

# THREES

Someone's probably taking the fall tonight. The question is: who?

Your holiday vacation has gone in the shitter. There's blood in your flip-flops and a hole in your swimsuit. Something bad has happened on the cruise, or island, or resort, or island resort where you tried to spend your holiday... and that bad thing is your fault. Now it's time to sort out what happened and see if you can't walk out of here even when it's all brought to light.

## The Goal

The goal of *Threes* is, ultimately, to create a sordid, compelling tale that amuses all the players. The game rules just tell us how to play and when to stop playing.

## The Setup

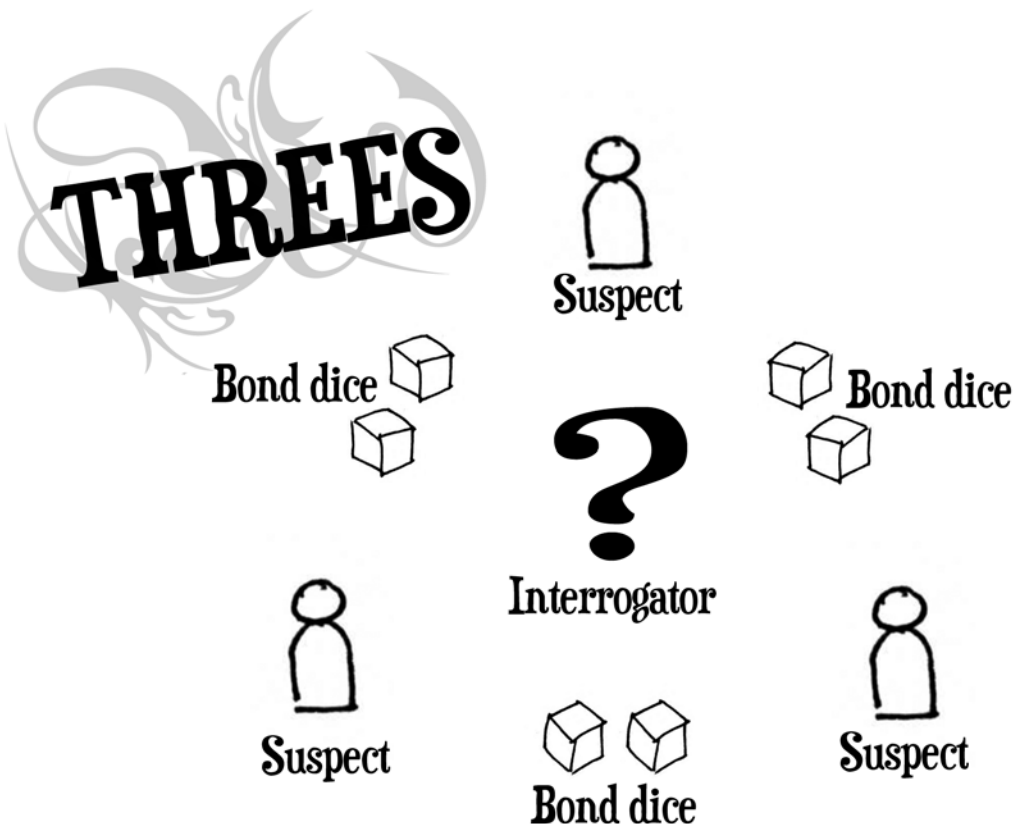
*Threes* is a simple game of three Suspects versus one Interrogator. Also, each other.

The three Suspects are in a high-tech interrogation chamber, matching wits against an Interrogator that might be a Fed—or worse—while the Suspects are still wearing their Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts. The trouble is, the Suspects totally did it. Or part of it. It's hazy. They were all pretty drunk—or worse—while celebrating the holiday weekend, when it happened. Now they're up to their asses in shit—or worse—and it's only a matter of time until some of them break.

Each Suspect is on the hook for the Crime, only the Suspects aren't told what the Crime is. They must suss out what exactly happened as their memories come back to them, in the interrogation room, and by making sense of the Interrogator's questions.

The Interrogator asks questions—questions pointed like spears and loaded like guns—which each Suspect answers, one after the other. Their answers gradually reveal the story of what happened the day or the night before, including, possibly, who it is that's to blame for the Crime.

Dice come into play, too. Read on for the part with the dice.



## One Interrogator

The Interrogator guides play by asking the Suspects questions, one question at a time. A question can be aimed at any Suspect, but each Suspect answers each question in turn. Each question marks the beginning of a *round*, consisting of three answers.

The Interrogator speaks only in questions, with one exception: citing the file. The Interrogator is allowed to give input on the identity of each Suspect, once per Suspect, by delivering a line that begins with these words:

“It says here that you...”

Once that line is finished, the Interrogator must follow up that declarative statement with a question, thereby ending the Interrogator’s turn. For example:

“It says here that you had your medical license revoked. Were you such a bad doctor that you couldn’t tell if Mr. Beaumont was dead or alive?”

The Suspect in question must accept the Interrogator’s statement as factual. (If it’s in the fucking file, it must be true, right?) Though the Suspect may build on that detail with sideways denials and tortured explanations (“It wasn’t revoked. They made me surrender it, of my own, you know, accord.”), though the Suspect may even lie about the facts in the file, though the file may not have the whole truth, the file is never wrong.

It’s up to the Interrogator to introduce facts that heighten or enrich the story, rather than those that shut things down completely. It’s an art.

A fact that declares one of the Suspects to be undeniably guilty could spoil the whole game, while a fact that simply insists one of the Suspects is lying (“It says here that you left your prints all over the body”) could ruin certain stories while energizing others. So, when I said it was an art, what I meant was that it’s a judgment call. You’ve got discretion. Use it.

Once the file has been cited, the other two Suspects are allowed to weigh in during that round, though they don’t have to incriminate anyone, like it says below.

As the Interrogator, it’s your job to keep the game going if it’s fun or to bring it closer to an ending, if it’s running on a fume.

## Three Suspects

Three players take on the role of the three Suspects. These Suspects should sit at a table together, and each Suspect should have a regular six-sided die in each hand, representing his bond with the Suspect to either side of him. At the beginning of play, each player rolls the die for each hand, to see how strong the bond is with the character on either side. If the dice match, those two characters have a bond.

The Suspects wait for the Interrogator to ask them questions. Then they answer, one at a time, starting with the Suspect asked. If you want to go next, raise your hand.

Answers must abide by a few rules:

- Your answer must consist of a number of sentences equal to the value of one of your dice.
- You must speak only to the Interrogator.
- Your answer cannot be the same as an answer previously given this round unless your character shares a bond with the character who gave that answer. That is, unless your dice show the same number, you can’t give the same answer as another player.
- After the first round, one answer per round must incriminate a Suspect in one of three ways: Means, Motive, or Opportunity. That is, one answer per round must be something like, “I don’t know what he was doing, but I remember thinking it was weird that Douglas was taking that drunken hooker back to his room at 3pm on a Thursday afternoon. I asked him what was up, but they just laughed and made out in the elevator. I got off on twelve.” (Which might go to Opportunity.) If you’re third in the round, and nobody has implicated a Suspect yet, you have to.
- Exception to the above: When a round is kicked off by *citing the file*, no one needs to be implicated during that round. Though, if you want to, have at it.

## Additional Rules

A few additional rules, while I’m thinking about it:

### Bond Dice

1. When another player implicates you, move your die’s value one step from the value on that character’s bond to you. For example, let’s say that Tony, to your right, says you had Motive to rob the wealthy tourist on the

sightseeing cruise with you. Right now, your dice look like this:

TONY'S:     ☐

YOURS:     ☐

You'd move your die's value to ☐, to get away from Tony. If you had a bond, and that character betrayed you, you decide which way to move the die, up or down, to break that bond. Dice can "roll over" from ☐ to ☐, if you want, but never from ☐ to ☐.

2. Once rolled at the beginning of play, leave your bond dice on the table. You're free to cover them, but not to otherwise touch them, except when handling them on official business, to track bonds and stuff.

3. A player in a bond can ignore the rule about implicating other characters (but doesn't have to). He just joins his cohort in saying some variation of "I don't remember," using the proper number of sentences.

Thus, if all three characters share a bond, and all of them have recalled their dead-kitten stories already (see below), the characters are in a position to withstand the Interrogator altogether. Call it a win, if you like, but someone guilty of a crime is getting away with it.

## Recollections

David Mamet, as I understand it, calls these "dead-kitten stories." These are those touching or hilarious anecdotes from your past that reveal something about your character, or your character's relationship with the other players' characters, before all this went down. Each Suspect may, once per game, recall his or her own dead-kitten story to explain something about the relationship between the characters and, maybe, change their bonds. Here's how it works:

- Start your dead-kitten story with something like, "I remember this time, when I was..." and tell roughly the first half of your story.
- About halfway through your story, roll any two bond dice at the table. Put those dice back, or even flip-flop them, with their new values in play. If they happen to form a new bond with somebody, great! Finish your story by incorporating details and an ending that explain why the effected characters' bond is made or broken.

One last thing about recalls: The Interrogator can force you to use your recall, if it's still available. All she has to do is say, "How well do you know [some other character]?" and you've got to tell a dead-kitten story

that puts your characters in the spotlight and rolls any two of the dice attached to you and the other character, maybe breaking a bond in the process.

Only one dead-kitten story can be told per round.

## Rolling Over, Confessing, and Mass Arrest

At any time (but usually when one character is totally incriminated), your character can choose to roll over on another. That's slang. It means your character can rat out another character, cooperating with the Interrogator to put that character away. If this happens, the leftover character must decide whom to side with, ratting out one partner and supporting the story of the other. The two Suspects who are in cahoots, in this way, must then provide details that totally incriminate the third Suspect, putting the whole story together for the Interrogator in a way that makes sense. (Or something approaching sense.)

Alternately, a Suspect can confess, in the process implicating one (and only one) other character in addition to himself.

## The Funny

One more thing, but it's important: Whenever the third answer in any round makes the Interrogator laugh, *everyone's* dice drop one point. That is, move it one digit closer to 1. Dice cannot "roll over" to 6 this way.

## The End

Just to be clear, the game ends either when the characters are able to provide (and maintain) a unified bond against the Interrogator, or when they finally turn on each other and (almost?) everyone is totally implicated and goes down for the crime.

There aren't really winners to this game, though. This just tells us how it ends. As long as you got to sit in on a fun or funny story, you're a big winner in my book. Also, you're a beautiful person.