

## The Bloody Burn

Lil' Game Chef 2009 – Midnight, Horse, Burn.

This is a 2hr game for 4-7 players. You'll need one copy of this sheet for every participant, a table for everyone to sit around, space nearby to stand and talk, and drinks for all.

We retain regret, experience loss, and feel guilt long after the transgression. Weighed down with all this, we continue to hope, yearn and dream. Why?

When you are sitting at the table, you are playing in the *present*. You may be discussing possible scenes with the other players or Barman, or you may be portraying your character and speaking as them. This is all in the present.

The game is set in a town in Scotland, in a pub called *The Bloody Burn*, 'burn' being a Scottish word for a small stream. The characters are a circle of friends, who have come together to drink, talk and await the results of a horse race on which they have each placed bets... though none of the chosen horses come in, and all the characters lose their stake.

When you stand, your words are considered to be your characters *current thoughts*. When you stand, everything you say is internal and no characters can hear these feelings or reactions. Of course in reality, every player can.

Let's **begin**. Pick one player to be the **Barman**. His job is to encourage, direct, assist in playing other characters and tick off time.

And when you're away from the table, you are playing in the *past*.

The Barman will announce different **phases** of play – *First Round*, *Line Them Up*, and *Last Orders*:

Everyone else should **pick a character** they will portray from the list of characters below.

- During *First Round*, you must remain at the table, standing or sitting while you portray your character.
- During *Line Them Up*, the Barman may call you away from the table from time to time. You can also choose to step away from the table whenever you like, perhaps pulling another player away to play out an argument between your characters that took place a decade ago. Or to have that player portray another character entirely, such as a wife, child, employer or lost friend.
- During *Last Orders*, you can stand, sit, or step away.

Write down a short **Burden** for your character. Burdens could include difficult relations, responsibilities or personal demons.

Place all the sheets in the centre of the table, and pick another player's sheet. Looking at their Burden, write a short **Loss** for them. Losses could include deaths, contact lost with friends, previous failed relationships, or perhaps homelessness or unemployment.

There is one requirement. Each character's Burden relates to their **bet**. How they relate must be explored during play. For example, might an angry wife's rainy day money be stolen for the wager? Perhaps petty cash taken from the office is used for the bet; what consequence will arise from losing the money? Is the Burden a drug problem, and the lost bet will mean a beating from a supplier?

Retrieving your sheet, write down a **Resentment** you as a player have – an undeserved slight, an unjust accusation, or other bitterness from your own experience. You share this resentment with your character.

As players, you have a special narrative tool: your **position** relative to the table.

Character	Burden (you choose)	Loss (another chooses)	Resentment (your own)
Rab			
Fraser			
Sandy			
Alasdair			
David			
Tomas			

As the **Barman**, you have two responsibilities: exploration of themes, and administering time.

First of all, use the **checklist** below to record the names of each player, their character, and their themes.

The game **begins** with *First Round* – call 'First Round!' to announce it. Serve everyone a drink.

During *First Round*, the characters are drinking during the evening, awaiting a horse race on television. They have each placed bets. This phase is short, no more than 15 minutes. The Barman should do nothing more than hover and observe, and watch the **dynamics** at the table between both players and characters.

Call 'Line Them Up!' to announce the **second phase**. During this phase, the characters continue to drink and converse. However, you can now *pull a player away* from the table at any time, and request they play a scene from their character's past, focusing on one theme. You can think of these scenes as explorations, diving deeper into a casual reference or subtle connection to see the history below.

You can call *one or multiple* players away. During scenes, the players at the table can comment or add to the past with conversation at the table (and thus the present) or thoughts and memories (by standing).

You also have the power to **end scenes**, either where the scene has come to a natural conclusion, or where an unresolved conflict lingers. Call 'I think you've had enough' to do this. Afterwards return the players to the table.

Each character should have **two themes** explored. So if five characters are in play, then there will be 10 scenes in the past, interposed with many scenes in the pub. Check off each theme as it is used.

Finally, you can call 'Last Orders!' This is a **final scene** set in the present. During the scene, the race starts. Continues. And then ends. The race commentary is described by the characters at the table.

When the race finishes, none of the characters' horses have won, and none of the bets pay off.

Call 'Time, Gentlemen!' to **end play** completely. It's midnight, and everyone must leave *The Bloody Burn*.

**Discuss** the game with everyone.

An example character:

Rebecca looks at the list of characters and is intrigued by 'Tomas', a not particularly Scottish name. She decides he is a Polish builder, long settled in Scotland. She chooses a Burden of 'Conservative Catholic mother back home' and places her sheet in the middle of the table. When she gets her sheet back, another player has written 'Was fired yesterday' as a Loss. Rebecca picks a Resentment from her own past – poor results in school.

During play, both in the past and at the table, another player helps her develop the overbearing mother. The bet placed turns out to have been money put aside to place her in care.

**Time, Gentlemen!**

		Themes		
Character	Player	Burden	Loss	Resentment
Rab			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fraser			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sandy			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alasdair			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
David			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tomas			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>