

# The Gaze of the Beast

A dark tale of wild desires and the longing to be seen



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## Introduction

*Something is watching you from the shadows. You can feel it like a shiver up your spine and an alarming awareness that something is about to happen, something horrible. Yet, you cannot make yourself leave. Instead, you stay, and you wait as you sense a dark presence moving closer.*

In this classical vampire story, an encounter will take place between the human and the beast. This will however take many different forms. Some will encounter the dark creature as non-human coldness, refined and elegant, yet deadly as a machine that operates without compassion. Others will meet it as a gruesome animal with untamed and violent desires. In short, the roleplay is about being caught by a hungry gaze, the courtship which follows and the final violent resolution of the story. At its core, it is about wildness, flesh and the mechanisms of desire, violence, submission, and resistance.

### **The scenario in short:**

*How to play:* Participants play in pairs; one as the vampire and the other as the prospective victim. In this way, several versions of the story will take place simultaneously. For each version of this dark tale, the beast will be manifested differently, and the victim might not be a victim at all. It is in many ways a very physical game; however, the level of touch will be up to the players to decide. During the game, there will be a voice-over guiding the players and giving instructions.

*Pre-game workshop:* Before the game, players will do physical exercises, as well as prepare the characters they wish to play. This includes deciding on what kind of vampire they want to explore (from the gentleman to the beast) as well as the characteristics of the so-called “victim”.

*Lipstick:* Before the game, if possible, an email should be sent to the players asking them to bring a red lipstick and to dress in black for the game. The lipstick is used in the game to symbolize certain things about the characters. See more in the pre-game workshop under *character work*.

*Acts:* The roleplay is played in three acts: 1) *The Gaze*, 2) *The Encounter* and 3) *The Resolution*. Each act will take approximately 20 min. In between the acts, some in-game activities will also take place.

*Props:* One chair per participant is needed for the game. The chairs should be put together two and two (to symbolize park benches) and spread around the room at an even distance.

*Technical:* Each bench should be lit with a spotlight with cold, bluish light. This light should change to red to indicate when an act is coming to an end and an intensification of the scene should take place (approximately when there is 5 min left). When the light goes out the act is over. Green light could be used in-between act 1 and 2, and purple light in-between act 2 and 3. Music, sounds, and smoke are used to enhance the game.

## Overview

Here comes a short overview of the steps in running the game. As a game master it is your role to facilitate this process. The whole process will take around 3 hours.

**1. Starting circle – 10 min**

Introduction and briefing about the game and its purpose.

**2. Warm up and exercises – 40 min**

**3. Character work – 20 min**

**4. Short break – 10 min**

**5. The game – 90 min**

**6. Sharing – 10 min**

Round up by gathering everyone together in a circle. Let everyone share something about their experience.

## Information to players before start:

There are three acts, and (as a game master) I will lead you through them by giving you instructions during the game. In a minute, I will also give you a brief overview of what will happen during these acts. But first, I just want to tell you **a few things that are good to remember before we start playing:**

1. When play is taking place in pairs, ignore other players. Stay inside your own bubble which consists of a park bench inside a spotlight.
2. When the spotlight changes from white to red it means that the act will end within approximately five minutes. At this time, the scene should be intensified. Whatever you are doing or feeling, start expressing it more clearly. Level up the game!
3. When the lights go out, the act is over. However, things will happen in-between the acts. Just follow the instructions.
4. There should be no actual attack before the end of the last act. The attack will (most likely) result in the death of either the victim or the vampire.
5. In the end of the last act a song will be played. This is good to know so that you can pace your play. When you hear the song, get up and move if you haven't done so already. At this time, you are encouraged to use the whole room. I also encourage you to play in slow-motion if you want to. This will make it easier to do the attack.

## **An overview of the acts:**

In the first act, the player being the prospective victim will go for a midnight stroll and end up sitting down on a park bench (you choose which one, but there can be only one person per bench). The vampires will lurk in the shadows as animals and watch from a distance. During the intensification (red light) the victims will go into a trance, which means they cannot move only watch and feel what is going on. At this time, the vampires will take human form and will approach a chosen victim and explore them closely by sniffing, looking, breathing with them, but without touching them. When the light goes out, the victim screams as loud as they can, and the vampires will flee into the darkness.

In-between the acts, there will be a power-play between the vampires.

In the second act, the vampires take a seat on a bench (one per bench) and the victims will choose which bench to sit down on (next to the vampire). A conversation will now start. The vampire is leading the conversation. And the victims are under a spell which means they cannot lie or avoid answering a question completely truthfully (even if they really want to). During the intensification, the vampire will move closer in order to attack. This will be interrupted by a loud sound of dogs barking. The vampires flee into the shadows. The victims stay seated on the bench.

In-between the acts, a dream scene will be experienced.

In the third act, the victims start by sitting down on a bench. The vampires will once again appear to sit down next to their chosen victims. The focus of the conversation is on the dreams they have had. During the intensification, the attack will take place. It can happen before or during the last song, which is a waltz. During the waltz, all boundaries are gone, and you can move freely in room, and you are aware of other vampires and/or victims (if you wish to be).

When the song ends, the play ends.

## Pre-game workshop

Warm up and exercises:

### 1. The Killing Moon – warm up

Play the song 'The Killing Moon' by Echo & the Bunnymen.

*Instructions:*

Move around the room, up and down and around. Role on the floor. Run fast or go slow.

### 2. The Gaze

*Instructions:*

Sit down in two circles one inside the other and facing each other.

We will now do a few exercises which is to do with how we look at each other.

Start with a neutral gaze. Observe but do not judge each other.

Watch each other now as if you are good friends. Like this is someone you know well and enjoy being with. Like this is someone who you have shared many memories with. Now watch each other like this is a dear friend who you haven't seen for a long, long time and you so look forward to hugging them. Now watch each other like this is a dear friend who is about to slip away, leaving forever, maybe dying. Stretch out your arms towards each other. Notice how this feels in your body.

Now close your eyes and relax your arms. The outer circle moves one step to the right.

Open your eyes and start watching each other as if the other person is someone you find really disgusting. Like their face is rotting right in front of you. Watch them as if you knew they have just killed someone with their bare hands. Watch them as they have just killed someone you care for. Notice how this feels in your body.

Now close your eyes and relax. The outer circle moves one step to the right.

Open your eyes and start watching each other as if the other person is a delicious piece of meat covered with soft skin. Like you would like to take a big bite from their neck and enjoy the blood spraying out of them like a fountain. Like you feel really hungry now because you haven't eaten in a long time. Like you can hardly restrain yourself and you are getting ready to attack. Notice how this feels in your body.

Now close your eyes and relax.

### 3. The magic safety words

This game includes violent scenes as well as (a possibility for) intimacy. To make sure we respect each other's boundaries, it is therefore important to practice using the BREAK word as well as TIME OUT.

#### **First exercise 5 min:**

##### *Instructions:*

Get together two and two. Decide who will start being the attacker.

As attacker, move in on your victim and begin slowly to find a way to give them a fake bite.

As victim, for the purpose of this exercise, choose to resist the attack.

As you struggle together, one of you should say BREAK at least once. When the word has been said don't stop the struggle but loosen your grip and/or really slow it down to give space to the other player. Also practice say TIME OUT at least once. In this case, the play should stop completely, and you should give each other a few moments to recover. Then talk together to find out if it is ok to continue.

(As game master, break the exercise after a few minutes.)

Quickly share with your partner how this felt for you. Then swap roles.

#### **Second exercise:**

##### *Instructions:*

Get a new partner. Decide who will start playing the dominant role.

If you have the dominant role, take the lead on getting more intimate with your partner. Your goal is to, in the end, lick them on their face. Remember to start slowly. The receiver of these advancements should say BREAK at least once. When the word has been said, don't stop playing but clearly tone down the intimacy. For example, instead of a lick on the face, go for the hand. Or stop touching altogether and simply use the space around the body to work with.

(As GM, break the exercise after a few minutes.)

Quickly share how this felt for you. Then swap roles.

**When both exercises are over, as GM, check in with the group how this was and if the players now feel empowered to use these words to set their own boundaries during play.**

#### 4. Becoming Animal

*Instructions:*

Lay down somewhere on the floor. Close your eyes. Curl together in fetus position. Imagine that you are inside the womb being rocked gently back and forth. Your limbs are developing into a body, a body which is not human. However, you do not yet know what this new body will be. You are just enjoying being safe in the womb.

It is now time to be born. Keep your eyes closed but imagine coming out of a long warm dark tunnel and out into the cold light. Stay on the floor while you take your first breaths of air. It is now time to start exploring your new body.

Start by being curled up. Then slowly, slowly start to explore each of your limbs. Are they long or short? Soft or hard? Do you have a snout or a beak? Perhaps claws? Move and explore your body while you stay laying on the ground. Are you tiny or huge, heavy or light?

Now it is time to get up and move around. Start by slowly getting up and moving forward. Do you jump or crawl? Flap your wings or leap into motion? Take your time to find your body.

It is time to explore the world around you. Ignore others for now, but use your eyes, your ears, and your nose to investigate your closest surroundings. Which is your sharpest sense? Use this and enjoy having the ability.

Now start being aware of the other creatures around you. When you are ready you can start to make contact. Explore your relationship with these other creatures. Are you more powerful than they are? Do they scare you? Do you want to play with them? Or could you eat them?

Your creature will now start to evolve. As you move around the room, notice how your body is step-by-step becoming more human-like. Your back starts to straighten. Your legs extend. Get up on two legs and move forward but stay in an in-between state of animal and human.

Finally, become fully human, stand still, and close your eyes. Feel how the animal is still lurking inside of you.

Character work:

Now it is time to decide who is playing vampire and who is playing human in this game. Half of you will be humans and half of you vampires. To do this I want you to sit down on the floor and close your eyes. Now check inside of you what you long to explore. Is it the predator inside of you? Or perhaps the wild part of your psyche? Or do you feel like killing off some part of you that you no longer need? Or is it perhaps to find yourself on a journey from submission to resistance that is appealing to you?

If you have decided that you want to be a vampire raise your hand without opening your eyes. I will pick six of you.

Ok, now open your eyes...

Vampires now pick a partner among the humans. This does not need to be the person that you decide to play with later. Sit down with your partner. You will now help each other make a few decisions regarding the characters you will play. Remember that you are always free to improvise during the game and to make any changes to your character that feels right to you. However, it can be good to have some idea of what you are aiming for before we start. Therefore, I want you to explore a few questions together.

1. **What is your character's level of wildness, meaning how close are they to being an animal?** This might feel mostly relevant for the vampires – who can be almost more animal than human at times, but it can be good for the human characters to explore this question too. Is your character very 'cultured' in the sense that they are suppressing any wildness inside of them, or are they more in contact with these sides? This can show in the way they move their bodies (e.g., how stiff, or agile they are), the way they speak (e.g., in the tone of their voice), the way they use their bodily senses (such as hearing and smell) and how much they allow themselves to openly show their emotional states. On one extreme you have the controlled and sophisticated British gentleman and on the other you have a werewolf. *Where is your character on that scale?*
2. **What is your characters level of exuberance, meaning how full of life and energy are they?** Here you can think of Nosferatu in the one end of the scale (all dried up) and Lestat on the other (full of boisterous life-energy). Although this is a reference to vampires, I think it works for humans too...

Now here is where the lipstick comes in. All characters that have decided that they are high on the level of exuberance should wear red lipstick during the game. This includes both vampires and humans. So, remember this before we move on.

3. **How does your character react to exuberance and/or wildness in others?** Do these things provoke your character or fill them with desire or with shame? Or perhaps all these things? In any case, why do they react in this way?

You now have a few more minutes to put a little bit more flesh and bones on your characters if you want. Discuss their backstory and current life situation and most importantly what drives them to act. The main question is what will you get the most out of playing?

**Now we have a small break before we will start the game!**

*For those who are using it, it's time to put the lipstick on.*

## 1. The Gaze

➤ Music track: 'Deep Meditation 3' by AMBIENT MUSIC THERAPY

Vampires: Start in the corners of the room. Lay down and wait like an animal watching its prey.

Humans: Start walking around in the room. Imagine that you are out walking late at night. It's a warm night, yet you feel a bit chilly somehow. You hear strange sounds but try not to worry about them. After a while choose a park bench to sit down. You want to watch the moon for a while. You enjoy finally having some time for yourself – away from work, from family and all obligations. Although you feel a little bit lonely too. But it's ok. You can talk to yourself or call someone on your phone or perhaps talk to your dog if you have one. Or be silent. It is up to you.

Vampires: Start moving slowly and explore your animal body. Do you have wings or paws? Feel them, stretch them out. Feel your power, how you can easily rip something apart with your sharp teeth. Imagine the pleasure of ripping and tearing into the flesh. Lick your lips. Think of the orgasmic feeling of drinking blood. Warm and thick and with a taste that is both sweet and salty at the same time. Yes. Yes. So good. You start to breathe heavily, and your body starts to shiver of the very thought of it. Hmmm... you can taste it. Suddenly a hunger arises inside of you. You want it. You need it. You must have it. You will have it. It is time. Feel the excitement building inside of you. Now scream, howl, shriek, or growl out your hunger, desire, and joy towards the moon!

Humans: You suddenly now that someone is coming for you. But you cannot move. It's like you are glued to the bench. You breathe fast, your heart is hammering. Your eyes are wide open. You are starting to sweat.

Vampires: Start moving around in the room looking for a victim. Watch them. Breathe. Lick your lips. You know they can feel your presence.

Humans: You try to calm yourself down, but it is difficult. You have this weird feeling in your body. You want to scream but you cannot. You want to run away but you cannot. A burning sensation is building up inside of you, like a fever. You're hot. You are really hot. You breathe heavily. You want to touch yourself, but you fear that someone might see you. You might do it anyway.

Vampires: Start to get closer to your victim. Breathe with them.

***Intensification – red light is showing:***

Vampires: You now take human form. Take a moment to explore how you move in this form. When you are ready, move in to explore your victim at close range, sniffing them, watching them closely, and almost, almost touching them.

Humans: You are in a trance. You cannot move or make a sound, but you are wide awake to what is happening to you. Breathe, breathe, breathe.

***When the lights go out:***

Humans: The trance is broken. Scream as loud as you can!

Vampires: Disappear into the corners of the room and return to your animal form.

Humans: Gather on one side of the room. Lay down close to each other in fetus position and shiver. Breathe together. Comfort each other.

Vampires: Gather at the other side of the room.

***Vampire power play – green light is showing:***

➤ **Music track: 'Spoiler' by Hyper**

Without words greet each other and find out who is the most powerful among you. Bow to that beast to show your respect. Then rest for a moment. Think of your victim. Feel your hunger.

**2. The Encounter**

➤ **Music track: 'Deep Meditation 2' by AMBIENT MUSIC THERAPY**

Vampires: The most powerful among you may now take human form and slowly step into the room and sit down on a park bench, waiting for their prey. The rest can follow. Find a bench to sit down. Wait.

Humans: Start walking around the room. Perhaps a day has passed, perhaps a month. It doesn't matter. The moon is full, and you can feel something stirring inside of you. A longing. An excitement. You will meet someone. Someone special.

Pick a bench, it doesn't need to be the same as before. Walk towards what you know might be your own death and sit down.

Vampires: You lead the conversation. Play with your victim. Push the conversation towards more and more intimacy and weirdness. At the same time, think of the blood moving around in the victim's body.

Humans: You must answer every question, revealing your innermost secrets, even if you don't want to. This comes as a surprise to you. Perhaps you enjoy it, or perhaps it fills

you with shame. Anyhow, you feel weird. Hot again, so hot. You want to take something off, to show your skin, but don't know if you should. Maybe you do it anyway.

***Intensification – red lights are showing:***

Vampire: Keep talking as you slowly move closer getting ready for an attack.

Humans: Your feelings are suddenly intensified. Disgust, desire, fear, anger – whatever it is. You cannot hide anything any longer.

➤ **Music track: Barking dog**

Vampires: Flee into the night. Find your corner. Lay down.

Humans: Sit and breathe while you realize you are still alive. Cry, scream, or do whatever you need to do.

***When the lights go out:***

Humans: Go to your corner and lay down on the floor.

Now the dreaming begins for everyone.

***Dream scene – purple light is showing:***

➤ **Music track: 'Pulses of Information' by Rival Consoles**

Close your eyes. Imagine that you are floating on a vast dark ocean. Underneath you and above you are endless amounts of space. You breathe into the water. Long breaths. Something inside of you are changing. You can feel it. You welcome it. It is your power growing. Breathe it in and feel it inside your body.

There is someone else with you now. You can feel it, but you cannot see who it is. You want this person more than anything. You would die to have them. Yet they are slipping away. You run after them into a dark tunnel. You run and run until you see a bright light getting closer. You know that there inside the light the person is waiting for you. Suddenly you know who it is. You throw yourself into the light and something amazing happens. You die and are born again in the most violent and beautiful manner. You see it unfold in front of you now and you remember all the details. When you wake up, you know the end is near.

### 3. The Resolution

➤ Music track: 'Deep Meditation 2' by AMBIENT MUSIC THERAPY

Humans: Start walking around in the room. For a last time, you are out walking in the night. Something is calling you and you cannot refuse. Yet this time things are different. This time you come prepared. Finally, you know what it is you want, and when this night is over, nothing will be the same again. When you feel ready, sit down on a bench, and wait.

Vampires: Start in your animal form. Again, you are getting into the night hungry for blood. You can feel that your power has grown. And so has your hunger. You must have blood tonight, or you must die. At the same time new feelings are stirring inside of you. You're thinking of the dream you had. You cannot wait to smell your prey, to touch them, to feel their beating heart, to taste their blood. The excitement is running through your body. Enjoy your animal form for a while and when you feel ready, transform into a human and find your victim. The dance will begin.

***Intensification – red light is showing:***

➤ Music track: 'The Vampire Masquerade' by Peter Gundry

***When the lights go out:***

Lie down on the ground just breathing and relaxing.