

THE INCREDIBLE ROBERT REDSHIRT RPG SHOW



This document is under a Creative Commons license:
Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives 4.0

You are free to:



Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

Full license: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode

Under the following terms:



You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.



You may not use the material for commercial purposes.



If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

 ludus-leonis.com   @ludusleonis

IMPRINT

© Markus Leupold-Löwenthal—Vienna, Austria 2020

Version: v1.2.1

Idea, text and layout: Markus Leupold-Löwenthal

Editing: Simon 'readyandnot' Lehrner

Illustrations: Bettina Ott—ottbettina.com



Financed via Startnext.

The Incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show was created using free software:

Atom, FontForge, GIMP, Inkscape and \LaTeX .

Fonts used: *Londrina*, *PT Sans* and *NIPAJIN Dingbats*

Special Thanks

Markus Widmer, Arne Babenhauserheide, Roland Bahr and Gregor Theado

My thanks go to: my loyal testers Ferdinand Dietrich, Christoph Flandorfer, Christian Janisch and Gerald Janousek, the Gratisrollenspieltag (gratisrollenspieltag.de), startnext.de (www.startnext.de) as well as all backers: Moritz Mehlem, Florian Findeiss, Patric Götz, Mike Bollin, Markus Widmer, Stefan Ohrmann, Matthias Nagy, Thomas Gaub, Hubert Pfeffer, Jonas Richter, Sylvia Schlüter, Sophia Brandt, Mathias Exner, Jörg Sterner, Arne Eilermann, Jürgen Mang, Stefan Peschl, Phillippe Scholten, Jörn Heimeshoff, Arne Babenhauserheide, Michael Jaegers, Stephan Zimmermann, Roland Bahr, Ronald Novicky, Heinz Fruehwirth, Emanuel Kessler, Christoph Flandorfer, Gregor Theado, Jessica Kampe, Gloria Manderfeld and Michael Gebhard

The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this production are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased) and places is intended or should be inferred. No redshirts were harmed in the making of this role-playing game.

INTRODUCTION

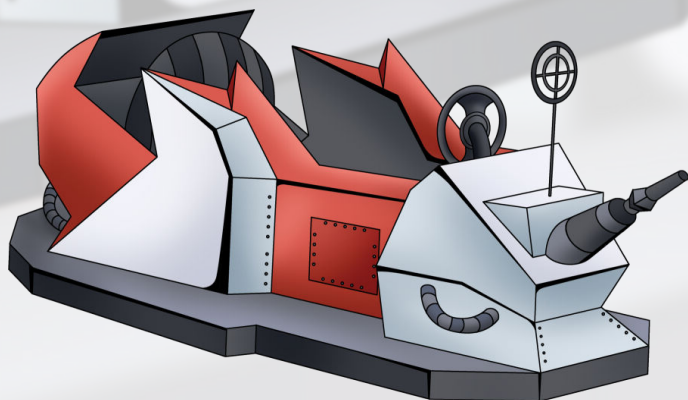
When Robert Redshirt got a job as an unpaid extra at the struggling broadcaster See-TV, all he had to do was to scream while being squashed by a foam boulder. Nobody thought that Robert would become a star overnight. Surprisingly, his naive, amateurish death was acclaimed by the press and viewers alike. See-TV was flooded with fan mail requesting Robert's comeback on screen. Executive management decided to give in and agreed to invest all remaining funds into a new show: *The Incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show*.

The remaining employees that haven't already left See-TV despite their minimal wages and complete lack of career options are now being thrown together: you! As director, set designer, gaffer or stuntman you are the last hope of the TV station. Your job: put Robert front and center in a

setting of your choice and give the viewers what they want—Robert Redshirt in danger at every step.

However, the show has to be produced on a tight budget, as See-TV lacks funding. So scenes can only be shot once. There is no money for digital effects or post-production. Everything on screen can only be filmed live—“*authentically*” as the board of directors never fails to point out. So Robert will be unknowingly exposed to all the real, dangerous situations you create for him. At the same time you have to find a way to rescue the dynamic individual from these perils, as an injured or dead Robert would mean the end of the show—and also the end of See-TV.

On the following pages you will find four show formats you can use to expose Robert to danger, followed by the rules on how to play this game. And now: Action!



NEW YORK FIRE FIGHTERS

On this show, also called N.Y.F.F. by its fans, Robert Redshirt joins the fire department of a large metropolis. Accompanied by the See-TV crew, he not only has to rush into burning buildings, but is also called when people's lives are at stake in inaccessible locations after accidents or natural disasters. In addition, anti-terrorism laws require the fire brigade to dispose of highly suspicious-looking objects in public places from time to time.

Since Robert joined the firefighters, there has been a dramatic rise in cinematic missions around the See-TV studio and in popular places like the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty for “*mysterious*” reasons.



ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Officer-in-charge: Shouts instructions and lets everyone know what to do next. Trait: Command+2

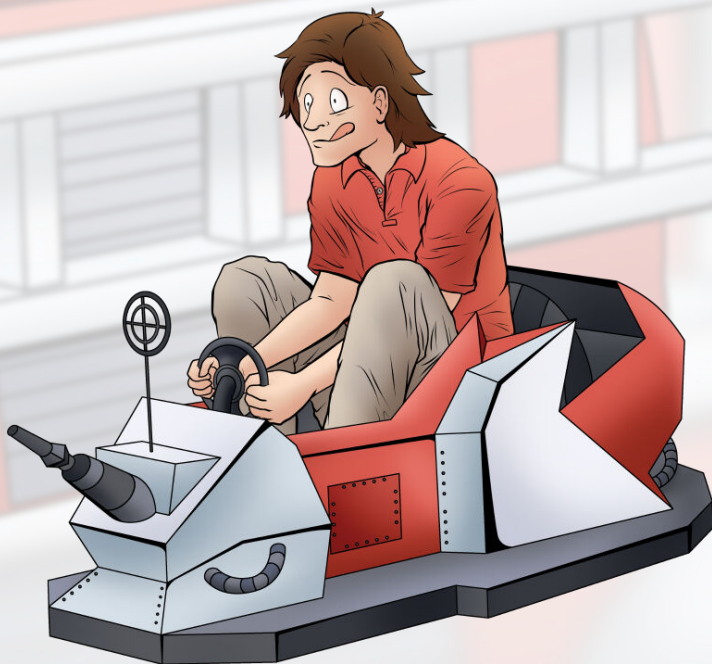
Emergency physician: Can't work miracles, but knows where it hurts the most. Trait: Medicine+2

Onlooker: Uniquely skilled at getting in the way of others with a passion. Trait: Hamper+2

TOKYO GLADIATOR

This crazy Japanese game show import has amazed its viewers for years. To win the show and get the prize—a mint-condition Space Invaders arcade cabinet—Robert Redshirt will have to master a series of hazards wearing a foam uniform. Crocodile-infested rivers, crushing boulders or fights with other combatants on small, elevated platforms—you name it!

Toyko Gladiator is moderated by legendary comedian Takahashi Akira, who explains all challenges to the audience in his signature over-the-top voice and even more over-the-top gestures.



ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Moderator: Hosts the show, announces challenges and gives “*good advice*”. Trait: Convince+2

Gladiator: A hostile combatant who fights undercover for the TV crew. Trait: Brawl+2

Torturer: Controls the nasty traps built into each scene’s set. Trait: Mechanics+2

STRANDED

In this reality show, a group of ordinary people find themselves abandoned on a remote volcano island. Robert Redshirt is one of them. Without any equipment they have to overcome their seemingly endless differences, build shelter and hunt or gather food to survive. To make things more interesting for the viewers, the TV crew releases deadly animals into the wild, enhances the environment with traps or artificial jungle ruins, and stirs up natives to attack the camp. Just make sure that all props fit the theme of the jungle: skyscrapers at the beach would upset the audience.

The cast of Stranded will have to survive on their own and may not interact with the crew. The show is filmed using hidden cameras.



ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Mole: This member of the crew pretends to be part of the survivors. Trait: Convince+2

Animal trainer: Knows how to control the beasts they unleashed—or so we hope. Trait: Animals+2

Native: Usually living in the jungle, this native cooperates with the TV crew. Trait: Survival+2

SPACESHIP ENDEAVOR

This retro-scifi show started Robert Redshirt's career. After 20 years new episodes are still in production. Spaceship Endeavor travels through the universe and discovers new planets featuring astonishing Earth-like civilizations. The ship's crew is supposed to drive strange computers mad with pointless riddles, beat new wrinkles into the forehead of weird aliens or to encounter slightly-too-real holograms that have a life of their own. While other actors do all these things, Robert stumbles from one accident to the next.

Hint: This show is better suited for more experienced players. It is not that easy to create “*authentically*” real dangers on this TV show's set.



ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Stuntman: Run. Jump. Fall. Repeat. Trait: Stunts+2

Director: Is in charge of announcing scenes and shouting instructions. Trait: Command+2

Door operator: Will open and close sliding doors while making “*hisssss*” sounds. Trait: Strong+2

Role-Playing?

The Incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show, or just *The Show*, is a pen'n'paper role-playing game. That's why there is the "RPG" in the title.

In a role-playing game you create your own fictional story. Two or more players will each take control of a **character** and decide what they do—in this case they are members of a TV-crew. One additional player, the **game master**, is in charge of the setting and background story—the TV station, the laws of nature and all other people, especially Robert Redshirt. All of this will happen while the players sit comfortably at a table. Nobody has to dress up or do some "real" acting. Confused? The actual play example (🔗 12) will show you how it works.

Other than this booklet you will also need: pencils, empty sheets of paper and dice. Each

player needs a four-, six-, ten- and twelve-sided die. In case you do not have enough of these, you can play using coins instead—see "No Dice?" (🔗 14). Finally, the game master will also need a watch or timer.

What is NIP'AJIN?

Every role-playing game needs rules so everyone knows who can narrate what when and to decide which actions are successful and which aren't. *The Show* uses NIP'AJIN for that. That's pronounced "nip-a-chin" and is the acronym for a German phrase that translates to "Nobody is perfect, but everybody can contribute."

NIP'AJIN has more rules than we need in this game, so we will use a shorter version called "NIP'AJIN Zero". The full game can be found at ludus-leonis.com/en

PRE-PRODUCTION

Before starting a game, the players will have to agree on a **Setting** and pick one of the show formats described earlier in this booklet (🔗 4). When this is settled, the players need to agree how long they want to play; the show can be either 25 or 45 minutes long. In case of disagreements the game master has the final say.

Now everyone except the game master **creates their character**. Each player picks one of the occupations mentioned below or in the setting you chose. No job can be picked more than once. Then each player takes an empty sheet of paper—their **character sheet**—and places it in front of them in landscape orientation. Draw a vertical line down the

OCCUPATIONS

Gaffer: Sets up lights and power at the right spot. Trait: Electrics+2

Set designer: Creates and manipulates sets. Trait: Craft+2

Costume designer: Sews useful or hindering clothing. Trait: Tailor+2

Make-up artist: Will enhance your appearance or turn you into a monster. Trait: Disguise+2

Special effects: Takes care of explosions, smoke and other effects. Trait: Pyrotechnics+2

Sound engineer: Records audio and produces sound effects on stage. Trait: Acoustics+2

Is your favorite occupation not on the list? Make up your own and give it an appropriate trait+2.

middle to separate it into two halves, then split the right half again with a horizontal line to get two smaller sections of roughly equal size. Write down the job in the left, larger area. If the players would also like to note down a name or a description of their character, they can do so there too. Each job comes with a trait, i.e. a label and a +2 value/modifier. Both are noted on the left-hand side of the sheet as well.

Now the players introduce their character to the others and also mention their trait. After a player has described their character, the player to their left gets to pick another

advantage+1 for that character. Now the player to the right has to come up with a disadvantage-1. Players can choose from the examples listed under “*Advantages and disadvantages*”, or invent their own.

Meanwhile the game master notes the initial audience rating of the show—that’s **10 percent**—on a sheet of paper everyone can see.

Finally each player puts their four dice in the right, upper space on their character sheet, turning them into **available dice** for that character. The crew is ready now. Lights, camera, action!

RULES

The game is driven mainly by the actions of the crew. Players state what their crew members will do to influence Robert. It’s the game masters job to respond to that and control Robert as well the TV studio. Whenever a player describes what their crew member does, this triggers a **task**, and their dice will decide if it succeeds. The game master never uses dice but interprets and describes how the numbers rolled by the players affect the game. See 12 for an example.

Before rolling dice, the game master has to decide how difficult a task is and will define its **target number** 🎯:

Difficulty	Description	🎯
very easy	child’s play	2
easy	usually succeeds without practice	3
average	50–50 chance without practice	4
difficult	requires regular practice	5
very difficult	requires years of experience	6

Now the acting player picks one of the character’s available dice and rolls it. If it shows a 1, the task is an **automatic failure**. Otherwise, the game master will apply the **modifier** of the acting crew member’s suitable advantages or disadvantages. If the final value is equal to or higher than the target number, the task succeeds. If not, it fails.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

- Agile/Clumsy:** You are (un-)skilled in jumping or climbing.
- Fast/Slow:** You can (not) run quickly from point A to point B.
- (Un)Communicative:** You are (un-)skilled in influencing / commanding others.
- Strong/Weak:** You are (not) physically powerful.
- Watchful/Sluggish:** You can (not) react quickly to danger.
- (In)Accurate:** You are (un-)skilled in throwing or hitting things.

Do you have another advantage or disadvantage in mind? Just pick your own!

Based upon that result the game master will now describe what happens.

After rolling a die it has been **exhausted** and is placed in the lower right space of the character sheet. For the time being no one may pick it any longer for any tasks. Only after *all dice of all players* have been exhausted they become available again and are put back into the upper space. So players without available dice have to wait until the other players have attempted more tasks.

Dice without any chance of reaching a set target number may not be used/exhausted. If players want their character to **repeat a**

task that another crew member failed at, the target number automatically increases by 1 for each attempt.

If multiple characters pool their expertise on a task, they can attempt **teamwork**. Their players simultaneously pick their dice and then agree on a leader. The leader rolls first and decides whether the result counts for the team. If not, the leader nominates a new leader from the players taking part in the teamwork who gets to roll next. Each new roll *replaces* the previous. If at any point a natural 1 shows up, the teamwork fails. Only dice actually rolled will become exhausted.

RUNNING THE SHOW

After the game master has read the introduction aloud (🔊 3) and the players have created their TV crew, each game will start with a commercial break (see below). That's when the players can plan the first scene(s) of their show. After the initial commercial break the game master will start a timer for the duration of the game you agreed upon earlier. The game now will run through certain **phases** until the time is up:

- 📺 danger phase
- 📺 rescue phase
- 📺 commercial break (optional)

These phases do not take equal amount of time and not every player has to be active in each of them.

The show has to be produced on a (very) low budget and there is only one take per scene. Therefore the players will have to improvise with whatever they have already established on the set during a danger or rescue phase. They can't do anything that requires more preparation than what they did during the commercial break. For example, they can't trigger traps they have not yet mentioned

before the danger or rescue phase or create new props. Also crew members can't change positions faster than real people could.

After a rescue phase the players can continue with the next danger phase if they have planned them during the commercial break. Should they need time to think ahead again or want to create new set pieces, they have to call for another commercial break.

Danger phase


During this phase the players try to send Robert Redshirt off into an incredibly dangerous situation. This is accomplished if:

- 📺 Robert himself, not just his character on the show, is in danger.
- 📺 Robert could be badly hurt or even die unless somebody acts immediately.
- 📺 the danger is real, not just a clever camera angle or a harmless special effect.

🗣️ An actor in an alien costume or a foam rock seem like dangers in a film, but not for Robert himself. When Robert is pushed over a cliff or made to run from a hungry lion, the danger is real.


While Robert is naive, he's not eager to die. The crew will have to trick him to walk into those dangerous situations. To do so, the players will attempt tasks to manipulate the set, trigger traps or distract Robert.

Every task has to add to the danger but it is not necessary that every player attempts to do something. When the game master decides that a dangerous situation is at its climax, the next phase will begin.

 Robert is in free fall. The lion attacks Robert, its maw wide open.

Rescue phase

Now the crew will have to find a way to rescue Robert from the danger. Naturally, time will be an issue now, as only seconds might remain to save him from certain death. Players will now attempt tasks to get Robert out of danger. But since the crew must not be seen in front of the camera, they will have to come up with clever ideas to act from behind the scenes.

 Robert, still in free fall, was given a suit with a hidden parachute and the tailor desperately tries to activate it via a remote control. A member of the crew tries to shoot the lion with a tranquilizer gun.

A single successful roll will rescue Robert. On a failure the crew can try to find other means to rescue poor Robert. It's up to the game master to decide what is still possible in this short time. If no options remain, Robert will be hurt badly and the game ends.


Commercial break

When players call for a commercial break, they get five minutes of real time to plan the next scene(s). This time is in addition to the 25 or 45 minutes of the show.

During the break the crew has enough time in the game world and enough budget to create new locations, sets, costumes and

props. In addition, Robert can recover from all minor wounds he might have got so far. Players brainstorm what they could do next while the game master will note down keywords of what they mention. The idea is that everything mentioned will be available on the set after the break.

No dice are rolled during the break. Players won't know if a preparation will be successful in advance. Only when Robert interacts with the preparations later on, the dice come into play.

 Even though the tailor has mentioned the hidden parachute during a commercial break, the player will not get to roll for it until it is activated.

In addition to the initial commercial break, the crew can call for one additional break during a 25-minute show and for two additional breaks during a 45-minute show.

Audience rating

Every successful task directly impacts the audience rating of the show: For every point a roll *succeeded* the target number, the game master increases the audience rating by one percent. Rolls that only hit the target or are ordinary failures do not change the rating. However, on an automatic failure—the die comes up with a 1—the audience rating will drop by as many percent as the die rolled has sides!

If the game ends prematurely by Robert getting hurt badly or dying, the audience rating is halved (round up).

End of game

The show ends when Robert is badly hurt, dies, the time is up or the audience rating reaches 100%. The audience rating gained (and in case of 100% the time needed to reach this) measures how successful the game session was. Players can try to top their score the next time.

EXAMPLE

Elon, Hana, Kim and Vanessa are going to play *The Incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show*. During Pre-Production (🔮 8) they agree to try the Stranded setting and will play a 25-minute game. Vanessa will be game master.

Elon wants to be a sound engineer, gets acoustics+2 from the job, accurate+1 from Kim and clumsy-1 from Hana, giggling already. Hana plays a set designer, gaining craft+2 from the job. Elon chooses strong+1 and Kim slow-1 for her. Kim has settled for the native—only available in this setting—and notes down survival+2, quick+1 from Hana and uncommunicative-1 from Elon.

In their initial 5-minute commercial break (🔮 11) Elon, Hana and Kim plan the first half of the show. Elon points out that his sound engineer has placed hidden speakers in knotholes and dead trees so he can play his sounds everywhere. He also suggests that the cast of Stranded just got dropped on the beach and are trying to build a shelter and gather food. Robert, of course, is assigned to go hunting. Hana agrees and suggests she could add a pit trap somewhere along the path. Kim comments that snakes coming out of small holes could make the trap more dangerous. Elon asks how they could rescue Robert from the trap later on and Hana suggests vines that are hanging above the pit—and they could be manipulated so that they rip when pulled. Elon thinks that's very cool but just as he points out that Robert won't be rescued by a damaged vine, the timer buzzes and the commercial break ends. Vanessa notes down what the three have mentioned so far: speakers, the pit, snakes, vines.

Vanessa resets the timer to 25 minutes and the show starts with the first danger phase (🔮 10). She introduces the show to her players: "Welcome to the incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show! This week: Stranded!

You will start with 10 percent audience rating. Our shipwrecked survivors just got washed up ashore on a tropical island. After they overcome their initial panic, they swarm out to make the most out of the new situation. Robert heads off into the jungle. What will the TV crew do now?"

Kim: "We have to navigate Robert to the pit trap. I'm a native and try to trick him to go there by appearing in the bushes, waving, and then hiding again."

Vanessa: "Well, roll for it. You can add your survival+2, but also uncommunicative-1 comes into play. Target number is four."

Kim picks his d6, rolls a two and gets a final result of $2+2-1=3$.

Vanessa smiles: "That's not a good start. Robert notices you, but is too scared to follow you. He turns and runs away in the wrong direction."

Elon: "I try to exploit Robert's fear and play sounds of dangerous animals, so that he hopefully turns around again and runs towards the trap."

Vanessa: "Well, roll your acoustics+2 for a target number of four."

Elon would like to keep his good dice for later and risks using the d4. He rolls a three for a final $3+2=5$.

Vanessa: "Great, you exceeded the target number by one point! Your rating raises by one percent. Robert, properly scared by the noises, is now about to run into the trap. Hana—please roll if your trap works as intended. This is difficult, so the target number is five."

Hana would really like for her trap to go off and picks her d12. She rolls 10, adds her craft+2 for a total of 12.

Vanessa: "Awesome! Not only did you get Robert to fall into your pit, but the rating rises by seven percent—you are now up to 18!"

Kim: "The snakes! I conjure them out of their holes!"

Vanessa: *"Training snakes is difficult. Target number five!"*

Kim rolls his d10, gets a three, adds his survival+2 and gets a total of five.

Vanessa: *"Barely! The snakes circle around and hiss at poor Robert, who mumbles 'Snakes—I hate snakes!' Robert is now in danger."* Vanessa announces that a rescue phase has started. (🎲 11).

Hana: *"That's why we have the vines, which just happen to hang into the pit..."*

Elon: *"Yes, but to rescue Robert, we have to use one that was not manipulated to rip!"*

Vanessa: *"There are enough regular vines here, too. Hana, your target number is three, but you can't use your craft for this."*

Hana picks her d6, rolls and gets a one: *"Uh-oh! An automatic failure!"*

Vanessa: *"Bad timing! The non-manipulated vine suddenly rips and Robert falls back into the pit. You lose six percent rating for the bad roll and are back to 12. How do you want to rescue Robert now?"*

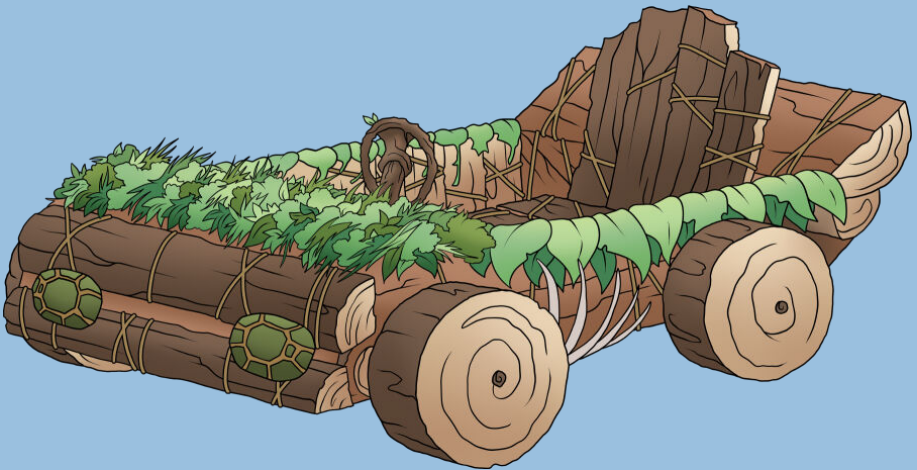
Kim has an idea: *"I improvise and pull a flute out of my pockets. I play a soothing tune to calm down the snakes."*

Vanessa: *"Risky, but let's try that. Target number six! And I don't think that your survival+2 will be of help here."*

Kim uses his d12 and rolls an eight: *"Hah! Success! And we'll also get 8-6=2 percent of our audience back."*

Vanessa: *"The snakes fall for your tune. While they are distracted, Robert can climb out of the pit. This concludes the rescue phase. You can lead Robert to new dangers now."*

If the players would have planned further ahead, they could continue to the next scene right away. But Elon, Hana, and Kim decide to call for their second commercial break to decide what happens next. Vanessa stops the timer after seven minutes. The crew now has five more minutes for brainstorming ideas before the timer will continue.



OPTIONAL RULES

Your own show-format

If you do not like the shows in this booklet, you can create your own. All you need to do is:

- ☒ define the general theme
- ☒ decide if it's a studio or reality show
- ☒ define appropriate occupations
- ☒ give it a fancy title

Tournaments

The limited duration and the resulting final audience score make *The incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show* well suited for tournament play in local gaming groups or at conventions. However, since the outcome of a session is strongly influenced by the mentality and luck of the players, Robert Redshirt tournaments

should be marked as tongue-in-cheek. The following additional rules apply:

- ☒ Play the 25-minute version.
- ☒ Each TV crew needs 4 members.
- ☒ Playing with dice is mandatory, no coins allowed.
- ☒ Only the occupations, advantages and disadvantages mentioned in this booklet are allowed.
- ☒ Only the settings mentioned in this booklet are allowed.
- ☒ The setting is randomly determined right before play and unknown in advance.

It is recommended to plan 1-hour slots for each tournament session. This gives you enough time to create the characters and explain the rules to new players.

NO DICE?

If you don't have enough dice, you can replace them with coins. You will still need a shared regular, six-sided die (d6).

Each player gets two smaller (e.g. 1 cent, dime) and two larger (e.g. 2 cents, quarter) coins. Instead of available dice, players put the four coins (one heads and one tails for each size) in the upper, left area of their character sheet. To roll for a task, players use the shared d6 and add +2 (large heads), +1 (small heads), -1 (small tails) or -2 (large tails), then exhaust the coin used. With each automatic failure the show always loses 6 percent of the audience.

Coins have slightly different probabilities than dice. Therefore all players have to use either dice or coins—you can't mix them.

GAMES BY LUDUS LEONIS

visit us at ludus-leonis.com/en



Kurai Jikan

The island kingdom Hinokuni is in danger: Evil Oni and their minions have conquered the realm and covered it in a dark fog. Only a small band of heroes may thwart their evil plans and use the Tears of the Sun Goddess to once again shine a light into the darkness.

NIPAJIN

Pen'n'paper role playing rules that fit on four pages. Perfect not only for short campaigns and one-shots.

Read less – play more!



THE INCREDIBLE **ROBERT REDSHIRT** RPG SHOW

Just reruns on TV? Shoot your own show! The incredible Robert Redshirt RPG Show!

As member of a TV crew it's your job to send poor Robert Redshirt off into incredibly dangerous situations. But you only have 25 minutes—real time—to shoot your show and boost the audience rating.

This booklet contains a complete pen'n'paper role-playing game. Add paper, pencils, dice and a stopwatch and you are ready to play. Four settings are included, but you can also invent your own. Or even play against other gaming groups in tournament mode.



LUDUS LEONIS

NIPAJIN
Z E R O