CLICKS & HUMS & SIRENS & THE SUN

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A Storytelling Game of Lost love.

THE PARTY

It's the middle of September, which means the **party's** coming up. Nobody needs any more details than that; they can hear the bold type when you say it.

Everybody's there, because the girl who's hosting knows everyone. She drops names like carpet bombs. She knows you. And she knew your love.

You met your love at the party two years ago. It was funny as often as it was brilliant. By the end of the night, you felt like you were going to know them forever.

You broke up at last year's party. It was awkward as often as it was horrible. You wonder if you knew them at all.

Now you're here again. You wonder if you'll see your love. You haven't yet. But, as the clicks and hums and sirens pumping from the sound system in the ridiculously huge garden flow through your body, you see them everywhere.

There's where you met. There's where you lay underneath them with your fingers in the dirt. There's where your stomach dropped and you felt worse than when S Club 7 broke up, because you knew that was it.

The DJ won't leave the tracks she's playing alone. She keeps remixing them as she goes. Technology overtaking music. Sometimes, you wish you could remix your life.

And tonight you can.
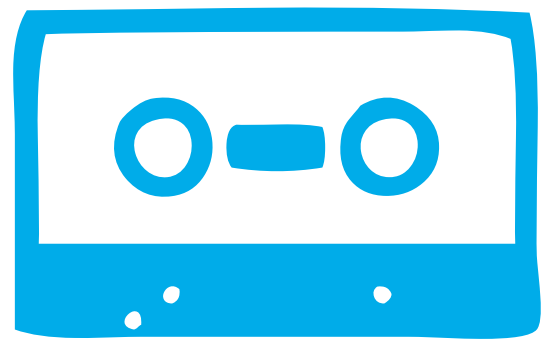
I go out into the garden, and the birds begin to sing, and I'm Troubled by the thought of all the daylight they will bring, and I think that I will let somebody take me home again. – Two Steps Foward, Emmy The Great

WHAT YOU'LL DO IN THIS GAME

Clicks & Hums & Sirens & the Sun is a storytelling game for two people. It's about lost love, reconciliation, and house music. To play, you'll need a copy of this game and 7 regular, 6 sided dice. If you're downloading a story game, you probably already have a bunch to hand. If not, go raid the Monopoly boxes. We'll wait.

One of you will take the role of the guest. The other will take the role of their love, who appears in the guest's memory as they reminisce in the midst of a dancing throng of people. Decide who's whom between you.

Come up with a name for your character, and a little description. Decide on how they look, what their all-time-favourite-album-you-have-to-hear-right-now is, how they feel about The Force Awakens – anything that'll help you get a grip on them before you play them. Don't tell the other player any of this. It'll come out in play. You can be any gender or sexuality you want, but it's assumed that the characters will be attracted to each other, even if they wouldn't normally be.

The story of the game takes place over the eight hours between the dusk and dawn on a warm September evening. The game should take one to two hours to play in real time.

The location is a big-ass house with an even more ludicrously oversized garden. The house and the garden are, both now and in the guest's memory, full of people attending the party. There's a rave in the garden.

Throughout the night, the guest will remember eight key scenes from their doomed relationship, one for each hour that they're at the party, which they'll improvise with their love. The scenes are divided into the high (the good part of their relationship) and the comedown (the bad part).

After you've played each scene through, you get the chance that you never get in real life. You get to remix the night. You can trigger plugins and replay through the scene with a new set of complications, hopefully coming out at a better outcome – or at least one you can be at peace with.

This is a game for adults. It talks (albeit mostly pretty obliquely) about sex, drugs and emotional distress. If any of that makes you feel uncomfortable, you don't have to play. There are loads of fantastic RPGs that provide a straight up good time. Give Dungeon World a go. Seriously, Dungeon World's great.

COMPLICATIONS

Each time that you start a new scene, roll your 7 dice to set up that scene's complications. These dice should remain within easy reach throughout the scene and are referred to as the pool.

Each number represents one of the following complications: **fuckupedness**; **atmosphere**; **other people**; **belief**; **regret**; and **sex**. The amount of that number rolled determines how much of a factor the parameter will play in the scene.

Decide which character each complication's referring to – or if it refers to both of them. If there's a synergy between two or more complications, use it – say if one of you takes **you say something stupid** and the other takes **you're offended**.

If a number doesn't come up when the complications are rolled, it doesn't play a part in the scene. If no 1s are rolled, for instance, you might still be a little drunk, but it's not relevant for this scene.

Act out one of the scenes listed in **Amazing Scenes**, using the complications you rolled as a guide. Describe the situation around you, and speak as your character. Try and get as much back and forth between you and the other player as you can – that's where the heart of the story and your characters will be.

During the high, even complications that sound kind of bad should be played as not-too-serious. If you **say something stupid**, you might have just said that your favourite Radiohead song is Anyone Can Play Guitar. If the other character's **offended** by this, it's mock-outrage, before dragging you off to a quiet room and insisting that you listen to Kid A immediately.

During the comedown, even complications that sound good should be played as serious. **Looking to get laid** almost certainly doesn't mean by the other character. If there are **good people, all around**, it just highlights that you two are the only people there who don't seem to be having fun.

Fuckupedness
"I used you as a surface, did a line across your face."

⚀ You've got a little buzz on, but you're basically-almost-sober.

⚀⚀ You're drunk or high, but you're having a good time.

⚀⚀⚀ **or more** Too much. Feel sick. Hang, on, hold my hair back.

Atmosphere
"Clicks, and hums, and sirens, and the Sun."

⚀ Good tunes, room to dance.

⚀⚀ Too many people - but they seem to be having fun.

⚀⚀⚀ **or more** It's crushingly busy right now. You keep getting barged into.

Other People
"A girl whose mum is friends with Elton John, so she kept telling us."

⚂ Good people, all around.

⚂⚂ An irritating asshole has taken an interest in you.

⚂⚂⚂ **or more** An actually beautiful, charming person has taken an interest in you.

Belief
"When I was a child, I was expected to believe in something up above that no one touches or can see."

⚃ You sound like you know what you're talking about.

⚃⚃ You're refusing to back down on something.

⚃⚃⚃ **or more** You're offended. They're going to know about it.

Regret
"The time's already gone when people were just people, not the jobs that they perform."

⚄ You say something stupid.

⚄⚄ You say something awful.

⚄⚄⚄ **or more** You do something stupid.

Sex
"I knew you best back when love was just a feeling that ran out between my legs."

⚅ Not feeling it.

⚅⚅ You're feeling romantic.

⚅⚅⚅ **or more** You're looking to get laid.

AMAZING SCENES

These are the scenes that you'll play through together. Each scene has a title indicative of what's going to happen here, some advice on how to use the complications and what to do in the scene, and a goal that must be achieved; once you've achieved the goal, the scene ends. Don't be tempted to jump straight to the goal, though. Getting there organically is the body of the game.

You can set the scene in the garden rave or in any room that might feasibly be in big old house. Remember that there's always other people around – finding a quiet space to be alone in could be an adventure in and of itself.

Also remember that no matter where you go, the pounding music is always there. If it helps, play with actual music in the background – there's a link to a playlist of suitable stuff at the end of this game.

The High

The high is the positive section of the game, representing the party two years ago where the characters first met and fell in love over the course of the evening. Remember that while complications inform the framing of every scene, during the high even the negative sounding complications should be given a positive slant.

MEET CUTE

This is the first time that the characters have ever met. They've never talked before this moment, though they may have seen each other around if you want. Find a compelling reason to get them talking – depending on how the complications fall, they may provide a way in. **Looking to get laid** is an obvious choice if it's available, but it might not even initially mean by the other character.

If there's no obvious way in from the complications, come up with another cute way in and let the complications define the rest of the scene. It doesn't have to be a big romantic comedy moment (though it can be). It might be as simple as one character having an unopened beer bottle and the other having a bottle opener on their key ring.

Goal: By the end of the scene, the characters should be definitely interested and attracted to the other.

FALLING IN LOVE

Love is a strong word, but over the course of this scene, the characters should at the very least come to the conclusion that each other are fucking rad. If you're really getting into the back and forth of the characters' dialogue, let this scene run a little longer than the others to lend it some credibility. Montage is your friend here; this scene can take place over several in game hours even if the scene only takes five real-time minutes. Cut back and forth between snatches of conversation and narrated action.

Goal: By the end of the scene, even if the characters aren't ready to buy that ring, they should be ready to ignore everyone else at the party for each other.

FIRST CONTACT

This is where your characters get physical for the first time. Narrate as much as you feel comfortable with here, both for you as the player and as your character. Neither you nor your fictional proxy should feel pressured into taking this scene further than you want. A first kiss is just as valid for this scene as your characters finding an unused bedroom to fuck in – but if you go the latter way, don't skip the part of finding that room either, which in a party this crowded could be really entertaining.

Goal: By the end of the scene, if the characters haven't had sex, it should definitely be in their near future.

THE END OF THE NIGHT

You go out into the garden, and the birds begin to sing. The DJ plays her last tune, and you can already feel your hangover coming. The two characters leave the party, probably together, and certainly as a couple – if one isn't sleeping at the other's place tonight, they'll have at least exchanged numbers, followed each other on Instagram and arranged to meet at this brilliant greasy-spoon they both know at 11.30ish (maybe 12.30ish, hangover-dependent) tomorrow. This is a high in the story. Make it feel like one, however you can.

Goal: This scene ends when the characters leave the party, either together or arranging to see each other again, confident that they'll know this awesome new person forever.

If you don't feel personally comfortable narrating something that would be in character, feel free to fade to black without getting into the gory details.

The Comedown

The comedown is the negative section of the game, representing the party last year where the characters argue and separate after an unseen downward spiral in their relationship. Complications in the comedown are uniformly negative, even if they seem like they should be positive; find a way to twist everything for the worse.

AN ARGUMENT

This is far from your first argument. You're a year into your relationship, and things have been going south for a while. Resentment has been building – if there was a bone of contention that came up lightly during the high, use it, and definitely use the complications to inform what causes the argument.

For example, if the dice say that one of you is at the **hold my hair back** stage of **fuckupedness**, maybe one of you is annoyed that the other got so tanked before the party even started, or perhaps you've both been getting gradually fucked up all day, and it turns out you're snippy drunks.

Goal: You should end the scene by parting.

SEPARATION

This scene is played with the two characters physically separated, so the player of the love won't be contributing much directly about their character. If the guest encounters any other characters throughout the scene, the player of the love can play them instead, or can contribute details about what's going on around the guest. It's also possible for the guest to see the love in the distance, at which point their player can describe their actions.

During this brief absence from each other, the characters must admit that they've drifted apart – the break doesn't come just because of the argument of course, but this scene is where they realise that there's no way back.

If someone has **you do something stupid** as a complication, there's no better time to use it. Anybody interested in either of your characters, be they a jackass or an **actually beautiful, charming person** will look very attractive now.

Goal: You should end this scene with the guest realising that they no longer want to be with their love.

THE BREAK UP

The characters meet again at the party, possibly with one seeking out the other, or entirely by accident. It's time for them to address what's been coming for a while: they're no longer a they. You can make this scene whatever you want: it can be messy, shouting, tear drenched or a relief. The only thing it must be, is over.

Goal: By the end of this scene, the characters must no longer be a couple. They may still be in love, but they must no longer be lovers.

THE END OF THE NIGHT

The characters leave the party, probably not together, but maybe so – if they live together by this point, there may be nowhere else for them to go. They might be furious at each other; it's entirely possible to play this scene without dialogue, only describing your character's wistful silence as they watch the prosaic end of the world, the love of their life pulling away in an Uber.

Goal: This scene ends when the characters leave the party alone or together, but apart either way.

AMAZING SCENES

THE REMIX

Once you've played through the scene once, you can remix it. This means playing it again, but picking and choosing dice to trigger plugins which change how the scene goes. The first play-through of the scene is how it really went; the remix is how the guest wishes it went, inspired by the effects that the DJ is dropping as you dance at this year's party, lost in your memories.

Plugins

Play through the scene again, much as it was before, but at any point either of the players can take a die from the pool. This has two effects: firstly, removing the die implicitly changes the complications. Suddenly, the **actually beautiful, charming person** who was distracting you from your love during the argument seems like an **asshole**. Maybe you go from **hold my hair back** wasted to **having a good time**, and the conversation goes a whole different way.

Taking the die also triggers a plugin. The plugins are numbered 1 through 6, and taking a die corresponding to their number means that the matching plugin is triggered. So, if for example you remove a 4 from the pool, you trigger **glitch**.

Once you've triggered a plugin, roll the die you picked up to see what effect it has. On a 2 to 6, the plugin has an effect on the scene, usually by messing with the complications pool. This could have a subtle of drastic effect on the scene, as the guest tries to imagine a better version of the truth. Once you've triggered the plugin, discard the dice and play the rest of the scene according to the new complication pool.

If you roll a 1 on your plugin die at any point, you trigger a siren and the remixed scene immediately ends. Sirens are described below.

When the last die has been taken from the pool, the player who took it can describe how the scene ends, using the number of the dice to inspire their description. So, if the last die to be taken from the pool is a 6, they can close on a sexy or romantic note, because a 6 represents **sex** in the complications pool. The closing of the remixed scene does not have to reflect the original scene's goal.

The last die taken from the pool does not trigger a plugin. It's possible that a plugin such as gate or filter removes the last die from the complications pool. In that case the player who triggered that plugin can close the scene using the same guidance.

⚀ Sample

The DJ drops a sample from an old classic tune of your youth.

On a roll of 2 through 6, pick a number. Change a number of dice from your complications pool equal to the number you rolled on your plugin die to your chosen number.

⚁ Distortion

The DJ hits the overdrive. Everything gets a bit manic.

On a roll of 2 through 6, increase that number of dice by 1 each. So, if you rolled a 3, you must increase the score of 3 dice of your choice by 1 each, so you could choose for a 1 to become a 2, and a pair of 4s to become 5s.

⚄ Filter

The DJ gradually fades out all the bass before bringing it crashing back in.

On a roll of 2 through 6, remove that category from your complications altogether. So, if you roll a 5, remove all the 5s from the pool. If the number rolled does not match any of the dice in the pool, the plugin has no effect. Dice removed with filter do not trigger further plugins.

⚁ Gate

The tune seems to flicker in and out, like the sound is strobing with the lights.

On a roll of 2 through 6, remove one die from as many categories in the complications pool as the number you rolled. Removing dice in this way does not trigger further plugins.

⚃ Glitch

Bits of the tune scatter about here and there; everything's everywhere.

On a roll of 2 through 6, pick up that many dice from the complications pool and reroll them.

⚅ Loop

The DJ cuts back to an earlier section of the tune and plays a few bars of it on loop.

Unless you roll a 1, go back to the start of the remixed scene, restarting with the current complications pool.

Sirens

"I know where I am: I'm in a garden, half-remembering your fingers in my hand."

Any time you roll a one on your plugin die, the DJ drops a siren or alarm sound in her mix, and it shakes the guest out of their reverie. You're not really with your love; you're just in a garden full of sweaty, dancing strangers. The scene ends unresolved, even if there were more dice left in the complication pool.

After the remix

"I'm asleep to the thought of two people walking two steps forward, always to the lives they've chosen."

If the remix phase of a scene ends because one of the players triggered a siren, the player of the love narrates a short, one or two sentence, scene where the guest encounters a third character known only as **somebody** in the real, non-memory party.

Somebody is attractive, interesting and interested in the guest. They keep running into each other every time a siren goes off, and there's definitely something between the two of them.

If the remix phase of a scene ends because all of the plugins were triggered successfully and the last die is removed, the guest comes out of their reverie because they hear a familiar voice nearby – they look up and see their love. They made it to the party after all.

After the final scene ends, and the sun begins to rise, total the amount of times the guest encounters **somebody**, and the amount of times they saw their love. If they saw **somebody** more times, they leave the party with them; it's absolutley not love but maybe they can forget with them that they knew their love at all.

If they saw their love more times, the two meet properly as the first rays of sunlight bathe the house in warm light. They might not get back together, and certainly not right now, but perhaps there's hope. Perhaps.
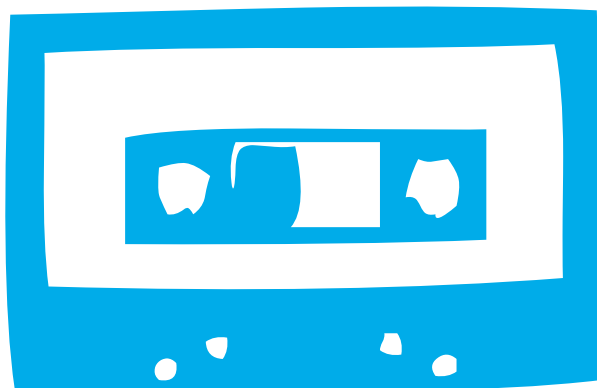
AFTER PARTY

Remixing the high

It's obvious why the guest would want to remix the comedown, but why would they remix the high? Things were already pretty good there. Well, knowing as they do how the relationship ends, maybe they want to be a little more cautious. Maybe they're quicker to call the love on their bullshit. Maybe changes made when things were good could help when they go sour.

Agency and consent

Because this game has limited scenes with very specific goals, your characters might seem to have less agency than in other roleplaying and story games; but how you get to those goals is 100% up to you and your characters. This is especially important in any of the scenes that involve implied or described sex; if you don't think your character would do it, don't do it, even if the complications imply otherwise.

This is a game about two people falling in and out of love; if it becomes a game about one character pressuring another, or especially if you feel the game is pressuring you that way, please play something else. Alex Roberts has some great thoughts on sex and romance in RPGs here: **http://goo.gl/JCzvSo**.

Asexuality

This game takes a fluid view on sexuality, but because it depends on sexual attraction between two characters, it doesn't really work if one or both of the characters is asexual. But – if you can come up with a hack for this game that tailors it for asexual characters, I would love to see it. Write me at **o.jeffery@gmail.com**.

I made you a mixtape

Music to story game to. Enjoy.
https://goo.gl/fXKBlu