

Under my Skin

jeep form version

playtest January 2008

Third of *Three Quick Games about the Human Heart*
by Emily Care Boss

A game about passion, fidelity and definitions of love.
Exploring monogamy and polyamory.



there is nothing but trouble and desire...



UNDER MY SKIN is a game about faith, love and commitment. In the game, you play characters in relationship who become drawn to someone who is not their partner. The players explore the fears their characters experience about loss and betrayal, and navigate, in character, the tricky issues of openness, trust and communication that all relationships are challenged by at one time or another.

A group of friends get together and secret loves and passions erupt. Partners and lovers have to face up to their fears and jealousies as they find that time has taken its toll on their relationships. Passions rage and lovers have to see whether their relationships will last or crumble under the pressures of temptation over a potential new love.

This is the live form version of the game. It is in the tradition of jeep form games (jeepen.org) and is greatly influenced by **DOUBT** by Fredrick Axelzon and Tobias Wrigstad. There will also be a tabletop version of this game which will have a distinct set of mechanics. In the live version of **UNDER MY SKIN**, the players act out their characters' words and actions. Both games share the same overall structure to the story:

Characters each have a Core Issue

Partners and Friends determine their Intimacy, Passion and Commitments

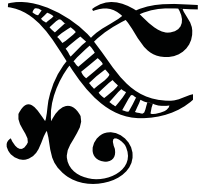
Passion ignites for a new Lover

Characters deal with the new Love and the repercussions on the original relationship

Lines are crossed and fallout ensues

Partners, Lovers and Friends deal with the changes this brings





*I've got you under my skin
I've got you deep in the heart of me
So deep in my heart, that you're really a part of me
I've got you under my skin*

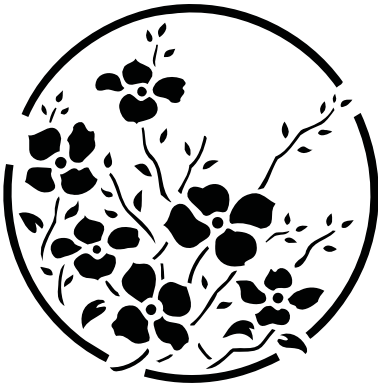
I. Preparation

INTRODUCTIONS: Begin the game by sitting in a circle. Make introductions by telling your name and share your relationship status. Prior to what could be intense in character flirtatious play, acknowledge the real world relationships of the players. Clarify real life boundaries before blurring the in game ones.

Before playing, it may also be useful to establish some physical contact between the players. Have people hug or shake hands with everyone in the circle before moving on to the next step of pre-play preparation.

EQUIPMENT LIST: To play this game, you will need:

- 4-6 players
- A dry-erase, large pad or chalk board and appropriate writing utensils.
- A room with space for the players to move about freely, with privacy from non-participants.
- Chairs and tables that can be moved and arranged to represent different settings.
- Name tags for character (and player) names.
- No costumes or elaborate props are needed for the game, though real (non-alcoholic) drinks for the party scene and small symbolic props as appropriate for other scenes may be helpful.





Preparation

CHARACTERS: Each player creates a character (of their gender is recommended though not required). Choose a name and a CORE ISSUE.

CORE ISSUES: these are problems, areas of focus or weak spots for the character. It is an area of life that has brought the character grief or heartache in the past. Likely something from early childhood but not restricted to that. You don't need to know why it is an issue for the character yet. It is good to choose something that you as a player feel troubled by or have experience with.

Example CORE ISSUES: Neglect, abandonment, fear, anger, honesty, insecurity, superiority, control, sacrifice, inferiority, madness, depression, attachment, loneliness, commitment, intimacy, hate, rage, apathy.

Each player suggests a word associated with each issue. It may be an area of life, a related concept or somehow that this issue might manifest in someone's life.

Example issues and areas:

Neglect: alone, children, poverty, housework, emptiness.

Anger: temper, driving, internet, arguments, intolerance.

Sacrifice: career, children, silenced, caretaking, martyr.

Write each character's Name and Core Issue on a name tag the player wears. As the game goes on, players will act out scenes from their character's life that illustrates the core issue. Other players should use the information that arises in these scenes and mirror and echo them in events in the game and in their characters' actions. When framing scenes, choose elements that evoke the flashback scenes. Use the Core Issues as themes in the present day events of the game.



Preparation

COUPLES AND SINGLETONS: Determine what the relationships are between the characters. The configurations of the relationships will vary depending on the number of players:

Four players: two couples; or two singletons and one couple.

Five players: two couples and one singleton.

Six players: two couples, two singletons

Seven players: three couples and one singleton.



Determine who are the couples and singletons by choice or randomly.

CREATING A COUPLE: the players work together to find out more about their characters' relationships. These characters are in a long term relationship or partnership of some kind. Choose or randomly determine which of the following aspects of the relationship, or **CONNECTIONS**, are High, Moderate and Low. Assign one to each. Record on character sheet.

CONNECTIONS:

INTIMACY: knowledge or shared experience with the other. (Determine how or why the characters are at this level of Intimacy)

PASSION: sexual attraction and compatibility. (Describe the level of Passion in the relationship)

COMMITMENTS: specific ongoing shared activities. (Choose one if Commitment level is low, 2 if Moderate, 3 if High)

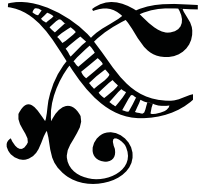
Example CONNECTIONS (for couples and friends):

INTIMACY: Low: Newly together, Grown apart. Moderate: Good companions. High: Childhood friends, Share deeply.

PASSION: Low: Infrequent sex, Not attracted. Moderate: Regular sex, Good chemistry. High: Sizzle, Can't keep hands off.

COMMITMENTS: owning a house, children, own business together, play ultimate together, writing book together, play in jazz band, live together, owning a pet, shared hobby, travel the world, water each other's plants, watch each other's children, in same condo association, going to school together.





Creating a COUPLE continued: QUESTIONS

Preparation

Answer some questions about their **life together**: Are the characters married? Living together? How long have they been together? Do they have children? What do they do for a living? Who is the main bread winner?

And some questions about the **relationship**: Why is the low aspect low? The high, high? What does it say about their sex life or how well they know each other? Are they new to the relationship, or have they grown apart? What are the things they can't let go of? What keeps them together? What do they enjoy?

Choose LINES: Each player chooses two things that are sacrosanct or huge sore spots in the relationship. These are things unique to their relationship that if the other partner does with someone else would be extremely hurtful. May range from a broad variety of things, including Commitments.

Example LINES: have sex, go to the park with kids, read out loud to one another, kiss, sleep in their bed, play tennis, write together, go to a special restaurant, fish, hold hands, tell dirty jokes, walk in the cemetery.

NOTES:

Having sex is a default LINE. Players must actively choose to cross this off the list. If so, some form of physical or emotional intimacy must be chosen instead. Be realistic.

Choose LINES that would bother **you**. Play *close to home*.

Playing Close to Home: In Jeep Form there is a concept of playing close to home. That is, to choose to play out issues and difficulties, or things desired or loved, that come from the player's real emotions. Rather than choosing to create distance between what the character feels and what the player does, use the resonance of what happens in the game to explore your own emotions and reactions.



Preparation

CREATING FRIENDS: Each player chooses another character to be friends with, randomly or by choice. The Singleton chooses two, one of whom is their **BEST FRIEND**. Choose levels of Connection with these characters.



BEST FRIENDS: High in Intimacy; moderate or low in Commitment.

FRIENDS: Low, moderate or high in Intimacy or Commitment.

Players with characters who are **FRIENDS** now talk about what the nature of their relationship is. If they have a high intimacy, are they old friends from college? Did they live together, back in the day? And if so, what was that like? What are their commitments? What do they share? Do they co-moderate a popular internet forum? Do they design games together? Do ritual? Co-own a house? Record this information on the character sheet.

SHARE INFORMATION: Get the whole group together. Share the information gathered so far. Clarify relationships: who works with whom? Who knows who? Is there something that pulls this social circle together?

CREATE LOCATIONS: Then, looking at the core issues, commitments, jobs, interests and other things created, make a list of locations where scenes may take place. Brainstorm about a dozen locations. Write this up on paper or board and post where all may see.



CREATE NEW COUPLES: From among the friends or other characters whom they don't already have a connection with, choose pairs of **NEW COUPLES**. These are characters, not the current partner, with whom a character shares a strong attraction. These characters now share a high **PASSION** score. If possible, choose randomly.

Notes: If there is an odd number of people, someone may get left out.
All Singletons get involved with someone.



*I've tried so not to give in
I've said to myself this affair never will go so well
But why should I try to resist, when, baby, I know so well
That I've got you under my skin*

Structure

II. Structure of the Game

The game proceeds from there in scenes acted out between characters. Use chairs and tables as needed to suggest settings by arranging them to mimic elements of a scene (around a table for dinner at restaurant, in rows for a movie theatre, next to one another for a couch, etc.).

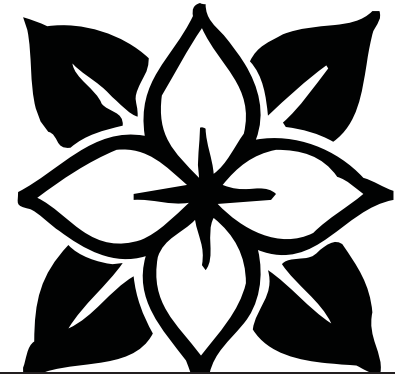
SCENES, REFLECTION SEQUENCES AND FLASHBACKS:

Game takes place in 8 stages with various **SCENES, REFLECTION SEQUENCES** and **FLASHBACKS** in each. Each stage is different and the specifics are described below.

SCENES involve playing out character actions and dialogue. In them, the players act out what their characters do and say.

REFLECTION SEQUENCES: For these you will use various techniques to represent the thoughts, feelings and past experiences of the characters. May occur during or after a Scene. These are described in the descriptions of the **PHASES** of the game.

FLASHBACKS: A scene from the past history of a character in the game. These scenes highlight the Issue of the character, and may involve other characters from the cast, as well as from other parts of the character's life.





THE PHASES OF THE GAME:

SETTING THE STAGE: Couples in their daily life, singletons with a friend.

Reflection sequence: Flashback for Singleton.

INITIATION: Everyone is together and new flames ignite.

FOLLOWING THROUGH: The new couples together.

Reflection sequence: Left Out character scenes and flashbacks.

DEVELOPMENT: back with the partner, how is this going to work?

Singletons have scene with their Best Friend.

Reflection sequence: character flashbacks.

ESCALATION: new flames negotiating lines of their relationships, what is too much?

Reflection sequence: angel and devil prompt characters during scenes.

REVELATIONS: Partners together, how do they find out? Singletons talk about their new relationship with their Best Friend.

Reflection sequence: Character flashbacks.

RESOLUTION: the whole group is united, what has been lost? What can be saved?

DENOUMENT: looking back on this situation from the future.





II. Playing the Game

Play

PHASE 1: SETTING THE STAGE

In the first stage, couples interact together, giving the players insight into the relationships as they exist at the start of the game. Singletons reflect on their single status and what relationships and other issues mean in their life.

COUPLE SCENES: Each couple gets a scene together, followed by a Reflection Sequence. They choose a Location, and a non-involved player chooses an activity for the characters. Pick an activity that relates to one (or both) of the character's issues. Interact in character, get a sense of how they relate. The other players may ask questions, especially if the players have a hard time getting into a groove with one another. For example: Who always does the dishes? How do you feel about that? What are your pet names for one another? Who do the kids listen to? When did you last have sex?

SINGLETON SCENES: Singletons have a scene with a Friend (Note: not part of New Couple with them). They choose where it is, based on their connection with their friend. The Friend should ask the Singleton about relationships and how they feel about being alone.

REFLECTION SEQUENCE: After the scene is done, the Singleton player frames a flashback from the character's past that has to do with their core issue and casts other players in roles of people in their past. Relate to issues of relationships if possible.



Play

PHASE 2: INITIATION

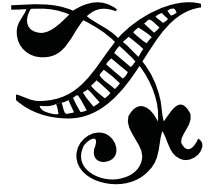
GROUP SCENE: All the characters are together for this scene. Decide what the event is that brings them all together. It may be a party, or a wedding. A concert or a funeral. Whatever fits for this group of friends. This scene is played out in a LARP style fashion, players interact in character with one another and mingle amongst one another. Have actual beverages if scene is a party.

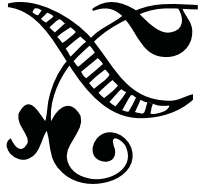
During the scene, the New Couples will meet one another and strike up a flirtation. Friends may cover for one another by talking to the other partner, or people may break off into another room for a tete-a-tete. End the scene once all couples have come back together.

PHASE 3: FOLLOW-THROUGH

NEW COUPLES: Each set of New Couples has a scene together. A non-involved player chooses where they meet. The players in the scene choose how or why they get together (by accident, someone calls, they drop by work etc.). During this scene the characters test out the boundaries of their attraction and talk about the other partner and how they would feel if these two got together.

REFLECTION SCENE AND FLASHBACK: If there is a character who is left out of the New Couples, this character gets a reflection scene in which they talk to a Friend (or Best Friend) about their relationship with their partner. They may not know that the other partner is interested in someone else. Then, play out a flashback from the character's life that involves their Core Issue.





PHASE 4: DEVELOPMENT

Play

Partner Scenes: The original couples are together. Time has passed and they have been in further contact with the New Flames. In this scene, they are doing something that relates to one of their Commitments. Do they tell each other they are falling in love with someone else? Do they ask to be able to pursue this? Does the other suspect? How do they deal with the idea of being with someone else?

Singleton Scenes: Each Single character meets with their Best Friend and talks to them about their budding relationship. Due to the interconnected nature of the stories, this may have fallout on other storylines.

REFLECTION: Play out Flashback Scenes for one or two characters with strong issues coming up in these scenes.

PHASE 5: ESCALATION

New Flame Scenes: How do they meet? Where? What is their relationship like? Are they furtive? Have they told their partners? Are they having sex? Lines may be crossed here. Commitments that the partners have are done by the new lovers. Betrayals are made. Who is reluctant? Who pushes? How does it come about? Do they regret? Get suggestions from other players on how situation can be made more charged and less stable.

REFLECTION: During the scene, two other players take part—not in character, but as “angels and devils”. Devil encourages characters to do what they want and disregard common sense and partner’s wishes. Angel encourages them to be cautious and think of how others would see things. Best played by players of partners of characters in scene. End by one or the other of main characters taking the hand of Angel or Devil, indicating by this what course of action characters will take.

Players of Partner not in scene have first choice to play Angel or Devil for their partner. Others may volunteer.



Play

PHASE 6: REVELATIONS

Couples: The truth comes out. How do they find out? What is the conversation like? Maybe a lied-to partner stumbles across them, lines are crossed, and core issues come to the fore. In this stage scenes are framed by the player of spouse character. Describe characters as having just crossed line, or about to and do so in scene. Involve Core Issues.

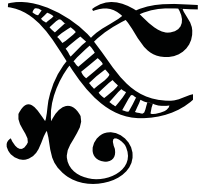
REFLECTION: May choose to replay scenes from the perspective of a different character. To do so, when scene ends, player requests replay. Then players act out scene again, roughly the same, but this player gives voiceover narration directing the actions of the other players. Change feeling of scene to match viewpoint of their character. Also, character flashback scenes.

PHASE 7: RESOLUTION

Mixed Scenes: Group scene, all present. Fall out from the climax takes place. Follow up conversations happen between characters. Relationships are shored up or abandoned.

Optional REFLECTION: During this scene, at any time a player may make the time out sign (“t” with hands). All other players freeze and that player gives a monologue about how a character is feeling. Or that player may touch another player to have them do a monologue. May walk about in the space. End by coming back to original place.

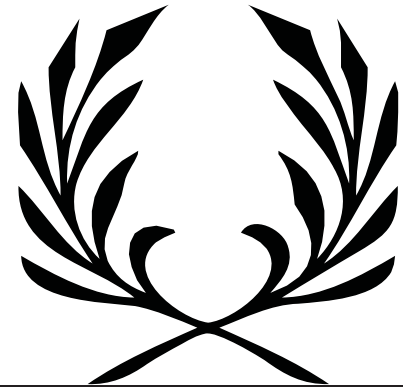




PHASE 8: DENOUMENT

FRIEND AND PARTNER SCENES: The characters reflect on what happened from some distant time in the future. For each character, the players choose where they are. Some couples may laugh over how foolish they were, or revel in the exploration they did together. Others may have parted, they may be with another person in bed, reminiscing about what they experienced in this relationship. Perhaps the new lover became their new partner.

This scene is an opportunity for the players to reflect on what their character experienced. To put it into the context of a life affected by the sometimes earth shattering pains of sharing love with another. Or that was enriched by the gifts of another's love, trust, forgiveness or deepened understanding.



Character Name:

Under my Skin

Core Issue:

Issue Areas:

	<i>Partner/Best Friend:</i>	<i>Friend/Best Friend:</i>	<i>New Lover/Friend:</i>
<i>Intimacy</i>			
<i>Passion</i>			
<i>Commitment</i>			
<i>Commitments:</i>			
<i>Lines:</i> <small>(partner only)</small>	<i>have sex</i>		
<i>Other notes:</i>			