

The Sublime Flickering Light

An American freeform game by Evan Torner

"Licht! Mehr Licht!" — Goethe's last words

Players: 3-12 + 1 facilitator

Time required: 1 hour

Materials required: A fairly empty room with lights that can be easily shut on or off; a bright light or strobe light that can be attached to a point at least 5-6' off the floor; character cards from the second page cut out

Set-Up: Suspend a bright light or strobe light from the ceiling facing toward the far wall. There should be enough room that one can distinguish between people close, near, and far to the light. Cut out and hand out the characters based on a whim.

Premise (Read aloud): You are all beings trapped in a cave. Who knows how you got there. You talk to each other about your feelings and tell stories when the lights are on. When the lights are out, you stay silent and orient yourself toward the Sublime Flickering Light projecting from one end of the wall to the other end. Your character will reflect on their situation. You will go through no less than 3 and no greater than 5 cycles of lights being on and off, and then we will end the game. During play, you will be generous to your fellow players in supporting their play, you will work to keep things interesting for yourself, and you will help keep everyone safe from physical and emotional harm.

Warm-Up (Read aloud): Take your character into your hand. Read it. This is you for the next hour. You can be as transparent or as secretive as you wish. You will now practice going silent as your character when all but the Sublime Flickering Light is off [turn off lights], and chatting in character when [turn on lights] all lights are on. Again. Now with the lights on, slowly move around the room as your character. Feel out the edges of the cave. Know your place.

The Game (Read aloud): When all lights are on, you *talk to the others*. Find at least one other, but don't make large groups. When you are talking to them, there are 3 different prompts you may give and respond to: (1) "How do you feel right now?" (2) "Tell me a story." (3) "Let's talk about our relationship." Other than cursory greetings, these are the *only* germane topics of conversation. It is OK to trail off or stop in the middle of a conversation. It is OK to go into depth on a topic, as long as the conversation remains on-topic.

When I as the facilitator shut off all the lights but the Sublime Flickering Light, you will all go silent and have 3 optional ways to comport your character toward the light: (1) Staring enraptured or grasping at light/shadows on wall, (2) Staring at the light itself, trying to see beyond it, or (3) Standing by the light, manipulating shapes that would project on the far wall for the other characters. Find the spot appropriate to how your character is feeling right now, and interact silently with the light and other characters until the lights are switched on again. We'll do this between 3-5 times, depending.

Debrief: Everyone sit around in the circle in the light, and introduce yourselves as players. Each player should go in turn and talk about one thing they found interesting about the experience. After going around once, go have a beverage around other humans.

The Twelve Characters

Print and cut these out. Hand one to each player. Have them use their bodies, voices, and imaginations to make them come alive for the other players.

<p>The Great Bear <i>You contain multitudes. You have grand gestures. You speak in a low voice. You seek to incorporate all things into your story.</i></p>	<p>The Buddha <i>You have transcended all. You move with certainty. You speak in a calm voice. You seek to advise others. But actually, you seek nothing.</i></p>	<p>The Mirror Demon <i>You reflect all around you. You move as they move. You speak in 1-2 syllables. You drain others of their essence by following them.</i></p>
<p>The Fish Man <i>Your enigma gives you pride and strength. You move like a fish. You speak as if underwater. You seek the enigmas of others.</i></p>	<p>The Skeleton Witch <i>You are more fashionable than others. Smarter too. You move like raw bones. You speak like dark magic. You seek a companion to be slowly devoured.</i></p>	<p>The Flying Joker <i>You trade in whimsy. You fly and writhe. You speak high-pitched. You have a heart of gold, and a soft spot for perseverance.</i></p>
<p>The Moon Priest <i>You are certain of the End Times and their Effects. You move as the cosmos. You speak with quiet vigor. You want others to recognize your visions.</i></p>	<p>The Faerie Warrior <i>You are magical and fighty. You move in fits and starts. You speak boldly. You follow an arcane code of honor, and few could understand that.</i></p>	<p>The Pablo Honey <i>You are everyone's happy friend. You move deliberately. You speak well of others. You wish for us to meet our true selves.</i></p>
<p>The Love Worm <i>You embrace life. You slither when you move. You speak in light tones. You want a difficult life, full of obstacles to overcome.</i></p>	<p>The Gargoyle <i>You see what faces everyone, and you act. You move without remorse. You speak gravely. You will avenge those who have been wronged.</i></p>	<p>The Ironic Cat <i>You are the lazy prankster. You sneak about gracefully. You speak in "Mrowww." You show your mastery through making others look foolish.</i></p>

