

## Gimme Shelter

A freeform game about authority, democracy, and possibly the end of civilization, for 2-20 players.

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### Pitch

The Big One came, and the world as we know it is no more. Probably.

OK, nobody's 100% sure, but the air raid sirens *did* go off, and the TV started broadcasting the Emergency Alert System. No one knows what's going on, and almost everyone has abandoned themselves to panic.

Except for the friendly but offbeat prepper who spends every neighborhood barbecue waxing poetic about the relative advantages of different brands of decontamination straws, or the reasons everyone should have at least one NATO-compatible firearm. They've been reading, and practicing, and they know exactly what to do. They were born for this moment.

The only thing most of us know is that the prepper has a plan, a shelter full of supplies, and a kind enough heart to welcome all the neighbors who've spent the last few years making fun of their preparations into the shelter. They assure us that the plan will keep us alive, but they're not divulging details yet. All we can do is trust and hope.

### Materials and Setup

- Determine who will play The Prepper; this character tends to be in the center of attention, at least initially, so should be comfortable in the spotlight.
- Shuffle two visually distinct decks of cards, and place one card from each facedown on a small table outside the room representing the shelter. Label one "Disaster" and the other "Duration." The player playing the Prepper may look at the Duration card, the value of which is the number of turns the characters will have to survive before leaving if a disaster has occurred. The Disaster card, which determines whether an actual disaster has occurred, should remain hidden.
- If practical and desired, decorate the room in a manner reminiscent of a survivalist shelter: set up chairs (maybe one for every two players), and if practical, decorate with some blankets, flags, books, an unnecessary amount of prop guns (if acceptable to your venue), cans of soup, or related *accoutrement*.
- Set up speakers with an air raid siren sound. You can download the one Rebecca uses for her ringtone at: <http://www.orange-freesounds.com/air-raid-siren/>
- Deal out a stack of cards equal to the number of players (use one deck). The total numeric value of drawn cards (with aces counting as ones, face cards counting as 10s, and jokers as zeroes) is the amount of food in the shelter. Convert this to tokens (edible or otherwise, like Tic Tacs, Necco Wafers, pennies, etc).
- Print and cut or reproduce the resource cards at the end of this document, shuffle, and deal a stack equal to the number of players. This determines the amount of medicine and/or ammo (if any) in the shelter. Convert this to tokens (bullet casings, bottle caps, adhesive bandages, etc.) Finally, create a pile of Random Event cards.

### Character Creation

Pair off with another player. If there is an odd number of players, one pair will be a triad.

These small groups represent families, biological or chosen (*e.g.*, roommates, couples, people who were in the same carpool).

In your pair or triad, establish the following traits:

- Names
- Relationship to one another
- Relationship with the prepper (*i.e.*, why are you in his bunker?)
- General attitude about being in the bunker (*e.g.*, reluctant, excited, skeptical)
- A handful of personality traits for each character; every player should create one short statement about their own character, and one for every character in their family. (Players have veto power over traits assigned to their characters. Talk to each other and find a compromise if necessary.)

After a few minutes, go around and introduce yourself, making sure to let the prepper know about their relationship with the family.

### **Overview of Play**

Characters begin in the shelter as the guest of the prepper. Each character has a family and a few identifying traits.

No one has conclusive evidence that a cataclysmic event has actually occurred, including the prepper- **BUT THE PREPPER IS ALWAYS 100% CERTAIN IN THEIR BELIEF THAT IT IS HAS.** However, the prepper has a plan that accounts for nearly any contingency, and is certain their planned course of action will save lives. They should act with the sense of confidence and authority imbued by this certainty, at least at the beginning.

A timer should be set for an air raid siren to go off every 7 minutes (balanced for a roughly 90-minute game; scale proportionally as desired, more time means more RP/opportunity for conflict and drama); each time this occurs, another day has ended, and each characters' biological needs must be satisfied via the distribution and use of a single Food resource. Characters who do not eat become "Unwell" (see Harm section below).

Initially, the prepper oversees handing out supplies. This includes food, which is distributed as needed each day, and ammunition (assume that the bunker has enough guns for everyone, but bullets are limited). The prepper is free to distribute resources according to any criteria of their choice by handing other players tokens representing the amount of resources given. Should anyone challenge their authority, and neither they nor another character are willing to use violence to assert control, supplies are distributed by simple majority vote.

NB: The prepper will never voluntarily give up control; they have a plan and want to maximize chances for survival, and they've prepared for this possibility. If the prepper is ever Unwell, exiled, overthrown, or otherwise loses control, they have the option to:

1. Draw one playing card at random.

2. Destroy any combination of resources (food, medicine, ammo) equal to the value of the card on their way out as a “poison pill.” This cannot be prevented by other survivors. Think carefully before overthrowing your benevolent dictator.

After supplies are distributed (or not), draw and roleplay a random event card, restart the timer, and start a new day.

### **Leaving the Bunker**

At any point, any character may leave the bunker if not detained, but may not return because the locking mechanism is designed to keep out intruders.

Characters who leave the shelter may examine the cards on the table outside. If the “Disaster” card is red, a cataclysm has occurred; if it is black, it was a false alarm, and the people in the shelter are acting in vain. Likewise, if the number on the Duration card is equal to or less than the number of “days” that have passed, the worst is over and the world is changed but habitable (aces count as ones; face cards count as 10s).

- If the character exits with a false alarm, they have survived and “won” regardless of other circumstances.
- If the character exits during a cataclysm before the safe number of turns has passed, they are killed by environmental forces, violence, etc. immediately after exiting the shelter, and “lose,” regardless of other circumstances.
- If the character exits during a cataclysm but AFTER the safe number of turns has passed, they have survived and “won” regardless of other circumstances.

Regardless, this player may no longer interact in character. They may, however, do the following:

- Make a single nonverbal noise upon leaving the shelter, possibly indicating the fate of their character.
- Stand outside the room and create sound effects. These effects should be ambiguous and used sparingly, but should have the goal of sparking conversation within the bunker.

### **Conflict Escalation**

Should other characters wish to restrain a character from leaving the bunker (or performing other actions), they may gently place a hand on the character’s shoulder to represent an attempt to restrain that character. Characters are assumed to be of roughly equal strength. If one character attempts to restrain someone, the restrained character may do as they please. If two or more characters restrain someone, they overpower the single character, who is temporarily bound to follow the victors’ instructions regarding the proposed course of action.

The bunker is full of guns, so anyone given ammunition by the prepper may escalate a conflict by using one of those guns. The guns may be used as a threat at any time, but if the character with the gun chooses to SPEND ammunition (they are not required to reveal the possession of ammo until this time), two things happen:

1. That player character has absolute control of the situation in question, as other characters are too shocked by the use of deadly force to act quickly.

2. The player selects another character, who is now Unwell.

## **Harm**

Characters can become Unwell in two ways:

1. Failing to eat for a day.
2. Getting shot.

Unwell characters should roleplay the source of their suffering, but also require assistance from another character to perform basic tasks. Specifically, an Unwell character needs assistance to:

- Move around (including leaving the bunker)
- Eat
- Defend themselves (they have no strength for the purpose of restraining others or resisting restraint)

Unwell characters do not die from the first harm they receive, but if they are not treated with Medicine, a second Unwell tag will kill a character, but save this for desperate situations; hurt characters tend to be more interesting than dead ones.

An Unwell character can be healed by using up one of the Medicine cards.

Dead characters are worth the equivalent of 2 food resources, in case anyone asks. This needs to be determined in the turn the character dies, not later, when “ripe” has taken on a different meaning.

## **End of Game**

Two situations will trigger the end of the game:

1. Everyone but the prepper has left the bunker.
2. Everyone left in the bunker is dead or Unwell.

Reveal the cards, and determine the outcome as detailed in the Leaving the Bunker section.

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***Acta est fabula, plaudite.***

*The drama has been acted out, applaud.*

(Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* [Life of Augustus], AD 99)

**Appendix – Resource Cards**

**Random Draw (1 per player)**

Medicine - 1	Medicine - 1	Medicine - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1
Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1
Medicine - 1	Medicine - 1	Medicine - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1
Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1	Ammo - 1

**Random Events**

Candy bar! +1 food	Loose bullet. +1 ammo	Rats in the stores -2 food; spend 1 ammo to reduce this to -1 (revenge rat burger)	Water damage - lose one of each resource.
Cabin fever - Everyone must choose someone who is getting on their nerves. Roleplay this.	Questionable MRE. +2 food, but whoever eats it becomes Unwell	Random character is found “in flagrante delicto” with someone NOT of their dyad (if possible). A random willing character is selected as a partner.	Stomach bug. 50% (round up) of characters require two food to stay well today.
Kitchen accident. Random player becomes Unwell.	Everything’s normal...	Everything’s normal...	Everything’s normal...