

Raspberry Heaven

HEARTWARMING HIGH SCHOOL ROLE-PLAYING
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PLAYTEST VERSION 0.2.1

Introduction

I don't know about you, but for me high school wasn't all that great, frankly. It wasn't terrible, but it was boring, some of the teachers were either hopelessly dull or outright annoying, everything to do with school spirit was stupid, and don't even get me started on some of the other students. The one thing that made it bearable was friendship. All of us nerds would hang out in the cafeteria and play *Rifts*. We'd hang out on the weekends, have little adventures to movie theaters, malls, and arcades, and generally enjoy life. I still regularly hang out with several of my high school friends, and while things aren't quite the same, that feeling of friendship is still there.

I got a bit emotional when I watched the last episode of *Azumanga Daioh*. There's a scene where the girls are heading out to go have some fun after their graduation, and Chiyo stops, faces the school, and bows. Later, she rejoins the group, takes in their smiling faces, and thinks to herself, "Even though we've graduated, we're still all together." It's not exactly nostalgia that gets me all choked up just thinking about it. It's more like, it reminds me of everything that's good about my life. It reminds me of "raspberry heaven," that place that's sweet and wonderful and just a little bit tart. That's why I wanted to make a game that celebrates that feeling.

Raspberry Heaven is a role-playing game intended for around three to six players. It's directly inspired by slice of life high school anime and manga, notably *Azumanga Daioh*, *Ichigo Mashimaro*, *Lucky Star*, and *Hidamari Sketch*, so being familiar with some of those is a big plus. There's no Game Master or other central authority figure, but at least one of the players should be familiar with the rules before you start playing.

Being a Japanese (Anime) High School Student

You are about to embark on what might be called an idealized version of the Japanese high school life, as seen in certain kinds of anime. You had to pass an entrance exam to get into the school, though it's not super-prestigious or anything. Rather, it's close to home and has a reasonably good reputation. And maybe one of your friends from middle school is going there.

It's going to last for three years, just like middle school, and each year you'll be assigned to a specific class. You're going to really get to know the people in the same class, since everyone spends the whole day in one classroom, with the teachers moving from room to room. Classes are referred to by year and a number, so class 2-1 is Class 1 of the second-year students. On the other hand, you don't often have much contact with students from other classes. School starts and ends in the spring, right around the time when the cherry blossoms are blooming, and breaks are few in number and short.

The school requires students to wear uniforms. Boys wear slacks, white button-up shirts, and stiff-collared jackets, while you girls wear a "sailor fuku" with a skirt and a blouse that has a small tie/scarf in front. You have to carry your books and such with you in a flat bag by its handle, and the ones who are either really diligent or have parents who like to cook will bring boxed lunches with them. Most students walk or bike to school from home. If you didn't bring lunch with you, you're in for some difficulty. There is a cafeteria, as well as a place that sells filled bread rolls, but both of them are always swamped and sell out quickly.

Hopefully you'll be able to make some friends at your new school. This place seems to have a nice atmosphere at least, and it has lots of activities throughout the school year. Although you're probably not the type to get too involved, the school does have a good number of clubs. These cover sports, traditional and contemporary arts, and all sorts of hobbies, but they all require you to stay after school for club activities.

Before graduation, you should probably start thinking about whether and where you want to go to college. Pretty much any college you might want to go to will require you to take an entrance exam, which means you'd better do some extra studying to prepare. A lot of students take the extra step of going to a cram school, but you're not the type to sacrifice quite that much of the present for the future. You don't have to go to Tokyo University to have a good life, especially if you have good friends.

What You Do In This Game

In a way, you could think of this as a deliberate hybrid of two different types of games. It's partly a card game, and partly a role-playing game. You play cards with your friends, and those help you decide what to role-play about.

You already take on different roles in everyday life. Within the course of a single day I can be a train passenger, a reader, a game designer, a translator, a graduate student, a classmate, a friend, a son, a brother, and a customer depending on the circumstances I'm presented with. Although you never stop being *you*, you inevitably adjust your behavior according to your current role. Role-playing means taking on a specific role, pretending to be a certain type of person, for some kind of objective. Role-playing can be used for education, therapy, or just for fun. In a role-playing game, you take on the role of a fictional character in a fictional world, and have them act and react within that world how you believe they would.

The optimum way to play is to have everyone seated around a table, but you can easily play it while sitting on the floor or at the local park. You need to be comfortable, and have a flat surface for playing cards. When your character is taking part of a scene, just speak as she would. When she would take some kind of action, either use pantomime to get the point across, or failing that explain it in words. You can even act out things for real, but don't do anything that's unsafe or makes people uncomfortable. If it isn't safe, it's almost certainly something that doesn't belong in the game, and if it makes your real-life friends uncomfortable you should think twice.

Getting Started

So, by now you've hopefully decided you want to actually give *Raspberry Heaven* a try. There are a few things you'll need to do before you can get started:

Materials

Aside from this book and some friends to play the game with, there are a couple of things you'll need to have ready in order to play this game:

- A deck of ordinary playing cards.
- Paper; copies of the character sheet work best, but any paper is fine. A copy of the scene template is helpful too, especially if you've never played before.

- Pencils

People, A Place, and a Time

You'll need to gather a group of about three to six people to play the game. You need a decent block of time (say, three hours or so), and a location where you can sit comfortably and make a little bit of noise without disturbing others. At least one person needs to know the game's rules, and everyone needs to have some idea of the game's genre.

Setting Up The Setting

Raspberry Heaven assumes that your stories will take place at an ordinary, slightly above average high school in Japan. If you want to change it a little bit (for example, having it be an art-oriented school like in *Hidamari Sketch*) or just flesh out some more details of the school, take some time to talk about it as a group. Once that's done, each player needs to make a character.

Characters

In this game you'll pretend to be a Japanese high school girl. Just like the people sitting around the table in real life, all of your high school girl characters are or will hopefully soon become friends.

1. Quirks

Quirks are important traits that define your character. Pick any three that you like.

You might want to give some thought to what quirks the other players are picking out for their characters, since it'll probably be boring if everyone happens to pick the same things. As a rule of thumb, no more than two characters should have any one quirk, and no two characters should have more than one quirk the same.

Each Quirk has one Special Move. Special Moves let you do special things with the cards, but they mean that something relating to the Quirk happens in the story, regardless of whether you get control of that part of the scene.

- **Addition Play:** Rather than matching numbers, you can play any two cards and add their ranks together and match the ones digit of the resulting sum to what was on the pile. If you have a 2 and a 3, you could play them together on a 5, but you could also play a 9 and a 6 on a 5. One of the cards has to be of the right suit (i.e. if your Special Move lets you use Diamonds, you can play a Diamond and a Club together), but you can put either of the two on top to represent the current suit. For the purposes of Addition Plays, Aces count as 1s, but you can't do anything with or to face cards.
- **Color-Matching:** Instead of matching suits, you can match colors. This means that you can play hearts in place of diamonds, spades in place of clubs, etc.
- **Draw Two:** You can discard one card of a particular suit to draw two additional cards from the deck. You can only do this once per scene.
- **Play Adjacent:** Instead of matching numbers exactly, you can match a card with a rank one above or below. So if there's a 3 of Clubs on a pile, you can play a 2, 3, or 4 of Clubs.
- **Wild Card:** Normally only Jokers are considered wild cards, but some Special Moves let you treat other cards as wild. A wild card lets you ignore the card on top of a phase's pile, and pick a suit to continue with.

Baka

Frankly, you're kind of dumb, albeit in an energetic, cavalier kind of way. You're lacking when it comes to brains, but you're seldom embarrassed or flustered.

Power of Dumb: You can use 4s of any suit as wild cards, but you have to do something stupid and attention-grabbing.

Boke

In the manzai comedy routine of your life, you play the *boke*, or “funny man.” Ideally one of the other players shouldn't be making a character with the Tsukkomi quirk to go with it.

Eternal Comedian: You can Play Adjacent with Spades or Hearts, but afterwards you must make a stupid or insensitive joke.

Busty

You're naturally busty, with an attractive, mature figure. This often makes you the center of attention, whether you want to be or not.

Sticking Out: You can Play Adjacent with Diamonds or Clubs, but when you do you'll draw lots of attention through your appearance.

Complex

You have some kind of complex, an obsession with some aspect of your body or your life that in reality you're largely powerless to change. You put a lot of time and energy into dealing with it (e.g. trying different diets), or at least complaining about it.

Sensitive Subject: You can treat the Ace, Jack, Queen, and King of Diamonds as wild cards, but when you do something must happen relating to your complex.

Cool

You've got a naturally cool, calm demeanor, so that people find you cool but a little unapproachable.

Cool as Ice: You can make Addition Plays with Diamonds, but you'll have trouble expressing yourself because of your cool exterior.

Cute

You are outright adorable, probably in part because you're naturally small and look sweet. Of course, as much as people might like you, they don't always take you seriously.

Adorable Little Girl: You can treat the 7 through 10 of Hearts as wild cards, but each time you do, someone will coddle you and treat you like a little kid.

Delicate

You're a little bit sickly and/or frail, so you can't handle much in the way physical exertion, and require more rest than most of your friends.

Not Feeling Well: You can discard a Diamond to Draw Two once during a scene, but something makes you need rest.

Diligent

You're a hard worker. You may not be terribly above average, but you can get solid grades because you're motivated enough to actually sit down and do homework and study.

Hard Work: You can make Addition Plays with Diamonds, but you must work hard at something at the expense of relaxing or having fun.

Gaijin

You come from another country (probably America), and you're one of those foreigners who doesn't fully grasp Japanese culture and doesn't especially care.

Wakaranai Desu: You can Play Adjacent with Spades or Clubs, but when you do, you miss something about Japanese culture and forge ahead.

Genius

You're exceptionally smart, head and shoulders above most of your class. Some people might resent you for it, and others might be bugging you to copy your homework...

Book Smart: You can make Addition Plays with Diamonds, but you must display book smarts at the expense of practicality.

Genkisugi

You're too "genki" (energetic, cheerful) for your own good. You're relentlessly hyperactive, often to the point of being annoying as hell.

Indomitable Energy: You can use 8s of any suit as wild cards, but you have to display hyperactivity that could be considered annoying.

Innocent

You're naturally good and innocent, and don't fully understand the dark underbelly of the adult world.

I Don't Get It: You can Play Adjacent with Hearts or Spades, but something adult or worldly should go completely over your head during the scene.

Jock

You're athletic, and you love doing physical things. You're great at any kind of physical activity, but you're lacking when it comes to tact.

Tomboy: You can treat red 3s and 7s as wild cards, but you have to display physicality at the expense of being tactful or feminine.

Lazy

You have a really hard time getting up and motivation to do anything that isn't immediately fun and/or gratifying. You might be able find time to play video games and such, but somehow your homework and chores always seem to fall by the wayside.

Procrastinate: You can Play Adjacent with Clubs or Spades, but you have to put off doing something you're supposed to do.

Nice

You're a naturally nice, honest person. You try to be pleasant, tactful, and helpful, and while not everyone respects you, most people like you and enjoy your company. You're naturally kind, but not exactly assertive.

Please: You can discard a Spade to Draw Two once per scene, but when you do, you'll do something nice that others could easily take advantage of.

Obsession

You're assessed with something. It could be that you're an outright otaku, or you might have a more specific and individual session (like a specific person at school you really admire). You put a lot of energy into pursuing this obsession, but have a hard time showing any kind of restraint in the face of it.

Gotta Have It: You can use Jacks of any suit as wild cards, but your obsession gets the better of you.

Physically Gifted

For some reason nature saw fit to bless you with a substantial level of natural physical ability, even though you'd much rather do other things. People regularly bother you to join their sports-related clubs, but you're just not interested.

Unwanted Gift: You can use 6s of any suit as wild cards, but it means that your athletic prowess will attract unwanted attention.

Plain

In Japanese when you say that someone has a "thin shadow," it means they're plain and easily overlooked. That's your problem; you're entirely too good at being inconspicuous.

Thin Shadow: You can use 2s of any suit as wild cards, but people fail to notice or remember you during the scene.

Slow

You're not all that smart, in a slow, ponderous kind of way. You're nearly always calm (it's harder to get upset when you don't really know what's going on), but you're bad at things that require actual intelligence.

I Missed Something: You can use the 8, 9, 10, and Jack of Spades as wildcards, but you'll completely miss something important about the situation.

Softy

Whatever he might appear on the outside, you're just a big softy, and tend to melt in the presence of things that are too sentimental or cute (pick one).

Aww: You can make Addition Plays with Hearts, but you'll completely lose it over something that makes you all googly.

Space Cadet

You're kind of weird, and you don't think in quite the way that other people do. It gives you a tendency to space out, and say things that give people pause.

From Pluto: Treat Spades ranked 2 through 5 as wild cards, but only if you do something that makes people think you're really weird.

Timid

The world can be a big, scary place, and sometimes you feel small and scared. You're **good** at being cautious, but **bad** at being assertive.

Excuse Me: You can discard a Club to Draw Two once per scene, but when you do, you wind up being ignored or overlooked for your timidity.

Tsukkomi

In the manzai comedy routine of your life, you play the *tsukkomi*, or "straight man." Ideally one of the other players shouldn't be making a character with the Boke quirk to go with it. You're good at making retorts, even if you're kind of stiff.

Retort: You can Play Adjacent with Diamonds or Spades, but you have to try to shut down other people's stupid fun.

Tsundere

"Tsundere" is a word used by otaku for a certain character archetype, a girl that's usually *tsuntsun* (cold, haughty), but under certain circumstances because *deredere* (melty, lovestruck, flustered). Whether or not you like to admit it (probably not), this describes you perfectly.

Through The Cracks: You can make Addition Plays as long as one of the cards is a Diamond, but every time you do you show some emotion you wanted to repress.

Worldly

You are perhaps too knowledgeable about the big, scary adult world, and you're determined to do what it takes to get ahead. You want money and crave good food and material possessions, preferably with as little effort as possible. You know all about money and the things you want, but seldom show restraint in going after what you want or correcting other people's misconceptions.

If Only They Knew: You can Play Adjacent with Spades or Hearts, but you have to do something that could detract from someone else's innocence.

2. Profile

Now you get to flesh out your character, making up some details however you like. Below are the things specifically listed on the character sheet and guidelines for how to fill them out. You can also think about your character's appearance, family background, etc., and scribble that stuff under "Notes."

Name

Come up with a name for your character, something you like the sound of. Below are some examples of Japanese names; feel free to use others from wherever you like. There might be one or two exchange students from, say, America or China, but the characters should be mostly Japanese.

Female Given Names: Aiko, Akane, Akira, Aoi, Arisa, Asagi, Asuna, Ayumu, Chiaki, Chihiro, Emi, Ena, Fuuka, Haruka, Haruna, Hikari, Himeko, Hoshi, Kagami, Kana, Kasumi, Kaori, Kazumi, Kumiko, Kurumi, Makie, Michiru, Mika, Minako, Misa, Misora, Miura, Miyako, Nanami, Nodoka, Sae, Sakurako, Satsuki, Setsuna, Tomo, Yotsuba, Yue, Yui, Yuka, Yukari, Yuko, Yuna, Yuno

Family Names: Asakura, Ayase, Hasegawa, Hayasaka, Hayashi, Inoue, Ito, Izumi, Kagura, Kagurazaka, Kakizaki, Kasuga, Kimura, Kitagawa, Kobayashi, Koiwai, Komatsu, Kurosawa, Mihama, Minami, Miyamoto, Miyata, Miyazaki, Mizuhara, Momose, Sakurazaki, Saotome, Sasaki, Sato, Serizawa, Shiina, Shiraishi, Suzuki, Tachibana, Takara, Takeda, Takino, Tanaka, Tanizaki, Tominaga, Uehara

Blood Type

Japanese people have this odd and utterly unscientific notion that a person's blood type determines their personality. Below are the cliché interpretations for each of the four blood types. Regardless of whether or not she actually fits the associated stereotype, note down your character's blood type.

- People with **Type A** are supposedly calm and composed, but are socially awkward. They are very creative, and also perfectionists.
- People with **Type B** are supposedly pragmatic and focused, but individualists to a fault. They are energetic and get things done, but can be selfish and irresponsible.
- People with **Type AB** are supposedly strange and unpredictable, with a cool, rational demeanor. They can be shy or outgoing at different times, and are generally reliable but can snap under pressure.
- People with **Type O** are supposedly outgoing, sociable, and optimistic. On the other hand, they're careless and don't always follow through.

Class

Write down what class the character is in. Classes are named by the year (1 to 3) followed by a class number (or in some schools a letter). There are typically no more than 5 or 6 classes in a given grade. All of the players' characters will usually be in the same class and school.

Hobbies

What does your character like to do in her spare time? Pick some kind of hobby that fits her background and personality. These can include girly/domestic stuff like cooking, sewing, and shopping, generic stuff like playing video games or reading books, or stuff that's so totally off the wall that I can't think of any examples.

Best Subject/Worst Subject

Note down your character's best and worst school subjects. Her quirks should give you some idea—physical characters are pretty likely to have PE at their best subject for example—but just about anything is possible.

The standard subjects in Japanese high schools include math, science, literature, Japanese, English, history, geography, civics, PE, and home economics.

Favorite Thing/Least Favorite Thing

Write down something your character likes, and something she dislikes. This can be just about anything, but stuff like types of food or people are common.

3. Sharing Characters

Next, it's time to share your characters with each other. Each player should give his or her character a short introduction, giving them her name and some idea of her personality and general background. Feel free to ask questions and discuss the characters and how they relate to one another. If you think you'll have trouble remembering the other characters' names, you might want to make some name tags.

Nickname

If you want, you can come up with nicknames for some of the other characters, but not every character needs one. Japanese nicknames are usually made by taking the name and cutting off a syllable from the beginning or end, and/or adding “chi” to the end. Names that end in “ri” often get a nickname that ends in “rin” instead. Other nicknames can come from just about anywhere: where they're from, speech habits, hair styles, etc.

Memories

The character sheet also has a space for “Memories.” This is where you put your character's fond memories of her friends. When you create a character, she gets one free Memory. You can create this right away, or hold off and add it during the game, preferably during the first episode.

A Memory is basically a record of something memorable that happened between your character and another. For example, “At the summer festival Ayumu got us lost, but accidentally found the perfect spot to watch the fireworks” would make a perfect Memory. For the Memory you get free at the start of the game, you should either talk with another player and figure out something that happened between your character, or just create it based on something that happens in the first episode. First meetings can be very memorable, after all.

You can use a Memory only once per episode. If you think the situation is in some way reminiscent of the events of a Memory, and if you and that other character are in the current scene, you can draw two cards and give one to the other character's player.

Secondary Characters

You should also take a moment to think about what secondary characters will play a role in the game. At a minimum you should come up with the characters' homeroom teacher.

Secondary characters don't get Special Moves and thus don't need Quirks per se, but you should as a group come up with three distinctive things about the teacher.

Signature Characters

If you've read this far you're already acquainted with Ayumu, Rika and Natsumi, the game's "signature characters." Here are their complete character sheets.

Ayumu

Quirks: Delicate, Genius, Space Cadet

Memories:

- I first met **Natsumi** when I tripped over Tama and she caught me.

Blood Type: O

Class: 2-4

Hobbies: Watching TV, Internet

Best Subject: Literature

Worst Subject: P.E.

Favorite Thing: Eggplant

Least Favorite Thing: Tripping

Nickname: None

Natsumi

Quirks: Tsukkomi, Tsundere, Complex (Height)

Memories:

- When I missed a week of school because of the flu, **Rika** came to visit and made rice porridge.

Blood Type: A

Class: 2-4

Hobbies: Reading

Best Subject: Math

Worst Subject: English

Favorite Thing: A Neat Environment

Least Favorite Thing: Stupidity

Nickname: Natchii

Rika

Quirks: Boke, Nice, Lazy

Memories:

- At the last cultural festival I got **Natsumi** to dress up in a maid costume for the class' café. She was so cute!

Blood Type: AB

Class: 2-4

Hobbies: Cooking, Video Games

Best Subject: English

Worst Subject: P.E.

Favorite Thing: Cats

Least Favorite Thing: Loneliness

Nickname: None

The Flow of the Game

This chapter deals with how you go about actually playing the game once your characters are all ready.

Getting Together, Warming Up

I recommend playing the game in a place and time where everyone can relax and feel comfortable. You'll need some kind of table or a clean patch of floor/ground to sit around and do things with playing cards. You might want to allow some time for everyone to socialize normally too. My friends usually haven't seen much of each other in the time since the last game night, and it takes a little while for everyone to catch up and calm down enough to role-play, and of course no one's going to role-play that well on an empty stomach. Watching an episode or two of whatever anime most inspires you for this game doesn't hurt either, though you might also want to do something a little more social like playing a round of some quick-playing card game to get warmed up.

Starting an Episode

Once all the players have their characters and are ready to play, you need to agree on the overall subject of the episode. Episodes can be about a very specific event (the school's cultural festival) or a general theme (things you're scared of), or anything in between. The Appendix has some examples of episode concepts.

You also need to decide how long you want the game to be. Although you can bring things to a close sooner if people need to leave, or later if you want to do one or two more scenes to wrap things up, by default the length of an episode is measured in terms of how many times you shuffle the deck. One shuffle means you just shuffle once at the start of the game and play until the deck runs out. This lets you do a fairly quick game with five to ten scenes. Two shuffles means when the deck runs out you take the discard pile and reshuffle it and start again, for a longer episode. Shuffles after the first don't last as long, since players will have some cards in their hands.

Next, pick someone to be the tutor for the first scene. The tutor's role is important to the game, but it's more like a dealer than a Game Master. The tutor deals cards and helps control the pacing of the scene. When a scene ends, the person to the tutor's right becomes the tutor for the next scene, unless the episode is ending.

Scenes

The game is divided up into **scenes**; just like in an anime or a movie, a scene is a short block of action, and usually occurs in one location.

This game uses a four-part structure sometimes used in Japanese narrative, called *kishoutenketsu* (起承転結). It originated with Chinese poetry but is now used for just about anything. The four parts are introduction (*ki*), development (*shou*), turning point (*ten*), and resolution (*ketsu*). One place you see it a lot is in Japanese 4-panel manga, some of which were key inspirations for this game. *Yon-koma* manga consist of four panels arranged vertically, and more often than not each panel corresponds to one of the stages of *kishoutenketsu*.

Each phase is played in three parts:

1. The players play cards to determine who gets narration rights for that phase.
2. That player narrates the basic contents of the scene.
3. All of the players who have characters participating in the scene role-play it out.

Playing Cards

If it's the first scene the tutor shuffles the deck and deals five cards to each player. If it's the second scene or later, the tutor deals three additional cards to each player.

Regardless, from there the tutor places four cards face down in the middle of the table for the scene. Each of these corresponds to a phase of *kishoutenketsu*, and the scene template is helpful here but not necessary. When it's time to start playing cards for a phase, the tutor flips over the card, and everyone gets to start putting cards down.

When a phase's base card is revealed, the players take turns playing cards on it until no one wants to play any more. Go around the table, starting on the tutor's left and going clockwise. Each player either plays a card or says "pass."

With normal cards, you can only play a card on top of a pile if the one below it is the same rank or suit. If the current card is a 4♦, you could play a 4 of any other suit, or a ♦ of any rank. Whoever is the last one to play a card on a phase's pile gets narration rights for that aspect of the scene.

If for some reason no one else wants to play a card on a phase, the tutor gets narration rights, and the effects of the base card are applied.

Card Effects

However, what card you play influences the contents of that part of the scene. Each suit represents an overall mood, and each non-number card represents some special effect. These don't dictate the mood per se—that's really up to you and your friends to figure out. Rather, they're meant to be a starting point, and very much open to interpretation. Each phase has a list of examples for the different cards, but those are every bit as much guidelines.

| Suit | Mood | Image |
|-------|------------------------|--|
| ♥ | Warm/Happy | It's a heart! |
| ♠ | Weird/Confused | An upside-down heart, and some other things. |
| ♦ | Responsible/Frustrated | It's pointy and straight. |
| ♣ | Lazy/Bored | A tree to relax under. |
| Card | Special | Notes |
| Joker | Overkill/Wildcard | Jokers are always considered wildcards, but they also mean that whatever is being done gets overdone in some way. |
| Jack | Imaginary | Jacks bring in some kind of imaginary or delusional element into the scene. A character's imagination runs wild from something said, or the conversation goes into a very strange place. |

| | | |
|-------|--------------------------|---|
| Queen | Teacher | Queens mean that a teacher or some other kind of authority figure has something to do with the scene. |
| King | World | Some aspect of the world itself (geography, school rules, etc.) has an impact on how things turn out. |
| Ace | Hit the Nail on the Head | Aces mean that something goes off perfectly, with no difficulty at all. |

Special Moves

Every character has one Special Move for each Quirk they have. Special Moves let characters play cards in different ways, but they require that something specific happen with the character, even if the player doesn't win narration rights for the scene. Also, since Special Moves are particular to the character, not the player, the player's own character has to actually appear in the scene.

Jokers are technically considered a Special Move that anyone can use. A Joker is always a wild card (meaning when you play one you can ignore what's on top of a pile and pick a suit that anyone who wants to play off of will have to match), and as noted above it also means "overkill."

Regardless, if your Special Move lets you play on a phase's pile, play your card(s) perpendicular to the others, so that it's clear to everyone that there's a Special Move involved.

Special Four-Card Combinations

When the fourth card is finalized, check to see if you have one of the following special combinations of cards. Each has a special effect on the outcome of the scene, and also creates an opportunity to create a new Memory.

| Combination | Special | Notes |
|----------------|------------------|---|
| Four of a Kind | Falls Into Place | When the final scene cards are all of the same rank, things just sort of fall into place of their own accord. |
| All Hearts | Friendship | The conclusion of the scene should emphasize the characters' friendship in some way. |
| All Spades | Dream Sequence | Whatever was going on turns out to have been a dream sequence, and gets much, much weirder before it ends. |
| All Diamonds | Synergy | Something about two or more of the characters comes together to resolve things. |
| All Clubs | Idyllic | The scene ends on a calm, pleasant note. |

Out of Cards?

If everyone is out of cards at the start of a phase, the tutor should deal one card to each player.

Narrating

Whoever wins narration rights for a phase gets to decide the relevant aspects of the scene. This should be something quick—no more than a sentence or two—and fairly open-ended, so the players in the scene can still be creative in how they role-play. The four phases, and what the player with narration rights gets to decide for each one, are explained below.

One thing to keep in mind is that even with narration rights, you can't force another player's character to do something, and you can't make up new facts about them. You can always narrate things dealing with the outside world, but you can also simply phrase things about other players' characters in terms of a request. Instead of saying, "Rika trips and falls," say, "I'd like to have Rika trip and fall here."

Special Moves are something of a special case, since by using one at all a player has committed to doing a certain thing with their character. If you have narration rights, you should try to set things up with an eye towards helping them get towards fulfilling the Special Move's requirement.

I Can't Think of Anything!

Everyone gets stuck or dumbfounded once in a while. Although it's best to refrain from playing cards unless you think you're ready to do the narration, if it does happen, don't panic. Take a little extra time to think about what you want to narrate, and be willing to ask the other players for help and ideas.

Role-Playing

Once you know where the scene takes place and who's there, you can start role-playing. Just speak in character and let things go where they go. It's a little tricky to feel out what should and shouldn't be considered okay to introduce into a scene without playing a card, but then a phase shouldn't take up more than a few minutes of real time. When the tutor feels ready to move on to the next phase, he or she flips over the next card to signal to the group that it's time to start playing cards again.

The Flow of Role-Play

Adopting different roles is a very natural thing for people to do, and little kids do it all the time without really thinking about it. It's when people are asked to role-play consciously and with some kind of objective in mind that they can feel out of their depth. It's actually not all that hard, once you get the hang of it.

For the purposes of this game, there is always going to be a little bit of a set-up process before the actual role-play begins. If you're playing for the first time, the players need to create characters, and regardless the tutor is going to be setting up a scene before you start role-playing.

Once the actual role-play starts, things move more or less in real time. You simply speak and gesture as you believe your character would, and when combined with everyone else doing the same a full-on role-play will result. Different people approach role-play differently. I have to get into my character's head and act instinctively, but other people can

multitask enough to watch from the outside and make careful decisions about how to play the role.

Although the tutor gets to decide the general situation, and decide when to bring in the challenge rules (where you roll dice to see what happens), there is no script, and pretty much anything can happen within the boundaries of the game's milieu.

That's the main thing you need to know. Below are some trickier issues that you should also be aware of.

Modes of Speech

People who play role-playing games have a way of switching in and out of character all the time. In the space of a few minutes a player might speak about their character or themselves in the first person, talk about their character in the third person, ask a rules question as themselves, and refer to another player's character by either the character's name or the player's. Not only that, but different people have different preferences for how to do these. Some players consistently talk about their characters in the first person, while others mostly use the third person. If this doesn't confuse you at all, then just do whatever works for you. If it's causing some confusion, try using these hand signals to indicate what mode of speech you're using:

- **In Character:** If you're speaking as your character, just talk normally. If you think she should be gesturing (Japanese people are relatively restrained about hand gestures, but they definitely do use them), then do so.
- **Narration:** If you're speaking about events in the game but what you're saying isn't what's coming out of your character's mouth, make a "scissors" sign (the one from Rock-Paper-Scissors) at least at the start of your narration. You'll mainly need to narrate if you're the tutor, or if your character is doing something that can't be communicated by pantomime.
- **Out of Game:** If you're speaking about something unrelated to the game, put your hand on top of your head, palm-down. Some people find talking about tangential stuff nigh-irresistible, and while most RPG characters are unlikely to be reciting Simpsons quotes, it helps to give a concrete cue to prevent out-of-game speech from being mistaken for in-character dialogue.

Controlling Reality

The thing about role-playing is that unlike with writing a book, the story belongs to a group of people. In most role-playing games a large chunk of the authority to decide things rests in the hands of a Game Master (GM), and the other players have input into the story through their character's actions. However, it's impossible to decide every detail of the game world in advance, so it becomes necessary to invent some things on the fly.

In a strictly traditional role-playing game this is the GM's sole prerogative, but in reality there can be a great deal of gray area. In such gaming groups it's up to the participants to decide (often tacitly) how much "authorial control" gets distributed to the regular players. However, *Raspberry Heaven* is one of those games that has no GM to fall back on as a central authority figure. On the other hand, it's not meant to have a competitive atmos-

phere either, so in principle the authority to decide stuff rests with the group as a whole. Keep the following guidelines in mind when playing the game:

1. This game lacks any kind of fantastic/genre elements. If it doesn't fit into a normal slice-of-life high school story, it also doesn't belong in the game. No one gets any magic powers or anything like that.
2. Regardless of who has authority over a given aspect of the game, everyone should be willing to give and receive ideas and advice.
3. The overall game/story belongs to the group. Elements that impact the big picture should be decided in accordance with a group consensus.
4. The tutor has authority over the general contents of scenes he or she is running.
5. The individual player has authority over the specifics of his or her character. Do not invent anything about another player's character without consulting them first. Characters mostly start off as strangers and become friends, so there should be relatively little in the way of pertinent past events to invent in the first place.
6. "Off-camera" action (things that take don't take place in the context of an actual scene) should be minimal and inconsequential.

Conflicts in Heaven

Compared to pretty much every other role-playing game out there, *Raspberry Heaven* is a strange beast in that doesn't really lend itself to conflict per se. This is more a consequence of following the source material than a deliberate choice. Still, in the absence of bad guys to fight or wrongs to be righted you might be wondering what it is you're supposed to *do*. In a way, this game is meant to be sort of a "quiet time" game you'd play as a break from more intense ones, in the same way that the source material is a change of pace from all those action-packed anime about giant robots, ninjas, or death reapers.

Conflict isn't totally absent from the girls' lives though. Just like in real life friends don't always get along perfectly, and there are always the trials and tribulations of high school life.

The Four Phases

Phase 1: Introduction

The purpose of the Introduction phase is to establish the overall setting of the scene. This means you get to decide when and where it takes place. As this is *Raspberry Heaven*, the time is roughly present-day, and the place is normally somewhere around the school or neighborhood where the girls live. Here are some examples:

- Characters that live close to each other might meet on the way to or from school, or even make a habit of walking together.
- PE class can be held at the track, on the field, or at the school's swimming pool.
- After school the girls can pick someone's house to hang out at for a little while.
- There are plenty of other places to go to play or hang out, like arcades, restaurants, parks, or karaoke.

You also take the lead in deciding *who* is present in a scene. Anyone who plays the final card for any phase should have their character have some influence, at the very least in spirit. If other players want their characters to take part, you should let them unless there's a compelling reason to do otherwise. This is especially true for scenes that take place at school.

On the other hand, a character can be present in the general area without necessarily taking part in the scene. Just because your character isn't taking part in a scene that takes place during class doesn't mean she's skipping school.

Secondary Characters

You can also ask players to temporarily take on the role of secondary characters. These are other classmates, teachers, parents, animals, etc. that might show up in the story. Try to avoid making players juggle multiple characters, however. Secondary characters do not get Special Moves or Memories.

Examples

| Card Played | Example Introduction |
|-------------|--|
| ♥ | The girls eat lunch on the rooftop, on a nice, sunny day. |
| ♠ | The girls bump into each other at an arcade, even though they normally never go to one. |
| ♦ | The scene takes place in the classroom, during a lecture. |
| ♣ | The scene takes place in the library, where the girls are supposed to be studying but are spacing out instead. |
| Joker | The scene takes place at an arcade with all the machines and music blaring so loud you can barely hear each other. |
| Jack | One of the girls has a dream about her friends. |
| Queen | The scene takes place with two of the girls consulting with a teacher at his or her desk in the staff offices. |
| King | While on their school trip to Kyoto, the girls visit the famous Kiyomizudera temple. |
| Ace | The girls all bump into each other by chance at the shopping district on a Sunday with clear skies and pleasant weather. |

Phase 2: Development

This is where we establish the situation that's taking place, and kick the role-playing into high gear. Whoever wins narration rights for the development gets to decide what's actually going on in the scene. This narration should be open to interpretation, or at least open-ended, and leave plenty of room for whoever gets narration rights for the remaining phases to add new stuff to the scene.

Examples

| Card Played | Example Development |
|-------------|--|
| ♥ | An adorable cat pokes his head out of the bushes, and tentatively approaches one of the girls. |

| | |
|-------|--|
| ♠ | One of the girls has made an attempt at drawing... something in her notebook. Everyone looks at it. |
| ♦ | The teacher calls on one of the girls to do a difficult math problem on the blackboard. |
| ♣ | One of the girls lets out a perfect, Zen-like yawn. This will be the subject of the rest of the scene. |
| Joker | The restaurant turns out to be all you can eat! |
| Jack | Someone asks the all-important question: What would happen if Ayumu went to America? |
| Queen | The homeroom teacher is late for some reason. |
| King | There's a sudden power outage. |
| Ace | One of the girls stops to pick up a 100-yen coin just in time for a cat to land right on her head! |

Phase 3: Turning Point

The third phase is the turning point, where something happens that needs to be resolved.

The fourth phase can sometimes come very quickly after the third, with as little as a sentence for the role-playing part of Phase 3.

Examples

| Card Played | Example Turning Point |
|-------------|---|
| ♥ | How are we going to divide up this cake? |
| ♠ | In my dream I see a button labeled "Do Not Press." |
| ♦ | If you don't get through this study session, you're going to fail the test. |
| ♣ | It's such a nice day, it's hard to keep awake. |
| Joker | The costume for the school festival is so popular the wearer is mobbed. |
| Jack | One of the girls hovers in front of the fire alarm, tempted to press it even though it's "rumored" that one is actually a self-destruct switch. |
| Queen | The teacher makes one of the girls stand in the hallway while holding buckets of water. |
| King | While on a walk, the girls find a small stream they must cross if they want to proceed. |
| Ace | One girl gives another a hard time for getting 100 points on the last exam. |

Phase 4: Resolution

The fourth and final phase is the resolution, where whatever wrinkle was brought up in the third phase gets resolved at least somewhat, and the scene is brought to a close.

Concluding the Scene

When the tutor feels the scene has run its course, he or she can signal the end of the scene by gathering all of the cards from the four phases and put them into the discard pile. If the deck ran out and you're not planning to do any more shuffles, this should be the final

scene of the episode. If you are moving on, players with more than 5 cards in their hands should discard down to 5.

Examples

| Card(s) Played | Example Resolution |
|----------------|--|
| ♥ | The angry impasse suddenly ends in laughter as the girls realize how silly they've been. |
| ♠ | One of the girls says something so bizarre that everyone just stops what they're doing. |
| ♦ | Whatever the girls were doing gets cut off when it turns out they're late for class. |
| ♣ | The girls fall asleep while at the park, and wake up as evening approaches. |
| Joker | Although she's won the race, the star of the track team keeps running, into the distance, for no apparent reason. |
| Jack | One girl's hiccups are finally cured... and somehow they seem to have jumped to another. |
| Queen | The teacher pulls up in her car, and offers the girls a ride. |
| King | The girls tumble down the hill and into the snow, where they round out the day with a snowball fight. |
| Ace | The baseball thrown high up into the air comes down... right on Natsumi's head. |
| Four of a Kind | Rika shows up at the last minute, with cake in hand. |
| All Hearts | Rika passed her entrance exam too! Everyone holds hands and dances a happy dance! |
| All Spades | Ayumu appears in front of Mt. Fuji, holding an eggplant and a falcon, and says, "Hi there! Time to wake up!" |
| All Diamonds | Rika hits the golf ball too hard; it bounces off of a tree and hits Ayumu on the head as she was distracted by a butterfly. Hole in one! |
| All Clubs | Under the setting sun, everyone sits down on a bench and eats sweet potatoes to round out a perfect day. |

Next Scene

Once the scene ends, it's probably going to be time to move onto the next one. The next person becomes the tutor, and plays the scene bases and deals three cards to each player.

Memories

As noted in the character creation section, Memories are specific memorable things that happened between your character and another. You get one when you create your character, and you can potentially create one new Memory per episode.

You get an opportunity to create a Memory when one of the following happens:

- You play the last card of a four-card combination.
- You play 6 or more cards in one phase.

Episode and Scene Ideas

This section has an extensive list of ideas for episodes and scenes. You can come here when you're completely stumped, or just when you need a little something extra. If you're not as familiar with Japanese high school life, this section also has valuable information on different aspects of school life.

Athletics Festival

Once a year, around the beginning of June, the school holds an athletics festival (*tai'iku sai*). The school is divided into two teams (red and white), and students compete in a bunch of different events. Each student should pick one or two events to participate in, and there are a few where most or all of the school takes part. We'll assume that the rest of the school is average, and the players' characters can tip things either way depending on how well they do.

- **Ball Throw:** Baskets are set up on poles, and your objective is to throw as many foam balls into it as you can.
- **Borrowing Race:** Each participant gets a piece of paper; your object is to find whatever's written on the paper and bring it back as quickly as possible. Sometimes it's everyday items (glasses), and sometimes it's a person (hopefully "someone you admire" or some such, but sometimes you won't want to tell them why...).
- **Bread-Eating Contest:** When Japanese people talk about "bread" (*pan*), they usually mean filled bread rolls. In the bread-eating contest the bread is suspended by a string, and your objective is to eat.
- Cavalry Battle
- Cheerleading
- Marathon
- Relay Race
- Three-Legged Race
- Tug-of-War
- **Folk Dance:** At the end of a long day of fun, the students divide into groups and do a "folk dance." The groups are arranged into two rings, boys and girls, and do a dance where they keep changing dancing partners. Some schools have a bonfire here too.

Birthday Party

Christmas

Although Christmas was "imported" into Japan a number of years ago, it's a secular holiday, and while little kids and parents may have a Christmas celebration (including eating Christmas cake) other young people go and have fun.

- Presents
- **Christmas Party:**

Club Activities

Coming Over to Play

Cultural Festival

Another fun (but hectic) yearly event is the cultural festival (*bunkasai*). Each class (and club) puts on some kind of event, so the class representative gets the unenviable task of trying to get everyone to agree on what the class should do. A café and a haunted house are the two standard cliché options, and someone from the class *will* suggest them. Hopefully you'll be able to come up with something a little more original. Some other possibilities include putting on a play (or other performance), or serving some other kind of food (takoyaki and taiyaki are must-haves for any festival after all).

- **Deciding What to Do:**
- Preparations
- The Festival
- Over At Last

Dieting

Dreams

Entrance Exams

Final Exams

First Day of School

The first day of school comes in the spring, right around when the cherry blossoms are in bloom, with almost no pause after the previous school year.

- **Entrance Ceremony (Year 1):** First-year students must attend the school's entrance ceremony. Like most such functions, it's pretty dull. The principal and other school officials that you probably won't see much of normally make some boring and predictable speeches. Can the more rambunctious characters really behave themselves at a time like this?
- **Checking Class Changes (Years 2 and 3):** At the start of each new school year, the classes get shuffled around a bit. A lot of the time you'll wind up with most of the same classmates and the same homeroom teacher, but there's always that moment when you have to worry about whether you'll be separated from your friends. Naturally this is done publicly, with big lists of names by class posted for everyone to see.

- **The First Class:** The very first class can be especially interesting during the first year, since often times there are new people to meet. This is especially true when it comes to the homeroom teacher, who is going to have a big impact on how the school year goes.
- **Picking a Class Rep:** Each class has to pick a class representative (*i'incho*). This person is forced to handle most of the mundane organizational stuff. Some people (like those with the Diligent quirk) can thrive on it, while others are coerced into it. The class rep can be a faceless NPC, or one of the player characters. Some of them wind up having *i'incho* as their nickname all through high school. Getting votes (or avoiding being nominated) for class rep can be a challenge.
- **Introductions:** Once things get properly under way, the characters can have the opportunity to get properly introduced to each other. This can take place over the course of a series of scenes (which would feel more natural), or circumstances might somehow throw the players' characters together somehow. A character's first impression could be the subject of a challenge.

First Meeting

Going to School

Graduation

In Japanese high schools students attend graduation in their regular school uniforms. There's a big assembly with everyone present, where the principal makes a speech, some awards are handed out, and everyone stands to sing a traditional graduation song. After that, students go to their classrooms, where the teachers hand out the actual diplomas.

Homeroom

Infirmary

Karaoke

Lunch Time

New Year's

For the Japanese, New Year's is a holiday full of family obligations.

- Cleaning
- Watching TV Specials
- **First Dream:** There's also a sort of superstition that the first dream you have after the start of the new year is particularly important and portentous.
- **First Shrine Visit:** Finally, on New Year's Day, most people go for their first shrine visit of the year.

P.E. Class

Part-Time Job

Physical Examinations

Once a year, students are divided by gender and the school nurse does a series of measurements, including height, weight, and bust/waist/hips. This is especially stressful for girls, because they get to find out in excruciating detail how much (or how little) their breasts have grown since last time.

School Cleaning

School Trip

Third-year students usually go on a school trip a little before summer vacation. School trips are usually to somewhere in Japan like Kyoto (the former capitol, which has tons of old shrines and historical sites), but sometimes places like Okinawa or even Hawaii. If you want to do a school trip episode, I highly recommend doing some real research on wherever it's going to be.

Sick Day

Spring Vacation

Study Date

Summer Vacation

In most of Japan summers are hot and humid, and the heat and humidity don't really let up even when it rains. People thus get to try to balance the desire to turn on the air conditioner with the reality of electricity bills. And there's the insects too, from the pleasant sounds of cicadas to the annoyance of mosquitoes. Summer break is relatively short for Japanese high school students, so it's best to make the most of it. There are all kinds of things the girls could be doing during this episode, so take a little time to think about what they'd want to do during their precious summer vacation.

- **Stuck at Home:** Chances are the girls aren't going to be having fun through *all* of the summer break. There's going to be at least a few days where they're stuck at home trying to pass the time by playing, sleeping, doing homework (see below), and of course trying to beat the heat.
- **Summer Homework:** A lot of teachers are going to assign some homework to be done over summer break. In elementary and middle school they'd give you cute little art projects, but in high school it's basically more of the same kind of homework you'd do normally. Of course, some people inevitably slack off through the break and copy their friends' homework.
- **Road Trip:** A long trip to somewhere interesting could be a fun way to spend some of the summer, especially with friends along. A true "road trip" would require getting an adult (i.e., a parent or teacher secondary character) to drive the

group, which has the potential to be a fun scene or two in itself. Otherwise there'll be a long train ride in store, probably followed by a bus or two. One of the characters might have a summer home if her family is rich enough, or the group might be able to spring for a stay at a hotel or a ryokan (traditional Japanese inn), or they could just take a day trip somewhere.

- **Fun at the Beach:** Whether as part of a road trip or its own day trip, the beach is a definite possibility. Of course, that requires getting a swimsuit (unless you want to wear the one from school), which means a trip to the store beforehand. Once they arrive, the girls can do things like make sand castles, play in the water, do melon-splitting (set a watermelon on the ground, wear a blindfold, try to split it open with a wooden sword or bat), get a tan, play volleyball, and so on.
- **Summer Festival:** Many, many different places around Japan hold summer festivals (*matsuri*). People traditionally wear yukatas (cotton kimonos) to attend these open-air festivals, though of course street clothes are fine. At the festival there'll be booths offering snacks (yakisoba, takoyaki, cotton candy, shaved ice, etc.) and games (shooting gallery, balloon fishing, goldfish scooping, etc.). And of course, a fireworks display.

Teacher Consultation

Test

- **You're In Trouble:** This is a scene that establishes how one or more of the girls isn't doing so well in one or more subjects.
- I Challenge You
- **Study Date:** If the girls are especially worried about how they're going to do on the next test, the obvious solution is to get together to study. Of course, it might be too much to expect a bunch of quirky friends to actually behave and study quietly in a group.
- **The Test:** The most obvious key scene is the test itself, though it doesn't necessarily lend itself to much in the way of interaction or comedy. The girls are mostly going to have to be quiet if they don't want to get in trouble, so you'll be stuck with physical comedy, and maybe having the teacher walk around and make weird comments.

Transfer Student

Japanese students typically go to the same school for all three years of high school. In fact, fathers who get transferred to other parts of the country (or other countries entirely) for work often wind up living in small apartments while their families stay put so the kids can keep going to the same school. When students to change schools, they usually do it between school years – some schools outright disallow transferring in during the school year – so a transfer student coming in partway through the term is even more unusual. Transfer students who come in suddenly are also allowed to wear the uniform of their old school for a little while until they get a new one.

Sometimes you'll need to introduce a new player character into the game, say if someone new has just joined your ongoing game. You can just have them be someone who was going to the same school all along and was either in a different class or just never stood out, but this can be more interesting sometimes. It's a well-established cliché in anime that on a transfer student's first day, the teacher has her come into the room and stand in front of the class to be introduced.

Valentine's Day

The Japanese have their own particular way of celebrating Valentine's Day. Girls are supposed to give chocolates, preferably handmade, to

- Making Chocolates
- Giving Chocolates
- **White Day:** White Day comes on March 14, one month after Valentine's Day. It was created as a cynical ploy by a candy company in 1980 to sell more by creating a holiday for guys to reciprocate the chocolates they got the month before.