

Romance in Solo RPGs

This article, prompted by a question in Reddit, suggests how I might implement a game mechanism for Romance inside a Solo RPG game.

As the author of the Augmented Imagination Solo Framework, <http://aigm.igm4u.com/aigm.html> I'll base the examples around that framework, but it should be generic enough to fit into other types of game or solo frameworks without too much effort.

I'm also going to assume the RPG Game Mechanics are D&D5E as that is commonly understood and most Solo Players should be able to convert the mechanics to other systems from that.

In Augmented Imagination, for every Scene, you get to state what your Chosen Scene Focus is from the list... COMBAT, ENVIRONMENT, KNOWLEDGE or SOCIAL.

Then you roll a d6 to see what type of Scene you actually get. If you roll a 1 or 2, you get your Chosen Focus and you MAY CHOOSE the Scene Details. Otherwise, you roll to determine the Scene Details.

One of the 10 options under the SOCIAL heading is "Romance". So, if you want a lot of Romance Scenes in your game, you can keep choosing SOCIAL as the Scene Focus and about a third of the time, you can choose a ROMANCE scene.

Augmented Imagination suggests that you try to come up with at least one Skill Check in every Scene using the mechanics of your RPG, although it's fine to play out much more to resolve the Scene (for example in a COMBAT Scene, you might play out an entire combat of multiple rounds).

To bring some game mechanics to bear on the chance to Start and Continue a Romance, here are a few things to consider...

I'm Assuming that Normal Skill Checks in D&D5E typically require DC12.

I think starting a romantic relationship, and getting it into a stable long-term one, can be treated as a series of Skill Checks, aiming to get a number of successes (let's say 3) before getting a number of failures (let's say 2).

There are some MAJOR things that might make it easier to fail (increasing the number of successes required).

There are also some MINOR things that might make the DC of the Checks higher or lower.

Please note that this isn't meant as a comment on any real-world relationships, it's just a way to introduce mechanical challenges into the RPG process.

Major Differences (number of Successes)

Differences in Social Class and/or Race (or even Nationality in settings where there is significant cultural variation) might affect the number of Successes Required, perhaps equating to a longer courtship to settle into a stable position.

Differences in Alignment also seem like they could be MAJOR hurdles add 1 Success required for every step of difference.

Minor Differences (DC of Skill Checks)

Differences in CHA (Personality/Confidence) & WIS (Empathy/Emotional Intelligence) Ability scores might affect Skill Checks and I'm going to suggest that each difference in the Ability Modifier (equivalent to every 2 points of the Ability itself) should add 1 to the DC of any Skill Checks. It doesn't matter if your Character has higher or lower scores, it's just the difference that counts.

Deception (Seduction)

If your character does not have a genuine romantic interest but wants to PRETEND that they do, I'd suggest that each time they get the opportunity to make a Skill Check to progress the relationship, they first make a Deception Check with all the penalties for CHA/WIS differences and if they succeed, then make the actual Skill Check with no penalties.

Emotional Hit Points

I'm going to suggest a new type of Hit Points for characters who are in love (ignore these for characters using Deception, but you could decide that it affects the target of your Deception instead)...

Your Emotional Hit Points begin at $5 + \text{Level} + \text{Wisdom Modifier} + \text{Charisma Modifier}$.

When you fail a Romantic Skill Check, you take damage to your Emo HP according to the severity of the Failure...

Fail = 1d4 damage

Fail by 5 or more = 2d4 damage

Fail with Nat1 = 3d4 damage

Once your Emo HP reach zero, damage taken reduces your normal HP Maximum.

While your Emo HP is at zero, you gain Disadvantage on all Saving Throws (except for Death Saves) and to all Charisma-based rolls due to the distraction and sorrow.

What will you risk for Love?

Ignore this if you are using Deception rather than true Romance (but you could decide that it affects the target of your Deception instead).

When making Skill Checks to advance your Romance, you can RISK taking an additional d4 of Emotional damage in order to get +2 to the Roll, or RISK taking an additional 2d4 of Emotional Damage in order to get +5 to the Roll.

What are the benefits of Romance?

Ignore this if you are using Deception rather than true Romance (but you could decide that it affects the target of your Deception instead).

Each time you get a success on a Skill Check to advance your Romance, you gain Inspiration.

You can hold up to 3 additional Inspiration as long as you don't have negative Emo HP.

Once your Romantic Relationship has reached a stable long-term position, the opportunity to GAIN Inspiration returns to normal, but you retain the ability to hold 3 Inspirations.

Romance Sub-plots

During a Romance, if you get a ROMANCE Scene, roll 1d10 and if the result is 1-6, follow the guidelines below. On a 7-10, use the Scene Details as normal instead.

1. An argument occurs between you and your Significant Other. This knocks the relationship back from Stable by one point if it was Stable, or counts as 1 Fail.
2. Jealousy flares up when the Significant Other believes you have shown interest in another. Each time you fail to resolve it, the relationship moves back by 1 point if it was Stable or this counts as 1 Fail.
3. You believe that your Significant Other is showing interest in another. You can ignore it, or investigate it, or try to fix it.
 - a. If you IGNORE, roll Ask the Bones at 50/50 whether the relationship is OK and if not you take 1d4 Emo HP and the relationship goes back by 1 point if it was Stable or this counts as 1 Fail.
 - b. If you INVESTIGATE, make an Investigation Check (you can use the RISK mechanic if you want to). If you succeed, Ask the Bones at Unlikely

whether the relationship is OK and if not you take 1d4 Emo HP and the relationship goes back by 1 point if it was Stable or this counts as 1 Fail.

- c. If you TRY TO FIX IT, make a Persuasion Check (you can use the RISK mechanic if you want to). If you succeed the relationship remains at its current state but otherwise you take 2d4 Emo HP and the relationship goes back by 1 point if it was Stable or this counts as 1 Fail.
- 4. Your Significant Other intends to put themselves in danger for some reason.
- 5. Your Significant Other wants to stop you putting yourself in danger.
- 6. Your Significant Other is placed in danger by some action (or some enemy) of yours.