

## Death's Door Demo kit

Includes:

This document  
demo script  
.pdf of the sample characters and filled out Antagonist sheet

You will need:

- A hat. Preferably something with some shape to it that is easy to carry upside down and can sit nicely on a table.
- 15 6-sided dice
- several scraps of paper
- one copy of the antagonist sheet
- as many copies of the sample characters as you are planning to run demos
- 4 or 5 pens/pencils
- a handful of paper clips
- a Ziploc or similar style of bag; medium/sandwich sized.

### **Prep way ahead of time:**

Cut up the character sheets and group them into bundles of 4 (one of each character), and hold them together with a paper clip.

Hold the scraps of paper together with a paper clip as well.

Ideally, read and play the game. Less ideally, read the game and have a demo, or read the game and listen to the Sons of Kryos podcast demo.

Absolute worst, read the rest of this document to be able to get a rough feel for the overall structure of the game and be able to field most really general questions.

Read On Driving Conflict. Twice. Note that you've got to pack that "15 to 20 minutes" of opposition into about 5-10 during the demo. Read it again.

Read the demo script several times. Practice it out loud. Practice by running people through the demo. Once you've done it a few times, time yourself, and aim for 12-15 minutes. **Important: Be comfortable enough that you do not need the script with you at the table when you demo.**

### **Prep on the day of:**

Put everything into the ziploc bag except the hat, this document and the script; put the ziploc bag into the hat. Grab a couple copies of the game and put them into the hat, on top of the kit.

Have throat lozenges/cough candies/bottled water etc. handy. Nothing sucks more than running demos all day and your throat being too sore to play games at night.

**RELAX.** I, James Brown, have paid for my costs associated with this game, have turned a mild profit, and have changed lives through actual play of this game. You do not need to worry about selling the game; it won't affect my self esteem or what I feed my kids tomorrow. I want to increase exposure to the game and have it played and understood by more people, because I think it's about something really, really important, and is a good game to boot, but there's nothing riding on this. Do demos, have fun, and if you've sold some games at the end of the day, that's a bonus.

## Pitching and Selling before/outside the demo:

Walk around with the hat in your hand.

**SMILE.** Be friendly. Make eye contact. Listen and show honest interest in the other person. If they're looking for something else, direct them in a friendly way, and thank them. Say that if they have 15 minutes when they're done, you'd love to demo a game for them. That **RELAX** up there? Yeah, that. Relax and enjoy your time. People recognize and respond unconsciously to body language.

Pitches for the game:

(these ramp up from friendly and explanatory to pushy and hard sell. I almost always use the first, sometimes the second, the third only in extended conversation, or at the end of a demo, to tap someone all the way who's probably going to buy anyway, and have never had the balls to use either of the last two)

-Death's Door is a game where you take on the role of a perfectly ordinary person who wakes up one morning and **knows** they are going to die.

-What kind of games do you like? [help them to find their thing.] Now, can I be a total self-serving ass, and ask you to look at the game I'm here selling?

-Have you ever had a favorite character die that just bugged the hell out of you? Wouldn't you rather give them a proper send off?

-Does death make you uncomfortable? This game was written purposefully for you.

-Do you have some time to kill?

## Boundaries, Certainties and Strictures (abbreviated)

**Boundaries** are lines that don't get crossed. The default is for there to be none at all, but anything can be added. Like "no cancer – my dad died of cancer" or whatever.

**Certainties** are how Death's Door works.

Protagonists always have Death's Door, and no one else ever does.

Protagonists will die at the end of three sessions.

It doesn't matter how they die: they die because they are at Death's door.

**Strictures** are rules for how to keep the game focused properly.

No answers: Nothing will ever "solve" Death's Door. There's no cure, no fix, no answers.

You are the carrier: The Protagonist has Death's Door because there's a player controlling it. There is no "in game" logic to it. It would probably seem very unfair if these were actually people.

Death has no voice: Death is not personified. No Joe Black, no Endless, no Charon, nothing. Death is empty of imagery.

## The Here and Now (abbreviated)

The default setting for Death's Door is here and now. For me, this means North America, around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The phenomena of Death's Door fits into the world kind of like ESP, past lives and similar paranormal phenomena were viewed in the 80's. Some people swear by it, some people swear at it, and most people haven't really formed a strong opinion one way or the other. Everyone has heard of it, but no one can honestly claim to have definitive proof of it one way or the other. If you said you were at the Door, you would get a range of responses from sympathy to curiosity to disbelief to outright scorn, depending on who you were talking to – much like if you said you'd seen a ghost, or could read the future in a deck of cards.

## On Driving Conflict

The first rule of Antagonist Club: There are no easy conflicts.

The second rule of... well, you get the point. No goal in the game should ever be resolved in less than 15 or 20 minutes and without some degree of agonizing and soul-searching. The example of play shows this, and is worth looking at. "Write a will" – pretty easy, right? Get a kit, be of sound mind and body, decide who gets the CD collection and you're done. Well, have you ever had one of those days where, no matter what you try, something always trips you up? The phone rings at *\*exactly\** the same time as the oven timer dings. There's an accident 10 feet in front of you on the day you *\*can't\** be late for work. That's where the antagonist comes in. Drop landmines. Oh sure, disguise the landmine as the girlfriend, but make sure she's a landmine. If you bring her in, do it *because she will make writing the will harder*. That's the first golden rule of the antagonist: **make it harder**. Don't introduce anything that will help – the protagonist will do that on their own – your job is to be the bad guy.

That being said, the flip side of the antagonist's role is to be reasonable. It's OK for the girlfriend to be completely off her nut as long as you're keeping your perspective. Never prevent an action, just complicate it. Examples of OK are Action: "I get a will kit at City Hall." Complication: "It's Saturday, they're closed." The protagonist still has a choice – wait until Monday or look somewhere else. Another example of OK: "I tell my girlfriend I have The Door." Complication: She thinks you're being an ass, to get sympathy." An example of not OK: "I tell my girlfriend I have The Door." Complication: She's not home. She's in a coma at the hospital." The second golden rule of the antagonist: **don't make it impossible**.

The third golden rule, because these things come in threes don'tcha know, is **life gets in the way**. As with the example of play and the examples above, it's never the protagonist's impending doom that causes the problem, it's the ordinary and the day-to-day. To put it another way, your role as the antagonist is not to play death; your role is to play *life*. Crazy, eh?