

THE DYING LIGHT

A game or ritual to end the year

SUMMARY

THE DYING LIGHT is a New Year's party based on more than aimlessly drinking until the clock hits midnight. It's a chance to end the year well and call in the next one surrounded by the people that matter to you.

THE DYING LIGHT is an evening of two halves: THE END and THE DREAM. In THE END, you will let go of the year that has just been—all of its bullshit and pain and crap. In THE DREAM, you will imagine and dream the year to come.

In THE END, you will gather around a fire pit (or other source of fire) and let go of the year that's been and burn your regrets and burdens. Towards the end of this phase, you should all eat dinner together (either make it beforehand or order it together), and then you'll transition into THE DREAM. In THE DREAM, you'll set intentions for the next year.

Towards the end of THE DREAM—before midnight—you should all leave the place you are gathered and walk to a natural place that might give you a good vantage point of fireworks. Think beaches, hills, rivers. If there's no good vantage point, you should just head to somewhere that makes you feel contemplative. When midnight hits, crack open a bottle of something, celebrate being together, and when you're all ready, head back to the event location. You'll collectively choose THE FIRST FOOT, then the hosts will announce THE LAST CALL and you can all have one last drink together, round out your evenings together, and then everyone can head home. All costs for THE DYING LIGHT should be split equally—including drinks, food, and transport home.

ATTENDEES

You should invite as many people as it is feasible to. These should be people you love and cherish, or the people they love and cherish.

MATERIALS

- A lot of index cards (some will require preparation, see next section)
- As many pens as attendees
- Something to make fire with
- Something to put fire out with
- A meal, either cooked or ordered
- A natural place you feel comfortable in, or which has a good view of fireworks
- Regular event-hosting paraphernalia (seats, cups, drinks, snacks)

PREPARATION

- Write “THE THRESHOLD” on an index card
- Prepare as many index cards as there are attendees with the following “THRESHOLD QUESTIONS” written on them:
 - What kept you small this year?
 - What was the biggest decision you made this year?
 - What was the biggest change you experienced this year?
 - What caught you off guard this year?
 - What are you most proud of this year?
 - What moment of this year took your breath away?
 - What hurt you this year?
 - What did you learn this year?
 - What did you risk this year?
- Prepare as many index cards as there are attendees with the following written on them:

WISH

What do you wish the other person can let go of in the next year?
- Prepare as many index cards as there are attendees with the following “STEPS” written on them
 - Something I will love about myself.
 - Something I want to achieve.
 - Someone who will support me through rough times.
 - Something I will dare to discover.
 - Something I will have the power to say no to.
 - Something I will make my surroundings cozy with.
 - Something I will do every morning.
 - Something I will pamper myself with regularly
 - Somewhere I will visit.

ORDER OF SERVICE

PART I: THE END

THE END should ideally take place outside, gathered around a fire pit or other source of fire. If it isn't feasible for this to happen, it should take place in a comfortable, reflective space, gathered around some candles with a bowl of water nearby. THE END is based around processing and letting go of the year that has just been.

ARRIVAL

As everyone arrives, greet them, ask what they'd like to drink. Explain that you are running THE DYING LIGHT so things may be a little weirder and more unconventional than any New Year's party they've come to before.

When everyone is sat at the fire, ask everyone to share an experience they have had in the past year that involved the drink they are currently drinking.

When everyone has shared a story, read the following aloud:

"The light of this year is dying and THE END has started. We are living in the final moments of this year, when anything might be possible and the world is more suggestible to our power.

Over the course of this evening, we will let go of the year that has just been, and find the most tender, hopeful parts of ourselves as we imagine the year to come. We will make new friends and cherish old ones. We will sink deeper into what it means to be alive here and now and we will sow seeds into the ground of the new year.

Now, we begin the ritual by entering into THE THRESHOLD."

Burn the card that reads "THE THRESHOLD", signifying the opening of the door to possibility.

THE THRESHOLD

During THE THRESHOLD, you should play low tempo, contemplative music with a repetitive beat. This can be popular music and doesn't have to stick strictly to this rule, but you're trying to create a reflective space. Think slow jazz, vaporwave, lo-fi, that sort of thing.

Read aloud the following poem:

*“From out of the chaos, a quiet
filled with aether. A thin place filled with the breath of gods.
Here, we might dream a future for ourselves
and burn a past.
We heed the call coming forth from the void
and find that somehow we endure,
here to stand another year.
We stand upon this blood and dust
to remember the flavour and smell
of possibility, nostalgia, regret.
Who were we in this past trip round the sun?
What were we feeling as fires raged
and cold filled our lungs?
What did we do when our last desperate shreds of self
seemed to escape us?
We call upon the dying breaths of this year
to cross into the threshold,
to pay tribute to all that has been and gone
and to chart a path forwards into the fog of the next. “*

Explain to each attendee that they will spend some time in THE THRESHOLD preparing themselves for THE BURNING by talking to someone they talking to someone they haven't spoken to much before. Ideally these should be one-on-one conversations, but if there is an odd number there can be one three.

Hand out the THRESHOLD QUESTIONS card to each pair/group. Explain that they should ask three of these questions to each other. Each person in the pair should ask different questions, i.e. when a question has been asked to one person it cannot be asked to the other. If anyone doesn't want to answer a question, they can choose not to and must not be asked why they don't want to. When a person is answering a question, the question-asker can only speak to ask further clarifying questions—they cannot give commentary or advice on the question-answerer's response.

After each person has asked and answered three questions, tell them to turn to the WISH card and speak their response to each other one by one.

As the conversation dies down, check back in with the group. How is everyone feeling? Did anything about their partner's responses surprise or interest them? Could they relate to their partner's experiences?

Then, read the following text aloud:

“Our worlds are stories that we tell ourselves to keep ourselves small. But we didn't write these stories. They told us these stories, over and over again. They broke us and told us they had the only story: that life is nasty, brutish and short; that this is the best we can ever get.

But stories can always be told differently. Different characters, different journeys, different endings. Sometimes we forget that new stories are possible, and we find ourselves lost and alone. To build a new story, we

must first release the stories that are not our own. We have to release this year with all its grime and rust. Now, we begin THE BURNING.”

THE BURNING

Change the music in some major way. It doesn't really matter how, just shift the vibe.
Hand out three index cards per attendee.

Read the following text aloud:

"In THE BURNING, we will externalise the baggage of the year by writing down three words onto three index cards, one word per card.

On the first card, you should write down a word that symbolises your lowest point this year.

On the second card, you should write down a word that symbolises what might still haunt you about this year.

On the third card, you should write down a word that symbolises your most peaceful moment this year."

When each person has written all three of their cards, have them approach the fire, say "This year has changed me, and for that I'm resentful/grateful, and now I let it go", and drop the cards into the fire. Each person can choose to say whether they are resentful or grateful. The person who is running the game/ritual should start, to give an example. There doesn't have to be a particular order to how people go up to the fire.

Once everyone has burned their cards, ask if anyone wants to share a story that's related to one of their words. If no-one wants to, that's fine.

Let everyone know that we are coming to the end of THE END. Once we end this portion of the evening, our attention will turn to the year to come. Knowing that, open the space to free conversation.

Read the following text aloud:

“As we approach the year’s final breaths, we need to cleanse ourselves of all that remains. Until the fire dies, or we get too cold, we will stay here, talking about the year that lays behind us. At any point, anyone may extinguish the fire to end this portion of the evening. They are the flamekiller, and they remind us that all things must end—whether good or bad.”

Once someone extinguishes the fire, everyone should head inside. That ends THE END. You should now eat together without the structures of the game/ritual. If you are cooking, go cook. If you are ordering food, go order. THE DREAM should begin after everyone has eaten and everyone is feeling kinda sleepy.

PART II: THE DREAM

Read the following text aloud:

“We have said goodbye to the past year. We have eaten our last meal of the year together, filling ourselves for the last time this year. Now that we are nourished, we can turn to the matter of the future.

You have probably felt the winds of the future many times before without ever realising. A moment where something new and exciting has happened, and you feel your heart about to leap out of your chest. That feeling you get when you are deeply self-assured and self-confident after doing something that is out of place for you right now, but contains the seeds of who you might become.

The nervousness you have when you move somewhere new. That ache you have inside of you when you finish reading a book that speaks to the very corners of your soul. In these moments, the boundaries of the timelines become porous, the world itself becomes thinner, and you can feel the cool wind of the future on your face.

Inside of THE DREAM, we will spend time imagining the next year together, and prepare ourselves to step into that world.

But first, to dream, we must SLUMBER.”

SLUMBER

In the SLUMBER, everyone will enter a state of meditative reflection.

Ask everyone to close their eyes, to take a few breaths however feels comfortable to them, and to get comfortable.

Ask them to think of the food you have just eaten together, and to feel it sitting in their stomach, beginning to digest.

Ask them to think of the things they burned together on the fire, the words that described the year that has been, and how they let go of that.

Ask them to remember themselves before they started THE DYING LIGHT, and what they imagined they might be stepping into.

Finally, ask themselves to remember themselves at this time a year ago, just a few hours before the turn of the year. Where were they? Who were they?

Now, ask everyone to try to imagine themselves a year from now. Where are they? What is the room they are in like? Who is there alongside them?

Space each of the following questions out, giving people time to reflect.

In a year from now, what is the greatest love you have felt that year?

In a year from now, what does your body feel like?

In a year from now, how have you shifted?

What is one word you want to sum up the next year? Keep saying this word over and over in your head. Say it 'til it feels numb.

Bring everyone back into the room gently, and ask them to write that word down on an index card, fold it up and put it in their pocket.

Once everyone has written their cards, ask if anyone wants to share the reasoning behind their word. If no-one wants to, that's fine.

THE STEPS

Read the following text aloud:

“We cannot reach that place we are hoping to reach by this time next with will alone. We need to find build THE STEPS to get there.”

Hand out three index cards per person, and give them THE STEPS. Ask them to select three steps of their choice and write the answers to them on an index card.

Once everyone has written their cards, ask if anyone wants to share a story that's related to one of their steps. If no-one wants to, that's fine.

THE MARCH

Identify a natural vantage point near to the event location that allows you a good view of potential fireworks. Ideally this would be something like a beach, a river, a hill, a park. If there is no natural vantage point, instead head to a natural place that makes you feel contemplative, like a woods.

Let everyone know that they are approaching the beginning of THE DREAM becoming real. Knowing that, open the space to free conversation. Read the following text aloud:

“As we approach the year’s first breaths, we need to open ourselves to all that is ahead. Until [specify a time that will allow you to reach the natural place before midnight], we will stay here, talking about the year that lays ahead of us. At that point, we will all leave the house and head to [natural place].

There is a Scottish tradition known as First Footing, which states that the first person to cross the threshold of a house after midnight on New Year’s will determine the luck of the household for the year to come. THE DYING LIGHT shifts this: the FIRST FOOT will be the person who we all collectively decide we want to shift our love and attention towards to ensure they have the best possible year. This might be because of something you’ve heard them say tonight, something you know, or a gut instinct.

When we leave [natural place], we will start talking about who we think should be FIRST FOOT. By the time we get back to [event location], we will have chosen the FIRST FOOT. Whoever is chosen as FIRST FOOT has to

enter [event location], light a candle, and welcome each person individually to the year.

Until then, let's see this year in!"

A NATURAL PLACE

Welcome the year in however feels right to you all. Crack open a bottle of something and celebrate being together. Let people do whatever they want to bring in the year. When you're all ready, head back to the event location.

On the way back to the event location, ensure people start discussing who they would like to be FIRST FOOT.

FIRST-FOOT

The FIRST FOOT should be chosen, light a candle inside the location, and they should welcome each person to the year.

Once everyone has been welcomed to the year, the hosts should announce LAST CALL.

LAST CALL

Read the following text aloud:

“Too often we mark a moment and spoil it by letting it spill over and out. We think that we’re having a good time and that time can never be ruined by having more of a good time. But as the flamekiller reminds us [gesture towards them], all things must end.

It’s LAST CALL, I’m afraid. There’s no rush to leave—far from it—but your next drink should be your last, and you should savour it as one of your first moments of the year. Whilst you’re drinking, feel that drink filling you with energy for the year to come—think of it as all your hopes and aspirations. Then, when you’re done, feel free to leave in whatever way feels comfortable to you. The last drop of your drink will finish your time with THE DYING LIGHT. Have a good year!”

The music should be upbeat, raucous party music. Think cheesy, think classics. Whatever people need to see in the year in style.

Once everyone has left, the hosts should sleep well knowing they have set the people they love on the clearest course for the year ahead.

APPENDIX: THRESHOLD QUESTIONS

<p>What was the biggest decision you made this year?</p> <p>What was the biggest change you experienced this year?</p> <p>What caught you off guard this year?</p> <p>What are you most proud of this year?</p> <p>What moment of this year took your breath away?</p> <p>What hurt you this year?</p> <p>What did you learn this year?</p> <p>What did you risk this year?</p>	<p>What was the biggest decision you made this year?</p> <p>What was the biggest change you experienced this year?</p> <p>What caught you off guard this year?</p> <p>What are you most proud of this year?</p> <p>What moment of this year took your breath away?</p> <p>What hurt you this year?</p> <p>What did you learn this year?</p> <p>What did you risk this year?</p>
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APPENDIX: WISH

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APPENDIX: THE STEPS

<p>Something I will love about myself.</p> <p>Something I want to achieve.</p> <p>Someone who will support me through rough times.</p> <p>Something I will dare to discover.</p> <p>Something I will have the power to say no to.</p> <p>Something I will make my surroundings cozy with.</p> <p>Something I will do every morning.</p> <p>Something I will pamper myself with regularly</p> <p>Somewhere I will visit.</p>	<p>Something I will love about myself.</p> <p>Something I want to achieve.</p> <p>Someone who will support me through rough times.</p> <p>Something I will dare to discover.</p> <p>Something I will have the power to say no to.</p> <p>Something I will make my surroundings cozy with.</p> <p>Something I will do every morning.</p> <p>Something I will pamper myself with regularly</p> <p>Somewhere I will visit.</p>
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