

**THE WORLD IS ENDING AND WE ARE VERY  
LARGE DOGS**  
**A TABLETOP GAME ABOUT BRINGING HAPPINESS AT THE END**



## Introduction

The world is ending in one week. This we know for a fact. It is too late to stop it. It cannot be slowed down anymore. Especially not by you, because you are just a group of large dogs. All you can do is try and make the final days as best as you can for those that are near and dear to you. Your owners, your community, the other wild dogs in the park, whoever you hold dear.

This is a GM-less collaborative storytelling game, wherein the players work to weave stories of bright moments in the face of Armageddon. This game has been left purposefully open ended, in that your Happiness may range from heroically saving your Best Friend from an invading hostile alien to simply giving them a warm cuddle as the solar flare reaches its peak. The mood, intensity and tone of this game are up to you, the players, to decide. With that in mind:

### Step Zero: Staying Safe.

This game deals with endings, in one way or another. Ends of life, ends of days, ends of existence. As these topics may be sensitive for some, I suggest enacting a couple of safeguards before you start playing, to protect the mental health and wellbeing of the players.

#### The X Card

The X-Card is an optional tool (created by John Stavropoulos) that allows anyone in your game (including the GM) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen till it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise. At the start of your game, simply say:

*"I'd like your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way **[draw X on an index card]** just lift this card up, or simply tap it **[place card at the center of the table]**. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny, but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X card to protect myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone. Thank you!"*

For more information on the X-Card, visit <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>

The following are best practices taken from Golden Lasso Games, for more information visit <http://www.goldenlassogames.com>

### Pregame Agreements

Agreeing on tone is an important step before starting your game. Tone is “the general character or attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation, etc.” Before making characters it’s important that everyone know if it’s going to be a lighthearted romp with funny characters, an intense emotional exploration, a game focused on romance and seduction, or a battle-heavy dungeon crawl. A good way of defining tone is to describe it using movie ratings, or to cite examples of popular media to make sure everyone is on the same page.

### Debriefs

After you have finished a session of your game, it is important to check in with everyone to see how they are feeling. This can be done by the GM in private with each person for highly sensitive games, or just be a casual conversation with everyone after the game over some beers. It’s especially important that players touch base with one another after intense scenes or conflicts that happened during the game. This avoids the build-up of negative emotions between sessions and player misunderstandings.

### Open-Door Policy

An open-door policy is exactly what it sounds like, players can leave the table or leave the game in a mature manner for any reason without being judged. Obviously, this policy doesn’t apply to players who leave the table in a combative or unreasonable way. This can apply to things as simple as restroom breaks, taking phone calls, or going to another room for an emotional cool-down. Everyone at the table is an adult and deserves the respect to take care of their own needs.

With these few elements in place, you should be able to create a safe and open environment to explore with your players. Additionally, after these tools have been clarified, give the players an opportunity to highlight any topics or themes they would not like to be included in the game, as they may be triggers or just uncomfortable for the players. With all of these in place, we’re ready to begin



## Step One: Who are You?

You are a dog. A large dog. A good dog. You are a best friend to somebody. This may not necessarily be one person, or even one household. A local stray dog may be the best friend of an entire street, or simply one child you used to accompany to school. And conversely, a domesticated dog may be best friends with their whole family, or simply the dad who slips them bacon scraps under the table.

To learn who you are, you have to answer a few questions about yourself, from before all this happened:

- *What does your best friend call you? (Booker, Lou, Phil, Gene)*
- *In five words, what do you look like? (fluffy, spotted, leggy, brown, lapdog)*
- *Who is your best friend? (my dad, the Ngoma family, Buxton Town, another dog)*
- *What do you do with Best Friend? (Walk to school, lie on the sofa, guard the gate)*
- *Where do you live? (In a house, under a bridge, behind a café, in a pub)*
- *What are you good at? (being brave, running fast, scaring bad people)*
- *What makes you remember your Best Friend? (The duvet, football, the sound of milk bottles)*

You may additionally wish to draw or otherwise illustrate who you are, but this is not mandatory. Now you know who you are, and who your best friend is. But you need to find out what happened.



## Step Two: What Happened?

Something happened that caused the world to end. Well, more accurately, something happened that is causing the world to end. This can be anything, from a “2012”-esque cataclysm to a zombie uprising, to something else entirely. Below, I have created some pre-written Ends for you explore, or alternatively you can discuss with your other players to establish an End for yourselves. If you are playing from one of the pre-written Ends, there are questions provided to help customise The End for your session.

### End One: Bark at the Moon

Potential Moods:

Pulpy/Comedy Sci-Fi (*Mars Attacks*, *The World's End*)

Scenario:

Two days before The End, and a ship landed close to You and your Best Friend. The things on the ship are far more advanced than us and they didn't come to play. They begin levelling buildings and population numbers around the world, with no sign of stopping. Rumours start spreading of them taking certain people, rather than killing them.

Questions:

- *Are the Rumours true?*
- *Where are the people being taken?*
- *Why did the ships come?*
- *What can the aliens do?*
- *What do the aliens look like?*

### End Two: The Long Walk

Potential Moods:

Quiet, Despairing (*I am Legend*, *Cloverfield*)

Scenario:

You and your Best Friend's environment has been ruined by something. Common luxuries have been torn apart, and vital resources are dwindling. The closest water point is two miles away. Something bigger is coming. The End is coming soon, you can feel it.

Questions:

- *What happened?*
- *Where are you getting water from?*
- *How has the community reacted to this event?*
- *What is coming?*

## End Three: Dog of The Dead

Potential Moods:

Typical horror (*The Walking Dead, Left 4 Dead, 28 Days Later*)

Scenario:

One day ago, the zombies appeared. If they bite you, you turn into one of them. They're violent and hungry and unstoppable. Humans are getting hostile as resources and population numbers dwindle. The zombie numbers are increasing with every day.

Questions:

- *How many Zombies are there?*
- *Is your community close to getting overrun?*
- *How dangerous are the Zombies?*
- *Where are your Best Friends hiding?*

## End Four: The Stillness

Potential Moods:

Slow, Sci-fi (*The Last Day, Dune*)

Scenario:

A month ago, the world stopped spinning. Somehow, momentum didn't cause every building to topple, but the effects are dire. Half the planet is boiling, the other freezing. Travel across the world is impossible.

Questions:

- *Which side of the earth are you on?*
- *How has your community survived?*
- *What are they missing?*
- *How are things going to get worse?*

## End Five: Good Boy, Bad Omen.

Potential Moods:

Rapturous, Fiery, Fantastical (*Good Omens, Left Behind*)

Scenario:

Rumours have bubbled through the local parish of the Anti-Christ. At first, most dismissed it as nonsense, but then both government and religious figures began frequenting the house of a local child. And four Motorcyclists have been seen in the area. And the sky is getting redder...

Questions:

- *What does your Best Friend believe is happening?*
- *How has the community reacted?*
- *How have the unwanted visitors effected the town?*

## Step Three: Playing the Game

You begin two days before The End. At The End, all of your group's Best Friends will be gone. Potentially along with the rest of the community or the rest of the planet. But that is in two days' time.

### Two Days Before The End.

On the first day, the group of dogs congregate in the evening and take it in turns narrating how they and their Best Friend are surviving, knowing The End is coming. Consider these points:

- How are they getting food & water?
- How are they filling their time?
- Are they scared?
- Did they have to get in a fight?
- Have they had to move or separate from their community?

Once every dog has described their experience near The End, you decide that your Best Friends need you now more than ever. Take it in turns to describe a Happiness that you could bring to your Best Friend, something you could do to make their experience better as The End is coming. Either one at a time or as a group, describe the kind of happiness you'd like to create for your Best Friends. This conversation can go on for as long as it needs to, and when you have all decided on your mission, you can return to your home and get some much-needed rest.

### The Day Before The End.

This day begins like the rest of the days have since the world began to end. But this one feels different. Describe how the day feels compared to the rest of the days did since this began. This conversation should culminate in a feeling of urgency to enact your plans from the day before.

Take it in turns to narrate your experience of setting up and creating the moment of happiness you decided on the night before. As one player plays the role of their Large Dog, the rest of the table plays as The End, coming up with obstacles that the Dog must overcome as they plan and complete their task.

When playing as The End, it is important to know your role is not to totally stop the player from completing their task, only to deepen the experience of the player and the lore of the world you're playing within. Consider the following questions when playing as The End:

- What state would the environment be in?
- Would The Dog's actions alter the state of the world at all?
- How would the surrounding humans react to The Dog's actions?
- How could a community member's protection accidentally hinder the task at hand?
- How could the community aid the task at hand?
- Are there any hostile creatures?
- Are there any friendly creatures?

When playing as The Dog, you are not invincible. The other players should not construct a situation that should put you in mortal danger, but nonetheless your task is not to outsmart the other players, but to weave an interesting and layered story with them. When playing as The Dog, consider the following points:

- Will you need to communicate with any other beings? How will you do that?
- Will you need to gather any resources for your plan?
- How will you ensure your own safety?
- Will you need to go on reconnaissance before enacting your plan?
- How will you plan around the surrounding humans and animals?

At the end of your section, narrate and describe the moment you have created for your Best Friend. Consider how they feel before and after the moment is created, how they react, how the world, The End, pauses for this moment of joy. This is the culmination of the game, so don't hold back. Get as flowery as you like.

Embellishments are certainly welcome.

### The End.

The End has come. As stated at the top of this document, there was no way to stop it. If your group is feeling up to it, you may describe how The End came, but this is not mandatory. If you wish to leave the table with the lingering happiness, then feel free. As per the Open-Table Policy, if the party wishes to split at this point, that is totally acceptable.

If you wish to elaborate, narrate as a group how The End happened. You can do this either as Narrators or from the Perspective of the dogs you have been playing as. Feel free to get as elaborate or as general as you wish. Consider the following:

- How does the community you have been playing with react?
- Are they prepared for this?
- Is it fast or slow?
- What are the sounds and smells of The End?

### After The End.

Once the game has finished, take a moment to reflect on how the game progressed. Compliment your fellow players on any curveballs they introduced that made you reconsider or think about your plan in a new way. Go around the table, each of you recapping your favourite moment of the game. After all, this is a game about moments of light.



## About This Game

The name of this game emerged as a silly joke initially, but it quickly grew into an exercise in finding the joy in seemingly joyless situations. To put this into perspective, this game was written during that period in 2020 where the COVID-19 Pandemic was raging, protests about systemic racism, white supremacy and police brutality raged across the world, and the US and UK Governments were simultaneously removing rights from Transgender People (like myself). As you can image, glimmers of joy and hope are few and far between right now. In creating this game, in crafting situations of hope in a literal apocalypse, I wanted to remind and encourage people to bring these moments of light to people around them.

## Acknowledgements

*End Four: The Stillness* is loosely based on “The Last Day” by Andrew Hunter Murray and *End Five: Good Boy, Bad Omen* is loosely based on “Good Omens” by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman. The photos used to this point are provided by Pexels.com

Thank you to Clouds from “Games of Absence” for helping to iron out the structure of this game. Thank you to my husband Isaac for encouraging me to be creative and my dog Booker, pictured below, for creating moments of light in his own silly dog way.

And thank you for playing. Please let me know how your playing experience went by tweeting me: @edensthings

