

Hand in your Puppet

you little shit

by Colin Steele

BACKGROUND

The world we live in is broken, doubtless. But to the miserable Fuppet people of Yarnia, the world is obviously, glaringly, hopelessly fucked. Fuppets know they are animated by Hands. They know their lives are performances. They bend reality with Coincidence, argue about free will, form secret societies with theme music, and eat sandwiches they do not need.

(Fuppets don't have digestive systems. So. Like... weird. Eating is weird. But we get so hungry.)

This is a game about the tragedy of consciousness and the only freedom left: laughing at it loudly enough that it hurts.

Or... is it a game at all?

this space intentionally disappointing

Think of this as a 1970s children's craft manual that has become aware it is a 1970s children's craft manual, and then photocopied by **DADAISTS**

Here's a primer, a taste, an **AMUSE BOUCHE**

What's behind the door? The answer is and must always be: a trap. Either a physical, actual trap (bear trap, trap door, pit trap) or a metaphorical one. both are good. Because asking the question means you've already sprung it. You've fallen into it. Poor Fuppet. Now try to get out.

When players are asking "what's behind the door" with that energy (you know, the treasure-hunt, plot-advancement energy) then whatever you put there should gently **punish the everloving shit out of** the question. Not the player. The question.

"You open the door. It's a room. There's a problem in it. The problem is not more interesting than the last problem. It is simply... next."

"What's behind the door? Your... mom. Yep, your Fuppet-mother. She's already ranting 'Why haven't you called? I've been waiting!' and she's got that look. You know, like when you were little."

HIYP makes you watch yourself expect things. And then it doesn't give them to you. And then you laugh. *Because what else is there?*

label all **pants** "regret"

READ THIS FIRST

READ THIS FIRST

NO REALLY. READ THIS FIRST.

Put the book down for a second. Look at the people you're about to play with.

Good.

Now understand this:

Reality is not fragile. Your feelings are not the point.

Reality, as far as your Fuppets can tell, is hopelessly, painfully, idiotically fucked.

Not "broken." Not "damaged." Not "in need of repair."

Fucked.

Bent screws. Loose seams. Warm jello as the foundation.

**NO FREEDOMS REMAIN EXCEPT
LAUGHING AT THE NOT-JOKE.**

What is the greatest joy?

DO THIS WITH YOUR ACTUAL PLAYERS...

MAKER **BEFORE WE EXPLAIN ANYTHING**
READ THIS ALOUD.

All right. Before we explain the rules, we're going to make a few confusing things... confusing.

This will feel awkward.

That means it's working.

MAKER

Put your puppet on your hand.

Yes. Right now.

If you don't have one, grab anything.

A sock. A napkin. A hoodie sleeve.

Reality does not give a shit.

Or just make a puppet-mouth-thing with your fingers and thumb.

MAKER

Look around.

You can see everyone's Hands.

Everyone can see yours.

There is no illusion here.

There never was.

MAKER

You are Fuppets.

You know you are Fuppets.

You are animated by giant meat-things with opinions.

This is humiliating.

You have made peace with it. *Mostly.*

MAKER

Welcome to Yarnia.

Yarnia is a dorky high-magic fantasy world where the laws of reality were dragged behind a truck sometime during the Great Unraveling and never quite recovered.

Time hiccups.

Causality shrugs.

Doors have personalities.

This is not a metaphor.

You might think of this as you being stuck in a workplace accident in slow motion, on Groundhog-Day repeat. On a cosmic scale.

success is uncorrelated with effort

HERE IS THE SITUATION

MAKER

THE SITUATION

You are all standing in front of a door.

The door should be open.

It is not.

[**MAKER**: Pause. **Don't say another word!** Until: someone more-or-less accidentally addresses the door directly. If the Fuppets get stuck for more than a couple of minutes, repeat "You are standing in front of a door. It should be open, but it is not. It's looking kinda annoyed."]

MAKER (as the door, tired):

"Look, I don't know what you want from me.

I woke up like this.

Take it up with management."

MAKER

Anyone.

Any Fuppet.

React to this.

Do not solve the problem.

Do not advance the plot.

THERE IS NO PLOT.

Someone, anyone... acknowledge how stupid this whole fucking thing is. Mmmkay? Yeah?

(Someone will say something. It does not matter what.)

MAKER

Good.

That thing you just did —

Talking to the room.

Complaining sideways at existence.

Venting into the void.

That is how Fuppets survive.

MAKER

That is called a Heckle.

MAKER

Take one token.

That token is a Heckle Shekel.

It represents attention, irritation, and reality briefly losing its grip on the wheel.

MAKER

You get Shekels by doing that.

Not by being clever. Not by being right. Not by being nice.

By saying the quiet part loud enough that reality hears it.

MAKING THINGS WORSE ON PURPOSE

IT GETS WORSE

MAKER (pointing):

You.

Your Fuppet tries to open the door.

It doesn't matter how. Do not explain how.

While you do it, say something to the room. About how doomed this feels. About how unfair this is. About how you absolutely did not consent to being part of a metaphor.

(They perform. It will be awkward. This is correct.)

MAKER

Everyone else:

Close your fist.

Put zero, one, or two tokens inside.

You are not rating a performance.

You are deciding how much pressure reality absorbs before something snaps.

MAKER

Reveal.

(Count how many tokens are shown.)

MAKER

Not enough.

The door does not open.

Of course it doesn't.

FAILURE IS THE POINT **WAIT. THERE'S A POINT?**

MAKER (immediately):

That failed.

Take one Heckle Shekel.

(Hand them a token.)

MAKER

And now —

Do that thing again.

Say something about how this feels.

To the room.

Not to the door.

Not to me.

To the other Hands, to the ceiling, to anyone except the thing you're supposed to be talking to...

(They Heckle. Now everyone gets it.)

MAKER

Perfect.

That was also a Heckle.

Notice something?

Failure gave you more to say.

That's intentional.

BENDING REALITY (GENTLY, AT FIRST)

BENDING REALITY

MAKER

Anyone can now spend a Heckle Shekel.

One token.

To make something conveniently true.

This is called a Coincidence.

MAKER

You don't ask permission.

You say it out loud.

Reality pretends this makes sense.

It hates that. It really, deeply, abhors coincidence. But you have this singular magic power.

(Someone spends a token. Scribble this on a piece of paper and give it to them: "When you read this, read it aloud. It's a script. Read it: "By coincidence, the door isn't really locked up. It's just emotionally stunted.")

PLAYER

*"By coincidence, the door isn't really locked up.
It's just... emotionally stunted."*

MAKER

Fantastic.

The door opens.

It sighs.

Causality is now taking a smoke break.

CONGRATULATIONS. YOU ARE PLAYING.

MAKER

You now understand the game.

Not the rules.

The posture.

STOP READING. START MAKING THINGS WORSE.

MAKE THINGS WORSE

If something feels unclear:

Complain about it

Say it sideways

Spend a token

Break reality

Sew it back together later

Trying sincerely is dangerous. Missing the point
confidently is survival. Reality is fucked. Laugh at it until it
flinches.

[Ed: Insert enigmatic Chaos Magic sigil thing here.]

CORE MECHANICS

THE SNAPE OF PLAY

IT GETS WORSE

PACK IT UP PACK IT IN

Hand In Your Puppet is a performance-driven tabletop game. You do not roll dice. You do not optimize builds. You do not judge one another.

You perform, you laugh, and you stress reality until it pushes back.

Reality is not fair. Reality is not kind. Reality is very tired of your nonsense.

FUPPETS, HANDS, AND THE MAKER

Fuppet: The character. A self-aware puppet who knows they are controlled.

Hand: You. The visible force animating the Fuppet.

Maker: The facilitator. Presents situations, enforces consequences, speaks for reality.

All Fuppets can see all Hands. All Fuppets know the Maker is responsible for everything wrong.

This is normal. ish.

HECKLING

A Heckle is a short, satirical address to the Fourth Wall.

You Heckle to:

- Comment on the absurdity of existence
- Mock the situation, another Fuppet, your own Hand, or reality itself
- Blow off existential pressure before it turns into violence

Heckling is not polite. Heckling is not constructive criticism. Heckling is how Fuppets stay sane.

You May Heckle...

At any time

Especially after failure

Especially when things feel “too serious”

When a Fuppet Heckles:

Time stops in the game world

The spotlight is theirs

No one interrupts

HECKLE SHEKELS

Heckle Shekels are the currency of narrative strain.

They represent:

- Audience attention
- Reality buckling
- The universe rolling its eyes and letting things slide

Gaining Shekels

You gain 1 Heckle Shekel when you:

- Deliver a solid Heckle
- Fail an Action (ie ya can't convince anyone to eat snax)
- Lean fully into your Fuppet's ridiculous nature

The Maker may award additional Shekels for:

- Exceptional timing
- Glorious bad ideas
- Making the table laugh in spite of itself

Shekels are visible. They are not secret. They are meant to be spent.

vaudeville is my church

GET SHIT Done

Doing Things in Yarnia

You poor miserable Fuppet, nothing wants to cooperate with you. Damnit!

When you try something ... risky? ...boring? ...serious?

The Maker will make you perform. You must heckle on the spot OR...

Convince another Fuppet, or their Hand, to eat something. No really, like eat something you brought to the game, right then and there.

OH SHIT DID WE FORGET TO MENTION THIS? YES, YOU NEED A PUPPET. A COCKTAIL NAPKIN, SOCK, HOODIE SLEEVE, WHATEVER. YOU ALSO ABSOTUTELY MUST ALSO HAVE SNAX.

So convince someone at the table, real or imagined, to eat some SNAX.

Outcomes

the machinery of pretending is visible

SNAX CONSUMED

Deliciousness. Also: Fuppet does whatever. That thing.
add +1 Absurdity to the scene.

SNAX REFUSED

The Fuppet's Hand must eat the snaxes. The Fuppet fails.
add +1 Absurdity to the scene but gain 1 Shekel.
Reality noticed everyone chewing too hard.

COINCIDENCE **COINCIDENCE**

A Coincidence is a deliberate bend in reality.

You spend Heckle Shekels to declare something conveniently true:

- A door is unlocked
- You know this MF
- You just happen to have the right object
- The timing is suspiciously perfect

To invoke a Coincidence, you'll have to pay in Shekels. Usually 1, 2 or 3. How many? The Maker decides.

This Coincidence only applies to the current scene.

Every Coincidence adds +1 Absurdity

Coincidences must be declared aloud, to the Fourth Wall. You must acknowledge how absurd they are.

Reality hates pretending this is normal.

i think not

ABSURDITY

Each scene begins with 0 Absurdity. Absurdity increases when:

- Coincidences happen
- Action Resolution is overloaded
- Reality is pushed too far, too fast

When Absurdity Rises

As Absurdity increases, the Maker introduces Reality Pushback:

- Props misbehave
- Strings become visible
- Timing collapses
- Things stop cooperating

The higher the Absurdity, the harsher the pushback.

Absurdity resets at the end of the scene. Reality remembers.

Reality is kinda pissed, bucko

CONSEQUENCES REALITY CLAPS BACK

When things go wrong, the Maker chooses the tone and scale of consequence. Consequences are not punishment. They are reality clapping back.

Minor Pushback

- Doors stick
- Props argue
- NPCs get suspicious
- The world becomes inconvenient

Major Pushback

- Physical damage to a Fuppet
- Lost Shekels
- Forced scene complications

Severe Pushback

- Mandatory repair
- Temporary removal from a scene
- Reality rewriting the situation out from under you

Consequences should always be:

- Visible
- Funny
- Inconvenient
- Unavoidable

PHYSICAL DAMAGE AND REPAIR

When a Fuppet is damaged, the puppet is damaged. This may include:

- Removing stuffing
- Tearing fabric
- Detaching limbs
- Adding stains or patches

Damage is real. Repair is real.

To repair a Fuppet:

- You must actually fix it
- Repairs leave marks
- Marks are permanent
- Every repair is character development you can touch.

SCHTICKS

Each Fuppet has one Schtick based on how they look. Your Schtick represents how reality expects you to behave. When your action clearly aligns with your Schtick:

- Reduce the cost of a Coincidence by 1 Shekel, or
- Gain +1 Shekel for a Heckle

No stacking. No arguing. If it's not obvious, it doesn't count.

ARE YOU TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY?
ZOMG YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT

FAILURE IS NOT EMBARRASSING

Failure:

- Gives you Shekels
- Gives you the spotlight
- Gives you something to say

Trying sincerely is dangerous. Missing the point
confidently is rewarded. **MISSING THE POINT**
SINCERITY IS SUSPECT

If something fails:

- Laugh
- Heckle
- Keep going

Reality is already judging you. You don't need to do it yourself.

INDEPENDENCE

independence

(This will not go how you think.)

A Fuppet may declare Independence once per session.

They must say it out loud. In character. With conviction.

When this happens: Play stops. The Maker invokes Random Authority.

The Hand does not choose. The Hand does not negotiate. The Hand does not get clever.

THE EXISTENTIAL DICE

The Fuppet announces:

"I'm rolling the dice of fate!"

Roll a d6 to determine what the Hand must do:

1. Pratfall
2. Love confession
3. Villain monologue
4. Interpretive dance
5. Crisis of faith
6. Musical number

THE HAND MUST DO THIS THING.

THE HAND DOES THE THING

Yes. Even that one. Especially that one.

After the action:

- The Fuppet narrates how this was always their intent alllllll along
- Reality immediately gains Absurdity

No optimization. No mitigation. No bargaining. The Hand is not punished... they are revealed.

WHY?

To earn Heckle Shekels, of course.

Any time a Fuppet declares Independence, the Maker awards 1–3 Shekels, based on how badly reality just lost control of the room.

Bonus:

Earn +1 Shekel if the Fuppet can convincingly explain how the outcome proves they were in control the entire time.

THE DELICIOUS IRONY

The Fuppet declares freedom

The Hand loses agency

Randomness takes command

Everyone pretends this makes sense

Ask yourself: Who's the puppet now?

Then keep playing.

MAKER: WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DO

You are not a storyteller. You are not a referee. You are not here to protect the plot. You are here to:

- Present a broken situation
- Let the Fuppets make it worse
- Decide how reality pushes back

That's it.

WHAT FUPPETS DO

Fuppets do not "go on quests" in the traditional sense. Fuppets:

- React to situations
- Complain about them
- Try to fix them
- Fail loudly
- Bend reality
- Suffer consequences
- Heckle and keep going

They are not heroes. They are not chosen. **They are aware.**

Their goals are small, local, and constantly derailed.

Examples of things Fuppets try to do:

- Get through a door
- Eat a sandwich
- Avoid an awkward conversation
- Figure out who pulled whose strings
- Make something stop being weird (it won't)
- Make something more weird (this will work briefly)

WHAT AN “ADVENTURE” IS

An adventure in Hand In Your Puppet is a situation that should be simple but isn't. That's the whole trick. Good adventures are:

- Mundane on the surface
- Metaphysically compromised underneath
- Resistant to clean solutions

Bad adventures:

- Epic quests
- Clear villains
- High-stakes world-saving plots
- Anything that assumes competence

GOOD ADVENTURE PROMPTS

- A door that refuses to open
- A meeting that cannot end
- A festival celebrating independence that is mandatory
- A sandwich shop that won't admit it's out of bread
- A prophecy that keeps changing its mind
- A secret society that forgot why it exists
- If it sounds stupid, you're on the right track.

exceptional buttocks

HOW TO START A SESSION

Do not start with a plot hook. Start with:

“Here’s what’s wrong.”

Examples:

- “The mayor has invited you to a party you can’t leave.”
- “Something important is missing, and no one agrees on what.”
- “Reality has scheduled an apology tour.”

Then stop talking. Let the Fuppets Heckle. Let them argue. Let them try things.

HOW SCENES WORK

Scenes do not have objectives. They have pressure.

A scene continues until:

- Absurdity gets too high
- Reality pushes back hard
- The situation collapses into something else

Then:

- Reset Absurdity
- Change the situation
- Keep the problem, not the solution

You are not escalating stakes.

You are rotating discomfort.

HOW YOU USE CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are not punishments. They are:

- Interruptions
- Complications
- Reality losing patience

Ask yourself:

- "What would make this more annoying?"
- "What would make this harder to ignore?"
- "What would make this funnier and worse?"

If the answer feels *fucking petty*, you're doing it right.

HOW LONG does this TORTURE last?

A session usually covers:

- 3–5 situations
- 1–2 major reality bends
- At least one moment where someone says, "Oh no. Oh no no no."

Campaigns are not about escalation. They're about accumulation.

- More patches
- More scars
- More inside jokes
- Fewer illusions

IF YOU ARE EVER STUCK

Say one of these things:

- "That shouldn't have worked. It did."
- "That should have worked. It didn't."
- "Someone noticed."
- "Reality is getting suspicious."
- "The Hands are visible now."

Then wait. The game will restart itself.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE

Do not protect the Fuppets from the joke.

They already understand it.

Your job is to make sure it lands.

(STEAL THESE)

THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PUTTING THINGS BEHIND OTHER THINGS

A prestigious society believes reality is hidden behind something else

They have diagrams. They are all wrong

Things are behind things that are behind other things

Some of those things may be important

Props keep discovering they are behind themselves

The deeper you go, the less certain it is that anything is in front of anything

Clap whenever someone says, "I know who's behind all of this!"

The question is not "what's behind it?" The question is "Why am I feeling so behind?"

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

An ottoman claims it is the lost Throne of the Silken City

It is very funny. Dangerously funny

Other furniture begin making competing claims

The Scenery Union is watching closely

A prophecy involving seating arrangements may be real

Upholstery factions are mobilizing

The question is not "who should rule?" The question is "Why is furniture better at this than anyone else?"

THE INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE PARADOX

A celebration of autonomy has been made mandatory

Attendance is required at the protest

Spontaneity is scheduled

Radical Free Will theorists are waiting for orders

No one can tell rebellion from compliance anymore

The finale must be a surprise. It is not. Or is it? Finally a fine finale.

The question is not "how do we stop this?" The question is "what would independence even look like here?"

Appendix N: Threads of Inspiration

Television & Film

- The Muppet Show: The gold standard for self-aware puppet entertainment and fourth-wall breaking
- Labyrinth: Puppets in a fantasy setting with dark undertones and musical numbers
- The Dark Crystal: Serious puppet-based worldbuilding and mythology
- Adventure Time: Whimsical existential dread and philosophical exploration through animation
- Don't Hug Me I'm Scared: Meta-commentary and horror through puppetry
- Mystery Science Theater 3000: Commentary on entertainment through puppet intermediaries
- Sesame Street: Particularly meta-moments like Grover's "Near and Far"
- Pee-wee's Playhouse: Bringing inanimate objects to life with personality
- Avenue Q: Adult themes through puppet medium
- Meet the Feebles: Dark puppet comedy (content warning)

Literature

- The Velveteen Rabbit: Exploration of toy consciousness
- Pinocchio: Classic tale of puppet autonomy
- Discworld by Terry Pratchett: Meta-awareness and narrative causality
- Alice in Wonderland: Nonsense logic and reality questioning
- The Phantom Tollbooth: Wordplay and reality manipulation
- The Never-Ending Story: Meta-narrative and story-within-story

Comics & Graphic Novels

- The Unwritten: Meta-fictional exploration of stories
- Fables: Reimagining traditional characters
- Calvin & Hobbes: Reality vs imagination debates
- Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud: Meta-analysis of medium

Games

- The Stanley Parable: Meta-commentary on choice and narrative
- Undertale: Genre-awareness and fourth wall breaking
- Portal: Dark humor and existential questions
- LittleBigPlanet: Craft aesthetic in gaming
- Theater & Performance Art

Puppet/Theater Traditions

- Punch & Judy
- Bunraku
- Shadow Puppetry
- Waiting for Godot: Existential themes through performance
- Six Characters in Search of an Author: Meta-theatrical exploration

Art & Craft Movements

- Craftcore: DIY aesthetic and handmade emphasis
- Art Brut: Raw, unrefined artistic expression
- Dadaism: Absurdist art movement
- Folk Art Traditions: Particularly puppet-making

Philosophy

- Existentialism: Particularly absurdist philosophy
- Fourth Wall: Theory and practice in entertainment
- Meta-Reference: Self-referential art analysis

Additional Influences

- Traditional Puppet Shows: Global traditions
- Improv Comedy: Particularly meta-commentary
- Stand-Up Comedy: Particularly crowd work
- Vaudeville: Variety show format and humor

Warning on Tone

While many of these sources deal with serious themes, HIYP approaches them through humor and absurdity. The game is about finding freedom in acknowledging the absurd, not drowning in existential despair.

If you find something wrong with HIYP, then... fucking fix it