

WE ARE THE WORST

An evil larp about evil people

By Laurie Penny

We Are The Worst

*'I am in blood stepped in so far that, should I wade no more
returning were as tedious as go o'er'- Macbeth*

'It's so good being bad.

I ain't ever going back.

Ah ah ah ow'-Rihanna

A tragicomic, character-based larp for 4-8 players about community, adversity and summoning the forces of darkness to wreak gruesome vengeance on your enemies.

You will need:

4-8 players, plus one facilitator

4-5 hours

Face masks (black N-95s would work well)

Enough space for the players to comfortably stand in a circle

A clock, visible to all players

A spooky playlist and something to play it on. (The facilitator should be able to control this easily)

A fancy/silly cup to serve as the 'poison chalice'

To print out the characters, relationships and survival stories. Arrange the first two where players can see them all, and keep the survival stories to distribute at random

Optional: paper, markers and art/craft supplies

Optional: a delicious beverage to use as the 'ritual wine'.

Optional: candles, for atmosphere.

INTRODUCTION

The Final Battle has ended in victory for the forces of Light. The Dark Lord was defeated. His plans were foiled, his followers captured or killed. The world is celebrating a new age of Peace, Love and Sensible Bedtimes. It's great news for everyone -

Except us. We will be playing the last surviving servants devoted to the Dark Lord. Six months have passed since the Final Battle, and the remaining Dark Cultists are meeting in secret to carry out a last, desperate plan.

This is a story about being part of a misunderstood political or cultural minority group. We will be portraying twisted, wicked, messed-up characters, but we will not be playing fascists. This cult isn't about racism, sexism or other forms of normative structural oppression. Think instead about forbidden magic, cultural taboos, decadence, degeneracy, perversion, horror, grime and gore, snakes and spiders, demons and monsters, bloodletting, drug-taking, holy madness, video piracy and pagan chanting.

INCANTATION (WORKSHOP SCRIPT)

Players and facilitators stand or sit in a circle and take turns reading out the 'verses', ideally in a sombre and sinister manner. You could even chant them in a call-and-response fashion, because for the next couple of hours

Mr Cringe has no power over us. Read out the **text in bold**, then follow the instructions in italics.

1. **We Are The Worst is a game in three acts.**
2. **The facilitator will be part of the game, playing the role of High Priest.**
3. **Players will enter and leave the circle wearing masks.** (*Distribute masks*)
4. **We will start by choosing characters.** (*Distribute the character sheets and give players ten minutes to choose. Then gather back in the circle.*)
5. **Every character has a secret. They must reveal that secret to at least one person.**
6. **Secrets may not be revealed before the second act.**
7. **Each character has their own story of how they managed to survive the Final Battle.** (*Optional: distribute the 'survival stories'. Players can swap with one another if they wish.*)
8. **Next, we will build relationships. Everyone should choose at least one 'relationship' slip, and calibrate with other players who are keen to co-create that relationship. Every character should have at least two relationships.** (*Take five minutes to choose and calibrate relationship roles, then gather back in the circle*)
9. **We will now take a twenty minute break before the last part of the workshop, and then we'll go right into the game.** (*Break for twenty minutes, then gather back in the circle*)
10. **In a few minutes, we'll start playing We Are The Worst. We will now invent a short ceremony for each part of the Deadly Serious Summoning Ritual.**
11. **It could involve chanting, dancing, eating, drinking, praying, miming, or anything legal that takes around two minutes.** (*While still in the circle, ask players to co-create 1.a ceremony to open the circle 2.a ceremonial chant 3. a ceremonial offering 4.a ceremony to invite evil into the circle, and 5. a closing ceremony*)
12. **The game will start in a few minutes. We will all leave the space, and then when the music starts, we will come in as our characters, one by one.**
Answer final questions. Close the circle. Start the game.

GAME IN (3-4 hours)

ACT 1: The First Meeting

When the music starts, players enter the space one by one, in masks. (The whole game could be played in masks, or characters could ask 'permission' to remove them). When everyone has arrived, the High Priest greets everyone and tells them that they're gathering here at great personal risk. The Forces of Light are still out there hunting them, and **they can only meet safely for one hour.**

Then the High Priest opens **the 'confession circle'** - essentially a hippie sharing circle, but (more) evil. The High Priest offers prompts, which could include:

What do you miss most about the Dark Court?

How have you served the Dark Lord in his absence?

The characters could choose to be more or less truthful. Players are encouraged to think nasty thoughts and indulge horrible fantasies. Eg: *I hate those smug heroic sons of bitches. It sucks that our assassins didn't manage to take out the Sun King. I wish someone would. Revenge sounds great. What I wouldn't give for one more three-day bender in the scorpion pit. Maybe we should have spent less time torturing each other and more time torturing the righteous. I'm tired and sad and I can't stop fantasizing about cleansing the lot of them with holy fire. I worry that they'll win forever. I worry that I won't be able to find a place in their world. I worry that I will. I've summoned a small torment matrix in the bathroom but honestly it's not the same. Etc.*

Players continue until the Priest decides it's time to move on - and **reveals that they're working towards a ritual that will bring back the Dark Lord.** They will have to **prepare the space** so they can create that ritual.

Using whatever props and craft supplies you've provided, the cultists will try to make the space feel a bit more ...evil. Draw sigils, light candles, create an atmosphere. **When the hour is up, play a song** to signal that the cultists have just a few minutes to **pack up and get the hell out of there**.

ACT 2: The Second Meeting. One week later.

During this act, players will start to reveal their secrets.

After players enter, the cult begins another, **shorter confession circle**, this time with only one prompt:

What do you hope will happen when the Dark Lord returns?

After this, the high priest will **remind the cultists about the steps of the ritual (3 min)**

Next, the cultists will **set up** and **rehearse the ritual**. Feel free to argue, change the rules, change roles, rearrange the space, make everyone go out and come back in again, demand snacks, go off in a sulk, desperately try to keep the peace and pick the absolute worst time to hash out your unresolved relationship issues. **Again, when the hour is up, play a song** to signal that the cultists have just a few minutes to **pack up and get the hell out of there**.

Act 3: The Last Meeting. One week later.

Cultists start by **sharing the ceremonial wine**. Then they **perform the ritual**: *the a ceremony to open the circle, ceremonial chant, ceremonial offering, the ceremony to invite evil into the circle...*

But then comes the twist.

(Unless everyone wants full transparency, strike this next part out with a marker pen before giving this guide to players. The game doesn't break if people find out, but it's fun if they don't.)

This time, instead of 'closing the circle,' the high priest interrupts and makes an announcement:

This ritual requires at least one of the faithful to make the ultimate sacrifice. Whoever is devoted enough to give their life to bring back the Darkness must drink from the poison chalice.

The high priest reminds **the cultists** that **'The poison takes five minutes to work. You will become more and more drowsy, and eventually fall into a deep sleep from which you will never wake.'**

The high priest gives players a couple of minutes to decide, at which point the game ends in one of three ways:

-If everyone volunteers, players should pass around the poison cup and drink from it one by one.

-If only some people volunteer, the people who did volunteer must choose a victim to sacrifice from among 'the unworthy' (those who didn't volunteer).

-If nobody volunteers, or if cultists refuse to kill each other, the facilitator will sacrifice themselves - unless someone stops them.

While the poison 'takes effect' and the characters say their goodbyes, play a 3-5 minute closing song.

Game ends.

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CHARACTERS

-You were born and raised as part of the Armies of Darkness. For a given value of 'healthy', you actually had a pretty stable, well-adjusted upbringing, and you've never experienced 'normal' life. You're finding it very, very hard to adjust. *Your secret: you managed to save an important holy artifact. Pick a random object. Nothing fragile or dangerous. It's holy now.*

-You are a deeply wholesome, honestly pretty adorable person who genuinely wants the best for everyone and can't understand human malice. Unfortunately, you are also a terribly powerful evil sorcerer. You create dark magic by accident all the time, and it's not safe for you to be in the normal world. *Your secret: sometimes, you fantasise about using your power on purpose.*

-You were an orphan, abandoned on a hillside to die by your birth family. The Dark Cult is the only real family you've ever known. You're dutiful and not especially hungry for power - which is probably why the dark lord chose you as one of his personal servants. You got close enough to see his human side. Everyone else is mourning their Lord, but you are also mourning a friend. *Your secret: you saw the Dark Lord in a moment so vulnerable that just mentioning it would be blasphemy.*

-You joined the cult five years ago as an enthusiastic convert. Nobody else knows that you are actually an heroic warrior of the armies of light. You were sent to disrupt the dark lord's plans. But you ended up quite liking these people, and you just...never went back. Whose side are you on? *Your secret: you wish you didn't have so many secrets.*

-You left your village before they could cast you out. You never fit in, probably because you were too fabulous to handle. You could take or leave the evil plans, but you love the vibe of the cult. You had many friends and lovers. Now most of them are dead. *Your secret: you messed up. Partied too hard, upset the wrong people. And you were about to be punished. Severely.*

-They say that the Dark Lord is dead. But how can that be? You hear his voice in your head as clearly as you always have. That was real, wasn't it? You refuse to believe he is really gone. Somehow, he is still watching over you. *Your secret: you've always suspected you were special. Holier than other people. Now you're convinced you survived for a reason.*

-You just needed a job. That's all. You clocked in, put in the absolute bare minimum effort, and everything else was above your paygrade. Yes, you were probably personally responsible for carrying out some of the Dark Lord's evil schemes, but that doesn't make you a bad person. Everyone needs to earn a living. Right? *Your secret: it's your birthday, and you wish someone would celebrate you.*

-You're a Dark Cultist, just like your parents and grandparents, but you're a tolerant sort of person - after all, it'd be a dull world if everyone was the same! You'd much prefer it if people could just stop fighting and try to find common ground, perhaps over a nice cup of tea and a biscuit. Few people guess that you are a true believer - quietly, unshakeably devoted to the Dark Lord. *Your secret: the idea frightens you, but you are perfectly prepared to die for your faith.*

Relationships

(Write these out and arrange them so players have a chance to look them all over and decide)

1. You two (or three) are siblings. Decide who's younger, who's older, and if you grew up together.
2. One of you is the mentor or teacher of the other.
3. You are in-laws or cousins, and you can't stand each other.
4. You dated a long, long time ago and are now 'just friends'
5. The two of you have an obvious, long-standing crush on each other, but you've never talked about it.
6. The two of you had a recent, acrimonious breakup. Decide why it ended.
7. The two of you share a very specific, very dorky special interest. Decide what it is.
8. You are engaged to be married.
9. You have been sleeping together for a long time, but you haven't 'defined the relationship'.

OPTIONAL: SURVIVAL STORIES
'How did you survive the Final Battle?'

(Write/print these out and distribute them at random. Players can swap if they wish.)

-You were caught in the heart of the battle and hid under the bodies of your fallen comrades. You've had constant nightmares since. Are you a coward, or just lucky?

-you were surrounded by the Forces of Light, but at the last moment you begged for mercy - and they spared your life. Just to prove they were 'better than you.' But wait...are they?

-You were taken captive. For six months, you were a prisoner of the armies of light. It wasn't fun. You escaped. That wasn't fun either. You're ready to get your own back.

-How did you survive? You didn't. You're sure you didn't. You remember a sudden darkness, and hearing the dark lord's voice telling you to wake up. How are you still alive? And why?

-You've been living in the woods licking green moss off trees for months. Hang on - the war's over?

-You're very, very good at killing people.

-You disguised yourself as a soldier for the other side, and you've been in disguise ever since. Which means you've been celebrated in every village you passed through as a hero, with free booze and pleasant company. They even gave you a medal. Obviously you hate all this and can't wait to get back to the cult. Right?

-You hid in the back of an abandoned coffee shop. After three days, you snuck out to see if the coast was clear- and a customer mistook you for a barista. Flustered, you turned on the machine and made them a latte. You have now been running a local coffee shop for six months. You've redecorated and are thinking of taking on extra staff.