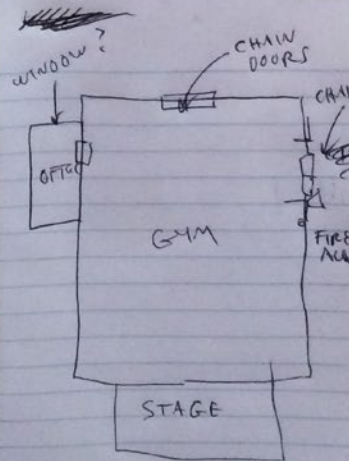**Active Shooter**

Author's notes:

The seed for this game was planted during the June 2014 school shooting at Reynold High School near Portland, Oregon. I listened on the radio as events unfolded, as information dribbled in and was proven true or false, and as practical steps were taken to reunite parents with children afterwards. It was a visceral, disturbing experience. Since then I've taken disaster management training, which has deepened my interest in how crises unfold from the viewpoints of the individuals involved. Active Shooter isn't an attempt to simulate anything, it's a sloppy sketch which may or may not be a useful or enjoyable or detestable study of something awful and serious.

I try out other methods of tweaking and breaking the player's involvement in the scenes to dramatic effect. The Shut Up mechanic is contrary to every supporting drive to keep people embedded in a scene. It's an act of cruelty to the character, but is also possibly hurtful to the player as well. It's an attempt to model how kids can shut each other out of conversation, to push someone out of where they want to be.

When a character becomes a victim they are literally labeled as such with tape and marker - this comes directly from standard disaster triage procedure in which information on a victim, live or dead, is attached to their physical bodies in order to make it easier for other responders to keep track of important information.

The silence of the Active Shooter Phase is intended to heighten the helplessness of the victims and to limit the sensory input flowing to the players, to have a scene that might be viewed through silent security camera footage. Even the character sheets themselves are violated as the the character portraits each player drew are torn in preparation for the Active Shooter Phase, then further defaced with a marker if the victim is actually killed.

This was a hard, uncomfortable thing to write. Thank you for reading and maybe playing this game.

Tim Hutchings
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version 0.75 submitted to the Golden Cobra Challenge on Oct 30, 2014

Introduction:

Active Shooter is a role playing game which ends in a board game sequence. Each player takes on the role of a student soon to be involved in a school shooting. We begin with a loose style of role play, playing out quick scenes in which we introduce our characters and explore the relationships between them. At the end of each scene one character is eliminated as a potential shooter. We then flash forward to a vignette on the day of the shooting, imagining a few seconds of the life of that character as the shooting occurs. After all characters have been eliminated but one, we have identified our school shooter. We immediately stop all role play and change to a board game format, playing on a school map we have created during the role play section. At this point the shooter has almost total control over the fate of everyone in the school, and we play out a handful of turns representing the minutes until the authorities arrive and the shooting ends. During this board game phase no one but the Active Shooter may speak.

The game uses no dice or conflict resolution mechanics, it does use character sheets and a map. All that is needed are writing tools, masking tape, a sharpie, and a print out of the necessary paperwork. The game is best played with 4-8 players.

Sequence of Play:

Set Up

1. Agree on the tone of play. Use one of the many possible methods to ensure the play space is safe and supportive. I suggest the X-Card mechanic. You know what to do here.
2. Each player chooses a character name from the name list on the back cover of this booklet, tweaking names as desired. Answer the three psych questions on the character sheet and read your answers aloud - these will give the other players a point of interaction with your character, the answers are personal but known to the other students. You will need to have a completed sketch of your character in the photo box by the time we enter the Active Shooter phase.
3. Place a print out of the starter map in a central area. Name the school and assign it any other characteristics of interest to the table, like year or location. Or not, it's not necessary.

4. Scenes are loose, free role play in which we explore our characters and their relationships to the students around them. Say hello, snub people, address the three psych questions on each others sheets for good or ill, describe yourself and your possessions. A scene ends when two characters leave the area.

   Except for the first scenes, scenes are suggested by the player with the most recently declared victim (see 5.) Not every scene needs to have every character, but any character may enter a scene at any time.

   Each scene will occur in a new area of the school which will need to be added to the map. Some example areas are the cafeteria, the art room, the gymnasium, the principal's office. If other areas of the school are mentioned during a scene these should be added to the map as well. Draw big and fill up space, the map sections do not need to be contiguous.

   The **first scene** is a set piece: All the characters have arrived at the Parking Lot area on the map, they are just about to start a new school day. The Parking Lot is already drawn on the map.

   The Shut Up Rule: If two characters tell a third to "shut up," that character may not speak or otherwise directly communicate for the rest of the scene. They are not required to leave the scene. This isn't necessarily about bullying but is meant to model exclusion, it's possibly cruel to both the character AND the player. Do it at least once.

5. After a scene ends, step out of character and nominate at least two characters you think are NOT going to be school shooters. These characters do not need to have participated in the preceding scene, but they must at least have been mentioned. Vote. The character receiving the SECOND most votes is removed from suspicion as the shooter, they are now known as a victim. The victim's player will strip off about twelve inches of masking tape and write their character's name on it, then put the tape prominently across their chest.

6. That newly declared victim now gets a one-minute vignette scene which occurs as a flash forward to the day of the shooting. We focus on that character alone, with the other players contributing color and ideas and confusion. We want to learn about

   how the possible victim will react in this awful situation. The identity of the shooter should not be revealed, and only other declared victims can appear in the scene. This vignette is firmly limited to more than one minute, time it. The outcome of these vignettes are not binding to the storyline and will be overwritten by the Active Shooting phase results.

7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 until every character but one has been eliminated. The remaining character will be the Active Shooter.

8. Take a moment and make sure that everyone has completed their character portraits. If not, stop all action until the portraits are completed. Heads down, no talking. Done? Now proceed to step 9.

9. The Active Shooter needs to do a little paperwork. First, the Active Shooter player will read aloud the instructions for the Active Shooter Phase and make certain that everyone understands how movement works. Next, he will quickly complete the map as per the instructions below. Then he will tear out, not cut, the dotted areas of each character sheet. These tear-outs will represent the characters on the map. Finally the Active Shooter circles the Minute Marker on the map which corresponds to the number of players at the table, if there are eight players circle Minute 8 and know that the Active Shooter Phase ends when that box is checked.

Preparing the Map for Active Shooter Phase

The Active Shooter player must take a few moments to ready the map for the board game like play of the Active Shooter Phase. First go through and make certain that the delineations between the sections of the map are clear, draw defining boundaries if not. Then go through and add as many more map sections as there are victims, use these to fill out the map. Some of these should be things that are normally off limits to students - the motor pool, the administration offices, the dumpster alley. Create any areas that the Active Shooter might use to ambush multiple victims, like a playground or gymnasium.

Finally, roughly divide off any large or unused spaces on the map. Pay attention to outdoors areas, and areas near the edges of the map.

10.   From this point until the end of the Active Shooter Phase only the Shooter may speak, and then only to say the names of the victims who are being killed. The Shooter places each of the character markers on the map. These can be placed anywhere, this control over others represents the Shooter choosing the time and place to strike.

Shooter Phase Movement and Shooting Rules

1.   **Murder:** The Active Shooter may kill up to two victims on the Murder turn. The victims must be in the same map area as the Shooter. To kill a victim the Shooter says their name aloud and uses the sharpie to put a large number on their character marker, sequentially numbering the victims as they fall. These character marker stay on the board. Players who have their characters killed should turn their back on the table for the rest of the Active Shooter phase.

2.   **Running:** The Victims may move to any adjacent map section. If they have moved off of the map they are safe from being killed.

3.   **Panic:** The Shooter may then choose any one victim and move them to an adjacent map section. This represents confusion and panic and the preparations of the Shooter, the victim is getting lost or frightened or is encountering doors that have been locked or fires that have been set.

4.   **Hunting:** The Active Shooter may move to ANY space on the board.

5.   **Time:** Check off one of the remaining minutes. If the final minute is ticked off the police have arrived and the Active Shooter is stopped, go to 11 below. Otherwise return to step 1 and repeat.

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11.   (Optional) After the Active Shooter Phase has ended, the players of the victims spend a few minutes going over what happened as if they were crime scene investigators. We do not refer to any of the characters by name but instead use the number they were assigned by the Active Shooter when they were killed. Play the scene backwards, freely creating information as if you had full access to forensic reports, to crime scene photos, to grainy surveillance footage. Mark things on the map: Blood stains, stray bullet holes and casings, dropped weapons, chained doors, the Active Shooters car or locker. Discuss what happened to the Active Shooter. The Active Shooter does not participate in this step.

12.   Wrapping up with a Debriefing is recommended.

PARKING
LOT
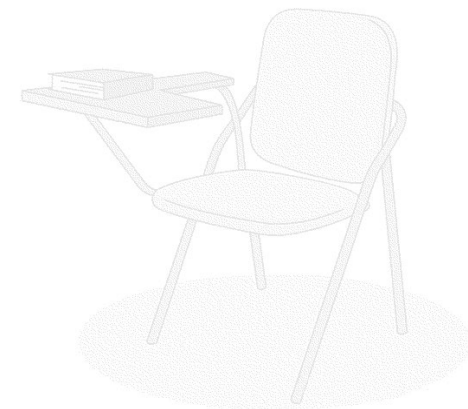
Minute Marker

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

portrait

name

What I accomplished last week:

What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

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portrait

name

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What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

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What I hope to accomplish next year:

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portrait

name

What I accomplished last week:

What I hope to accomplish tomorrow:

What I hope to accomplish next year:

Students who have died in school shootings in the United States before 1960.

Frank Pope	Robert Lomas
Todd Hutchinson	Arthur Shively
Anna Dwight	Lewis Napier
Chauncy Barnes	James Kane
Elvina Stickney	Charles Listman
Thomas McGiffen	Andrew Milton
George Hall	William Carter
Thomas Sguires	Irma Caler
George Gohen	Beatrice Conner
Gerald Gray	William Scott
Michael J. Jordan	Henry Gray
Dan Wamack	Dennis McDonald
Will Guess	Georgia Valdo
Ben Corbery	Gladys Solomon
Cora Brubach	Houston Upton
Jack Craycroft	Nell Umberson
Edward Higgins	James O'Donnel
Willis Gardner	Wesley Clow
Neil Gardner	June Mapes
Harry Flasher	Robert Snyder
Henry Carney	Vieling Spencer
Ralph Jones	Melba Moshell
Haz Harding	Harry Wyman
May Thomas	Donald Peabody
Harry Garvey	James Heer
Herbert Horton	Jack McKeown
Eva Wiseman	Billy Ray Powell
Edward Foster	Hugh Justice
James Barret	David Brooks
Mack Howard	Patrick Colleta
James Vires	Bernice Turner
Henry Schaze	Putnam Davis Jr.
Paul Jelick'	William Joyner
Charles Colby	Allen Long
Fred Smith	Holmes Strozier
Tom Bucanoros	Bob Bechtel
George DeWolf	Billy Pravatte
Elizabeth Bailey Hardee	Donna Dvorak
Sarah Chamberlain Weed	Bobby Whitford
Ruth Sargent	Tennyson Beard
Nellie Swinney	Deborah Faith Humphrey
Dorothy Malakanoff	William Harchmeister
John Butram	James Arthur Frampton