



Who Was  
Sal?

## Before the Game:

### **Pick a Setting**

Draw one card from the deck of the set of possible timelines and contexts. If everyone agrees to play this setting, proceed. Otherwise, draw again – but only up to two additional times. If the first two settings are discarded, the third card must be played. Once this is drawn, edit the setting as you desire – a Victorian era setting could focus on traditional aristocracy or a more technological “steampunk”, while a futuristic setting could have aliens and faster-than-light travel or play out in a desolate starscape.

### **Define the Climax**

Once a timeline is set, describe the climax of Sal’s life. This is the event that the game will build to, so it should have enough space to work with – you don’t want a story that is too short. Each card played will tell a step on the journey to this climax, so make sure you leave rooms for yourselves to explore Sal’s life. In a dawn of humanity setting, maybe Sal leads a nomadic tribe to the lush land it will eventually settle down in. A sword and sorcery setting might see Sal become the Evil Emperor – whether Sal is the hero or the villain is dependent not only on this choice but also the story that will ensue!

Once this is set, determine the number of rounds to play. This will provide a pacing scheme for the game – a standard game could have six scenes (so every player is the turn player twice), whereas a shorter game might have only three scenes. After the length is established, determine the turn player and begin.

## During the Game:

### **Draw a Conflict**

The turn player plays Sal and draws a card from the deck of conflicts. This card should be placed between the other two players such that one word or phrase on each card faces one of the players – these are the “poles” of the conflict. The turn player then calls a scene dealing with the conflict established by these two poles. The turn player must elaborate on the action and present a decision. This decision will be answered over the course of the scene.

An example explanation is such (following the conflict of caution vs. recklessness):

“Sal has a stable job in his hometown, but is offered a more lucrative position further away. Should Sal leave his family and hometown in pursuit of this job or maintain his current position?”

Each scene is played in chronological order, so a scene that is called must follow all previous scenes. Information from prior scenes can influence the setting of the current scene or inform decisions made in that scene.

## **Describe Supporting Characters**

The other two players pick two characters in the scene. Selection proceeds in a clockwise manner from Sal, and each player must provide a one sentence description of their character and how he or she relates to the scene. This character's motivation in the scene should be to influence Sal in the direction indicated by the pole facing that player – in the previous example of the conflict between caution and recklessness, one player plays a character urging Sal to stay at home (caution) while the other encourages Sal to leave and pursue his job (recklessness).

## **Play the Scene**

The scene begins with Sal's opening line of dialogue and ends when Sal makes a choice on the decision. Any action that occurs to a character is resolved by the player who plays that character – if Sal wants to punch Player A's character, Player A determines if the punch hits and what effect it has on Player A. During the scene, non-Sal players can spend a token to have an external event occur. For example, a player could say (again in the previous example) that Sal's friend just accepted a job in the same location, or that Sal's family fell sick and Sal needs to stay home. Sal cannot spend any tokens, but has ultimate authority on which decision is made.

## **Resolve the Scene**

After Sal has made a decision, the scene ends. The player whose pole aligned with Sal's action earns two tokens, which can in turn be spent in later scenes. The turn then passes to the player on the turn player's left. Play continues until the final round, in which the climax must be played. After this round, move to the summary step.

## **After the Game**

### **Summarize**

After the climax is played, the journey of Sal's life has been determined! Each player, beginning with the player who went first, now gives a recount of Sal began and how Sal ended – though everyone saw the same scenes, these recounts will likely differ slightly in their tone and focus. Once these are given, the game is over.

## Appendix A: Quickstart Guide

1. Set-up
  - a. Pick a Setting
  - b. Define the Climax
  - c. Determine the first player and begin regular play
2. Regular Play
  - a. Draw a Conflict
  - b. Describe Supporting Characters
  - c. Play the Scene
  - d. Resolve the Scene
  - e. Repeat (if necessary)
3. Summarize

## Appendix B: Sample Settings

The following are the sample settings from the deck. Players are invited to use their own as well – Sal can be adapted to any setting provided everyone is on board. These settings should be described, developed, and agreed upon by all players – one table’s Victorian Era could focus on a more Steampunk fantasy while another might orient itself around traditional aristocratic politics.

1. Revolution!
2. The Inquisition
3. Victorian Era
4. Galactic Consortium of Man
5. Colonial Times
6. Surveillance Police State
7. Contemporary Earth
8. Cold War
9. The Age of Exploration
10. The Warring Tribes

## Appendix C: Sample Climaxes

The following are sample climaxes. Again, providing your own can make a game more personal for all involved, but these can be considered as a starting point.

1. Sal ascends to the throne of Emperor.
2. Sal leaves his hometown disgraced.

3. Sal commits a murder most foul.
4. Sal prevents international conflict.
5. Sal discovers the next energy source.
6. Sal eradicates the last traces of magic from the world.
7. Sal brings humanity to its knees.
8. Sal sets off to explore the West.
9. Sal is the first to break global peace.
10. Sal brings his nomadic people to lush foothills and establishes civilization.