

When You Meet Your Doppelganger on the Road,
You Must Make Out With Them

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a game by Midsummer Meinberg

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Introduction



When You Meet Your Doppelganger on the Road, You Must Make Out With Them is a game about meeting your doppelganger on the road and then making the decision about whether or not to make out with them. It is a game about horror and intimacy, about self-identity and self-love and self-destruction.

It requires two players, a copy of these rules, a quiet space, some writing utensils, and enough time to work through the three *Encounters* below. If a break is needed, it is recommended to break between the *First Encounter* and the *Second Encounter*.

Basic Rules

The game takes place as a conversation between the two players. In response to the prompts listed under each *Encounter* below, they will create a story together. Narration can take the form of describing actions, describing surroundings, or speaking in your character's voice. Except when the *Emotional Safety* rules are being using, all dialogue should be considered in-character from the beginning of an *Encounter* until its end.

If you're not sure what to say, look to the prompts below the *Encounter* and think about how your character will feel in the circumstances they are in. Each *Encounter* also has an end-point listed, so think about ways to bring the narrative naturally towards that end-point. The most important thing is to listen to your partner, to give space for them to speak and to have their voice heard. Indeed, each player gets to speak until one of the three following conditions are met.



First, the narration has moved to an area that is uncomfortable or potentially uncomfortable on an ideological, emotional, or health way. If so, follow the *Emotional Safety* section below.

Second, the current speaker has indicated that they wish to pass narration on. This can be done using the code phrase "what do you think?" or by remaining silent for an uncomfortably long period of time. If your partner is silent, do not immediately jump in, but give them time to think, and only take the narration if the silence is a clear cue to hand off narration.

Third, the non-current speaker wishes to take over the narration. If you wish to do so, you must in-character complement your doppelganger by referencing a trait of your own, out-of-game, body in a positive way. That is, if Player A currently has narrative control, Player B can take it by describing Player A's character with a trait that Player B possesses.

The Tally Sheet

Before beginning the game, take a piece of paper or an electronic document and divide it into two sections. Title one section "Steamy" and the other "Spooky." Whenever events occur in the narration that are particularly steamy (that is to say intimately or erotically charged) or spooky (intimidating, scary, off-putting), make a tally mark in the appropriate section. You'll need this total for the *Denouement*. It is recommended that you award points generously to generate the most interesting outcome.

Emotional Safety

When You Meet Your Doppelganger on the Road, You Must Make Out With Them is, as you might guess from the title, an emotionally intense game with heavy themes of intimacy. It is highly recommended that you play this game only with someone who you trust to respect your boundaries and who you know well enough to have some idea of where those boundaries are. If you do extend that trust to someone and they do not give you the space needed to be safe in the emotional content of the game, immediately leave the game.

Before starting the game, both players need to read through the *Encounters* and then bring up any potential topics that they do not want to see in the game. Those topics are completely off-limits for the sake of the game, and if any player brings them up, that's a sign to stop playing.



The first emotional safety rule of this game is the player is more important than the game. Your comfort and the comfort of your partner are necessary for the game to function. Stopping the game to prevent harm is more important than the narrative.

The second emotional safety rule of the game is to speak up when you are feeling uncomfortable. Everyone's standard for what level of discomfort is too high varies. Part of the reason that people seek out horror and romance is to explore a certain degree of discomfort within safe circumstances. Only you can say when a line has been crossed, and you have a responsibility to do so in order to make sure that you keep yourself as safe as possible. It's probably best to err on the side of caution.

The third and final rule of emotional safety is to listen if your partner says that they are uncomfortable. First, immediately stop play and listen to them as they describe why and how they're uncomfortable. Work with them to the degree that they desire to create the best possible outcome. One player may simply want to move on, another may want to address directly what was uncomfortable about the narration, while a third might just want to warn about things going off into a bad direction.

You may also find formal tools useful for navigating the emotional space of this game. I recommend Lines and Veils, Script Change, and the OK Check-in as core parts of a suite of emotional safety tools.

First Encounter - On the Road

It's a sweltering summer day, the asphalt of the highway wavering in the heat. The day is long and the road is empty and the sun is an unblinking eye staring down in judgment on all that scurry beneath its imperious presence. One is driving, music blasting, AC broken, windows down to get some of that breeze in. One is walking backwards along the side of the road, thumb extended in a clear gesture. There is an immediate recognition like an electric shock that disturbs the very ground, an earthquake that exists only in their hearts. Of course a ride has to be offered, of course a ride has to be accepted. It doesn't matter where they're going, they're going there together now, these two identical strangers.

In this First Encounter, the two characters meet and head out down the road. There are certain to be questions, but answers are in short supply. Neither player should determine the exact nature of their character, that will be determined after the Climax. No lies, save those by omission, should be included in the narration at this point. The details are clear, the world is concrete. Characters can lie in their speech, can keep things hidden, but the world itself is clear.



Things to Discuss

Who are you? Offer a name, offer pronouns (these don't have to match, two identical people can use different pronouns and/or be different genders), speak lightly and defensively of where you've been.

Where are you going? Offer a destination, somewhere in the distance, and a reason, perhaps a vague one, for the travel, and an explanation for the circumstances you were found in.

What does the road inspire in you? Ramble about emptiness and distance, about places to be and places to have been, about connections and asphalt, about the desolate beauty of the empty wilds.

How about the weather, huh? The most banal of topics, but strange things can emerge from a frank discussion of the weather and the climate and that beating heat and that slowly setting sun shining always.

Encounter's End

This encounter ends when night falls and the travellers decide to spend their night at a hotel on the road's side.

Second Encounter - The Empty Hotel

The hotel stretches, occupying more space than it ought to, but it casts no light, absorbing the night's darkness and casting it like a shadow over the surroundings. The lobby is empty save for a young, Korean-American person working behind the desk. Their nametag says "Bobbi Park." They get the travelers a room for the night and promise to help with anything the pair need. Despite the lack of guests, the place seems well maintained and is elegantly furnished. It's the kind of place that a person can just sink into, like the too plush carpet.

During the Second Encounter, the two characters spend their time exploring the interior of the hotel. Any facility desired can exist, but there is definitely a restaurant and a bar. The only staff present is Bobbi Park, who works every position, appearing precisely where they are needed when they are needed. Either player can describe Bobbi Park's actions during their narration, just remember that they are always courteous but will refuse to enter any guest room.

The hotel is a strange place, and it can change from moment to moment. Feel free to stretch the truth of the place in the narration, extending and shifting the nature of the world. Make the shadows seem longer, indulge in purple prose in the narration itself, embrace metaphor and other figurative language to imbue the surroundings with an unnatural vibrancy.



The Empty Hotel

Things to Discuss

What's for dinner? Food is good, it nourishes the body and offers room for a quiet conversation over candlelight and an excuse for silence when focused on the food.

Isn't this place weird? The hotel is a liminal space, a place between places, and reality bleeds around the seams, ichorous and dark, inky and thick, pulsing and humming with the luminous possibilities of a world that is not home, but where the imagination can truly shine.

What will tomorrow bring? Night is long and it draws on across the vast gulf of time, but there is always a tomorrow, always a next step towards the destination, and room to talk about what comes next, about the logistics and the abstractions and those quiet needs.

What dreams linger in your heart? Hidden desires flutter in the heart and the gut and the loins, and the night promises so much in its quiet embrace and the presence of this

stranger, identical and alluring, but what desires lurk beneath that, beneath the layers of the body and into the innermost reflection of the self.

What do you think of Bobbi? Everywhere and nowhere, the psychopomp to guide those awaiting a death (either little or large) to that destination, but who knows what drives them, or why and how they do what they do.

Who is waiting for you? Few are truly alone in this world and there are those who need an accounting, who will miss those that disappear, that are expecting labors, expecting faces and words before things are over.

Encounter's End

This encounter ends when the pair finally retire to their room, the only one available despite the lack of any other visible guests, and discover that it only has one bed.



Third Encounter - Climax

At long last the night comes to an end and revelations shall emerge, the truth shall be forged out of the darkness and the fire and become a lingering passion, either one of desire or of dread. Time ticks down its final fatalist minutes, here in this tiny hotel room with the single bed, well furnished, well maintained, but so blisteringly intimate that there can be no escape from the destiny that is calling.

In this final Encounter, explore the topics that have been set up in the previous encounters. Do not leave anything on the table, for this is the last time that there will be an opportunity to discuss these things before the lives of the characters are changed, when that spark of tension finally reaches its terminus.

Things to Discuss

Why are you still here? You've had plenty of opportunities to leave, plenty of options to escape from this inevitability, but some force keeps you here, keeps you locked onto this path.

What does your flesh and your heart yearn for? There is no more time to be coy about lusts and hungers, now is the true to reveal it, to reveal those carnal hungers and rejoice in the truth of them.

Encounter's End

This encounter ends whenever one character decides to open up completely about what they've been hiding. Move immediately to *Denouement* to resolve this.



Denouement

First, each player reveals their *Tally Sheet*. Then, each player makes a final sum of their tallies and determines whether they have more points in Spooky or Steamy.

If both players have more points in Steamy, then the identical appearance of the characters is just a coincidence. There is nothing supernatural at work and they are both free to consummate their desires in whatever way they wish.

If both players have more points in Spooky, then the characters are both supernatural beings sent to terrorize, torment, and kill the person that they look like, but things got messed up and they wound up meeting each other rather than their target. They're both still incredibly attractive, though, and have no reason not to make out.

If one player had more points in Steamy and one player had more points in Spooky, then the one that had more points in Steamy's character is a supernatural being sent to terrorize, torment, and kill the other character. Whether or not they still wish to is up to them, though they must reveal their nature in the following narrative.

Once the result has been determined, each player gets one more opportunity to narrate, offering their attempt at a conclusion to the story.



Debrief and Derole

After the game is complete, it is important to take some time to readjust back to the normal world. The high levels of intensity and intimacy can offer a deeper engagement with the narrative, so it is important to carefully step backwards and out of character. Take some time apart to breathe and take care of any immediate physical, then return to continue.

First, reintroduce yourselves by your real names and your real pronouns. Then, talk about some of your real world interests, things that you're looking forward to doing over the course of the next week or so, as a reminder of the importance of reality moving forward. Finally, take some time to discuss your feelings about the game and about each other and about how the game has changed those feelings if at all.

After this, take the time to thank each other for playing, then pack up the materials of play and move forward.

