

OBLIVIOUS

A GAME POEM

A game poem is a short and focused story game designed to be played in just fifteen minutes.

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For more of Chris' work, visit the Year of Living Free Wiki (<<http://www.yearoflivingfree.info>>).

UNDER AN OPEN LICENCE.

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?. PREMISE

A hideous, gargantuan thing is menacing the city. Drool sizzles in its maw.

...

Pow! It squashes the cafe, sending Moleskines like shrapnel through berets and scarfs.

...

Bang! It just breathed fire all over the Big Brother house.

...

Smash! It gobbled up every Human Resources department in the city.

...

No one has noticed yet.

...

Well, we're busy, okay?!

?. CHARACTERS

There are a few options for characters, or you can create your own. Every character has a problem. The monster is going to make your problem irrelevant, but you sure don't know that!

The Mayor: A pipe in the sewerage plant burst last week, and you can't find a plumber for love or money. The river's starting to look dirty, and you only moved in to your river-front house last week!

A Shiftworker: Three more hours for the shift and there's nothing to watch on TV. Just static. Also, the rotor or chute or flux or something is a bit bunged up, but it'll last for three hours. Definitely.

The Priest: You've never been really convinced that God exists. I mean, *something*, yeah, but tomorrow's sermon will need to be a bit more substantial than that.

A Schoolkid: So, there's this boy in Maths, right? And he's really cute. Uber cute. Only you may have been distracted by his uber-cuteness in your last test, and failed. Mum's gonna kick your arse.

?. STARTING OFF

Draw a square, and divide that into four. Each section is the part of the city currently occupied by a character. There's three buildings or public spaces in each section – parks, hospitals, thousand-year-old oaks, houses, a statue of a Roman god doing something disgusting to a cow, office blocks, supermarkets, post offices, a fountain with a Greek god doing something disgusting to a swan, universities, schools, a health-food store and so on.

In the centre, part of all four sections, is the most important part of town. You're all going to end up here in the end, so you better decide on something awesome for here. Lazy Joe's Fishmonger, if nothing better comes to mind.

Decide which section the monster starts in.

?. PLAYING IT OUT

If the monster's in your section, first describe how it comes dangerously close to killing you without you noticing. Its footstep misses you by inches and you're skimming through a book. It breathes its icy breath over you, but you wore thermal underpants. It throws a car at you, but you looked both ways before crossing. It tried to bite you, but wearing a fake nose so you just figured it was one of the old folks escaped from the nursing home again.

Then, explain at length to the other players how pressing, troublesome and difficult your current crisis is, and some vague attempt you're making to resolve it.

Then, flip a coin.

Heads: Nice! Unbeknownst to you, the monster has moved towards resolving your problem in some way. Maybe it woke up a slumbering plumber or its primal scream rearranged the mathematical laws of the cosmos. Oh, it also destroyed a building.

Tails: Bummer! Unbeknownst to you, the monster has exacerbated your problem in some way. Maybe it pooped on the sewerage plant or it squashed the person who would replace you on your shift. Oh, it also destroyed a building.

Each player may then flip a coin. Heads, the monster moves one sector clockwise and tails, the monster moves one sector counter-clockwise.

Repeat!

?. FINISHING IT UP

Eventually, all three buildings in one sector are destroyed. Whichever character is in that section describes how the monster has resolved his or her problem for good. This description is positive if the person has flipped more heads than tails, and negative if the person has flipped more tails than heads.

For example, the monster sat on the sewerage treatment plant. The monster ate your parents (that's a negative resolution, by the way).

Congratulations, you no longer have a care in the world. You take a much needed trip to the centre of town.

The other characters also travel to the centre of town to drown their sorrows or distract them from their predicament.

Once you all arrive, you notice the monster. Goodness gracious you!

The monster eats you.