
THE BRONZE VIPER AWARD COMMITTEE

by Peter S. Svensson
A live roleplaying game for 4-6 players.

PREMISE

You are one of the intelligent, creative, and witty members of the committee judging a prestigious contest for live action roleplaying games - The Bronze Viper Awards.

It's time to hold a video conference and judge this year's entries. If only you had actually gotten around to reading any of them. No one will notice, right?

SET UP

The four to six players agree on when to play the game, and on which video conferencing system to use. You will need both video conferencing and a text chat.

One player volunteers to be the facilitator, who will have additional duties. They oversee the character creation process to ensure each character is unique, keep track of the fictional submissions to the awards, and have a leadership position during play.

When the game begins, the players should introduce themselves. Each player should have this document open in another window. They will read this together.

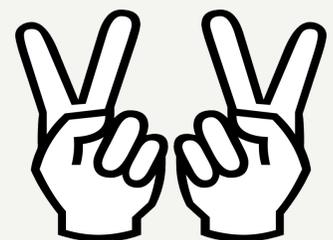
CALIBRATION

As a group, the players should discuss the expected tone of the game using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is absolutely ridiculous and 10 is deadly serious. Players keep the result of this discussion in mind when creating characters and playing the game.

Your characters as members of the committee have agreed to follow a set of "Viper Virtues." These help to keep a civil tone, ensure you avoid cruelty while judging the entries, and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Players who feel that play is starting to become mean, emotionally unsafe or that players are talking over each other, may say "Viper Virtues" and/or make two "V" signs with their hands. This is a calibration technique to have players stop, think about their actions and continue play in a calmer fashion.

Then, discuss what other issues or concerns that "Viper Virtues" will address, as well as any other safety mechanics or calibration techniques that should be used. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

The people playing the game are more important than the game itself.



SECRETS

Each character has a secret, the reason why they weren't able to read the larps before the meeting. As a group, decide whether or not to be transparent about them, if players will know even if their characters don't. Some groups like that, as it allows them to steer play in interesting directions. Other groups like the element of surprise that occurs when players discover character secrets in play. If one or more players want to keep their secrets a surprise, they should still inform the Facilitator over a private message, to help avoid the chance that everyone picks the exact same secret.

CHARACTER CREATION

Each player creates a character by answering the following questions. Keep in mind the earlier discussions on tone, and secrets. Discuss your character creation choices as a group when appropriate.

WHY ARE YOU ON THE BRONZE VIPER AWARD COMMITTEE?

Make your own answer, or choose one of these:

- "I wrote a really cool game last year that everyone loved."
- "I thought that it was about another type of roleplaying, and can't admit I was wrong."
- "I share the same last name as a prominent larpwright and people got us mixed up."
- "I am a serious academic who wrote an influential paper about gaming."
- "I vlog about larp a lot."
- "I'm a B-list geeky celebrity who really wants to use this to promote my new project."
- "I'm an old friend of the founder of the awards who got asked to help out."
- "I shitpost about larp discourse on social media and thought this would be funny."

WHAT PROBLEM KEPT YOU FROM ACTUALLY READING ANY OF THE GAMES?

Make your own answer, or choose one of these:

- "I thought the meeting was a lot later, but it turns out I got the timezones mixed up."
- "I have an awesome new project that used up the free time I'd set aside for this."
- "I am in the middle of a messy break-up/family drama/business problem."
- "My beloved pet has been sick/gone missing/taken up all of my free time"
- "I got incredibly invested in a novel/K-drama/MMO/actual play and lost track of time."
- "I agreed to do too many projects and got overwhelmed."
- "I had a car accident/flooded home/bad hair month."
- "I suffered from a never-ending series of technical problems."

If you are keeping your character secrets hidden from the other players, it is still recommended that you privately message them to the Facilitator, so that they can inform you if there's other players with the exact same secret, or a very similar one. Make sure that your character's secret doesn't clash with the game's expected tone.

WHICH AWARD ARE YOU PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Each judge has an award that they are personally responsible for, in addition to the general "Best In Show" award that the group decides upon.

Make your own answer, or choose one of these:

- Most Innovative New Mechanic.
- The Laugh Out Loud Award.
- Game That Will Change the Future.
- Best Metaphor/Allegory.
- Most Compelling Conflict.
- Best Adaptation of Another Media.
- Most Interesting Use of Props.
- Safest Game To Play.

WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER'S NAME?

Make your own answer, or choose and expand on one of these, giving them a first name:

- J. Michaels
- T. Lee
- R. Appleton-Smith
- A. Miller
- C. Park
- L. Goodman
- G. Rude
- Z. Lightbringer
- M. Nilson
- R. Garcia
- B. Silvers
- C. Devi
- S. West
- D. Kingston
- E. Friedman
- W. Fierce
- F. Maximus
- Y. Solow
- F. Richardson
- P. Archer

GAME SUBMISSION CREATION

Each player then contributes one of the games submitted to this year's Bronze Viper awards. They send their answers to the following questions as a private message to the facilitator, who will reveal them during the course of play. (Alternatively, the group may agree to use one of the premade lists of games from the appendix.) Then, together as a group choose the theme of this year's awards.

It's in poor taste to mock a specific game or writer. You can parody a genre or certain tropes without targeting individuals. Please be kind with your comedy.

WHAT IS THE GAME'S NAME?

Make your own answer, or choose one of these:

- "The Rise and Fall of Civilization"
- "Falling From High Altitude"
- "Bones"
- "Silence In The Ether"
- "The Sonnet of Truth"
- "Red Zone Strike"
- "The Masks We Wear"
- "Villagers"

WHO IS THE GAME'S AUTHOR?

Make your own answer, or choose an unused name from the previous page.

WHAT IS THE GAME'S ONE SENTENCE PREMISE?

Make your own answer, or choose one of these:

- "You've been replaced by your evil twin, who writes letters to people in your life."
- "You are the janitors at a supervillain's secret lair, solving a murder mystery."
- "You play the most important words in the dictionary, having a dinner party."
- "Across four scenes over four seasons, play a group of people leaving their hometown."
- "Following the recipes listed, talk to your estranged family while you cook dinner."
- "The Adventurers meet the last survivor of a lost civilization, and learn about history."
- "Everyone's shadows have come alive and are politely explaining their complaints."
- "Your spaceship is about to explode, and the crew says their goodbyes while they can."

WHAT IS THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S BRONZE VIPER COMPETITION?

As a group you may come up with your own answer, or choose one of these:

- Class Conflict
- Masks
- Space Travel
- Hot Tubs
- Gambling
- Persecution
- Ribbon Dancing
- Sunsets

FINAL PRE-GAME PREPARATIONS

PHASE ZERO: Post-Character & Game Creation

Decide on an appropriate amount of time to take a break. During this break, you might consider drinking water, using the restroom, eating a snack, resting, or possibly finding an outfit or accessory that might match the character you'll be playing, if appropriate. The facilitator will make sure they have all the game submissions easily accessible for use during play.

Once everyone has returned and is ready to proceed, have each player introduce their character, and what award they are in charge of. If you chose to have the secrets be open, reveal those as well. Once everyone has introduced their character, they should alter their names on the video conference to match. (And include their pronouns as well.) Everyone then turns off their cameras.

THE FLOW OF GAME PLAY

PHASE ONE: The Introduction

The game begins when the facilitator turns on their camera. Other players turn theirs on, “logging in” to the meeting one at a time, making introductions and small talk. Each player makes at least one subtle reference to the problem they are facing in this process. Once everyone is in the meeting, the facilitator’s character officially starts the proceedings. They explain that there is only about an hour (4 players) to an hour and a half (6 players) to judge the awards, and that there’s people at Big Game Con currently waiting for the award ceremony that will soon begin.

No one admits that they didn’t do the reading.

PHASE TWO: Reviewing the submissions

The Facilitator picks the first larp from the submissions that they received from the other players. They then read the title, author and premise out loud, as well as post them into the chat for the video conference. The player who submitted that game will start the discussion about it, making up a fact about the game that they think is plausible. This will generally be about how the game actually matches the theme of this year’s Bronze Viper awards. Other players will build on that fact, possibly adding their own as they go along.

Once every player has gotten a chance to talk about that submission, the facilitator takes a short pause to prepare the next entry, allowing for some small talk, before they move on to the next entry. The process repeats until all submissions have been covered.

PHASE THREE: The Judging Process

Once all entries have been covered, it’s time for discussion. Each player has one award to give. While it is preferred that each game get a different award, it is possible for one game to get multiple awards, or even all of them if something incredibly bizarre has happened. Likewise, the players need to come to some sort of consensus about the Best In Show award.

It is expected that the judging process be derailed by the personal issues of each member of the committee. Talking about the personal lives of the committee members takes precedence over figuring out which games get which awards. People are more important than the game.

At this point, players have the option to start hinting that they didn’t read the games, or to just admit it. Even if a character admits that they didn’t do the reading, the other characters should avoid being overly cruel to them, since you are guilty of the same thing.

PHASE FOUR: The Conclusion

Ten minutes before the end of the game, the facilitator reminds everyone that there is a group of people waiting for the awards to be announced. However, that doesn’t mean that the awards are more important than everyone’s issues though. Creative solutions are recommended.

At the end of game, the video conference is broadcast to the convention. The facilitator addresses the attendees. If the awards are to be given, each judge announces their award and their reason for picking it. The facilitator announces best in show before ending the call. The players turn their cameras off.

PHASE FIVE: The Post-Game Debrief

The players turn their cameras on again, and change their displayed names back to their actual ones. It is recommended to have a short post-game debrief. Any players who didn’t get their character’s problems revealed in game are encouraged to share them with the rest of the group during this time. Everyone thanks each other for creating a collaborative experience.

APPENDIX A: PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Players, either individually or as a group, may pick characters from one or both provided sets. Alternatively, these may be used as inspirations for your own characters.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER SET A

- Frankie Buckingham.
 - *Best Character Design* award.
 - You're on the committee because you love reading new games.
 - You didn't read the games because you got on a nostalgia trip and re-read a bunch of classic ones you loved instead. Ooops.
- Andy Esposito.
 - *Funniest Game* award.
 - You're on the committee because you teach game design at a university.
 - You didn't read the games because you're a teacher and have no free time, but volunteer for things anyways.
- Blake Miller.
 - *Most Compelling Allegory* award.
 - You're on the committee because you really hated how your friend's entry got rejected last year.
 - You didn't read the games because you got sucked into playing Animal Crossing and lost track of time.
- Dallas Lane.
 - *The Most Innovative Game* award.
 - You're on the committee because you and your ex wrote a cool game together that impressed everyone.
 - You didn't read the games because your ex is suing you, and life is too overwhelming.
- Channing Toledo.
 - *Clever Design* award.
 - You're on the committee because you run a larp podcast reviewing cool games.
 - You didn't read the games because you've been so focused on your podcast's upcoming 100th episode that you forgot.
- Emery Lee.
 - *Best Replayability* award.
 - You're on the committee because you run a popular D&D podcast, but also larp on occasion.
 - You didn't read the games because you thought this was just a ceremonial position without any expectation of labor.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER SET B

- Greer Martin
 - *Most Dynamic Play* award.
 - You're on the committee because you wrote a beloved larp that people really liked a few years ago.
 - You didn't read the games because you were too focused on trying to finish a new larp of your own.
- Kris Montgomery
 - *Most Dramatic* award.
 - You're on the committee because you help edit larp podcasts.
 - You didn't read the games because a tree fell on your house and you've been couch surfing for weeks.
- Hope Richardson
 - *Most Elaborate* award.
 - You're on the committee because you are famous at larps for elaborate costumes
 - You didn't read the games because you are suffering from a creative burnout.
- Ira Matthews
 - *Best Use of Safety Mechanics* award.
 - You're on the committee because you wanted a creative escape from a dull day job.
 - You didn't read the games because you lost your job, and life is now hell.
- Landry Norman
 - *Most Comedic* award.
 - You're on the committee because you got asked to by one of the award's founders.
 - You didn't read the games because you have a new baby in the house, and sleep hasn't really been happening.
- Jess Caster
 - *Big Concept* award.
 - You're on the committee because you hoped that you'd make some friends.
 - You didn't read the games because you thought you had another day so you could do it at the last minute.

APPENDIX B: PRE-GENERATED GAME SUBMISSIONS

Players as a group may use all of the submissions from the appropriate set, or pick one that they like to use individually instead.

GAME SUBMISSIONS FOR A FOUR-PLAYER GAME ~ The theme is "Positioning"

- **"tatterdemalion"** by Marie Wilshire.
 - You portray a community of poor squatters on a space station.
- **"I Know You Are But What Am I?"** by Tom Savitsky.
 - The magical furniture owned by a demonic children's show host makes plans.
- **"My Office Life"** by Ruby Rodriguez.
 - A group of office workers enjoy lunch together.
- **"Paper White"** by Ian Zheng.
 - Everyone has amnesia! Except for one of you.

GAME SUBMISSIONS FOR A FIVE-PLAYER GAME ~ The theme is "Fireworks"

- **"Revolutions Per Minute"** by Eddie Estrada.
 - The pit crew at a NASCAR race suddenly face a major change.
- **"The Rain Falls Mainly In..."** by Elizabeth Anderson.
 - You write letters to the rain, and the rain answers back.
- **"It's For You."** by Herman Novak.
 - You are all trapped in one room when someone knocks on the door.
- **"Blazer Blazer"** by CJ Takeuchi.
 - A group of friends go to a nightclub together but their strong bonds are put to the test.
- **"Shade"** by Robin Derek.
 - A monster is confronted by their victims.

GAME SUBMISSIONS FOR A SIX-PLAYER GAME ~ The theme is "Clockwork"

- **"Silver Tongued And Shy"** by Warren Gladstone.
 - A gathering of the Fair Folk who try to find which of them isn't who they claim to be.
- **"Like A Bull"** by Cedar McMillian.
 - A stubborn family gathers for dinner and fails to be polite.
- **"Meteoric"** by Andre Block.
 - Bankers in the 1920s party, knowing nothing could ever go wrong for them.
- **"The Bottom of The Sea"** by Giovanni Sterns.
 - A man on a desert island writes letters for help, and gets responses.
- **"Sincerely Yours"** by Marta Green.
 - Rival assassins try to admit their love for each other.
- **"The Body Electric"** by Jason Thunderbolt.
 - Artificial Intelligence in our smart devices talk to each other, and vent about their problems.

You have permission to take one or any of these prompts and use them for a creative project of your own, as long as you tell me about it. (Contact Peter S. Svensson, peterssvensson@gmail.com)