

NecBromancer

Alex Rowland, 2018

PITCH

Players embody the corpses of dead Bros, temporarily reanimated by magic on every Bro's favorite day, Thanksgiving. They have 30 minutes to crank butts, slam brews and give thanks.

Just a Heads-Up Bro!

This game contains misogyny, adult language, sexist slurs, touch, alcohol, toxic masculinity and descriptions of rot.

INTRODUCTION

About 40 years ago, a mysterious necBromancer cast a spell upon a graveyard just outside Marblehead, MA, so that his fellow Bros may walk the earth for 30 minutes on their most cherished of nights, Thanksgiving. That dark wizard also left a barrel of a 'magic' *elixir* that slows the effects of decomposition and then disappeared into the night.

CHARACTERS

All players embody Bros both recent and deceased. They are not zombies, they are decaying corpses temporarily infused with life. A Bro is usually a man who is primarily occupied with masculine coded comradery, partying, and obtaining physical pleasure. But Bros also have needs outside of pure consumption and domination. Whether they want to accept it or not, the trauma of death has softened them. Deep, deep, deep down they yearn for human intimacy, emotional expression, to be needed and indeed, loved. There are three generations of Bros. Old Bros, Big Bros and New Bros. All characters are men.

Generations

New Bros: These Bros just died, they are likely younger and less decomposed. This is their first Thanksgiving and are likely scared, confused and need of getting pumped up.

Big Bros: Sometimes called "Mid Bros," this isn't their first Thanksgiving and are in charge of shepherding in New Bros, teaching them the rules (known as the New Bro Code), making sure they fit in and that they are pumped up.

Old Bros: They have been here from the time the necBromancer first cast his spell. They have been dead for various lengths of time but were all first rose 40 years ago. They are responsible for creating Thanksgiving as it is known now and for keeping its traditions alive.

Thanksgiving

"We Roll Deep, Turn It Up, Dominate, Give Thanks!"

Many facets of the beloved holiday are now inaccessible to the Bros in their state of undeath. Eating way too much food, watching way too much football, that boring-ass parade... all gone. In the absence of these traditions the Old Bros created new ones (The New Bro Code) and passed them down annually to the newly deceased. Now, it is simply the riotous, toxic comradery of many generations of Bros, passing a bottle of elixir, and wrecking the graveyard like The Patriots just beat The Giants. The Bros find any other way they can to celebrate gluttony and excess. On Thanksgiving, there is no moderation, no pussy shit. It is a cere-

mony about consumption and celebrating one's own existence.

Goals of Thanksgiving

- Greet one another
- Indoctrinate New Bros
- Wreck Shit (See Principles and Rules)
- Bro Out
- Get Fucked Up!

OVERVIEW OF PLAY

Players embody undead Bros for the brief time they are resurrected on Thanksgiving. The chronology of play is divided into two main sections represented by a Thanksgiving and the subsequent Thanksgiving, separated by a short introspective break and prefaced by character creation and workshopping.

Designer Notes

Sometimes knowing the intent of the designer can be helpful when imagining how a game is going to play out or what that experience might be like. I, the designer, believe this is one such time, but if that isn't your thing, please feel free to skip this section.

Thanksgiving one, is about emotional and physical interaction between men and the limits imposed on those modes of interaction by masculinity. Touch is often violent, jocular and requires a socially constructed and approved alibi. Thanksgiving two, is about how those modes change when both pretext and masculine artifice are removed.

PRINCIPLES & RULES

Principle - Tone: The tone of this game will fluctuate between comedic to serious. The author suggests you look out for those beats, and when they occur, commit to the new tone.

Principle-Open Door: The door is always open. Players always have the choice to leave the game at any time, should they feel the need, and are welcome to re-enter play at any time.

Rule-Elixir: A mixture of Southern Comfort (SoCo), embalming fluid and some other dark ingredients (please use a non-lethal substitute). This potion is meant to be consumed and allows the Bros to *wreck shit* and Bro out on each other physically without *perma death*. The *Elixir* only works for a minute or two at a time so Bros should make sure to be swigging consistently. There is a big keg of the stuff that the Old Bros fill the bottle from so Bros drink it like water.

Rule - Decomposition: All Bros are in some state of decay and thus fragile. To wreck shit or physically engage one another results in damage to you and risks perma-death. So drink lots of *elixir*.

Rule - Communication: Death, decomposition and isolation from Non-Bros, have left Bros with a significantly deteriorated vocabulary. After play begins, players may only communicate in the following ways based on the generation of Bro they belong to...

Old Bro: They may only use physical gestures, and the word "Bro" along with various expressive grunts to communicate.

Big Bro: They use mechanically relevant terms e.g., *Elixir*, Thanksgiving, Bro, *Wreck shit*, *Bitch Shit*, *Old Bro*, *Big Bro*, *New Bro* etc. They do not speak in full sentences and also heavily rely on grunts and gesturing.

New Bros: Being newly deceased the effects of death, decomp and isolation has yet to transform their ability to communicate. They speak in full sentences, with no limitations to vocabulary... but 'Bro' is still an important part of their dialect.

Rule—Bitch Shit: This is part of the necBromancer's spell that old Bros have so eloquently named *Bitch Shit*. It encompasses any kind of interpersonal touch outside that isn't aggressive or jocular as well as expressing emotions that aren't tangentially related to Hunger to being Horny. Such behavior results in rapid onset decomposition and near instant *perma-death*.

Rule—Perma Death: *Perma-death* occurs on the character level and simply means the character has decomposed or otherwise become Broken beyond function and the player must watch play for the rest of the Thanksgiving. If this occurs in the first Thanksgiving, they may return as a New Bro in the second.

Principle-Touch: Players will be expected to touch one another. It will be workshopped, but players should be prepared to engage in physical behavior ranging from high fives to chest (shoulder) bumping. Players wanting to engage in *Bitch Shit* should take care and arrange that with those they want to do it with.

Rule-Wrecking Shit: Bros *wreck shit* all the time, but especially on Thanksgiving. Bros wreck gravestones hit one another, throw things. They want to their friends, their environment, dominate everything. To do this safely, players use pillows to simulate aspects of the environment they want to wreck and use them to hit one another to simulate rough housing or fighting (careful of faces).

Principle-Bronouns: Everyone should wear their nametags somewhere visible on their person during play. They all should have a name and pronouns on it. While everyone is playing a man within the fiction, specific pronouns can still be important to players. Players should write whatever pronouns they want to be addressed by on the tag.

REQUIREMENTS

Time: 2 hours

Players: 3-7

Materials: Name Tags, Empty Wine Bottle, Pillows, Music Source, A timer

SETUP

The ideal location for this to be played is a black box theatre. However, as these are not easily secured, any open space where up to 7 people can have a pillow fight is fine.

Totally optional, but a fog machine helps give your environment that ooky spooky cemetery feeling.

Make sure all of the character cards are printed (print character cards as many times as needed and flip over "short side") and cut out individually before play begins.

Queue up Thin Lizzy's *The Boys Are Back In Town*, and Chumbawumba's *Tubthumping* to play.

Bronoun Tags should be available for all players to grab at will. New Bros may put first names on their tag but Old Bros and Big Bros should just write Bro.

Stock the player area with plenty of markers /pens.

Fill the wine bottle 4/5 of the way up.

Preparing to Play

Read the Introduction to the players.

Read and discuss the Principles and Rules.

Pass out and complete character sheets so that everyone has one.

Designate one person responsible for queuing music and thus starting and stopping scenes (give them *The Grave Shift* card.)

Designate one person to read workshops and run them for the group.

Workshop 1: Vocal

All the Bros should sit in a circle. They should take up as much space as they feel they deserve. Sitting in the circle, players take turns saying "Bro" in a manner that expresses a specific emotion or tells a specific story. Attempt to convey as much info with this utterance as possible. The workshop is over after each player has gone 5 times.

Workshop 2: Touch

A. This requires a group understanding of what a fist bump, chest (shoulder bump) bump and jocular shoving, collectively define how these interactions are performed and then move on to step B.

B. All players form a circle around a pillow in silence. When one player is ready, they should enter the center of the circle. They should use this momentary spotlight to pump up the fellow players. The players surrounding them enthusiastically chant "Bro." Before leaving the circle, the player in the center must approach four people in the circle and greet them by chest bumping (or shoulder bumping), pounding fists, shoving each other and hitting them with a pillow. Once they have done all four they may leave the circle and the last person they greeted should replace them in the center. Repeat this until everyone in the circle has been in the center.

Workshop 3: Physicality

Have players stand up and then read the following..

"Bros are Big, Bros are Loud, Bros are Heavy, Bros just ate, Bros Fuck, Bros conquer, Bros are maxed out, Bros are pulsing and ready to explode. Listen to me and use the following prompts to express your inner Bro physically."

(allow each action about 30 seconds)

Just stand there – bask in your own existence – this room and everyone in it are yours.

Now, move around the room.

Wordlessly acknowledge the others in the circle as you continue to move around the room.

The Brewins just scored, celebrate.

Look at the person nearest to you. You just sent them dick pic and you know they are gonna LOVE it. Wordlessly tell them to check their phone.

Keeping moving around the room – but your body is now desiccating, decaying. You become weak and are suddenly very aware of the weight of your bones.

Some decay is worse in some places, those parts of you are a little slower and drag. Some parts are a little stiffer, some a little looser.

The decay is now worse, you feel any move that isn't carefully considered will cause you to fall apart.

Hug the nearest Bro.

Now you are dead.

A Final Note for Steering

Sometimes knowing what is going to occur in the game can enhance the experience we have in character. It can inform our decisions and allow us to steer our play in the direction we most desire.

Toward the end of this Thanksgiving players will come to the realization that there isn't enough *elixir* for another Thanksgiving – and that come next year, they may not rise at all.

Players will all go into your graves and will arise one year later for a final Thanksgiving. After 30 minutes, play will end.

PLAY

Before play begins, everyone should be scattered around the room, lying down. *The Boys are Back in Town* begins playing and players are to emerge from their graves and begin play.

When *Tubthumping* begins playing Bros know the magic is about to wear off. They say their goodbyes and return to their graves. Play ends at the end of the song.

After the first Thanksgiving, everyone should allow themselves five or so minutes to be quiet in their grave. During this time, players should read the prompt on the back of their character card. Players should indicate that they are ready by putting both arms in the air. Once everyone has their arms extended, the player responsible for queuing music should play *The Boys are Back in Town*.

Bros will rise, and the final Thanksgiving will play out. The reanimation magic begins to fade when the timer goes off. *Tubthumping* will sound and play will end at the end of the song.

Timeline

Setup / Preparing to play – 20 min

Workshops – 30 min

Bio Break – 10 min

Thanksgiving One – 15-30 min

Grave Time / Character Update – 5 min

Thanksgiving two – 30 min

Character Cards

See cards on next page. Distribute cards according to the player count:

Three Players: one New Bro, one Big Bro and one Old Bro

Four Players: two New Bros, one Big Bro, one Old Bro

Five Players: two New Bros, two Big Bros, one Old Bro

Six Player: two New Bros, two Big Bros, two Old Bros

Seven Players: three New Bros, two Big Bros, two Old Bros

SPECIAL THANKS

To all my bros that helped me get to the finish line - Jeff, Chad, Eric

Kira Magrann, whose game “Mobilize” inspired the gendered physicality workshop.

Chumbawamba and Thin Lizzy for music.

Everyone at the Golden Cobra Challenge for supporting everything pure and good about freeform design.

OLD BRO

You died a long time ago and are a bro from an era you can no longer remember. Your generation wrote the Bro Code and are in charge of this place... which has meant keeping the elixir safe and rationing it.

The Old Bros know that the supply of Elixir has been running short the past few years and that tis years bottle will be the last... What happens next year is anyones guess. You have decided not to ruin this years celebration for the younger ones, and will break the news to them once the bottle runs dry. Make this year one to remeber.

Answer the following questions for yourself?

What are you thankful for?

What do you wish you could do with your friends that you feel as though you are not able to?

What is something about you that your friends don't know that you wish they did?

BIG BRO

You died a while ago and barely remember being alive. Those memories have been replaced with the New Bro Code and a unquenchable need to bro out.

You know your place in the pecking order around here. New Bros get shit done and party hardest. It's up to you to greet the New Bros, introduce them around and teach them the code so they don't do anything dumb and wind up getting themselves perma-deathed. This is not your first rodeo.

Answer the following questions for yourself?

What are you thankful for?

What do you wish you could do with your friends that you feel as though you are not able to?

What is something about you that your friends don't know that you wish they did?

NEW BRO

You died pretty recently and show only mild signs of decay. You have just been ripped from the peace of non-existence and truly have no idea what is going on. This graveyard smells like a bar and that corpse over there just did a keg stand. Everyone is chanting Bro. You remember being alive and you remember dying... is this heaven or hell... or just another frat party? Regardless, it is objectively horrifying.

Answer the following questions for yourself?

What are you thankful for?

What do you wish you could do with your friends that you feel as though you are not able to?

What is something about you that your friends don't know that you wish they did?

How did you die?

Bro Code

- No Bitch Shit
- Drink or Die
- No Crying
- A bro of bro is a bro to you
- A bro never refuses a drink
- No Drama

Final Thanksgiving Prompt (read after first Thanksgiving)

The first thing you notice is the stench, you don't just smell like SoCo and dirt anymore... you smell like decay. The last of the elixir must have slowed the process of decomposition a little, because you are more than just a skeleton - but not much more. Much of your soft tissue is missing, and the parts that aren't are inhabited by maggots or worse. Depending on the area, you feel either desiccated or pulpy and your limbs feel as though even walking may cause them to fail. The slightest physical provocation could cause permanent death and it is abundantly clear that this is the final Thanksgiving for you. You finally feel your age.

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Grave Shift

This is just a cheat sheet to help you remember how and when to start and end scenes.

-Prepare Tubthumping by the artist Chumbawamba and The Boys are Back in Town by Thin Lizzy so that either can be played at any time.

Once play is about to begin and everyone is quietly laying, play The Boys are Back in Town. Let the track finish.

-Once it is revealed that all of the Elixir is gone. Wait a couple minutes and then play Tubthumping. Allow it to finish. Play ends once the song end.

-After the short break between Thanksgivings. Players will once again get in their graves. When you see that everyone is laying and has raised their arms play The Boys are Back in Town. Let the track finish.

-Set a timer for 30 minutes, when the timer goes off, play Tubthumping. Allow it to finish. The game ends once the song end.