played or if it is discarded. A kept tile adds to the player's score. If the player was able to only use one of the natures effectively, they only get a partial score based on the pips. Blanks always score as zero. A simple majority vote is all that is need to award a full or partial tile. In case of a split vote, the player gets their points.

In our previous example, the 3/5 tile was played and the audience agrees that Ted played to both of Orlando's natures in the scene. Ted gets to add eight (3+5) to his score. If the audience thought that Ted did a poor job with one of his natures, the player might only end up with three or five points instead of all eight.

9. Pass Control to the Next Player

After scoring, that player's turn ends, they now join the audience and scene creation and player control passes to the left. Domino playing continues around the table in this manner until all the players' tiles have been revealed and scored. One of the interesting story telling tricks is for to end a scene on a cliff hanger and leave it up to the other players to introduce interludes or resolve the action.

10. Hidden Agenda

After the last scene has been scored by the audience, the players reveal their secret agenda cards. By table consensus, the players decide if each of the characters achieved their secret agenda. If so, they player is awarded an extra ten points on their score.

It might be a surprise to the reader, but achieving your secret agenda requires more skill than you think. As the other players create their own scenes, they might be at cross purposes to your plans. Romantic triangles and nuclear bombs make for strange bedfellows.

11. Epilogue

The player with the highest score gets to describe the epilogue and narrate the end of the story. This is the last scene of the game and the big payoff. Who gets the girl? Is justice served? Will villainy prevail? Are the ghosts avenged? The winner gets to narrate this and wrap up the game.

12. Take a Bow

No, seriously. Your group has just spent several hours creating their own story and breathing life into characters on an index card. That's actually some pretty cool creative stuff. You all deserve it! Hopefully you've had an entertaining time and look forward to playing again.

Appendix: Example of Play

Alice, Bob, and Todd get together and decide to play *The Trouble with Rose*. Since TTwR does not use a GM or game master like a traditional role playing game, everyone at the table is a player. Todd lays out the dominoes face down and starts to scramble them. Alice begins to shuffle a deck of playing cards.

Alice: So, what setting do you want to play or should we build one from scratch?

Bob: I'm keen on doing something with a sci-fi feel to it.

Todd: How about the Deep Six play set? The players are the crew of a deep space exploration ship. They start the story as they come out of suspended animation.

Alice: That works for me.

Bob: Cool, that's right up my alley.

Alice deals out a face down playing card to each of the players including one for her.

Alice: That's your secret agenda. Go ahead and take a look but don't turn it over right now.

Todd takes a peek and sees that he has a club; his secret agenda is to protect and defend Rose.

Todd: Ok, the Deep Six play set comes with five characters. But, you can also create your own if none of them work for you. I'm going to go with Angel, if you all don't mind.

Alice grabs Casey and Bob decides on Chris.

Bob: Hey, is Chris a guy or a gal?

Alice: You tell us.

Bob: Let's go with Christine. Everyone grab five dominoes.

The players grab five tiles and keep them hidden from the other players. Todd draws his dominoes: 0/5, 3/4, 1/3, 0/0, and 4/6. Keeping a poker face, he doesn't reveal that he drew the dreaded double blank.

Todd: Well, I brought the dominoes. So, I go first unless either one of you have a burning desire to jump in.

Bob: Go for it, I still need to sort out my story strategy.

Alice nods for Todd to go on. Angel Rivera is the security officer for the Deep Six exploration team. Angel has the following traits: 1) I can't stand bullies. 2) Why yes, I do sleep with my knives. 3) That reminds me of the time when… 4) The safety of this crew is my responsibility. 5) Anything can be solved with enough firepower. 6) I've got my orders, secret orders. Even though Todd did not draw a 2, that trait is still part of Angel's character. Todd decides to set the scene and play the 3/4 tile.

Todd: Ok, let's go with the 3 and 4. The scene starts with a dark room with only a few indicator lights softly glowing. The overhead lights snap on with a harsh blue-white glare and the sounds of hidden pumps and machinery begins to purr. The small circular room holds six cryogenic tubes that are tilted back at a slight angle. The camera pans around the room to reveal name plates; Wright, Chambers, Rivera, Hutchins, Xan, and Pendragon. The camera comes to a halt on the last tube, it's ominously empty. With a clack of hidden latches, Angel's tube cover pops open and slides up.

Alice: Cool.

Todd: I try. Speaking of cool, it is damn cold in the stasis chamber. Angel shakes his head as he leans out of his stasis tube and says to no one in particular, "Jesus, that never gets easy." Angel rubs his arms through the sleeves of his blue jumpsuit to get some circulation going. But, he stops as soon as he realizes that he's the first one that's been revived. "Archie, ship status. What is the nature of the emergency?"

Todd points a finger at Bob indicating that he wants Bob to step in and play the role of an NPC, Archie the ship's computer.

Bob: Oh! (taking on an emotionless voice) "All systems are on-line. There is a fault in astrogation. There is a fault in science station three. Unauthorized personnel have compromised security on decks seven and eight."

Insufficient Data

Todd: "What the hell? We're in the middle of deep space. How in the hell can we have unauthorized personnel on board?"

Bob: "Insufficient data. Unauthorized personnel detected after contact with Dr. Pendragon was lost."

Todd: "Shit!" Angel sits up and looks over at Rose's stasis tube and realizes that it is empty. "Not good." Angel staggers out of his stasis tube and over to Commander Wright's tube where he checks the vitals and punches in the re-activation sequence. He goes in turn to each of the remaining crew members and repeats the process. "Archie, how many unauthorized personnel are present?"

Bob: "Insufficient data."

Todd: "Do you know where Dr. Pendragon is located?"

Bob: "Insufficient data."

Todd: "Why was Rose not in her stasis tube?"

Bob: "Insufficient data."

Todd: "Jeez, this reminds me of the time when those terrorists attacked Phobos station. Command was paralyzed due to a lack of information." Angel types in the last of the activation codes. "Archie, notify the crew when they are revived about the nature of the emergency. Inform Commander Wright that I'm headed to the armory. I don't want a replay of the Phobos Incident."

Bob: "Order acknowledged, Sgt Rivera."

Todd: OK, I think that's a great place to end the scene. So, did I earn my pips for "The safety of this crew is my responsibility." and "That reminds me of the time when…. "?

Alice: Sure, I don't have anything that I want to add to that scene as a consequence. Are you good, Bob?

Bob: Insufficient data… nah, Ted nailed it with lots of good details to play off of. That's seven points for him.

Play moves around the table until all the dominoes have been used, then the secret agendas are revealed.

For more in depth play examples, check out the actual play podcasts of *The Trouble with Rose* and other games at the SundaySkypers. (http://sundayskypers.podbean.com)
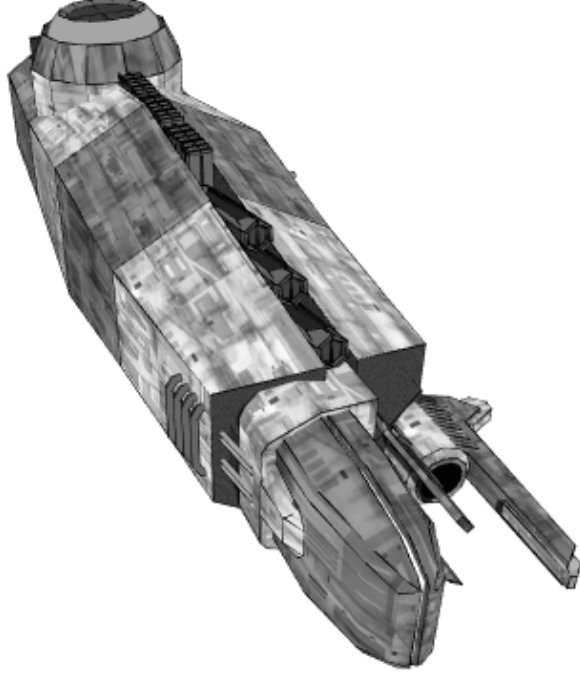
Appendix: Settings and More

The setting descriptions where kept short in the main text in order to not disrupt the flow of the rules presentation. Here, I'd like to expand on them and describe how they can be used to tell a wide variety of stories.

Ace Space is a wide open setting ranging from the early days of space flight to galactic empires. Space can represent a new age of discovery, revisiting ancient tales in science fiction garb, or allow the players to explore human issues in a distant time and/or place such as racism, slavery, religion, or politics.

Two Noir as a genre evokes images of mobsters and detectives. It is a great setting for crimes, investigations, corruption, drama and mysteries.

Three The three musketeers are immediately associated with the French Court. But, the setting can easily be Spanish, Italian, or English. There are intrigues, betrayals, secret liaisons, and much swashbuckling. You can even take this setting to the high seas and the islands of the New World for a pirate spin on the play.

Four Four winds of the Orient represent the ancient tales and settings of Japan and China. Stories of honor, arranged marriages, and duty abound. They are as powerful as any Shakespearean drama or tragedy. They can also be as light hearted as any Disney™ film or tale of the Monkey King.

Five The pentacle and pentagon are commonly seen as symbols of the occult. Witches, demons, and black hearted cultists threaten our protagonists. Is Rose the escapee of some dark ritual? Is she the bearer of a demon soul? Are those rumors of witchcraft true?

Six Six guns and dust color the old West. Tales of greed, revenge, and the battles over land and resources are plentiful. Caught in the cross fire are the honest and hard working people of the West, the US Army, as well as the native Americans.

Seven Lucky seven is understood at gambling dens and casinos world-wide. Exotic locals such as Las Vegas, Macao, and Monte Carlo make the setting where luck, high stakes gambling, crime, and the jet set lifestyle meet. Big entertainers and show girls rub elbows with the high rollers.

Eight The eternal war between Chaos and Order sets the stage for battle, strife, betrayal, and revenge. From ancient and fantastical times to the dark future, Rose finds herself at a pivotal moment in the struggle. Is she running away from destiny, carrying dark secrets, or forbidden technology?

Nine Nine to five at the office may not alter the course of nations, but there's plenty of room for romance, drama, comedy, and adventure. Perhaps your career is going out the door with Rose? The boss may be a jerk, but getting them back together is better than living in a cardboard box.

Ten Mathematics, science, and secrets may not sound like a play for the masses, but knowledge is power and spycraft is required to save the day. From atomic secrets, to industrial espionage, to mad science and steam punk, this setting offers a wide range of stories to tell.

Jack Jack in to the future that might be only a few years around the corner. Dysfunctional governments, dystopian cities, and mega corporations dominate this future. Everyone is out to make a deal or win that big score. Dropped in the middle of that is Rose. Is she your salvation, your ticket out, or is she just a symbol of everything that's wrong with life?

Queen "Off with her head!" is just the beginning of the problems for our central NPC. Take on a whimsical setting. Crazy characters and wild magic abound as the players try to stay one step ahead of the Queen's guard. Or was that flying monkeys? I'm sure dropping a house on the evil queen's sister was the last thing Rose intended.

King Weary rests the crown and sometimes painful decisions have to be made. To protect the crown, Rose must go. Carried on the winds of suspicion, lies, and a well placed rumor or two, it is not safe for her to stay.

Hopefully, these will spark some imagination in the players. One alternate to drawing a playing card is to draw from a plot or tarot deck. While strictly optional, the imagery and symbolism of tarot cards are a great source for inspiration.

Hearts\ Cups Romance and affairs of the heart have driven Rose into exile or flight. For example, forbidden love, fleeing an arranged marriage, chasing after a heart's desire, or running from improper advances.

Clubs\ Wands Defense reflects Rose standing up for herself even when things can (and do) go wrong for her. Defending a traitor or an enemy can get her banished or perhaps she was defending herself from an attack by someone. Bashing the horny old goat with a wine bottle was the right thing to do even if the 'goat' was Duke Ferdinand.

Diamonds\ Coins Theft, whether true or baseless, can get Rose exiled. While gems and family heirlooms are at the top of the list; state secrets, magic, or even kidnapping can earn Rose the wrath of the authorities.

Spades\ Swords Murder most foul is a traditional reason for fleeing the city. It could be an accident or even self defense, but there are powerful forces in play that want to see Rose blamed for the death.

Appendix: Optional Rules and Ideas

Suspense and Chaos

One suggested variant on game play is to not draw dominoes from your hand, but to pull from the shared pile of face down dominoes. This reduces some of the strategic elements of play in favor of offering more of a challenge to the players in creating a scene. The big 'gotcha' is that you may draw the double blank in the middle of the game. In such a case, the domino does not take the player out. Instead they get to share the grief with another player's character. Vicious sword battles, brutal brawls, disastrous scenes at court, or both players getting arrested for a drunken karaoke duel are all possible.

The Bloody Rails play set introduced the idea that blanks can be used for other things than harm. In that murder mystery setting, playing a blank means that the player has to cast suspicion upon themselves as the possible murderer. I think that's a genius move and shows that by tweaking a rule here or there you can get you a different style of game with almost the same set of rules.

Horror/Survival Stories

Can TTwR do sole survivor or no survivor horror games? Sure, if you get two blanks in ANY combination your character would be taken out. You would still get to keep playing dominoes but you have the option to run NPCs, your zombified character, or even the bad guys. A clever group might write up a character sheet for the bad guy or fill one in on the fly for the 'dead' players to use.

Alternate to Dominoes

Don't have a set of dominoes handy? There are a couple of ways that you can play with just a deck of cards and some regular dice. With a double six set of dominoes, there are seven blanks out of 28. That's a nice clean 25%. Instead of drawing a tile, deal out a four or five cards *face down* (depending on the number of players.) These cards will modify your dice roll. If the card is a spade, one of your dice is discarded and you play as if you drew a tile with a blank. If the card is the King or Queen of spades, discard both dice and play as if you drew a double blank. As with the double blank tile, the King or Queen of spades should be played last unless there is a house rule or play set that changes the default behavior.

Bucket of Dice: If you have a lot of dice (8-10 per player), roll the dice and place them on top of each card. The players then play out the combination of card and dice as if they were dominoes in your hand. Reveal the card when you 'play' your dice.

Panic Party: This is the cousin of suspense and chaos, you only need two dice. Before your scene, you deal a card and roll. Surprise! That's what you have to act with for your scene. If you get a spade face card before the last round, you may keep that card as your final card and get dealt another one. You'll need a pencil and paper to keep score since you won't have dominoes or dice on the table to do that for you.

Appendix: Play Set Design Notes

One of the neat things that came out of the initial development of *The Trouble with Rose* rules was the creation of play sets. Play sets are quick setup guides for getting a TTwR game up and running very quickly. They're ideal for convention gaming or throwing together a game in a few minutes and jumping straight into play. TTwR play sets are actually pretty easy to create because all the author needs to do is provide the seeds. It's up to the players to build them into a unique story. Each play set is essentially broken up into four sections; the Setting, the NPCs, the Stage, and the Characters.

The Setting is always the first section and lays out the world and the trouble that Rose (or the Rose equivalent) has gotten in to. The important thing to do in this section is to get all the players on the same page. Usually a few paragraphs is all that you need. You want to leave some of the details vague as that increases the re-playability of the play set and gives the players room to play with the setting. What you want to avoid is a huge information dump. All that does is slow things down and limits the player's creativity.

The NPCs are minor characters in the story that give the players some props to act with in any given scene. Since Rose is the main NPC in most games, she's usually listed first. The kind of information that you can provide should help to give the NPC some skills and attitude that makes them memorable characters to add to your story telling. You don't need to create a large cast of characters as the players can introduce (or kill) as many as they need. This is essentially a cheat sheet for players.

The Stage can vary widely in detail, at a minimum; it should be a list of interesting and logical places that the player characters can visit based on the setting. Again, these are all seeds that can inspire a player to create a scene. At the higher end, the author can provide a set of detailed locations and their contents. An example of a very detailed play set might be where you want to duplicate a setting such as the manor used in Cheapass Games' *Kill Doctor Lucky.*™ Images that are included in the play set typically appear as part of the stage.

The Character section is the heart of the play set from a designer's perspective. You want to create a cast of potential characters that people will want to play and that have good hooks for telling stories with. At the same time, you don't want to make any one character essential to the story since they may not be picked. As a design guide, each character should be distinctive; they have four positive traits and two negative or dark traits. If you can find interesting ways to link the traits to the NPCs and other player characters, that's all the better.

There is a general style to these character write-ups. While a character might strong or fast, you can get more story hooks out of a colorful phrase. Try "strong as an ox" or "I am the brute squad" instead of strong. Similarly, "fastest gun in the west" or "master of the cobra strike" is a better description of a character.

A good place to start out on play set design is to look at the existing ones and see how they combine elements together to inspire the players to create scenes. There is a template document available which will allow authors to be consistent in style with the original play sets. Also, look for RandomCast, a pair of documents that will allow gamers to create random characters that can be customized for any setting.

Appendix: Online Tools and Resources

A lot of the play testing, convention gaming (ala MonkeyCon), and just for fun games of *The Trouble with Rose* were done over Skype. Skype is a great tool for gaming in general and storytelling games specifically. But, like all table top games, you might have to do a little extra to replace the physical presence of cards and dominoes.

The easiest way to set up a TTwR game for Skype is to play with an open table where the owner of the dominoes and cards handles all the draws. All the dominoes and cards are known up front. Setting aside the hidden element of *The Trouble with Rose* actually does not change the game play at all. The strategy is a little different since you know upfront who has all the big scoring tiles and if anyone has the double blank.

The next level up is to have a facilitator handle the dominoes and cards and use side chats and e-mails to secretly tell each player what their hidden agenda cards and dominoes are. Remember, a facilitator is part of the table and thus part of the audience. So, even if they are not acting as a player, they can still contribute ideas to the game.

The next level up is where things can get a little complicated and fun at the same time. There are a lot of game table programs out there that can provide a virtual table top experience for your game. Each of them has their own strengths, weaknesses, fans, and costs. What you want to look for is one that handles multiple card decks (one for playing cards and another for a 'deck' of dominos.) And if possible, you should look for features like hidden hands for secret agendas.

My personal favorite right now is Taebl. It's got a pretty good feature list for playing TTwR; it's free, it allows for multiple mixed decks, Taebl has a place for scoring, you can load and save play sessions, it has hidden hands, and if you have a web browser that supports Silverlight, it requires zero set up. The table owner just shares a URL with the players and bam, you're ready to play. A pre-made taebl file with a deck of cards and dominoes is available with the other TTwR support files.

Skype: http://www.skype.com

Taebl: http://www.taebl.com

Game Development Resources

All images created by the author or provided by WikiMedia Commons: http://commons.wikimedia.org/

A Concordance of Shakespeare's complete works:
http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/

Structure of a Shakespearean Play by Owen Roberts
http://www.ehow.com/facts_6173760_structure-shakespearean-play.html

Jeepform essays and terminology:
http://jeepen.org/dict/

Thank you!

I'd like to offer a big thanks to everyone that helped review, comment, and play test all the various editions of the rules. You've been an inspiration in helping me to clarify and expand the game. My apologies in advance if I missed anyone.

Andrew Arnold, Brian Carter, Dirk Cjelli , Joshua Lambert, Colin Luttrell, Dante Muñoz, Christopher Onstad, John Reiher, Carl Rogers, Simon Silva Jr., Randolph Wood, Justin Zircher, and Zylo.
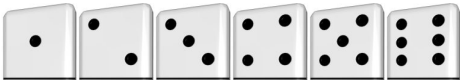
And a special version 2.3 thanks to the Mom's Basement podcast for running and posting a TTwR session and helping me to fine tune some rules and make them clearer.
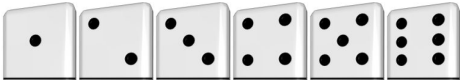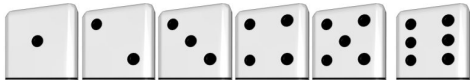
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