

2024 Golden Cobra Challenge

Title: Doctor. Doctor.
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Doctor. Doctor.

-a ridiculous LARP of bad doctors and secret spies-

The natural world is full of beauty and wonder. Just go outside and take it in. Breathe deeply. Start to sneeze. Watch your skin get fried by the rays of the sun. See that tick crawling up your leg seeking a place to sink its fangs in your fleshy body and wreck your world... Yeah, when you look a bit closer at the world, you see it is actually all survival of the fittest, terrible ailments, and deadly disease. Everything out there wants us dead!

But we still survive! Thanks to our stalwart warriors, our scientist-priests, the front line of the war against human extinction: the doctors!

And now, the best doctors across time and space have been summoned to the *First Annual Interdimensional Doctors of Excellence* conference to present their research on defying the natural order and extending the human lifespan. You are there too. But you are an imposter.

You ARE a doctor, of course, but not a *Doctor of Excellence*. You are the other kind of doctor... Some might even call you a quack. Nobody actually knows how or why you got an invitation. But here you are, so you might as well make the best of it. This is a chance to present your own unique patients to the medical community, and maybe even cure them through the power of a second opinion!

But be careful, because there are spies in your midst. Brainwashed infiltrators sent by evil, anti-vaxxer, natural-selection worshipping acolytes to bring death and destruction down on this noble establishment. And nobody knows exactly who they might be...

Supplies needed:

- Masks (*each player must provide their own*)
- Popsicle stick, tongue depressor, or pointer (*one for each player*)
- Pens and index cards/small pieces of paper (*two for each player*)
- A book with entries (*dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, medical textbook, etc.*)
- *Optional:* Lab coats or related props and costuming

The players:

- All players are doctors.
- All doctors must wear a mask (*any mask that covers the nose and mouth will do*).
- All players are also secretly brainwashed spies.
 - None of them are aware of this fact.

The world:

- Everyone in a mask is a doctor.
- Anything not a doctor is a potential patient to diagnose and cure.

The goals of play:

- Have fun.
- Identify and diagnose patients.
- Weed out the “spy.”

The most basic rules:

- Players may not remove their masks (*except to eat, drink, or when medically necessary.*)
- Players may not touch anything directly (*that’s a great way to spread germs!*) You must use your stick if you want to touch anything after the game has begun.
- Players must be respectful of those around them who are not “in on the game.”

=Character Creation=

Everyone should create characters together at the start of the game. Write the details of your own character on a blank piece of paper or index card and keep it in your pocket or on a clipboard. You will write your trigger phrase (*in step 4*) on a different piece of paper.

Step 1: Inspiration

Think of a doctor. Any doctor. It could be a doctor from TV or film (*McCoy, House, Zoidberg*), it could be a doctor in name only (*Who, Teeth, Pepper*), it could even be your actual physician (*if they won’t get offended and refuse their services in years to come.*) Your own character should be inspired by this doctor.

Step 2: Name & Era

Give your character a name that starts with the word Doctor, and decide what time period you are from. Are you a plague doctor from the middle ages? A futuristic space doctor? A 90s spin-doctor? A doctor of love? Any of these are fine. Write your name down on the top of your character card.

Step 3: Traits

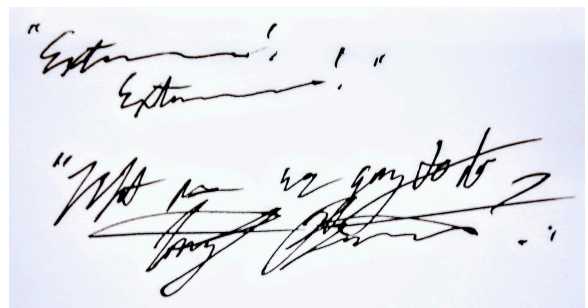
Identify a few **traits** of that doctor that you can emulate in your own role play and write them down on your first note card. You can even combine traits for various doctors if you wish. These are simply aids to help your characterization and keep the game silly.

Step 4: Specialty

Define your **specialty** by flipping to a random page in the chosen book. The first entry that your eyes fall on is your specialty. It does not need to make sense. Everyone should use the same book to define their specialties. Write your specialty down on the card with your traits.

Step 5: Trigger Phrase

Pick your secret trigger phrase and write it down in your best (*aka worst*) doctor handwriting on your second index card. Place this card in clear view of all other players. (*Examples: “Exterminate! Exterminate!” and “What are we going to do tonight, Brain?”*)



Everyone should use the same source for their trigger phrase. We suggest popular movie quotes, but you could narrow it down even further to specific movies or TV shows, famous book or song titles, or even well known advertising slogans. Remember that a phrase needs to be more than one word, but does not need to be a grammatically complete sentence.

=Playing the Game=

Phase 1: Introductions

All players gather at an acceptable distance from each other. This could be around a table, standing in a circle spaced six-feet apart, or even via Zoom. Everyone should take turns introducing themselves as directed below, starting with the eldest, tallest, or most distinguished looking doctor. If there is any confusion or dispute, whoever says “*Screw it!*” and begins introductions is, by technical definition (*the best kind of definition*), the one who starts first.

To introduce yourself you should look directly at another player, nod your head slightly and recite the formal greeting of acknowledgement and respect by saying the single word “*Doctor.*” The doctor you are addressing responds in kind by nodding back and replying with “*Doctor.*”

Repeat this process by nodding to each other player, greeting them with the word “*Doctor*” and accepting their response. Once you have greeted each and every player, the next player begins the process anew, greeting each and every player as above. Continue until all players have initiated a greeting with all other players.

Phase 2: Presentation of the Patients

Each player will secretly choose a “patient” in the immediate area (*i.e., something that everyone can see*) and take turns presenting the **symptoms** of their chosen patient, but giving no other identifying details.

For example, if your chosen patient is a nearby floor lamp, you might say. “Fellow Doctors, I present to you a curious case. My patient used to be quite a bright student, upstanding in every way. Now, they are unmoved by even the basic pleasures of life. They have been completely stiff and unresponsive to all external stimuli. Please, help me identify what ill humors have befallen them.”

Do your best to talk in “*doctor speak*” while also taking into account the time period from which you hail. If you are a plague doctor, everything might be humors or evil influences. If you are a sci-fi doctor, it might all be nano-viruses and transporter malfunctions.

Take care when using outside humans as your chosen patients. If they are not aware of the game or are not willing to be humorously analyzed, this could lead to confusion, embarrassment, anxiety, and confrontation. Remember that you cannot agitate the patients - anyone could be a naturalist spy!

Note: If playing via video chat, each “patient” must be something visible to all players, therefore it must be in the background of someone’s camera (*but it doesn’t have to be your own.*) For instance, if another player has a cat lounging in the background, you are welcome to make that your own patient. If another player has a poster of a superhero on their wall, that is also an acceptable patient. Etc.

Phase 3: Examination and Diagnosis

In any order you choose, discuss and debate the symptoms and root causes attached to your various patients. You do not need to go patient by patient, nor do you need to stick to any set order of discussion. (*But you totally can!*) Have a conversation, remembering to lean into your traits and time-period, but make sure that every player gets to talk and be heard.

There is also no need to identify the specific object or person who became the patient. They exist. They need help. Medical privacy laws must be upheld!

- Patients are successfully diagnosed when the proposed ailment or solution falls under any doctor’s previously defined specialty, and is identified as such.

But no doctor can independently declare that a patient is covered by their own special focus, you have to have a second opinion to confirm it first. Therefore, you must listen closely to what the other doctors propose. If another doctor suggests something that is covered by your own focus, you may stand up, shout “*Eureka! That’s the answer! And I should know, I am an expert in X.*” or something to that effect. This patient has now been diagnosed and is on the way to recovery.

The conversation continues, with players tossing out observations, underlying medical issues, potential solutions, etc. until every doctor’s patient is diagnosed under a different doctor’s specialty. At that point, the conference ends and the players have saved the day!

Triggering a Spy!

If at any point during the game, anyone (*even a bystander*) says a player’s trigger phrase, that player’s character is overcome with a horrible virus/curse/etc that turns them into an obvious plague carrier. They should act out an appropriate transformation as they become the villain.

- **If at least one patient has been successfully diagnosed**, the remaining players win the game because they have done their job -and- uncovered the spy in their midst!
- **If no patients have been diagnosed yet**, the triggered spy player wins the game as they devour all the other doctors at the conference and bring an end to the age of reason and science. Mother Nature will be so proud!