

## **Exclusive Listing**

A game about not breaking up by Jesse Coombs

# **“Hope is the last thing a person does before they are defeated.”**

-Henry Rollins

This is a game about a couple buying a house. It requires 4 players. Two players will play as the couple, one player will play as their real estate broker, and the final player will be known as the *hope* player. The *hope* player will portray various roles and also create scenes for the other players to roleplay their characters in.

The game will last no longer than 2 hours and usually no shorter than an hour, but that may vary. The *hope* player needs a way to keep track of time. Everyone will also need access to a room or space that the players can pretend are the various rooms of a couple's future home. Multiple locations are good, but not required as long as everyone is able to imagine a different location using the same space.

To begin, everyone who is playing will need to pick a role, as listed below. Each role has a different way to win the game.

## The couple

Two players will play the two halves of a couple. Their characters can be married or dating, but they must be in a serious relationship. The genders, backgrounds, and names of the couple can be anything that both players agree upon and are comfortable roleplaying.

Both players should also be comfortable with each other before play begins. These are not roles to be taken lightly.

The couple are in every scene of the game. To win, you must get the real estate broker to shake your hand.

If you are interested in really getting into the head of your character, you should play as a member of the couple.

## The real estate broker

One player will play as the real estate broker. The broker has known the couple for some amount of time; they've already met at least a few times. This player will choose the name and appearance of the broker.

The broker's job is to show the couple around the space, describing the features, hoping for a sale. Be descriptive!

The broker will not be in the *dream sequence* scenes. To win, the broker must shake the hand of the person in the couple who is not *heartbroken*.

If you are interested in a slightly more tactical game, and enjoy taking charge without getting personal, you should play as the broker.

## **Hope**

One player will play as the *hope* player. This is less of a role, and more of a symbol. You will play as various different characters who will probably have some connection to the couple and who may not exist.

The *hope* player has the responsibility of describing new houses on the market, framing *dream sequence* scenes, and playing *dream sequence* characters.

The *hope* player does not take part when the broker is showing the house. The *hope* player wins if the timer reaches 90 minutes before the broker shakes hands with someone in the couple.

If you love being creative and entertaining others, you should play as *hope*.

## Playing the game

After roles have been picked, the couple must go somewhere private and decide which one of them is *heartbroken*. They both must keep this secret from the other players and anyone who may be watching the game as well.

The *heartbroken* member of the couple wants and probably needs to break up with their partner, but is afraid to do so. The *heartbroken* has felt this way for a while. The other member of the couple is, for the most part, clueless about this. “Hey, we’ve always had some issues, but who doesn’t?” The characters in the couple do not have the knowledge that the players do.

After the couple has secretly chosen who is *heartbroken*, they briefly describe their characters, relationship, and past to the other players. The broker, in turn, describes what this real estate broker looks like and their name. The broker does not reveal anything else.

The *hope* player then sets a timer for 90 minutes and play begins with *showing a property*.

## Scenes

There are two types of scenes, *showing a property* and *dream sequences*.

## Showing a property

*Showing a property* is the first scene of the game. First, the *hope* player describes what type of property just came on the market; whether it's a house, an apartment, or something else where people could live. They also briefly describe the type of neighborhood it's in, making sure not to contradict any fiction that has already been established.

When framing any scene, it is a great time for all players to ask any clarifying questions, remembering to keep the *heartbroken* a secret. Don't take too long framing a scene and don't describe anything inside of the home. That's the broker's job. If everyone seems to be nodding their heads, roleplaying should begin.

When playing a *showing a property* scene, the broker is trying to sell the unit, describing everything and answering questions. The broker should also ask gentle probing questions as to better find the right fit for the couple.

The couple should feel free to point out stuff in the house and describe things as well, but the broker has the fictional authority on the space if confusion occurs.

At any time, the broker may "go for the hard sell" or "show another place". If they go for the sell, the broker straight up offers their hand to one member of the couple. They must shake hands and the game is over. At this time, the *heartbroken* must be revealed. See "The end of the game" below. The couple can never initiate a handshake, only the broker.

If the broker wants to "show another place", they let the couple know that they have something else that would be perfect for them. The *hope* player must then frame a new *showing a property* scene, with a new location.

## Dream sequences

A *dream sequence* scene happens within a *showing a property* scene. If at any time during a *showing a property* scene, either member of the couple touches the other (not the broker), even accidentally, this triggers a *dream sequence*. The *hope* player should be watching for hand holding, brushes, hugs, etc and call for *dream sequence*.

The *hope* player frames a new scene, set in the exact same location, but in the future when the couple is living in this room. *Hope* describes what's going on, probably in a typical or idealized day for the couple. The *hope* player must create and play a third character, such as an old or new family member, a friend, or really anyone who has a reason to be in this space. Delivery person or contractor are good options.

The couple and *hope* must both play out the scene in character and within this new context. The couple must play their characters from the point of view of the character who is not *heartbroken*. In other words, this a fantasy.

The couple can touch each other if they'd like and it does not trigger a new scene. The scene ends if either player touches the *hope* player. The couple and the broker are now back where they were before, and the *hope* player returns to being the audience.

## The end of the game

If either member of the couple shakes hands with the real estate broker, the game ends.

Whoever is shaking the broker's hand, wins.

If it's the *heartbroken*, then they are forced to come clean to their partner about their feelings before their relationship goes to the next level. They breakup and the *heartbroken* is free to love again.

If it's not the *heartbroken*, then their partner and the broker win. The home is bought, movers are scheduled, and the broker gets a commision. The partner never learns the truth.

If the broker doesn't shake hands before 90 minutes go by, the game ends and *hope* wins. Anything is possible.