

# IT'S ALL GOOD

-an ancestral autobiography based on family myths, lies, and misunderstandings-

"It's All Good" is a freeform larp which uses some novel mechanics to explore the idea of learning about characters through stories. Players will alternate between primary characters and secondary characters who share family legends about those primary characters. The game uses light and shadow to both evoke a nostalgic ideal of the setting and to pace the scenes.

Set Up: Print out a copy of the second page for each player. Cut out the card shapes nicely on one sheet and set them aside - they will be needed. Quickly cut out a few random card shapes from the other sheets and discard the pieces. The holes in the rules sheets make a gobo, a pattern through which we will cast light using a flashlight or smartphone. Divide the cards randomly among the players. This game should be played in a darkened room.

Explain to the players that there will be light shoulder touching. Explain that the tone of this game can be a mixture of serious and comical, that we explore realistic characters in changing times and then tell outrageous stories about them.

## The Setting

Primary characters are members of a small community in the Ozark Mountains in 1937. Many lost their ancestral homes and property when the Bagnell Dam flooded the valleys in 1931, the young people will leave in 1939 to fight in the war or work in the factories. Few will return and the community will wither and die.

You are nominally white. Scotch-Irish descent, though you don't know it, with a mix of Osage, Kickapoo, and black which you do know. You probably own a car and read a weekly paper. You probably don't have electricity or a flush toilet in your home. You are a bit superstitious and just a little religious. Your clothes are store bought, and you aren't nearly as self-sufficient as your parents were. You know of no time when your family didn't live here in these hills.

Secondary characters appear for a single scene. They are the distant descendants of the primary characters and will share stories about them. When a secondary character appears think about when and where they are, and who they are talking to. Sample prompts are on the reverse.

## How to Run a Scene:

There are two kinds of scenes, soliloquys and stories.

Soliloquys are told in the first person and explore what a primary character is thinking and doing, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are true - the speaker may be lying to themselves. Verbalize the

concerns of the character, what they are doing to address them, and try to bring the experience alive by describing the lushness of the trees, the smell of the bedewed earth, the ill omen of hearing a hoot owl during the day, the stink of gasoline and oil, the sound of distant thunder.

Stories are told by later generations about the primary character's we've been exploring. These stories may or may not be true, they may or may not be believed by the teller. Think about the cleverly overlong jokes of Mark Twain, the earnest lies told by people who've been told the same ridiculous stories so much they believe.

Players take turns having scenes of either sort. Sample scene prompts are on the reverse, but players should suggest scenes that build on or complement the ongoing narratives. Both stories and soliloquys inform us about what's happening in the overall narrative, though we can never know which parts are true. Scenes, especially stories, can be treated like challenges to the other players, "Tell us the one about..."

Begin with "An oil man come up to the house to buy you out."

## He Got a Gun...

The players making up the audience may ask questions. They may also give cards to the speaker. These cards must immediately and significantly impact the story being told. These cards stay in circulation, a speaker will give out cards that they received from others.

## That Dappled Sunlight, the Fireflies at Night

Players use their lights and cut paper sheets to cast a gentle, moving light over the speaker. We are creating the ambiance of the breeze, the trees, the sunlight. As audience members think the scene should come to a close they turn their lights off, the sun is setting on this story.

However, if an audience member has their interest reinvigorated by the speaker, they may light up a firefly. Turn your light back on, cover and uncover it with your hand while drifting around the space. Once the all the lights are out and the fireflies stop flashing the story ends immediately.

## We're All Here Now

If an audience member thinks the speaker has made a great sacrifice for the community, or thinks that the community will silently empathize with the speaker's problems, the audience member may turn off their light and stand behind the speaker and gently rest a hand on their shoulder.

## The End

Play until you feel you're done. It's all good.

"The humorous story is told gravely; the teller does his best to conceal the fact that he even dimly suspects that there is anything funny about it..."

- Mark Twain

## Bibliography:

Blansett, Clark, "Inter-Tribalism in the Ozarks 1800-1865" American Indian Quarterly. Davidson, James, "Keeping the Devil at Bay," International Journey of Archaeology. Harington, Donald, the Stay More series. McClanahan, Scott, "Crapalachia." Randolph, Vance, "Pissing in the Snow."

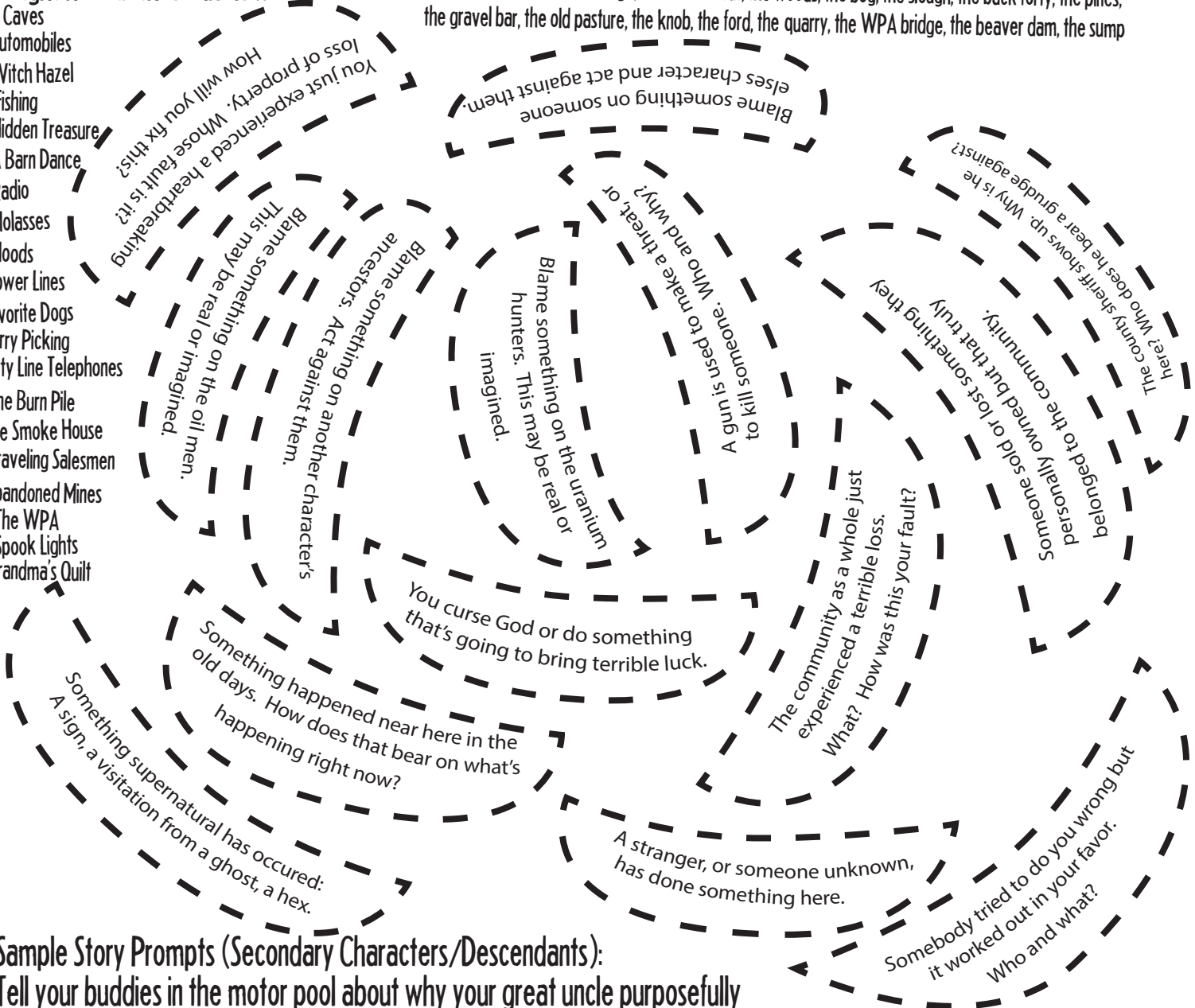
**FIRST NAMES ARE BILL, JOHN, LITTLE JOHN, GABE, SAM, OR LORETTA, DAWNY, LOUISA, MARY, IMOGENE  
LAST NAMES ARE HODGES, LESTER, COOKE, BRAND, DOUGLAS, CAMDEN, CRAWLEY, SMITH, HARROW**

**Sample Soliloquy Prompts (Primary Characters):**

An oil man come up to the house to buy you out - The old homestead before it was flooded out by the new dam -  
A uranium hunter sneaking around your back property - Someone signed up for the army or took a city job or just  
up and disappeared - You visit a witch though you swore you wouldn't - Someone touches you inappropriately while  
you are out at night on a coon hunt - A rich tourist took something that was rightfully yours - Who or what was buried  
right here in these dark woods?

The hollow, the creek, the ridge, the railroad cut, the woods, the bog, the slough, the back forty, the pines,  
the gravel bar, the old pasture, the knob, the ford, the quarry, the WPA bridge, the beaver dam, the sump

- Caves
- Automobiles
- Witch Hazel
- Fishing
- Hidden Treasure
- A Barn Dance
- Radio
- Molasses
- Floods
- Power Lines
- Favorite Dogs
- Berry Picking
- Party Line Telephones
- The Burn Pile
- The Smoke House
- Traveling Salesmen
- Abandoned Mines
- The WPA
- Spook Lights
- Grandma's Quilt



**Sample Story Prompts (Secondary Characters/Descendants):**

Tell your buddies in the motor pool about why your great uncle purposefully  
sank his car in Stockton Lake - Tell your cell mates about how you aren't the first murderer in your family but you're  
certainly the last - Tell the Prime Minister of Latvia about your grandfather and the bucket of electricity - Tell your  
Mexican-American neighbor about how your family mispronounces jalapeno - Tell your fantastically wealthy lover about  
your one-eyed great grandfather who worked in a lead mine - Tell the story about your other great uncle falling out of a  
tree - Tell credulous rednecks a whopper about buried treasure and spend two generations chasing them off your land