

CABANA ON THE
LAKE OF THE DEAD

DRINKING GAMES
AND READING GUIDE

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“Our Byzantium”

Drink: Virgin Mary with gin

How to play: You need 3 friends and a map of the continental United States. (Please cut out Alaska and Hawaii.)

Each person should have a penny (value of 1), nickel (5), and dime (10). Place all of your coins on the states of your choosing. You or any other player may not have more than one coin on a state at any given time.

One of you represent the Byzantine Empire Expeditionary Forces and one of you represents the United States government. Your forces can move only the allotted value of each coin. Take a drink for every state you have captured.

Pennies cannot be destroyed, but neither can they destroy.

Okay, so this makes nickels kind of pointless, and they’ll probably be destroyed anyway by being captured by a dime—but we needed a third coin and a quarter would just be TOO powerful, so we’ll deal.

Play continues until: 1. a peace treaty is signed, or 2. no one can remember whose turn it is, or 3. one player holds the entire border state of Canada and Mexico, plus Kansas.

Questions about the story:

1. Is the narrator a protagonist, antagonist, or just an asshole?
2. When do you think American soil will be invaded next, anyway? And by who?
3. At times, the hallucinatory nature of reality comes to the forefront, rears its ugly head. And yet it's not clear whether this a process of will, chance, or suggestion? So which is it?
4. Why do you think a Pinto could ever have transgressive and/or relevatory properties?

“Skinny Dipping in the Lake of the Dead”

Drink: Anything. It doesn't even have to be a liquid.

Players: Any.

How to Play: Go down to a large body of water with the game players. Watch the waves, and the moon, and how the clouds stagger against the surface of the moonlight, making it look like there are steps cut into the sky, and you could just climb them. Observe any flight life: gulls, planes, etc. Think about what their desire is, on that plane, and how they are going to get there. And why they're hurtling into the air of the future with such abandonment. And why you're paying attention NOW about just how fucking scary the future is, even for that gull checking out a piece of bread. Is there a stray net in its future? An oiled mottling? But, watching the waves on the hood of your car, with the other players, begin to realize that on some level it's going to work out in the end. That barbarism will not varnish everything. Then at some point it will be time to go.

Questions about the story:

1. How does the development of intra-state high-speed rail affect the geographical implications of the story?
2. Do you think Owen would have made it in the music business? Why or why not?
3. How long do you think the relationship between our protagonist and Jane will last?

“The Fourth”

Drink: Shots, alcoholic or not.

Players: 2-3. Each person also needs a computer terminal. And an egg timer. Or rough equivalent.

How to Play: When the timer begins, each person gets 2 minutes to find as many kids web pages for government agencies as possible. Each person should write down the names of the agencies. Each person should take a shot for each agency found. The person with the most agencies is the winner.

Questions about the story:

1. Inter-departmental turf wars are nothing new. However, can you think of any other point in American history when such turf wars have caused so much detriment to the fabric of our country?
2. What’s the weirdest Fourth of July celebration have you ever been to?
3. Our protagonist at the end, in pretending the surveillance at the end didn’t happen, made a distinct--albeit passive--choice. Why do you think he made this choice? What is he afraid of? Can you identify with that fear, and that need for comfort?

“If I Leap”

Drinks needed: None. Kind of. See below.

Players: This is a drinking game best done alone. Otherwise, telepathic signals may get crossed and is that a risk you really want to take?

How to Play: Visualize, in your mind, your favorite drink in your favorite location. Close your eyes if that would help. Whatever works for you. Keep this in your mind, and imagine drinking it. Use hand motions to “cup” the glass, and lift it to your face. Imbibe.

Now, imagine that the imaginary drink that you are drinking is bottomless. It can go on forever. The glass is a magic glass. When do you stop? How can you stop? Imagine friends of yours telling you to stop, stop. If you can visualize five of your friends telling you to stop, stop, what is wrong with you, and you keep on chugging, you have lost.

Questions about the story:

1. The story takes place, for the most part, around a skyscraper that appears largely uninhabited. Have you ever been in a very large building by yourself before? How do you think the building felt about you? Its architects?
2. What was the longest distance you ever fell? Did it appear to happen slowly or quickly?
3. The Goodbye Girl has an odd nickname. So does Chicken Little. At what point in their young lives do you think each of them, respectively, gave themselves those nicknames?

“The Centaur”

Drink: One glass of water and one glass of alcohol of any kind, and one more glass of alcohol of any kind.

Players: 3

How to Play: This is a game of nerves. Mix all three drinks in equal portions (three thirds). The first person to drink this concoction wins. This is supposed to be a grand metaphor about bifurcation of the soul and the perils of dualism, but it’s really the equivalent of the kind of “science” experiments you used to do on different flavors of pop as a kid. Except that, in war and times of scarcity, it makes sense to dilute one’s alcohol, to make sure there’s more next week. And on long journeys. I think that covers it. Oh, and the three-thirds is like the type of potion a hero or heroine in a fairy tale would have to drink. So there’s that as well.

Questions about the story:

1. What kind of provisional government do you think the invading army would have set up, had they succeeded?
2. When was the last time horses were used in combat?
3. Did the nurse save the protagonist?

“Cuttlefish”

Drink: Anything Genoan. It doesn't matter what. Consult your local beverage vendor.

Players: Any number.

How to Play: Pour a glass of [drink in question] for each player until the bottle is gone and dry. Then imagine this empty bottle is a shell, or carapace. Find a piece of concrete flooring, perhaps in a basement. Each person should make a wager as to the lowest-needed height in order to break the bottle. The person who makes the lowest height bet should drop the bottle accordingly. Proceed until bottle breaks in at least two places. If the bottle has any cracks or any indications of a failure of structural integrity, it is vitally important that another bottle be emptied through drinking and the procedure begin again.

Questions about the Story:

1. The final creature at the end of the story is actually based on a vampire squid. How did it get there? On the table?
2. “Fish and fowl” often gets bantered around, as if these creatures have something in common. But, really, do they? How do the two usually interact?
3. The Genoans, although a great sea power, also controlled land and villages along the coast of Italy. How do you think the inland communities would feel about Genoa, going willy-nilly all around the Mediterranean?

“The Caliber”

Drink: Something popular, like Natural Light.

Players: Any number of. The more the better in terms of physical protection.

How to Play: This involves crashing a party and playing one of the aforementioned games in this little pamphlet. Bonus points for a fraternity or sorority party, one with lots of “whoos!” This is a good sign that you have reached an excellent site for this research/gaming opportunity. If approached in the party by those who claim to belong there, patiently explain that you are performing a drinking game for a short story involving a cult and the FBI, and that you require a little time and a little patience on the part of the hosts. If that doesn’t work, offer your Natty Light.

If you manage to finish one of the other games, you win.

Questions about the story:

1. This story was written before 9/11. How would you imagine you would read into FBI’s fulcrum of benevolent power if you had read this story before 9/11, as opposed to now?
2. What kind of parents would name their child Star?
3. What was the strangest postcard you have ever received?

“The Excavation”

Drink: Anything alcoholic. Wine, eucharistic or otherwise, is preferable.

Number of players: any.

Put on three separate pieces of paper your three greatest fears. Allow no one to see them. Trade one at random with another player. Take a drink for each fear that is still your own. Then trade another fear, and continue turn by turn. The last person to have any fears left wins the game. Then everyone places their fears in a coffee can and buries them in the back yard.

Questions about the story:

1. The narrator finds himself at the end of the story in a subbasement with a TV. Is he trapped? Does he see himself as a survivor, a survivalist, or dead?
2. If our two characters were light-industrial factory workers, do you think they would have had the same marital problems? What if one was an archaeologist and one was a bulldozer driver?
3. Have you ever seen, or been trapped in, a bog? What was it like? Was it creepy?
4. Does the depiction in popular culture of “archaeologist as adventurer” inform your reading of this story?
5. How do relationships erode besides the unearthing of archetypal objects from one’s past?

“A Keeper”

Drink: Anything flammable and fun!

Players: Any.

How to Play: Set your drinks on fire. The first to down one's drink wins. Calling the fire department results in disqualification.

Questions about the story:

1. If the pet goldfish you buried in your backyard when you were a kid had one thing to say to you, what would it be?
2. If our current president had a court painter, what kinds of subjects do you think he or she would undertake, to better memorialize the 8-year regime?
3. Do you think that being a keeper--in the throes of it--would involve actual awareness or self-consciousness of one's state? Did the queen, while a keeper, realize she was a queen?

“Fuming Woman”

Drink: Water from a spray bottle or perfumerie-type spritzer.

Players: 2

How to Play: The players should close their eyes. Each should spray the other person with the water, and try to replicate a certain mood or location. Each person should shout out “Mood!” or “Location!” before doing the spritzing. Each person should try to guess the location from the variances of the water, the level of spray, and the movement of the hand spraying the water on the other’s face. (E.g., Niagara Falls, crying after the dead of a grandmother, the last remaining patch of rain forest in 2070). The person who guesses first wins.

Questions about the story:

1. So what’s the deal with dogs and frisbees? What did dogs do for aerial play before the invention of Frisbees? Do you think that in medieval times there was some kind of substitute for a Frisbee? Surely a clay discus wouldn’t do the trick. Do you think that dogs’ psychosocial well-being was in any way stunted until the invention of plastics? (Okay, so these are a lot of questions--but think well on them. The fate of the world is in your hands!)
2. What do you imagine the Fuming Woman to be wearing?
3. What do you think the relationship is between circuses and Roman gladiatorial competitions?

“The Friendly Giants”

Drink: Those giant bottles of Bud or Colt .45 that you see in liquor stores that you never actually see anyone buy.

Players: 2

How to Play: You need a Monopoly board. Each of you can be whatever piece pleases you the most. Put the giant bottle of non-liqueur in the free parking slot.

Play a normal game of Monopoly, but BUY NOTHING. It is imperative that you buy nothing. The first person to go around the board once OR lands on Free Parking, whichever comes first, has to drink the entire bottle. And then goes to jail. And then wins.

Questions about the story:

1. How do you think our narrator would feel about astrology?
2. What would playing Monopoly feel like if the board depicted a gated community in South Carolina?
3. Agree or disagree: governance committees of suburbs are authoritarian and promote people staying the fuck away from each other?

“Quiver”

Drink: Moonshine, everclear, and/or something with 150 proof or more. Sangria does not count.

Players: Three and three only will the players be. There must also be a six-sided die. This really isn't a player but I didn't know where else to put it.

How to Play: Put the bottle on the center of the table. Each player must jot on a sheet of paper the stats for a character:

Power:

Smarts:

Karma:

Roll a six-sided dice for each character. One may disregard one of the rolls and roll again for a particular stat.

Each player must give a name to their character involving the letters of their first and last name, as well as the letter “x.”

The characters then find themselves in a tavern in a distant land. They have heard, from an old crone, about the possibility of the existence of a magical elixir, in the cave system that exists outside of town. The drink on their tables, is only the faintest simulacrum of that very drink, which bestows upon those who drink it--well, what? Transformative properties?

Do the three of you go? Each player-character, after taking a shot of the drink-in-question, must provide an eloquent and persuasive case as to why they must, or must not, go down into the caves to retrieve the magical bottle. Each player must take into the account of the score of 1-6 for each attribute as to how their character would approach this (perhaps dangerous) quest. After hearing all arguments, the characters must vote on proceeding or not. The two who win the vote are the winners, needless to say.

Questions about the story:

1. Do you think live-action role playing is an art form? Do you think it will be an art form in 10 years? 100?
2. "Belle appeared to be in over her head." Agree or disagree? Why?
3. What kinds of grades do you think our fine protagonist got in high school?

“Child Assassin”

Drink: None

Players: None

How to Play: No elixir can save you.

Questions about the story?

“The Exchanges”

Drink: See below

How to play: Play this game only with those you know, trust, and love.

Each person needs a completely different drink, a different species of drink: beer, wine, spirits, non-alcoholic if necessary, taurine-jolter, cola, juice, etc. etc. as needed. You make the call. Each person begins with one of their respective drinks just for starters. Everyone then flips a coin and calls that coin flip heads or tails. If you win, you get to pass your drink onto another person, i.e. a loser. If you lose, you have to take a drink of your own, as well as whoever foists their drink upon you.

If everyone “wins” the coin flip, everyone drinks (including multiple drinks).

Everyone “losing” the coin flip means no one drinks.

If one has multiple drinks and wins a flip, only one drink can be foisted off on another person per round.

Winning is...pretty much in the eye of the beholder for this one.

Questions about the story:

1. Do you think that personal identity is all that big of a deal when it really comes down to it?
2. In the story, the police are portrayed as ambivalent, chimerical figures. How do you think their fellow officers would feel about their body-switching shenanigans
3. Does holding a gun make you feel like this completely different person, like you could rob or protect someone more easily?
4. Why are parking ramps so often the locales of so many car chases?

“Salting the Map”

Drink: Beers under a dollar, preferably at a bar, at happy hour, 4-6 p.m, or 1 a.m.-close.

Number of players: 2

How to Play: You and your partner will think out loud the name of the beer and, if necessary, brewery, of the beers that are in front of you. It can be as complicated as you would like, with as much backstory as you would like. Each person takes a drink, and then takes a turn giving another detail about the beer in question. For example: “Baedfrouzer Brewery was founded in 1790--”

“I thought it was 1970!”

“Let me finish. Anyway, in 1790 ex-patriots from the Revolutionary War moved to Savannah, Georgia-Elizabeth’s Island and decided to make an honest living selling the strongest, most pure beer imaginable.”

“Oh, I’ll tell you what they did. They used the beer bottles themselves to hide messages for their patrons, who ALSO happened to be freemasons further up north--”

“Ridiculous! Keep drinking!”

And so on. When the narrative seems to inhabit, even vaguely, the same space-time continuum that you and your cohort inhabit, it's probably a good time to stop.

Questions about the Story:

1. For an entry-level job, do you think it is more important for the employer to provide the opportunity for transdimensional adventure, or health insurance?
2. If your city had an Ecrú line, where do you think it would go? If your city does not have a subway system, what would your city be like if it had a subway system?
3. Do you think the people in the company who were snickering at Casey really hated him, or were trying to just appear stronger and more cutthroat than they actually were?

“Home of the”

Drink: generic soft drinks from a super-grocery store, preferably with grape, orange, or strawberry flavoring.

Players: 6. If you don't have five other people to play this game with, each person should assume the identity of one or more player, as if they were possessed by another player, or players. You could play this game solo, and pretend to be inhabited by five other people, but it's not recommended. Seriously.

How to Play: First you're going to have to stand outside a Wal-Mart, next to the coin-operated horse. Drink a can for each person who uses it. If anyone [THIS TRANSMISSION HAS BEEN transmitted THROUGH OUR EAR SATELLITE, AND NOW THE PROPERTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSMISSIONS, MAY THE LORD PROTECT US!!! DEFIANCE COUPONS (Have a smile!) HAVE EXPIRED]

Questions about the story:

1. [LITERATUURE SHOULDN'T IT ONLY INVOLVE JESUS, WOULDN'T YOU THINK?!?]
2. [CHESS: A DEVILISH, NON-PENTECOSTAL GAME! what MAKES YOU THINK YOU'D LIKE TP PLAY IT?]
3. THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE ISN'T BUILT FOR THESE TYPES OF QUESTIONS! NOW YOU GO ON TO THE DRAG RACE!

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For more information on Alan DeNiro
please see his blog at
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