



Iris Down



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Set-up:

As a group, pick a genre or tone. The default is **creepy tragedy**.

Randomly assign each player one Talker.

Sit or stand around a central Surface that everyone can easily reach. Turn off lights, put on blindfolds, and make sure that no one can see anyone else.

Objective:

Each player then secretly writes down one word that represents what they'd most like to see within the chosen genre.

Examples for creepy tragedy: murder, revelation, cold, abyss, abomination.

At the end of the game, whichever player's word best encapsulates the gist of the story is the winner.

Talkers:

Talkers are hand-held objects which can be easily distinguished from each other by feel. They act as "talking sticks" -- whoever holds each Talker gets to speak according to that Talker's province.

The provinces are:

- action
- sound
- sight
- sensation
- smell & taste
- memory

If you have fewer than 6 players, omit or roll together from the bottom up. (That is, with 5 players, either ditch Memory or include it with Smell.)

Time to tell a story.

The story starts like this: "You cannot move, hear, see, feel, smell, or remember anything."

The rules:

1. No one can speak without a Talker.
2. When you have a Talker, you must speak in the second person, and only concerning your Talker's province (see Examples).
3. Whenever you finish speaking and are silent for more than a few seconds, you must put your Talker onto the Surface.
4. Whenever you have a Talker, you may discard it from play.
5. Whenever you hold a Talker for several minutes without speaking, you must discard it from play.
6. Whenever you have no Talker, you may grab a Talker from the Surface.*
7. You may not undo (or render irrelevant) anything another player has said.
8. When no one speaks for several seconds, the game is over.

*If you have just put down your Talker after speaking, you cannot just pick it right back up again. Wait until the next person to speak has finished speaking and put their Talker down (as best you can guess).

Ending:

When the game ends, take off the blindfolds, turn on the lights, reveal the players' words and select a winner.

Examples:

Action: "You move forward. You look around."

Sound: "You hear WHSSSSH the wind in the leaves."

Sight: "You see a man beckoning you to advance. Off in the distance, you see a glow just over the trees."

Sensation: "You feel something brush against your leg."

Smell & taste: "You catch a powerful stench of wet mud."

Memory: "You recall a time when you entered a place like this, with a gun, looking for someone."

Never infringe on another Talker's province! You can never say, "You see a man, who says 'Come with me' and beckons," because the "You see a man" sight and the "Come with me" sound belong to two different Talkers!

Design notes:

It doesn't matter who wins; the victory condition is just to remind players to choose and pursue a vision for the story. In the end, it's more important to work together to craft a story that flows well. Thus the "yes, and" rule.

The intent of the game is to play around with the channels of information available, and to inexorably narrow those. As Talkers get discarded, the story's protagonist finds themselves more and more in darkness, unable to see, or hear, or act, until all players but one must passively receive the ending. A film analogy is "closing down the iris" (of the camera), thus the title.

I'm also hoping that this might simultaneously get multiple players immersed in one character. When no one can make eye contact, and one player says "You", everyone else experiences that as "Me".