

# The Last 12 Hours

Written by Jules Waller for the Golden Cobra Challenge 2022

## Summary

This is a remote LARP for 4 players, who take on the roles of a group of emotionally close but physically distant friends who have been given a sign of the impending apocalypse. This game explores themes of fear, friendship, long-distance relationships (both platonic and romantic), and confirmation bias. The structure of the LARP is minimal; each player will go about their lives for the day, but within the headspace of their character. Players will communicate through text or Discord messages. They will prepare for the end in their own way as the clock ticks down to midnight, and the apocalypse looms... or does it?

## Inspiration

This LARP was written for the 2022 Golden Cobra Challenge, utilizing the ingredient ‘midnight,’ and inspired by the TTRPG *Alice Is Missing* by Spenser Starke. *Alice Is Missing* is a text-based TTRPG in which players take on the roles of the friends and family of a missing teen girl. My favorite parts of *Alice Is Missing* are its immersiveness, its replayability, and the way it lends itself to remote play. I have integrated each of these aspects into *The Last 12 Hours*.

Though the subject matters differ, I hope to capture the intense emotions and mood of *Alice Is Missing* and for it to have enough customization options and variations to be able to be played and enjoyed many times over.

Mechanically, several aspects of my game are inspired by *Alice Is Missing*. The biggest of these is that play is done through text message. Character creation in *The Last 12 Hours* also heavily takes from *Alice Is Missing*: the character archetypes and the relationship tags are modified from *Alice Is Missing*'s character creation rules. I was also inspired by the role music plays in creating the mood of *Alice Is Missing*, which motivated me to include the optional character playlist section.

## Logistics

Number of players: 4

Length: Noon to Midnight (12 hours), not including character development or debrief

Materials needed: each player needs a cell phone and a coin

## Game Guide

For game prep, players should gather ahead of game time on a video or audio call. Zoom or Discord both work well for this prep session.

- Discuss player expectations
  - This game takes a long time to play—12+ hours!--but is specifically designed to be largely played passively. This means that it is not only allowed, but encouraged that you go about your daily life while playing—run errands, hang out around the house, take your dog out on a walk. That being said, it will be a lot harder to fully engage with the LARP if you're working or busy all day, so it is encouraged that the game be played on a weekend, holiday, or other day on which none of the players have extensive work or family obligations.
  - This game centers around the apocalypse. If this subject matter is likely to be harmfully triggering for a player, that player should seriously consider not

playing. Other subject matters will be discussed further in the Lines and Veils section.

- Safety tools discussion
  - Lines and veils
    - This is a designated time for people to set their limits. Specific subject matters that should be discussed are: religion, romantic relationships, recreational drug use. Certain relationship tags and scenarios should be avoided if they may be triggering to any of the players.
  - X card
    - Because this game takes place over text and not in-person, the X card is not a card, but an agreed-upon norm. During play, any player can text a capital X or X:(content) in any chat. If an X card is played in this way, all players remove whatever was just said from the game's narrative and pivot to another topic of conversation.
- Character selection
  - Each player selects a different character archetype. This may be done by random draw or intentional choice.
    - If any player would be uncomfortable playing any specific archetype for any reason, respect this choice and select in a way that that player will not get stuck with something they object to.
    - It may be beneficial to keep in mind players' schedules for the day when selecting archetypes. For example, if one player has a lot of errands to run during play, it may be harder for them to immerse themselves in playing the Survivalist role, as it might be hard to justify the Survivalist running errands when they believe it's the last day before the end of the world. Consider assigning that player the Nihilist or Skeptic role instead.
- Character development
  - Each player takes a few minutes on their own to look over their character sheet, name their character, and begin to think about their backstory and personality.
  - Each player tells the group their name and a few character details.
  - Relationship tags
    - Relationship tags are descriptors for the relationship between any 2 given characters. The tags are: **Best Friends; Siblings; Long-Distance Relationship; Amicable Exes**
    - These tags should be assigned so that every player has 2 tagged relationships with 2 other players. This can be done randomly by utilizing sites such as [random.org/lists](http://random.org/lists), or intentionally, especially in cases where someone has a line or veil that might relate to a specific relationship tag.
  - Descriptor tags
    - Descriptor tags are similar to relationship tags, but will help to build interpersonal drama in the game. Unlike relationship tags, descriptor tags are one-directional: they describe how one character feels about another character, but the recipient character might not agree with or even know about the first character's feelings. The tags are:
      - **I feel like you're hiding something from me**
      - **You did something years ago that I'm still mad about**

- **I'm seriously considering moving to be closer to you**
  - **During the hardest time of my life, you, especially, were there for me**
  - These tags should be assigned randomly, 1 per player. The players will then, in turn, 'give out' their relationship tags to another player. Ideally, each player will receive one tag.
- Group dynamics
  - Discuss as a group: how did you get to be a friend group? How long have you all known each other? Do you have any inside jokes or group traditions?
  - Choose the Portent for the game
    - The Portent is the shared event that convinced this group, and no one else, that the end of the world is coming. The Portent can be chosen randomly or by group consensus. The options are: **A shared dream; A bad trip; Strange phone calls**
    - After one of these options are chosen, decide as a group when and how the Portent came.
    - The Portent (at least in the way that the group interpreted it) warned of a sign that would come to one of the group's members on the day that the world is to end. What is this sign? And which member is going to see it?
      - Which player will see the sign is information that the players will know, but their characters will not know. It can be chosen at random or intentionally.
- End-of-game plan
  - The game will end at midnight. No texts can be sent in- or out-of-character regarding the game after midnight. Pick a time—ideally the next morning—to meet over text, voice, or video chat to debrief.

This concludes the group prep portion of the game. Between finishing the group session and the agreed-upon start time (noon in whichever time zone works best), players should look over their character sheets, complete the optional playlist step if they would like, and take some time to get into the headspace of their character. Play will start with the player chosen to receive the sign messaging the rest of the group at or slightly after noon.

### **Game convention notes**

- The game timeline is just a guideline. If you have an idea of something your character would do that isn't outlined in the document, do it!
- You can text in the group channels regardless of whether specifically instructed to at any time. In-between scheduled timeline prompts is the perfect time to chat with the group about what's to come, or to react to what other players are doing and saying.
- Anything you would like to communicate out-of-character during gameplay can be communicated in parentheses or in a designated out-of-game channel.
- You may not be able to do all of the timeline prompts exactly when they're specified because of prior commitments, chores, etc. This is fine! If you can, do them whenever you find some free time.

## The Witch

You've been passively interested in the occult for years now, but you didn't really get into it seriously until the fateful day of the Portent. Sure, the experience you and your friends had could be explained away with logic, but it didn't *feel* logical to you. Something deeper happened that night. And the end of times is coming. Fast. What if magic is the answer to stopping it?

### Questions to consider

- What system or systems of magic have you been learning about?
- What is one incident from your youth that you could never quite explain?

### Optional: Character playlist

Put together a playlist of songs you think fit the vibe and tastes of your character. You can listen to this playlist throughout the LARP to help you stay immersed in your character and the world of the game. Some suggested songs to start with:

- "The Shining" by The Staves
- "Alibi" by Dessa
- "Cry, Hold" by Cannibal

**The below section is for gameplay, not prep!** Do not read until the agreed-upon start time.

### Timeline

**12pm:** If you were the player chosen to receive the sign, this is the moment that you see it. Take a moment to think about your character's experience and reaction. Then, message the group telling them what you've seen.

**1pm:** You know that the end is coming, but you don't know *how*. Perhaps some divination magic could give you some insight? Perform a ritual and see if you can get a glimpse into the future.

**2pm:** Take a look around you. See if you can find any visual signs of the end that's to come: do you see anyone on the street acting strange? Any messages you can parse from the clouds or the weather? Perhaps some meaning in some graffiti on the walls or garbage on the ground?

**4pm:** If your friends would just help you out with your casting, maybe it would work... try to convince them to help you with a ritual.

**7pm:** It's dinnertime... probably the last meal you'll ever eat. Think about what you want your last meal to be. Treat yourself a bit—if you can, prepare one of your favorite home-cooked meals, or maybe order takeout from one of your favorite spots.

**7:30pm:** Now is as good a time as ever to clear the air. Message one of your friends about something that you want to resolve before it's too late.

**8pm:** You're running out of time. Throw together a last-ditch spell to repel... well, your best guess at whatever's coming. Take the time to gather the best materials you can on such short notice, and be careful not to mess anything up.

**9pm:** You finish the spell! And... nothing happens.

**11pm:** If this thing is coming at midnight, you've got an hour left. Might as well spend it with your friends. Hop onto the group chat. Share some memories, say goodbyes...

**12pm:** Flip a coin. Heads: nothing happens. Tails: the world ends.

At this point, your timeline has diverged from the timelines of your friends. You can't message them (or their players) from this point forward. Reflect on your character's fate. Then, get some sleep.

## The Skeptic

You love your friends. You really do. And, usually, they're trustworthy! And have good heads on their shoulders! But... really? The apocalypse? There are explanations for all this. The world's *not* ending. And, when the clock strikes midnight and nothing changes, you're going to have a little too much fun saying "I told you so." You'll all look back on this one day and laugh...

### Questions to consider

- This isn't the first time you've felt like the odd one out in this group. Why?
- When was a time you were really looking forward to something, but were let down?

### Optional: Character playlist

Put together a playlist of songs you think fit the vibe and tastes of your character. You can listen to this playlist throughout the LARP to help you stay immersed in your character and the world of the game. Some suggested songs to start with:

- "Castle" by Halsey
- "Wolves" by Maggie Rogers
- "You're Gonna Go Far, Kid" by The Offspring

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### Timeline

**12pm:** If you were the player chosen to receive the sign, this is the moment that you see it. Take a moment to think about your character's experience and reaction. Then, message the group telling them what you've seen.

**1pm:** The world *will* still be around tomorrow. Maybe the best way to prove it to your friends (and perhaps to yourself?) is to do some planning for the future. Meal prep, housekeeping, emails... What's something you wouldn't do if you really believed there is no tomorrow?

**4pm:** Your friends are getting on your nerves with all this doomsday talk... Try to convince them they're getting worked up over nothing.

**6pm:** You notice something in the world around you that feels... off. What sign of the coming end do you see? And why does it make you doubt your convictions that this is all a hoax?

**7pm:** On the off-chance that your friends are right... This might be your last meal. Of course, they're *not* right, but it's an excuse to have something tasty. Prepare or order in one of your favorites.

**8pm:** You're starting to get pretty freaked out by all of this. You just need to be rational. Maybe it will help if you get it all down on paper. Journal for a bit about what you're feeling.

**9pm:** Destroy your journal entry. If you can't beat the worries down in your head, maybe burning them on paper will help.

**9:30pm:** *If* it's the end, you don't want to leave anything left unsaid. Message one of your friends about something you've been wanting to resolve with them.

**11pm:** If this thing is coming at midnight, you've got an hour left. Might as well spend it with your friends. Hop onto the group chat. Share some memories, say goodbyes...

**12pm:** Flip a coin. Heads: nothing happens. Tails: the world ends.

At this point, your timeline has diverged from the timelines of your friends. You can't message them (or their players) from this point forward. Reflect on your character's fate. Then, get some sleep.

## The Survivalist

Not to brag or anything, but your friends always say that, if the zombie apocalypse hit, you'd be the first person they'd turn to for guidance. You've got a plan for just about everything. And you're confident that, whatever's coming tonight, you can take it. Your friends are freaking out about the end of the world, freaking out takes time and energy that you don't have. You're gonna make it out of this thing alive. And you'd like to bring your friends along with you... if they would just *listen*.

### Questions to consider

- What is the most unsafe you've ever felt?
- People say you tend to 'over-prepare.' What is a time your preparedness paid off?

### Optional: Character playlist

Put together a playlist of songs you think fit the vibe and tastes of your character. You can listen to this playlist throughout the LARP to help you stay immersed in your character and the world of the game. Some suggested songs to start with:

- "Dilaudid" by The Mountain Goats
- "Come Away to the Water" by Maroon 5
- "Youngblood" by 5 Seconds of Summer

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**12pm:** If you were the player chosen to receive the sign, this is the moment that you see it. Take a moment to think about your character's experience and reaction. Then, message the group telling them what you've seen.

**1pm:** Whatever's coming, you need to be prepared. Put together a backpack of the bare essentials you'd need to survive. Keep the pack with you all day.

**2:30pm:** Things are only going to get more frantic as the day goes on and the end draws near. You don't want anything holding you back. Message one of your friends to talk about something you've been meaning to resolve.

**4pm:** Your friends are being impractical. You want them to survive this, but they're not going to if they keep wasting their time. Try to convince them to get on the same page.

**6pm:** You see something—a sign of what's to come. What do you see, and why does it unsettle you?

**7pm:** You've been preparing and scrambling all day. Take a little while to yourself to decide what you want to have for what will be, if you fail, your last meal. Prepare or order one of your favorites.

**8pm:** What is the most safe location you know of that's easily accessible? Now is a good time to head to wherever you want to be when it all goes down... whatever 'it' is.

**11pm:** If this thing is coming at midnight, you've got an hour left. Might as well spend it with your friends. Hop onto the group chat. Share some memories, say goodbyes...

**12pm:** Flip a coin. Heads: nothing happens. Tails: the world ends.

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## The Nihilist

So the world is ending. Seems pretty unavoidable. You don't see the point in panicking, or scrambling for an answer you're never gonna find. If it's the apocalypse, then so be it. Might as well enjoy yourself a little on the way out.

### Questions to consider

- What is something you cared about that you've lost?
- What was the most fun day you've ever had?

### Optional: Character playlist

Put together a playlist of songs you think fit the vibe and tastes of your character. You can listen to this playlist throughout the LARP to help you stay immersed in your character and the world of the game. Some suggested songs to start with:

- "Nintendo Game" by Alessia Cara
- "Shake It Off" by Taylor Swift
- "Say Something" by Justin Timberlake ft. Chris Stapleton

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**12pm:** If you were the player chosen to receive the sign, this is the moment that you see it. Take a moment to think about your character's experience and reaction. Then, message the group telling them what you've seen.

**1pm:** What is something fun you can do to distract yourself from all the doom and gloom for an hour or two? Do it.

**3pm:** You've managed to mostly forget about what's coming and enjoy yourself, but then you see something you can't quite shake: a sign of the apocalypse. What do you see?

**4pm:** If your friends would just *chill out* and enjoy themselves, that would be great... they're stressing you out. Try to convince them to stop worrying and scrambling and enjoy the time they have.

**7pm:** What do you want to have for this, your last meal? Prepare or order one of your favorites and take the time and intention to really enjoy it.

**8pm:** Spend some time looking back on your favorite memories. If nothing really matters... Why does letting go feel so hard?

**10pm:** There's no point in leaving anything left unsaid. Message one of your friends to clear the air on something you've been meaning to talk over with them.

**11pm:** If this thing is coming at midnight, you've got an hour left. Might as well spend it with your friends. Hop onto the group chat. Share some memories, say goodbyes...

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