

## Edgar

I've always been a quiet boy. In my early childhood that meant being lonely too, you don't make many friends when you never talk to other people and both of my parents worked full-time. I learnt to be cautious. No-one was ever there to pick me up if I were to fall. Over time the loneliness started bothering me more and more, but I didn't know where to start in order to make friends. In a sense I didn't even know that that's what I needed. All I could feel was this cold emptiness. My life was empty and stale.

So at barely the age of seven, I developed a vice. I would fetch the big ladder from the garage and lean it up against the house. This was no small feat, the ladder was huge, it felt like it could scale anything. I would then get all the sweets I could find and climb onto the roof. There I would have my picnic at the edge of the world. I would feel slightly less empty, and slightly more alive. It got to a point where I was having that picnic every day. By eight I was quite overweight, as if I needed anything else to alienate me. The kids at school now noticed me, but only to mock me. My parents became concerned. First they stopped buying sweets, so I ended up spending all of my pocket money on stock for my picnics. Then, they stopped giving me pocket money.

"You need to learn impulse control"

It got to a point where anything that could be taken for the picnic, whether it was mine or someone else's was fair game. I was caught stealing sweets a few times. Always the same questions:

"Don't you feel any shame? Surely you've had enough? Why do you take what isn't yours, what you don't need?"

I never had an answer. I did feel shame, but I couldn't put in words why I did what I was doing.

This cycle of shame and rejection may have continued forever, if it had not been for Sophie. Somehow, where everyone else failed to understand, she saw what was going on and had the courage to help me.

She approached me and asked if she could join in my picnics. I was taken aback. First, someone had come to me without the intention of through jibes or inciting shame, second they had asked to be a part of an activity that I thought only I know about.

I still remember that moment, that smile that she flashed before saying:

"I'll see you after school"

She joined me after school, between the two of us my meagre stores didn't go very far. It didn't matter though; I now had someone to share this experience with.

The sweets started to matter less and less, that hole was filled by the time we spent together, watching the neighbourhood from the rooftop, looking out for birds, counting cars.

One day she introduced me to some other kids:

Melissa was tough, she would protect me when other kids wanted to hurt me.

Jonathan was nice and outgoing. He could speak on my behalf, and help me be included in games with the other kids.

Andrew was patient; he helped me lose weight by going running with me every-day, even when I could barely make it to the end of the block.

Since then we've been inseparable.

I was on the camping trip with Melissa and Andrew, where Melissa accidentally killed her dog, Scruff.

I helped set up the magic show, where Andrew messed up his trick and Jonathan saved the day.

I was with Sophie when she was almost caught spying on Helen...

I don't think Sophie ever recovered from that. Sophie was the first of us to notice Helen, near the end of high-school. She became a bit obsessed actually, but the first we heard of it was when she approached me and Andrew to help her with something. She wanted to follow Helen home from school, just to find out more about her. Andy and I were a bit sceptical, it sounded like a bad idea, but it became apparent that she would go whether we went with her or not. We decided it was best that she had some people to help her, or at least testify for her if she got caught. We got to Helen's house. Sophie watched her through her bedroom window all through the evening. We weren't caught, but Sophie seemed a bit strange after the whole thing.

We told Jonathan and Melissa about Helen, and well... Jonathon did that Jonathon thing where he just went up to her and asked her over to study. She agreed.

Helen coming to study with us became a regular occurrence, right from high-school to university. We grew quite close, and I could see how Sophie could get caught in her pretty smile for ages. But more than that, as two quiet souls we shared a similarity in world view which made hours of conversation come easily.

Eventually I came to marry Helen, and we have a beautiful 3 year old daughter; Emily.

The rest of us went on to the same university; we qualified together and ended up in the same company, pushing paper. And when that company liquidated our branch we all met up in the same bar.

None of us could bear to face our families. It wasn't a good time for me, what with a child. We had some drinks to relax. We swapped stories, but nothing lifted our spirits. Eventually we needed to go home. I couldn't have driven in that state, but some-one volunteered to. We should have called a taxi.

**Stats:**

Sharp: +1

Cool: +2

Hot: -1

Hard: 0

Weird: +3

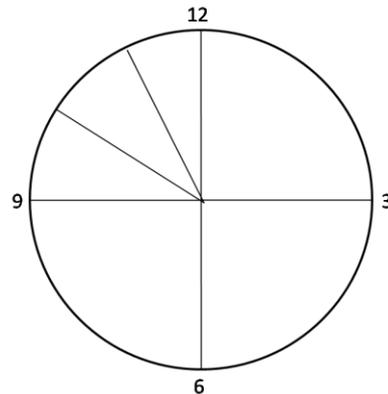
**Hx**

Sophie: +3

Andrew: +2

Jonathan: +1

Melissa: +2



**Special move: Special Place**

I've always been able to retreat into my own world. Lost in my own thoughts the world is empty and different. No one notices me as I pass through it. My imagination has the final say, and the longer I dissociate the scarier my Special Place becomes.

Roll +weird:

On a miss, your special place rejects you, take 1 harm.

On a 7-9 you get in, but the GM gives you a hard choice

On a 10+ you get in.

## Sophie

I suppose you could call me a sensitive person. I love looking at things, but I mean, properly looking at them. Most people don't; then they get surprised when you point out something that they never made the effort to notice. This extends to people, I consider myself to be a great judge of human character, even going back to when I was quite young.

I must have been about seven or eight when I decided to follow the fat kid home from school one day. I saw him partaking of some bizarre ritual where he would climb up onto his roof and eat sweets. He looked so sad and lonely... So the next day I asked if I could join him.

That's how I met Edgar, who went on to become one of my best friends. I suppose that's pretty much how I meet everyone. Some people think it's creepy (I suppose it is kind of), but I really believe in finding out as much as you can about a person before introducing yourself to them. Jonathon, Andrew and Melissa also passed my initial scrutiny before I introduced myself. Jonathon was really friendly, Andrew was really earnest and Melissa... she acted tough, but had the kindest heart. We've all been friends ever since. The system works.

Well, it does for friends... it's looked down upon a bit by polite society when the same approach is taken with romantic interests.

Not that it stopped me in high school, when I noticed Helen. She was so beautiful, her auburn hair framing her perfect face and porcelain skin. Her grace was astonishing; everything she did was done elegantly and beautifully. I could watch her for hours, taking notes or talking or eating. Anything.

I wanted to find out more about her, but I found that she was shy to the point of almost being secretive. This incentivised me more, each tiny thing I learnt about her became infinitely more valuable to me than the life-story of one of my peers. Eventually, what I could learn at school was not enough. I needed to find out more, but for that I had to follow her out of school.

Now it's one thing to follow a person about in crowded passages that you have every right to be in, it's something else entirely to gawk at them for their entire walk home. I needed some plausible deniability. I knew Andrew and Edgar wouldn't interfere, so I asked them to come along with me.

The plan worked, we weren't noticed and I found a good place to look into her room from. I got to see her do all manner of new things...

One of which was undressing. Up until that point I wanted to believe that my intentions were purely centred on the pursuit of beauty. This delusion was crushed the moment I saw

that pale flesh. The unbidden thoughts that followed had nothing to do with placing that figure on a pedestal and quite a lot to do with some other things.

I continued staring into that window much longer. But I wasn't really looking anymore.

I left feeling dirty, like some creature had crawled inside my skin. People's advice dithered between calling me an abomination, and saying that what I felt was natural.

The whole situation became even more awkward when Jonathon decided it would be a great idea to invite Helen over to study with us. I spent most of those hours awkwardly trying to avoid staring at her (often failing), but as time passed things became more relaxed.

I still found her as beautiful, but I could appreciate it without leering. When those walls broke, we got on spectacularly well.

We're now married, and we have a beautiful three year old girl, Emily.

I'm still as close as ever to Jonathon, Andrew, Melissa and Edgar. We ended up going to the same university, and eventually all working for the same company.

Until the economy turned bad and the company had to retrench us. It's a raw deal, and it weighs hard on everyone. None of us knew how we could face our families with the news. We went to a bar and tried to find the courage, but we couldn't even face each other with it. In the end we decided to go home, I decided that I wasn't alright to drive, but someone said that they were...

Stats:

Sharp: +3

Cool: +0

Hot: +1

Hard: -1

Weird: +2

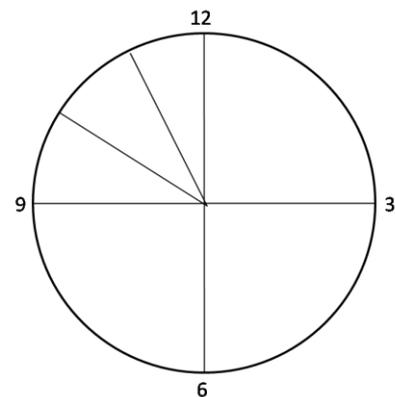
Hx

Edgar: +3

Andrew: +3

Jonathan: +3

Melissa: +3



Special move: The Way Things Are

I've always been able to find out a bit more about what's going on, by looking a little harder. Looking through the spaces often reveals a whole other world.

Roll +Sharp, on a7-9 you gain a special insight into the current situation. On a 10+ you get a very clear impression of the underlying forces at play.

## Melissa

When I was young, I was a bit bigger and stronger than the other children. It's normal for a very little girl. The other kids were actually a bit scared of me, which was kind of unfair. They'd been told their whole lives to look out for the big stupid bully, that they just assumed that by virtue of being bigger I was a bully.

I didn't really have the tools to deal with the distrust, it was unfair and it made me angry, but there was no way for me to vent that anger. So I just bottled it up. One day, a little girl called Sophie came up to me out of no-where.

"You're not really a bully are you?"

"Of course not, have I ever hurt anyone?"

The little girl smiled and asked to play. We would spend every other break together, until she eventually introduced me to her other friends: Jonathon, Andrew and Edgar. Jonathon was really funny and entertaining, but he would sometimes upset people accidentally. I suspect that if the other kids weren't afraid of me he would have gotten into a lot more trouble with the other kids. Andrew was a very serious boy, when he would go about doing something, he would do it right. I really admired his perseverance and his level head. Edgar, I met last. I felt sorry for him; most other kids actively disliked him for no real fault of his own. He was a bit spacey for me to really get on with, but he was important to Sophie, so I wanted to protect him.

As I grew up, the gap in strength between me and my peers didn't really disappear as expected. Jonathon would always joke that I was more of a man than he was. I'm still not sure how I feel about that, but in some sense it was true. I was just always as strong as or stronger than most of the guys my age. I grew confident in my abilities, and took on tasks that highlighted them.

One summer, when I was about ten, we went on a camping trip. The whole gang came along and we even brought Scruff. Scruff was the most bright-eyed and friendly dog you ever would meet. He was a Jack Russell, potentially with a little bit of something else in there too. He would follow me everywhere, meeting each action with a bark or pant of approval. I always saw Scruff as part of the gang too, though the others were less attached to him.

Anyway, one day Dad and a business friend he'd brought along decided that they were going to go boating in the nearby river. I was really keen to come along, half of the selling point of this camping location was the boating. Dad laughed me off though:

"It's just not the kind of thing I'd feel safe letting my little girl do."

I was so angry. I wasn't exactly little, I was strong and I could swim. There was no reason the boat would be dangerous for me. Was it because I was a girl? That's such a stupid idea, it's

not like I was some wilting flower that needed to be kept in a dragon guarded castle lest a rabbit deigned to sneeze on me.

When Dad left, I wanted to prove a point. I wanted to show him what his “little girl” could do. The most dramatic thing I could think of was to chop up some wood and make a giant bon-fire. So I picked up the axe and with Scruff in toe, headed towards a nearby grove of trees. Sophie could tell that I was upset, and sent Andrew and Edgar to help calm me down. When I got to the grove, I was greeted by a frustrating scene. There were no branches on the ground, and all of the low branches had already been chopped off. But I would be damned if I was going to leave this be. I picked a tree with plenty of room and started chopping. Scruff growled and barked at the tree, as if it was some kind of needled assailant that needed seeing off. Andrew and Edgar arrived and immediately started trying to talk me down. I ignored them. Soon enough, I’d hacked a deep gash in the side of the tree, and it started creaking downwards from its own weight. Only it wasn’t falling away from the gash like in children’s cartoons, it was falling towards me. I froze in place, and would have been seriously hurt if Andrew hadn’t pulled me to safety. Scruff was not so lucky.

I promised myself that I would never raise my hand in anger, except to protect those who I loved. I can’t ever forgive myself for what happened.

As we grew up, being big and strong became less and less important. The relative maturity of high-school meant that I felt less valuable to my friends. I’d always seen myself as their protector, but they hardly seemed to need it. They didn’t mind, they still kept me around, but I felt pretty purposeless.

This was until we met Helen. Well, I say we, but really I was the last person to meet her. Sophie, Edgar and Andrew had been stalking her for a while. Jonathon was the first person to officially “meet” her when he invited her over to study. At first I wasn’t sure what the others saw in her, she seemed too much like the princess I imagined my dad saw me as when I was small.

But the thing is, that metaphor offended me because I wasn’t the princess, I was the dragon. The more time we spent with her, the more I realised that I needed a princess to fill my empty tower.

I would use every excuse to prove that I was useful to her. I would insist on walking with her to places, rather than her going alone. If she went clubbing I would insist that I would come along. I would hold her shopping for her, or help her move furniture. Sometimes I wondered if she was taking advantage of me, but I didn’t really mind even if she was. We steadily became co-dependent and when romance eventually blossomed, it only seemed natural.

We’re married now, and have a beautiful three-year old girl named Emily.

I always stayed friends with the rest of the gang. We all ended up going to the same university and working in the same company. We always stuck together, even now.

Our whole division was liquidated, leaving us out of jobs. None of us knew what to do. We were shell shocked. We met up at a bar to gather our senses. Instead we gathered a bar tab. By the end of the evening I was too drunk to drive, but someone else volunteered to drive us all home...

**Stats:**

Sharp: -1

Cool: +2

Hot: +0

Hard: +3

Weird: +1

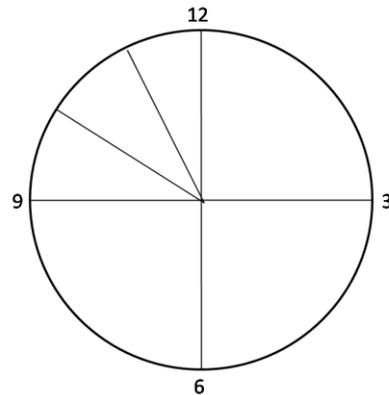
**Hx**

Sophie: +3

Andrew: +3

Jonathan: +2

Edgar: +1



**Special move: The Dragon**

If a friend of mine is in danger, I will stop at nothing to help them.

In a charged situation, where a person you feel protective over is in direct danger, you take -1 harm, inflict +1 harm and get -1 to the suffer harm move.

## Andrew

If I work hard enough at something, I can achieve anything. Dad has always told me that hard work pays off. And it's pretty much been my life's motto. It's not very useful for making friends though...

I would have been pretty lonely if it wasn't for Sophie, she approached me when I was very small and offered to be friends. I didn't have any at the time, so it meant a lot for me. She then proceeded to introduce me to her other friends, Jonathon, Melissa and Edgar. Jonathon, Melissa and Sophie have always been very dazzling personalities. Sophie is insightful to the point of being uncanny, most guys would be envious of how strong Melissa is and Jonathon could charm his way out of a paper bag. Edgar was something else, I could never find any specific talent of his, but I probably got on so well with him because of it. He was less intimidating.

I always made an effort to be there for everyone when they needed me. Years of honing my focus on mundane tasks had made me more level headed than most in a crisis situation. Soon, people were dragging me along to every outing with a chance of failure, just in case.

I was always the side-kick though, never the hero. All the others would have their pet projects and their chance to shine. I would be the one putting in the hard hours, or coming through in the crisis. I wanted a chance to be the star of the show.

One afternoon, Jonathon and I were watching a magic show, when the idea struck me. I knew that a magician's tricks were only quick hand movements that he had practiced well. I decided that if I wanted to be the star; that was the kind of "talent" I could fake. I pitched the idea at Jonathon, and he was excited about it too. I got a book of magic tricks and started practicing. When I felt I was ready, the whole gang got together and we made a little stage, and magician's coats and hats. Jonathon gathered kids from all over the neighbourhood to see the show. He introduced me; I bowed and entered the "spotlight".

I choked. My hands were shaking with the pressure so much, that I couldn't pull off even a single trick. Jonathon saved face for the gang by pretending that the whole thing was actually part of a comedy act which he took over.

The second I went for that thing that wasn't mine. I lost what I already had. I swore that I would always take what was supposed to be mine, the things that I had earned. It was for other people to win things by luck.

I like to think that this principle even applies to my relationship with Helen. I first saw her when Sophie started stalking her, but she seemed like the kind of girl I wasn't meant to end up with so I didn't pay her much mind.

Then, Jonathon arranged for us to study with her as a group. I didn't think anything in particular would come of that. Everyone else seemed quite pre-occupied with fawning after her, it was a fools game to compete. So instead I just did what we actually met to do. I studied, and I helped. I worked diligently and was always prepared, always able to help. I ended up spending more and more time with Helen, and I was soon helping her with more than just home-work problems.

I worked hard towards making her happier and built a good rapport with her. I didn't even realize how close we were until one day she just grabbed me and kissed me.

We're married now, and we have a beautiful 3-year old daughter, Emily.

I'm still close with the rest of the gang, we ended up going to the same college and even worked for the same company. Which is why we're in the same bar.

The company was sinking, so it through out some extra weight, which in this case was our whole branch. Now we need to figure out how to keep our families afloat on our own. It seems too much, these things don't tend to come to me quickly. I was hoping to get some ideas from the others, but all I got was drunk. By the end of the evening I wasn't sober enough to drive. Jonathon claimed he was though. I wasn't too sure, but I took his word for it.

Stats:

Sharp: +0

Cool: +3

Hot: +1

Hard: +2

Weird: -1

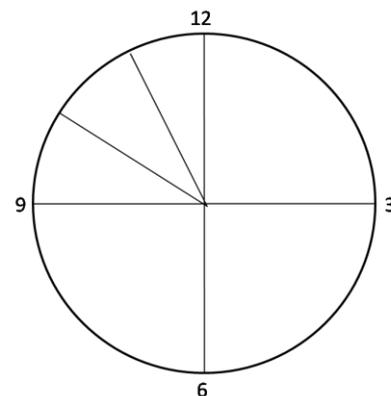
Hx

Sophie: +3

Edgar: +3

Jonathan: +1

Melissa: +2



Special move: Sleight of Hand

I still remember some of those magic tricks.

Roll +Cool, on 10+, the trick goes as planned, on 7-9 the trick works, but part of it is revealed. On a miss, the whole thing fails obviously and spectacularly.

## Jonathon

It's amazing how far a quick smile and a good joke can take you. People tend to like me. I've hardly met a person who hasn't upon first meeting me. It's all to do with relaxing them, making them feel like they aren't being threatened.

The problem is, that once people become invested one way or another, things get a bit more complicated. This is the part I'm not so good at. I sometimes cross the line with people who I know a little better. This is the point where people feel upset, betrayed, boo-hoo, etc. I don't want to hurt them, but you need to be able to take a joke. You need to acknowledge that I may have to pretend to be friends with your bitter enemy from time to time.

There aren't many people who can deal with all of that, the flip-flop to the wheeler-dealing. So I'm glad that they found me. A girl I'd barely noticed approached me one day and said:

"Would you like to be friends?"

I started with my standard smile, I reached into my bag for a sweet to give her (people trust you more if you give them food). I was already rummaging through my mental inventory of people, so as to find a person to joke about that wouldn't offend her.

"Stop that, I want to be friends with you, not your circus act."

She'd caught me. She had seen through the whole charade. And once that was gone, I felt naked. I think that's how I ended up being such good friends with the gang. Those moments when I was still on the back foot allowed me to let them in.

I never really appreciated how important that genuine friendship was. I would always return to them, as my bay of safety, but my goal was to have *everyone* like me. It was something I worked at steadily for the entirety of my school career. By the end of high-school, people would hi-5 me in the passages. They would cheer my name as I pulled one crazy, attention grabbing stunt after another. All of this would culminate in me being voted head boy by the student body.

The results of that vote came in. I didn't even get a spot for prefect. I was sure the teachers had rigged the election. They denied any involvement. So I snuck into the faculty office and looked through the ballots. Only the gang voted for me. A teacher found me.

"I told you we didn't lie. Maybe these people don't want to be led by a clown."

I'd let my pride grow to them point where I had forgotten who really cared about me. I looked back at them, and their problems. I wanted to help in a way only I could. Sophie was fawning over some girl called Irene. So, I asked about, found out who she was and invited her to study with us.

The other's were shocked at the abruptness, but If I hadn't done anything they wouldn't have either. If there's anything the gang needs from me, it's the occasional kick into action.

To be honest, the whole studying together thing was pretty dry, but after the tests we would go out as a group and enjoy ourselves.

Eventually this became me taking Helen out on dates when we had the time.

Somehow that in turn evolved into a real relationship.

Now Helen and I are happily married and we have a beautiful 3 year old daughter, Emily.

The gang? We are still as thick as thieves. We stuck together through university and all ended up working in the same place. We were even fired all at once.

That came as a bit of a shock. I needed to dull that a bit before pulling the pieces back together again, so I suggested we go to the bar, and had no protest raised against the prospect. We had quite a bit to drink, but it got late. Helen would have been pissed with me if I was out much later. I picked up the keys and offered everyone a lift back home.

### Stats:

Sharp: 0

Cool: +1

Hot: +3

Hard: -1

Weird: +2

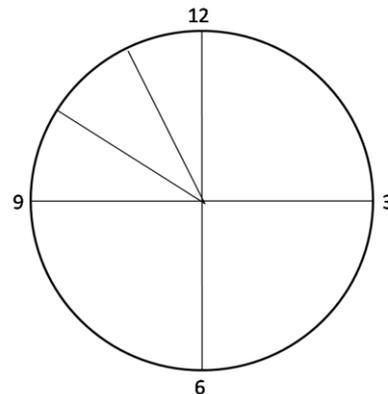
### Hx

Sophie: +1

Andrew: +1

Edgar: +1

Melissa: +1



### Special move: Winning Smile

In a tense social situation, all I need to do is crack a smile and tell a joke and everyone will relax a bit.

Roll +Hot, on 10+, then everyone calms down. On a 7-9, everyone except one person (chosen by the GM) calms down. On a miss you actively offend people.