

Down the Line

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3 - 5 players + GM optional

Concept:

You're travelling home, the morning after a gathering or party, with a group of friends that you attended with. Last night things didn't go exactly how you planned and now you're trying to deal with the repercussions of that. You want to preserve the group dynamic as much as possible, but at the same time, you need to deal with what happened last night.

This game is set on public transport, such as a train or coach. It can be played either privately or on public transport.

Safety:

If you choose to play this game in public please be aware that non- participants should not be drawn into the game in any way. The game is designed for low intensity tension and emotion. If you would like to play out more overt conflicts, please play in private. If the answers to any of your character creation questions involve violence, or any content which may be disturbing for someone to overhear please use your judgement if playing in public.

The answers to character creation questions should be agreed as a group. Any player can call a timeout during the game to recalibrate if the content is making them uncomfortable.

If you are playing in private you can leave the game at any time. If you're playing in public you are free to leave to sit elsewhere. You can also stop the game if you feel uncomfortable. People are more important than games.

If you're playing the game during a journey and want to end it with the characters going separate ways at the end of the journey, it's advisable to meet somewhere afterwards to debrief.

You will need:

Pens or pencils

Scissors

Blank paper

Stickers for character names (optional)

Character creation:

As a group decide the following:

What was last night's event?

How do you know each other?

What is the age range of the group?

As a player decide:

Your character's name and age

Why the group is important to them

As a group consider status. Point to the person you consider to have the highest and lowest status in the group. What are the group dynamics? (consider status, people who might be closer or more distant from each other, people who might have joined more recently)

Each player is dealt two questions (see below). They have the option to change them by dealing in another question if they prefer. Ideally both sets should relate to a different player, but can be linked to a single incident. Each player should have 2 answers applied to them, should be negotiated by the group, possibly with

players taking turns to answer their questions in rounds. Answers should be discussed as a group. Any player gets the opportunity to veto a suggestion that makes them uncomfortable, even if they're not one of the players participating in that relationship.

Cut out the questions below:

- 1) Who did you sleep with last night? Why was it a bad idea? What do you want that person to know? Why must you make your position clear before the end of the journey?
- 2) Who were you trying to protect last night? What did you think the risk was? Why do you think you failed? Why must you apologise and offer to help before the end of the journey?
- 3) Who did you finally confront? What prompted it? Why was the issue so important to you? Why must you work out where you stand with each other before the end of the journey?
- 4) Why did last night end with you alone and crying? Is that the first time this has happened? Who contributed to it? Why must you tell someone before the end of the journey?
- 5) Why did you finally feel able to confide in someone last night? What about? How did they react? Why are you scared it might have been a mistake? Why must you work out where you stand with each other before the end of the journey?
- 6) Who are you scared of after last night? What did they do / do you think they did? What do you want to do about it? What will you do about it? Why do you have to do it before the end of the journey?
- 7) Who do you now owe something to? What must you sacrifice to pay them back? Why is there conflict? Why must you talk about this with them before the end of the journey?
- 8) Who have you fallen in love with? What was the trigger for it happening/ you realising it? What will you do about it? Why must you tell someone before the end of the journey?
- 9) Who made you realise something dramatic about yourself last night? What are the consequences of this? Who do you want to tell? Why must you tell someone before the end of the journey?
- 10) Why was this the last time you're doing this? (going out / going out with these people/ going to this event) Who do you want to make this clear to now? Why must you make a decision before the end of the journey?
- 11) Who wronged you last night? What did they do? How can you make it clear how you feel? Why must you decide whether to confront them directly before the end of the journey?
- 12) You feel guilty about something you said or did to someone yesterday? What did you say? Who was it? Why did you know it would be hurtful? Why must you decide how to resolve it before the end of the journey?
- 13) Why do you dread coming home? Who is the one person you could rely on to help you? Why must you ask for their help before the end of the journey.

Once you have the answer to these questions try to build up a more fleshed out idea of your character. Who are they? What's their personality?

Techniques:

- Avoiding confrontation: You're torn between the social pressure to keep things normal and avoid confrontation and a strong desire to communicate how you're feeling. Try to hint at what you want to say without saying it outright. It's possible direct confrontation will become unavoidable.
- Note writing: This is an out of character technique. You can write notes to symbolise a message from an NPC (e.g. a text from a character's partner). The aim of this should be to put pressure on the character. (In a GMed game this will be done by the GM.) If you as a character receives a note from a GM that you don't wish to play out (e.g. a break up message from your partner) this can be signalled by shaking your head at the GM. If you do this your character won't have received that message.
- You can also write an in character 'journal', describing what your character is thinking. This can be read by other players and they can use it to inform their play (It won't be seen by the other characters.)
- Seating arrangements (optional) This game is taking place on a coach. 4 players are sat facing each other and one is sat on a separate seat across the aisle. (This can demonstrate group dynamics, but be generous - get up to talk privately with another character, or offer to swap seats regularly. Don't use this technique to block someone's play.)

Play:

The game should last around 1 and a half hours, with an option to finish early.

You aren't confined to your seat - you can get up to 'get coffee' or 'go for a walk' as a way to speak privately to another player.

There are two ways to finish early. You are free to say that your station has arrived and 'get off the train' if you no longer want to play or feel that your character's arc is coming to an end. Alternatively, if you feel that the game is finished you can ask the other characters if that's your station. Other characters are free to agree or disagree.

If you're playing on public transport you may want to play it for the duration of a journey and finish when the journey does, potentially leaving some things unresolved. If you do intend to play this way, remember to debrief afterwards.

If you are playing in private set a timer for the duration of play. When the timer goes off, you only have 5 minutes of your journey left, and then game is over.

The game begins: - You are travelling home. You feel slightly overwhelmed, and possibly hungover. You want to just shut your eyes and think for a moment, but you're worried you don't have time. You need to find a way to deal with what happened last night before things escalate out of your control. Before you lose your chance or your nerve.

Debrief:

All players answer the following questions:

How do you feel now?

Is there anything you need?

Is there anything you'd like to say about your experience?

Optionally, go round and take turns to say one thing that you enjoyed that each player brought to the game.