# MORTAL COIL

## *"Three's a Crowd"*

A 10-20 minute demo for 1-3 players

*Purpose*
The purpose of this demo is to show the Mortal Coil conflict resolution system, showing how action, magic, passion, and power tokens interact and are used in play.

*Script*
**<Hand each player a copy of the book if you have enough.>**
This is MORTAL COIL, a game of magic and passion in the vein of the movie SPIRITED AWAY or Neil Gaiman's SANDMAN comics. Normally, the players all build a world together, and magic can be anything the group agrees to. This is a demo, however, so we are going to cut right to the action.

There is a bar in Philadelphia, a seedy hole-in-the-wall, where the gods of dead religions gather. They have no place in the world anymore and are comfortable with their own kind.

**<Hand out the pregen character sheets, in this order: Pluto, Proserpine, Jupiter. If you have only one player, give the player Pluto or Proserpine to match the sex of the player. Announce the name and character description as each player takes a sheet. If there are any extras, read the name and description and place the sheet in front of yourself. When the sheets are placed down on the table in front of each player, hand out the stacks of tokens for each character.>**

These are the tokens you are going to use in play. What each of these does will be explained once the scene is underway. MORTAL COIL uses no dice. **<Give each player two power tokens.>** These are power tokens. **<Give each player three passion tokens.>** These are passion tokens. **<Give each player eight action tokens.>** These are action tokens. **<Give each player two magic tokens.>** And these are magic tokens.

As you can see from your sheets, these three characters have a history and their passions relate strongly to one another. Here's the scene: It's after dark, and Pluto is in the bar. He's already got a couple in him and is working on a third. The door swings open, and in walks Jupiter with Proserpine on his arm. They are definitely dressed for a night on the town, and you know that Jupiter brought Proserpine here just to gloat.

**<Prompt the players to roleplay the characters briefly, but as soon as tempers start to flare suggest a conflict. There should be no more than a minute or two of freeform roleplay.>**

OK, sounds like this is a conflict. **<Ask each player in turn what their stakes in the conflict are. If two characters' stakes align, have them join the same side of the conflict. This could very well end up a three-way conflict, however.>**

All right, now that we have set stakes, let's get into the actions your characters will be taking to achieve these stakes. To do this, you are going to need to take actions against the other characters, and actions to defend yourself. The four circles you see at the top of the sheet are for allocating tokens for actions. **<Point to the Committed Actions section of the character sheet.>** Your actions will be a combination of one of your faculties (Power, Grace, Wits, or Will) and an aptitude, like barfly. **<Point to the relevant sections of the character sheet.>** You can only use each faculty

for a single action, that's why the names are written here. **<The Committed Actions section again.>** When you want to perform an action, you need to take one of your action tokens and move it to the faculty you want to use. Then, note the aptitude you are pairing with the faculty. Any questions so far?

All right. Later, we'll do this part in secret, but since everyone needs to learn, let's do a sample action in the open. **<Pick the most vocal tester and have them decide on an action, choosing which faculty and aptitude to use.>** Sounds good. Move an action token up to the faculty circle and note the aptitude next to it. **<Turn now to the target of this action.>** Since he is doing this against your character, hopefully you would have planned a defense. How will your character defend himself? **<Once the player has indicated a defense.>** OK. You will also move an action token forward. Now let's compare the totals. **<Add the faculty value to the aptitude value, plus one for the committed action token.>** Now we can see that since this character has a higher total, he will succeed. The margin of success is important, and here is what this particular action would indicate.

**<Turn to the losing player.>** So, you lost. This is the most basic kind of action, however. There are things you can do to get an edge. First, you can commit extra action tokens to an action. **<Move several tokens forward on the losing character's sheet—enough to beat the other player's total.>** If you did this, you would win instead. Of course, your opponent can do the same. You can also use these. **<Pick up a power token.>** This is a power token, and it adds to your total just like an action token except you can sacrifice them after the reveal, when everyone shows what their totals are. You can't put up more action tokens at that point. One of the most powerful tools in your arsenal is this, however. **<Pick up a passion token.>** These are passion tokens. If you spend one of these on an action, you can call on one of your passions. **<Point to the appropriate part of the character sheet.>** The value of the passion you call on gets added to your total. This may seem obvious, but it's important. You can only call on a passion if it is relevant to your action.

Now let's try this for real. Everyone choose the actions they are going to perform in the conflict, and don't forget the stakes you set for your character. **<Have everyone secretly note down their actions and allocate tokens appropriately.>** Everyone ready? OK, this is what we call the reveal. Everyone show their actions. **<Have each player in turn describe their actions, then resolve them. If the stakes are resolved, end the conflict. IF they do not resolve, move into a second round of conflict.>**

**<Someone is likely to use a supernatural aptitude somewhere in all of this. When they do, read the following. If no one uses a supernatural aptitude, jump to this section after the first round of conflict.>** OK, you just picked a supernatural aptitude. With all of your other aptitudes, it's pretty clear what they do. These supernatural abilities are not yet defined, however. To know what a God of the Sky or a Goddess of the Underworld can do, you need to add a fact to the theme for our game. **<Pick up a magic token.>** To add a new magical fact to the game world, you need to sacrifice one of these. **<To the player.>** So, what power does a God/Goddess of the Sky/Underworld have? **<Once the player responds, help guide the statement into a fact.>** Great. You sacrifice the magic token **<remove the token from the sheet>** and you now have that power.

All magic has a price, however. Since you, a player, introduced the fact, I, the GM, get to set the price. **<Set an appropriate price, soliciting suggestions from the players.>** Anyone can do this while we are playing. You can even create facts about other people's aptitudes, if you want. In a regular game, we'd have a theme document which would contain information about our game world. All new facts would get written there, and you can't change facts already established.