



# TWENTY FOUR GAME POEMS

*A “role-playing poem” is a very short game, where the idea is to investigate a mood or scene or something else of limited scope. -Thomas HV Mørkrid*

# INTRODUCTION

Hi. Thanks for picking up my book of game poems.

I first encountered the term “role-playing poem” on the Story Games message boards, when Bryan Hansel posted a strange little thing about child monks throwing peas at each other while humming “Ohmmm...”

I thought it was completely fantastic, and very soon there were more, both from a chocolate-driven game design challenge there, and from the fine gentlemen over on the Nørwegian Style RPG blog.

What is a “game poem”? Basically, it’s a little game that you can pick up and play in fifteen minutes or so, give or take. There’s no preparation time, nothing to get between you and playing immediately. They generally address some specific mood or emotion, or focus on one particular notion, but not all of the games here strictly adhere to that definition. First and foremost, a game poem is just there to be taken in and experienced with a friend or group of friends for a few moments, and then those moments are over – and hopefully, something small and wonderful will happen in the process.

So, read, play, and enjoy! Any and all feedback is welcome and encouraged.

If you have questions, comments, or if you’d like to send me your play reports, you can reach me at [majcher@gizmet.com](mailto:majcher@gizmet.com). My ongoing game-a-week project lives at <http://gamepoems.gizmet.com/>, so if you want more, you know where to find them.

Thanks again – have fun!

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# THREE OLD MEN

This game requires exactly three players. The three players will play the parts of three old men in a retirement community: Charles, Peter, and Michael. Each of these three men wish each the others dead.

Beginning with the oldest, each player will chose one of the old men to portray. Charles is wealthy, and is willing to pay people to carry out his malicious intentions for him. Peter carries a heavy walking stick that he imagines that he will use to cave in the skulls of his enemies. Michael keeps a straight razor in his pocket, and he fantasizes about drawing it across the throats of the other two. In any life-or-death conflict, and only in a life-or-death conflict, Charles will win over Peter, Peter will win over Michael, and Michael will win over Charles.

Charles, Peter, and Michael have known each other since they were boys, and have shared much of their lives together. Now, every day, the three old men sit together and complain. They complain about their health, women, the weather, politics, the other people in the community, taxes, their children, people of other races or social classes, but especially, they complain about each other, and the wrongs that they perceive have been perpetrated upon themselves by the other two.

The player who has chosen Charles begins by reminding one of the other two men of something that they did to annoy, slight, or injure him. This could be anything from borrowing money and not repaying it, to running down his daughter-in-law with an automobile, to taking the last good seat at lunch. It can be trivial or serious, but the complaint must be genuine, and bitterly felt. The accused man may choose to defend himself or not, but must very soon thereafter tell one of the other men why they have wronged him, in the same manner, and that man must lodge a complaint against one of the others again in turn, and so on. Each accusation leveled against one of the other players must be of increasing significance to the accuser – Charles spilling grape juice on Peter’s white pants may not be objectively worse than the fact that Michael slept with Peter’s first wife while he was away fighting Germans, but those were some damn fine pants.

Two things may modify this circle of escalating indictments.

First, if anyone feels that their accuser has gone too far, struck them so deeply that they have no recourse but to finally make their stand, they may stand up and bellow, “God Dammit! That’s enough!” When a player takes a stand against their accuser, they initiate a life-or-death conflict, describing how they intend to at last end the life of the miserable bastard. The man who is being attacked then describes the outcome of this conflict,

remembering the rules above: Michael will always kill Charles, Peter will always kill Michael, and Charles will always kill Peter.

After one of the men is dead, the remaining two must pause, lock eyes, and regard each other before deciding what to do next. If one of them wishes to make a move against the other, now is the time. If a conflict results in one man remaining alive, alone, that man is the winner, and may take a sentence or two to describe what happens next, before fading to black.

The second thing that may be done within the circle of recriminations is this: when accused of wrongdoing by another man, instead of returning an accusation to one of the other two, simply complain about something else. It's been colder this year than previous years, and my joints ache. Did you see that news story about that lady on welfare? It's been a month since my birthday, and that no-good grandson of mine still hasn't called. When a man issues a general complaint instead of lodging an accusation against another man, the others may either continue to respond with accusations as before ("Yeah, well I wouldn't visit an old louse who cheats his friends at cards, either!") or respond with another general complaint, either in agreement with the previous one, or on another topic altogether.

If it happens that all three men make general complaints without accusing another of some offense, the game has ended. Each of the men in turn must look into the distance and say, "Yep." Then they will all walk away, and will return to begin again the next day.

## STONE AND FEATHER

The game begins with three to six players sitting in a circle, or at a table. In the center, there is a single feather, and one small stone for each player. Whoever has flown most recently will begin, and describe in one brief sentence what type of bird they are. What color are you? What are your eyes like? Are you large or small, sleek or clumsy, predator or prey? The only restriction here is that the bird must be able to fly.

Once everyone in the circle has described themselves briefly, the first player will take the feather from the center and describe his or her nesting place in a sentence or two. Is it high in a tree, or in a crag by the sea? Deep in the desert, or on a post in the hunters' camp? They then tell the others what it is like to take to flight, to leave the nesting place and to go in search of something. You may be searching for food, a mate, someone to play with, a place to stretch your wings in the sun and the wind, anything. After a moment, this bird will take a stone from the center and put it in front of

themselves, and then pass the feather to another player who does not yet seek something. They will then describe taking off in the same way, take a stone, and pass the feather, continuing until every player has left their nest.

When each player has taken a turn describing taking off in search of something, the feather may then be passed to anyone who has a stone set in front of them. Any bird who receives the feather this way will then tell what they see below them as they fly. Take a few sentences and describe the landscape, or the sea beneath you, the quality of the air, the weather, the sensation of the wind flowing over and through you. Do you see people? Animals? Natural or man-made structures? Nothing? Nobody? Do you have a sense of what it is you seek yet? If you remember something that another bird described, and that affects your description, marvelous. After a moment, this bird will pick up its stone, and pass the feather to another player who still knows that they seek something by the stone in front of them. They will then describe their flight in the same way, taking up their stone and passing the feather, until every player does this as well.

When every player is holding their stone, the bird who holds the feather places it back in the center, and pauses for a moment. Look around at the other players, and choose one to place your stone in front of. That bird will briefly describe what ends their flight. Do they find the thing they sought after? Do they return to their nesting place, or is their flight interrupted terribly? Do they find something new to search for, or are they contented? If they remember something that another bird described, and that affects their description, wonderful. After a moment, that bird's story is over. They look at the other players, and choose one who still holds a stone in their hand, but has no stone in front of them, and places their own stone in front of them. They will describe the end of their flight in the same way, until the every player does this, and every player has a stone in front of them again.

Take a moment, and one by one, each player will choose to return their stone to the center alongside the feather, or keep it with them. If they wish to take a sentence or two to explain their choice, they may, but it is not required. When everyone has chosen, give the feather to one player. They will begin the next game, next time. Leave the stones where they lie.



# BEHIND THEIR BACK

This game requires an even number of people – at least six, but no more than ten or so – a deck of regular playing cards, and someone to be the dealer and referee for the game. If there isn't an extra player, have the most trustworthy person available act as the dealer.

To set up the cards, go through the deck and pick matching pairs of unique numbers, one card for each player. (That is, there may not be more than two of each number in play.) So, for example, for a group of eight players, the dealer might choose two each of twos, jacks, threes and eights. The suits of these cards will be random – there might be three hearts, two spades, two clubs, and only one diamond in the set. The dealer should choose the cards as randomly as possible, maybe by secretly dealing out a card, then going through the shuffled deck in order until they find a matching number, and repeating the process until all the cards are chosen. (Or, if they're feeling wicked, picking a set of cards that will ensure optimal mayhem.) It is completely up to the dealer, but a random selection of card pairs should be totally fine. Regardless, the actual cards selected should be kept a secret from the rest of the players.

After the cards are selected (and the dealer has done their best to forget what they were, if possible), put the rest of the deck away, shuffle the selected cards and deal one to each player. Everyone now has a mate – the person who has the other card that matches their number – and at least two people will have one or more secret lovers – the person (or persons!) who match their card's suit. Players should announce their number, find their mate, and join them. At no time should anyone show anybody else their card, not even their mate, or say what their card's suit is.

(It should go without saying that “mates” and “secret lovers” are assigned and accepted without regard to gender. But I'm saying it, anyway.)

Each mated pair should privately decide on some casual physical signal of intimacy that they will use to show their devotion to each other. It may be silently mouthing a certain endearing word or words to the other person. It might be something like touching your fingers to the other's arm, shoulder, neck, or ear. It may be making a specific funny face at each other. It could be a playful sock to the jaw, or a tweak of the nose. Whatever it is, spend a minute or so establishing the signal and making small talk with your mate. After everybody is settled in, the dealer will say, “mingle!”, and each person should find someone else to talk to – most likely, someone who is not their mate.

You may now be talking to your secret lover, or you may just be chatting with a pleasant stranger. You have no idea at this point. You must find a way to subtly indicate your suit through normal conversation, without being too obvious, or stating it outright. Maybe you talk about your jewelry, or golfing, or valentine's day. Perhaps you tend to alliterate the starting letter of your suit a bit more than you normally would. Whatever you do, you must make sure that nobody else could possibly overhear what you're trying to tell (and find out) from your conversation partner. If you do happen to overhear someone else being crass and obvious about their suit, you are well within your rights to pause in your chit-chat, tap them on the shoulder, and explain to them gently, but clearly, how embarrassed they should be about speaking of private matters so openly.

After a minute or so – maybe more, maybe less, according to the number of players – the dealer will again call out “mingle!”. Everyone must find a new partner to talk with. The dealer will continue to encourage the players to mingle, until everyone has had a chance to talk with everyone else at least once. When the dealer thinks that everyone has had their fun, they may say, “mates!”, at which point everyone should find their mate, and attempt to make their signal of intimacy once again.

Attempt? Oh, yes. In the course of mingling and attempting to allude to your true nature – the suit of your card – you may very well run into someone who shares your suit. This person is your secret lover, and you must try to express your covert relationship with them. If at all possible, when you find a secret lover, you should attempt to share your signal of intimacy with them, and if they recognize that you are doing that, they will try to share theirs with you, as well. If you happened to notice what the original couples were doing with each other in their initial conversations, you may be able to recognize this immediately. Once you've done this, attempt to discreetly establish a new, secret signal of intimacy with your lover. This should be something that will be recognizable across a room, but only to the two of you. Inevitably, you will be separated, but you may try to reconnect as many times as is feasible in the brief course of the game.

Public intimacy between secret lovers is not without its dangers, of course. While mingling, people should be aware of who their mates are talking to, and what they're doing. If you see that your mate is sharing your private intimacy signals with someone else, it's a good chance that they're carrying on behind your back! Do not say anything. Maybe it was nothing. Maybe you should try to reconnect with them the next time mingling is called for. Are they going back to the same person? Are they acting funny with them now? Be cool. Wait until the dealer calls “mates!” – if they try to use your private signal with you now, after they've done it with someone else, you are well within your rights to brush them away or glare at them, to let them know that you're on to their shenanigans.

After allowing the couples to check in with each other, the dealer should ask for pairs of people to turn in their cards. If your partner has discovered your perfidy and brushed aside your intimacy, you'd probably be best off turning in with your secret lover, if possible. If you've been cuckolded, you probably don't want to turn in your card with the person who's been sneaking around behind your back. Maybe you've got a secret lover of your own – you may turn to them, and see if they'd like to turn in with you. Unless they haven't been caught out by their mate, of course. Then it might be best to just exchange your secret signals, swallow your pride, and go with the one who brought you. You may not win as hard as the pairs that remained true to each other, but at least you won't be turning in alone.

## ALL THE COLOR HAS GONE

Find two coins, and a few friends to play with. Sit with your other players. The person wearing the brightest color begins by naming a place that they have a strong memory of. They then pick up one of the coins, and hand the other coin to one of the other players. The first player begins by noting their memory, only briefly, and then describing where it took place. They may not use any color words in their description. After a minute or so, the player with the other coin waits for the first player to note a particular thing in their description, lets them finish their current sentence, and then holds up the coin, asking "What color was that?" Both players then flip their coins.

If the two coins do not match, the starting player must pause, blink, take on a confused look, and say, "I don't know." They then hand their coin to a player who has not yet asked for a color. If the two coins do match, the starting player may answer with one or two color words, blink, take a deep breath, and then hand their coin to another player, as above. The player who just asked "What color was that?" now begins describing their memory and place, as the starting player did, until the person with the other coin stops them again, and asks for a color. Coins are flipped again, they respond again as above, and then the describer passes their coin to someone who has not yet asked for a color. This is repeated until everyone has done this once.

After every player has had a turn describing their place, with or without a color, the two players who hold the coins flip them one more time, and then place them in the center.

If the coins match, a single color has returned to those who answered “I don’t know” to the question about their description. Each of those players take a turn describing one element of their place that they now remember having a vivid, brilliant color, using only a sentence or two. After every player has had the chance to name a and describe a color, pause for a moment, then, beginning with the starting player, go around and have each player speak their color aloud, in turn.

If the coins do not match, however, color has fled from those who were able to recall one color in their description. Each of those players take a turn describing how the colored item in their place fades, using only a sentence or two. After every player has experienced the loss of color, pause for a moment, then, beginning with the starting player, go around and have each player in turn speak silently, in their mind, the color that they know should have been in their place.

Remember your color, and hold it in your mind until the next time you play. Perhaps then you can remember another.

## EVERYTHING YOU DO IS STUPID

Gather your players and have one of them set a timer for fifteen minutes. After the timer has started, another player should tell them how stupid it was to use the kind of timer they used. If they used a kitchen timer, tell them to join the twenty-first century and get something digital. If they used their iPhone, tell them that they’re being trendy, and complain about how stupid Apple is. Whatever they did, it was stupid, and you should let them know. The player who set the timer should acknowledge verbally that what they did was stupid, and totally agree with the person who told them that it was stupid to set the timer that way.

After the stupidity of setting the timer that way was been accepted, you may begin the game in earnest. The person who told the person who set the timer how stupid it was to set the timer that way should begin recounting their boring day, starting as early as possible. As soon as anyone gets the urge to tell them that something they did was stupid – and that urge should come easily, since everything you do is stupid – they should tell them exactly why what they did was stupid, and how they could have done it better, or why they shouldn’t have bothered doing it at all. You don’t need to go into great detail about why it was stupid, just a general dismissal of the method of doing something (say, oh, I don’t know, brushing your teeth, just off the top of my head) or a statement of the pointlessness of doing it in the first place.

“God, that’s so stupid. You don’t have an electric toothbrush? What are you, some kind of hippie?”

“Really, you don’t use organic toothpaste? How stupid is that? You must really hate the planet.”

“It’s stupid to brush your teeth every day. People survived for thousands of years without brushing their teeth!”

After someone points out something stupid that the person talks about doing – and really, it could be anything, because everything you do is stupid – that person should start talking about their own day, starting off from about the same point. If the last person talked about brushing their teeth (“You’re just making the hygiene product companies rich, you know.”), the person who berated them for their stupidity might start talking about taking a shower (“It’s stupid to get up extra early to shower – I just take a bath at night.”) or eating breakfast (“You brew your own coffee? That’s so stupid! Starbucks, dude.”) or driving to work (“You still drive when gas costs this much? Man, it’s stupid not to ride a bike everywhere now.”).

When telling someone that something they did is stupid – and remember, *everything* you do is stupid – you may be as serious, crazy, well-founded or extreme as you wish. The only rule is to pick out something that is stupid, tell them that it was stupid, tell them why, and then start talking about your own stupid day. Also, be sure to point out that the thing that they did was stupid and how, and not tell them that they themselves are stupid, no matter how offended you may be at the stupidity of their actions. This is about pointing out the shortcomings of each others’ actions, not pointing out how dumb you think your friends are as people.

After the fifteen minutes is up, and the timer goes off, you may finish the last judgement of stupidity if you need to, or just stop immediately where you are. After you’re done speaking, let a moment or two pass. When the time is right, someone will say, “Wow, that game was stupid.” Then go do something else.



# SLOWER THAN LIGHT

Find three to five players. You will each be going on a long journey, traveling far away from the others. You will still be able to stay in contact with each other, although as you travel, the distances between you will become greater, and the time it takes the messages to travel between you will increase. But still, you will continue to write, to maintain the threads of connection.

First, agree what kind of journey you will each be embarking upon. Perhaps you will be blasting off into deep space in silver rocket ships, you might be exploring the oceans on old sailing ships, or trekking across undiscovered country with your caravans. Whatever the journey may be, you will be mostly isolated, individually, with the brief letters that you send to each other as the only contact with other people.

Now, each of you will need several small pieces of paper, or index cards, and a something to write with. You will keep the first one for yourself, to keep track of how far away your friends are. Write each of the other players' names on the paper, one per line. This will be your message log.

Now, choose one to write a message to, and make a hash mark next to their name on your message log sheet. Take a new piece of paper and write them a short message, no longer than a sentence or two, taking maybe thirty seconds or so. The note may be about anything – what you've done or discovered on your journey, a question asking how they are doing, passing on greetings from another traveler, or anything else that springs to mind. When the message is written, fold the paper in half, and write "From [your name], To [their name]" on the outside. It might be nice to hold the folded paper up so that everyone can see that you are finished.

Once everyone has completed their letter, or a minute has passed, hand the paper to the person it is addressed to. Each player will take a moment to quietly read their message to themselves. Keep the message that you have received safely next to you. When everyone has read their message, it is time to write another.

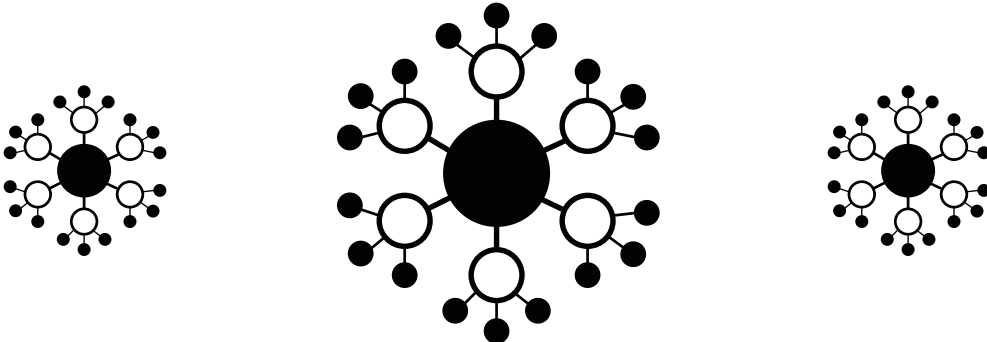
Every message that you send after the first is likely to take longer than the last. Decide again to whom you will write your letter. (Remember that you will only be writing a sentence or two, at most.) If you are once again writing to someone who you have not sent a message to yet, do the same thing as the first message – put a hash mark next to their name on your message log, write your message on a new piece of paper, fold it up, put your name and theirs on the outside, and once all the messages are done, hand it to them to read.

However, if you have already sent someone a message – you will know by the hash marks next to their name – it will take longer for them to receive it this time. Write the note as before, fold the paper, but when you write your name and theirs on the outside, draw an empty check box next to their name, one for each hash mark after their name on your message log sheet. Once you have done that, add another hash mark, and when it is time to pass the message on, hand it to someone else, anyone who is not the intended final recipient. They will hold on to it for the next round.

(This means that the first letter that you send to someone will arrive immediately, the second letter that you send will take an additional round of messaging to arrive, the third one will take an extra two rounds, and so on. One extra message round – one empty check box – for each letter that you've sent them previously.)

So, what do you do when you receive a letter in transit, one that is not addressed to you, which has empty check boxes next to the recipient's name? When you first get the message, tick off one of the check boxes. Then go ahead and write your own letter to whoever you choose, remember to mark them off in your log, and add the appropriate number of check boxes next to their name. Now, look at all the outgoing messages that you have in front of you, including the one you're sending right now. If a message has no unchecked boxes on it – either this is the first message to that recipient, or all the boxes have been checked off – you may simply hand it to them, and they will read it immediately. If there are still unchecked boxes on the letter, however, you must continue passing it to someone who is not the noted recipient (maybe even the original sender), until it has traveled long and far enough to reach its final destination.

Continue writing and passing and reading messages in this manner for a dozen or more rounds – about fifteen or twenty minutes worth. When everyone agrees that they have written their last message, it is inevitable that there will be many undelivered letters floating around. Take a few rounds to pass the messages around, without writing new ones, checking off the boxes until the last letter reaches its destination. Do not read these messages now, however – take them with you, and read them later, when you are alone.



# THE SIGN OF THE GREAT OLD ELDER GOD FROM BEYOND

This is a game for two players. One player will take the role of the mad worshipper, bent on manifesting the Great Old Elder God From Beyond here on Earth, and the other will act as the avatar of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond itself. (You may play the game multiple times, alternating roles, at your own risk.)

To begin, decide how powerful the Great Old Elder God From Beyond will be. Some Great Old Elder Gods are worse than others. The avatar will begin with a number of tokens – stones, coins, nails, pieces of candy, teeth, whatever you have at hand – to denote exactly how terrible they actually are, with fewer tokens being worse. For example, you may give the avatar of the GOEGFB five tokens if they are just plain horrible, or even just a single token if they are quite horrible indeed.

The avatar of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond then asks their foul master to deliver unto them an action that the worshipper may perform that will allow it to assume a monstrous form in our plane of reality, and lay waste to the insignificance of human civilization. This may be something as simple as touching one's nose with the left index finger, or as complicated as jumping up and down on one foot while rubbing your belly and whistling "Mean Green Mother from Outer Space". The difficulty of the action is entirely up to the avatar, depending on how sadistic they think the Great Old Elder God From Beyond is feeling today.

Once decided, the avatar declares, "BEGIN, MORTAL!" The worshipper may then begin asking questions about the summoning action, which must be able to be answered with a "yes" or "no". The avatar of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond must then answer the question to the best of their ability. If the question is unclear or unable to be answered, the avatar may simply respond by bellowing "MY MASTER IS DISPLEASED WITH YOUR INQUIRY!", and the summoner may ask another.

If the avatar answers the supplicant's question in the affirmative, bringing them one step closer to bringing ecstatic devastation to mankind, the worshipper becomes just a little bit more unhinged. After answering "yes", the avatar of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond must choose one of the words that the asker used in their question, and declare it forbidden, stricken, blasted from their mind. The worshipper may not speak the word, but they may emit gibberish from their mouths in place of it.

For example, the worshipper may ask, “Shall I touch a finger to my forehead?” The avatar answers, “Yes, and you are now forbidden to utter the word ‘finger.’” The mad god’s servant may then ask, “Do you wish me to use my pinkie?” or “Must I use my middle galbahrah to summon you?” Bear in mind that the worshipper may only ask questions verbally – they may not use physical gestures (“Do I use \*this\* finger?”) to get information. If these strictures are broken – if the worshipper uses a forbidden word, or physical gesture to ask a question – then that question is void, and they must give the avatar of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond one of their tokens in compensation for their transgression. If they have lost their last token in this way, the GOEGFB immediately strikes them down where they stand, and they lose the game.

Alternately, if the avatar is able to answer the worshipper’s question “no”, then the avatar must give the worshipper one of their tokens. If the avatar has run out of tokens, and cannot give them one, they may demand that the inquisitor immediately attempt to summon the Great Old Elder God From Beyond, on pain of being torn limb from limb by invisible demons. This is most unpleasant, and is to be avoided at all costs. The avatar may also demand that the worshipper attempt a summoning if they cannot formulate an understandable question – it is possible, nay, likely, that so many words will have been elided from the questioner’s mind that all they can do is spout unrecognizable gibberish. If this is the case, the GOEGFB may demand that the avatar remove all tokens from play, as the worshipper makes one last desperate attempt to interpret their demands.

The worshipper may attempt to summon the Great Old Elder God From Beyond at any time – or when required to, as above, when the avatar is unable to give them a token for a negative answer. The summoner announces that they are beginning the ritual by discarding a token, and attempting to perform the action that they believe will bring ruin to the worthless insects that crawl upon our world. If they successfully perform the action that was communicated to the avatar by his dark overlord, then the Great Old Elder God From Beyond is able to manifest upon the earth, wreaking destruction and havoc to the great delight of its followers. Hooray! If the attempt fails, and the worshipper has not discovered the correct action to bring about the End of Man, they must give another token to the avatar, and continue trying. If they have lost their last token by doing this, the Great Old Elder God From Beyond becomes extremely displeased with their failure, and is able to breach into our dimension just long enough to consume their degenerate worshipper, and drive the avatar into utter madness and despair. Way to go, guys.

(A simpler version of this game removes all of the foolishness with the tokens, and simply focuses on the elimination of the worshipper’s vocabulary, and their ridiculous attempts to fulfill the wishes of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond and its avatar. Continue until the proper summoning action is discovered, or until there is no sensible language left available to the summoner. Have fun destroying the world!)

# THE CALAIS BUNKER

This is a game for three or more players. Each of you will play the role of a German soldier, stationed together in a spotting and gunnery bunker in Calais, near the French beaches overlooking the Strait of Dover, which is the narrowest point in the English Channel. At least one player must take the part of a soldier manning a machine gun, one player will take the part of a spotter – using binoculars or field glasses or the like – and exactly one player must take the part of the radio operator. You may assume that you are each familiar with your roles and positions, you are capable and competent in carrying out your responsibilities, and you all have standard equipment appropriate to your stations.

One of the soldiers is a traitor to the Reich. Do not decide who this will be, or discuss it as players at any time. If the issue comes up during play, act and react accordingly, but do not address the matter out of character.

As the game begins, it is early June, 1944. It is summer in occupied France, and it is miserably hot inside the bunker. You are terribly uncomfortable in your uniforms, and you have been operating on continuous watch for the last twenty-four hours. Your watch has been uneventful for some time, but you can sense that something is stirring in the wind; your superiors have not informed you exactly what that something might be, however.

The radio operator should start a timer, or note the time as you start playing. Take a minute or so to establish the setting and characters – address each other by name and rank, discuss your duties, gossip, socialize a little bit. You have known each other for months, at least, and should be able to make small talk easily. Accept what each player says as fact, and build and explore your characters and relationships from there.

One minute and thirty seconds after play begins (1:30), the radio man announces that he has just received word that there is enemy movement in the area. You are to remain alert and await further orders. The soldiers should continue talking among themselves, but take no action yet.

Four minutes after play begins (4:00), the radio operator announces that German radar has detected a large fleet of Allied ships approaching the shores of Pas-de-Calais, exact composition unknown, and the soldiers should prepare to engage any ground troops that make a landing.

Continue interacting with each other, and act and react appropriately.

Nine minutes and fifteen seconds after play begins (9:15), the radio man turns to his companions and tells them that further information regarding the attack began to arrive, then the radio suddenly fell silent. A brief inspection reveals that the transceiver has gone completely dead, and nothing will bring it back to working order.

Twelve minutes and thirty seconds after play begins (12:30), the radio sputters to life for a moment, and the radio operator can make out the following words through the static: "...ssive invasion fl..." "... treachery and cowardice wi..." "...duty as a Ger..." "...ngage the ..." "...all appropriate for..." The radio then emits a shower of sparks and falls silent once again.

Fourteen minutes after play begins (14:00), the soldier acting as the spotter announces that German gun batteries along the coast have commenced firing, and you pause for a moment, listening to the low thumping sound of the artillery in the distance.

Fifteen minutes after play begins (15:00), one of the soldiers manning a machine gun spots something moving towards the bunker, coming over a dune just within range.

Each person may then make one statement or describe one action that their character takes, and the game ends.

# GOOFBALL

This is a game for two players. The players may be of any gender. One player will be the Lover, and the other player will be the Beloved.

The Beloved sets a timer for fifteen minutes, or uses a watch of some sort, and keeps an eye on it.

The Lover should pay as much attention to the Beloved as they can. Maintain eye contact if possible, move physically closer, as close as you are comfortable. After a few seconds, the Beloved should note something about the Lover, and compliment them on it. They have nice eyes or a bright smile, their clothes look particularly good today, they seem very happy. The Lover thanks the Beloved, and returns the compliment, telling the Beloved something that they appreciate about them, or find particularly pleasing. Continue this exchange of compliments for a minute or two.

Pause for a moment, and look each other in the eyes. Feel the connection. The Lover says, simply, "I love you." The Beloved pauses for a moment, looks away, returns to meet the Lover's gaze, and replies, "I love you."

For the next minute or two, continue taking turns looking into each others' eyes, smiling, and saying, "I love you."

Just before the timer reaches the three minute mark, the Beloved looks away, and is silent for a short while. Just after the three minute mark has passed, the Lover attempts to reconnect by catching the eye of the Beloved again, and saying again, "I love you." The Beloved looks away.

For the next ten minutes, the Lover may only take two types of actions. They may continue to reestablish the bond between the two players, making any kind of contact and saying only the words, "I love you." The Beloved may respond to this in any way besides saying, "I love you," or any acknowledgment or variation upon those words. The Lover may also follow their statement by taking a single dollar bill and tearing it up in front of the Beloved. Then, and only then, may (and must) the Beloved smile, look into the eyes of the Lover, and respond, "I love you, too." This warmth will last for ten seconds or so, then fade away.

Continue play in this manner until there are only two minutes left on the timer. At this point, the Beloved's reactions change in two ways. First, every time that the Lover says "I love you" to them, they must respond with disdain, contempt, or verbal abuse. If the Lover attempts to get physically close to them, the Beloved tries to get away. However, if the Lover decides to tear up a bill larger than one dollar, the Beloved declares their love for them more strongly than before. After a few seconds, however, they must return to their loathing.

When the timer reaches fifteen minutes, the Beloved must leave the room. The Lover may no longer speak, but may collect up what they have destroyed, and attempt to put things back together.



# BUSTER

You need a ball. Get a ball. Just a regular ball. Like that one! If you don't have a ball, make one by crumpling up a couple of pieces of paper really tight. That's a good ball!

Sit somewhere where everyone can pretty much reach everyone else. You're going to play with the ball! Put the ball somewhere near the middle of where you're playing. That ball looks fun to play with! Anyone can play with the ball by grabbing it with the hand that they use the most. It's fun to play with the ball, but try to just play with the one hand!

Someone should grab the ball and play with it! That's fun! Everyone wants to play with the ball, though, but you shouldn't just grab it from whoever has it. You should say something to them first. You can only say three things:

**“ARF ARF ARF!”** This means that you're happy, and excited, and you want to play!

**“GRRRRRRRRR.”** This means that you're a little angry, or very serious about playing.

**“AWROOOOOOOOOO...”** This means that you're probably lonely, and want to play, too.

Everyone is going to be making lots of noise! It's fun, but pretty confusing! And it's hard to make any noise but the growling noise when you've got the ball in your hand. But you really want to play with the ball! Maybe you could even grab it at the same time as the person who has it now, and tug it back and forth a little bit while saying something to them! Are they growling at you? Are they really mad, or just playing with you? If someone is really sad that they're not playing, and telling you that, maybe you should let them play first, before taking your turn! Are you angry that you can't play now? Or just really excited about getting to play at all?

If you're playing with the ball, everyone is probably trying to play with you, because playing with the ball is so much fun! They're making all kinds of noises at you, trying to get you to let them play with you! Who should you pay attention to? Do you think that you've played with the ball for long enough now? Do you think you should let someone else take a turn? Who should get to play with the ball next? The people next to you? The saddest sounding one? The one who looks like they'd be the most fun to play with? Maybe you should give that one who sounds angry a little space – they might even bite you, so that you drop the ball!

Everyone should get to play with the ball! Be nice to the other players! They like to have fun as much as you do! Maybe you can figure out how to play with the ball at the same time as someone else!

After fifteen minutes or so, you're tired of playing. Whoever has the ball should just drop it in front of them. Everyone should either lie down and rest, or find something else to play with!

# THE AZONÉ BUTTERFLIES

The Azoné are a tribe of fantastic hunters and warriors, and they have lived at the edge of the jungle since the time of the first reckoning. Each season, as their young men and women approach adulthood, they prepare for the ceremony of Stála, in which the youths demonstrate both their worthiness as defenders and providers for the tribe, and their attractiveness to prospective mates. The Azoné value equally skill in deadly combat, and the ability to construct and wear battle garb of exquisite beauty. It is the balance of these two traits that make the Azoné “butterfly warriors” (or “Tyriá”) truly great.

Each player will take the role of a young man or woman, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, who is preparing themselves to take part in the coming of age ceremony, during which they will create their own exotic clothing and weaponry, and then venture to the place of Stála, in a clearing near the edge of the jungle. There they will strike the great wooden bell that hangs there three times, and face the beasts that emerge from the wilderness. If they survive, and return to the village, they will have their choice of partners, depending on how fine their battle raiments were, and how bravely they fought.

First, you will create the beasts that your Tyriá will do battle with. Each player will create three creatures by writing numbers from one to nine on three slips of paper. The number will determine the strength of the beast, and all three numbers should sum up to thirteen. They may all be about the same strength, or there may be a mix of very strong creatures and very weak ones – you will not know until the ceremonial bell is rung. If you wish to write down one adjective or attribute that describes the beast on each slip of paper – “talon”, “red”, “moaning”, “woolen”, etc. – you may. Then put all of the slips of paper in a bowl, mix them all together, and strike the bell to begin.

Each player will face three creatures during their trial, in three rounds. To start a round, players will write down two numbers between one and nine: the first is how beautiful and elaborate they have made their battle gear, and the second is how deadly the gear makes them in combat. The two numbers will add up to ten, so you may choose five and five, one and nine, or anywhere in between, but always, the more beautiful you make yourself, the less effective you will be in fighting the jungle beasts, and vice versa. You may change the numbers between rounds, as you change your ceremonial battle garb, but you should not tell the other players what you have chosen until everyone has decided.

Now it is time to fight. Each player will draw a slip of paper from the bowl, and, beginning with the oldest, reveal the numbers they have chosen, and describe how they have outfitted themselves for the fight to come. For every three points of beauty you have chosen for yourself, you may describe something about your battle garb that is exquisite or beautiful. A peacock-feathered cloak, jewel-colored leggings of knotted silk, a long knife made from the pressed petals of the scarlet glass-flower, or any other thing that you can imagine. Likewise, for every three points of deadliness you have chosen for yourself, you may describe something about your equipment that is particularly effective for defeating the jungle beasts. An iron spear with a jagged obsidian hook-head, your elder brother's spiked and beaded bamboo chest-plate, a net made of thick vines with tiny barbs woven throughout, and so on.

Then, look at the number on the slip of paper that tells you how strong the beast is that you must fight. In a single short sentence, give an impression of what the creature looks like, and how it approaches you from the jungle. Now compare the beast's number with your own, and determine the outcome of your battle. If your deadliness is higher than the strength of the beast, you defeat it easily. Narrate your victory, and mark down points for both your deadliness and your beauty. However, if your deadliness is less than the creature's strength, you lose the fight, and are wounded. You do not mark down any points for this battle, and if you are wounded a second time, you will be killed. Take the time now to briefly describe how you are defeated. If your deadliness is exactly equal to the creature's strength, you will just barely defeat the beast – you are not wounded, but you only mark down points for your deadliness, not your beauty. You may again narrate your victory, but describe what you lose during the fight. (Are your clothes or weapons destroyed? Is your skin scarred? Did the beast die under an ill omen?)

After each player has fought their beast, they may choose a new set of numbers for their beauty and deadliness for the second round, which proceeds as before, drawing new creature numbers and fighting again, oldest to youngest. After the second series of battles, the surviving players may choose new numbers again, and fight the third and final round of creatures. When the last jungle beast has been dealt with, the newly mettled Tyriá return to the village, and determine their fates.

Each player totals the points for their beauty in battles that they won against the creatures of the jungle. The player with the highest overall attractiveness wins the game, and has their choice of mates from the Azoné tribe. Take a moment to narrate how you are received, the greatest of the new Tyriá warriors, and describe the mate that you have chosen for yourself. The other surviving warriors may briefly do the same, in order of descending beauty, each receiving rewards from their people slightly less glorious than the ones before them.

The last thing you must do is determine the fate of the village. The first duty of the Tyriá is to defend their people from the beasts of the jungle, and it is said that if they have not proven themselves to be capable enough warriors, then the wilderness itself will reclaim them. Total up the deadliness scores from all of the warriors' successful battles. If the total score is at least ten times the number of players – forty for four players, for example – then they have performed their duties well, and the village is safe for another year. Celebrate! However, if they did not prove to be deadly enough, then the beasts of the jungle will overrun the village and destroy the Azoné people. If this is the case, describe the terror and sadness that befalls your tribe, and vow to protect them at any cost, next time.

## IN | COMPATIBLE

In|Compatible is a game about romantic relationships for three players.

To set up, you will build four decks from a regular deck of playing cards; these decks will represent your potential partners in the relationships that you will be playing out over the course of the game. Each deck starts with six cards of a single suit; so, begin with a deck of six hearts, a deck of six diamonds, a deck of six clubs, and a deck of six spades. (The number values on the cards do not matter.) Now shuffle up all the remaining cards, and then deal out six more cards onto each of the decks, so that you wind up with four stacks of twelve cards, with each stack made up of at least half all one suit, and a good mix of suits for the other half. Don't look at the two left over cards! Put them face down to create a discard pile somewhere in the middle of the play area.

Once you've created the four decks that represent the four romantic partners, you will assign a name to each one. If you're playing with two or three female players, you will all be playing men in the game, and you will give each deck a female name. If you're playing with two or three male players, you will all be playing women in the game, and you will give the partner decks male names. (If you feel like switching it up, feel free to mix up the genders of the players and partner decks any way you like, as long as all the players are okay with it.) Shuffle up each of the decks really well, set them out randomly so that you don't know which one is mostly which suit, and place them near pieces of paper that say what their names are.

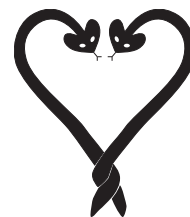
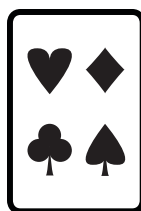
Once the partner decks are constructed and named, each player will secretly choose a suit that represents their own personality. It's totally okay if more than one person chooses the same suit! Write down your suit, and think about what that suit might mean to you, personality-wise.

Once you've done that, each player will choose a random deck to start with; this deck represents the person that you're in a relationship with at the beginning of the game. There will be one "single" deck left over, so put that in the middle where everyone can see what's going on with it.

The game is played in twelve rounds, each of which will represent some amount of time that you have to deal with being in (or out) of a relationship with one of the partners represented by the decks you've just built. Each round will be scored, and when the twelve rounds are over, the player with the most points wins! Begin with the player who's been in a relationship the longest, or if none of the players are currently with someone, begin with whoever has been in a relationship most recently. Give the start player a coin or token of some kind to note who they are.

Here's how a round goes. First, turn over the top card on the "single" person's deck, just to show everybody what they're missing out on. Then, the starting player will describe some kind of event in which there is potential for conflict in their relationship. If it's early on, it might be deciding what movie or restaurant to go out to, or whether to stay in or go out at all. In the middle stages of a relationship, the conflict can be more serious, with higher stakes – maybe an argument over friends, or jealousy, or job or money issues – and later on, you might be talking about whether you should move in together, get married, think about children, and so on. Whatever you choose, make it brief, and make sure that there is a clear point of decision. When you reach that point, turn over the top card on your current romantic partner's deck, and compare it to the suit that you have chosen for yourself.

If the card that you've revealed is the exact same suit as your chosen suit, that's great! Take a couple of sentences to narrate how things were resolved perfectly, with the best possible outcome for you and your partner. If your mate's card is the same color as your own chosen suit, that's still pretty good – the person on your right will describe your mate's positive reaction or how the outcome of the situation came out fairly well for you. However, if the card you've turned over is one of the two suits that is the opposite color from the suit that you've chosen (black for hearts or diamonds, red for clubs or spades), then things have gone very poorly. The player on your left will describe in detail how things went terribly wrong, and decide just how very badly the conflict went for everyone concerned. However the incident was resolved, hang on to the card that you've turned over. Put it somewhere safely nearby, and let the next player have a go.



The play will continue around with players setting up a situation, revealing the top card on their relationship partner's deck, and either describing the outcome or having it described for them, until all three players have gone. Once everyone's done their thing for the round, you all have the opportunity to decide whether to stick with the relationship you're currently in, or end the relationship, and swap your current deck out for the single person's deck in the center. If things are looking bad enough, a player may even choose to break up with their current partner, and remain single for a round or two! (In which case there would be another "single" deck available to the other players...) Starting with the beginning player, each of the players will make this decision, either keeping their current partner or trading them in for a new one, and once everyone has done so, pass the start player token to the left, and begin the next round.

Once all twelve rounds have been worked through, each player should have had the opportunity to make a dozen decisions through a dozen beats of their love lives, and act as the starting player four times. Once that's all done, each player can take the opportunity to narrate a short ending to their relationship story, and then calculate their scores for the game.

At the end of the game, each player should have a stack of twelve cards, chronicling the events of their relationships. (Fewer, if they chose to remain single for a while.) Each card that is the exact same suit as the suit that you chose at the beginning of the game is worth three points. Each card that's the other suit of the same color as your suit is worth one point. Each card that is the opposite color of your suit is worth *negative* two points. Add up all your cards, and then, if you stuck with the same relationship partner deck throughout the entire game, double the number of points that you have. Whoever came out with the most points totally wins at life!

## THE NEXT ROUND

This is a game for a small group of friends to play together. To prepare for the game, gather your friends and have everybody put in earplugs. Have everybody sit at a table together. The host will turn on some music – preferably some music that you don't particularly like – and make sure that it's fairly loud. The music should end abruptly (ideally at the end of a song) after somewhere between twelve and fifteen minutes.

You will all play the parts of friends who have been hanging out together at a bar for a few hours. Each of you has had more than a couple of drinks, and now everybody's glasses sit empty in front of them. It is time for somebody to buy another round of drinks. That person must be you.

To begin the game, one player must move to stand up and announce that they will buy the next round of drinks. They might ask what everybody is having, or just assume that they'll have another of the same. However, nobody can actually get up to leave the table until everyone has agreed unanimously on who is actually buying the next round. When someone makes to get up, someone else must stop them, and insist that they buy the next round of drinks instead, and explain why. Anybody may attempt to get up at any time, but nobody may allow anyone else to buy the next round. Each player has very strong reasons why they must be the one to buy next, and they will make sure that everybody else understands them as well as the circumstances allow.

Try not to come to blows.

Soon, the music will stop, and whoever set it up must announce "Last call!" (If you were unable to manage the music setup properly, just keep an eye on the clock, and turn off the music by hand.) All the players should stop talking for a moment and take out their earplugs. The decision must be made right now, or everybody leaves without getting their last drink in. You have about thirty seconds to decide, and then the game ends.

## THE PITCH

The Pitch is a game for at least four players. (It should accommodate up to eight or so fairly well, and may even work with two or three.) Players will take the parts of employees of a company who are attempting to sell a particular product or service, and their clients or potential clients who will be deciding whether or not to buy what the company is selling.

To start, decide what you'll be pitching or deciding to pay for. A long-term insurance policy? A remodel of a house or building? A new sports car? An advertising campaign, or developing a new image? A collection of antique brass keys? A camping trip? A new kitchen gadget? It could be anything at all, as long as everyone thinks it's okay, and it sounds fun. Don't worry about picking the perfect thing – just throw out some ideas, and talk about it for less than a minute or so before grabbing something that sounds good.

Now, split up the players into the pitchers and the clients. The sides should be the same size, if possible. If you have an odd person, make the extra player a client. Find yourself somewhere to play, and have the clients and pitchers sit across a table from each other. You'll also need a regular deck of playing cards. Grab some, shuffle them up, and have a seat.

There are two things to set up before you start playing. First, each player draws a card from the deck, and does not look at it. Do not look at your own card! Show it to the other players, and then put the card somewhere on your person where all the other players can get a good look at it while you're playing – on your forehead, in your hat band, poking out of a shirt pocket – but where you are not able to see it at all. This first card is an indicator of how important you are to the rest of the group, and they will behave accordingly. So, a two or three is pretty low on the totem pole – maybe you're an intern, or if you see that a client is a two, you don't care about their business at all, or maybe the guy trying to sell something to you is a three, and you've already blown them off in your mind. Likewise, someone showing a face card is fairly high status – a king might be the CEO of the company, or a very rich, very influential client that you've been courting for a long time, or maybe just someone that you've had a crush on since high school. Try your best to keep your card visible to everyone else throughout the game, to give the other players a constant reminder of how important – or unimportant – you are.

The second thing you need to do before you begin is to draw another card – this time, you will look at the card, and make sure that none of the other players see it. This is your motivation, or objective during the game. Look up the value of your card on the following list, and use the corresponding item to inspire you during the negotiations:

- **Ace:** You actually genuinely care about this product or service, and whether you're a client or a pitch man, you really want this deal to work out as well as possible for everyone involved.
- **Two:** You are extremely attracted to one of the other players. Look around and choose someone now! You will do everything in your power to get them to go out, make out, or sleep with you.
- **Three:** You are sick and tired of the company or team that you're part of now, and you want to leave and join the other side as soon as possible. Don't let your current partners know, though – you don't want to hurt their feelings.
- **Four:** You just want this meeting to be over with. You want to get out of here and get home. Maybe your kid's soccer game is starting right now, maybe your wife is taking the day off and waiting for you, or maybe it's just a beautiful day out.
- **Five:** All you care about is money, having money, and taking it from other people. If you're a client, you basically want whatever they're selling for free. If you're pitching, you will squeeze every last dime out of these suckers, and then some.

- **Six:** You are very, very, very hungry. You didn't eat breakfast, you skipped lunch to get here on time, and all you want to do is fill your belly with tasty, tasty food. There is no food at the pitch meeting, unfortunately, unless someone brought some.
- **Seven:** You are extremely religious, and enjoy proselytizing enormously. You would very much like to convince someone in this room to change their religion to yours. It doesn't matter if they're on your side already or not.
- **Eight:** You have to go to the bathroom very badly, but can't leave the room until the meeting has been concluded.
- **Nine:** You are in a terrible mood for some specific reason. Something that someone here did, perhaps? You will turn down anything that anybody suggests to you, and won't be happy until everyone else is as miserable as you are.
- **Ten:** You really don't care if this deal goes through or not. What you do care about very much is whether or not every single person here likes you. You want to be everyone's best friend, and vice versa.
- **Jack:** You just got an offer from a competitor this morning, and you jumped on it. You haven't signed the papers yet, but if this deal goes badly, your new gig will benefit greatly. Don't blow it, but don't tip your hand too soon.
- **Queen:** You aren't really concerned about the business side of things here at all. What you are concerned with is making sure that everybody with a stake in this deal feels okay about everything that happens.
- **King:** The most important thing in the world, whether the deal happens or not, is that everybody in your presence recognizes what a smart and intelligent person you are. Smarter than them, for sure.

Once everybody has taken a look at their objective card and had a moment to think about it, and has also had a chance to look around at the relative importance of all the other players, it's time to get going! Set a timer for ten or fifteen minutes, and let the pitchers begin their spiel. Interact normally with each other, and try to behave as if the status cards and your motivations are real and compelling. Whatever is said by the players should generally be accepted as truth during the game, so try not to cancel out or invalidate something that someone says without a very good reason.

When the timer goes off, the meeting is over, and you must immediately decide if the deal is off or on. Take a minute or so to come to a decision, shake hands, and wrap up. After everything is settled, take a look at your own status card, and see if you were able to figure out how important you were, based on how the other players were treating you!

# TIME FLIES LIKE A BANANA

This is a game-within-a-game, or perhaps an instance of a kind of meta-game, or a sense-of-a-game-layered-on-top-of-a-game, or maybe something less interesting than that. Maybe it's just fun. We'll see.

You'll need at least three players, and probably not more than five. The simple game that you will be playing is called "Five" It is simple, and I'll tell you all about it here. The other things that you will be doing are less simple, and I'll tell you what they are here, but I won't tell you how to do them. Each time you play may be different – you may want to try several times to get the hang of it.

The simple game consists of several rounds. In each round, the players will count one-two-three-GO! On the "go", each player holds out their right hand with one, two, three, four, or five fingers extended. The player who is holding out the lowest unique number of fingers wins a point. So, if you throw a two, and the other players throw a two and a three, your two is not unique, so the three will win a point. Clear? Keep track of your points on your left hand. When someone gets their fifth point, they will yell "FIVE!" and win the game.

That's it for the game of Five. You may want to play it once or twice by itself, just to get the hang of it.

Now, to play this game, you will all be playing the same game of Five, but only one player will be playing it in real time. If you have three players, one will play at regular speed, one will be playing at half-speed, and one player will play the game at double speed. If you have four players, have the extra player decide whether they want to play fast or slow, and they will play even faster or slower than the half- or double-speed player. With five players, have them play on the other end of the spectrum from the fourth player, even slower or faster again. With more, it's totally up to you.

This is going to get a little bit crazy. All of the rules still apply, just at different speeds. If you're playing fast, make sure that you're still playing with everyone else, not just throwing numbers by yourself. And don't keep playing when you finish the game before everyone else! Do whatever you'd normally do when you've finished, and everyone else is halfway through or so. Likewise, slow players, don't stop until your game is done! It will take you twice as long to complete your game, so make sure that you play the whole thing.

One-two-three-GO!

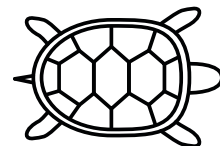
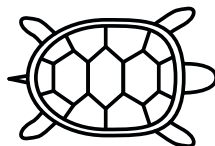
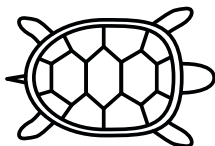
# TURTLE, TURTLE, WHAT'S MY NAME?

“Turtle, Turtle, What’s My Name?” is a light game to be played when four dear friends have gathered in the parlor for an evening’s entertainment. Each of you will play the part of a character from the beloved children’s books of the celebrated author, Timothy Roberts. Do not fret; it is not necessary that any or all of you have intimate familiarity with his stories or the delightful talking animals that dwell therein. Simply follow the instructions given here carefully, set out some tea and sandwiches, and you and your party guests will be ensured a grand time.

Select three of the players to portray the characters from “A Splendid Day Out With Flopsy and Mopsy”. These three players will pretend to be the turtles from the story! One of you will be Flopsy, one of you will be Mopsy, and the third will play the remaining turtle, the discovery of whose name comprises the entire point of this game. The remaining player will take the role of Banger the rabbit (from “Banger Makes A Hash Of It And Other Tales”), the mischievous hare who plays the trickster, making trouble for everyone else and getting in their way.

As stated above, the essence of this game is for Flopsy and Mopsy to discover the name of the third turtle, while Banger endeavors to prevent the same. To begin, the player who has taken the part of the unnamed turtle must choose an appropriately whimsical name for himself or herself, and write it secretly on a slip of paper. You may now commence to play!

Each of the turtle players must abide by certain rules, and behave as they imagine that a speaking tortoise might. Their speech is slow and deliberate, but exceedingly polite. Be sure to turn your head carefully towards the person whom you are speaking and look them in the eye thoughtfully before making your statement. Statement, indeed, for as a tortoise, you may never ask a question! Turtles may only make simple statements or declarations, one which you might conclude with a period, if you were to write it down. Turtles speak in a plain and straightforward manner, saying what they have to say in the most brief and direct way possible. They may address each other by name, when known, and offer the usual pleasantries when appropriate.



As noted previously, certain additional rules and restrictions apply to the manner of speech of certain of the characters. The turtle whose name is not known to the players at the beginning of the game may never speak his or her own name under any circumstance! The other players may not simply ask their name, but must deduce it through cleverness and persistence – qualities that are surely to be admired in any proper gentleman or lady. Further, the characters of Flopsy and Mopsy are quite respectful of one another, and must speak in turn, one after the other, even if another character has spoken in the meantime. That is, after saying their sentence, the players who speak for Flopsy or Mopsy may not talk again until the other has had their turn. What good manners!

As all of the characters being played are already well acquainted with one another, the conversation may begin as any meeting of jolly companions might. “Good morning, Flopsy.” “Good day to you, and you, Mopsy.” “I do expect that we will have lovely weather today.” “Indeed, I believe you are correct.” “Perhaps we will picnic together in the buttercup field this afternoon.” And so on. But what of Banger?

Although charming in his own naughty way, Banger the rabbit does not display the same good behavior that our turtle friends exhibit. No, indeed! The player who takes the role of Banger may speak whenever he or she wishes, and may even rudely interrupt one of the turtles while they are saying something. Banger may say anything that he or she pleases, within the compass of common propriety, naturally. Whenever the mischievous bunny does something to be a pest, or disrupt the civil intercourse in which the others are engaging, or otherwise befoul the intentions of the other characters – all in the interest of fun and playfulness, of course – the three turtles may collectively sigh and exclaim together, “BANGER!” After being so admonished, the rabbit player must remain silent for a short period before engaging the others in conversation once again. Remember that all of these animals are the best of friends, and while he is a rascal, Banger does not intend any harm or ill will towards the others. It is simply in his nature to be a scamp!

Keeping all of these things in mind, continue play-acting as your chosen characters. The turtles should take their time in slowly unraveling the mystery of the anonymous tortoise’s name, Banger should continue to make a pest and a nuisance of himself, and everyone should take care to make sure that everyone is included in the conversation in a way that brings them enjoyment. One player, presumably the host, should keep an eye on the clock or take note of his timepiece, and begin to lead the other players towards the end of the game after fifteen minutes or so. As the animal friends bid each other a good day, if they have deduced the name of the third turtle, they may say it as they part company. “Good morning, then, Flopsy!” “It was a pleasure as always, Mopsy.” “We will see you this evening, Marmalade.”

If the turtles have not figured out the name, or have guessed the wrong one, the player may show the others what they have written on their slip of paper, and everyone will have a hearty laugh at their confusion. Lastly, as always, Banger the rabbit should make one final smart quip, at which everyone will exclaim in exasperation, “BANGER!”, and laugh together once again.

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

This is a game in which you play fantasy adventurers at a speed-dating style dungeon-delving party hookup event. Everyone is looking to form up with a party to go adventuring, ransacking some old ruins, storming a wizard’s tower, rooting out a goblin encampment, what have you. Going out to kill monsters and take their stuff, basically. You can’t do that kind of thing alone, of course, and hanging out at Ye Olde Tavern has become a drag, so here you are. First Impressions is ideally played with an even number of players, but if you have an odd number, one player will just be sitting out for a couple of minutes before jumping back into the rotation. All you need to play are a timer, some paper and writing implements, and a bunch of counters or tokens, like pennies or glass beads.

Give each player a pen and a sheet of paper, and a number of counters equal to half the number of players, rounded down. (So, in a game with six or seven players, each player should have three tokens.) Everybody will sit down and quickly fill out a character sheet. Write down your adventurer’s name and gender at the top of the sheet – it can be anything, so don’t think too hard about any of this! Then, everyone gets together and writes down what class they are – each player chooses one from the following list, and each class may be used exactly once, with no duplicates:

**Warrior | Priest | Wizard | Rogue | Hunter | Knight  
Barbarian | Shaman | Monk | Bard | Henchman**

If there are more than nine players, make up some more! (And get comfortable, because you might be here a while...) Next, everyone writes down what race they are. It’s okay if people duplicate here, but there should be a good mix of fantasy races in the group. Choose from the following standard list, or have fun and create new ones:

**Human | Elf | Dwarf | Hobbit | Half-Orc  
Dark Elf | Gnome | Lizardfolk | Sprite**

To finish up making your character, quickly make up and write down three last things: where your adventurer hails from (Amanoth, Garraton, Bloodmoor, Glenvale, Derbyshire, whatever), a special item or ability that your character possesses (the flaming sword of legend, a seat on the duke's council, the ability to drink an ogre under the table, etc), and a great deed that you have done or something that you might be known for (banished a demon lord back to hell, swindled the thieves' guild, led the king's army to victory, kept last season's crops from blight, and so on). Again, these can be anything, so don't take too long to write these down. It should take less than a minute or so for everyone to make their characters, so just throw down the first thing that springs to mind, super-cool or not, and make with the speed-matchups!

Okay, so here's how the dungeon crawler speed-dating works. Form up in two lines, so that everyone is paired up with another random person. If there's an odd adventurer out, they can make themselves useful by keeping time for now. Depending on how many people you have, set the timer for two minutes or so; if you're short on folks or feel like a longer game, go longer, and if you find yourself playing with a whole mess of people, keep it around a minute. When the timer starts, go!

Say hello, introduce yourself, and get to know each other. Ask the other person what kind of quest they're looking to get in on, what their favorite weapons or spells are, how they like to split up the treasure, where they got that fantastic longbow, do they have a nemesis? Be as charming, interesting, and useful-sounding as possible. You might want to jot down a few notes while you're talking, but try to focus on the person you're speaking to. You only get one chance, and it doesn't last long! When the ending timer goes off, thank your partner, and move one person to the left. If you're the one sitting out, rotate in – if you're moving out to the oddball slot, grab the timer and start it a-tickin'.

Once every player has had a chance, however brief, to get to know everyone else, the speed-dating part is over, and it's time to make judgements and see who gets to go delving with who. Remember those counters that you got at the beginning? Find the adventurers that you felt the best connection with, and give them one token each. You can only express interest in about half of the other players, so choose wisely! Once everyone has split their professional affections among the other adventurers, go around and see who has the highest number of tokens – that is clearly the new party leader! If there's a tie among two or more, co-leaders are totally kosher. The new head honcho may then select adventurers to join the party at their discretion, one at a time. If they choose to join up, great! If not, move on. Once you have collected a number of adventurers equal to half of the total players (rounded down, again), you're done! Go forth and start plundering!

And for the unwanted leftover players, I hear that there's a shady-looking elf sitting at one of the tables in the back of the Green Dragon Inn...

### **Super Exciting Bonus Throw-Down Alternate Ending!**

Sometimes, you don't find adventure – adventure finds you! Before you can see who has how many tokens and who is the prom king or queen of this adventure squad, the door bursts open, and a bunch of bad guys swarm in! Take no more than ten seconds to quickly decide as a group what kind of adversaries you're now faced with – rampaging orcs? disgruntled dragon-men? drunk and/or surly bandits? a gang composed entirely of the characters' nemeses? – and get to brawling!

Each round of combat goes like this: Everybody picks a partner super quickly, like one-two-three-go. If there's an extra person left out, sorry, you fall to the intruders. Take a sentence or two to narrate your unfortunate demise and quickly and quietly bow out. If you're paired up, compare the number of tokens that you each hold.

If the two players hold different numbers of tokens, the person with the lower number is taken down by the bad guys – again, take a moment to tell the entire group how you go down fighting. The player with the larger number of tokens survives, but at a cost – remove a number of counters equal to your partner's number, and describe how you battle on. (So, say, a wizard with five tokens allies with an archer holding two. The archer is devoured by flying monkey-gators, and the wizard fire blasts them out of the air, but is left with only three tokens afterward.) If, however, you and your partner have the same number of tokens, you are well matched, and both survive the round. Tell the others how you thoroughly kick ass, and the two of you will go on to the next round as a single monster-stomping duo, with a strength as a unit that is equal to each player's individual strength. (So you've got a barbarian and a bard both holding three tokens; next round, they're treated as a single character – a bardbarian? – holding three tokens, and will both match up with another player. Get it? You will.)

After each group has figured out who lives and who dies, start another round, and continue going on like this until there is only one character left, or you've wound up with an elite super-group of baddie beater-uppers. Pay your respects to your fallen comrades, and try not to step on their bodies on the way out the door – to adventure!



# MONSIEUR PRASLIN'S CANDY SHOPPE

Kind old Monsieur Praslin is the proprietor of the greatest candy shop in town. This is not only on account of his superlative sweets, but because he is given to distributing free candy to children who come to him with tales of what good little tykes they have been. That, and sometimes he is not as sharp-eyed as he used to be, and is not as quick to notice if little hands grab an extra handful or two! However, the finest and most coveted confectionery of all, the famous Praslin's Praline, it sits upon the top shelf, and can only be obtained by the youngster who proves to be the most upstanding and precious among his or her peers – or the one who shows the most moxie and swipes more than their share!

This is a game for up to six players – the more the better! – who will play the parts of the children of the town. They have gathered at Monsieur Praslin's Candy Shoppe, as they do every day, hoping to get their little fingers into his box of pralines. The children have no money, so they must ply friendly old Monsieur P. with their sweetness and good deeds. The candy is divided into four tiers: Praslin keeps the penny candy in the case up front, the finer sweets on the bottom shelf, the more elaborate chocolates and such on the middle shelf, and all the way up top is the shelf that holds his world-renowned pralines. For the game, these will be represented by four pools of different types of coins: a bunch of pennies for the penny candies, nickels for the bottom shelf, dimes for the middle shelf, and a single shiny quarter for the pralines at the top.

Play begins by one of the children turning to the person on his or her right, who will be playing the part of Monsieur Praslin for the moment, and telling them about something nice about themselves, or something good that they have done recently. Perhaps they were kind to an animal, or did very well in school this week, or treated their siblings or parents especially nicely today. Whatever it is, Monsieur Praslin will commend them for it – “What a good little girl!” – and let them take their choice of one of the penny candies. The player then takes a penny from the pile representing the front case and puts it in front of them. What kind of candy is it? Tell us! Now the person who just played Monsieur Praslin takes their turn as a child. They turn to the player on their right and tell them of their virtue and courtesy, how they are obedient and well-mannered, and receive a penny for themselves. Play continues around like this until each of the children has spoken of their merit and received their first piece of candy.

Now, Monsieur Praslin may be a soft touch, but he is no fool. Once a little one has a bit of candy in their hands, it takes a bit more to get him to hand out another. Once more, going around the circle of children, each player may attempt to sweet-talk Praslin into giving them one more from the case of penny candy, but they will need their friends to back up their claims of goodness. For each penny that a player has in front of them, they must convince another one of the children to swear that the even greater worthiness that they claim is indeed the honest truth. So, if young Thomas has managed to get two pieces of penny candy already, and claims that he brought a hot meal to the old woman on his street who lives all alone, two of the other players (perhaps Fredrick and Yvette?) must raise their hands and swear that Thomas is in fact the little angel that he claims to be.

But what of the better candies, the ones on the higher shelves behind the counter? What of the fudge bon-bons, and chocolate turtles, and maple snowmen, and sour spotted frogs? Well, as you might rightly guess, a child can turn in a number of lesser candy to “purchase” the greater ones. A player may turn in five pennies to the shop to receive their choice of sweets from the nickel shelf, they may trade ten cents worth of candy for something from the dime shelf, and if they manage to scrape together twenty-five cents worth of confections, they can achieve the apogee of treats, the Praslin Praline! The first child to do so wins the game, of course, but they may very well need more than the help of their friends.

Firstly, you will notice that with a maximum of six children – for that is all that can fit inside Monsieur Praslin’s small shop – even with the absolute cooperation of all present, a child may only be given up to six free penny candies, and even that seems like an unlikely proposition. And, of course, the same rules apply to the candies higher up on the shelves, only more so! If a child already holds one or more pieces of nickel candy, they must receive the testament of two of their little friends for each of them if they are to be given another! And if they are lucky enough to be given a sweet from the dime shelf, then four of their chums must back up their goodness to be presented with a second, and even then, they had best have a story of saving the local schoolhouse from burning down, or something of the like!

So what is a hungry child with a sweet tooth for dark brown sugar and pecans to do? Well, as we all know, children are often not as honorable as they claim, and if they sneak an extra piece of candy now and then, what’s the harm in that? In short, players may steal candy from the good-natured old man. Any time that Monsieur Praslin turns or bends over or climbs his little ladder to get to a shelf of his wares, each child may attempt to help themselves to a bit from that shelf or lower. To do so, a player declares which shelf they are trying to pilfer from, and then throws all of the coins that they have collected. If there is at least one head showing on one of their coins from that shelf, then they may take a new piece of candy from that shelf for free!

(Clearly, if they have no coins from a given shelf, they may not steal from it.) However, if no heads turn up on a coin from their declared shelf, they must discard every coin – of any kind! – that came up tails, and put them back into the piles. And, of course, suffer the sour disappointment of Monsieur Praslin, as he had thought you so honest and true.

Play continues around the circle, with the children spinning taller and taller tales of their benevolence and munificence, telling tales that verge on the heroic, all the while filling their pockets while the kind old shopkeeper has his back turned. The moment that someone has collected twenty-five cents worth of coins, they may declare that they have bought the coveted Praslin's Praline! At that point, all of the children pour out of the front door of the shop, only to return the next day for more complimentary treats.

Don't eat the pennies!

## WE ARE THE ONLY ONES LEFT

This is a horror game for two players. You should play at a table, somewhere quiet, where you can turn the lights low enough to still read and write, but just barely. Both players should know that they are in the midst of some kind of widespread attack of hysteria and violence. It must be a disease, a disease that causes normal people to go mad and kill, without hesitation and without mercy. Worse, it causes those that are murdered to rise again and continue to kill. The cycle of killing and reanimation has gone on for days and days, and in those days, the two of you have found a safe haven here, in this room. You sit quietly, listening to the screams outside. You know that these people, the infected, these... things, they are attracted to noise and movement, so you wait, patiently hoping to ride out the storm. Surviving, but for how long?

To play, find twelve pennies (or any kind of coins), six index cards or pieces of paper to write on, and one pen or other writing implement. Divide the coins and writing material evenly between the players, six pennies and three cards each. Take turns with the pen writing down the names of friends on the paper; make them people that you both know, if possible, but definitely make them people that you are fond of, or attached to in some way. After the six cards or papers have names on them, turn them face down and mix them up, and place them somewhere nearby. Place the pen in the middle of the table when you are finished. The pen is now a revolver, a gun with one bullet remaining inside. Either player may pick up the gun at any time and use that bullet to destroy a single monster, should one make its way inside. It may also be used to kill the other player, if necessary.

Once you have set everything up, allow a few moments to pass, and let the quiet settle in. Eventually, one of the players will say to the other, "So. We are the only ones left." The other will slowly look around, maybe listen intently to whatever noises they may hear, and after a few seconds respond, "I think so. Maybe. Probably." For the entire course of the game, be sure to speak in a low voice, almost a whisper. Any louder, and the things out there may hear you. They may discover your safe room, and attack.

After this brief exchange, the players will sit in silence once more for a full minute. There is no need to use a watch or a timer – simply count to yourself slowly in your head. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. When the minute has elapsed, one of the players should draw one of the pieces of paper with a friend's name on it, and look at the name. The player should then say to the other player, "Wait. I think I hear something. That sounds like [the friend] out there. Is that them?" Pause again for a moment, then bang loudly and sharply on the table with your fist two or three times. Allow a few seconds to catch your breath and listen again, and bang your fist another time. Pause once more. Bang. Bang. Bang. Then, silence.

The person who heard their friend outside the door is certain that they are alive, and in need of rescue. Each player should now take a coin in their hand, and begin to discuss – very quietly! – whether the wretch out there is still human, or if it is a beast, come back from the dead to find them and turn them into one of those murdering things. At some point, each player will flip their coin and place it carefully under the paper containing the friend's name. The player who chose the name may look at their coin before slipping it under the card or paper, but the other player must not know what the result of either coin flip was.

After a brief, intense deliberation, the players must decide whether or not to open the door. You probably should not take more than a minute to do so, for if you do, and your friend is still alive, they may not be for long. The player who did not select the name from the pile must decisively end the exchange by pounding on the table again, at which point both players must immediately fall silent. If either of the players chooses to open the door, they must now stand and say, "I am letting them in." If neither player does this, nothing happens. Put the paper with the coins underneath to one side until the end of the game. The players will continue to silently wait.

To open the door and see what waits outside, the other player must say, "Okay." They will then take the card or paper with the name on it, and reveal the coins underneath. If both of the coins are showing heads, the person banging on the door was indeed a living person, and you have saved them from almost certain doom! Greet them quickly and quietly, tell them to sit down and be silent, and do not speak to them again. The two players will return to silently waiting.

However, if either of the coins came up tails, the thing outside was indeed a murderous creature, and it bursts inside! Both of the players must let out a scream at the horror! If they have not yet used the gun (pen), one of the players may pick it up and yell, "BANG!" This will kill the monster, and you will be safe again, for the moment. The gun, now, may not be used again. Be sure that the door is secure once again, sit back down, and wait.

If the players are unable to stop the creature, it immediately kills both of them, and the game is over. You may flip coins for the remaining slips of paper, and reveal them all to see if there were any humans left alive, but it does not matter, because they will now all be dead before long.

If one player does decide to open the door, the other player may simply let them, or they may vehemently disagree with their decision. If a player is dead set against the other letting whatever is banging on the door inside, they must pick up the gun that sits between them, point it at the other player, and declare, "I swear to god, if you touch that door, I will shoot you." (Note that if the gun has already been used to destroy a creature, shooting the other player is no longer an option.) If the standing player changes their mind, they will sit down, and the game will proceed as if nothing happened. Put down the gun, and wait. However, if they move to open the door, or take the paper from the coins, the player with the gun may shout, "BANG!" and murder the only other human that they know to have survived. Even if you have rescued one or more of your friends friends, they will not say anything at your action, but the game is still over at this point. You may again flip coins for the names that have not been chosen and reveal the rest to see what other things may have been outside, but you now know that there is at least one monster in the room.

If, after all of these choices have been made, both players are still alive – either you have decided not to open the door, the person at the door was uninfected and harmless, and nobody shot anybody – you will again turn to sitting and waiting for a full minute, counting silently to yourselves. This time, it is the other player who will draw a slip of paper with a name on it, pound on the table, and insist that someone they know is out there. Flip coins again, placing them under the name, discuss quietly, and make your decision as before. If you wish, you may even bang on the table before drawing, but this might startle the other player, so do so carefully.

After going back and forth this way six times, either letting the banging at the door go away or succumbing to curiosity, the players will spend one last minute in complete silence, looking at one another and counting to yourselves in your heads. When this minute has elapsed, you may both stand up. The game is over, and you have survived. Congratulations. You may now look at the coins under all of the names of the people who you did not let in.

Again, if there are any with two heads showing underneath, they are in fact other survivors – or, were, as by now they have most likely been taken by the monsters, murdered and left to rise again to kill others. One way or another, without a doubt, those friends are still out there, seeking other victims. But not you. Not this time.

# ACCORD

You will need at least three or four players to play this game, but more is better. Try playing with up to a dozen or so, and see what happens.

The players begin by getting into a circle. One person will begin by taking a deep breath, and starting to hum or sing a single steady note, holding it as long as possible. It doesn't matter what the pitch or tone of the note is, as long as you can keep it going steadily for a little while. As soon as the first player begins to sound their note, the next player to their left will start to breathe in deeply, and when they have inhaled fully, begin to sing or hum a second note. This second note may be the same note as the first one, it may be shifted up or down an octave, it may be in harmony with the first one, or something totally not in harmony at all. Again, it doesn't matter what the second note is, as long as it is steady, and can be maintained for a good while. When the second person begins their note, the next person in the circle should begin to breathe in deeply, and when they have taken in all the breath they can, begin another note, in the same way as above.

Listen to the chord that you three have created. It may not be part of a scale, or a harmony, it may be beautiful or ugly, but it is your chord nonetheless. Do not stop there. As the third player makes their sound, the next person will begin to breathe in, and then sing their own note, adding to and further building the chord. And when they begin, the next person will breathe in and sing, and the next, and so on.

Hold your notes as long as you can, but if you run out of breath, that is totally fine. Just sit and listen until your turn comes around again. As the chord progresses around the circle, there may be more people singing at some times, and fewer people singing at others. Maybe the chord dwindles to just one or two singers. Maybe everyone is sounding their note at once, forming an impromptu orchestra of voices. Any these things are perfect.



As each person begins their sound, singing or humming or whistling or whatever they can do to use their breath to make a note, the next person in the circle to their left will breathe in as deeply as possible, and when they have filled their lungs completely, they will begin to form their sound as well, each person adding to the group's chord. And as players run out of breath, their sound drops from the chord, changing it once more. Around the circle, all the way around, until it becomes the starting player's turn once again.

When the chord reaches the first player again, instead of singing a note now, they should listen to the music that the group has created, draw in a deep breath, and begin telling a story, in first person, that the sounds inspire in them. It doesn't matter what it is about, just let the group's chord enter your mind, let go, and say the first thing that comes to you. What is the music like? Can you think of an adjective that describes what you are hearing? Does it remind you of the notes from a popular song, or the score from a movie? Does it make you think of a group of animals, or machines? Just open your mouth, and begin with "I was..." or "I am..." or "I always..." or "I never" or "Once, I..." and let the rest of the words just flow from there. Your story should be short, just a few sentences, not more than the duration of a few breaths. Maybe you can even tell it in one long breath. When you have finished, just wait and listen to the chord.

As soon as the first player begins telling their story, the next person in the circle, on their left, they should begin breathing in again, and continue by singing a new note, maybe a different note than they were singing before, or maybe the same one, with a different tone to it, or perhaps the exact same thing. Whatever feels right. They will continue singing over and along with the storyteller, holding their note as long as they can, and letting it end when it needs to. Again, as before, as one person begins their note, the next person breathes in, and when they have taken the deepest breath they are able to, begin their new note as well, and so on, around the circle as before. The chord continues and changes and grows and shrinks and evolves as the storyteller finishes their tale, and when they have finished, they may join in the chord again, as well.

When the storyteller ends their story, let the chord continue to live and change for a while, breathing and singing around the circle, until someone else feels like it is time to begin a short story of their own. They will breathe in and begin their brief first-person narrative, as the next person breathes in and continues the chord with their own note, and around again, until they have finished and rejoin the chord again, as the first player did before. This may happen any number of times. Hopefully, every player will have an opportunity to add to the story at least once, and if they feel like it, a player may be the storyteller more than once, but you should make sure that everyone who would like to narrate has a chance to do so.

Once everyone who feels like they would like to tell a story inspired by the music has done so, the game will begin to end. When everyone is done telling their story, the chord will progress around the circle at least once more by itself, and then someone – perhaps the first player, the initial storyteller – may signal the end of the game by simply breathing in and letting their breath out in silence. Pay attention to the person on your right as they end this way, and do the same, exhaling silently instead of singing a note. Eventually, the last person will finish their sound, and everyone will be silent. At this point, all the players will take in a deep breath together, hold it for a moment, release their breath together, and the game has ended.

# DANSE

The Danse requires at least three players, but will greatly benefit from more – try it with a half dozen, at least. In addition to the players, you will also need several regular six-sided dice, approximately twice as many dice as there are players. One of the dice must be of a different color than the rest, ideally one red die among a number of white dice. The players may also wish to each fill a glass to drink from as they play.

The players will take on the roles of the hosts and guests of a lavish party, an extravagant affair that takes place within the walls of a grand mansion while a plague sweeps across the country outside. However, as you may well know, and will surely learn, death may not be held in check by iron gates and stone facades, nor by purses full of gold and goblets full of wine. This will be the tale of how even the noblest fall to the pestilence, and how the reaper takes his due on all men.

One player will take the red die and give it to the person who will play the host of the party. In doing so, introduce yourself to the group – tell them your name, your title if any, and what your relation is to the host, familial or otherwise. Describe your manner and your station briefly, and describe how you came to be invited to this most exclusive of festivities. If you are related to the host, tell us how, and what your feelings toward your kinsman are; if you are a dear acquaintance, or a partner in business, or a lover, or a cherished old friend, provide whatever level of detail that seems proper to the relationship. When the first guest has finished, someone else will take another die – one of the white ones – and give it to them, introducing themselves similarly. Once they have made their acquaintance to the other partygoers, another guest will give them a white die of their own, and make their own introduction, and again and so forth, until finally the host hands the last guest a die, and at last properly introduces themselves to the gathering, and bids the revel to begin in earnest.

The Danse is to be played out in a series of rounds. Each round commences with the player who holds the red die, so the host of the party will begin the first round. This first player describes what they are doing at the party at this moment. (If the players have drink, they may take a sip from their glass as they do so.) Now, close to the beginning of the festivities, the revelers' activities will be primarily light and gay – dancing merrily, flirting and gossiping, telling amusing stories, taking advantage of the food and drink from the banquet that has been laid out before them. Do not take a long time to recount your folly; let your description be brief but rich in detail. The other players may raise their glasses as well, and cheer those exploits that they find pleasing.

Now, the current player will roll their die. If they roll a two, three, four, five, or six, then he or she may continue on blithely, and play passes to the person sitting on their right. The next player will describe their behavior at the party similarly, and cast their dice when they have finished as well. Play continues on this way until someone rolls their dice, and a one appears.

If on your turn, you throw your dice and any should come up a one, then the plague has found you. You will be silent for the rest of the game. Drain your glass, and give your dice to any single player. That person will tell the others how they found you among the revelry, where in the mansion your body lay and how death has ravaged you. This news is, of course, troubling to all those gathered, but there is nothing but to carry on, so the player with the red die will describe how the corpse is disposed of (discreetly, of course), and they will pass the red die to any other player, and take a new white one from the supply to replace it.

A new round now begins with the new holder of the red die, and each player will take turns recounting their actions at the party and rolling once again, until death claims another. At this point, you will notice, some players will be rolling more than one die on their turn, and more still will be rolled as the game wears on – this is simply the nature of things.

Play continues this way, with the party guests (and, inevitably, the hosts) succumbing to the epidemic one by one, emptying their glasses and passing their dice on, describing more and more desperate acts as the night progresses and the company dwindles. Polite conversation turns to bitter accusations and recriminations, innocent flirtation becomes outright lechery, and the normally refined enjoyment of a simple meal may degenerate into an orgy of gluttony and inebriated debauchery. Any deeds that are described by any of the players should be treated as fact, regardless of their consequences, but they party guests must remain inside the mansion, and may not take the lives of any of the other guests outright – that is the sole purview of the pestilence that stalks the halls of this doomed revel.

Eventually, there will be but two that remain, and then one. The last surviving player will continue to describe his or her actions alone, rolling their copious supply of dice each time, until they too succumb to the unavoidable plague. When the final partygoer has met their inescapable end, set all the empty vessels and dice aside. The party is over, and death has won the game again, as always.

## THE LEAVES WILL BURY

This game is for a few players, somewhere around two to five. You will need a pen, and twenty or thirty small pieces of paper to write on. The players will choose someone, a person that they all know, or create a fictional person that they will all come to know. Either way, the players will decide on the name of the person and write it on one of the pieces of paper.

Working together to inspire each other, and to prevent duplication, the players should each write down a number of facts about the person, one per piece of paper. Note their birthday and their age, write about their appearance, what color their hair and eyes are, how tall or short they are, what their skin is like, and so on. Add more details, one per paper, about their personality, what they liked, what they hated, how they talked, how they laughed, whether they seemed bitter or cheerful, if they always complained or always smiled, what kinds of things they believed in, and so forth. Talk about and write down the things that surrounded them, their prized possessions, the people that they loved and despised and tolerated, how you all know the person. Note down what kind of car they drove or what kind of bike they rode, what their favorite books and movies and games and music were. Add anything that comes to mind, until you have twenty-five or thirty facts about the person. Take all of the slips of paper, and shuffle them roughly into a stack that everyone can reach.

This person has recently died, and you have all gathered together because you knew them. You will play a scene as yourselves that takes place at or just after the person's funeral. Players should talk about the deceased respectfully, but not necessarily mournfully; everyone is allowed their own feelings and perspective about their late acquaintance. Reminisce as you wish, discussing what the person was like, using the details written on the pieces of paper as reminders, trying to work most – if not all – of the elements that you've written down into the conversation. After a few minutes, no more than five, the conversation will end, and you will all finish speaking, give your regards, and say goodbye to each other.

Years pass. The players should take turns picking out and discarding slips of paper, until about a quarter of them are gone. You may wish to get rid of the ones with what you believe to be less important details first, but that is your decision. Tear each of the discarded papers in two, and let the pieces fall to the ground onto their grave.

The second scene takes place several years after the person's death. Each player will play themselves once again, only much older this time – possibly nearing the end of their own lives. You have all come together again for some special reason – decide why amongst yourselves – and the conversation will inevitably drift to the topic of your old deceased friend. Talk about your former acquaintance for a little while, using only the details that still exist on the remaining pieces of paper. Some of you may remember something of one of the facts that was lost, but you will be unable to bring it to mind. After a few minutes, the conversation will turn to another topic, and the scene will end.

Years pass. The players again take turns picking out and discarding slips of paper, until only about half of the original pieces of information remain. Tear each of the discarded papers in two, and let the pieces fall to the ground onto their grave.

The third scene takes place many years later. Each player will play someone from the following generation, someone who lives on after the player's own death. Perhaps a child or a grandchild, or a student or a young friend who is now grown. Decide why you have all met now, and have a conversation that begins with someone recalling something about an old friend of their parents or grandparents or their teacher or whatever you choose. You will all have some kind of connection to this person in some way, but you will only be able to recall the facts that exist on the remaining slips of paper. You may try to recall the other details, but you will fail. The conversation will soon return to more present topics, and the scene will end.

Years pass. The players once more take turns picking out and discarding slips of paper, until only a few remain. Tear each of the discarded papers in two, and let the pieces fall to the ground onto their grave.

The final scene takes place at a much later date, perhaps a hundred years or more in the future. The players will each play someone who was associated somehow with their previous character; again, decide why you have all gathered together. One player will bring up the deceased in passing, and the others will discuss the deceased person's life with some amount of curiosity. Again, only the few details that exist on the remaining slips of paper may be used, and again, the conversation will inevitably turn to another topic, and the scene will end.

Years pass. The players take turns tearing each remaining piece of paper in two, letting them fall to the ground onto the grave. The players will have one last conversation, as themselves, on any topic, but will not mention any of the facts from any of the discarded pieces of paper, except perhaps the fact that they knew someone once who died. Nothing else about the person may be recalled. Inevitably, the conversation will go where it will, and the players will realize at some point that the game has ended. Leave the fallen papers where they lie until someone decides that it is time to clean them up and throw them away.

## ACHILLES' HEEL

Achilles' Heel is a game for two players – one will play a super-powered hero, the other their nemesis. Choose who will be the superhero and who will be the supervillain, and quickly choose names for your new personas – Captain Fantastic and Doctor Midnight, for example. Find ten cards or slips of paper to write on, and fifteen pennies or tokens of some kind. The hero will quickly write down ten things on the slips of paper, numbering them from one to ten. (Obviously, the players may collaborate on the ten things if the hero is having difficulty coming up with them.) The things may be objects, actions, places, emotions, anything. Two of these things will be the only weaknesses that the hero possesses – otherwise, the superhero is completely and totally invulnerable.

Place the ten slips of paper into a hat or a cup or some container where they may be drawn randomly. Both players will take four pieces of paper from the container, note down the numbers of the items that they pulled, return them, and mix the papers up well again. The things that were written on the two slips of paper that were *not* chosen represent the hero's vulnerabilities. Everything else will be useless as a weapon against the hero, but each player only knows what four of those things are, so the hero's vulnerabilities still remain largely unknown.

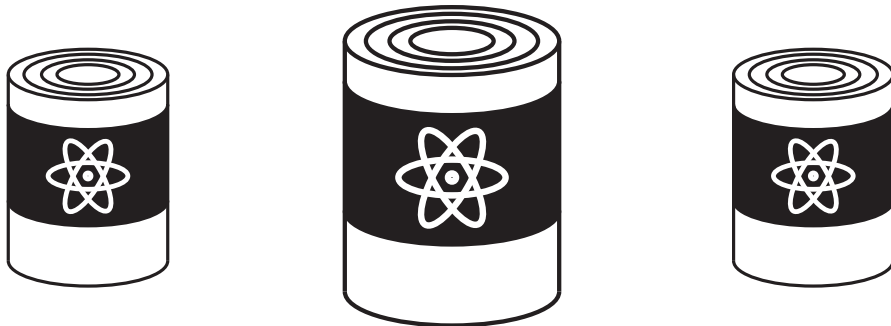
Once the setup is complete, the players will engage in a series of five "episodes", which will culminate in a final battle between the hero and his nemesis. In each episode, the villain will randomly draw two of the slips of paper from the container, and present a brief scenario where the hero must choose between two situations or outcomes that involve the elements drawn. So, for example, if the villain drew "radiation" and "fear of birds", they might describe a scenario where they must disable a nuclear reactor that the villain has rigged to blow, while the nearby city is being attacked by mutated crows. Alternately, they may combine the two pieces: the reactor may be protected by the giant, twisted birds.

Once the scenario is laid out, the villain will take a number of coins from the supply and divide them between the two elements. In the first episode, they will only take one, in the second they will take two, three in the third, four in the fourth, and five in the fifth. So, in the initial episode, one slip of paper will have one token next to it, and the other will have none; in the final episode, they will have zero and five, one and four, or two and three. The hero will then choose one of the situations indicated by one of the slips of paper to attempt to resolve.

If the thing on that paper is one of the ones that either of the players chose during setup, the hero is invulnerable to that thing, and they succeed in saving the day all around! The hero takes the coins from that item, and the villain takes the coins from the other. The superhero may now quickly describe exactly how they thwarted their arch enemy's diabolical plans. For the purposes of narration, assume that the hero has whatever powers necessary to do what needs to be done – flight, super strength, laser eyes, telekinesis, whatever. The day is saved!

If, however, neither player has the chosen element noted down, the villain has discovered one of the hero's weaknesses, and the hero fails to foil their evil deeds! The villain takes all the tokens from both pieces of paper, and narrates how they used the hero's vulnerability against them, incapacitating them long enough to execute their nefarious plan – this time! The hero is not completely defeated, though, and will return in top condition to fight the forces of darkness once again in the next episode...

After all five rounds have run their course, both players will have a number of coins in front of them. There will be one final episode that will decide the fate of the two mortal enemies once and for all. Decide together how and where this ultimate battle between good and evil will take place, and then, starting with the hero, each player will put forward one token and narrate an action, either telling how they attack the other player or defend themselves or react to the last action. Eventually, one player will run out of tokens – that player will be defeated, and the victor will describe how they put an end to their adversary for good. Will Captain Fantastic stop his fearsome foe's fiendish machinations for all time, or will Doctor Midnight extend his shadow across the entire world? Only you can decide!



# MASK

This is a game that will accommodate any number of players, but will likely work best with a smallish number; definitely not less than three, probably no more than five or six. To play, you must create a mask. The mask will be constructed from a single piece of letter sized white paper. Just draw two simple eyes – just circles about the size of quarters – about halfway down the page, so they're as far apart from each other as they are from the edges. The mouth will be a single straight line drawn about halfway between the eyes and one of the short edges, just straight across, as wide as the eyes are apart. Do not poke or cut out the eye holes. You don't need to attach a string or rubber band to hold the mask on anyone's head – players will just hold the mask up in front of their faces when they want to use it.

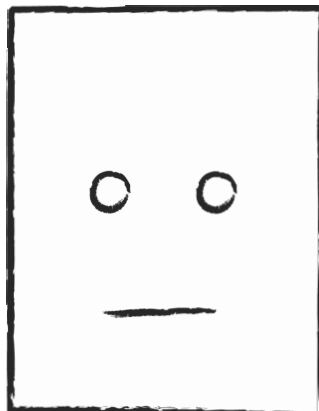
Choose the most shy player to wear the mask first. That player will hold the mask in front of their face for a few minutes, and play the character that emerges. Everyone else will play as themselves. To begin, give the mask a simple gender-neutral name, like Sam or Alex. One of the players will greet the mask, and say hello. "Hello, Sam! How are you?" The player wearing the mask is now "Sam", and will respond as such. When wearing the mask, the player should respond slowly and smoothly, without twitching around or making any quick or sudden moves. When someone talks to the mask, the mask should unhurriedly turn to face the person and respond naturally, in a neutral voice that fits the mask. So, the mask will turn to look at the person who greeted them, and say hello back. All that is happening now is a regular conversation, just normal everyday chit-chat between the players and their new friend, the mask.

The conversation with the mask will last for a couple of minutes, and then someone will say goodbye, and the person who was wearing the mask will hand the mask to another player, and as they do, tear off a small piece of paper from the corner of the mask, and roll it into a small ball. The new player will hold the mask in front of their face, and play the same character. (So, really, there will be a number of "characters" in this game equal to the number of players, plus one: everyone playing themselves, and the character that emerges from the mask.) When the new player has taken on the role of the mask, someone should greet the mask again ("Hello, Sam!"), and you will have a short conversation again, only a couple of minutes. When the conversation is done, say goodbye, and a new player will take the role of the mask. Make sure that whenever a player takes off the mask, they take a small piece of paper from the corner of the mask, and roll it into a small ball. Also be mindful of who you are handing the mask to – try not to give it to the player who just handed it to you. You will do this a few times, just talking to your new friend, and taking turns between the all the players playing themselves, and playing the character of the mask.

Eventually, maybe after switching the mask between players three or four times, shortly after one of the players takes on the role of the mask, just after someone says hello to the mask character, one of the players will say, "I have to tell you something." Then they will say the name of the person who is currently wearing the mask, and they will say, "...They mean to do you harm." The mask can react to that revelation however they like, but remember that they should still be making slow, gentle movements, and they should still be using a voice that is appropriate to the character of the mask. Let this conversation go however it goes for another minute or two, and then say goodbye and pass the mask to another player.

Have another conversation or two, until at some point, one of the players will say, "You know..." And then they will say the name of the person who is currently wearing the mask, and add, "They mean to help you out." (This person cannot be the same person who intends to do the mask harm, as you may have guessed.) The mask can react to this announcement however they like, but remember to maintain your steady movements and the neutral voice of the mask. Continue the conversation for another minute or two, and then say goodbye and pass the mask to another player.

Eventually, the mask will be ready to confront the person who intends to do it harm. It should make sure that it can see both the person who wants to harm it, and the person who it knows will help it. When the mask is ready, after the players say hello, it can ask the person who intends to hurt the mask why they want to hurt them, what they intend to do, and so on. The mask can react to them however they wish, but this will be the last time that the players talk to the character of the mask. This time, when the player who is currently playing the mask takes it off, you will determine the ultimate fate of your new friend. Each player will give the small paper balls that they have collected to either the person who will harm the mask, or the one who will help it. Whichever of the two has more paper balls will get their way – in the case of a tie, the person who had the mask last will decide the winner. Once the decision is made, that person – the helper or the hurter – may do whatever they want with the mask, save it or destroy it. After that, the character of the mask is gone, and the game is over.



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