

# CAMP PLEASANT

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**MURDER**

STEFFIE DE VAAN

# Credits

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## What you need to play

**Players:** 4-16

**GM:** No

**Time:** Half an hour prep time, determine 1-2 hours play time. Set a timer so the evening progresses organically, without someone constantly having to check the clock.

**Items:** A pen and identical notepad per player (a stack of loose papers works too, as long as they're identical), something that sets an alarm (phone or watch), six-sided die (optional)

**Food:** Hot cocoa and marshmallows in Winter, iced tea for Summer, candied apples for Fall, and cucumber sandwiches for Spring.

**Location:** If you can play outside, even in someone's backyard, that's perfect especially if you have a fire pit or other way of safely making a campfire. Have a fire extinguisher, or bucket of sand (not water) nearby if things go wrong. Pause play (and possibly explain what you're doing) if someone passes by. Also be mindful of the law, don't trespass, and alert the proper authorities beforehand if you're playing with a large group.

**Camp Pleasant** can be played indoors. Darken the room to mimic the dusk of evening, and use candles in lieu of lamp light. Use all safety rules for candles: ensure proper ventilation, and keep flammables away.

# Camp Pleasant

Welcome to **Camp Pleasant**, a cooperative storytelling game about nights spent with friends, the end of the holidays, new beginnings, secrets and murder. It's inspired by season two of *Slasher (Guilty Party)*.

The players are all camp counselors, getting together for one last campfire hangout before heading to their separate lives again. This is their last chance for shared memories, to air grievances, or poke at secrets. It's been a long, hard vacation with just a spot of murder. Life can be a bummer sometimes.

**Welcome to Camp Pleasant,  
where experiences are made!**

## Building Camp Pleasant

The group creates Camp Pleasant together. Is the camp situated on a lake, in the mountains, or in a forest? Is the camp renowned for its academic program, sport activities, or its team-building exercises? Maybe it's not renowned at all, but it's a cheap and easy way for parents to get their kids out of the way during vacation times. Is the camp brand new, or old and nearly bankrupt?

Once you have the broad strokes, add scandals and secrets. Why did that one camp counsellor get fired last year? Did they ever find the kid who went missing? Is the camp really haunted?

The season in-game matches the one out-game.

**Don't say anything about the murder victim yet.**

# Packing for Camp

Take a moment to discuss soft and hard boundaries as a group. One player may **veto** sexual violence (a hard boundary), while another would **prefer** everyone tread carefully around racism (a soft boundary). No one needs to explain why they're putting a boundary in place, but everyone does need to accept and respect it.

# Character Creation

The characters are camp counselors who just graduated from college or high school (the group decides which). They've come together on the last night of the vacation before they begin their new studies, internship, or job (or whatever you decide). You can develop a character from scratch, or roll a D6 on any of the three tables below to determine your character's Archetype, Background, and Popularity.

## *Role*

1	AV Club Member
2	Cheerleader
3	Class President
4	Jock
5	School Paper Journalist
6	Science Club Member

## *Grew Up*

1	Countryside Ranch
2	Countryside Small Cottage
3	Inner City, Bad Neighbourhood
4	Inner City, Rich or Gentrified
5	Old Suburban House
6	New Suburban Build

## Popularity

1	Actively Shunned
2	Ignored
3	Plain Jane or Joe
4	Sits with Popular Kids
5	Part of the 'in' crowd
6	Class President / Prom Queen

Take some time to envision your character. Give them a name. What are their hobbies? How's their academic record? Which college, university, or job did they apply for, and did they it? What are their homelife and family like? What is their secret? Everybody has a secret.

Lastly, work out how the characters know each other. All players should answer at least three of these questions (pick at will, or roll a D6) by naming another character. This creates a shared history, and the players involved should work out details together.

1. Who is your best friend? What secret are you keeping to protect them? (This needn't be reciprocated.)
2. Who used to be your childhood friend? What fight saw you 'break up'?
3. Who is your frenemy? Why are you jealous of them?
4. Who is your secret crush? Why don't you trust them enough to tell them?
5. Who did you help out of a bind, or who helped you, and what is the debt owed?
6. Who did you steal from, what did you steal, and do they know?

# A Conspiracy of Murder

The player of the least popular character takes their notepad and writes either “innocent” or “murderer” on a sheet, then folds the paper twice, and places it in a container. The player creates one sheet per player. For every four players, create one murderer (rounded up).

The same player shuffles the container and, without drawing themselves, passes it to the player on their left. This player shuffles again, and draws one folded sheet. They then pass it to the player on their left, who shuffles and draws one. Continue until everyone has drawn a slip of paper. Now open your paper and secretly read your role.

If there are more than four players (so two or more murderers), all players close their eyes. Now, the player of the most popular character counts to three. On three, the murderers open their eyes to see who their co-conspirators are.

The most popular player now sets the alarm (using a phone or watch) for one to two hours, depending on how long the group wants to play. The shorter the timer, the more intense the game becomes under the pressure of the clock. Play starts.

## ***Alternative Conspiracy: We are All Killers here***

Rather than draw who is innocent and who a killer, the characters killed the victim together. Now the narrative they construct is about what drove them to this horrible deed, and the bonds and rifts it creates between them.

# Campfire Confessions

Starting with the most popular character and going clockwise, every character makes a confession about themselves and repeats a rumour they heard about the murder.

**Confessions** are about **your character**, and they must be at least technically true. For example “my dad was away a lot when I grew up” might mean “dad worked long hours,” “dad left for cigarettes and never return,” “dad spent my formative years in and out of prison,” or “dad mysteriously disappeared one day,” so long as “was away a lot” holds true.

**Rumors** deal with the **murder** victim, and the place and method of their murder. Don't make statements about the killer's motives. A rumour isn't true until a second player confirms it. Rumours can't simply be wiped away though, but rather they must be expanded on.

For example “he was drowned in the lake” can be **confirmed** “yes, I heard he was drowned too,” or **elaborated on** “the killer tied a heavy object to him and dumped him in the lake”. A rumour can also be **countered** with “I heard he was killed elsewhere, then his body dumped in the lake”, but not with “no, he was mowed down by a tractor and his body buried in a field” as the latter does not build on the lake rumour.

If your character is a murderer, craft a mental narrative about your motives and seed clues for other players to find. For example “the victim was a drug-dealer and one of his customers died” if your motive is revenge for the death of your brother. Be flexible though, in case your rumours don't get confirmed by another player. If there's more murderers, try to confirm each other's narrative whenever you can - good killers help each other out.

**It's a good idea to keep notes about the murder!**



Players can make separate statements (“My father was an alcoholic. The victim was drowned.”) or weave them together (“The victim didn’t put up much of a fight when he was drowned, because he was drunk. He reminds me of my father, who was an alcoholic.”)

After the round of confessions and rumours, each player may ask one question of another player. Remember that, certainly at the start, characters have little reason to believe one of them is the murderer. Other characters may simply be more interested in the story of your deadbeat drunk, possibly abducted by aliens, dad, than in the murder. Camp Pleasant is a cooperative storytelling game with a murder woven into its narration, not a murder mystery.

Continue with rounds of confessions, rumours, and questions, or let the conversation progress more organically. Whichever works best to get your group immersed.

### ***Signals to use and look out for:***

- Hand open, palm up, beckoning “more”. This interaction, story, or conflict is good. Keep going or even escalate.
- Hand open, palm down, gesturing “calm”. This interaction, story, or conflict is making me nervous. Continue, but tread slowly or let me take the lead.
- Hand open, palm down, “finish gesture” across chest/throat area. This interaction, story, or conflict is making me anxious. Stop immediately.
- Arm crossed over chest, hand on opposite shoulder. I am watching and listening, and having fun. This player might not be talking, but they’re not feeling left out and other characters can still entice their into the conversation, or ask questions.
- Be aware of players who are silent and withdrawn, without having an arm crossed. Maybe they’re engrossed in listening and simply forgot to cross their arm, or maybe they are not having a good time and feel uncomfortable making the “slow” or “stop” gestures. Make eye contact with them. Ask if they’re alright if you think they might not be. **It’s every player’s responsibility to make sure everyone in the group is at ease.**

The purpose of the game is to get to know your own (through questions you had not considered) and other's characters better, and to create a combined narrative of secrets, camp experiences, and murder. It's perfectly valid to say that *your character's* motivation is to catch the killer (or remain hidden), but that should not be *your* goal.

**Camp Pleasant has no winners or losers!**

## The End of Camp

After play time ends, or when conversation has organically wound down, the characters craft the definitive **Tale of Murder** together. What happened to the murder victim, and why? Rumours no longer need to be confirmed, whatever characters state is how it went down. The only exception is that the murderer may, immediately after a statement, reveal themselves by saying "No, here is what really happened - I was there: ..." and erase, correct or supplement information as they desire.

### ***Alternative Ending: To Catch a Killer***

After the last round, all players pick up their notepad and (secretly) write the name of another player's character. Innocent people write down who they think the murder is. Murderers write down one last victim ("NO ONE" is valid), and put a little checkmark to indicate this is a murdersheet. Fold your paper twice, and put it in the container as it's passed back around. Then, one by one the names are read. Did the killer claim another victim? Were they caught? Then proceed to craft a Tale of Murder together, taking this new information, and a possible second murder, into account.

This alternate ending makes for a more competitive version of ***Camp Pleasant***, so expect players to be more focused on the murder aspect of the story.

# Last Round

Now that camp is over, take a moment to discuss how you experienced the game.

- What was something another player did which impressed you?
- What character story did you find most compelling or intriguing?
- Who made you feel safe?
- Who made you laugh?
- Anything else you wish to discuss?

**Here at Camp Pleasant we build bonds  
that last forever!**