

= (Joe)¹⁰
[Joe in Ten Persons]

YOU ARE YOUR OWN WORST ENEMY.

a 24-hour RPG
by Daniel Ravipinto

[Joe in Ten Persons]

an entry in the
1KM1KT / Free RPG Blog 24-hour RPG competition
by Daniel Ravipinto

a peccable production
[\[http://www.peccable.com/\]](http://www.peccable.com/)

Topic
Ten Men Called Joe

Start
Friday, April 24th 11:47AM
End
Saturday, April 25th 11:33AM

This one is for Nancy.

Inspirations

xkcd web-comic
by Randall Munroe
[\[http://www.xkcd.com/\]](http://www.xkcd.com/)

To Save Her web-comic
by Jennifer Diane Reitz
[\[http://www.pasteldefender.com/\]](http://www.pasteldefender.com/)

Primer by Shane Carruth (2004)
[\[http://www.primermovie.com/\]](http://www.primermovie.com/)

Otherkind Dice
[\[http://www.lumpley.com/archive/148.html\]](http://www.lumpley.com/archive/148.html)

Sign In Stranger
[\[http://www.blackgreengames.com/sis.html\]](http://www.blackgreengames.com/sis.html)

A huge amount of German-style board games involving area control as a central mechanic, including:
El Grande, Samurai, Carcassonne, and Louis XIV

Resources

Humor-Sans font
from
(ironically enough)
xkcdsucks.blogspot.com
[\[http://xkcdsucks.blogspot.com/2009/03/xkcdsucks-is-proud-to-present-humor.html\]](http://xkcdsucks.blogspot.com/2009/03/xkcdsucks-is-proud-to-present-humor.html)

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Table of Contents

Introductions All Around.....	4
Overview.....	5
A Note On Gender.....	5
Winning the Game.....	5
Equipment.....	5
Examples.....	5
Creating Joes.....	6
Time and Place.....	6
Random Words.....	6
How to Build a Joe.....	6
Two Joes Too Many.....	7
Naming Joes.....	7
Choosing Joes.....	7
Player Character Joes.....	7
Meet Joe Prime.....	7
Decisions and Reasons.....	7
Building the Board.....	8
Contact Between Joes.....	8
Keeton.....	8
Initial Influence.....	8
Joe Prime's Timeline.....	8
Playing the Game.....	9
Rounds, Turns, Actions, and Scenes.....	9
Influence, Risk, and Targets.....	9
The Actions.....	9
Creating Scenes.....	10
Scenes Come From Actions.....	10
Acting Joe.....	10
Target Joe.....	10
Keeton.....	10
A Note on Table Chatter.....	10
Step 1: Where, When, and How.....	10
Step 2: Framing the Scene.....	10
Step 3: Playing the scene.....	10
Resolving Scenes.....	11
Two Dangers.....	11
Rolling the Dice.....	11
Suffering Harm.....	11
Breaking Joes.....	11
Successes and Criticals.....	11
Resolution and Narration Rights.....	12
Ending the Game.....	13
Endgame Conditions.....	13
Narrating Joe Prime's Decision.....	13
The Epilogue.....	13
The Broken Joes.....	13
The Player's Joes.....	13
Author's Notes.....	14
So What Was That All About?.....	14
24 Hours of Madness.....	14
Thanks.....	14

Introductions All Around



Hi. My name is Joe. I'm pretty normal. Nothing interesting about me, really. I'm **[twenty / twelve / thirty-five]**. I live here in the city. I've been here most of my life. What else can I say?

I guess the most interesting thing about me is what happened a few weeks ago. I ran into this **[guy in class / kid at the playground / man on the bus]** and we somehow struck up a conversation. I'm not quite sure how it happened.

I'll admit I was distracted. You see, I've been a little obsessed lately. I was kind of avoiding this decision I had to make about **[my boyfriend / this bully at school / my future career]** and I'll admit Keeton showed up at just the right time to pull me out of my head.

Oh did I mention that? He said that was his name.

Anyway, we talked for a long time. About decisions, ironically enough. About how they can affect you and everyone around you. About how we seem to come to these points in our lives – these moments of decision – that can change everything for us. Those moments we go back to late at night, and wonder how things might have been different.

Keeton asked me a lot of questions about things I might have done differently in my life.

I haven't seen him since. I went home with my head spinning.

The next morning, I knew something had *changed*. I felt different, though I've never been able to put it into words. The first time I *traveled*, though, I understood what Keeton had done. It was the day I met myself. One of myselfs. Whatever the word would be.

I met a Joe that **[had never gone to college / lost his mom when he was little / had joined the army]**, and while it was weird, we had a nice conversation about the other Joes that might be out there.

Since then, I've met a lot of me, as I've learned how to wander through time and possibility. But there's one Joe in particular I've become...well, I guess I've become obsessed with him. I ... well, I guess **we** call him Joe Prime.

See I'm not the only one who's obsessed with this Joe. There's this **[geeky twelve-year-old kid / old-sad-man-me / gay version of me]** that I've seen around, and he seems interested in Joe Prime, too. I've gone up and down Prime's time-line and seen him lurking everywhere in the background.

And I've seen how the other Joes are obsessed, too. Obsessed with the decision that Joe Prime is facing. You see, I want him to **[stand up for himself / get away from the mess he's in / admit the truth to himself]** but I don't think the others want that.

So we're kind of at a stalemate. Every time I try doing something directly to Joe Prime, one of the others shows up and messes everything thing up.

But I've got a plan.

I've got some other Joes on my side. **[Blue-collar Joe / That sad other kid Joe / Army Joe]** and I have been talking and I think I've got some pull with him. He's agreed to go out for me and do a couple things along Joe Prime's time-line. Try and convince him that our way is the best. Then, once he's made the right decision, I think I can finally go back and **[tell off my cheating ass of a so-called boyfriend / tell my parents about what's really been going on at school / leave my job and find my true calling]**.

And then everything'll be great. Right?

See. I told you. I'm pretty normal.

Overview

Joe in Ten Persons is a role-playing game of choices, consequences and being your own worst enemy. It's designed to be played in a single session for 3 – 5 players running anywhere from two to three hours.

In JiTP, each player will take on the role of one of ten versions of a man called Joe. These versions all come from different times and possibilities. One might be Joe when he was 12 years old, dealing with a school bully. Another might be a 20-something college student with a lecherous boyfriend.

Joe is a pretty obsessive person, so it's unsurprising that all of his variants are as well. Each of them is obsessed with a particular **decision** that he has to make, but has avoided making thus far.

All of the Joes in the game have come into contact with a person they know only as **Keeton**. From one innocuous conversation, they have each gained the ability to meet other possible Joes and influence them and their decisions. Unsurprisingly, after gaining this ability, most of the Joes choose to wander through time and space visiting and watching other versions of themselves rather than dealing with the decision they were avoiding in the first place.

The Joes embodied by the players are different, though. They've all become **stuck**, fixated on one, specific variant that they've found in their travels. They've dubbed him "Joe Prime."

Joe Prime is just like every other Joe: he's obsessive and he's avoiding an important decision. Unlike the player-characters, however, Joe Prime has not met Keeton.

Joe Prime's decision has become incredibly important to the stuck Joes. They each want his dilemma to be resolved in a different way, for different reasons. Maybe his problem resonates with their own, or maybe he's come to represent something about themselves that they hate. Regardless of why, they've each decided to marshal their influence amongst the variants and push Joe's situation towards their chosen conclusion.

But the Joes are risking more than they know. Interacting with variant versions of themselves can begin to take a toll on their sense of self. In the end, they may have to decide which is more important: the safety of themselves and their variants, or the success of their self-imposed mission.

And what of Keeton? What does he want? Why did he give this peculiar power to Joe?

Only time will tell.

A Note On Gender

Since the topic JiTP is based on is "Ten Men Called Joe" I will refer to Joe as male throughout the rules. If, however, you're more interested or comfortable playing **Jo(sephine) in Ten Persons**, by all means go for it!

Winning the Game

Unlike many RPGs, there is a way to win Joe in Ten Persons. In fact, the game contains two mutually-exclusive goals. During the course of the game, players gain and move **influence** tokens from Joe to Joe, representing their pull with a particular variant. At the end of the game:

1. The player with the most influence on Joe Prime narrates the resolution of his decision, thus getting what they want.
2. Players who have their influence destroyed by other players move that influence to Keeton. The player with the most influence on Keeton at the end of the game narrates the **epilogue**, in which this mysterious stranger's reasons for interfering with Joe's life are revealed.

Since players only gain influence with Keeton by losing it with one of the Joes, it is extremely unlikely that any one player will win both goals, though it is possible.

Equipment

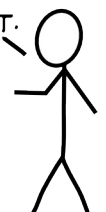
All you'll need to play are these rules, a print-out of the cards found in the Appendix, three 6-sided dice, pens or pencils, scrap paper, and a set of unique tokens for each player. Coins of various kinds will work fine for tokens, with each player taking a particular type: pennies for ones, nickels for another, dimes for a third.

Examples

To help you understand the game, we'll be following an example session run by four players. As each gameplay concept is introduced, it will be followed by an example, which will be set aside in boxed text:

*Our example **Joe in Ten Persons** players are Andrea, Bill, Carol, and Devin. Andrea is the only one who has read the rules and will be leading the other players as the games proceeds.*

A. B. C. D.
ORIGINAL. THAT.



Creating Joes

Time and Place

Joe in Ten Persons can be played in a variety of settings and genres, though the default is the world as we know it in the 21st century. Before you begin the game, you as players will need to answer the following questions:

1. *In what year was Joe born?*

By placing the beginning of Joe's life in a particular decade, you'll be making an important decision about the game's setting. A game in which Joe was born in the early 1970s, and came of age in the 1980s will be very different from a game in which Joe was born in the 1920s.

Decide as a group what period of history you're comfortable or interested in setting Joe's life in.

Default answer: 1980. Joe turns 5 in 1985, 10 in 1990, 20 in 2000 and 30 in 2010. This should hopefully be a period that everyone playing is familiar with, while still giving you the as-yet-unknown future to play around with in the years after Joe turns 30.

2. *Where has Joe lived most of his life?*

The decisions Joe makes throughout his life might send him to the four corners of the world, but most of the Joes have probably lived in the same area (at the very least, the same country) most of either lives. While where Joe lives is less important than when, it can have a definite effect.

Since Joe in Ten Persons is all about possibility, you can of course place the setting in a variant version of our own, or in a completely fantasy world.

Default answer: Whatever region of whatever country you are in right now.

Our players decide to stick with the defaults. Joe was born in 1980. Since they're playing in Philadelphia, in the United States, they reason that Joe has basically stuck to the East Coast for most of his life.

Random Words

To create the ten Joe variants that will populate the game, you'll be using random words as inspiration and a starting point for each.

Tear up some of the scrap paper into small pieces and give four pieces to each player. Each player should then write a random word on each piece of paper.

The word can be a noun, a verb, or an adjective. Avoid

proper nouns. Use ocean instead of Pacific, or city instead of New York.

Take your words and fold each of them so that it is no longer readable from the outside. Take all the words and form a pile in the center of the table, then shuffle them around.

How to Build a Joe

Each player should take one of the Joe cards from the Appendix and one of the words at random. Each Joe card has four elements to fill in. At this point, you'll be filling in the first two:

My obsession is...

My decision is...

Look at the random word you drew and use it to fill in Joe's obsession. If the word is 'cheat', maybe this Joe is obsessed with honesty, or trust. If the word is 'ocean,' perhaps he dreams of travel. Write a few words, a phrase, or a sentence that describes Joe's obsession.

Then, come up with a decision that this Joe faces. If Joe is obsessed with honesty, he might need to tell someone how he really feels, or decide whether or not to turn a loved one over to the police. Write one or two sentences describing the decision Joe faces.

An important note: **BE SPECIFIC.** Name specific people, places, and situations, rather than generalizing. Name the person Joe is in love with, or name the crime and criminal that Joe needs to make the police aware of.

Also, don't worry if your Joe doesn't match anyone else's. Since they're variants in time and possibility, your Joe might have a brother, while the others players are making Joes who are only children.

Don't spend more than a minute or so creating an individual Joe. Trust your instincts and write the first thing that comes to mind, rather than agonizing over getting the "right" answer.

Andrea explains the rules to the others and then takes four pieces of paper for herself. On them, she writes: "Cheat", "Destiny", "Flee", and "Beautiful". She folds the papers and places them in the center of the table, along with everyone else's.

She then picks up a Joe card (#7) and a random word (Honesty). She thinks a moment, then writes "Law and Order" beside Joe's obsession. Then, she writes "Joe has just discovered that his brother Michael has been siphoning funds from Xenon Insurance, where they've both worked for years. Joe must decide whether to turn Michael in or not."

Finally, fill in Joe's **age** in the given field. Simply make it an age you think is appropriate to the decision Joe is facing. Leave the last field ("I'm AKA") blank for now.

Two Joes Too Many

Every player will make at least two Joes. In the case of a 3-player game, you'll be left with one Joe left over, in a 4-player game, you'll be left with two.

Either give the remaining Joes to whichever players are feeling particularly creative, or break off into groups of two. One player fills in the obsession, and the other fills the decision. Finally, decide on Joe's age between the two of you.

Naming Joes

Have each player take a Joe that they haven't created and read his description to the others. Discuss that Joe's defining feature and use that to fill in the AKA (Also Known As) field. From then on, you can either refer to that Joe by his number, or his nickname.

While naming Joes, Devin reads Andrea's Joe #7 card. After talking it out with the other players, he decides to name him 'Paladin Joe'. He writes this in the AKA space.

Choosing Joes

Player Character Joes

By the time you're done naming Joes, you should be familiar with all of them. You now need to pick the Joe whose role you'd like to play during the game.

Remember that whichever Joe you choose will be **stuck**. He's never gotten to the point of having to deal with his decision. Instead, he's taken the opportunity afforded to him by Keeton to wander and watch other versions of himself. Eventually, he became obsessed with another Joe's decision. It's very likely that your Joe's decision will never be resolved, so choose carefully.

If you're having trouble, you can always choose randomly. If more than one player wants to play a particular Joe, try talking it out. Is there another that interests you just as much? If you can't come to a decision, roll a die and call for either odd or even numbers to see who gets the Joe.

Andrea thinks about choosing "Paladin Joe", but then thinks better of it. If she chose him, he'd become stuck and the players might never find out if Joe #7 turns in his brother or not. Instead, she chooses Joe #3, "Paranoid Joe." Carol says that she'd also like Joe #3, but after talking it out she realizes she's fine with playing Joe #1.

Meet Joe Prime

Next, you'll need to decide which of the remaining Joes your character has become obsessed with. Most likely, there is some connection or resonance that's led your character to that point, though it could be that he's simply interested because a particular Joe is so different from himself.

All players must end up with the same Joe Prime. The game then becomes about manipulating this Joe into making the "correct" decision.

Take a piece of scrap paper and write your first choice for Joe Prime, as well as an alternate.

Everyone then reveals their choices. If one Joe shows up on everyone's list, you've found your Prime. If not, see if one particular Joe shows up more than any other. This is a strong contender. Talk it over with those players who didn't choose him and see if they'll agree to making him Joe Prime.

If it seems like no agreement can be reached, then simply shuffle the remaining Joes and choose one at random.

Andrea is apparently not the only one interested in Paladin Joe's decision. He manages to show up as first choice for both herself and Bill and as an alternate for Carol. Devin agrees to make him Joe Prime.

Decisions and Reasons

Once all of the players have chosen their Joe Prime, you each need to figure out what decision your character wants Prime to make. Joe Prime's situation could come out several different ways, and it's up to you to decide the outcome your character desires.

If you're having trouble, think about your character in terms of his obsession and decision. Given the situation he's leaving, what are his priorities? Your obsession should give you a good idea of what he wants. Talk out your reasoning with the other players as you go.

Each player must have a unique outcome to Prime's dilemma, even if its only in terms of why the decision is made. In other words, it's alright for you and another player to want the same outcome, as long as Joe Prime makes it **for different reasons**.

Go around the table starting with the youngest Joe and proceeding clockwise. Each player should describe their final desired outcome and reason.

Write your outcome on the back of your Joe's card.

Andrea decides that Paranoid Joe doesn't want Joe Prime to turn in his brother, since her Joe's obsession is about keeping himself and those he loves safe. Bill's Joe (Greedy Joe) wants the same outcome, but after talking it out, they realize that Greedy Joe is always looking out for himself. He wants Joe Prime to blackmail Michael. They decide that their reasons are sufficiently different to proceed.

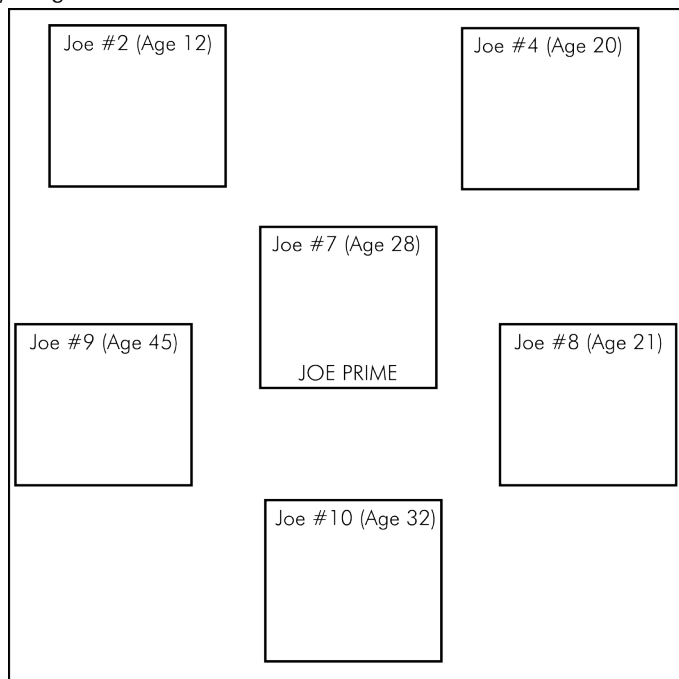
Building the Board

A Community of Joes

Now it's time to set up the game board. The board is made up of the relationships amongst all of the Joes not directly controlled by the players, including Joe Prime.

Using this board, players will attempt to influence other Joes into pushing Joe Prime towards their desired decision.

First, place Joe Prime at the center of the play area. Around his card, place all the other non-player Joes in age order, starting with the youngest. When you're done, the eldest and youngest Joes should be beside each other.



Contact Between Joes

The player's Joe's are assumed to be moving outside of the circle of the board. They can contact any of the outer Joes anywhere along their personal time-lines.

The players cannot directly contact or influence Joe Prime.

This is due to the interference of the other players. Any direct attempt at contact or intervention by one player's Joe is stopped by the others. The players can, however, influence the Joes which make up the circle into helping them.

Non-player Joes can contact and influence Joes directly adjacent to themselves. Thus, in the example above, Joe #9 could directly contact Joe #2, Joe #10, and Joe Prime. He could not contact Joe #4 or Joe #8.

Keeton

The Keeton card is also placed in the play area, far enough from the rest of the board so as to be distinct. Keeton takes no direct part during the game, but influence tokens moved to his card determine who narrates the endgame **epilogue**.

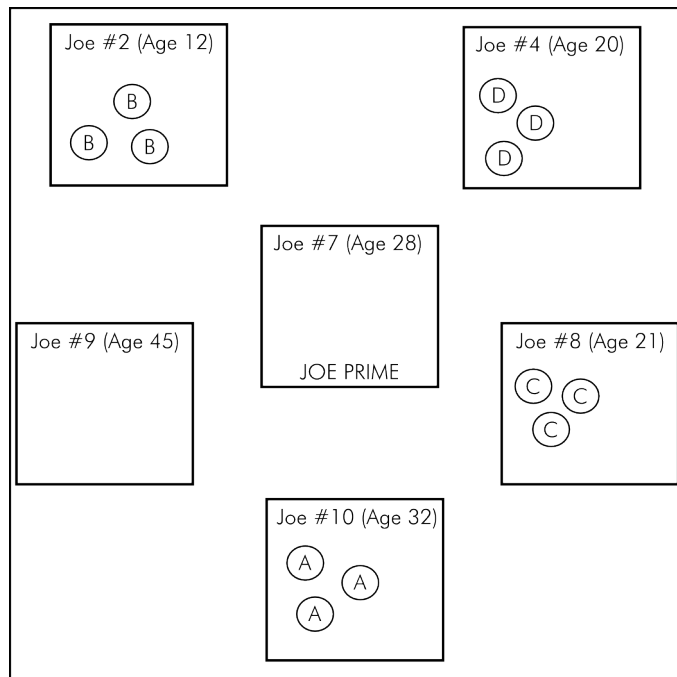
Initial Influence

At the start of the game, each player's Joe has built up an initial amount of good-will with one of the Joes on the board, other than Joe Prime himself. This influence is represented by **influence tokens**. Each player's tokens should be unique. Coins of varying denominations make good tokens.

Starting with the player with the youngest Joe and proceeding clockwise, each player chooses a Joe on the board with which his character already has influence and places 3 influence tokens on that card. All 3 tokens must be placed on the same character.

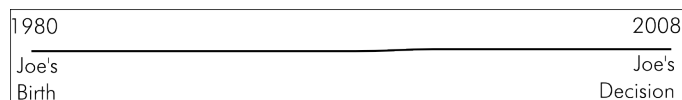
A player may choose to have influence with a Joe that already has influence tokens, if he or she chooses.

Andrea has the second-oldest Joe amongst the players, and is sitting on Devin's left. Devin has the the youngest Joe. After Devin chooses Joe #4, she places 3 tokens on Joe #10. Bill sits to Andrea's left and goes next. After he and Carol have gone, the board looks like this:



Joe Prime's Timeline

On another sheet of scratch paper, draw a line. At the leftmost side write "Joe's birth," followed by the year. At the right-most side, write "Joe's decision" followed by the year (calculated by adding his age to his birth year). The timeline represents where in Joe Prime's life the players can interfere, right up until the time when he will make his fateful decision. They may attempt to influence him via the other Joe's anywhere along it, but not beyond.



Playing the Game

Rounds, Turns, Actions, and Scenes

Joe in Ten Persons is played in a series of **rounds**. Each round is made up of a series of **turns**, one per player. Each round begins with the player whose Joe is the youngest and proceeds clockwise around the table.

On his or her turn, a player may take one of three **actions**:

- **Increase** their influence with a Joe.
- **Move** their influence from one Joe to another.
- **Destroy** the influence of another player.

Once an action has been chosen, a **scene** is played out with players taking on the roles of the Joes involved. The resolution of the scene determines whether the attempted action was a success or a failure.

Influence, Risk, and Targets

Once a player has chosen his action, he must determine which Joe he is affecting and how much influence he wishes to **risk** on the action. All actions require a risk of influence.

The Actions

Increase: The player is attempting to get another Joe to see things his way. He can do this by directly talking to the Joe in question and convincing him of the rightness of his cause, or (more likely) by taking direct action in the targeted Joe's time-line such that his philosophy is forced into a different direction.

The **risk** involved in an Increase action is a number of influence tokens already on the Joe, up to a maximum of three.

If the action is **successful**, the player may place a number of new tokens equal to those risked on the Joe. If the action **fails**, the risked influence is removed from the Joe and placed on the Keeton card.

There is a special Increase action a player may take if he or she has no influence on the central board (not including the Keeton card). In this case, the player may attempt an Increase action, risking no influence. If successful, they may place a single Influence token on the Joe card.

Increase actions are used to either create new Influence if you find yours wiped out by other player's actions, or shoring up your resources on a Joe you already have a foothold with.

Increase actions cannot be performed on Joe Prime.

Increases represent the player's Joe acting himself, and Joe Prime may be not contacted or influenced directly.

In the **scenes** driven by an Increase action, you'll be playing the role of your own Joe as he directly interferes in the time-line of another Joe in an attempt to get him on your side.

Move: The player is attempting to extend his influence from one Joe to another by having a Joe he already has influence with act on his behalf. **This is the only way to place influence tokens on Joe Prime.**

The **risk** involved in a Move action is a number of influence tokens on the Joe taking action on your behalf, up to a maximum of three.

If the action is **successful**, the player may move the risked tokens to any Joe **adjacent** to the acting Joe (See "Contact Between Joes"). If the action **fails**, the tokens are moved to the Keeton card.

In the **scenes** driven by a Move action, you will play a Joe other than the one you control, acting on behalf of the Joe you are playing. This is the only way you can gain access to Joe Prime's time-line.

Destroy: The player is attempting to remove another player's influence over a particular Joe, either by acting directly or through a proxy.

The **risk** involved in a Destroy action is a number of influence tokens on the same Joe as the influence being targeted, up to a maximum of three. **Both you and your opponent must have influence on the same Joe to perform a Destroy action.**

If the action is **successful**, the player moves an opponent's influence equal to the amount he risked from the Joe card to the Keeton card. If the action **fails**, his risked tokens are moved to the Keeton card instead.

In the **scenes** driven by a Destroy action, you'll be in the role of yourself playing tug-of-war with another player over a Joe's affections or using a Joe on the board to sabotage the efforts of another player to influence Joe Prime's life.

It's Andrea's turn and she's attempting a Move action. She has three influence on Joe #10 and she'd like to try moving some of it towards Joe Prime.

She announces her action, saying that Joe #10 will act on her behalf to influence Joe Prime and that she'll risk 2 influence tokens on the action.

If Joe #10 succeeds, Andrea will end up with 2 influence tokens on Joe Prime, giving her an early lead.

If Joe #10 fails, Andrea will have to move the 2 tokens she risked from him to the Keeton card. In that case, she'll be in the lead for controlling Keeton during the epilogue.

Regardless, she'll be left with 1 influence token on Joe #10.

Creating Scenes

Scenes Come From Actions

When a player declares an action on their turn, he or she is setting up the context of the scene. What is this particular Joe trying to accomplish and how will he go about it?

Each scene involves two Joes: the **acting** Joe and the **target** Joe, with the former attempting to somehow influence or change the later. A third figure, that of Keeton, controls those aspects of the scene not connected to either Joe.

Acting Joe

The acting Joe is always played by the current player. In the scene that follows, they will either be playing the part of their own Joe (in the case of any Increase actions, or on Movement or Destroy actions targeting non-Prime Joes), or a Joe they've influenced previously (during Movement actions or Destroy actions targeting Joe Prime).

Target Joe

The Joe who is targeted by the action is played by the player to the acting player's right. That player will be in charge of playing out that Joe's attitude and actions leading up to the acting Joe's attempt, as well as narrating his response.

Keeton

The player to the left of the acting player plays the role of Keeton, whose responsibilities are similar to that of the GM in other RPGs. He or she **frames** the scene, giving the initial context that the other two players will act within and makes decisions about the environment, playing any other characters who might be present.

A Note on Table Chatter

Even though specific roles are given to the three players within a scene, any players not currently involved are encouraged to offer their ideas and insights to the current actors, though the final say over any particular aspect will be left with the acting Joe, the target Joe, and the Keeton, respectively.

Step 1: Where, When, and How

A scene opens after a player declares his or her action for the turn. The player then declares where and when in a Joe's life they will be acting and what particular activity they're planning.

Depending on the action, they will either be declaring the activities of their own Joe, or a Joe they have influence over.

Andrea continues her Move action. Since she's moving tokens from Joe #10 to Joe Prime, she'll be playing #10 in the following scene.

Andrea has 28 years of Joe's life to work with, from the time he was born until he made his decision regarding his brother. No one else has taken an action against Joe Prime this game, so his time-line is wide open: no one has established anything previously.

Andrea declares that Joe #10 (a twitchy gun-nut) will attempt to attack Joe Prime when he's 20, but then ultimately fail and reveal that he's simply acting out of desperation. She hopes that will allow Joe Prime to feel some empathy for Michael upon discovering his crimes eight years later.

Step 2: Framing the Scene

Next, the Keeton player sets the scene: when and where is the target when the active Joe makes his move? What is the environment like? What's going on?

Be sure to mark any pertinent information on Joe Prime's timeline, if he is the action's target.

Bill sits to Andrea's left, and so is the Keeton for this action. He declares that Joe #10 decides to mug Joe Prime one night when he's returning to his dorm with his roommate Kevin after a drunken evening at a local frat. He writes down "2000: Joe in college" on Joe Prime's timeline.

Step 3: Playing the scene

The target Joe (played by the player to the acting Joe's right) starts the scene, declaring his actions and attitudes.

To help you play the role of the acting or target Joe, look closely at your Joe's card. Remember his obsession and the decision he will eventually be faced with. Think about the scene that's been set by the acting Joe and Keeton players. How does your Joe feel at this point in his life? How would he act?

The acting Joe now makes his move. Play out the scene, with each player narrating for his or her character, and the Keeton handling any scene issues or other characters.

Devon, sitting to Andrea's right, plays the drunk Joe Prime. Playing off his obsession with "Law and Order," Devon decides that Joe's toying with a career as a lawyer, though it doesn't work out. He slurs out how great it'll be to help put criminal scum behind bars where they belong. Bill, playing Kevin, replies in kind as they make their way back.

Andrea narrates Joe #10 pulling a pistol on both of them, hitting Kevin upside the head and then pointing the gun at Joe Prime, demanding his wallet.

The scene continues until a moment of conflict, when we must answer the question: does the acting Joe succeed at his intent?

Resolving Scenes

Two Dangers

There are two dangers whenever one Joe interferes with the life of another:

- the **acting Joe** may suffer harm
- the **target Joe** may suffer harm

Harm results from the strangeness of Joe interacting with himself. He sees some of the worst and the best he's capable of embodied in another version of himself. Even if he doesn't recognize the other has himself (as is often the case), the strangeness of it can shake the foundations of a Joe's sense of self.

Whether the acting Joe fails or succeeds in his original intention determines whether the player's original action succeeds or fails. Often the player will be faced with a choice of either succeeding at a cost, or failing while keeping himself and the target safe.

Rolling the Dice

To resolve a scene, the acting player rolls three six-sided dice. Each die must be assigned to either a danger or the acting Joe's original intent.

Think of it as three slots the dice are placed in: one for the acting Joe's safety, another for the target Joe's safety, and a third for the original action that set off the scene: the Increase, Move, or Destroy.

Rolls of 1, 2, or 3 are **failures**. Any danger assigned a failure immediately occurs, and that Joe is **harmed**. If a failure is assigned to this turn's action, it **fails**.

Rolls of 4 and 5 are **successes**. Any danger assigned a success does **not** occur, and that Joe is **safe**. A success assigned to this turn's action means the player **succeeds** in his or her original intent.

A roll of 6 is a **critical success**. Not only does a danger not occur if assigned a critical success, but an **extra bonus** is gained. An action assigned a critical success is **doubly successful**. (See "Successes and Criticals")

Thus, a roll of 1, 4, and 6 results in one failures, one success, and one critical success. Given that, the acting player could:

- succeed at his intent with an added bonus while harming one of the Joes
- assign the failure to his action while protecting both Joes, with a bonus affecting one
- succeed adequately at his action while protecting one Joe (with a bonus) and harming the other.

Suffering Harm

If the acting player assigns a failure to either the actor or the target, that Joe suffers harm. Immediately cross out one of the letters that make up that Joe's name on his card. The label of that letter lists his current state.

Crossing out **J** leaves a Joe worried, but **stable**. His interactions with himself have left him unsure of who he really is and where he belongs.

Crossing out **O** leaves a Joe **shaken**, but able to go on. Continually crossing paths with himself has struck him at the very core of his being.

Crossing out **E** means that Joe is **broken** and immediately removed from the game. His card is removed from the central board and placed beside the Keeton card.

When a Joe suffers harm, it tends to make holding influence over him harder as even he isn't certain where his loyalties lie. **Whenever a Joe is harmed, one token belonging to each player is removed from his card and placed on Keeton.**

Breaking Joes

If Joe Prime is ever broken, the game immediately ends. The player currently ahead in influence does not get to narrate Joe Prime's decision. Instead, play immediately proceeds to the Keeton epilogue (See "The Epilogue").

If a Joe played by a player is ever broken, that player may immediately choose any Joe from the central board other than Joe Prime as his new character. The original Joe he played is placed beside Keeton and is out of the game. Any influence currently on the new Joe is moved to Keeton.

Breaking a Joe and removing him from the board immediately changes the connections between the remaining Joes. The Joes on either side of the broken Joe are now considered adjacent to one another.

Successes and Criticals

A success assigned to the acting Joe means he is not harmed.

A success assigned to the target Joe means he is not harmed.

A critical success assigned to either means that not only is that Joe not harmed, but **he immediately erases one mark against him**. Thus, if a Joe with **J** and **O** crossed out were assigned a critical success, he would erase the mark against **O** and would now be **stable**.

A success assigned to the player's intent means the action is successful and tokens are added, moved, or destroyed as described in "The Actions" section above.

A critical success means an action is **doubly effective** and thus affects **twice the number of risked tokens**. So a player assigning a critical success to an action after risking 3 tokens would place, move, or destroy 6 tokens rather than 3.

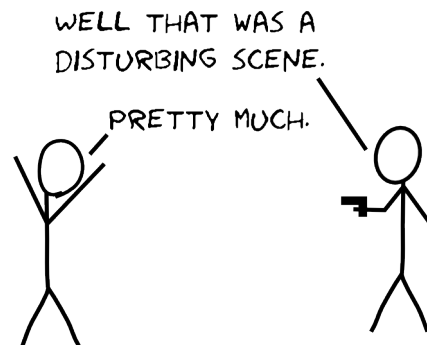
The scene continues with Joe Prime turning the tables on Joe #10 and snatching the gun away. He helps Kevin to his feet as Joe #10 falls to the ground, begging for mercy.

Andrea rolls three six-sided dice to see how the situation resolves. She rolls a 1, a 2, and a 4: two failures and a success.

She decides that getting her influence onto Joe Prime is more important than protecting either Joe #10 or Joe Prime. She assigns the 1 to the acting Joe (#10), the 2 to the target Joe (Prime) and the 4 to her original intention.

She moves her two tokens to Joe Prime, then marks one harm on both Joe Prime's card and one on Joe #10's. Both have their J's crossed out and are **stable**.

Since harming a Joe causes a fallout of influence, she takes one influence each from Joe #10 and Prime and places them on Keeton. Not a good turn for her, all in all. She's ended up with only 1 influence on Joe Prime and none on Joe #10. Then again, she's ended up with 2 influence tokens on Keeton, so she's currently in the running for narrating the epilogue...



Resolution and Narration Rights

As noted in the "Framing Scenes" section, each of the three roles (Acting Joe, Target Joe, and Keeton) is responsible for a different part of the narration. The resolution rules do not change this in any way.

Once the specific outcomes of a scene have been resolved with regards to the success or failure of the action and harm to the Joes involved, the outcome is narrated as follows:

- If the action **succeeded**, the acting player narrates how his Joe succeeds, with the targeted Joe filling in his character's responses.
- If the action **failed**, the Keeton narrates the outcome, with the targeted Joe narrating his responses. The Keeton can give any reason he likes for the failure, up to and including interference by other player-character Joes, with their permission.
- Any Joe that is harmed may narrate what that harm looks like or, in the case of a **critical success**, they may narrate how they regained some sense of themselves.

As always, other players are encouraged to give their ideas on the situation, but the final outcome is left to the controlling player.

Andrea's action has now been resolved: Joe #10 succeeds in softening Joe Prime's feelings towards criminals, but at a cost. Both Joes involved have suffered harm.

Andrea continues the scene by narrating Joe #10's attempts to explain his actions, his desperation and hopelessness.

Devon, playing Joe Prime, has his character help Andrea's to his feet, telling him "Go. Leave. Get out of my sight." He then narrates helping Kevin up, then running off to find help.

Andrea and Devon then each describe the effects of the scene on their characters.

Joe #10, acting on Joe #3's orders, has succeeded in his mission, but ultimately, he found Joe Prime's act of mercy more disturbing than compassionate. Andrea describes Joe #10 shaking his head in disbelief as he runs off, vowing to himself never to listen to #3 again.

Devon closes the scene by having Joe Prime arrive at the campus nurse's office, shaken by his interaction with the gunman. There was a terrible moment of recognition when he looked into the man's eyes.

"There but for the grace of God go I," he thinks...

Ending the Game

Endgame Conditions

The game ends immediately when one of two conditions occurs:

- Joe Prime is broken.
- All of the other Joes on the central board are either broken or have been removed from the board to become player characters.

Otherwise, play continues until a majority of players agree to end the game. Players then play **one last complete round after the current one**, giving each player one last chance to increase, move, and destroy influence tokens.

Narrating Joe Prime's Decision

At the end of the game, the player with the most influence tokens on Joe Prime wins. His Joe has managed to convince Joe Prime of the rightness of his view, or simply changed Prime's life to the point that no other decision is viable.

If two or more players are tied for the most tokens, have them each roll a die as a tie-breaker, with the highest roll winning.

The winning player may now narrate Joe Prime's moment of decision and its immediate repercussions. Be sure to use the timeline as a guide. How did the changes and events in Joe's life lead him to choose the outcome you wanted?

As always, other players may chime in with their ideas and opinions.

The Epilogue

All that's left is Keeton. Up until this point, he has remained an elusive figure, his motives unknown. But that changes in the **epilogue**.

The player with the most influence tokens on Keeton gains narrative control over the epilogue. Again, if two or more players are tied, roll dice as a tie-breaker.

To begin the epilogue, the winning player assigns the roles of the broken Joes to the other players as they see fit, handing out Joe cards to the other players. If there are enough broken Joes, players may end up controlling more than one.

The premise of the epilogue is Keeton explaining to the broken Joes what his intentions were all along. Unfortunately, the Joes who are present for this revelation have so lost their sense of self they probably don't really understand what's going on.

Keeton's premise should derive from the scenes the players framed throughout the course of the game, as well as their priorities in assigning die rolls. Were they ruthless? Cruel? Kindly? Protective? All of them are, after all, facets of the same person. What kind of guy **is** Joe, in the end?

If the game ended by breaking Joe Prime, be sure to narrate Keeton's observations on this fact into the epilogue. Somewhere along the line, one or more of the players decided he was expendable.

If you're having trouble coming up with a motive for Keeton's actions, here are some possible ideas:

- One possible Joe somewhere and somewhen created Keeton. The events which make up the game represent Keeton's elaborate revenge on his creator.
- All of the Joes as a whole (and their combined obsessions) represent a powerful force for change in the universe. Perhaps **too** powerful. Keeton has turned their attention to one another in an attempt to keep things under control.
- Before Keeton, every Joe everywhere was stuck in his obsession, unable to take any sort of action regarding it. All that pent-up indecision was gumming up the universal works. Keeton just gave the whole thing a swift, sharp kick to get things moving again.

The Broken Joes

The remaining players may narrate their broken Joe's reactions to Keeton's revelations. Do they understand what they've just experienced? What will happen to them now?

The Player's Joes

Players may narrate a brief end for their own character, if they choose. The author prefers leaving that part of the story unfinished, however. In this way, the players never truly know if their character's experiences allowed them to move on in their own lives or if they remained stuck, parasitically moving from one variant's obsession to another in an attempt to avoid dealing with their own.

Author's Notes

So What Was That All About?

Joe in Ten Persons is a weird game.

I'll admit that right off the bat.

The central conceit of ten versions of the same man running around in time and space sabotaging himself arrived fully-formed in my brain as soon as I saw my chosen topic in the list. Everything after was just a matter of dealing with mechanics.

I've been a fan of Vincent Baker's "Otherkind Dice" mechanic for awhile, and I knew that if I wrote another short-form RPG, I'd have to try my hand at a variant version of it. It ended up being a perfect fit for **JiTP**, forcing players to choose their character's priorities in every scene. Ironic that the Joes are so bad with decision-making, huh?

The art "style" of the game is a result of necessity: I can't draw a straight line with a ruler. Stick figures in Inkscape are about the limit of my visual artistry. Finding an xkcd-style font was just the icing on the cake.

The experience of creating **JiTP** was like most of my designs in that it felt like sculpting. My initial designs are always too complicated, even when I aim for a simple one (as was the case with **JiTP**). Inevitably, most of the work involves removing those parts of the design that aren't really necessary, don't promote the central premise, or are just downright not fun.

What I ended up with (and I'm not sure it's where I started) is an exercise in group character-creation. The Joes are ultimately just facets of one guy: one-dimensional obsessive possibilities. It's only when you've finished the game and Keeton looks back and comments in the epilogue that you can get an image of who Joe really is. That's why I encourage players to spend as little time on the initial Joe-creation as possible.

It's funny, but in a lot of ways, **JiTP** feels like an improved (dare I say "fixed"?) version of a previous game of mine: **The Glass Bead Game** [<http://www.1km1kt.net/rpg/the-glass-bead-game>]. The **GBG** was also about taking a set of disparate ideas and trying to synthesize a complete whole out of them.

Unfortunately, **GBG** comes off as more clever than wise in the end. It deals with "big" issues like love and passion and betrayal and in doing so becomes very ethereal and cerebral. One reviewer suggested that players would need degrees in philosophy or poetry to successfully complete the game.

JiTP feels more focused, concentrating on a single man and his obsessions and in doing so feels more concrete and real. I'm hoping it will ultimately be a more playable, and fun, game.

Did I succeed?

Only time will tell.

24 Hours of Madness

The actual process of writing was fairly linear. I literally wrote the game straight through from beginning to end, wandering back every once in a while in an attempt to both edit my copy and clear my head.

I took breaks as I went, taking a big one for dinner around 8:00pm on Friday and then worked straight through to midnight, when my brain started leaking out of my ears.

I slept until about 5:00am, when I awoke with dimly remembered dreams of multiple versions of myself being involved in an alternate version of World War II where talking animals did most of the fighting echoing in my head. See where I get my ideas?

I'm writing this at 8:00am on Saturday. The cover's finished and all that's left is the Appendix of Joe and reference cards. With a little luck, I should have something presentable when my time runs out.

If I don't fall asleep first.

Thanks

To Neil, as always, for putting up with my various insanities. "You want to write a game in 24 hours? Have fun!"

To Rob Lang and 1KM1KT, for running and hosting this particular instantiation of the 24-hour RPG competition.

To Vincent Baker, for having so many ridiculously good ideas even he can't use them all.

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 1
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 2
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 3
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 4
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 5
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 6
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 7
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

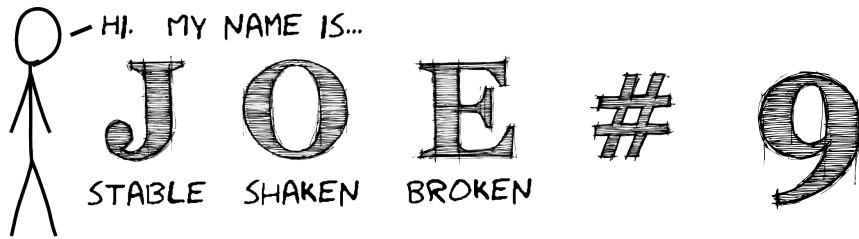
- HI. MY NAME IS...
J O E # 8
STABLE SHAKEN BROKEN

MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

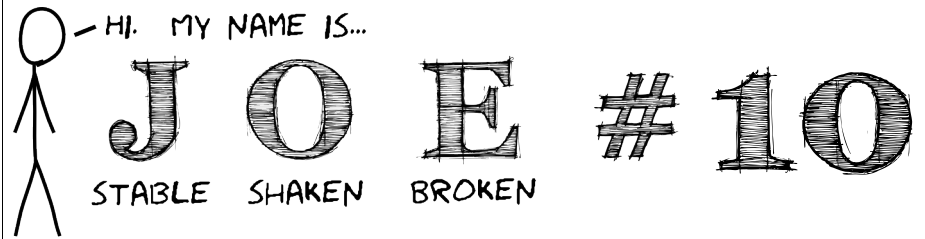


MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...



MY OBSESSION IS...

MY DECISION IS...

I'M AKA...

MY AGE IS...

Keeton

Place this card separate from the others at the start of play.

Whenever a player loses tokens through a failed action, a harmed or broken Joe, or an opponent's Destroy action, place them here.

At the end of the game, the player with the most tokens on the Keeton card narrates the game's epilogue.

Whenever a Joe is broken, place his card beside this one.

Actions

Reference Card

Increase

Target any Joe on the board other than Joe Prime

Joe Prime cannot be targeted by an increase action.

Risk up to 3 influence tokens already on that Joe to attempt to add an equal amount of new influence tokens.

Move

Target any Joe on the board either acting as your own Joe or a Joe you have influence tokens on.

Risk up to 3 influence tokens on the acting Joe to attempt to move those tokens to the target Joe.

This is the only way to place tokens on Joe Prime.

Destroy

Target any Joe on the board on which both you and your opponent have influence tokens.

Risk up to 3 of your influence tokens to destroy an equal number of your opponents.

You may act as either your Joe or any adjacent Joe on which you have influence tokens.

Resolution

Roll 3d6 and assign one die to each of the following three categories:

Harm to Acting Joe

1-3: The Acting Joe is immediately harmed. Mark one letter on his character card and move one of each player's tokens to Keeton.

If Joe is **broken**, place him beside Keeton.

4-5: Nothing happens.

6: Erase an existing mark on the Acting Joe's character card.

Harm to Target Joe

1-3: The Target Joe is immediately harmed. Mark one letter on his character card and move one of each player's tokens to Keeton.

If Joe is **broken**, place him beside Keeton .

4-5: Nothing happens.

6: Erase an existing mark on the Target Joe's character card.

Turn Action

1-3: The action **fails**. Immediately place any influence tokens which were risked on the action on the Keeton card.

4-5: The action **succeeds**.

6: The action is **doubly successful**. Increase, move, or destroy twice the number of risked tokens.

Harm

Reference Card

Stable

Joe has become worried, but is still mostly stable.

His interactions with himself have left him unsure of who he really is and where he belongs.

One token of each player's is removed and placed on the Keeton card.

Shaken

Joe is shaken, but can go on.

Continually crossing paths with himself has struck him at the very core of his being.

One token of each player's is removed and placed on the Keeton card.

Broken

Joe is immediately removed from the game.

Joe's card is removed from the central board and placed beside Keeton.

If Joe was a player character, the player may replace it with any non-prime Joe from the central board. All tokens on that Joe are placed on the Keeton card.

Scene

Reference Card

Keeton

Played by the player to the acting player's left.

Frame the initial scene. Describe the opening events of the scene based on the acting player's actions.

Play any characters other than the two Joes.

Narrate the outcome if the action fails.

The Acting Player

Describe where, when, and how your Joe will be acting against the target.

Play the acting Joe in the scene. Describe how you will either increase or decrease the influence on the targeted Joe.

Narrate the outcome if your action is successful.

Narrate how any harm affects your Joe.

The Target Joe

Played by the player to the acting player's right.

Play the Joe targeted by the acting player's action. Base your narration on that Joe's obsession and decision as well at the setting described by Keeton.

Narrate how any harm affects your Joe.