

This Procrustean Bed

Daniel H. Levine

This is a game about love and sex for two players. It's probably best played with someone who you know and trust at least a little, but that's your call. There are two characters who now, in the present, have had long-term romantic relationship, lasting years. You will play them now, as well as in the past. Please play this game in a quiet room. It can take as little as fifteen minutes to play, or as much time as you like.

You'll play out three scenes that involve sex, represented by touching the other player on their hands, arms, shoulders (above the chest/breasts, and on the back on the shoulder blades only), and neck (below the jawline and earlobes). When you are touched in these places, you should act/react as if the other character is touching you sexually. When you touch the other player in these places, touch them as you would a lover. If you are uncomfortable with the other player touching you in some of these places, tell them before you begin. If you are uncomfortable being touched in *all* these places this game may not be for you - though of course I invite you to come up with creative accommodations. (This technique is called *ars amandi*; for more info: <http://www.ars-amandi.se/resources/the-ars-amandi-method/>)

STOP. THIS SIDE OF THE PAGE IS THE CHARACTER 1 INSTRUCTIONS. YOU WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE OF THIS GAME IF YOU READ BOTH CHARACTERS' INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE PLAYING THAN YOU WILL IF YOU READ ONLY ONE.

ONE: Begin the game by describing and acting out, with the other player, what your characters were doing non-sexually just before the first time your characters had sex. Maybe you were at a concert or having a quiet dinner at home. When you describe a fact about your environment, introduce it by saying "Remember when/that..." to indicate that this is narrative, and not in-character speech. Respond to the other player's facts with "yes, and..." or "yes, but..." Delight in the other character's company. When you move to having sex in character, be eager and excited, but always (in this scene and others) respect and seek your partner's consent. "Sex" is whatever it is for your characters, not necessarily just penetration leading to orgasm - and you can also leverage the techniques above to leave the exact nature of fictional act you are representing abstract, if you like. Or you can make explicit what, e.g., this touch on the shoulder means in the fiction. After you have had sex, whisper something about their character that has always infuriated yours about them, all these years, into the other player's ear.

TWO: Describe and act out a scene from five years later - again beginning with what was happening just before you had sex. Delight in the other character's company. You begin in a public place - maybe at a party or an art gallery - and must leave it to have sex. While you were enjoying the activity, you also really want to have sex. You will initiate sex; be eager and excited. After you have had sex, whisper a problem your character has that the other character has never, and will never, be able to fix into the other player's ear.

THREE: Describe and act out a scene in the present. Now, introduce out-of-character statements of fact with "Now..." You are alone with your partner. Maybe you are making dinner together or reading in bed. Delight in their company. You will initiate sex; be eager and excited. After you have had sex, whisper something you adore about their character into the other player's ear.

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STOP. THIS SIDE OF THE PAGE IS THE CHARACTER 2 INSTRUCTIONS. YOU WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE OF THIS GAME IF YOU READ BOTH CHARACTERS' INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE PLAYING THAN YOU WILL IF YOU READ ONLY ONE.

ONE: Begin the game by describing and acting out, with the other player, what your characters were doing non-sexually just before the first time your characters had sex. Maybe you were on a blind date at a restaurant or browsing the same bookstore. When you describe a fact about your environment, introduce it by saying "Remember when/that..." to indicate that this is narrative, and not in-character speech. Respond to the other player's facts with "yes, and..." or "yes, but..." Delight in the other character's company. When you move to having sex in character, be eager and excited, but always (in this scene and others) respect and seek your partner's consent. "Sex" is whatever it is for your characters, not necessarily just penetration leading to orgasm - and you can also leverage the technique above to leave the exact nature of fictional act you are representing abstract, if you like. Or you can make explicit what, e.g., this touch on the shoulder means in the fiction. After you have had sex, whisper something about their character that has always infuriated yours about them, all these years, into the other player's ear.

TWO: Describe and act out a scene from five years later - again beginning with what was happening just before you had sex. Delight in the other character's company. You begin in a public place - maybe taking a dance class or playing a sport - and must leave it to have sex. While you enjoy being physical with your partner, you also had been enjoying what you were doing beforehand. Do not initiate sex, and when your partner does, tense up initially when your partner touches you. After you have had sex, whisper a problem your character has that the other character has never, and will never, be able to fix into the other player's ear.

THREE: Describe and act out a scene in the present. Now, introduce out-of-character statements of fact with "Now..." You are alone with your partner. Maybe you are binge-watching TV or fixing up your home. Delight in your partner's company. When you move to having sex, let it be at their initiation but with your full consent - it is difficult for you to find physical pleasure in the act, but you care about them and enjoy pleasing them. After you have had sex, whisper something you adore about their character into the other player's ear.