

TEN CANDLES

A ROLEPLAYING GAME OF TRAGIC HORROR



STEPHEN DEWEY

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**A STORYTELLING GAME
OF TRAGIC HORROR**

BY STEPHEN DEWEY

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Published by Cavalry Games

www.cavalrygames.com

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First Edition

Safety Disclaimer: Ten Candles suggests the use of candles as part of your gaming experience. The use of candles and fire is dangerous and can cause injury, property damage, and death. Please exercise extreme caution if you choose to use candles in your game. In no event shall Cavalry Games and its employees be liable for any liability, loss, injury, or risk (including, without limitation, incidental and consequential damages, personal injury, or wrongful death) which is incurred or suffered as a direct or indirect result of the use of any of the material, advice, guidance, rules, or suggestions of this game.

Please play responsibly. Fire bad.

Thanks to Lynne Vaz for
never letting this die.

Thanks to Eben Lowe for
opening my eyes to what gaming can be.

Thanks to my supporters
for making Ten Candles a reality.



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These things are true.
The world is dark.
And we are alive.

THAT'S THE END OF THINGS

*It seems strange to have to lie,
About a world so bright.
And tell instead a made-up story,
From the world of night.*
– Keep It Dark, Genesis

I don't know if anyone's out there. I don't know if anyone's listening. I don't even know if anyone's left. I guess I'll just talk for a while and leave this recording somewhere. Maybe I'll put a note with it. Maybe I'll just listen to it a few times. It'll be good to hear a voice. Even if it's my own.

God.

My name is Gene. My parents named me after Genesis – the prologue, not the band. I'm nobody. I'm nothing special. I'm a part-time librarian, part-time pot-head. I go to church on Sundays. I tell girls I love whatever book they're reading, even if I've never read it, because I am utterly incapable of starting a conversation any other way.

And now I'm being hunted.

It's been ten days since the night came. It happened while we slept. I'm sure there were hectic phone calls between government officials and professional stargazers that night, but the rest of us had no idea. That is, until the sun didn't rise. There was just... nothing. No stars. No moon. No sun. Just darkness. Like the big old universe had thrown a

blanket over us. All tucked in and ready for bed.

Turns out the blanket theory wasn't entirely wrong. Something was out there. Something that blocked out the sky. Blocked out the satellites. It's weird, you never really think about how much we rely on little machines floating around our planet until they're gone.

It's been a quiet sort of apocalypse.

But you know the human race. Apart from the riots, the rest of us were pretty willing to get along with our lives. All of the "very important people" were on the radios telling us the sun hadn't gone out. Just some "extraplanetary interference" is what they called it. Like it was a temporary thing. I bought it. Wouldn't you? Not a lot of options to the contrary. Sunscreen went on sale. I went in to work last Thursday.

And then, They came. I don't really know what They are. I don't think anyone does. Sam used to joke; she'd say "If only They were zombies. I had a plan for zombies." Maybe They are. Or aliens. Oh, the theories I've heard. The theories I've *made*. Whatever They are, the only fact that mattered became clear real fast. They hated one thing more than us. Just one.

The light.

That's what they said anyways. The "very important people". Over and over. Stay in the light.

Stay in the light.

Speaking of theories, I can't help but wonder if They're just playing with us. I can't help but wonder if the whole darkness thing was just some plan. Some seriously twisted and genius plan to drive every terrified human to light up the world.

Maybe They wanted the power grids to overload. Maybe They knew it would cause widespread blackouts. Maybe They were pretending. Maybe the light doesn't hurt Them at all. Maybe They just wanted to hunt us in the dark. Maybe... maybe They just wanted us to die afraid.

I mean, it's an elegant way for the world to end, I suppose. No meteors or melting ice caps. No warning. Nothing unnecessary. Just a flip of some cosmic switch, and the lights go out. It's like something reached into our collective subconscious and pulled out the most basic of terrors. That simple dread. Fear of the dark. I don't care what they tell you, you never outgrow it. You just forget about it for a while. Until it's all you know. Until those monsters under your bed come looking for you. Until the lights above your head start to flicker.

Speaking of which, I need to keep moving. If you're listening to this, well, I don't really know what else to say. If you were hoping this recording would hold some answers, I'm sorry to say that I don't have any to give. The world is dark, and I am alive. That's all I know. That's the end of things.

That's all there is.

HERE THERE IS LIGHT

Read on survivors, there are no secrets here.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This is a game about telling a story. The story that you will tell is not a kind one, and far from a happy one. It is the sort of story that has sharp edges. The kind that lingers long after it's gone, nesting in nightmares and drifting on every shadow. The kind that no one wants to tell. The kind that needs to be told.

This is a story is about what happens in the dark. This is a story about survivors trying to light up their little corner of the world and do something meaningful within it in the few hours they have left. This is a story about desperation. It is a story about people like you and I fighting back against the darkness, only to inevitably and inescapably be consumed by it.

Ten Candles is a tragic horror time-based cooperative storytelling game through which you will tell the story of a dark world and those who fall victim to it. It is best played with 3-6 players, and takes about 2-3 hours.

TRAGIC HORROR: The standard setting for Ten Candles is in the middle of a sunless apocalypse. The sky has darkened and turned against you. Satellites have gone quiet, leaving you without solar power, cell phones, internet, GPS, and many other luxuries that the world has grown accustomed to. Power grids have failed on a global scale against the demand and the world has been left in darkness. And now, They have come. It is uncertain what They are, but They're out there in the dark, and They're coming for you.

Ten Candles is “tragic horror” rather than “survival horror”, despite the similarities in feel and theme, for one important reason: in a survival horror game there is a chance that you might make it through. A hope that you might beat the odds and win. Ten Candles is not a game you can “win”. It’s not about whether the characters fall to the darkness or emerge as survivors. There are no survivors. Not here. Everyone will die in the final scene, without question or quarrel. Instead it provides the stage upon which you will act out the final hours in the lives of your characters who are destined to die. You will see them pushed to the very brink of terror, madness, and sorrow. It is a game about loss, but it is also a game about hope. Through it all you must remember this:

THOUGH YOU KNOW YOUR CHARACTERS WILL DIE,
YOU MUST HAVE HOPE THAT THEY WILL SURVIVE.

That hope will live on, even in the end. But hope can be lost when those who guard it are pushed to the edge. It is in those moments that the darkness *around* becomes the darkness *within*, and that is when They have truly won.

ROLES: Most of the players in Ten Candles will take on the role of a character in the narrative. As a player, your job will be to create one of these survivors and roleplay them as truthfully and faithfully as you can, saying what they say and deciding what they do. You are tasked with caring about your character and hoping they will be successful in their endeavors. You will try to overcome conflicts on their behalf and you will root for them every step of the way. However, you are also tasked with having a hand in telling this tragic and dark story. While you must cheer your character on, you must also introduce conflict,

failure, and fear. You must build your character up *and* be ready to challenge them, hurt them, harrow them, and in time, knock them down.



One player will be the gamemaster, or GM. The GM will handle the majority of the story's narration, control Them, describe the environment, call for conflicts, and act as any additional characters that emerge throughout the story. If you want to run your own game of Ten Candles, make sure to read through this whole rulebook beforehand.

TIME-BASED: Ten Candles uses a time mechanic to progress gameplay. Ten tealight candles provide the light (preferably, the only light) the game is played by. During play, every failed conflict darkens a candle and advances the story on to the next scene, bringing the game one step closer to its fatal conclusion. When only one candle is left lit, the final scene begins and one by one the characters will perish. Even if the players do not fail a single conflict, in time the candles will darken on their own. The end always comes, one way or another.

COOPERATIVE STORYTELLING GAME: Ten Candles is a tabletop roleplaying game that focuses around shared narrative control. Rather than one player or the GM having complete control of the story, everyone will share the mantle of storyteller and contribute to the narrative. Even though the GM will act as the narrator while the players seek salvation for their characters, everyone has an equal hand in telling this dark story.

Good luck.

How You Must Prepare

You will need the following items to play: ten tealight candles with something to light them, a pack of index cards, some black markers, ten six-sided dice of one color, a handful of six-sided dice (one per player) of another color, a fireproof bowl, and a voice recorder. Most smartphones have a built-in voice recorder application, though any digital voice recorder will work.

Ten Candles is played around a table in the dark. Ideally, the *only* light you will play by are the tealight candles. The darker you can make your play area, the better. Place the bowl in the center of the table and the candles in a circle around it. Give five index cards and a marker to each player. The GM will need an index card as well. Finally, put the ten dice of one color where the players can reach, and set aside the remaining dice for now.



Before we go any further I want to acquaint you with some of the symbols I'll be using to organize this rulebook. If you see this candle it denotes some helpful examples, game tips, or clarifications.



This symbol, on the other hand, will mark a gameplay example. Here you'll be able to see a sample of how some concepts and components function or could be explained when you're actually sitting down to play a game of Ten Candles with your friends.

WHAT IS TO COME

While this rulebook contains all of the rules needed to play Ten Candles, this section contains a brief introduction and overview to some of the core components of the game.

Ten Candles is played over a series of scenes with a maximum of ten scenes comprising your story. Whenever a candle is darkened for *any* reason, the current scene ends and a new scene begins. Throughout the game you will be forced to darken candles. You may choose to do so for a small benefit, or candles might be darkened accidentally. Regardless, once darkened, **candles may never be relit.**

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: While we will discuss the conflict resolution system in more detail later (see *That Which Stands Against*, page 34) you should be aware of a brief overview before diving into the character creation section coming up. Here is the quick version: The players have a communal pool of dice (the ten like-colored dice) which they will roll to resolve conflicts (whenever a character attempts an action that has an unclear outcome). If any of the dice, even just one, land on ☰ the conflict is successful. However, all of the dice which land on ☱ are lost for the remainder of the scene. If none of the dice land on ☰ the conflict fails and a candle is darkened, advancing play to the next scene. Between scenes this communal pool of dice will refill, but grow smaller in size. The GM will be rolling dice as well, but not in opposition or to try and counter a character's action. Instead, the GM will be rolling to try and win narrative control over the outcome

of the conflict, with whoever rolled the most 's getting to narrate the conflict's resolution.

DARKENING CANDLES: A candle must be darkened if a player fails a conflict roll. A player may also choose to darken a candle after a successful conflict roll in which they would lose narration rights in order to seize narrative control from the GM (see *Narration Rights*, page 35). When only one candle remains lit, the game enters The Last Stand, but this is the GM's domain, and shall be left to later discussions of darkness.

CHANGING SCENES: Any time a candle darkens and a new scene begins, two events occur. The first is that everyone will collectively speak new truths through the establishing truths phase (see *That Which Is True*, page 45). The second is that the communal pool of player dice refills up to the number of currently lit candles.

Through the establishing truths phase of play you will have the opportunity to move the action forward, reach destinations, find other survivors, acquire much needed equipment, or otherwise simply move the narrative along.

MOVING FORWARD: During each scene the GM will serve as storyteller and mediator. They will set the scene, establish the environment, introduce dangers, provoke challenges, and instigate conflicts. Players will assume the role of their characters, gather supplies, seek shelter, live Moments, and generally try to stay alive and as far away from the darkness as possible. Together, a story will be told.

WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF

Characters are composed of Traits, a Moment, and a Brink – the aspects which define them and provide a foundation for their journey to come. These characteristics will be written on index cards for reference and used throughout the game. They represent who the characters are, where they are going, and what they are capable of.

TRAITS: Traits describe who your character is. While these commonly denote personality traits, they can also define physical characteristics, skills, or knowledge a character has. Every character has a positive Trait or *virtue* and a negative Trait or *vice*.

Traits can be burned in order to reroll all dice which come up □ in a conflict - potentially salvaging a failed roll, or in order to lose fewer dice on a successful roll.

MOMENT: Every Moment details an event that will happen over the course of your game session. Each character has their own Moment in which they will have a chance to find *hope* in the darkness of the world. Hope is available for all who seek it, and while some may cling to it until their final breath, others may lose sight of it in the dark, and some may never find it at all.

If a Moment is lived successfully, you gain a hope die. Hope dice are used when you make conflict rolls, and succeed on a ▢ or □.

BRINK: Brinks are hidden Traits which only enter play once

characters become exhausted and pushed to the limit. They are dark, dangerous, and deadly Traits which represent the extreme means and measures that your character is capable of succumbing to when pushed to the brink.

Brinks may be embraced to reroll your entire die pool. If the result is a success you keep your Brink. If not, the Brink is burned, a candle is darkened, and hope is lost.

Your Brink cannot be called upon until your Moment has passed, and all of your Traits are gone. Only when everything else has literally burned away, lost to the ashes like a candle burning down inch by inch, will your character truly discover who they are, and what darkness they are capable of.



BURNING: Traits, Moments, and Brinks are temporary things. Once you use a Trait, live a Moment, or are consumed by your Brink, they are lost to you for the remainder of the game, or “burned”. “Burning” a Trait, Moment, or Brink is not just a thematic way to describe its loss, but a literal instruction. In order to expend them, you must burn them. Set the appropriate index card ablaze on one of the tea light candles and place it in the fireproof bowl to watch it burn away safely. In the meantime, try to find some comfort in the short flare of light. Though you may be burning away piece by piece, perhaps you can at least find some comfort there, in a momentary respite from the shadows. Probably not, but perhaps.

How You Are Formed

Character creation is a seven step process. As you work through it, begin lighting the candles. Once they are lit, candles may no longer be touched under any circumstances.

STEP ONE: WRITE TRAITS

Light three candles at this time.

The first step in character creation is for the group to collectively determine Traits. Traits are one-word descriptive adjectives that define who a character is.

Every character has two Traits: a virtue and a vice. Virtues represent a Trait which a character is proud of, or that is otherwise helpful and positive. *Virtues should solve more problems than they create.* Vices represent a Trait which the character is ashamed of, an addiction, something they deal with, or something they fight against. *Vices should create more problems than they solve.*

Each player should have a number of index cards. On one of these cards, each player (not the GM) will write a virtue, and on another they will write a vice. Once these have all been written, players will pass the virtue they've written to the player sitting on their right, and then pass the vice they've written to the player sitting on their left. In this manner, each player will receive both a virtue and a vice that will be the Traits for their character.

HOW TO WRITE A TRAIT: Keep each Trait to a single word, preferably a descriptive adjective. Come up with the words, not the meaning behind them. Traits can and should be vague, as this will allow more flexibility of use during play.



EXAMPLES OF VIRTUES: *Lucky, Resourceful, Watchful, Merciful, Daring, Committed, Handsome, Hardy, Subtle, Streetwise, Strong.*

EXAMPLES OF VICES: *Afraid, Greedy, Regretful, Addicted, Naive, Controlling, Worrisome, Compulsive, Claustrophobic, Rash.*

The Traits you choose define not only the group of characters you'll be playing, but also the tone your game will take. Make sure to choose Traits that will support your style of story. Traits like "Funny" or "Awkward" tell a vastly different story than "Paranoid" or "Terrified".

Traits can also be used as a vehicle to dramatically define your characters. Consider the impact of vices like "Asthmatic", "Blind", or "Traitorous". Traits have the potential of strongly influencing who a character will become throughout the character creation process.

USING TRAITS: After you roll to resolve a conflict, if one of your Traits is active, you may choose to burn it in order to reroll all dice that landed on \square . If a Trait is burned to do this, it must be brought into the resulting conflict narration in some significant way. For example, you might describe a virtue assisting your character in overcoming a challenge, while a vice might be triggered as a result of it, bringing on a whole new set of problems to deal with. You cannot burn both your virtue and vice in the same scene.

Traits define your character. Even if they are not active and cannot be burned for their benefit, or have already been used, they should still impact your character's personality and can continue to be incorporated into roleplay.



Dave is running a game for Karen, Tobin, and Justin. They're starting character creation, and Dave has just lit the first three candles.

Dave: Okay, the first step here is for us to create Traits. Everyone take two of your index cards. On one of them, go ahead and write "virtue" up in one of the corners, and on the other you can write "vice". On each of these you're going to write a Trait, a one word descriptor for a character. The virtues should be positive, like "generous" or "brave", something that will fix problems, rather than create them. The vice should be the opposite, something negative, or that the character struggles against. Don't worry about the module we'll be running tonight quite yet, I'll go over the background for tonight's session in just a little bit. For now we're just creating the basic Traits for our characters.

Karen: I was thinking about having a doctor on the team. Could I write "doctor" as a virtue?

Tobin: That's probably for the best because I definitely plan on getting injured. I was thinking about making a soldier, something like "sharpshooter" as my virtue.

Dave: Those would both be fine Traits, however you can make them even more vague if you want to. For example, instead of "doctor" you could put "caring", "intelligent", or "studied". Instead of "sharpshooter", you could put "steady", or "unstoppable". Even "fighter" gives a little more flexibility. You

can be specific, but it might box someone into a corner later on.

Justin: I've got my virtue, I went for "charismatic." The vice is a little trickier though. I was thinking of playing an alcoholic, so would I just write "alcoholic"?

Dave: You could! Vices can be a little more specific. They can be negative personality Traits, or real issues the character struggles against. An addiction, illness, or injury. Something they fight with, or that causes them problems.

Karen: What about something a little more dramatic for a vice, like "lonely" or "lost".

Dave: Both doable! I like "lost" because it could go a lot of different ways during the game. But anything can work that makes things difficult for the character or would show some weakness to the others. If it winds up making more problems for the group, all the better! Alright, what do we have?

Tobin: "Steady" and "regretful".

Karen: "Caring" and "lost".

Justin: "Charismatic" and "alcoholic".

Dave: Sounds great! Now I hope you weren't too attached to those. Everyone pass your virtue to your right and your vice to your left. These will be your Traits for the game.

Tobin gets "caring" and "alcoholic". **Justin** gets "steady" and "lost". **Karen** gets "charismatic" and "regretful".

STEP TWO: INTRODUCE MODULE

Once all of the players have their Traits, the GM should read the session *module*. The module establishes the setting and storyline for the session, as well as possible goals that can be accomplished or destinations that can be reached. The module reads a bit like a mission briefing and a large number of sample modules can be found in the appendix.



Dave: You all know the basics. Ten days ago the world went dark. Five days ago They came. Here's your module for tonight: Lights at the Lake.

The fallout shelter was only meant to be temporary. The high school's gymnasium was just a meeting place. Some basic supplies, cots, and company, while waiting for rescue. The generator was old, as was the company, and it wasn't long before they both started to go. Folks started to vanish straight out of the hallways whenever the lights would flicker for too long. Of the eighty-odd people that once gathered here, now only a few of you remain, huddled close on cots as the lights above you flicker dangerously low. Perhaps you shouldn't have stayed this long, but where would you have gone? In the hills of Pennsylvania the nearest town is an hour's drive, assuming you could even find a car. Some people say there's light north of Lake Erie for those who can get to it, but that's just a rumor. What isn't a rumor is that the generator is in its final throes of sanctuary. Soon enough you'll all be in the dark. No point to stay and fight, but there aren't too many places to run and hide either. Gathering supplies and hitting the road might be your best bet. You'll at least need to find some new batteries for the radio. It's up to you, but the time has come to move.

STEP THREE: CREATE CONCEPTS

Once the module has been introduced, the players should take a few minutes to work out a basic concept for their characters, jot the information down on another index card, and then introduce them to the group. At minimum, you should try to solidify three things:

1. **NAME:** What's their name or what are they called?
2. **LOOK:** What do they look like at a quick glance?
3. **CONCEPT:** In a few words, who are they? What are they?

HOW TO WRITE A CONCEPT: Concepts are really meant to be a snapshot. No need to get into too much detail. "Andrew Litwell, mid 40's, salt and pepper hair with a long black coat, retired lawyer" or "William 'Billy' Cale, 9 year old with a bright face and dark eyes, just a kid" are a couple examples of working concepts.



Dave: Now that you know a little more about what our story is going to entail and what Traits your characters have, go ahead and write down a quick character concept on another one of your index cards. Give me a name, a couple physical descriptors, and a quick phrase about who they are. You don't have to get into too much detail.

Tobin: Even though I didn't get the Traits I thought I was going to, can I still make a soldier character? I got Alcoholic and Caring.

Dave: Absolutely! As long as you can work in their Traits, you can make any kind of character you want.

Karen: Well if you want your wounds patched up, you'll have to do it yourself. With Charismatic and Regretful I thought it might be fun to make a police officer instead. Maybe someone who lost a lot of their unit when They first showed up. Do I have to just make a normal officer, or could I have them be the captain?

Dave: It's completely up to you. There aren't any restrictions on what power your concept inherently carries or anything like that. You'll still have to roll for conflicts just like everyone else.

Justin: Here's a crazy idea. So, I got Steady and Lost as my Traits. Could I play a dog? Like an honest to goodness hound dog who's quite literally lost?

Dave: Not only can you, but there's an entire module in the game book where everyone plays dogs. You can play a nonspeaking character and be just as involved with the game. You just wouldn't really be able to communicate with the other characters, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Justin: Maybe not for this game, but that's pretty cool nonetheless.

Tobin has decided to play Luke Singer, a shaky-handed medic-in-training for the U.S. Army Reserve. Karen is playing Officer Piper, a local police sergeant who lost a lot of good men when They first showed up. Justin has chosen to play Abercrombie Ward, a mysterious drifter with a dark past.

STEP FOUR: PLAN MOMENTS

Light three candles at this time.

The next step in character creation is for every player to

determine what their character's Moment will be.

Moments detail a personal scene or event that will be played out for each character at some point during the session. Significantly, in living this Moment a character will have the opportunity to find *hope*. You might find this hope in an act of heroism, in solving a mystery about Them or the sunless sky, in completing a goal, in reaching an area of safe haven, or in some other accomplishment. To establish Moments, each player should take another index card and write down "I will find hope..." at the top. Then fill in the rest with the Moment for your character.

HOW TO WRITE A MOMENT: Moments should encapsulate an event that would be reasonable to achieve, and kept succinct and clear to provide strong direction to fold them into the narrative. They can relate to a goal your character has, or an experience that you as the player would like your character to go through. Moments should be personal to your character. Think of it as a scene where your character will take the spotlight. Consider what would be important and impactful to them. Moments should have the power to restore the character's hope in the world, often by reaching a place, finding something, uncovering a truth, or seeking a minute of rest from the darkness. However, all Moments should also have the potential for failure.



- EXAMPLES OF MOMENTS: "I will find hope..."*
- "...in a moment of prayer at a quiet church."*
 - "...when one of Them lies dead at my feet."*
 - "...when the truth of the sky is revealed to me."*
 - "...when I find my sister, dead or alive."*
 - "...in the contents of my stash, back home."*
 - "...when the fallout shelter's door closes."*

During play, once a character's Moment becomes active it may then be "lived". At this point players should start looking for a chance to weave it into the story. It is up to everyone to work together in order to make Moments happen, and to make them evocative, intense, and most importantly, *hopeful*.

HOPE: When a character is ready to live their Moment, a conflict roll is required. If the roll is successful, hope is inspired. You have gained a respite of peaceful prayer, one of Them falls to a storm of bullets, or the fallout shelter's door swings shut behind you safely. If the roll is unsuccessful, hope is lost. Your respite of prayer is interrupted, with ease They stand up to a hail of gunfire, or the door to the fallout shelter is shut tight, but you're still on the outside. These are only examples, but regardless of your Moment there is always a chance it may fall to pieces.

Once the Moment is resolved, either successfully or unsuccessfully, burn your Moment.

If hope is *lost*, you must immediately darken a candle (as with any failed conflict). Play proceeds to the next scene.

If hope is *inspired*, the player is awarded with a *hope die* (one of the additional six-sided dice) and the scene continues.

Hope dice are specific to each player and may be rolled in addition to the communal die pool whenever that player rolls to overcome a conflict. Unlike normal dice which only succeed on a roll of ☀, hope dice succeed on a roll of ☀ or ☀. In addition, hope dice are not lost if they land on a ☐. They can only be lost through a failed Brink reroll.

STEP FIVE: DISCOVER BRINKS

Light three candles at this time.

At this point, everyone should have a good idea of the characters at the table. Who they are, why they're there, what's going on, and maybe even the Traits and future hopeful Moments of your fellow survivors. For the next piece of character creation, every player (as well as the GM) should have one last index card. On these cards, you will create your Brinks.

Writing a Brink is much like writing a Trait, however instead of describing who a character *is*, Brinks describe what a character *is capable of*. Rather than representing the character as they are, Brinks are hidden Traits which show what the character may become when pushed to the edge of fear, hopelessness, and desperation. When everything else has burned away, a character's Brink is their last dark refuge. Whether a character will embrace their Brink, or eschew its temptations and refuse to give up hope is each player's decision to make. But in the shadows of the apocalypse even the strong may give in to the darkness before inevitably realizing what they have become, and more importantly, what they have sacrificed.

The reality of a Brink should be a dangerous thing. It need not be rooted in violence in order to be dangerous, especially with Them on the hunt. Brinks are meant to demonstrate that a character has broken, and while Brinks may create their own plethora of problems when embraced, the biggest concern should be amongst the survivors. Brinks should truly call a character's humanity,

sanity, reliability, or trustworthiness into question. For this reason, regardless of what a Brink is, they must be kept a secret until used. Otherwise, your fellow survivors might distrust you from the start. Of course that would work out much better if one of them didn't already know about it...

To create Brinks everyone should take their final index card and write the words “I’ve seen you...” on the top. Just as with the Traits, you don’t get to choose your own Brink. Instead, everyone will choose the Brink for the player sitting on their left.

Not only will you know the Brink for your character, but you will also know the Brink for the player sitting next to you (since you’re writing it for them), and by extension, *your character will also know*. In this manner, each character has seen what another character is capable of. Perhaps it was before the world went dark, or even just a few days ago. Either way, you’ve seen that character pushed to the edge. Maybe you’ll warn the other survivors. Perhaps you’ll confront them directly. Or you may just wait to see how it all plays out. Regardless, each character knows the dark truth about one of their companions, for good or ill.

HOW TO WRITE A BRINK: Brinks should be kept to a single word or short descriptive phrase. Just as with Traits, don’t worry about making them too specific. The more situations they can apply to, the better for the player when it comes time to build them into the story. When writing a Brink, it is also suggested that you write a short explanation on the card outlining when or where your character saw the Brink embodied by your neighbor. Or feel free to pull them aside to talk about it. Work it out, make it dangerous, and make it fun.



EXAMPLES OF BRINKS: “I have seen you...”

*Kill, Abandon, Rage, Lie, Hide, Cry, Sacrifice,
Betray, Freeze, Promise, Collapse, Fight, Run*

*I have seen you destroy what you care about most.
I saw you on trial, before the world went dark.
Three dead. Your family. You monster.*

I have seen you break down. While we were on the run, you lost it over this dead dog. You cried for hours. I almost left you behind.

I have seen you worship Them. You didn't see me, but I saw you. Whispering prayers for Them to spare your life. I saw Them give you something, but couldn't make out what it was.

During this process, two of the players will find themselves in interesting positions, because the GM is also included in writing Brinks. The player sitting to the left of the GM has the secret of their Brink safe from the other players because it is not another character who has seen what they're capable of, but *Them*. The GM will write the Brink for this player, framing it instead as “They have seen you...”. They have seen this character pushed to the edge, and They want to push them right back there again.

The player sitting to the right of the GM has a unique responsibility. It is this player who writes the Brink for *Them*, framed as “I have seen *Them*...” and determining through it what *They* are capable of. Through writing this Brink, the player in question holds a lot of power to establish the abilities or even identity of *Them*. Because of this, the antagonists you face in each session of Ten

Candles will drastically vary, based on whatever Brink is established for them each time you play.



EXAMPLES OF THEM BRINKS: *"I have seen Them..."*

- "... move like shadows."*
- "... shapeshift in front of me."*
- "... howl at the pale moon."*
- "... consume the dead."*
- "... possess the living."*
- "... and I know this is all an experiment."*
- "... and They serve the witch of the woods."*
- "... and They are the gods made manifest."*

There are basically no restrictions when establishing the Brink for Them, and you can be as specific or vague as you want to be. Since every single game of Ten Candles has a different style of antagonist, any number of horror tropes can be embraced. They can be robots, aliens, zombies, demons, shapeshifters, nightmares, faeries, ghosts, hive-minded hounds, or burrowing insects. Maybe They serve a mysterious lady in red, or gain the knowledge of anyone They kill. Perhaps They were created by man, or some ancient and elder god. They may be darkness incarnate, or flesh and blood. They may die, or They may be death itself. They may speak in lies and whispers, or lay traps and illusions of light and safety. Maybe They hunger. Maybe They hate. Maybe They remember.

There is only one rule.

Brinks for Them can only establish a strength, power, or identity. It can never establish a weakness. They only have one weakness. The light.

EMBRACING BRINKS: After rolling to resolve a conflict, if your Brink is active, you may choose to embrace it. This allows you to reroll your entire die pool. When a Brink is embraced the full pool of dice must be rerolled, even dice that had landed on $\bullet\bullet$. Once the reroll is resolved, if it was successful (at least one die landed on $\bullet\bullet$, or in the case of a Hope die $\bullet\bullet$ or $\bullet\bullet\bullet$), the conflict is successful. You lose all \bullet dice and proceed with narration as normal. Unlike Traits, with a successful Brink reroll, you get to keep the Brink, and may continue to embrace it in future conflicts. You may even embrace your Brink again in the same scene.

If a Brink is embraced and the reroll fails (no dice land on $\bullet\bullet$, or in the case of a Hope die $\bullet\bullet$ or $\bullet\bullet\bullet$), you have been consumed by your Brink. You must immediately darken a candle, lose your hope dice (if you have any), and burn your Brink. This is the only way hope dice may be lost.

Like with Traits, Brinks need not be directly tied to overcoming an encounter in order to be used, they just need to be tied into the outcome narration.



Dave: Okay, now everyone can take their last index card and we'll create our Brinks. Tobin, you'll be creating Justin's brink. Justin, you'll be making Karen's. Karen you get to determine what They are capable of, while I get to decide what They've seen Tobin do. Feel free to talk through it, but the actual Brink should be kept secret until it is revealed later in the game.

Tobin: How big can we go with these? Can we write Brinks in such a way that we establish something as being true about the world? For example, could I write Justin's brink as 'I've seen you

throw the world into darkness. I know this was your fault?

Dave: There aren't any real restrictions, but Brinks have the potential to be used more than once, so you shouldn't have it be too specific to one event. Just like with Traits, a little more flexibility is for the better. For example, you could write 'I've seen you play God.' And then, as a description on the card you could write 'I know that you're a scientist. I think you're behind all of this.' That way you sort of leave it open-ended, and Justin could use the Brink whenever they were doing some mad science. That being said, you can totally use Brinks to establish things as being true. For example, 'I've seen you fire indiscriminately into crowds just to kill one of Them with that gun you keep hidden.' Now you have established that they have a gun that no one knows about. Except for you of course.

Karen: My job is to write the Brink for Them. Am I restricted to just explaining a power I've seen them use, or can I fully define who They are? I've got a fun idea.

Dave: Again, there aren't any real restrictions. As long as you don't define a weakness for Them, you can use the Brink to define as much or as little as you want. If you have a good idea, feel free to write it down. 'I've seen Them... teleport' is just as valid a Brink as 'I've seen Them... They are government scientists and we are Their test subjects.'

Karen: If my character knows all this about Them what's to stop her from sharing it with the survivors as soon as we start?

Dave: Nothing! Feel free, if you trust them that is. In all seriousness though that information is yours to share. Just remember that we're not in this to win as much as we are to tell a really engaging story. If it makes sense in the story for Officer

Piper to brief everyone then go for it. Alternately, you can always wait for a more dramatic moment in the narrative. It's up to you.

Karen: Interesting. So, how familiar are you with Slavic folklore?

STEP SIX: ARRANGE STACKS

At this point you should have a hidden Brink, a concept, a Moment, and two Traits written on index cards in front of you. The GM should have a single Brink. Over the course of the game, you will slowly work through these cards one by one, each of them burning away in time.

The next step is to arrange these cards into stacks. Set the concept card aside, as that's just for your reference, and stack the rest of your cards in whatever order you want. Within the group, all Brinks should be on the bottom, and ideally not more than one Moment should be on top.

During play, only the top card of each stack is active. You may not burn a Trait until it is active, even if it relates to the scene at hand (though you may incorporate the Traits into your roleplay of the character). Likewise, you may not live your Moment until it is active (though you may begin steering the narrative towards it). Brinks are always placed face-down at the bottom of each player's stack. Brinks can only be embraced after everything has burned away, when we see what you are truly capable of.

While you may hint at your Brink through roleplay, you should avoid succumbing to your Brink outright before it becomes active. After that, go crazy. Once stacks are built, they are locked and cannot be changed.

STEP SEVEN: INVENTORY SUPPLIES

Your character has whatever you've got in your pockets. Equipment beyond this can only be acquired through establishing truths, or conflicts to locate supplies.

Light the final candle now, and turn off the lights.

It begins.



HERE THERE IS SHADOW

Read on survivors, but tread softly.

How It BEGINS

Once the lights go out, the first scene of the game begins. Each game of Ten Candles plays through a module which is introduced during character creation, but may be reread and expanded upon by the GM as an opening at this time.

Once the scene has been set and before fully diving into the narrative, the survivors have one last task before them: To record a parting message for the world they will inevitably leave behind. For this recording, pass the digital voice recorder around the table allowing each player to leave one final message as their character.

For the recording, your character may leave any brief message they wish. They might call out to family members, foreshadow their Moments, request aid from anyone who might be listening, or simply say goodbye. Whatever the message, make sure it's recorded, and turn the recorder over to the GM when everyone has contributed.

Once the recording is complete, the first scene begins. Play continues onward, broken up by conflicts as needed, until the first candle is darkened. This will transition to the second scene, and so on until the game's conclusion.



Dave: Alright. Lights out, and we begin. The high school gymnasium where you've been keeping yourselves has begun to grow cold. There is a chill on the wind, the sort of chill that digs in deep, that settles down to stay awhile. The wind whips

through the dark school hallways, keening as it does so. Almost like some ethereal howl. Winter winds, despite the fact that it is mid-June. Perhaps the sun did go out after all... Regardless, the generator is dying, and you've got to move. But before you do, you decide to leave behind a recording. One last mark on the world. Just in case someone comes looking. Just in case you don't make it out of this.

Dave turns on the voice recorder and begins passing it around.

Tobin: "This is Private Singer, Luke Singer. I'm a medic with the U.S. Army and I am escorting a small group of survivors. We're heading to Lake Erie. Supplies and morale are low. There is a military base near there, Camp Perry. That's where we're headed. If you're hearing this, know that this city is abandoned. We were the last ones out. Keep moving."

Justin: "Name's Ward. Not much to say. I was just passing through when everything came crashing down. It's getting cold. Never liked the cold. Fly south, that's what my bones are telling me. But we're heading north now. I've got a bad feeling."

Karen: "Officer Piper, sergeant of the local police department. I don't really... know what to say. No, you know what? I do. We are here. We are here, and we are alive. I don't know what these things are out there, but a lot of good people are dead now because of Them. That ends now. We're going to fight back. And we're going to win."

Karen passes the recorder back to Dave who turns it off.

Dave: Perfect. Now, let's get started.

Tobin: "Ward, Piper, first things first, let's gather some supplies."

THAT WHICH STANDS AGAINST

As you play through a game of Ten Candles, your characters will come up against challenges that require skill, smarts, a steady hand, a stroke of inspiration, or just a bit of luck. They may kick down doors, round risky corners, or shine a light into the darkness, never entirely sure what they may find. In any situation where a character is attempting to overcome something that is complex, risky, or which simply has an unknown outcome, the GM may choose to call for a conflict roll.

Only one player (the “active player”) may roll for any given conflict, typically whoever suggests the course of action that prompts the conflict, or whoever’s character is performing the action (whoever is opening the door, driving the car, pulling the trigger, etc.). Some conflicts, such as searching for supplies, remembering detailed instructions, or fighting against Them, may be attempted multiple times by different characters for a variety of outcomes. Each attempt requires its own conflict roll.

To resolve conflicts, the active player will roll the communal pool of dice shared by all the players. This pool starts the game at ten six-sided dice, and will fluctuate in size as the game proceeds, gradually shrinking in size from scene to scene.

When you need to overcome a conflict, roll the communal pool of dice. If any dice land on ☀ the conflict is successful. If none of the dice land on ☀, the conflict has failed.

In the case of a successful roll, the players immediately lose all of the dice that landed on ☐ from the communal die pool (except hope dice, these can only be lost by a failed Brink reroll). These dice are set aside for the remainder of the scene.

In the case of a failed roll, a candle is darkened and the communal pool of dice is refilled, but only up to the number of now-lit candles for the new scene. The remaining dice are transferred to the GM's die pool.

Whenever a player makes a conflict roll, the GM also rolls the dice in their die pool, if they have any. This pool starts at zero six-sided dice, and will fluctuate in size as the game proceeds, gradually increasing in size from scene to scene.

The GM does not roll to succeed or fail at conflicts. Only the player can succeed or fail and only the players roll to overcome conflicts. Instead, the GM rolls to try and win narration rights over the conflict's outcome. Whoever rolls the most ☰'s wins narration rights and gets to narrate what the success or failure looks like.

NARRATION RIGHTS: When you win narration rights it means that the power is in your hands to describe what happens as a result of the conflict. For example, winning narration rights while kicking in a door would allow you to narrate what you find on the other side. If you were stabbing one of Them with a wooden stake, you would get to say what happened as a result. Keep the narration simple, reasonable, and interesting. Keep in mind, no one is playing to "win". You're playing to tell a good story.

When determining the winner of narration rights, ties

always break in favor of the GM, and the GM always narrates in the case of a failed Conflict.

SEIZING NARRATION: If a conflict is successful, but the GM rolls an equal number or more \blacksquare 's and therefore wins narration rights, the active player may choose to seize narration. In order to do this, they must darken a candle. This does not cause the conflict to fail. Instead it wins narration rights for the player and they may then narrate the outcome of the successful conflict. However, this does end the scene as darkened candles usually do.

HOPE DICE: If you have successfully lived a Moment, you earn a hope die which can be rolled as part of the communal pool of dice whenever you are rolling to overcome a conflict. Unlike normal dice which only succeed on a $\blacksquare\blacksquare$, hope dice count successes on a $\blacksquare\blacksquare$ or $\blacksquare\blacksquare\blacksquare$. Even if a hope die lands on \square , it is not lost. Hope dice can only be lost as a result of a failed Brink reroll. As a note, even though hope dice succeed on a $\blacksquare\blacksquare$ or a $\blacksquare\blacksquare\blacksquare$, only rolls of $\blacksquare\blacksquare\blacksquare$ count towards winning narration rights, just like normal dice.

DIRE CONFLICTS: The GM may label any conflict as a “dire conflict” if failure would result in lethal or ruinous consequences for the characters involved. For example, jumping out of the way of an attack or diving from a moving car before it plummets off of a cliff could both be considered dire conflicts. If the conflict roll is unsuccessful, as with all conflicts, a candle is darkened and the GM narrates the (likely severe) outcome.

Labeling a conflict as “dire” indicates that the stakes are much higher and that a failed roll may result in characters becoming gravely injured, the group being separated, the

loss of vital equipment, or any number of other heavy consequences. In addition, *any* player (not just the active player) may, if they deem it thematically appropriate, choose to have their character die as a result of the failed dire conflict. In this case, the candle is *still* darkened, but the player who made this sacrifice wins narration rights over the failed conflict as well as their character's death. A voluntary death in this manner is the only time when a player may narrate the results of a failed conflict.



MARTYRDOM: *If a character sacrifices themself as part of a failed dire conflict in such a way that they die heroically, in assistance to their fellow survivors, or for the greater good, they may grant their hope die (if they have earned one) to another survivor who is especially inspired by the selfless act. Moving forward, this player may then roll this hope die as if it were theirs, in addition to any other hope dice they are already rolling.*

After a conflict roll has been made, but before the result of is narrated, there are a few tools players can use to reroll dice or alter the outcome.

BURN A TRAIT: If the player who rolled for the conflict has an active Trait and rolled at least one \square , they may burn the Trait in order to reroll all of the dice which landed on \square . When burned, a Trait must be worked into the narration of the conflict and the roleplay outcome, for good or ill. A player may not use both of their Traits in the same scene.

EMBRACE A BRINK: If the player who rolled for the conflict has an active Brink and has rolled such that they will either fail the conflict or lose narration rights, they may embrace

their Brink in order to reroll their entire die pool. If the reroll succeeds, play continues. If the reroll fails, the Brink is burned, their hope dice are lost, and a candle is darkened, with play proceeding to the next scene. When embraced, a Brink must be worked into the narration of the conflict and the roleplay outcome. So long as your rerolls do not fail, you may continue to embrace your Brink for conflicts and may use it any number of times per scene.



Dave: Soon, the high school gymnasium is far behind you. The school bus you've commandeered is not running nearly as well as you'd like, and either the gas gauge is broken or you're running on empty. Thankfully, on your way to the police station you catch sight of an abandoned auto repair shop with a few old gas tanks out front.

Karen: I'm going to pull the bus in. Maybe we can get some supplies here too.

Justin: "Why are we stopping Piper? Thought we were gonna load up at the station."

Karen: "We might not make it there without a little more fuel. Besides, there might be some supplies here too. Either way, someone needs to take a look under the hood. This thing sounds like it's just going to give up on us."

Dave: You pull the bus in and up to one of the pumps. The pumps are so old you're fairly certain you can siphon out some gas, even without electricity.

Tobin: Singer is the first one off the bus. He's got his gun up, looking around for trouble. "I'm going to check inside for any

supplies, you guys gas us up.” I head inside.

Dave: The place is definitely abandoned. It looks like some looters have been through already. There’s some graffiti on the wall that says ‘stay in the light’ in all capital letters. There’s a sizable stain on the floor. Could be dried paint. Could be dried blood. Either way, no one’s been here for a while.

Tobin: Alright, I’m looking for supplies. Luke starts ripping open boxes, tool chests, looking for whatever might be useful.

Dave: Okay, make me a conflict roll.

The group is still in the first scene, but they’ve set aside three dice due to ☐’s they’ve rolled. Tobin picks up the remaining seven dice and rolls them. He rolls three ☐’s, two ☀’s, and a pair of ☀☐’s.

Dave: Since you rolled at least one ☀ the conflict is successful, so you’re going to find some supplies. However, since you rolled three ☐’s, you’ll lose those three dice out of the communal die pool and we’ll set those aside for the rest of the scene.

Justin: Rough, that will drop us to four dice left over, fixing the bus suddenly seems unlikely.

Tobin: I do have a Trait active, I have my Alcoholic Trait right at the top of my stack so that means I can use it right? Though I’m not sure how being an alcoholic will help me find supplies...

Dave: Yup! Since your Trait is at the top of your stack it’s active and you could use it. Keep in mind that the Trait itself doesn’t need to help you overcome the conflict - we just need to work it into the narration.

Tobin: And I will win narration rights, correct?

Dave: Absolutely. I don't have any dice in my die pool yet since it's the first scene. If I did, I would have needed to roll at least two ☰'s in order to tie with you and win narration rights. But since I don't have any dice, you'll get to narrate everything for the time being - unless you fail a conflict of course.

Tobin: So, even though I succeeded on the conflict, I think I want to burn my Trait.

Tobin burns his Alcoholic Trait, making his next card active, which is his Caring Trait. Since he burned a Trait he rerolls the three dice which landed on ☐. The reroll results in a ☐, ☦, and a ☱.

Tobin: Oh man. I still got a ☐. Can I use my Caring Trait to reroll that? I have Caring active now.

Dave: Nope, you can only burn one Trait each scene, so you'll have to wait for a candle to darken before you can use that. So you'll just lose the one ☐ from the communal die pool. However, you still succeeded on the conflict, and since you rolled more ☱'s than I did - not a hard feat since I didn't roll any dice - you've won narration rights. So, you're searching for supplies, what do you find? And remember, you need to work the Alcoholic Trait in there somehow.

Tobin: Okay. So, Luke goes in alone. This place has clearly been hit by others who had the same idea, but he's convinced there might be something left behind. He snags a worn matchbook off the main counter. It says "Lucy's Auto" on it, same as the sign outside. A half dozen matches left. Soon enough he's moving into the back room and it's dark back there. The doorway cuts off

the headlights from the bus. So he lights one of the matches and looks over a shelf top to bottom before it goes out, nearly burning his fingers. He does this a few more times, these little bursts of flickering light. If this were a movie, each time he lit one you'd be half-expecting to see a face in the darkness behind him, but he's alone in there. The light from the last match falls over this dark box, like a fish tackle box. He snaps it open and his eyes light up as he pulls out a heavy flashlight, the sort you could knock someone out with if need be. He flips on the flashlight and sees that the rest of this box is basically a roadside essentials kit. There are a few road flares, one of those foil-wrapped thermal blankets, a poor excuse for a first aid kit with a box of plasters some hand sanitizer and a roll or two of gauze, and a state road map. What really catches his eye though is behind the tackle box. A half-empty bottle of whiskey. It's got some dust on it, and is poorly hidden behind a few rusty hubcaps. His mouth waters almost instantly, but for now he knows he doesn't have time for a drink. He tosses the bottle in the tackle box where the flashlight was, snaps it shut, and heads back out to join the others.

Dave: Meanwhile, outside...

Justin: "Piper, why don't you work on getting this thing gassed up. I'll take a look under the hood. I know a thing or two about cars. Sound good?"

Karen: "Sounds like as good a plan as any." Officer Piper goes to work siphoning some gas into the bus.

Dave: Sounds like a conflict. Let's roll some dice.

Karen rolls the remaining six dice. She rolls four \bullet 's, one \blacksquare , and one $\blacksquare\blacksquare$.

Karen: Well, I succeed, but we're losing four dice. Hmm... well I have a Trait that would work well: Regretful. Maybe Piper burned something down with gasoline after They attacked. Could I use my Trait to reroll my □'s?

Karen examines her stack. Her Moment, 'I will find hope when I recover the guns at the police station' is the top card on her stack, so the Regretful Trait is not active. It cannot be used at this time.

Dave: Sorry, since your Trait isn't active, you can't use it yet. The □'s are simply lost. So, you'll lose four dice, but you win the conflict and win narration rights.

Karen: I'm just pumping gas. How do I really narrate that?

Dave: Well, since the conflict was to siphon gas, and you succeeded, then you are able to get some gas. That much is true. However, you can determine what that success looks like. Does it go well? Does it introduce a new problem? You can describe how she gets the gas, or really anything else you want. It's up to you.

Karen: Okay, I think I get it. So, Officer Piper unholsters the pump from the machine and removes the nozzle so it's just a long tube. There isn't any electricity, but the pumps are so old that gas can just be siphoned out the old fashioned way. So she goes to work, and soon enough the gas starts flowing. But not for long. She gets maybe a gallon or two into the bus before the hose comes up empty. The gas tank must be bone dry. She pulls out the hose and some excess gas spills onto the front of her jeans and her shoes. "Perfect" she mutters to herself before tossing the hose aside.

Justin: "Hey, save some gas for the molotov cocktails," Ward



calls over. Meanwhile, I guess I'll still take a look at the bus. That should be enough gas to at least get us to the police station, assuming the whole thing doesn't break down.

Dave: Give me a roll.

Justin rolls the remaining two dice. He rolls two \bullet 's.

Justin: I'm going to burn my Steady Trait. It's active on top of my stack. Ward's got a steady hand while he's working on this car, so I think that would fit.

Justin burns his Steady Trait and rerolls his two \bullet 's. He rolls a \bullet and a $\bullet\bullet$.

Justin: Well, so much for that.

Dave: Since you didn't roll any $\bullet\bullet$'s, the conflict fails and I win narration rights. Ward pops the hood of the bus, and a bank of smoke pours out. It looks like the bus was overheating, badly. He takes a look around the engine and discovers the root of the problem rather quickly when he sees a trio of huge gashes on the side of the engine. Smoke is boiling out of them. They look almost like deep claw marks. As you examine the cuts closer, a distant howl cuts through the trees. As if responding to the howl, the whole vehicle groans and the headlights flicker. To his credit, Ward doesn't flinch. He remains steady, despite the chill that runs down his spine. You don't think this bus is going anywhere. **Justin**, please darken a candle.

Justin darkens a candle. This ends the first scene.

THAT WHICH IS TRUE

When a scene ends in Ten Candles there is an opportunity to move the story forward, not unlike in a film or book when the characters have suddenly arrived at their destination. The circumstances have changed and new things have become true. This is done through “establishing truths” which is a special phase of the game that occurs at the end of every scene.

Establishing truths is a phase of the game in which the players and GM have the opportunity to create new truths about the story. This allows you to move the narrative forward and change it in new and exciting ways.

All establishing truths phases begin the same way, immediately following a candle being darkened - indicating a change of scene. To begin, the GM states the following:

THESE THINGS ARE TRUE. THE WORLD IS DARK.

This ritual phrase must be spoken by the GM at the beginning of every establishing truths phase.

Once spoken, the players and GM will go around the table clockwise, each establishing a single truth. This will continue for a number of truths equal to the number of now-lit candles. If the previous scene’s candle was darkened due to a player failing a conflict or darkening a candle to seize narration rights, that player establishes the first truth. Otherwise, the GM holds this privilege.

All establishing truths phases end the same way, with the final available truth not being spoken by a player, but by all of the players collectively. The final truth is spoken in unison with the players stating the following:

AND WE ARE ALIVE.

This ritual phrase must be spoken by all of the players (whose characters still live) at the end of every establishing truths phase in place of the final truth.



If you are down to your final candle, “and we are alive” would be the only truth spoken during the establishing truths phase, spoken by all of the players with living characters immediately following the GM’s introductory phrase.

SPEAKING TRUTHS: The ability to speak truths is a powerful resource. When you speak a truth, you may establish any one thing as an irrefutable fact of the story. Each truth can only pertain to a single change in the story, but the change can be *anything*. Perhaps you have reached the hospital you’ve been looking for, or found a stray dog wandering the streets. Maybe you found a loaded gun tucked away in a broken-down police car, or have caught sight of something lighting up the sky in the distance. Truths can be helpful or harmful to the survivors. They can establish facts about characters, the environment, equipment, or dangers yet to come. Truths could be beneficial, establishing a cache of weapons and supplies you come across. They could be light and thematic, describing a budding spring rainstorm; or they could be dark and foreboding, hinting at a swarm of Them lying in ambush just over the next ridge. When establishing truths, remember that while you

are your character's advocate, you are also their adversary. Establishing truths is a fantastic way to overcome problems, but it also a great way to create new ones.

Once something is true, it is true. While you can build off of the truths of others, you cannot contradict them.

How to Speak a Truth: Each truth should be about a *single thing* that is now true. For example, if you want to establish that the survivors have reached the fallout shelter, you should not *also* establish if the shelter has power, if there are people inside, or if you'll be safe there. However, these truths may be established by other players. In this way, truths can often snowball off of one another. Of course, players aren't the only ones speaking truths. The GM takes their turn as well.



While you are establishing truths, more candles might darken on their own. If a candle goes out while you are in the midst of establishing truths, the truth it might have held is lost and may no longer be spoken. If, for whatever reason, it would have been the final truth, the communal truth is still spoken by all of the players.

Once the final truth has been established, the next scene begins. At this point, the communal player pool of dice should be refilled up to the number of now-lit candles. All other dice are given to the GM and are part of their pool of dice for the remainder of the game.

Concerning the weaknesses of Them, the dark, and the sunless sky; only the GM may establish truths about these. Such things are not for you to decide. Only to fear.



Dave: Now that Justin has darkened the candle, our first scene has ended and we will begin a special phase of play called 'establishing truths'. Here we can move the story forward and introduce new elements to it. Since that was our first candle, we have nine candles still lit so we will establish nine truths. We'll each state a single truth, one at a time, starting with Justin since he darkened the candle and moving around the table. The final truth is always 'and we are alive', and will be spoken by all of you. Sound good? Okay, I'll kick us off with my introduction to the phase, and then we'll begin... These things are true. The world is dark.

Justin: Ward found something under the hood of the bus, something hard, like a chipped piece of a claw. He hasn't really had a good chance to look at it yet, but he pocketed it quietly.

Karen: We've reached the police station safely.

Tobin: There are lights on inside.

Dave: The whole thing seems to be lit up by a generator, but it's not long for this world, just like the one back at the school.

Justin: There's some movement inside, but we can't make out who or what is in the station.

Karen: We don't know it yet, but there are two officers in there.

Tobin: They're badly wounded.

Dave: Whatever wounded them is still inside.

Justin, Karen, and Tobin: And we are alive.

HERE THERE IS DARKNESS

Turn back survivors. This is Their domain.

How To End The World

This section of the rulebook is written for those who are interested in running their own session of Ten Candles as the GM. It will provide some insight into how a game of Ten Candles might be run and some helpful hints regarding pacing scenes, framing conflicts, moving the game forward, setting the stage for a session, and bringing a game to its tragic conclusion. If you do not plan on running a game of Ten Candles, feel free to skip this section of the rulebook entirely as the advice and techniques contained within it may diminish the surprises that lie in wait ahead of you.

As the GM, it is your job to act as mediator, guide, referee, and storyteller. You will describe the world that the characters travel through: the furnishings of rooms, the color of buildings, the cold wind of the endless sunless night, and the distant howls which cut through it all. It's up to you to fill the world with darkness and dangers, challenges and conflicts, traps and monsters.

You will be the hidden supplies beneath the floorboards, the broken bridge to safety, the rendezvous point, the escape routes, the twisted trees and abandoned playgrounds, the voice of each NPC (non-player character), and most importantly of all, you will be Them. You will be Their traps and tricks, claws and blades, hungry moans and relentless hordes. You will whisper Their tainted words and haunt the shadows with Their breath. You will be the illusions They craft, the hunger They harbor, and the death They inevitably bring.

SETTING THE STAGE: Before the session, it's up to you to prepare the play area. Play somewhere quiet where you won't be interrupted, ideally where lights can be turned off and windows can be closed and curtained. When the last of the candles goes out, it should be pitch black. The darker the better. Playing around a table is best, as each player should be within arm's reach of the candles, dice, and fireproof bowl.

ZERO PREP: Don't plan anything. I will repeat that. Don't plan anything. Though you will need to choose or design a module for your session, Ten Candles is a cooperative storytelling game at heart. More often than not your players will be creating the world, not you. In fact, one of the best things about running a game of Ten Candles is that the players will make most of the hard decisions about the world and the secrets it holds for you! Every time they roll dice and overcome conflicts, they also narrate the next piece of the story. If you are too locked into what you have planned, then the truths they establish and narration they present will inevitably throw your carefully constructed story off of its rails. Instead of worrying about answers, it is your job as a Ten Candles GM to ask questions. The players will answer them, and the answers they provide will drive the story forward.

While it never hurts to think ahead of time about some traps They might set or an interesting encounter with other survivors, be prepared to discard such ideas as the players come up with their own stories and diversions.

EVERYONE DIES: While it is not necessary for your players to read the rulebook of Ten Candles before your game session, there is one piece they need to know: everyone

dies at the end. In order for the narrative to be embraced and for the players to be able to walk the line of both advocate and adversary for their characters they need to understand this. It is not meant to be a surprise. So, say this early, and remind them often:

YOUR CHARACTERS WILL DIE. THE STORY WE'RE GOING TO TELL TODAY IS NOT ONE OF SURVIVAL, BUT ONE OF HOPE AND OF LOSS. THIS IS A STORY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE DARK AND THE FINAL FEW HOURS IN THE LIVES OF A GROUP OF SURVIVORS FIGHTING AGAINST IT, LOSING THEMSELVES WITHIN IT, AND INEVITABLY BEING CONSUMED BY IT. THOUGH THEIR ENDEAVOR MAY BE DOOMED TO FAIL, IT IS OUR DUTY TO MAKE THIS STORY OF THEIR STRUGGLE AS MEANINGFUL AS POSSIBLE.

RUNNING THE GAME: During character creation, guide the players through the process by answering questions and providing rules explanations when needed. Coordinate the final recording and ensure the recording is kept in a safe and accessible location for the session.

Once the game has begun, in addition to acting as the narrator and storyteller, it is also your job to call for conflicts. This doesn't just mean calling for a conflict whenever a player volunteers an action which would trigger one, but also setting up situations which will present them with challenges to overcome.

Conflicts move the story forward. They drain dice from the communal player pool, burn cards, and end scenes. Conflicts give players a chance to use their Traits or bring them into the spotlight for their Moments, and eventually into the shadows as they embrace their Brinks. We'll discuss more about conflicts later.

How This All Came To Be

Ten days ago something, or someone, blotted out the sky. Now no stars can be seen, all communication with satellites has been lost, and the sun no longer lights up the sky. Five days after this anomaly occurred, They came. No one knows exactly who or what They are, but two very important things are clear.

They fear the light.

They're coming for you.

Following Their appearance, terrified humanity lit up the world, causing massive large-scale blackouts. Now those who are left cling to dying generators and unreliable flashlights. Small patches of survivors huddle by radios, listening hopefully for news about military rendezvous points or rumors of some illuminated oasis to reach them. But even with a destination to reach and hope to guide them there, the woods are lovely dark and deep and there are miles to go before you sleep.

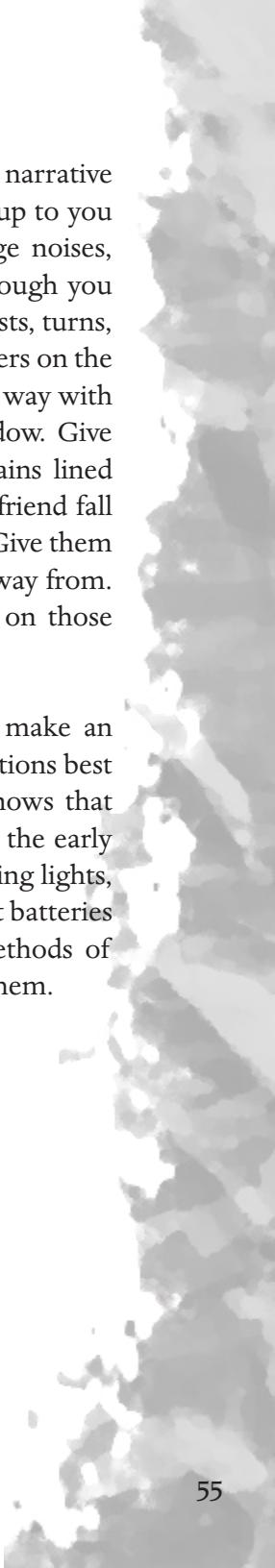
SHIFTING SECRETS: As to what darkened the sky, or who They are, that is up to you and your group to decide. The answers will change with every session you play. Some groups may be intent on solving these mysteries, and some modules may even encourage uncovering them, while other sessions won't even approach these anomalies as the characters simply try to survive. Every group and every session will be different.

WHEN YOU MUST WATCH

Your role as the GM will evolve throughout your game session. While you will take a much more active role in later scenes; throughout the early scenes you will find that your role is more reactionary. Based on the module and character Moments, your group should already have a good idea about where they want to go and they will be the ones driving the action initially. Your job is to support their intentions, ask questions, describe the world, and call for conflicts when they are needed. While you are “running” the game session, in the early scenes the role you will fill is more as a narrator and referee.

Don’t feel rushed to push the characters into conflict or move the narrative forward. If the characters are having a conversation, or plotting their next move, don’t feel pressured to interrupt them with opposition. The candles will stand as a constant reminder to your players that time is a precious resource, and they will move the story forward when they’re ready. Obviously you should take the reins when offering scene descriptions or setting notes and you should speak up when you need to call for a conflict, but the best way to move the action forward is simply to let your players play.

That being said, you do have one very important job that you should begin working on the second the last candle is lit: to *create terror*. Ten Candles artificially generates a great amount of anxiety through various components of the game’s design: playing in a darkened area, the time limit,



the fragility of a candle flame, the slow loss of narrative control, the looming finale, and so on. But it is up to you to litter the scenery with distant howls, strange noises, unexpected shadows, and unsettling vistas. Though you may not be driving the plot forward through twists, turns, and action scenes, it is up to you to keep the players on the edge of their seats. Throw creaky houses in their way with a single flickering candle in the top floor window. Give them long dirt roads down out of the mountains lined tightly with grasping tree branches. Have their friend fall behind around a corner, never to be seen again. Give them things to plan, talk about, investigate, and run away from. Then, as they execute those plans, or embark on those investigations, call for conflicts.

Finally, don't feel any pressure to have Them make an appearance too quickly. *Ten Candles* often functions best by fostering a fear of the unseen. Everyone knows that They're out there, watching and waiting, but in the early scenes the darkness is the real enemy. Let flickering lights, low-running generators, and unreliable flashlight batteries drive the players to seek out more reliable methods of illumination. Let them think the light will save them.

They will come in time.

They're not in any hurry.

WHEN YOU MUST ACT

Conflicts are the engine which move a session of Ten Candles forward. The players will create plenty of conflicts on their own when they search for supplies, attack Them, tend to a wounded companion, run for their lives, and so on. However, it is also up to you to *create* conflicts. Whenever the players go up against something with an unknown outcome, from scouring the grocery store for the last scrap of food, to simply listening at a doorway to see if something's on the other side, this can create a conflict. It's your job to create scenarios and situations which have these unknown outcomes which will then encourage the players to drive the action forward into uncharted territories and roll dice in order do it.

What's behind the locked door? What's inside the rusty old safe? What's down in the chasm? Being a Ten Candles GM is about asking questions, and significantly you don't always have to have the answers. In the early scenes, if players fail a conflict, the scenes change and stakes get higher. If the conflict is successful, they will almost always win narration rights and they will answer the questions for you. Your players will build the rooms behind the locked doors, fill the lockboxes and safes with clues and equipment, imagine mysterious things to catch sight of deep in the chasm, and create the world on your behalf.

When players win narration rights it gives them an opportunity to share in the storytelling and give you hints of what they want to find and situations they want to encounter. This is your greatest resource.



Dave: You're standing at the doors to the police station. You can see some lights on inside, clearly a generator must be running, but every few minutes or so the lights flicker something fierce. You occasionally catch glimpses of movement through some of the side windows. Something's in there, but you can't quite make out what.

Karen: Piper gets visibly excited at the thought that some of her fellow officers may have survived. She's going to try and see if she can catch sight of what's moving around inside.

Dave: Okay, give me a roll.

Karen succeeds and wins narration rights.

Dave: Alright, what do you see?

Karen: Wait, but I don't know what's inside. How can I narrate?

Dave: Since you won narration rights, it's completely up to you. I don't know what's inside either; that's your call.

Karen: Oh! Okay, I get it. So, Piper looks in the window and she tries to get a better idea of what's going on inside. The movement appears to have been coming from one of her fellow officers. He looks pretty beat up. He's got his gun drawn and has it trained on a doorway he's walking towards. Hey, Dave, I know it doesn't help our characters, but I have a somewhat gruesome idea for how this ends. Can I narrate that as part of my narration rights?

Dave: Absolutely! I'm not the only one who gets to throw all the scary stuff at you - we're all telling this story together. Go for it.

Karen: Alright, so Piper's eyes light up at the sight of her fellow officer. She knocks quietly at the window to try to signal him but he doesn't hear, his eyes are trained on the doorway he's walking towards. Piper is about to knock a second time as he reaches the door. The lights in the hall flicker and she sees something dark, but catching the light like it's a blade, slashing out from around the corner. The officer's gun goes off, there's a splash of blood and a gurgle of pain, and then the guy's just gone. Piper stifles a scream and takes a few shaky steps back from the window. She turns to the group and speaks quietly, but frantically. "There may be more alive in there, we have to go help them!" She begins pushing towards the door.

Tobin: "Piper, I need you to slow down. We can't help anyone if we just bust in there guns blazing. Let me take lead on this."

Karen: Piper doesn't argue. She's all shaken up.

Tobin: Okay, I'm heading to the door. Is it one of those big glass doors, can I see what's inside?

Dave: Nope, the whole door is frosted glass. In the darkness you can only make out the words POLICE in all capital letters, and what looks to be a spray of something darker on the inside of the glass, slowly dripping down the door.

Tobin: I'm opening the door, and carefully stepping into the station, gun raised and ready.

Dave: Alright, make me a roll.

Tobin: To see if I can open the door?

Dave: Nope! To see what's on the other side.

Tobin succeeds and wins narration rights.

Dave: Okay, what are you walking into?

Tobin: The inside of the police station looks like the remnants of a battlefield. Bodies litter the lobby and blood stains the walls...

As the GM, it's your call when something can simply be done, or if it requires a conflict. In the play example above, by calling for a conflict the GM is allowing the players to determine what is moving around and going on inside the police station. However, if the GM had already decided what was inside or what was moving around, they could have simply narrated what was seen rather than asking for a conflict roll.



It is never required that you call for a conflict, even when the characters are doing something that would typically prompt one. If you already have an idea for the outcome of a certain action, you can simply narrate it. However, keep in mind that the best way to move the game forward is to give the players the opportunity to win narration through conflicts, so I would always suggest erring on the side of conflict rolls, unless maintaining a hold on a given narration is necessary for a critical component of the story.

As the scenes progress closer to the end of the game session, the player's communal pool of dice will grow smaller and smaller while your presence in the story will grow larger and larger. Once you begin to win narration rights more frequently, it will be up to you to start steering the story towards its inevitable end.

Significantly, towards the end of the game, scenes will become much shorter and establishing truths will have less of an impact on the narrative. This means that big jumps forward will be less likely to happen and scenes will blend into each other more commonly. This is when you can truly begin forcing conflict and confrontation onto the players, with high stakes encounters and attacks by Them.

MOMENTS: Keep an eye out as Moments begin to become active for your players. Allowing for powerful and meaningful Moments to happen is one of your most potent tools for running a memorable game of Ten Candles. Make a note of the Moments your players create during character creation and think of them as the big scenes which form the framework of your game. Moments should act as the pillars of your story where each character individually gets a chance to stand in the spotlight. As soon as a Moment becomes active you should start leading the story in the direction of its completion. Remember that players cannot get lower in their stack until they have lived their Moment.

When a player is ready to live their Moment, a single conflict roll is required in order to see if hope is inspired or if hope is lost. It will be up to you to decide what opposes them and what potential outcome would lead to that Moment being thwarted.

Keep in mind that just as with any conflict roll, if the player is successful and wins narration rights it will be up to them to determine what their success looks like. Encourage players to take their time and make their narration of Moments powerful and poignant.



Dave: Piper hears a terrifying click from her pistol signaling that she is out of ammo. The thing, whatever it is, not twenty feet from her, seems to be recovering from its wounds and turning angrily toward her.

Karen: I'm getting out of there.

Dave: You start to run. You know this station better than anyone and find yourself ducking around familiar corners and hurtling through dark hallways. You hear noise down one hall, it sounds like more combat. Maybe that's where Ward and Singer are, but you don't stop. You know where you're going, and that thing is right on your tail. You round one last corner and come face to face with a tall heavy door. It says "Armory" in stenciled letters.

Karen: I'm throwing open that door.

Dave: Okay, what is Piper's Moment?

Karen: My Moment is "I will find hope when I recover the guns at the police station".

Dave: To live your Moment you will need to make me a conflict roll. If you succeed, you will gain hope from whatever is behind that door. If you fail, you will lose hope and we'll move on to the next scene.

Karen succeeds and wins narration rights.

Dave: Okay, you have won hope. You get to narrate, and feel free to make it awesome. Piper's in the spotlight.

Karen: Piper plants a boot into the door and the thing nearly

flies off its hinges. She knows exactly what she's looking for. The room is nearly empty, but she passes by a half dozen handguns in search of something better. The thing is coming up behind her, right where she wants it. She rounds a corner and spins around, facing the creature dead on as it follows her. But she is not longer unarmed. It looks down, almost confused at the weapon in her hands as she cocks the shotgun. For the first time in a long while, she smiles, and pulls the trigger. The thing explodes backwards in a blast of shrapnel and destruction. She steps forward, calmly cocking the gun a second time. Boom. And again. Boom. The shots echo through the empty police station and at last the thing falls to the ground, motionless. Dead. Everything finally falls silent and Piper leans against a nearby wall, slumping down against it. She takes a deep breath.

Karen burns her Moment card and claims a hope die.

THEY WHO HAVE COME

As the game proceeds, They should slowly and methodically begin to make Their presence known. It's up to you and your players to determine how quickly and violently They enter the narrative. I always suggest having Them first appear not through direct conflict, but rather through traps, tricks, and illusions. Conveniently downed trees blocking the road, broken bridges, rocks falling from cliff tops, etc. These could all be excellent weapons used by Them. Have the players driven into the parking lot of a convenience store to search for supplies? Maybe the exit is littered with shards of glass that blow out a tire when they leave. Or maybe their headlights have been smashed in. There are many ways They can begin to assert themselves within the narrative – but it's never too early to begin setting the stage for Their inevitable final strike.

While They cannot directly kill characters until The Last Stand, you can use Them to set up dire conflicts (see *Dire Conflicts*, page 36). If the players fail dire conflicts - especially against Them - your outcome narration should be brutal and punishing. While you cannot cause the death of characters through dire conflicts (though they can choose to sacrifice themselves), you can severely injure them, separate the group, summon hordes of Them, or any number of other severe outcomes. Keep in mind however that you're on the same team as the players to cooperatively tell a story. Making a character fall unconscious, or otherwise removing a player from the game is ill-advised. A grievous injury on the other hand,

requiring immediate medical attention and permanently crippling the character may have deep story ramifications that cast the entire session in a new light.

As for Their tactics, tricks, traps, and how They hunt; these will change with every game session. Perhaps They are zombies or beasts, hunting in packs with no intelligence, only instinct. Perhaps They are tricksters, leading survivors into traps and illusions. Perhaps They are gods, tempting characters with offers of power as the ground shakes and mountains turn to dust at their whim. Perhaps They are soldiers with shadowed blades that can cut even light to shreds. Perhaps They are simply darkness, an inexorable tide of umbral void, unstoppable until all is consumed. Whatever form They take, make them strong, make them innumerable, and make them terrifying.

THEIR BRINK: Keep in mind that They have a Brink. This Brink should be your guide to what They are or how They operate, and should slowly be revealed as the game proceeds. If the characters are encountering Them in a conflict and you would fail to win narration rights, you may embrace your Brink just as a player would, allowing you to reroll your entire die pool. This is a one-time event. After using your Brink to reroll your die pool, you must burn it regardless of the results. This doesn't mean They lose their power or identity, it just means you can no longer utilize the Brink for reroll purposes. Be wary in how you use Their Brink as it will reveal Their identity to everyone.



How To PLAY THEM: While there is no right or wrong way to portray Them in your game, and it will change drastically from session to session, one piece of advice for coming up with ideas for Them

is to divide Them into three classifications: Dark, Darker, and Darkest.

They who are Dark are the rank-and-file unending supply of minions. They are weak and expendable. These can be used in varying numbers in the first four scenes to great effect. One character should be able to take out one Dark.

They who are Darker are essentially mini-bosses. They control groups of Dark and are formidable on their own. Sometimes there may be a unique way to combat Them. These can be introduced in small groups after a handful of scenes. A group of characters should be able to take out one Darker.

They who are Darkest are the leaders of Them. All who are Dark and Darker walk beneath their banners. They cannot die. They can only kill. Sometimes They may have special skills and abilities, or are particularly resistant to the light. There should be only one or two such creatures, and They typically will make Their appearance in the final scene or two.

These are just tips for getting started but everything will change as the players establish who They are as the game proceeds.

HOW IT MUST END

When only one candle remains, The Last Stand begins. There is one final establishing truths phase, but since only one candle remains lit, the only truth spoken is the collective “AND WE ARE ALIVE.” At this point, a full attack by Them should be starting, or underway. The character’s flashlights have gone out, or are useless. The darkest among Them have come. It is not a matter of if the characters can survive. It never was. It is simply a matter of how they wish to die.

For The Last Stand there is a single rules change, but it is an important one. Make this known:

PLAY CONTINUES NORMALLY, EXCEPT THAT UNSUCCESSFUL
CONFLICTS NO LONGER RESULT IN A DARKENED CANDLE.
INSTEAD, THEY RESULT IN THE CHARACTER’S DEATH.

That’s it. Typically, players will be rolling one die to overcome conflicts. Two if a player has earned their hope die and has not yet lost it by succumbing to their Brink. There may be rare successes, but the high stakes should be clear. Any conflict holds a heavy risk for failure and will likely mean the death of your character.

DEATH NARRATIONS: Typically in the case of a failed conflict you would assume narration. However, with The Last Stand feel free to give players a bit more narrative control over their death scenes. Work with them to make each character’s death meaningful or epic in its own way.

If the last candle goes out on its own in the middle of the scene, take control of the narration and describe the darkness overwhelming the light at last, bringing the remaining characters lives to a close.

THE END: When the final character dies, darken the final candle, and say this:

THESE THINGS ARE TRUE. THE WORLD IS DARK.

At this point, play the final message recording.

This ends the game.

The Last Stand, and importantly these two final steps, are critical. The final GM's truth, spoken for the first time without the player's echo of "AND WE ARE ALIVE" along with the final message being played are the last essential pieces which bring a game of Ten Candles together. The more surreptitiously you can play the recording the better. If they don't know it's coming, the impact is even greater.

Often, you may find that your players will be silent as the recording plays and after it ends. Let them have that silence. Allow the weight of the past hours to sink in and be felt. This moment is what Ten Candles is all about.

APPENDIX 1: MODULES

As mentioned previously, running a game of Ten Candles takes no amount of prep time for the GM. Since the story is created as you play, all that you'll need to get started is a module. Modules define the setting that your session will take place in, as well as provide some suggested locations of note or potential goals to pursue. While each session is unique and built cooperatively by your group, modules provide a great jumping-off point for the session as well as a foundation for the story and for character creation. What follows are a number of module examples, but I encourage you to design your own as well.

DEAD RADIO

No one's coming. Not anymore. The radio's gone dead, and you're on your own now. There's only one option left: Fort Victor. All the chatter on the radio seemed to imply that Victor's the place to be. But you're a good hour out; over the river and through the woods – literally. Everyone else has packed up and left by now.

The Town Hall's fallout shelter is slim pickings. Not enough food to last the next few days, not to mention the fact that the generator's been acting up. Maybe a few supplies could still be scavenged, but one thing's for sure: it's time to leave.

Areas of Note: Fallout shelter, bridge out of town, dark woods, Victor
Goal: Discover what has become of the military forces at Fort Victor

LIGHT IN THE DARK

Your job is simple: ride into town, retrieve any survivors, and get them to safety. The Humvee is loaded with enough gas to get there, but you'll need to stop at a local station for refueling to get out again. Not too much room for passengers, so your team will have to be creative when you see what you're dealing with. The helicopter pick-up at Drop Point Delta is arriving in less than two hours. You've got guns, and enough flood lights to surround your car with a halo of protection, at least for now, but little else.

There's supposed to be a safehouse on the way into town that might have some supplies if it hasn't been picked clean. For now though, the drive is long and the roads are dark. Be ready.

Areas of Note: Road, safehouse, homes, gas station, Drop Point Delta
Goal: Recover any survivors you can find and rendezvous for pick-up

THE LAST BOAT

The island resort has turned into a nightmare. The beach sand has turned so thick with blood that not even the tide can wash it away. There aren't many folks left... not since They came. Just the group of you, and from the crackled interference on the radio, it sounds like one other group holed up on the far end of the island at another resort. Maybe some locals further in-land too, who knows? You've sent out call after call for rescue, but only recently did you finally hear a reply. It was all crackle and static, but you

were able to make out something about the Coast Guard, and the Northern Island. The reef's too taxing on boats here so you'll have to make your way there. Of course that means finding a boat or swimming a quarter mile of ocean water. Not to mention navigating to the northern tip of the island and hoping the folks holed up there haven't already taken the last boat across. The lights are flickering low. It's time to move.

Areas of Note: Inland, the resorts, open water, northern island, boat
Goal: Travel to the distant resort and take a boat to the northern island

ON THE DARK SIDE

You are astronauts aboard the international moon base Artemis. Darkness is a frightening thing when it means that your communications with Earth no longer gain responses, and your solar generators are suddenly without fuel. Without the sun, Artemis is dying.

Alone that would be enough. And then They came. One by one, crewmembers started to vanish. Auxiliary power is running low, but there's still enough left to launch the return rocket and head for home – assuming there's a home left to return to. Either way, the lights have begun to dim, which means life support isn't far behind. You've got to get power to the rocket and get the rocket off-moon as fast as you can, but that may not be as simple as planned.

Some sectors of the station are already without air, and the static-laced warnings of your fellow crewmembers over the intercom cautioned that there may be damage to

one of the halls. That was the last you ever heard from them. But time is running out, and the station is dying. It's time to move.

Areas of Note: Generator, airless rooms, breach, moon surface, rocket
Goal: Escape Artemis aboard the rocket before life support gives out

NIGHT STUDIES

The city is quiet now that the evacuations have emptied the streets. The world is dark and you have stayed behind. A group of scientists, researchers, and the muscle to protect them. Volunteers. The sky is black and They prowl the darkness. Someone's got to stop Them. Someone's got to figure this all out. And that someone is you.

Professionals in your fields, bunkered down in a small lab off of the main street. No answers yet, just more questions. Infuriating questions. Maybe if you had one of Them to examine. Perhaps if you could get to the library one town over, the largest in the state, there might be some answers on their shelves. Or even up to the old observatory in the mountains. But you've learned all you can here. And the lights have begun to dim.

The generator is on its last legs. It's time to move. They are coming, and if anyone can figure out what's happened to the world, it's you.

Areas of Note: Lab, library, road up the mountain, old observatory
Goal: Figure out some truth behind Them and what darkened the sky

ADRIFT

The cruise ship has been silent for ten days. Silent, save the occasional howl on the wind, and screams quickly silenced. The motors have gone quiet and you have been adrift in the darkness. Backup energy and emergency lights held out for some time, but now even they have begun to fade. There were rumors of a secondary back-up generator below deck; but with no one to activate it, the ship is being overtaken by night. Perhaps even more unsettling however is the fact that less than an hour ago, the ship's motor started once more. The ship is moving, but under whose control? You have barricaded yourselves in a cabin, and now the ship is turning off course, sailing to the unknown. If you could get to the back-up generator, you may be able to retake the ship. Maybe even send out a call for help. That is, if you can move quickly enough, before your shadowed cruise arrives at its new destination.

Areas of Note: Cabins, generator, radio room, bridge, isle of the dark

Goal: Activate the generator and retake the ship

WITH A BANG

FOR EXPERIENCED PLAYERS

They rule the streets, but the Resistance hasn't given up the Light. Ten years ago They stole our dark world, but not all of humanity was willing to lay down and die. The streets of the metropolis are dark with Their presence, as here They have flocked. A legion of Them crowd this city, and you will make it Their grave. The road in is perilous,

as They lie in wait with scouts and advance battalions. Beyond Them, your best bet is the tunnels. Perhaps you can even get one of the old subway cars running. Just enough to get you there. But more importantly, get the package there.

The footlocker is unwieldy, but the warhead inside is worth the weight. Once you've reached the center of town you'll need to find a car and get to Central Square. It may be open on all sides, but that's where the bomb will hurt Them the most. There is no other way. You know from the start this isn't a mission you'll walk away from, but it is one They'll remember forever.

Areas of Note: Road to the city, subway, parking garage, Central Square
Goal: Detonate the warhead. The Resistance will live on.

MIDNIGHT CABIN

You have been waiting. You have earned it. It... is Spring Break at last! Rock on! Finally a vacation away from the rigors of education and tribulations your upcoming final exams. Most of your friends have headed home or to some distant tropical beach, but you don't need anything so fancy. Just a week away with a few kegs in the truck bed and the keys to a remote cabin one of you were able to snag for the much anticipated week off.

The cabin has been abandoned for a while so it may take some settling in, but there's a lake out back and some walking trails. You should probably gas up before you arrive and check in with the local sheriff so they know you're

up there, but then you'll be ready to get the celebration started. Party on!

Areas of Note: The last gas station, sheriff's office, the cabin, the lake

Goal: Have an awesome Spring Break!



BREAKING THE MOLD: You may have noticed that the above module breaks away from the default setting of “the world is dark” and replaces it with the setup for a classic teen slasher flick. *Ten Candles* can be used as a foundation to run any form of tragic horror game, and advanced or adventurous players should feel free to run such games where the world is not dark, or games where the GM has decided what They are from the beginning (such as in the case of a zombie apocalypse or alien invasion session, for example). Feel free to break the mold and run any kind of horror story you want! Check out Appendix 2 for some more mold-breaking module ideas!

APPENDIX 2: BONUS MODULES

Ten Candles would not be what it is without the support of its followers. Here are several modules submitted by rockstar Kickstarter backers who helped Ten Candles become a reality. Enjoy!

ARMISTICE

Submitted by Caroline Murphy

November 11th, 1918. You and your German compatriots have agreed to the negotiation terms put forward by the Allies, putting an end to the Great War at long last. Germany's defeat leaves a bitter taste in your mouth as you travel to Supreme Commander Foch's train car to sign the documents. You are your compatriots are left waiting as the appointed time, 11 o'clock, comes and goes. The Allies are nowhere to be seen. You start to worry, expecting a trap. But no one ever comes.

The following persons are playable:

- Matthias Erzberger, a civilian politician
- Count Alfred von Oberndorff, Foreign Ministry
- Major General Detlof von Winterfeldt, Army
- Captain Ernst Vanselow, Navy
- Other entourage members, as necessary

Areas of Note: Foch's train car, train station, empty barracks, front line

Goal: Discover what's going on with the Allies, turn the war around for Germany if at all possible.

BUNKER

Submitted by Brady Tatro

The world is crumbling, but people in power have planned for this possibility. People like you. A massive bunker has been constructed, a bunker capable of saving many from the arrival of Them. It only requires minor modifications to account for constant light production. Of course, it also needs to be determined who will be staying there. How many is too many? Who gets to live? Who must die? While the world is falling to pieces out there, you sit here in a dimly lit boardroom making decisions that will effect the future of the human race. But not even you can stay here for long. The buses to take you and your cohorts to the bunker are waiting. The lights have begun to flicker low.

It's now or never.

Areas of Note: Boardroom, elevator, lobby, buses, city square, bunker
Goal: Decide who lives and who dies. Reach the bunker. Survive.

THE BURNING MAN

Submitted by Jon Washer

The members of your commune have long spoken against the evils of the modern world's reliance on technology. You knew that the earth mother would one day exact her revenge on the parasitic human race... When the sun set for the final time, you felt vindicated, ready to live your lives as one with nature. But then They started hunting in the darkness, and suddenly the dwindling community

wished for nothing more than the comfort of the lights of the city. In the deep woods of northern Vermont, there is precious little to keep the darkness at bay - except to constantly feed the fires set at the edges of your campsite. But the firewood is running low, and getting more requires a trek into the midnight woods to cut it... Or perhaps a trip to the old saw mill to scavenge what you can.

Areas of Note: The camp, an abandoned sawmill, the woods

Goal: Get as much firewood back to the campsite as possible.

CLASSICS CONUNDRUM

Submitted by Luke Collin

You knew things would be bad when the sunfire chariot crashed down from the sky. The sun stood still, no longer drawn by the fallen Hunter, and many flocked to the temple you guard to offer sacrifices. Then, the still, fiery orb began to dwindle, and people began to disappear.

The faithful say the Huntress could still raise the moon to drive back the darkness of a dying sun, but she is lost to grieve over her brother. Her shrine is in the forest and her ways are unknown to you. Perhaps the oracle knows what may console her. Either way, the darkness must be driven from the world before the sun is lost forever.

You are guardians of the Sun's Temple. It is up to you.

Areas of Note: The Sun's Temple, abandoned town, the Oracle's Shrine, the forest, the Huntress Shrine.

Goal: Convince the Huntress to raise the moon.

DARK SKIES

Submitted by Ryan Abercrombie

Your carrier strike group was on its way back across the Atlantic after a nine month deployment when the sky went dark. The first signs of Their arrival were when a fighter disappeared. Then another. Then an entire division. The admiral halted flight operations, but that didn't change anything - the next thing to disappear was a destroyer. Over the span of five days, every other ship in the strike group disappeared; finally, the carrier was the only one left.

The ship's company are slaving around the clock to maintain the ship and keep the lights on. Nobody has heard from shore since They came. Supplies are running low and most of the aircrafts are down for maintenance. The ship's propulsion plant just failed. Now it's only a matter of time.

Areas of Note: Flight deck, the mess decks, the hangar bay, enlisted berthing, ready rooms, the reactor

Goal: Get to shore and find out what has become of the world.

FEAR ITSELF

Submitted by Joel Carlson

The mental health clinic is used to dealing with frightening ideas, but rarely are they real. For the last month the doctors had reported a rise in a communal paranoia: the patients were claiming the shadows were growing, attacking them, and talking to them. The darkness was something to be feared. Group therapy was a disaster - no two patients

could agree on any of the details. Lights had to remain on at all times or the patients would become inconsolable. The slightest shadow lead to screaming. Then the world went dark, and the lights went out. Panic erupted throughout the building. The all consuming fear of the dark has made it hard to maintain order in the hospital. What's worse, stories of horrible things outside have made everyone too afraid to leave. The backup generator is working although it won't last long. Then again, can you really stay here and wait for the lights to go out once and for all?

Areas of Note: Patient rooms, dining hall, rooftop, the outside world
Goal: Take control, find somewhere safe for everyone, and get rid of all these crazy thoughts

Trait Variant: In this module, paranoia should make it very difficult to deal with the threat of Them. One option for play might include replacing Traits with Fears, to encourage this sort of anxious and frenzied gameplay. You are encouraged as well to blur the line between patient and doctor, making it uncertain who is who.

FINAL DESCENT

Submitted by Patrick Whelan

The local airport handled the situation as well as possible when the sky went black. At first the staff tried to keep everyone calm and flights were simply delayed. A couple of days later, the airport resumed business. Then They came. Terminal B went dark first, then Terminal C.

You are in Terminal A, where the generators have held, for now.

Only a few short minutes ago there was an announcement over the airport intercom. A strong, confident voice said “*If anyone’s left, I’m in Terminal D. The power’s still on here, and there is a plane fully fueled at gate D14! I’m a trained pilot and will wait three hours for anyone listening to get here before I take off. There has to be somewhere that is safe.*” Can you make it safely to terminal D? The tram may still run, or you might be able to make it through terminals B and C. The pilot must be right. Safety’s out there somewhere.

Areas of Note: Air traffic control tower, security, terminals A-D, the food court, the inter-terminal tram.

Goal: Make it to Terminal D to board the last remaining plane.

GATES OF VALHALLA

Submitted by Ian Griffin

A darkness has begun to coalesce offshore. Like a rolling fog, but black as night; it has swirled and spread upward for days and now has blocked out even the sun. Many look skyward and see only the unknown, but you know what has happened. You have heard the whispered words that an ancient prophecy has come to fruition. The gates of Valhalla have opened, and soon hordes of Viking warriors will be unleashed - thousands of souls who have been awaiting the day they could return to battle and once more prove their bravery. You are but a few who know the truth of these dark times, having gathered at a local university to plan your next move. You have heard reference of an ancient Norse calendar and an obscure tablet in the possession of the local historical museum that may hold the key to mankind’s salvation. However, the darkness

of night has prevailed and recently a great lightning bolt has struck the town's power station. On the wind, you can heard the booming sounds of thunder and deep laughter.

Areas of Note: The university, road to the museum, archives, harbor

Goal: Turn back the tides of Valhalla at any cost

MAJESTIC BOB'S LAST SHOW

Submitted by Neil Grieb

When the world went dark you started looking for a place to make a stand. Luckily you came across a mansion, lit like a beacon in the night. The house had all the trappings of a great carnival inside; and though you heard the ruckus of countless patrons, you didn't see a soul beyond your small group of survivors. That is, until you approached one of the many booths. Suddenly a man dressed like an old-time snake oil salesman greeted you. And continued to greet you at every booth you traveled to. The man seemed mad, chanting on and on about protecting and strengthening the ten candles to ward off the darkness. One thing's for certain, this is no ordinary mansion and the snake oil salesman, "Majestic Bob" is no ordinary man.

Areas of Note: Mansion, carnival, alchemy lab, parapets, dream prison

Goal: Reinforce the dream, or end it

Suggested Play Notes: One suggested approach for this module is to have the mansion exist only in Bob's dream. The players can help Bob strengthen the dream, but they will be trapped in it forever. Or they can try to wake him up, only to face not only Them, but Bob as well.

MIRAMAR

Submitted by David Burbank

The Commerce Arms apartment building is a ten-story concrete pillar two miles from the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station; sixteen miles north of San Diego on US 15. Cheap rent and a good location attracted a mix of residents from all walks of life; but the majority are off-base military and their families. The place was given the nickname "The Armory" by its minority populace in 1995. The folks that worked at Miramar didn't think it was very funny - but it stuck.

Five days ago, street lamps along Carroll Road began randomly winking out, the Village Shopping Center disappeared behind a wall of night, and the light was sucked out of the Preston Condominium building across the street. You heard muffled screams and other sounds that you don't want to remember. Looting and violence began in earnest a few days ago. You and the other residents of the fifth floor hunkered down. Even without the sun, southern California is still warm; so dying of exposure to the elements is not your primary concern. That's food and water - and it's running out.

Since the world went dark, Miramar has been an island of light, jets landing and taking off on a regular schedule for the last few days (rumor has it that the base is powered by a small military grade nuclear reactor). Twelve hours ago, alarms went off at the Air Station. Loud speakers repeat the same message every thirty minutes. "All residents and off-site military personnel seeking passage to the safe

zone, the last plane will leave at 17:00. Meet on runway marker B25." Time to go.

Areas of Note: Commerce Arms apartment building ("The Armory"), the looted stores (Lucha Dora's Mini-Mart, Papa Vega's Laundromat and Dry Cleaners, El Sangre Bar and Grill, etc.), Miramar Road, the fence, outskirts of the base, central base, the runway

Goal: Reach the oasis of light at the Miramar Base and evacuate.

MISKATONIC NEVER SLEEPS

Submitted by Leonard Lee

Your first week at Miskatonic University has been anything but normal, to say the least. There was the small fungal plague that turned most of the student body into mindless zombies, the occasional poltergeist hurling books around the dusty library, ancient curses being invoked by the drama society in the student commons, and rumors of an ancient god being awoken.

Thankfully most of that was covered in your student handbook and you've surrounded yourself with good, albeit slightly supernatural friends.

But as of just a few hours ago, college has gotten especially difficult. An enormous black and smoking pit has opened in the center of the quad. Which is unfortunate timing since the Sigma Sigma Sigma mixer is tonight. Well, maybe you can save the world *and* go to the party? What's the worst that could happen?

Areas of Note: Dors, Library, The Pit, Campus Grounds, Sigma Mixer

Goal: Attend the best party of the year! Oh, and save the world.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Submitted by Ian Camper

This was supposed to be a fresh start. New city. New you. You were looking for a more permanent residence than this crummy hostel when everything went dark. It wasn't so bad at first. It actually made the place more tolerable to look at. Then They came. The group of you are only still here thanks to the tiny generator powering a few lamps in the lobby. You who are left huddle around these last sources of light. The rest of the residents... Well, all you heard were screams. That was 24 hours ago. The portable radio says that some of the city schools are being set up as shelters; and that everyone should use them to make their way towards the Arena, where a generator is running strong and there is plenty of food in storage. You feel your stomach gurgle at the thought of food... When was the last time you ate? You're all hungry and getting antsy, and at some point when you were sleeping one of the lamps blew. Has to be just another stroke of bad luck... Right?

Areas of Note: The hostel, various schools, corner markets, buildings in the city, The Arena

Goal: Seek out shelter at The Arena

POUND PUPPIES

Submitted by Lynne Vaz

When the long night came, the humans were forgetful. They didn't come to the big house to give you food and water and treats and petting like you trained them to do.

They were just... Gone. It took too long for you to realize they weren't coming back. Some of your friends took a long nap. Too hungry. Too cold. But not you. You need to get out of here. The humans appear to be lost. The streets outside are quiet. Nothing but distant howls. Not the way you howl though. Something different. Something sharper. The kind of howl that cuts and claws and bites. You know where to go, if only you can get out of your cage. There's a park across town. The humans usually bring you there to play and smell things. They're probably there, waiting.

Areas of Note: Pound, empty streets, pet store, running river, park

Goal: Find some food and water and then make it to the park across town. The humans are waiting.

Play Note: For this module, all of the characters are dogs. It is up to you if you want the dogs to be able to "speak" to one another, but there are otherwise no rule changes.

SOLE SOL

Submitted by Nicholas Weaver

The universe is dying. It has been dying since it was born, and now its death rattle echoes into the void, calling Them. Now They circle the last light, preparing to snuff it out.

The sun of the solar system where humanity was born, Sol, is the last remaining star in the universe; but it is changed. It glows pale white, and a black hole gnaws through its heart, giving it the visage of a great eye. The planet Mercury is the last refuge for the living. You and your companions are all that remain on its surface, besides

the ruins of the last civilization.

As They approach you must survive long enough to activate a monument you have found: The Messenger. You don't know who made it, but you do know that if activated it may create a message that will survive the end. Before that, however, you have to turn it on. Search through the wreckage of Atlas, the last city, for an artifact known as the Ten Candles. The library of Hecate should hold the key to their resting place in the vault of best-forgotten secrets, Pandora's Box. Sol gazes upon you. Will you answer its final prayer?

Areas of Note: The Messenger, the ruins of Atlas, the library of Hecate, Pandora's Box vault.

Goal: Find the Ten Candles, bring them to The Messenger, record your message, and watch the last sunset.

STRATHAM

Submitted by Jason Bartow

In the upscale hamlet of Stratham everything is calm and quiet. Neighbors are polite and keep to themselves. Five days after the darkness fell, your group of young schoolmates have wound up trying to survive by finding provisions in your former neighbor's houses. People will do whatever they can to survive these days, so beware anyone you thought you knew. This onetime peaceful enclave has become a breeding ground for paranoia, deceit, fear... and that doesn't even bring into consideration "the others."

Areas of Note: The schoolhouse, backyards, basements, quiet homes

Goal: Forage for supplies and stick together. Avoid "the others"

THE DEVIL'S HAND IS IDLE

Submitted by Dominick Neveux

The year is 1720. Not but one league from the coast of St. Dominique, The HMS Calla Lily, a mercantile brigantine vessel has been commandeered by a pirate frigate known widely as The Devil's Hand, flying a black flag with a crudely painted outstretched white palm in its center.

You have been held up in the tiny brig of the Calla Lily and considerable time has passed, but neither vessel has traveled far since the attack—if at all. Mutterings and scuffles have broken out amongst the pirate crew that has taken control of the Calla Lily. You can't make out much from the dank confines of the brig, but several concerns spread through the crew like a virus: the dearth of wind, the absence of the sun, stars, or moon, and eventually whispers about a black spot. You can't tell if but one or nearly all of the pirate crew have witnessed, or even bear this superstitious curse.

As time passes, tensions rise. It has been three days now by your wager, and the shouts and occasional musket fire from above deck have been replaced by silence. You and your fellow prisoners have not seen any of your captors for many hours now.

The flimsy bars of the brig will be your coffin if you do not move soon, be it by starvation, or something else.

Areas of Note: The deck of the HMS Calla Lily, The Devil's Hand, The Port of St. Dominique, the open ocean

Goal: Reach land

THE WEDDING PARTY

Submitted by Sean Nee

It was meant to be the happiest of days; and it was. Ethan found Catherine, and Catherine found Ethan. So when this perfect couple decided to get married, you were more than happy to travel many miles to celebrate their union. It didn't hurt that Catherine's father, Andre Duval, was hosting the wedding at a winery that his family's owned since the end of the 19th Century. The wedding was beautiful, and the party was far from over. After waving Ethan and Catherine off to their honeymoon, you took up Andre's offer to stay in the winery's guest rooms for the next couple of days to enjoy the countryside, food, and libations. It was paradise - until the lights went out.

That was ten days ago. It wasn't so bad at first, as you stayed safely locked in a secure compound stocked with cheeses, cured meats, and many, *many* bottles of wine. At least that was until They came. Five days ago, They started killing the livestock. You only heard the cries of the animals. No one ever saw Them. Since then there have been dark shapes roaming the vineyard, tapping on windows, dragging something sharp across the doors. Catherine's brother, Michael, took a rifle and went to investigate. That was two days ago and he has not yet returned.

The only transport left on the grounds is a flatbed truck and a Humvee owned by Andre, but he's holed up in his office with the keys, drunk and armed. Every night They get closer. The wedding party is over. It's time to move.

Areas of Note: Winery, Andre's office, wine cellar, the vines

Goal: Get the keys from Andre and get out alive



THESE THINGS ARE TRUE THE WORLD IS DARK AND WE ARE ALIVE

TEN DAYS AGO THE SKY BETRAYED YOU.
THE WORLD WENT DARK. THE SUN VANISHED.
YOU WERE ALONE.

THE FALL INTO CHAOS WAS Sudden AND PREDICTABLE. THE WORLD WAS FILLED WITH RIOTS AND FEAR. RADIOS PROMISED THAT THE SUN WAS NOT GONE. IT WAS STILL OUT THERE BEYOND THAT BLACK SKY.
ORDER RETURNED.

FIVE DAYS AGO, THEY CAME.

NOW THE RADIOS PROMISE RESCUE THAT NEVER COMES. NOW THE LIGHTS FLICKER LOW AND THE DARK IS WHERE THEY HUNT. NOW YOU HEAR THE SCREAMS. NOW THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU.

KEEP MOVING. DON'T LOSE HOPE. AND STAY IN THE LIGHT.