

Third Date

By Susan Weiner

A game about relationship building and consent. Players interact with a partner to define their characters, go on the eponymous third date, and explore the budding sexual relationship through touch and consent gaining.

Game Set-up:

Print one Character Sheet, Relationship Sheet and Debrief Sheet for each player.
Print one OOC/IC card for each pair of players.

There are two ways to run this game. One is advance pairing, and one is pair at the game. If your players know each other well, you may prefer at the game pairing, to let people make their own decisions. If your players do not know each other well, advance pairing is recommended if possible. If you choose, you can do advance pairing at the game by having your players fill out a paper sheet and reserving a little extra time.

For advance pairing:

Have everyone fill out a questionnaire with the following information:

- Name:
- Age:
- Gender: (we strongly recommend freeform here)
- What age-range are you ok being partnered with?
- Are there any genders that you would prefer not to be partnered with?
- Are there any players you would particularly like to be partnered with?
- Are there any players you would prefer not to be partnered with?
- Please put the following genres in order from most to least interesting:
 - Romantic comedy
 - Tragedy
 - Soap opera
 - Romance novel
- Is there anything else that we should know?

Once you have this information, pair people up within their restrictions. If possible, people who are interested in the same genre should be paired up.

For at game pairing:

Ask people to choose a partner however they would like, before beginning the game. Please do a little check while this is happening to make sure that no one seems to be being pressured into a pairing.

Facilitator Script:

In this game, you will be playing one member of a couple. They are just beginning a relationship, and feeling out each other's likes, dislikes, and boundaries. You will begin by working alone to design certain aspects of your character and your partner's character. Then you will come together and share those aspects and describe your interactions so far. At that point, the game will begin, with the two of you going out together on your third date. As is canonical in certain parts of American culture, the third date will lead to going back to one of your homes and some degree of sexual intimacy as determined by the players. For some pairings and some characters, this game may end in sex, for some pairings and some characters there may be no sexual intimacy at all. Either is fine as long as it works for the players involved.

This game may involve intense emotions, and complicated intimate experiences. Please take care of yourselves first. If at any point you need to break character, back off, or leave the scene, please feel empowered to do so. We will use Cut and Break as safewords in the game. Break means "Please back off. This is too intense and I'm not feeling comfortable with it." If your partner requests a Break, please back down, and possibly release touch, but do not end the scene. Cut means "I need to end this scene immediately." Please respect both of these safewords and your own and your partner's safety. Before you begin, please discuss your touch boundaries with your partner.

Workshop:

Begin by shaking hands with your partner, introducing yourself by real name and giving your pronouns.

Within the touch boundaries that you have established with your partner, establish and maintain touch. After you have done so, ask your partner for permission to do something. It should not be sexual and should involve their body in some way (eg. Shake their hand, pat their shoulder, poke their nose). As long as they are comfortable with this request, they should give consent. Then you may take the action. Switch roles and repeat.

Next, ask consent for a different non-sexual action involving your partner's body. This time, the other person should not consent. Practice accepting the refusal of consent without breaking intimacy. Switch roles and repeat.

Pregame:

Start on your own. Answer the listed questions about your character. For each question, decide whether your character's partner would already know it about your character. If so, check the box to the left.

- What is your character's name?

- What is your character's gender?
- What public fact about your character would your character most want their partner to know?
- What does your character want out of this relationship?
- What is one thing your character loves?
- What is your character's biggest fear?
- What is your character's deepest secret?

Answer the following questions about your characters relationship to their potential partner.

- What is something you really like about the other character?
- What is something you dislike about the other character?

Now come together and read each other's sheets. If it is something that your character does not know, you should still read it, but remember that your character does not have that information. Whatever the other player wrote that they like or dislike about your character is true about your character, although you may interpret it through a different lens.

Work together to answer the following questions. When working to design your history, try to operate on a "Yes And" framework. Whenever possible, accept what the other player says and elaborate rather than rejecting it. One person should take point on planning the first date, and the other should take point on planning the second.

On your first date:

- What did you do?
- What was the best thing that happened?
- Something disastrous happened. What was it?

On your second date:

- What did you do?
- What made the experience most memorable?
- What was the emotional tenor of the relationship at the end of the date?

For your third date (coming up now):

- What is the plan?

The Date:

At this point, the date begins. Play through the date, starting from when you meet up. At some point, you will decide to take the date somewhere more private. When this happens, the date portion ends and you move onto intimacy.

Intimacy:

Throughout the intimacy portion, you should be maintaining physical contact in some way that is comfortable to both of you, unless the intimacy is broken. Please do not kiss or touch any body parts that are generally considered to be restricted to intimate touch. At this point, please take the time to recheck your touch boundaries with your partner.

In this game, intimacy is simulated with a verbal consent mechanic. Feel free to continue the conversation as seems appropriate during this time. If, at any point, you would like to change the state of physical intimacy, ask your partner for permission. This may be done in any way that seems to fit as long as it is clear that you are asking and clear what you are asking. Please feel empowered to say no to any request. Each pair has received a card. On one side it says "IC/OOC" with a white background. On the other side, it says "IC Only" with a black background. If you reach the point where the player boundaries have been crossed or something has been asked that would violate the rules of the game to do out of character, flip the card to the IC Only side. Either the asking or the responding party may flip the card to the IC Only side at any point. At that point, out of character physical contact will not change, but in character consent may continue to be asked and given or refused.

If consent is clearly asked and clearly given, it is considered that the action has occurred for the characters. Refusal of consent means that the action for which consent was asked does not occur, but does not automatically end the physical intimacy. Physical intimacy ends when physical contact is broken. At that point, take a few minutes to wrap up any in character conversation, and then the game will end. Thank your partner out of character, using their out of character name.

While this game is about the experience of dating and the formation of intimacy, not all dating relationships lead to sex. Some characters may be asexual, some pairings may not work out, some players may be uncomfortable playing that through, or sometimes the scene may simply not go that way. If you never get to the point of flipping the card over and moving into sexual intimacy, that is also perfectly fine.

Debrief:

Come back together with the other pairs. Team up with someone who was not your partner. Going back and forth, talk to them about your emotional experiences in the game.

Please follow these rules during debrief:

- **The third person rule:** when talking about something that was done at the larp, avoid the use of the first and second person. Not "You screamed at me" but "Your character screamed at my character" or (even better) "Ophelia [your character] screamed at Polonius [my character]".
- **Confidentiality:** what is said in the debrief, stays in the debrief, unless it can be anonymized. Common sense provides many exceptions to this, where

sharing an anecdote is perfectly OK for all those involved, but that doesn't need to be said explicitly.

- **No interrupting** each other. Let the current speaker finish.
- **The door is open:** you can opt out of anything at any time without giving an explanation. If you don't want to talk, don't.

If you feel that you need support that they cannot give, or vice versa, please call a facilitator over. One person should interview the other, and we will signal when it is time to switch. When it is your turn to talk, describe your experience in the game, from beginning to end. The interviewer may prompt after you are done speaking with follow up questions. We suggest starting with the following questions if they are not covered, but do not feel obligated to stick to these:

- How do you feel after this experience?
- What did you find surprising or challenging about this game?
- How did this experience change how you think about consent?

At the end of the debrief, if you are comfortable doing so, exchange information with your debrief partner. If you feel the need to talk about the LARP later, this provides an outlet.