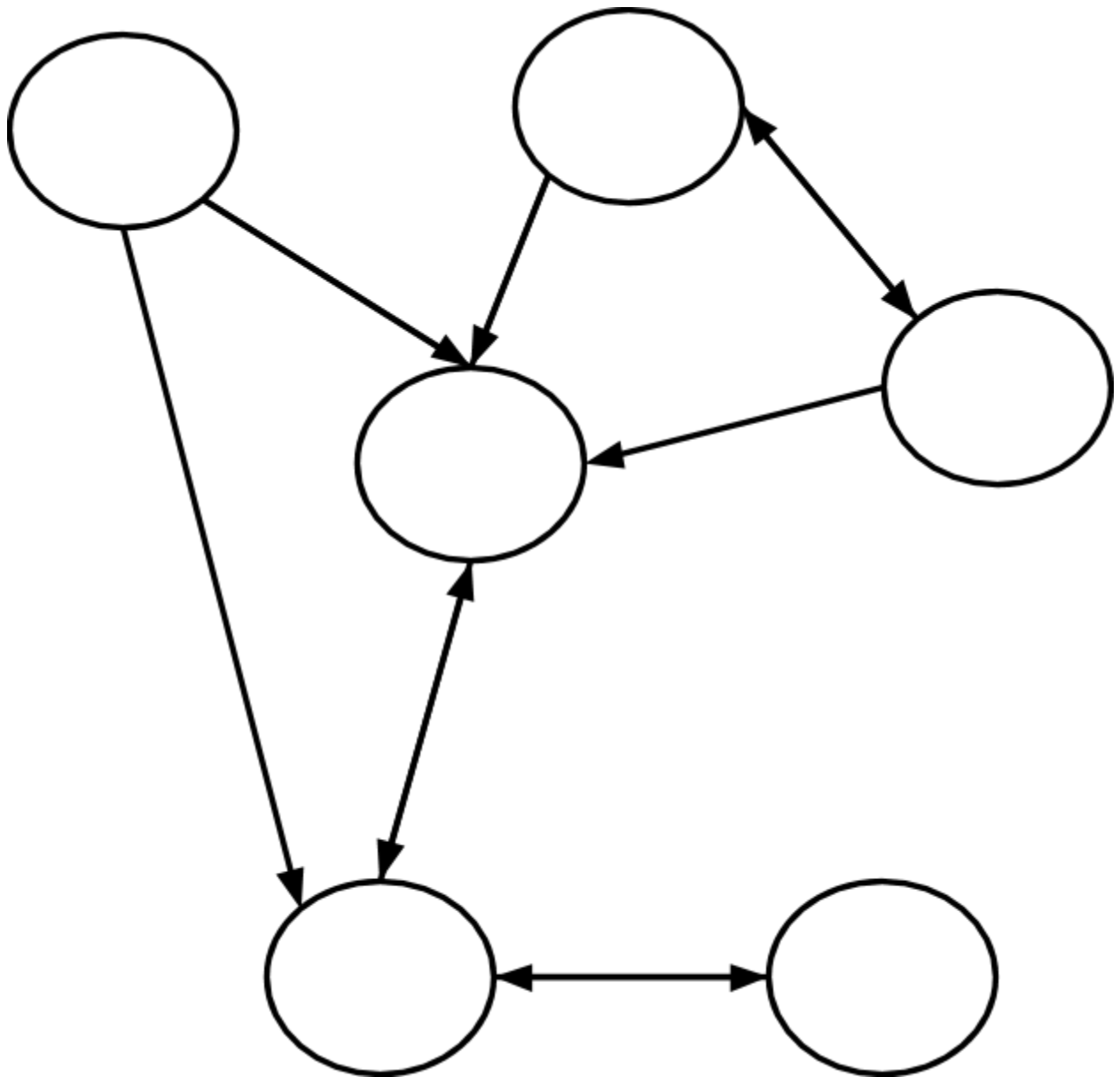


What Is Love?



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# What Is Love?

## Basic information

### Number of players: 4 - 10

Number of game masters: 2 is preferable

Run time: ~ 3 h

Presentation/explanations/bridges: ~ 90 min

Role playing: ~ 110 min

### Material (printed out):

- Character sheets
- Name tags for the characters
- Lyrics for the karaoke songs
- Relationship map
- Overview of the game with approximate schedule (see Content)

### Material (other):

- Headphones and some kind of music players with access to the character songs. This can be arranged by the game masters or be brought by the players.
- If possible, a video playlist with the chosen karaoke songs and a beamer. The Karaoke could also be done with a loud speaker and printed texts, or by playing the karaoke songs directly from a computer, but it is not as smooth.
- Some fruit or other snacks that the players and the characters can eat during the game.

### About how the scenario is written:

- Explanations to the game masters are written like this.

- Things that we would like the game master to pay extra attention to are written in bold.

- Ideas for phrasings that the game masters can use when they are instructing the players are written in italics and with increased indent.

# Scenario

## We Go Together: Presentation

10 minutes

*Hello!*

*We are the ones that will play “What Is Love” together. We are looking forward to it!*

*Our names are X and X and we will be leading the game.*

*Let’s just hear everyone’s names once before we start to prepare the game.*

*“What Is Love” takes approximately 3 hours to play, 1 hour of preparation and follow up, so 2 hours of actual role playing. As game masters, we will give you clear frames in a number of scenes that follow each other. We will tell you when every scene starts, ends and other things that you need to know. We might also at any point give you instructions and ideas that you can integrate in your play.*

*“What Is Love” takes place around the annual club competition of a karaoke club: from the start-up of the season, through the rehearsals and right up until the performance night. It is a relaxed competition between friends without prestige, so silly games, nonsense and the opposite of singing talents are warmly welcome in this scenario, as are solemn conversations about the nature of love. Each and everyone of your characters will actually have their very own perspective on what love is, and the scenario will be about the collisions or encounters between these different perspectives.*

*Before we start, we would also like to add that if you need a break in the middle of playing, it is fine to just yell out that you are going to the bathroom, or sit at the side (specify an off-game area in the room) to take it chill for a while or to say “stop, let’s cut the scene!” if that feels necessary. If, for any reason, you need to leave before the scenario is over, we would like to know that you are leaving for good and we would like you go get back to us afterwards, so that we know a bit about what happened.*

## **I Wonder Who Is Like This One: Choosing characters 15 minutes**

The players walk around in a room where there are character sheets spread out. Every character has the name of a song. Tell the players that they will not sing the songs: they are just the starting point for the characters. There are also a music device next to every character sheet, playing the song of the character. The player chooses a sheet and reads it through while listening to the song.

The player will first read a description/interpretation of the perspective on love that is at the base of the character (represented by the song). Then, there is a possibility for the player to choose an “obstacle” that makes it more difficult for the character to handle their love during the course of the scenario. This is nothing obligatory; it should be possible to play this game entirely “feel good”. Finally, the players gets to fill in a form that creates some specific traits for the character; gender, age, living conditions and so on.

**Please note that the players don’t have to write a lot. This is just a simple sketch. Also be clear about the fact that the living conditions, work place, etc. might be connected with other characters later on. Because of this, the players should keep their answers general, rather than coming up with very specific ideas about their characters’ lives.**

Apart from filling in the form, the players will also write the name, the pronoun and the age of the character on a name tag. Ask the players to wait with putting them on until after the first dance of the competition night (next scene).

## **What Is Love: The first dance of the competition night 15 minutes**

*The scenes of the scenario do not occur in chronological order. This dance takes place right after the karaoke competition where your characters take part has been judged. It is a sort of memory from the future, where your characters are dancing their adrenaline out after a fun and exciting club competition.*

*This dance also has a function in the creation of your characters and their relationships. You will choose different attractions, friendships and important connections that can form the events of the scenario for your characters. We will not talk to find this out, but instead use hand gestures in a wordless dance.*

*The hand gestures are:*



*To hold out the palm of the hand. This means that the character considers themselves as a friend of the character standing opposite to them. A minimum here is to reciprocate by putting your palm against the other: this means that your characters are buddies. There are probably several of you that know each other from earlier through the karaoke.*

**Remember to show this in practice, either with the help of the other game master if there are two of you, or with the help of one of the players if you are game mastering alone.**



*To interlace the fingers/clutch someone's hand. This means that the character feels physical attraction to the one who's hand is being clutched. If both are doing it, the attraction is mutual. Another possibility when someone holds up the palm (as in the gesture above) is to clutch it even though the other one is not doing the same. This symbolizes a one-sided attraction.*

**Remember to show this in practice, either with the help of the other game master if there are two of you or with the help of one of the players if you are game mastering alone.**



*To place the finger somewhere on someone's forehead. This means that the character considers the one pointed at as a soulmate, someone who understands the character on a deep level. If both are pointing at each other, the soulmate-ship is mutual, if not it is one-sided.*

**Remember to show this in practice, either with the help of the other game master if there are two of you or with the help of one of the players if you are game mastering alone.**

*In other words, there are three levels of connection to play with, and it is possible to create a relationship where someone is both mentally and physically attracted, while the other one is only interested in friendship, and it is also possible to not only pair up but also make combinations of three or four characters that feel something particular when they are together. However, the connections you make in this dance should not be understood as a destiny that you have to play out at any price, but they are possibilities to explore in the game.*

*Now you might wonder: How can my character know who the other characters are when there are not even name tags yet? The answer is: Love is blind. We will ask you to look at the room through the eyes of the character and try to choose attractions and friendships based on what your character is experiencing - but you will inevitably choose something that surprises your character, since you don't have access to all the information. Tova and Mikael wrote the scenario this way because they are interested in the surprises of desire.*

*Remember that your character can have several soul mates or attractions simultaneously, and that it is often more interesting to play the more relationships you have that are charged with meaning. The scenario is specifically about encounters and relationships, so don't hold back - create several relationships, at least three!*

*Very soon, the first dance of the competition night will begin. No one needs to dance beautifully here; it is completely legitimate to be both embarrassed, stiff and very relaxed in this karaoke club. You have just finished a competition and this is the first dance of the evening.*

**During the dance, which lasts for the duration of Haddaway's *What Is Love?*, the game masters will follow the interaction of the characters as closely as possible and thus collect information about the relationships that are created.**

## **Ring of Fire: The clarification**

**25 minutes**

After the dance, the players will present their characters off-game in a sharing circle, now for the first time displaying their name tags to each other. Every player has maximum one minute to present their character, starting from what has been written on the character sheet and from what happened during the first dance.

The purpose of the sharing circle is partly to give the players a chance to discover the characters that have started to form, but also to give the game masters a chance to build stories that tie the characters even closer together. The game masters should make sure that the presentations stay focused on the aspects and relationships that are important for that sort of story-telling.

Other information, such as the character's hobbies apart from the karaoke, dreams in life and so

on can be added as a bonus and to flesh out the characters if it is a small group with plenty of time. A small group also allows more co-creation with the players.

The sharing circle is closed by the game masters who, with the players' character presentations as a starting point, will briefly story-tell how the characters know each other and how they are connected. Who lives with whom, who works with whom, who is married to someone they interacted with on the dance floor and who is new in town? Here, it is up to the game masters to find and reinforce interesting connections that can help the scenario. The game masters supply a frame to start playing from.

The game masters have to keep track of time actively. Especially if the players in the group are many and have a tendency to talk a lot, it is probably best to stay away from discussion and instead build a story that is exciting to listen to and where the relationships are as clear and ready-made as possible.

**Relationships to be inspired by:** partner, tenant, landlord/lady, friend, sibling, colleague, classmate, common political circles (extra relevant for the songs His Girl and Did You Give the World Some Love Today), parent, ex, facebook stalker...

## **Touch Me: Technique for physical intimacy**

**10 minutes**

Here is a suggestion for how the technique could be introduced:

*It might be interesting to play at different kinds of intimate physical contact in this scenario. If you do, we ask you to be perceptive of each others and your own boundaries. That is, if you play at physical closeness, you must be able to receive both a yes and a no. Physical closeness is not a must, but a possibility in the scenario.*

*In this scenario, we are imagining that a hug is a hug and a slow dance is a slow dance, but if the characters want to make out, you as players might for different reasons want to show that without making out yourselves.*

*In this scenario, you can show that the characters are making out by touching each others faces with your hands. This can be done in many ways. You can show that the characters are drunk, shy, elaborate or many other things while making out. To give you the possibility to try out some of the options, and to make you feel that this is a technique available to you during the game, we will now have a short practice round, kind of like a*



*line dance make-out. You will practice as your characters, so imagine how you characters would do this.*

*Line up in two lines, facing each other (if you are uneven numbers, one of the game masters can join in). You will now get to try the making out technique during one minute with the person you are facing. Walk up to each other. Try out a possible way to make out using this technique as your characters (wait). Start to find a way of ending it. Now one minute has passed.*

*Now, we ask all the players in one of the lines to take a step to the right so that you are facing another line-dance-making-out-partner. Try out the making out technique as your characters but with a new approach this time (wait). Start to find a way to end it. Now one minute has passed.*

*Now, we ask all the players in one of the lines to take a step to the right again so that you are facing another line-dance-making-out-partner. Try out the making out technique as your characters but with yet a new approach this time (wait). Start to find a way of ending it. Now one minute has passed. And the line-dance-making-out is over.*

## **I'm So Excited: Start of the karaoke season**

**30 minutes**

The scene is divided in two parts.

The first part is about the characters hanging out with their “groups” on their way to the first meetup of the season. This is an opportunity to get the play going between individual players.

The game masters will start by telling the story of how the characters arrive to the start-up meeting for this season's karaoke competition. With whom did they come there, what were their expectations and alliances? The story for each character should not be long, maybe a couple of sentences, but since the characters are also connected, a fraction of the group can also share a longer story.

**Example:** Maybe the characters Nina, Soleil and Rani live together in a communal house and have been eating ceviche together in a restaurant right before arriving to the meet-up of the karaoke club? Maybe they are really up for getting to know new people, since Laila has been bragging about having convinced her entertaining cousins (who she is arriving together with) to

join?

When the story-telling is over, give instructions for where each group scene takes place and give clear instructions for when the play can begin. If there are no more than two groups, you might want to cross cut between them, so that the players can hear what is going on in the different character groups. If you are three groups or more, let the scenes run in parallel - this is mostly a "warm-up scene". Also, make sure that the different groups get to the meet-up with good timing. They don't have to arrive simultaneously.

As a game master, you can at any point intervene and give new information in order to get the game going, for example by saying: "*Nina starts to be stressed out and would like to get to the clubhouse now*" or "*Leila has this idea that everyone will sing Hello Hello Sunshine to Solveig when they meet*".

The second part of the scene takes place at the clubhouse, where the characters greet each other and the members who are new to the karaoke club are presented. It is decided who will sing what song and who will practice with who (maximum 4 groups). The karaoke songs that can be chosen are already set. There are only 6 songs, so in a bigger group some characters will definitely choose the same song. They will then perform together in the competition. The ones that sing together don't have to practice together. The choice of song should somehow be connected with the character and their view on relationships, in what way is up to the player.

When the relevant decisions have been made and the time is up, the game masters can also tell a story of how the night ended and try to find stories that enable good play if they have the inspiration to do so.

**Here, we recommend a small break**

**5 min**

**You Are my Destiny: Preparation for an important conversation 20 minutes**

The characters meet to practice their karaoke songs in no more than 4 groups. In this scene, the game masters are "jump cutting" (directing who speaks) between the different meetings so that everyone gets the chance to push their stories forward. The game masters can also explain what happens between the jump cuts and give the players instructions that they can use when starting their scenes.

The title of the scene, “preparation for an important conversation”, means that the character at some point during the course of the scene tries to formulate something that is important to them. Questions to the characters that the scene can linger around could be for example “Why did you chose this song?”, “What do you want to express?”, “What is important to you in your life?”

The scenes that the game are jump cutting between can take place in a park, at home in the shower, in front of the mirror, on the living room floor, in the clubhouse, on the phone, during the lunch break - depending on what makes most sense for the characters and their stories.

After the end of the scene, the players need to make a quick decision:

- *What character/s does my character want to talk to now, and what do they want to say?*

Inform the players about the conditions of the scene before it starts.

## **I’m Coming Out: an important conversation**

**20 minutes**

This scene consists of a maximum of six mini-scenes all under time pressure. The characters are meeting (according to their own/their players’ wishes in the last scene) on a bus stop where one person's buss is soon arriving, in a break at work, right before the fire alarm goes off, while waiting for a telephone call... or they might have to write their confession with a bad pencil on a paper napkin before the character working at the café arrives with the bill, etc.

We estimate approximately two minutes as a good length for the scenes if they are as numerous as six. Think of the fact that you can sometimes add scenes to each other without compromising the idea. Maybe Solveig and Rani both wanted to talk to each other, while Leila wanted to be alone with Rani. This triangle can become exciting under the right conditions!

In these scenes, it might become even more important to force certain series of events through storytelling or hands-on tips about what to do to the players, especially if a player freezes a bit and can’t really come up with a way of saying what the character needs to say. Only exceptionally - if it is obviously part of a remarkably good play dynamic - may a character fail to say what they wanted to say.

In these scenes, it is also an option to use other players as extras; that is to say, they get a function that underlines and lifts the experience for the players that each scene focuses on.

They don't have to play their own characters in this case, but can be people on the bus, guests in a café, a salesperson, etc. What is important is that the extras know why they are there.

Example 1: A person is at work and in a hurry, constantly interrupted by customers while simultaneously trying to tell a friend something important. The task of the extras is here to stress the characters. Example 2: Two very shy persons that have to talk have ended up next to each other on the subway for a couple of stops - right opposite to a couple who are heavily tongue-kissing. The task of the extras here is to make the characters intimidated.

## **We're In This Together: the karaoke competition      20 min**

The competition is really not a competition. The question of who "wins" is entirely dependent on what the drama of the scenario benefits from. Still, this scene makes use of the nervousity of the competition - the players should always know that the last song that is called out will be the "winning song". The "winning song" is however sang only once, just like the other songs.

This scene is also a countdown to the end of the evening and the scenario. It is not just a question about who wins or loses - for every song played, the characters know that they have even less time to say what they need to say, do what needs to be done, learn what they need to learn. Remind the players that they can build up to this scene, so that the tension gets elevated the further the evening proceeds.

All the songs in the karaoke competition are performed in the same way. The one/s that will sing are called out by the game masters, who become the masters of ceremonies for the karaoke evening.

**Note that you need to explain the ritual of dedications in practice for maximum clarity.**

**Example:**

- Game master 1: *We now proudly present Mikey with the song Wicked Game! Welcome to the stage, Mikey!*
- Game master 2: *Hi, so I'm Mikey obviously and I am going to sing Wicked Game, that I would like to dedicate to Tova since she was the one that really made me understand the emotions described in this song...*

If several characters are singing together, they can choose if they want to make individual dedications or agree on a common one.

The dedications should preferably make a reference to something that has occurred during the game, and it is great if they also create even more options for play through introducing reasons for the other characters to be fascinated, pissed off, curious, worried, etc.

After the dedication has been made, the song is performed. How long every song lasts depends on how many songs there are, but 2 minutes/song is more than enough even for a run with just a few songs. While the song is going on,, the characters in the audience can have different conversations with each other, calling, whispering or talking. In contrast to how performances are usually done, it is thus completely legitimate for the players to not direct all their attention to the ones singing.

Every song ends with a big applause.

The karaoke competition proceeds in the same manner for each song, with a presentation of the song, a presentation of the characters singing and a dedication that can spark interaction. The song is performed while the ones who are not singing have a chance to continue playing.

The “winning song” is announced in this way: *“and now tonight’s winner/s will perform their blasting contribution - [name of song] with XX!”* Just like before, the character/s will dedicate the song to some other character/s, and then perform the whole song while the rest of the characters are interacting.

## **Storytelling: a link to the future**

**3 minutes**

Here, the game masters are leading the players into the last scene of the scenario. There is a possibility to catch threads from the different stories that have been played out, and give direction to what has been left loose. It is also fine to just give a brief summary of the situation, as so:

*After the winning song was performed, you were all dancing the adrenaline out of the body to “What Is Love”. During the evening, you continued dancing, talking, thinking and singing. As the last song will play, your bodies will be both more tired and softer. The make-up has started to wear, someone smashed a glass, everyone feels both happiness and grief now that the night is coming to an end. When the last song stops, this scenario will also be over. But now the song starts, and everything is still possible.*

## **I Want to Know What Love Is: Last dance**

**5 minutes**

The last dance is played out to “I Want to Know What Love Is”, and everything is still possible. During this song, it is ok to talk, just dance, watch what is going on or something completely different, depending on what fits each character best.

## **This Is The End: final meditation**

**3 minutes**

The game masters are guiding a meditation taking farwell of the characters. It is not lengthy, but remember to leave space for thought - try to answer the questions in your head a bit before you continue reading.

*Stand somewhere in the room where you have some space for yourself. If you like, you can close your eyes, because I will now guide you through a small final meditation.*

*Think of your character.*

*What does your character know that you would like to bring with you out of here and make a part of yourself?*

*Safekeep that knowledge somewhere inside of you where it can stay until you need it.*

*Think of yourself.*

*What do you know that your character doesn't? What would you like your character to bring with them from their encounter with you?*

*Think of a piece of advice that you could give your character.*

*Imagine that the character is listening to your advice, thanking you and telling you that your advice is valuable.*

*Imagine that you are thanking your character for the two hours you just shared. Imagine that you tell each other goodbye with respect, and rest assured that if you ever meet again that encounter will also be respectful.*

*Now stay closer to yourself than to your character. Breath calmly with your own lungs.*

*Notice how the the ground feels under your own feet. Listen to your own heart.*

*We as game masters would like to thank you all for playing the scenario with us. We will make a small closing circle where everyone has the possibility to say something about the game to the whole group. You can open your eyes and find your way back to our shared space when you are ready, and come and sit down with us.*

## **The Circle Game: closing circle**

**20 minutes**

If there are many players and you are running out of time, do not hesitate to set a time limit for the closing circle so that each player gets for example maximum 1,5 minutes to speak. It is important that everyone gets the chance to say something, and it is always possible to pick up discussions and more lengthy reflections afterwards. Try to stick to the order of the circle, especially if you are more than 4 players.

Questions that the players can answer in the circle:

- *What have you felt during the game and what do you feel now?*
- *What ideology of love did your character have?*
- *Did your characters view on love somehow change during the game?*

## **Characters, overview**

1. Baby Revolution
2. Blank Space
3. Did You Give the World Some Love Today, Baby?
4. Even if Love
5. Halo
6. I'm His Girl
7. I'm Your Man
8. Love Hurts
9. Marathon Kiss
10. P1 Song (this is not a commercial song, you can only find it on Tova's computer)

11. The Greatest Love of All
12. Time after Time
13. Woman in Love

## Karaoke songs, overview

As a game master, you can of course choose other karaoke songs than these, but you should preferably decide what songs to use in advance - this is not about the players or characters picking their favorite songs, but having to choose between a limited amount of songs in the scene "I'm So Excited" where the characters first meet. Our selection criteria for the karaoke songs is that they retell a dramatic situation that the characters can identify with and use to "tell their lives" somehow.

1. Mamma Mia - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2wsM9qF3Ns>
2. Must Have Been Love - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvXrinxgh-U>
3. These Boots Are Made for Walking - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nht\\_o1\\_ltvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nht_o1_ltvI)
4. Heaven Is a Place on Earth - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wZI\\_KgCzas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wZI_KgCzas)
5. I Wanna Dance with Somebody - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lxtluu1mA0>
6. Wicked Game - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2TW97\\_sCl8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2TW97_sCl8)