

Shared Trauma Sleepover

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-you are CHILDHOOD FRIENDS who have REUNITED

-you're having a SLEEPOVER. It's a COPING MECHANISM.

BACKSTORY:

(you are afraid of- pick one:

-the vampire that haunts your town and takes children away to be his horrible thralls and mind-wipes adults. You staked him, but now he has risen from the grave thanks to a former servant...

-the haunted D&D book that sucked you into a lethal OSR adventure. You beat the game and burned the book- but lately, people have started calling you by your characters' names, and a local gaming club has gone missing...

-the demon that, every decade or so, possesses people in the town and incites them to violence while causing their bodies to decay rapidly. You're immune to its influence, your minds impenetrable, so it hates you the most...

-the creature that lives in the woods outside town and eats children. You were the only survivors of an ill-fated class field trip, but now people have forgotten what happened and are planning to go in the woods again. You need to find a way to defeat it, once and for all...)

CHARACTER CREATION:

Pick an archetype that describes the way your character was as a child, and an adjective that describes the veneer of adult polish they usually hide behind. Grab a name, too. Something a little old-fashioned. Nothing cool.

Introduce your character to the group.

HOW TO PLAY:

Tell stories about dumb and embarrassing things, or brave and clever things, that you did when you were kids. Don't worry about silence. These are people you're comfortable being silent with. Think of it like the theatre game where you try to count to ten without saying any numbers at the same time.

(And sometimes silence is safer. Sometimes there are things that don't feel real until they're said.)

When you leave this place of sanctuary, you will be going to confront your supernatural nemesis once and for all.

Dumb and/or Embarrassing Things:

- The time someone fell into a creek
- The time someone got chased by bees
- The time someone got poison ivy
- The time someone thought it would be a good idea to go skinny-dipping
- The time someone was convinced they'd found buried treasure
- The time someone was way late to find out Santa Claus wasn't real
- The time someone freaked out over something that turned out to be no big deal- brain freeze, a scary movie at the multiplex
- The time someone refused to admit they were sick.
- The time someone stole Halloween candy from a bigger kid
- The time someone snuck alcohol or cigarettes from a parent
- The time someone got an unflattering nickname
- The time someone rolled a natural one
- The time someone absolutely totaled their bike or scooter
- The time someone broke a limb doing a ridiculous stunt
- The time someone fell for an obvious prank or blatant lie

Clever and/or Brave Things:

- The time someone stood up to a bully
- The time someone was a stone-cold badass at the local pool or water park
- The time someone built something really neat
- The time someone thought up a genius prank
- The time someone found something really cool in an alleyway/vacant lot/the woods
- The time someone invented a really great game
- The time someone got the upper hand on a teacher.
- The time someone figured out a clever way to cheat at a game
- The time someone invented a word or phrase that became an inside joke
- The time someone smuggled a movie you weren't allowed to watch into a sleepover
- The time someone pulled off a spectacular stunt

When everyone has had at least one good and one embarrassing story told about their younger self, let the conversation drift. Maybe someone complains about the air conditioning or the mattresses or room service, or the weather, or the flight. Maybe someone goes and brushes their teeth, puts on slippers, hangs their bathrobe on the back of the door.

And then someone- perhaps almost casually, even- brings up the scattered pieces of the past.
Who was our enemy's first victim?
What adult who we thought we could trust turned out to be a servant of the evil?
What unsettling place in town were we right about?
What quiet place in town did we fail to suspect?
Which adult meant well, but failed to help us?
Which one of us took the most dangerous risk?
Who tried to sacrifice their self for the others?
Who assumed they were in this fight alone?
Who figured out how our enemy could be killed?
Let's talk about our coping mechanisms and roast ourselves for how traumatized we are.
Let's talk about the nightmare, the one we all have and never tell anyone about.
Do you remember what we did to defeat the evil?
Do you remember what we did afterwards to feel human again?

AFTERWARDS/HOW TO END THE GAME:

It's getting late. You'll need your strength- your enemy doesn't follow the scary-thing rules of coming out only at night. It could attack at either 4 AM or dawn with equal ease.
Someone says something grown-up and sensible to that effect.
You lie there in the dark, listening to each other breathe.
Maybe there's something you want to say, something you never said as a kid. Maybe you whisper it, hesitant or just helpless to stop yourself.
Maybe you just wait for sleep in the silence, because you can say whatever it is after you've won.
And you will win, right?