

REVENANT



**A ONE-ON-ONE RPG OF PASSION BEYOND DEATH
BY PAUL STEFKO**

Revenant is a game designed for one Player and one Narrator to tell a story about passion beyond death. Inspired heavily by films such as *Ghost* and *The Crow*, **Revenant** is about wanting something so bad that you will defy the laws of mortality to see it done.

A game of **Revenant** should last about an hour. To play, you will need a handful of six-sided dice (called d6s, maybe six or so) and some tokens (beads, poker chips, etc., about 10) to note your character's traits.

MEMENTOS

You may also use a Memento (short for Memento Mori), a set of documents that give the bones (story elements) and meat (character elements) of your story. Several Mementos should be available where you downloaded these rules, or you can make your own. You can even mix the meat from one Memento with the bones of another, if you don't mind telling a weird story (well, weirder).

PLAYER

As the Player, you take the role of a Revenant and attempt to complete this being's overwhelming goal. In the process, you will face obstacles that are the results of your own actions.

WHAT IS A REVENANT?

A revenant is someone who is possessed of a passion so strong that she returns to life to perform an all-consuming task. The Player's character is such a person, a Revenant with a mission in the land of the living.

A Revenant is defined by two traits: Passion and Drive. These are two sides of the same coin, and their levels are connected.

Passion is an emotion or value, like love, justice, or faith. This is the power that raised you from the dead. It is the energy that keeps you going and allows you to overcome the obstacles in your path.

Drive is your goal, the mission you have returned to accomplish. When you complete your Drive, you will be able to rest again. This could be anything from avenging your own murder to cleaning up your neighborhood.

At the start of the game, the Player has seven tokens to split between her two traits any way she likes, as long as she puts at least one in Passion.

ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES

Many actions your character takes do not require a roll of any kind. Assume that she has the natural and supernatural abilities necessary to accomplish many different tasks. You only need to

roll when you are doing something extraordinary or dramatic.

In such a situation, you will choose a number of tokens from your Drive to wager on your own success. Pick up that many d6s. If you are facing any unresolved obstacles, put one d6 back for each obstacle. Roll the remaining dice.

If any of your dice come up 5 or 6, you succeed. If none of the dice show 5 or 6, you fail. It doesn't matter how many dice roll 5 or 6; you either succeed or you don't.

If any of your dice roll 1, the Narrator will

add an obstacle, some ongoing circumstance that makes your mission harder. It doesn't matter how many dice roll 1; a single action can generate only one obstacle.

After a successful roll, you get some Drive tokens back. If you faced any obstacles before the roll, you get one Drive token

back for each obstacle. For every 6 rolled, you get one Drive token back. You cannot get back more Drive than you risked. If you succeeded but faced no obstacles and rolled only 5s, you get a single Drive token back. If you failed, you do not get back any Drive.

EXAMPLE OF ACTION

Carly, a drug addict killed in gangland crossfire, has come back from the dead, raised by the power of her love for her husband, Gin (Passion). She can't rest until she gets him clean and helps him move on (Drive). Currently, Carly has 3 Passion and 5 Drive.

Gin is in a rundown house on the wrong side of town, about to shoot up. Carly is facing an additional



obstacle, though. The house is guarded by cartel thugs, and Gin is in deep with their bosses.

Carly decides to enter the house wreathed in unholy fire, an avenging angel in torn fishnets. She wants to scare Gin straight and get him to leave the house. Carly's player is willing to risk 4 Drive on this action.

Carly's player would normally pick up four d6s, but the obstacle of the thugs reduces this to three. She rolls and gets 6, 4, 1. She succeeds in scaring Gin out of the house, but he doesn't recognize her, so he flees screaming (a new obstacle), and both he and Gin are chased out by the thugs.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Your Passion can weather any trial. By focusing on the force that brought you back, you can find the wherewithal to overcome the obstacles in your path.

If you perform an action that generates an obstacle, you can describe how your Passion lets you solve the new problem. If the Narrator agrees, you can spend one of your Passion tokens and remove the obstacle.

Instead of following your Passion, you can try to use an action to remove an obstacle. This uses the normal rules above, wagering Drive instead of spending Passion. It also has the chance of generating *another* obstacle in the process.

THE FLOW OF PASSION

As you perform significant actions, you will spend Drive, pushing yourself toward your goal. You regain Drive by rededicating yourself to the mission, focusing your Passion into an emotional weapon.

You must first clear your path of obstacles as outlined above. Then you can transfer Passion tokens to Drive. Usually, this requires meditation, rituals, or some other time-consuming practice.

Alternately, you can transfer Drive tokens to Passion. This requires you to pull back from your

goal and focus on the emotional core of your renewed existence. In the process, you accept a new obstacle from the Narrator.

If you have obstacles, you cannot transfer tokens from Passion to Drive, but you can transfer them from Drive back to Passion.

You can earn new Passion tokens by exposing yourself to sources of your emotion or value in others. If your Passion is faith, perhaps you attend a moving church service. Being present at the conviction of a murderer would count for the Passion of justice. Indulging in your Passion earns you a new token.

There is no maximum to the number of tokens you can have in either Passion or Drive.

If at any time your Passion is reduced to 0, the power that raised you from the dead is exhausted and you return to that state once more. If you spend your last Passion token in the process of completing your Drive (below), you may still compete your goal before you succumb to death.

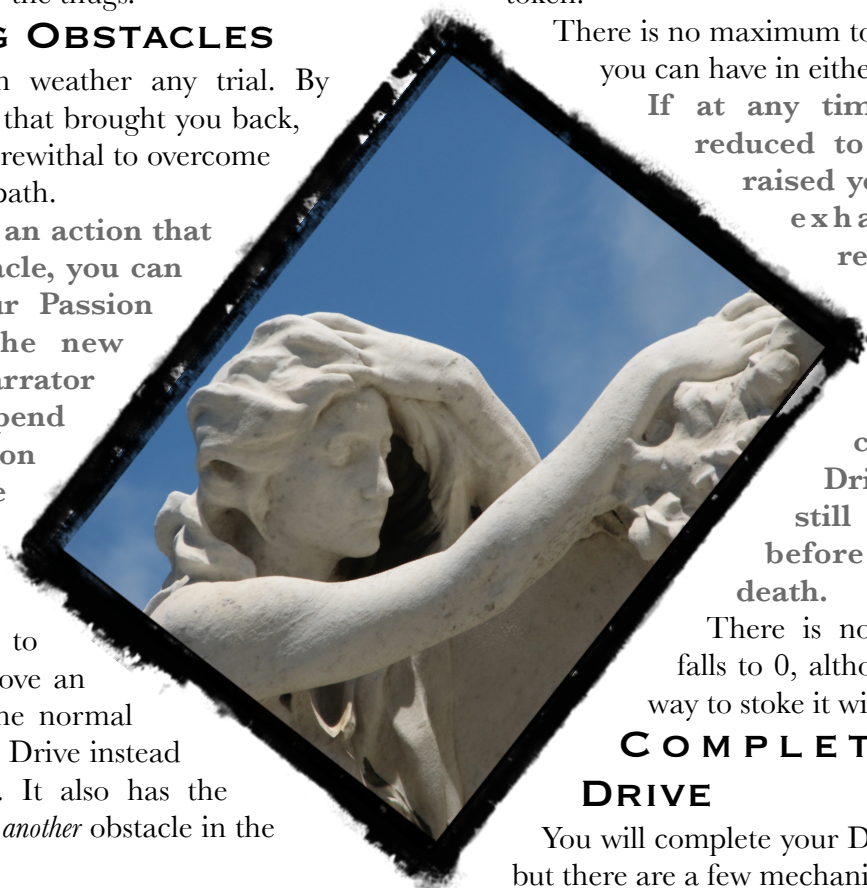
There is no effect if your Drive falls to 0, although you should find a way to stoke it with Passion if possible.

COMPLETING YOUR DRIVE

You will complete your Drive through narrative, but there are a few mechanical guidelines.

First, completing your Drive requires a significant action. Simply overcoming an obstacle with Passion will not do.

Second, you cannot have outstanding obstacles when you complete your Drive. You can rely on the luck of the roll, hoping not to roll any 1s on that final action, or you can push yourself to overcome fate itself. Before taking an action that will accomplish your Drive, you can spend 2 Passion tokens. If you do, that action will not generate an obstacle, no matter how many 1s show up.



NARRATOR

The Narrator sets the scene for the Player and creates the twists and turns of her story.

SETTING THE SCENE

The Player is responsible for creating her character and setting her Passion and Drive. You are responsible for creating everything else that exists in the world of the game.

Don't worry. It's not as hard as it sounds.

Much of the world of a **Revenant** game can be drawn from the real world you live in. You can use the shorthand of real life to make scenes feel more real for the player.

It is up to you to populate the world with interesting characters as well as settings. Again, you don't have to work too hard on this. Most people that a Revenant encounters will fall into one of three categories: Enemy, Ally, or bystander. Bystanders may have a line of dialog, but they'll be out of the scene almost instantly.

Allies can be loved ones that discover the Revenant is back from the grave, new friends she makes while pursuing her Drive, or even mysterious entities with powers that may relate to the Revenant's own. You should come up with a physical description and one or two interesting traits for each Ally.

Enemies will crop up as the Revenant pursues her Drive. Many obstacles will take the form of antagonists. Most such villains will be meaningless mooks and can be treated as bystanders, but some will be more important. Treat Enemies with the same importance as Allies; give them a description and a suitably loathsome personality.

Neither Allies nor Enemies will have any mechanical traits. The game doesn't need them.

They exist to define obstacles and to give the Player tools for describing her actions.

CREATING OBSTACLES

As Narrator, your job is to come up with obstacles. These can be any characters or events that impede the Revenant on the way to completing her Drive. Since a game of Revenant is set in a world where the fantastic has literal power, obstacles can take just about any form.

When you set up an obstacle, try not to make it too overwhelming. There should be some way to overcome it, even if that way is not immediately clear. What's more, the solution should relate to the Revenant's Passion or Drive, since she will use her traits to overcome it.

CREATING A MEMENTO

A Memento consists of two documents. The Meat is for the Player and includes a list of Passions, a list of Drives, and ideas for supernatural feats appropriate to the type of being they are playing. The Bones is for the Narrator and includes lists of obstacles that would be appropriate based on the Passions and Drives

from the Meat document.

To create your own Memento, first you need to come up with a premise. Typically, this will relate to a specific type of Revenant. Ideas for your premise might include:

- Traditional Revenant (intelligent, zombie-like creature)
- Mummy (an ancient, cursed being of memory and knowledge)
- Ghost (a spirit that cannot let go of this world yet can no longer directly influence it)
- Full-Body Cyborg (perhaps a robotic police officer of some kind)





- Mind-Emulation Software (a copy of a mind, but is it still the person it was?)

Once you have decided on your premise, you can begin working on the Meat. The Meat is comprised of two lists of six traits each, one for Passions and one for Drives. In addition, the Meat will usually list several supernatural abilities that are appropriate to the premise, although these are purely descriptive and have no mechanical impact.

So, to create the Meat for your custom Memento, you need to think of six appropriate Passions, six interesting Drives, and possibly a few neat tricks for your Revenant.

The Bones follows the Meat, but it includes 12 lists of six obstacles. Each list corresponds to an entry on the Meat's lists. To create the bones, you must come up with 72 potential obstacles that fit with the Passions and Drives in your Meat document.

An example Memento for the traditional Revenant appears in the next pages.

USING A MEMENTO

The Meat can be used to randomly generate the Player's Revenant by rolling a d6 for each list and using the entries for her traits. Or simply use the listed traits as inspiration for your own original creation.

The Bones can be used by the Narrator during play to inspire the obstacles he places before the Player. He can roll a d6 on either of the tables that correspond to the Player's Passion and Drive and use the entry to create a new obstacle.

Mementos are not required to play Revenant, of course. You should be comfortable coming up with the simple traits a Player character calls for, and the Narrator should be able to riff on the action to create obstacles.

MEMENTO: REVENANT

MEAT

PASSIONS

DRIVES

1 Love: The most common manifestations of the Love Passion are romantic love and the love of a parent for a child. Revenants with the Love Passion often exhibit powers of empathy or telepathy. They can read the emotions and memories of others, and they can project their own feelings or any of the emotionally-charged memories they have read.

2 Justice: The pursuit of justice is a powerful Passion, and it is often coupled with violent Drives. A revenant looking for justice will usually manifest strong and very physical abilities, including telekinesis or pyrokinesis.

3 Faith: These revenants return because their belief in a higher power leads them to right some wrong, sometimes personal, usually not. Their powers will relate to their faith, but often involve powerful protections, both of their own body and of the bodies and souls of others.

4 Ambition: Some revenants return because of a dream or goal they had in life that went unfinished. Their powers will let them accomplish their goal, and are by far the most varied, ranging from increased stamina, strength, or intellect, to visionary insight and inhuman knowledge.

5 Jealousy: Some revenants return for the desire of something they never had in life, something they coveted but belonged to someone else. Their powers often let them enact curses on those who have what they want.

6 Possessiveness: Something was taken from this revenant that was more precious than her life, and she wants it back. This can be an object or even a person, contrasting darkly with Love. The revenant's powers will let her locate her possession anywhere, teleport to it, and punish those who stole it.

1 *Get revenge on those who wronged me.* This will often involve solving (or at least punishing those responsible for) the character's own murder.

2 *Save someone from himself.* Often, this will be a loved one who has gotten himself in trouble, but it can be anyone that the revenant made a connection with in her life.

3 *Complete a task left unfinished.* There was something the character hoped to achieve before her life was cut short, and she has come back to finish it. This may require taking important works back from someone who has co-opted or stolen them.

4 *Atone for a past mistake.* This will usually involve helping someone else that the Revenant hurt or fixing a problem she caused while she was still alive.

5 *Prevent something terrible.* The Revenant may not know what she is meant to stop, so the first step of her Drive may be to find out her true purpose. Even then, the job may be bigger than even one supernatural entity. The Revenant will need Allies and resources.

6 *Improve the lives of others.* This Drive resembles #2 above, but rather than saving an individual, the Revenant may be helping an entire community. This Drive can be more open-ended. The Player and Narrator will have to agree that her actions truly have made things better.

DIRECTIONS

Player: Roll one die on each Meat table to generate your Passion and Drive.

Narrator: Roll one die on an appropriate Bones table whenever you need to generate an obstacle.

BONES

PASSIONS

LOVE

1. The Revenant discovers that her lover has found happiness with someone else.
2. The Revenant encounters a loved one who is terrified by her.
3. The Revenant discovers an imminent danger that threatens a loved one.
4. A loved one begins following the Revenant, interfering with the pursuit of her Drive.
5. The Revenant feels hatred so strong toward something that it threatens to overwhelm the love that animates her.
6. A loved one is brought to the brink of death, but there is a chance the Revenant can save him.

JUSTICE

1. The Revenant stumbles on a crime in progress. Does she stop to help or continue on with her own mission?
2. In order to accomplish her goal, the Revenant must endanger innocents.
3. The Revenant runs afoul of the law in the pursuit of her Drive.
4. In order to accomplish her goal, the Revenant must lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise behave unjustly.
5. The Revenant targets the wrong individual.
6. The Revenant's Drive is unjust. Once it is complete, she must face some kind of judgement.

FAITH

1. The Revenant has a dream that makes her question the righteousness of her Drive.
2. A holy person declares the Revenant evil and incites people against her.
3. The Revenant encounters a false omen. Following it will lead her into danger.
4. An antagonist who opposes the Revenant is filled with a conviction as strong as hers. Can her faith overcome his?
5. The Revenant accidentally breaks one of the tenets of her faith. Her powers may weaken if she doesn't atone.
6. The Revenant must explain to a loved one why her Drive is righteous.

AMBITION

1. The next step in the Revenant's Drive is time sensitive. The Revenant must force herself to wait until the time is right.
2. The Revenant must choose between two equally difficult paths to her Drive.
3. A loved one disagrees with the Revenant's goal and tries to convince her to stop.

4. The Revenant focuses on her drive blindly. She is surprised by another obstacle.
5. The Revenant must give up a set of accomplishments to pursue her Drive.
6. The Revenant can take credit for someone else's accomplishment.

JEALOUSY

1. The object of the Revenant's desire is threatened with destruction.
2. The Revenant thinks she has attained her goal only to discover that the object was a fake.
3. The owner of the object becomes aware of the Revenant and begins to act against her.
4. The object is fragile and cannot be easily moved, or someone has rigged a system to destroy it if it is taken.
5. The object of the Revenant's jealousy belongs to (or is) a person who endangers it (or himself).
6. The Revenant must give up something she loves to pursue her Drive.

POSSESSIVENESS

1. Something the Revenant treasured in life has been stolen or sold to someone who is abusing it.
2. A loved one has (or is) the Revenant's treasure, but he refuses to believe she is really back from the dead.
3. The Revenant's treasure has been moved or otherwise hidden.
4. The treasure has been destroyed. The Revenant must now get revenge on whoever is responsible.
5. The Revenant must give up something else she treasures.
6. The Revenant stole the treasure. Its rightful owner wants it back.

DRIVES

GET REVENGE

1. Someone powerful is protecting the target(s) of the Revenant's revenge.
2. The targets themselves seem to feel remorse for what they did and want to atone.
3. The Revenant finds the ones she believes are responsible only to discover someone else was behind it all along.
4. The targets are using human shields.
5. The targets have overwhelming force.
6. The Revenant must hurt others to get her revenge.

SAVE SOMEONE

1. The target is in debt to or under the control of someone powerful who doesn't want to see him saved.
2. The target is addicted to a drug and begins suffering withdrawal.
3. The target is injured.
4. The target is scared and runs.

5. The Revenant faced the same troubles as the target and is overwhelmed by her own memories.
6. The target may not deserve to be saved.

COMPLETE A TASK

1. The work the Revenant did in life has been partially undone. She must take time to rebuild her efforts.
2. The Revenant must collect the resources she needs for her task.
3. The task is dangerous to the Revenant or others.
4. Someone else finished the Revenant's work but did it badly.
5. Someone else is taking credit for the Revenant's unfinished work.
6. The Revenant cannot remember how to finish her work.

ATONE

1. The Revenant must find the person she wronged, but they have disappeared.
2. The Revenant wrongs someone else in pursuit of her drive.
3. Someone powerful benefitted from the Revenant's original crime and doesn't want to see it undone.
4. Atoning means admitting her crimes, which will bring shame or reprisals on the Revenant's family.
5. The person she wronged forgives her, but someone else seeks revenge of the Revenant.
6. The target is in danger and may die before forgiving the Revenant.

PREVENT

1. The catastrophe is caused by someone powerful who will act against the Revenant.
2. The catastrophe is a natural disaster. The Revenant must convince people to get to safety.
3. The true nature of the catastrophe is hidden by a lesser danger.
4. If the Revenant acts too quickly, the person responsible for the catastrophe can just pick a different target.
5. The Revenant may have to sacrifice a few to save many.
6. The Revenant finds evidence of more than one impending disaster.

IMPROVE

1. Powerful forces profit from ruining these people's lives.
2. The people are too proud to accept help.
3. The people mistake the Revenant for those responsible for their condition.
4. The problem seemingly cannot be solved, but can be shifted elsewhere.
5. Improving conditions means going against the Revenant's Passion.
6. The Revenant's presence draws forces that make life harder for the people.

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