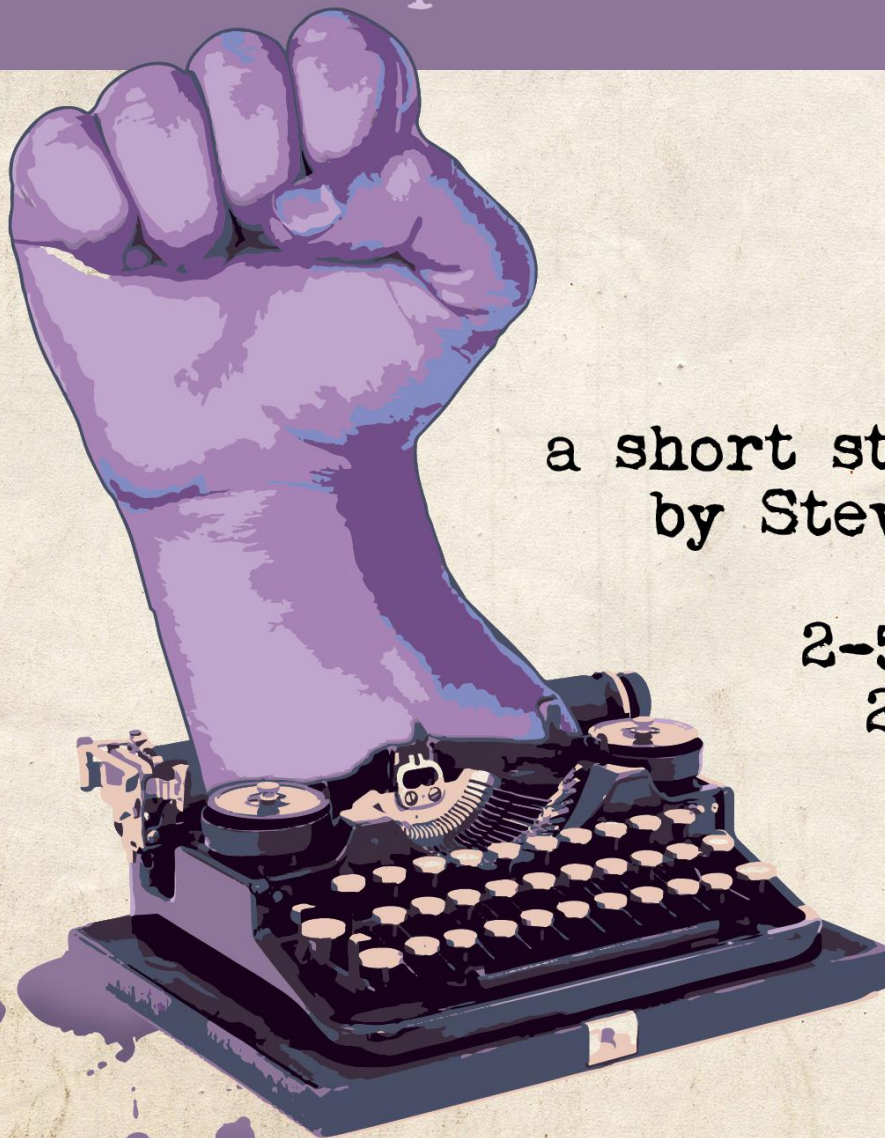


Left Coast

Los Angeles, 1970.

A sci-fi author's novel
spills into real life.



a short story game
by Steve Hickey

2-5 players
2-3 hours

The Pitch

Left Coast is a game where, together, we create a short story about a science-fiction writer and the weird people in her life.

The short story is set in America some time between the 1960s and 1970s.

How we play the game

We'll each control different characters in the story. One of us will be 'The Author'. For some reason, the Author's life has just become weird and we'll play to find out why: Is it alien? Or government mind control? Or some deeper conspiracy?

While the person portraying the Author will often be the centre of attention, we'll all take equal responsibility for making sure the game runs smoothly. The rest of us will be supporting characters in the Author's life. We'll put pressure on the Author and maybe reveal ourselves as being part of the conspiracy.

We'll create the story through having a conversation, taking turns to tell each other what happens next. A little bit like when we're with a group of friends making up a funny story: some of you will pretend to be characters and say what they say, while others will throw in ideas and descriptions about how people react or what happens next and you'll swap the responsibility for doing that back and forth between you.

Left Coast's rules will guide you through how to do that and provide you with ways to help make the story stay unpredictable.

The Author

*The person who's introducing this game reads
the following aloud -*

Welcome to Left Coast. We're going to create a short story about a science fiction writer and the weird people in her life. The short story is set in America some time between the 1960s and 1970s.

Here's a sheet that gives you a quick guide to what's going on. This'll be useful for when we're creating the characters in the short story and deciding what could happen.

*Hand out the 'Guide to Left Coast' on
appendix page A. Then say the following -*

First we need to choose one of us to play 'The Author'. For this short story, the Author is Jane P. Richards, and she's a scientist at the University of California. Because Jane's struggling to get promoted in the sexist world of academia, she publishes her sci-fi stories under a pseudonym, as J. Philip Richards.

The Author player tells us what Jane does, how she reacts to events, and what she says to the people she meets.

The Author player should be someone who's enthusiastic about portraying a writer who doesn't quite fit in with society. They should also be someone who's OK with being the centre of attention and with being put under pressure from everyday problems and from a weird conspiracy. Let's discuss it and choose one of us, now.

*After you've chosen the Author player,
say the following -*

We're each going to take a turn reading some of the rules out. Whenever you see italicized text, it contains instructions for you to follow.

*Pass this book to the player on the
left of the Author and have them read
the rest of this page -*

The Weird

Now we have to decide who's going to be responsible for the weird conspiracy that's invading the Author's life.

This person is called the Weird player, and they're responsible describing weird moments that happen throughout the game (there's a sheet at the back of the book to help with this).

Let's choose one of us now.

Who's most excited about creating a conspiracy or thinks it'll be fun to mess with the Author a little bit?

*Once you've made your choice, ask the Weird
player to take the Weird sheet
on Appendix Page B and read the
first column to themselves.*

Pass this book to the Author player and ask them to read this two-page section aloud -

Create Supporting Characters

You're about to create the supporting characters in Jane's life. There are two types of supporting characters: ones involved in the Weird conspiracy affecting Jane's life and ones who aren't.

Take the Supporting Character cards from Appendix Pages C-F and put them face-down in two separate piles: Weird Supporting Character cards in one pile and the 'other' Supporting Character cards in the second.

The Weird player takes all the cards for Weird Supporting Characters. Take a look at all of their secrets and choose the one with the secret that inspires you the most.

Everyone else except for me: choose one of the face-down Supporting Character cards. Have a look at the secret on the card you've chosen: if it doesn't work for you, put the card back and choose another face-down card.

If there are only two players, the Weird player creates one Weird character and one supporting character.

Scene by Scene

*If someone hasn't explained any rules yet,
they should read out this next section;
otherwise, choose someone to read -*

We play the game by creating a series of scenes: these are conversations or encounters between the Author and one or more supporting characters.

The Author player is responsible for telling us what Jane says and does. The rest of us are the 'Owners' of the supporting characters we created: we'll describe what they say and do.

Scenes generally have a laid-back vibe. Think of them like scenes from a character-centered indie movie: they show us the Author's day-to-day life, and they're (usually) filled with dialogue that reveals character and takes its time before getting to a point. During a scene we want to gain insights into Jane's life, her relationships with supporting characters, and into the Weird forces that surround her.

*Pass this book to the next player on your
left who's not the Author player and ask
them to read this next section -*

A limited number of scenes

At the same time as having a laid-back vibe, there are a limited number of scenes in the game.

Take five six-sided dice and give them to the Author. Then read -

These are your Author Dice. You start with five, and at the end of every scene you give one up. When you run out of dice, we'll end our short story. That means we only have five scenes to reveal secrets, play out Weird events, and explore the relationships between the characters. It's up to us to make these five scenes count.

So, how are we feeling right now? Do we want to jump right in to playing the game or would we like a bit more guidance and support about how to create our first scene?

Discuss this, then choose one of the following options:

- ① *If you all want to jump right in, go to page 14 (the next page) and ask the owner of the character Jane has her most significant relationship with to read out a brief overview of how everything works.*
- ② *If you want more guidance and support, go to page 16 and ask the Author player to start reading out advice on how to create your first scene.*