

Mendel Schmiedekamp (wyrnwood)

Group Ξ

Ingredients: Currency, Drug, Palace, and Memory

College is a time for experimentation, so when your friend Faust suggested selling your souls for an open tap of demonic intervention you jumped at the chance. Especially since you know something that snappily dressed demon doesn't - souls don't actually exist. Faust and Friends is a game of college friends who have sold their souls to acquire authority and wealth, pleasures beyond imagining, and ancient secrets and lore.

Faust and Friends

by Mendel Schmiedekamp

A Time for Experimentation

College is a time for experimentation, so when your friend Faust suggested selling your souls for an open tap of demonic intervention you jumped at the chance. Especially since you know something that snappily dressed demon doesn't - souls don't actually exist.

In Faust and Friends you take on the roles of a group of college friends, in the midst of social exploration and learning to become independent one of you, Faust, found an offer too good to refuse. Lurking around campus is a well-dressed being not of this world. Mephisto is a demon. And like any other corporate representative is looking for recruits.

One late night meeting later, Faust and Friends have sold their souls. And the prospects have never looked brighter. In Faust and Friends you tell the tale of what happens next.

Conning Mephisto:

Even knowing Mephisto for what it is, you each know that the contract doesn't actually hold water. Perhaps you don't believe in souls. Or maybe you know for certain that Mephisto can't take possession of your soul anyway. But each of you is conning Mephisto, and oddly enough, it doesn't seem to care.

Just because you have a steady supply of demonic favors at your call, doesn't mean that life is all easy. The one thing Mephisto can't do is control people's minds. Which means if you want that boy you've had a crush on to fall for you, you'll have to do it the old fashioned way.

Because in Faust and Friends, the *relationships* (friends, enemies, lovers, and so on) you have are the most important part. Vast wealth, undying pleasures, and long forgotten wisdom are fun and all, but in the end, it's what you make of the people around you that matters.

Being Faust

Faust and Friends is a game for three or more players, where you take on the role of the college students who've made the deal with Mephisto. That student is your *character*, the primary role you will have during the game. However, each player will also be responsible for a handful of *supporting character*, representing the other people who are important to the lives of the characters. They may come and go, but the purpose of Faust and Friends is to determine what sort of relationships you will have between your main character and the supporting characters.

One of you will play the role of *Faust*, perhaps a true descendant of the original Faust, all this requires is when naming your character, giving her or him the surname Faust. Faust acts as a moderator in addition to a regular player. Faust breaks voting ties, sets the scenes, and generally keeps the pace of the game flowing.

Faust Among Equals:

If you've played other roleplaying games then you might see Faust as the one running the game. This isn't entirely the case. Faust has some authority and some responsibility, but is a more flexible role in the game than the person in charge. Exactly how much authority Faust has changes for each group. Some won't need a strong Faust, which leaves Faust mostly a tie breaker and dealer. Other groups may need a firmer hand and more direction. Faust needs to be open to the needs of the group as they arise.

Once you know which of you will be playing Faust, start talking together about where you want your tale to be set. Typically this means choosing a university or college. It can be real or fictional, or even a mixture of the two. This helps to give a backdrop to entire game, and there is surprising flexibility.

Perhaps you all attend a small liberal arts college, an all-womens or all-mens university, a military academy, a religious institution, a sprawling party school, or a prim and proper old-world university. As much as the type, the location can be compelling as well. A rural university or one in the midst of a city have very different feels. So to do universities in different countries or even regions of the same country.

With a consensus for the college, you are ready to start planning your character, either Faust or a friend who has made the deal with Mephisto. The important thing is to build a basic concept for your character at this stage. It can be as simple as thinking up a few vital statistics - area of study, undergraduate or graduate student, gender, extra-curriculars, and so on. You can flesh these out with some back story, family, pre-college friends, and personality. Once you have a basic sense of who your character is, give her or him a name, and if you are playing Faust you already know the last name.

Joy, Lore, Power

Each character, including Faust starts with three stats. Each player divides 20 points among them. Record these in pencil, they will change frequently.

Dice and Stats:

Faust and Friends uses a pair of dice, the 8-sided and the 12-sided. Only one of each is needed, and they are rolled together, summing to a single value. If that value is equal or below the stat used, then your character succeeds and you describe the ramifications. If it exceeds the stat, you fail, and you also describe the ramifications. This means that a stat of 1 or lower always fails and that a stat of 20 always succeeds. A good general value is between 6 and 10. Don't worry, stats change easily, and will tend to grow over time.

Joy is the vibrancy of life, the ability to enjoy and provide all manner of pleasures. It is overt and often quite physical. Joy seduces, allows you to overpower your foes, and to dance free of those who would capture you.

Power is influence and authority, it is your social clout and the financial resources you have at your disposal. Power is often indirect, but over-

whelming. Whether you buy someone or intimidate them into submission, power is about control.

Lore is knowledge and secrets, the subtle cunning that lets you plot your foe's downfall or impress others with your wisdom. Lore can be arcane, delving into strange magics and rituals long forgotten.

Accenting Your Character

Taking on the role of a character can be difficult at time. Especially when the character is only showing you a trio of numbers. *Accents* provide a way for you to customize your character and let you play her or him more easily. Accents are details you note for each character, including any vital statistics from your original concept.

The most important accents are a few phrases of short description. Think of how an author would introduce your character or show some special part of your character's personality. Put these in quotes. Even if everything else about you changes because of Mephisto's gifts, those accents will stay the same. Try to bring them into your description of actions when you can, the accents are the handle you and the other players have on who your character really is.

Supporting Characters

At this point you won't have *supporting characters*, but very soon you will. And its important to know how supporting characters are made before you start dealing the cards. Every player will be building and playing supporting characters, though some more than others.

On the face of things, supporting characters are much like main characters. Each supporting character has three stats - Joy, Power, and Lore, also adding up to 20. And each has a few accents to help you play them. When you gain a supporting character, you will build them in much the same way as your main character.

But supporting characters are different in a few ways. Relationships (at least from cards) always involve at least one main character. So, while a handful of the supporting characters may be friends and a pair might be dating, this doesn't allow the players who control them to play those cards.

Another difference is that supporting characters do not initiate actions. They make decisions, but always in response to the actions they care about. So while they have the same stats as main characters, those stats are used very differently. They act

as the threshold needed to make an impression on that character.

Threshold To Care:

Remember how the dice work? Roll an 8-sided and a 12-sided, adding them together. The main character is rolling below one of her or his stats. But to get a supporting character to care about the action one of the two dice needs to equal or exceed the stat of the supporting character. This presents a natural tension, a lower roll is more likely to succeed, but less likely to make a supporting character take notice. And a high failure will often attract a great deal of attention. Generally, supporting characters should have at least one low stat, the primary way to make an impression on them.

While setting up the game, you'll likely be given a few supporting characters by other players. And over the course of play, you'll gain and lose supporting characters. What determines those changes are the cards.

In the Cards

Faust and Friends uses a standard 52 card deck of playing cards. Make sure that the jokers are removed and the deck is shuffled before you start playing. Faust will deal the cards. Each card has a particular meaning, based on its value. The suits don't matter.

The \Leftrightarrow indicates a symmetric relationship, which must be mutual. The \Rightarrow indicates it is asymmetric, for example, fan to idol or master to servant, it must still be mutual, if you become someone's servant then they need to have treated you as one, acting like a master, as it were.

- 1 - True Love (1) \Leftrightarrow
- 2 - Idol (2) \Rightarrow
- 3 - Nemesis (3) \Leftrightarrow
- 4 - Master (4) \Rightarrow
- 5 - Lover (5) \Leftrightarrow
- 6 - Friend (6) \Leftrightarrow
- 7 - Rival (7) \Leftrightarrow
- 8 - Fan (8) \Rightarrow

- 9 - Servant (9) \Rightarrow
- 10 - Unrequited Love (10) \Rightarrow
- Jack - Remove one of your supporting characters, or if you have none, add one of either gender.
- Queen - Add a female supporting character.
- King - Add a male supporting character.

The face cards manipulate your supporting characters, adding or removing one. The numbered cards indicate relationships for your main character. These relationship cards also provide a threshold, analogous to the stats of the supporting characters. If your character is in that relationship with a supporting character, then you use this threshold instead of the character's stats - after all, your true love is far more likely to take notice of what you do, than, say, your idol. That threshold is also the face value of the card representing the relationship.

Your Relationship With:

Remember, the relationship cards always indicate the relationship a main character has with another character. So, Idol means You are another character's idol and Servant means you are another character's servant.

Once you've built your main character, Faust deals out six cards to each player. Players should generally keep these cards a secret. In the next stage, you will use three of these cards, leaving each player with three cards. Those cards are your hand, and when you use or discard a card, you are dealt a new card to replace it. If the deck runs low, Faust reshuffles it from the discarded cards.

In the Past

Once you have your six cards, choose three of them to help build the back story. If you choose face card, use the face card as normal, building or removing supporting character. If you choose a numbered card, then choose a player. That player must build a supporting character who had that relationship with your main character in the past.

For example, if you play a Queen of Hearts at this stage, you add a female character to your supporting characters. If you play a 6 of Clubs instead, you choose another player who will add a

supporting character who is an old friend of your main character.

The accents of these characters should indicate the past relationships, and possibly what has changed more recently. You will discard these cards as they are used and you aren't dealt more. Once everyone has three cards left, you are ready to start playing.

Setting the Stage

Faust and friends is played through a series of scenes. Scenes have a natural structure to them. They are usually a place and a time where people are interacting together, often a mix of main characters and supporting characters. While you can play more than one character at a time in a scene, some players may be more comfortable playing only one. You shouldn't force the issue either way.

A stricter Faust will set up each scene, describing the place, time, and who is present. This should be done using input from the players about their characters, and generally should be interesting to everyone. There is always the opportunity to bring in characters during a scene, if Faust permits it. When the scene has resolved its purpose, Faust should end it and start a new one.

Sometimes it is useful to discuss what the players want out of a scene. However, purposes can change during the scene, so this discussion should be considered preliminary. But it is a good way to make sure that the scenes you get are the ones you want.

A less strict Faust may let other players set scenes. Faust should keep an eye on the scene pace and structure, to make sure that no one is being left out, and that scenes are ending when they should. If multiple players want different scenes, then Faust can arbitrate and determine which scene or scenes will happen, and in what order.

Getting What You Want

In the midst of a scene, you may find your character wants to do something noteworthy. Most mundane activity doesn't require rolling. You will spend most of your scenes acting out your characters without a need for dice. But if you want to make a definite impression, even if you fail, then you will need to roll the dice. Faust and Friends uses a pair of dice, one an 8-sided, the other a 12-sided. These are rolled together and added. The result is compared to the stat best describing what your main character is doing.

If your total is equal or under your stat, then you succeed and you the consequences, letting other players describe the effects for their own characters. If your total is larger, then you fail, and there are specific consequences or complications. These tend to make life interesting, and failures also tend to draw attention from supporting characters - which need not always be negative.

The Dice - Summary:

Whenever you roll dice you roll the 8-sided and the 12-sided together, adding them together. If either die rolls above the threshold of a character they will be affected by your action. If your total is equal or lower than your stat, you succeed. If your total was higher then you fail. Either way there will be consequences.

You will probably notice that main characters are woefully ineffective. There are two ways to work around that. The quick way is to call on Mephisto's contract and get a demonic intervention in your action. You can do this even after you've rolled. The slower way is to slowly improve your character by way of relationships.

Drug, Palace, and Memory

Before you made your deal with Mephisto, you had little recourse when you made a fool out of yourself. But now you have the power of demonic intervention, and nothing will be the same.

Demonic interventions are based on the three stats. When you call upon a demonic investment, several things happen immediately. First, you shift any number of points of stats to the stat for your action, from the other two. You must shift at least the current minimum number listed for that intervention. You now use your new stat value to determine the outcome of the roll.

For example, if the minimum Palace shift was a 3, then you could shift three or more points from Joy and Lore to your Power. These shifts are permanent, so your Joy and Lore would be reduced for any following actions, but your Power would remain enhanced. The only way to move the points back is another demonic intervention.

Second, if you call upon demonic intervention, you always make an impression - Mephisto's handiwork is rather flashy, after all. This can be useful even if your roll would succeed without demonic intervention.

Third, the minimum shift for that intervention listed on Mephisto's Contract is crossed out. So the next time someone uses that form of intervention, the minimum shift increases. When the "all" minimum shift appears, that means that when that intervention is called upon, that main character shifts all of her or his points to the stat in question.

Intervention Strategy:

Interventions serve two purposes. First, is to shift a failed roll to a success. The second is to assuredly make an impression. These purposes are often at odds. Most rolls that fail to impress are successful ones. Whether to take an intervention is one of the most important decisions in the game. It's easy for low minimum shifts, but as they get higher, you risk building a dependency on them.

Drug is the demonic intervention of Joy. Drug makes you, and other around you delirious with energy, happiness, and strength. It fortifies the body, allowing you to push yourself beyond human limits and it can bring pleasure beyond what the human world can offer. It manifests as sudden strength, a gluttonous feast, or the attentions of ephemeral lovers.

Palace is the demonic intervention of Power. Palace is an external intervention, bringing you wealth, servants, political favors, and sudden inexplicable luck. Like a word from an emperor, Palace opens doors, removes legal repercussions, and forces your will upon those around you. It manifest as dramatic mandates, opulent trappings, and excessive displays of money.

Memory is the demonic intervention of Power. Memory brings you thoughts and knowledge that was never written down. Whether is reading the thoughts of another or learning the ancient magics of Atlantis, memory grants you an arcane edge. It manifests as recollections, inspirations, eldritch empowerment, and the stealing of thoughts.

Mephisto's Secret:

Mephisto doesn't actually have the authority to take souls. The soul sale is actually a ruse. Mephisto wants the characters to take the demonic interventions, and it figures they will be far more willing to accept them as payment, than a free gift.

When you call upon an intervention you and Faust work together to describe how the intervention manifests. They are always strange and oth-

erworldly, but their manifestation is also guided by the problem at hand.

The Relationship Vote

The slower way that your character changes is the relationships on your cards. Over course of the scenes, you should work to building the relationships on your cards with one of the other characters. When you think you've begun that relationship, you can show the card to the other players, tell them which other character you think you have that relationship with, and ask for a vote.

The relationship vote is an important part of Faust and Friends. It determines if the relationship is actually present or not. Players may vote for the relationship, against it, or they may abstain. It is usually a good idea to indicate why you are voting the way you are, perhaps even saying what conditions would change your vote.

If the vote passes, then you discard the card, draw a new one, note the relationship on your sheet, and add 1 to any of your main character's stats. With that relationship, you have a new threshold to affect that character, and you've gotten the reward for roleplaying the beginning of that relationship well.

If the vote fails you have two choices. Either take the card back and try again, or discard the card and draw a new one. Usually this depends on the sort of feedback you get from the other players.

Playing Cards:

Playing cards can be tough. You must figure out what the other players are thinking about the characters and confront the possibility that they see the relationship differently, than you. On the other hand, its a learning experience. And it is the only way to increase the total of your stats beyond 20.

Finding Your Ending

Faust and Friends, like any tale, has an ending. Or, rather, it has several possible ways of ending. The most basic way to end Faust and Friends is when the players conclude that the story is reaching it's conclusion, and the game is over. This is just when the story feels finished. There isn't always a hard and fast rule for it, but most people know when they see it, so don't be afraid to acknowledge it when it happens.

When you reach that point, let each player have one more scene, to finish things off, perhaps describing graduation or foreshadowing the fate of your main character. Then you are done, and I hope you played an enjoyable tale.

If you want a bit more structure to your ending, here are a few options for knowing when the end is reached:

Going All In:

When one main character takes a demonic intervention with a minimum shift of “all”, that character has changed forever. Ending the game here, gives each character a chance to follow their friend, or give up Mephisto’s contract.

Or Staying Out:

If no main character has used the contract for three or four scenes, in spite of difficulties and poor actions, then the main characters may have weaned themselves from the contract. Have a final scene for each, showing what they valued more than pleasure, wealth, and secrets.

Design Notes

At the design level, Faust and Friends has an open secrets. The core mechanic of the game seems to be rolling the dice. It’s not. The real crux of the game is the cards and the relationships. That’s what drives the game. And you don’t get relationships by rolling well, it doesn’t work that way. Instead, you have to convince the other players that the relationship is present - and everything else in the game, from demonic interventions, to rolls, to supporting character descriptions are tools to make the relationships convincing.

Many roleplaying games have a social learning component, in the midst of other goals. But Faust and Friends has been designed to act as a sounding board for how the players think about relationships and what people do in and around them. People often surprise us, and sometime we surprise ourselves. In many ways Faust and Friends is just a means to do exactly that.

Name:

Joy

Power

Lore

Accents:

Your Relationships:

Your True Love (1) ⇔

Your Fans (2) ⇒

Your Nemeses (3) ⇔

Your Servants (4) ⇒

Your Lovers (5) ⇔

Your Friends (6) ⇔

Your Rivals (7) ⇔

Your Idols (8) ⇒

Your Masters (9) ⇒

Unrequited Love (10) ⇒

Your Supporting Characters:

Name:

Joy	Power	Lore
-----	-------	------

Accents:

Name:

Joy	Power	Lore
-----	-------	------

Accents:

Name:

Joy	Power	Lore
-----	-------	------

Accents:

Name:

Joy	Power	Lore
-----	-------	------

Accents:

Name:

Joy	Power	Lore
-----	-------	------

Accents:

Face Card Key:

- Jack - Remove one of your supporting characters, or if you have none, add one of either gender.
- Queen - Add a female supporting character.
- King - Add a male supporting character.

Mephisto's Contract

The undersigned owe one (1) soul each, in exchange for the following interventions to be provided by Mephisto (here after referred to as the demonic party). Interventions provided by the demonic party include the following:

Drug
Interventions of Joy

Minimum Shift:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
all

Palace
Interventions of Power

Minimum Shift:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
all

Memory
Interventions of Lore

Minimum Shift:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
all