

Mixtapes and Mistakes

For the last few years, you've been a student at a co-ed boarding highschool for highly achieving students. Your time here has been a rollercoaster, dealing with the pressures of a difficult course load and the reality of living away from home for the first time at a young age. Plenty of people washed out, but you made it through final finals.

It's senior week, which is time off until graduation next Friday when all your parents and guardians get into town. It's time for the legendary worst-kept-secret afterparty for the soon-to-be graduates. The school and your parents have a general sense of the shenanigans that go down, but they turn a blind eye to it to any light illegality. The kids are alright, and after all, it's tradition.

But how will you react when one of your fellow students dies at the party? And how will this affect your futures?

Handling the fiction

The gameplay of *Mixtapes and Mistakes* revolves around co-narrating scenes as it is GM-less, but if a fictional conflict does come up, players should feel free to vote on what should happen or do rock-paper-scissors for a contest if necessary.

By its theme and the situations depicted during play, players may not feel at ease with some of the events. If anything feels wrong to you, you shouldn't hesitate to stop the scene and to draw lines and veils. Lines can be probably set before play but lines may depend on how the scene goes into the gritty details and on how players feel comfortable with each other, and so on. Keep that in mind and, if you feel ill-at-ease, just say it so before things getting worse.

Materials

- 3-5 players.
- Paper or index cards to write information about your characters on.
- Tokens.
- Tunes of rebellion, misunderstood youths, or youthful invincibility.
- Adult beverages for adult players, to get in the mood.

One of the players should have read this whole document to facilitate the play.

Inspirations

RPG:

Fiasco

The Valedictorian's Death

Movies:

Very Bad Things

The Hangover

Play summary

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1. Setup**1a. Time period, School, and Party Venue**

-- *School's out for summer*
School's out forever --
(Alice Cooper – *School's Out*)

While initially envisioned for a modern day smart kid boarding high school, this game could be moved around to be set in a specific decade, magical world, space knights academy, etc. Decide together what time period and kind of world you are in, and then describe the school itself and the party venue. Where are they? What do they look like? Gigantic, or rather small? Isolated, or located within a big city? Are there hidden nooks to sneak into? Forbidden corridors? A woods or lake nearby?

Maybe you rented out hotel rooms at the Silver Moon Inn, a sketchy, run-down place on the outskirts of town. Maybe there's a cool dad's lakehouse perfect for this shindig. There needs to be some kind of chaperone, in name at least, but there's an understanding that as long as there's no excessive property damage or injuries, no one will call the cops on account of underage drinking or other shenanigans.

1b. Mixing Tapes

-- *Music that triggers some kind of response*
I have what ya want, I have what ya need --
(The Chemical Brothers – *Music: Response*)

You need a mixtape/playlist for at least the ~1 hour Party Scenes phase. This isn't trivial - the tone should match the kind of party (and thus kind of game) your group wants to play. Is it a party where relationships and unrequited love is going to be explored? A chill hangout den where people are mostly mellow, until a game of Truth or Dare comes out?

An upbeat dance party? A rebellious anarchist celebration? The music will help set the mood. If necessary, create an online radio station and just cut it off at the hour mark (but where's the fun in that?).

Here are some suggested playlists:

Melancholy

Billy Joel - Vienna
Jim Croce - Operator
Johnny Cash - Hurt
Pink Floyd - Wish You Were Here
Otis Redding - A Change Is Gonna Come
Coldplay - The Scientist
Gorillaz - Feel Good Inc.
Portishead - Roads
Pearl Jam - Nothing as it seems

Rise Up

The Who - Baba O'Riley, I'm Free
Reel Big Fish - Sell Out
Kanye West - Power
Old 97's - Won't Be Home
Jay-Z - 99 Problems
The Rolling Stones - (I can't get no) Satisfaction
Rage Against The Machine - Calm like a Bomb
Audioslave - Be Yourself
Janis Joplin - Summertime

The Chill Zone

Pink Floyd - Comfortably Numb, Dark Side of the Moon
David Bowie (& Seu Jorge covers) - Changes, Life on Mars
Lauryn Hill - Can't Take My Eyes Off of You
Red Hot Chili Peppers - Road Trippin'
The Doobie Brothers - Black Water
Bob Marley - Turn Your Lights Down Low
Depeche Mode - Waiting for the night
The Doors - Riders on the Storm

Something to move your hips to

Al Green - Let's Stay Together
Redbone - Come and Get Your Love
Santana - Oye Como Va
Jackson 5 - I Want You Back
Van Morrison - Moondance
Elvis Presley - Jailhouse Rock
Daft Punk - Around The World
Beyoncé (ft. JAY Z) - Crazy In Love, Single Ladies
Michael Jackson - Beat It

Bright Indie-ish Dance Party

Islands - Vapours
Jukebox the Ghost - Somebody, Hollywood
Ra Ra Riot - Dance with Me
Justice - D.A.N.C.E.
Chromeo - Night by Night

Silly

Ida Maria - I like you so much better when you're naked
Reel Big Fish - She has a girlfriend now
Weird Al (decade-flexible!)
The Darkness - I believe in a thing called love
Electric Six - Danger High Voltage
Gunther - Ding Dong Song (You Touch My Tralala)
Aqua - Barbie Girl

J-Pop

Kyary Pamyu Pamyu - Invader Invader
Sambomaster - Seishun Kyousoukyoku
The Yellow Monkey - My winding road
FLOW - Go!!!
Scandal - Shunkan Sentimental
Polysics - Catch On Everywhere
Golden Bomber - Dance my generation

1c. Creating the Characters

*-- Well, who are you?
I really wanna know --
(The Who – Who are you?)*

Identity.

In the days leading up to graduation, you've had two questions on your mind. You think you know the answers to both. Write them down (broad strokes, quick sentences).

- Who are you?
- What does your future look like?

Now, keep the index card with the answer to the "Who are you?" question and give the other to the player playing the character who is your best friend. Obviously, you don't want someone to have several papers and one with none, so if you can't make up your mind, everybody should give this paper to the player on their left.

*-- What is happening in his head
Ooooh, I wish I knew --
(The Who – Go to the Mirror!)*

Look.

This is high school - you either have cultivated a specific look or cultivated a careful blase attitude about not caring how you look. Decide your physical appearance, clothing,

mannerisms, and some quirks. Alternatively, if you can put your hands on an old yearbook fitting to the setting you have all created, you may choose a picture to inspire your character's description.

Take a few minutes to describe your character to the other players. You are also known for at least a significant trait or two, so go ahead and state the obvious. The other characters know you at least a little bit about you, after all.

*-- No one knows what it's like
To be the bad man --
(The Who – Behind blue eyes)*

Secrets.

There are a couple of other things on your mind - secret things. They mainly should be about or involving other characters at the table. Here are some starter questions:

- What happened between you and another character that you don't want to get revealed?
- What happened last year that only you and one character know about?
- Why were you hoping that another character wouldn't show up?
- What do you want from _____, knowing that they will never give it to you?
- _____ has seen you during your lowest moment, what was that?

Jot down 2-4 of these thoughts; give one paper to each player, and obviously the secret should be tied to his character. Work out the answers to these questions together as a group, seek for agreement because you're involving another player's character with this story and therefore influencing someone else.

You can also have a few secrets unrelated to the others' characters. For example:

- Why did you think you might not be able to attend this year?
- What is your worst fear?
- What is your secret pain?

Keep this paper for you. The players should have an equal number of secrets. If you want a shorter session, have just one secret per player; else every player should have two secrets.

1d. Defining the Secret Goals

*-- Can you see the real me? --
(The Who – The Real me)*

Secret goal.

Over the course of both phases of the game, your character has a "secret goal" driving them. These goals somehow need to involve other player characters. Players can choose which goal they want, or randomly draw. The result of this goal is shared with the rest of the players, but it is assumed the other characters don't initially know.

Here is a list of broad goals with some examples of a concrete goal to write down.

- Love
 - It's your last chance to win the heart of [PC].
- Power
 - You want to get the upper hand over [PC].
 - You want to get free of the influence of [PC].
- Vengeance
 - [PC] has wronged you. Tonight is your last chance to make them pay.
- Redemption
 - You have wronged [PC] in the past. You must make it up to them, you can't live without gaining their forgiveness.
 - You have been a jerk in school, and don't want to be remembered this way by [PC].
- Hedonism
 - Escalate the party's risk factor, convincing [PC] to do more dangerous and irresponsible behaviors.
- Avarice
 - You intend to steal something meaningful or valuable from [PC].
 - You need to convince [PC] to help you steal something from the party venue.
- Fame
 - You want your name to be whispered with awe in the halls of your school for decades to come. Whatever stunt you're going to pull off, you need the assistance of [PC].
 - You want to impress [PC].
- Sadism
 - You crave for pain, the one of [PC].

2. Introduction Scenes

*-- Remember when you were young,
You shone like the sun --
(Pink Floyd – Shine on you crazy diamond)*

The first scene should describe each character coming to the party location, alone. It can be useful at this stage to let everyone share again both their conception of themselves and their future plans. These should be stated as certainties.

This also might be a good time to mention any recent events that everyone would know in that character's life. Here are some examples:

- They recently pulled a huge prank in the gymnasium.
- They recently had an explosive breakup.
- Their family died in a car crash a few weeks ago.

Play this intro as a short and dictated scene. You don't want to spend more than a few minutes on that first scene.

*-- Come in here, dear boy, have a cigar,
You're gonna go far, you're gonna fly high --
(Pink Floyd – Have a cigar)*

For the second scene, describe your impressions of the party location when you arrive, as well as how you're presenting yourself. What did you bring with you?

Lastly, everybody should together describe the party location. What does it look like? What are your personal accommodations like? Do you have your own room or just the promise of some space on the floor of a friend's room?

These should be short, dictated scenes lasting no more than a minute or two each.

3. Party Scenes

*-- Let's dance to the song
they're playin' on the radio --
(David Bowie – Let's Dance)*

Roleplay the party. As a character, advance your secret goals, do risky actions. As players, take turns, have people bounce around proposing scenes and who is in them, with any players not involved suggesting stopping points for the scenes. Try to move around the spotlight. You have one hour of game ahead of you, no more, no less. Everybody should keep track of the pace of the game: scenes should be fast and furious.

Put on the table four Risk tokens per player. If you want a shorter session, you can have only three tokens per player.

When it's your turn, you get one Risk token if there is any available on the table. Because you're taking a risk, you must describe how in the fiction your character is doing something crazy and/or dangerous. Something bad may happen to you personally or to the party in general, you choose. It should be something bad but without any risk of death for you or anybody else, maybe mild injuries in a worst-case scenario. Anyway, there shouldn't be too many disastrous consequences.

Here are some examples:

- You accidentally start a fire.
- Something bad is discovered in the basement, the cellar or in the attic.
- You are smoking pot on the rooftop.
- A wild animal attacks you.
- You break something extremely valuable in the house.
- You lose someone or something.
- An NPC crush confides in you that they have a crush on someone else.
- An authority figure arrives (like, for example, the chaperone).

You could decide to do something even more crazy and/or dangerous to gain another Risk token. It can be something specifically worse for you because of the future you're

planning for your character, if what you're doing is especially detrimental to your stated future.

Alternatively, you can gain another Risk token if your action is related to one of your own secrets (one that is not related to the other players' characters).

Example: It's Bob's turn. In order to gain one Risk token, he has to frame a scene where he does something bad for him. He says that he is smoking pot on the hotel's roof. Fair enough. Even better, Bob gets a second Risk token because he wants to be a doctor and a drug conviction would make that future much harder to realize.

Also, another character may join you in the crazy and/or dangerous stuff you're doing if its player can find a link between your two characters. Maybe his character will do something with one of the secrets you gave to him. Maybe this character is the target of your secret goal. In any case, the player takes a Risk token from you.

Let's change things a little bit. It's Alice turn. Alice and Bob are on the same roof and they smoke together. Later, they go to the edge of the roof and lean over it. It's Alice's turn, so she gets two tokens because she's attending college on a sports scholarship, which a physical injury would jeopardize. But Bob's secret goal is to impress Alice, so he takes one of her tokens.

If another player steals you a Risk token during your turn, you can choose to raise the stakes and do some even crazier shit. This time you'll have to describe how your character make the situation far way worse and more dangerous. Now, some serious injuries or really dreadful consequences may occur. You take this Risk token from the table firstly; and if you cannot, you take it from any character with whom you can find a link, using your secrets or goal, but preferably not the character already in the scene.

For example

- You get or cause an injury (losing fingers, getting burnt, stabbing someone).
- You start vomiting and getting sick, maybe from food poisoning.
- You start shivering, having fever, getting sick.
- You start having serious hallucinations, maybe having ingested some drug without knowing.
- You are involved in a sexual mishap.
- An authority figure arrives (like, for example, the cops).

It's still Alice's turn and Bob has taken one of her tokens because he's an asshole like this. That means she would gain only one Risk token with this scene, so she decides to raise the stakes. She dares to jump from rooftop to rooftop in order to avoid Sam who were coming also on this very crowded roof. Being on a rooftop, in company of Sam would have reminded her that hey had sex together, same circumstances, same period of the year. So she jumps and, well, falls down. She breaks her leg. The pain is awful but she drinks a lot and can stay at the party, even if she will be crippled for a few months. And, yeah, first thing in the morning, she will go to the hospital.

You describe together the scene and have a little chat, introduce little details about your characters. Again, a scene shouldn't last more than a few minutes or, let's say, at the very most, no more than two songs.

Then the next player, in clockwise order, takes his turn.

4. The Tipping Point - a Death

*-- Things they do look awful c-c-cold
I hope I die before I get old --
(The Who – My generation)*

The end of the mixtape, roughly 1 hour in, represents the end of the party. The music stops and someone screams.

The character with the least amount of Risk tokens dies. That player should take a moment to describe the circumstances of the death. The manner of death can be anything, but it should be sudden, surprising, and preventable by the player characters.

The other characters were either at the scene itself or somehow otherwise had a chance to prevent what happened (or directly had a hand in it). They should have as many scenes as it takes to establish what each person was doing at the time of death (or to have a hand in the death). Each say what they could have done to save the character and why they didn't. There might be overlap, but what's important is that each character can imagine a scenario where they could have prevented the victim's death.

The victim's player then gives to the other players his Risk tokens. He could explain why he does that, giving them to the characters he feels were the most responsible for his death or characters with whom he had the strongest links or he spent most of his scenes. Anything works. The idea is, the more tokens he gives to one player character, the worst it is.

5. Interrogation Scenes

*-- What'cha gonna do
When Sheriff John Brown come for you? --
(Inner circle – Bad boys)*

After the death scene, the police arrives at the party location and the victim's player takes on the role of the lead investigator.

Take a few moments to give a name to the police officer and a brief description of how he arrives at the party location and takes control of the situation.

The police then drives the characters, even notable non-player characters previously described during the party scenes, to the police station and keeps them all in a room adjacent to the interview room, where they will be interviewed one at a time. The characters can get a bit of privacy to have conversations with each other, but they can't leave the room.

The officer questions the player characters, beginning with the one possessing most of the Risk tokens. In case of a tie, the police officer decides who goes first. Risk tokens should be treated like “evidence” of the character’s wrongdoings.

They play the scene, the officer asking questions, and the student trying to defend themselves. As the police officer, don’t spend too much time with uninteresting questions and try to skip directly to the unnerving questions. You may play the “good cop” or the “bad cop” but, either way, your goal is to find a culprit.

- The student character can choose to tell the truth, revealing one of their secrets and why it has a link with the death of the victim. If the story seems convincing, the police officer takes away the paper concerning the secret revealed. That secret cannot be used anymore, even by the other players.
- They can also throw other player characters under the bus, lying or telling the truth about why they are somehow responsible for the victim’s death. If the officer accepts the story, the character gives one Risk token to the other character; two, if they have a link with them (like a secret or a goal).
- The character can finally lie to cover someone’s else responsibility if there is a link between them. If the officer accepts the story, they take away the shared link. Now, the player character between those two, with the most Risk tokens available, puts one token on the table.

Alice has the most Risk tokens in front of her, so she goes first. Bob, the dead, was joking all the time with her since they were kids, so when he choke himself to death, she thought he was, as always, pulling one of his stupid pranks on her. The secret is removed from the game.

Or maybe she can tell the police officer that Sam has hated Bob since, like, always. And he knew about Bob’s peanuts allergy but he offered him nevertheless a peanuts cake. And yeah, that’s a stupid way to win Sam’s heart, but, you know, teens... Anyway, Alice gives one of her Risk token to Sam with a disarming smile.

Or, same story but different choice, Alice can cover Sam’s part in Bob’s death because she tries to win his heart. Maybe Sam had no idea about Bob’s allergy, or maybe Alice saw that Sam gave to Bob a cup of punch or stuff and not at all the killing peanuts cake. If the police officer is gullible enough, they remove their shared connection. Now, Alice has five Risk tokens and Sam only 3. Alice gets rid of one of her token and puts it on the table.

The Interrogation scenes can be focused on how each of the characters has responded to the same question. If asking about something that hasn’t been established yet, the player characters can run a flashback scene, possibly with the dead character in it.

You should take two turns with each character at the very most. Play only one scene if you want a shorter session.

At the end of the Interrogation scene, the player with the most Risk tokens is the one who will be convicted of the crime. He will spend the rest of his life in a jail. Or worse...

6. Secret Goal Vote

*-- Though I campaigned all my life
towards that goal --
(Neil Young – Campaigner)*

The players, beginning with the dead student/police officer player character, should give one Risk token each, eventually and first of all from the pool on the table, then from their own pool, to another player character, even one not remaining anymore. They should award it to the player character who, in their opinion, has taken the most risks to fulfill a secret goal or, if none has been achieved, to the one who pursued it the most fervently.

Obviously, the dead character has played only half of the game, so little disadvantage here, but that's okay.

7. Epilogue Scenes

*-- I think I've reached that point
where giving up and going on
are both the same dead end to me --
(The Cure – End)*

The player characters should take a moment to tell short epilogue scenes. It should be a short montage sequence about their characters and each scene shouldn't take more than a few sentences.

To narrate a scene, the player needs to spend one Risk token. That means the more token they have, the better the future they describe will be. They can frame the following scenes, without skipping any of them:

First epilogue: Describe how you leave the party venue. What have you left? Who is not your friend anymore? Who do you see differently?

Second epilogue: Describe how the media are relentlessly trying to ask you questions, how they invade your privacy. Are you publicly speaking about what happened? How are you badly depicted?

Third epilogue: Describe how you are welcomed by your family or your friends. Do they blame you or do they comfort you? How are you dealing with this disaster?

Fourth epilogue: Describe the weeks later, when you meet students who were at the party. How have you changed in good, compared to them?

Fifth epilogue: Describe the future that you will actually achieve. Does it look like you thought it would? How is it a better future than the one you had thought initially?

At that stage, the dead student / police officer player character, if they want and if they have received Risk token(s), could narrate epilogues with one or both of their characters, as they see fit. After all, a ghost is always a good creepy ending.