
2 HOURS TO MIDNIGHT

A game by Tore Vange



It's the night of no consequences, the night where everything is permitted. Whatever you choose to do, you can do without fear of legal punishment. You can follow all your dark impulses. If you choose.

The nightmare ends in two hours, at the stroke of midnight. In two hours, the rule of law returns.

In the game we follow a group of people who've found a safe place to spend the night. No-one can get in.

But what about the people already there?

The Basics

Players: 4-24 players

GM: None

What you need to play: Printed cards a set for each group (light version will do, or if you want to be fancy, print the nice ones at the end of the document double sided).

Name tags: I prefer paper tape because it sticks nicely to clothes, is cheap, and leaves no glue behind when pulled off.

A pillow: Preferably one that can take a punch. The pillow must be placed in the confessional.

Some way to time the game. A two-hour countdown on a mobile phone will do nicely. If you're being fancy, a wall-clock set to 10 PM.

Location: Game takes place in the place in which it's played in the real world, an apartment, a livingroom, classroom, abandoned theatre... Just imagine the place has steel doors and bullet proof windows.

Bonus: If you're playing at night, turn out all lights (if everyone is ok with it) and just use flashlights or phones. After all, nobody works at the power company tonight. Except, keep a lit corner for the confessional.

Time to play: 1 hour for rules and character creation, up to 2 hours play time.

Safety rules:

Discuss rules for touching before playing. No violence of any kind. No weapons, although if you murder someone, you can describe how, and with what.

Anyone can leave at any time. If you feel you can't keep playing, leave the room. If you leave the room, your characters fate is sealed. You cannot re-enter.

Decide on a common safeword. If the safeword is mentioned, game stops. Period.

Don't forget to debrief after the game. Cake or chocolate is great for debriefings.

How to play:

The game is played in real-time, and the fictional location corresponds to the physical location in which the game is played. If you play in a bedroom, that's where the game takes place. Same for a living room or submarine. If an item is present, it can be used as a prop.

As this is a freeform/parlour larp/black box, it borrows a lot from improv. The basic rule is to say yes. You cannot negate something put forth by another player. However, you can add to it. You can also disagree, and offer something better, but you cannot block.

Also, listen. Allow others to speak.

Ending the game:

The game ends after the first person dies and the players have had a chance to play an end scene (probably takes about 15-30 minutes). Alternatively, the game ends shortly after the clock strikes midnight in case nobody was killed.

The Confessional:

The confessional has two uses. One is as a spotlight scene, where the player can relate what awful things happened the previous year, or declare their true feelings for another character.

The other use is as a vessel to murder someone.

The confessional also contains a pillow. It can be used to both comfort the confessor, or be used as a tool to illustrate violence.

Whenever anyone enters the Confessional, all play freezes.

Committing murder:

In order to commit murder, the murderer invites the victim into the confessional. If both agree, they hold hands, and look into eachothers' eyes. The killer describes in detail how the murder is committed. The victim must describe their feelings.

The death scene: Should a character be killed, the game ends once the death scene and aftermath has been played out. This gives the deceased and the other players the opportunity to play the aftermath of the murder.

Character creation

Characters are created by selecting cards, some face up, some face down, and following the instructions on each card. There are three cards for each player, 8 of each type.

If there are more than 8 players, divide them into groups, and have a full set of cards printed for each group. Please note that if you prefer smaller, more intimate groups, that's fine, but discuss it beforehand.

4-8 players: 1-2 groups

9-16 players: 2-3 groups

16+ players: 3-4 groups.

Each player selects a character card (face up) and decides a name for themselves. Spend a few minutes discussing your interpretation with your group. Nothing here is secret.

Select a relationship card (face down) and follow the instructions. Try to ensure that relationships are spread around the group. That way everyone will have a detailed relationship with two others.

If playing with multiple groups, put the relationship cards back in the pile, re-shuffle and repeat the process choosing someone from another group. Do it again if playing with multiple groups, so that each player will have connections to each group.

This will give the players up to 7 connections, which is a lot. They may not all come into play, but it does create options.

Finally, each player selects a Past-card, face down. The card only comes into play if the player decides to use the confessional to confess past sins.

Cards:

Character (face up) tells who you are in real life

Relationship: Drawn face down.

Past: Drawn face down

CARDS

(Light version. One set for each group. Simply print and cut with scissors)

Characters:

(face up)

The Preacher

You believe in a greater power, probably you have a congregation. Maybe some of the other characters belong to it (their choice).

Decide what faith you belong to and decide how you preach. Is it brimstone and hell-fire or love and compassion?

The Bon-vivant

Life is meant to be lived and enjoyed to the fullest, and vices exist to be savoured.

Decide your vice and choose how you react when it's inaccessible.

Do you want everyone to have a good time or are others just decorations at your party?

Sample vices: Art, music, sex, drugs, booze, violence.

The intellectual

Life is a mystery meant to be studied and solved.

Decide how you make the most of the opportunity to study your fellow man. Will you provoke them, question them, or calm them?

The nihilist

Life is a series of pains that inevitably end in death.

Decide whether you'll leave the others to their pretty illusions or confront them with the truth.

Also, why are you here where it's safe?

The home-maker

Family and community are foremost in your mind. Safety and comfort above all.

Decide how you'll keep everyone happy and comfortable during your stay.

What if they don't want you to?

The artist

Creating is foremost in your mind, whether it be food to excite the palate, paintings to please the eye, or music to break the heart.

What insight will you gain from this night, and how will you put it on display?

The worker

You work to make society function. Maybe you build things, maybe you clean, maybe you work the till at the market. Regardless, gruelling hours of labour for little reward is your lot in life.

Is being here, safe, reward or punishment?

The law

The rule of law is your main priority. Maybe you're with the police, or a lawyer, or a judge, or maybe you just had jury-duty at one point. Nevertheless, you've seen the ugly side of humanity.

Will you be true to the law even though it doesn't work, or exact some justice of your own?

Relationships:

(face down)

You had a passionate love affair with someone. Decide who, and ask them why it ended.

You stole something from someone. Decide who, and ask them what it was, and if they know about it.

You spread rumours about someone. Decide who, and ask them what the rumour was. They decide if it was true.

You committed a heinous act. Decide who knows about it, and ask them what it was.

Someone knows your darkest secret. Decide who, and ask them what it is.

Someone helped you at great risk to themselves. Decide who, and ask them how and why they helped.

Someone is your greatest rival. Decide who, and ask them what the rivalry is about.

Someone stole an opportunity from you. Decide who, and ask them what that opportunity was.

Past:

(face down)

Last year I *murdered someone*

Last year I *stole something*

Last year I *left someone behind*

Last year I *sacrificed someone*

Last year I *hid behind locked doors, letting no one in*

Last year I *went on a rampage*

Last year I *got revenge*

Last year I *barely survived*

Revision history:

I had the game read by Troels Ken Pedersen, who suggested making the murder more personal by having the murderer and the victim hold hands.

Max Møller made a host of suggestions to the layout an ordering of the text, and especially too to heart explaining the Confessional and Murder earlier in the document.

Inspiration:

The game is, at its most basic level, deeply inspired by the basic concept behind the film “The Purge”, which I’ve never seen, and the comic book “Bomb Queen”

Other inspirations of a more game related sort:

“Bring your own Bottle” by Alisa Matavilava, Yauheniya Siadova and Nastassia Sinitsyna

“Sarabande” by Maria and Jeppe Bergmann Hamming

“Old Friends” by Ole Peder Giæver and Jason Morningstar

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