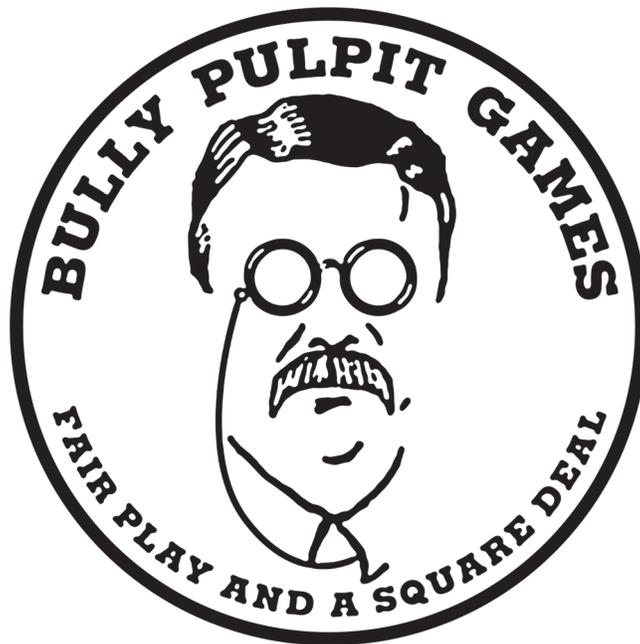


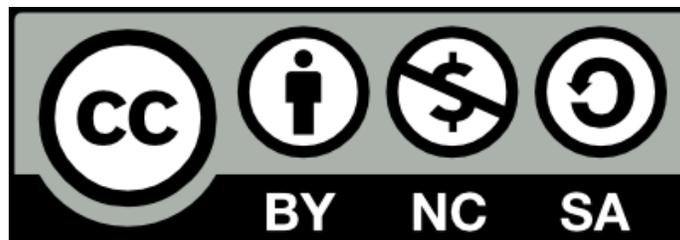
King is Dead

I hope you enjoy *King is Dead*. I certainly enjoyed bringing it to you and if you have comments—particularly if you play it—I would like to talk to you. I can be reached at jason@bullypulpitgames.com or @jmstar on Twitter.

None of this was done in a vacuum—there’s a whole community of talented, generous, creative people out there making and sharing their work. I borrowed from a few and stole from many, who in turn eagerly did the same.



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KING IS DEAD

Front Matter

Written by Jason Morningstar

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Introduction

The Submarine Room of Blue Pines, King's mansion, has an undersea theme. Blue shag carpet rises to meet massive overstuffed captain's chairs custom built to look like barnacle-encrusted logs. The ceiling is painted in a night sky mural interspersed with mirrors. To the east, a red sky warns of coming danger. Some have joked that the danger is the fully-stocked bar directly beneath it. The atmosphere is convivial, over the top, trashy and fun. King likes it that way.

King was once the most popular entertainer in the world.

Now he's a has-been - a wealthy, powerful has-been, but younger, prettier, less talented and more ruthless artists have usurped his throne. Times are bad, but you are King's dearest friends in the entire world. He's been good to you. He remembers his friends.

Now you sit in the submarine room, drinking King's liquor, waiting for the call that will change everyone's life, because King is in the hospital dying from a drug overdose.

About the King

This live action game is loosely based on the sordid final days of Elvis Presley, but your King need not be *the* King - Guy Lombardo was the King of Pop in 1931 and would be a cool inspiration. Purely for my own convenience the materials for this game assume a male King, but that isn't remotely necessary. A Patsy Cline analog would be a great historical King. The very first playtest of this game had a female King.

Characters

There are six characters—King and the five people in his inner circle. Each is sketched out on a card, and each will have an additional motivation during each scene.

The inner circle is a collection of people who fall somewhere on the trusted old friend-sycophantic Johnny-come-lately gold-digger continuum. No one is completely pure or innocent, but no one is irredeemably evil either.

King is a special case. The player choosing this role should be prepared to be a metatechnique-wielding shit-stirrer; King is physically absent for two thirds of the game and appears as memory, and conscience. When King is hospitalized (Scene One) or dead (Scene Three) King's player still participates and is present in the play space, but interacts as a ghost.

Dead Man Talking

King's player is always present, and King himself is also present—either physically or as a ghost. Regardless of his form, King should be anchored to his throne. Moving from his seat of power should always be a big deal, to be used sparingly, even while alive. If King needs something there is always someone at hand to fetch it.

As a ghost King should provide running commentary, observing the unfolding events and making his opinions known. Invisible and untouchable, his presence is vaguely felt by all but no interaction is possible.

Safety

Discuss physical and emotional safety. Demonstrate “cut” and “brake”. There's no need for touching in this game. Violence is conducted in slow motion and its outcome is described by the victim. Emphasize that the door is always open, both in character and out.

Setup

- Print and cut all play materials.
- Secure a place to play. Any small room is ideal. A hotel room would be fine. make sure there's a comfortable throne for King.
- If you want to, have a soundtrack of music inspired by your King of choice on hand to play lightly in the background.
- Make sure you have a timer or alarm, and a pen or pencil.
- Fold and tape the disposable assets sheet.

Arrange the cards as follows:

- Sort scene cards randomly into stacks of six by scene.
- Lay out the six character booklets so that they can be easily examined.
- Shuffle the eighteen gift cards and lay out five randomly, face up.

Preparation

Welcome everyone and briefly discuss safety, tone and technique. Read the introductory text out loud.

Choose characters. If you are comfortable with the Bird-In-Ear metatechnique or know another player who is, consider just assigning them the role of King. it isn't necessary but it might be helpful experience.

Ask everyone to take one Scene card each, for Acts one, Two and Three.

Ask every character to choose a gift King has recently given them, from among the five face up gifts. Give King's player the rest of the gifts for later.

Give the player of Dunk the disposable assets sheet. It is marked with instructions and shouldn't be opened before Scene Three.

The entire game takes place in the Submarine Room. Characters can leave (to go to the kitchen of Blue Pines, for example) and players can as well. When everyone is ready, set a timer for 20 minutes and begin play.

Play

Scene One is the wait for a phone call confirming King's death from a drug overdose. Everyone should read their Scene One card and do their best to fulfill its instructions, including King. King's friends should also mention their most recent gift and what it means to them.

Scene One ends with a ringing telephone after 20 minutes. This is the news of King's death. After playing out the call briefly, the scene ends. Inner circle players should hand their Gift cards back to King's player.

Scene Two is a flashback that takes place a week before Scene One, at a wild party. Everyone should read their Scene Two card and do their best to fulfill its instructions. King, full of largesse, is giving away presents to his favorites. King's player should "re-gift" the items the other players chose before Scene One and make those gifts particularly meaningful. The other gifts can be distributed however King's player wishes, and can go to the inner circle, his father, his daughter, or his ex-wife. He can make them compete, play games, or embarrass themselves for gifts. King should cherry pick the most appropriate, awkward, or agonizing ones to share.

Scene Two ends when there are no more gifts to give or King grows tired of the party. There's no need to go through all the gifts. Scene Three begins immediately.

Scene Three takes place shortly after Scene One. Everyone should read their Scene Three card and do their best to fulfill its instructions. King is definitively dead and his father has sent word that the inner circle needs to divide up his disposable assets quickly by any means and in any combination they deem appropriate and fair.

Scene Three ends when the assets have been divided and the first character leaves the Submarine Room

Debrief

Make sure to budget in time for a debrief and be attentive to everyone's emotional state post-game. People will want to talk.

DISPOSABLE ASSETS

<p>King's father has asked you to disperse these assets according to King's heartfelt wishes, either among yourselves or to his family. Anything you don't allocate will end up in probate, since King had no will. Write down who gets what.</p>	<p>EX WIFE, DAUGHTER, FATHER, CLOSE ASSOCIATE OR FRIEND</p>
<p>PROPERTY AND REAL GOODS</p> <p>Blue Pines, <i>King's vast mansion.</i></p> <p>KING-ONE, <i>the Blue Pines LLC Gulfstream Jet.</i></p> <p>JENNIFER, <i>King's yacht.</i></p> <p>A dozen framed gold and platinum records.</p> <p>A battered guitar <i>used during King's magical first appearance at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.</i></p> <p>A trio of gaudy outfits <i>from King's most recent tour.</i></p> <p>King's monumental drug stash.</p>	
<p>CONTRACTS AND ROYALTIES</p> <p>Music royalties, in points, <i>for eleven albums through various labels.</i></p> <p>Music royalties, exclusive and unencumbered, <i>for three albums to Blue Pines LLC.</i></p> <p>Film and TV royalties <i>for King's points in seven films.</i></p>	
<p>BUSINESSES</p> <p>Recording contract <i>with midlist singer Bonnie Peach.</i></p> <p>Piccalilli Holdings, <i>which owns 80% of the stock in Blue Pines LLC and other investments.</i></p> <p>Blue Pines LLC management company, <i>which exclusively supports King's projects.</i></p> <p>Kingtone LLC production company <i>with younger artists under contract (Moxley is under a burdensome contract with Kingtone).</i></p>	

OPEN AT THE BEGINNING OF SCENE THREE

HOUSE

A modest ranch located at 613 Crestwood Lane, just up the road from King's mansion. Just built.

CAR

A sports car with elaborate after-market racing gear. Brand new.

TRUCK

A tricked-out truck with a super patriotic paint job. Brand new.

VAN

A family van with a wheelchair lift. Brand new.

NEW JOB

...or added responsibility as Recording Supervisor at Kingtone LLC.

NEW JOB

... or added responsibility as Security Supervisor for Blue Pines LLC.

CASH

One thousand American dollars, straight from King's greasy pocket.

BIKE

Well, a candy apple red minibike, anyway. Brand new.

DRUMS

A very large set of Tama drums in a hot pink perloid finish. Brand new.

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

SCUBA GEAR

Brand new, just what you need for ... swimming around underwater. Brand new.

MEDICINE

An unopened bottle of extremely potent painkillers.

PHOTOS

In a thick family album, all featuring King, his father and daughter, his ex-wife, and the rest of the gang hanging out at Blue Pines.

RECORDING

Of Christmas one year at Blue Pines, with King, his daughter, his ex-wife, and the rest of the gang. King plays a few songs and clowns around.

MEMENTO

A loose-hipped little hula girl, from one of King's many trips to Hawaii.

FANCY DOLL

Still in its package, every little girl's dream. Brand new.

NECKLACE

Solid gold, and heavy, with a custom-made ornament on it. Brand new.

THREADS

A handmade suit in a style and fabric that King picked out just for you. Brand new.

LIQUOR

A very expensive bottle of the very finest liquor King could find.

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

GIFT

PROTECT YOURSELF

Protect your position and your status. Let your general anxiety and doubt motivate you.

REGRET YOUR CHOICES

Express your shame for sharing in a miserable, destructive life-style.

BE PRACTICAL

Accept what comes. Agree on a leader and spokesman. Maybe that person is you, maybe it isn't.

KEEP IT TOGETHER

Get your story straight. Keep a brave face and maintain appearances at all costs.

ACT THE FOOL

Hide your anxiety behind clowning and horsing around.

ASSIGN BLAME

Figure out who is to blame. Demonstrate your deep well of cynicism.

MAKE PEACE

Make it your job to quiet the loudest and calm down the meanest.

BE GRATEFUL

Pay back the person to whom you owe the most gratitude.

BE A FRIEND

Befriend the loneliest person in the room.

SCENE

1

SCENE

1

SCENE

1

SCENE

1

SCENE

1

SCENE

1

SCENE

2

SCENE

2

SCENE

2

FORGIVE

Forgive the person most in need of forgiveness.

SHOW COMPASSION

Be sympathetic and kind to the person who is hurting most.

REMINISCE

Recall better times and tell happy stories.

SCOLD THE SYCOPHANT

Shower contempt on the most obvious gold-digging opportunist.

TEAR APART FRIENDS

Find the two closest friends and break them apart.

KILL JOY

Find the happiest person and take away everything that makes them that way.

EMBRACE JEALOUSY

Despise the richest or most successful person in the room.

LASH OUT

Attack the fool you are most frustrated with, a role that can switch often.

EMBRACE MOCKERY

Mock the most pathetic person in the room, even if it is yourself.

SCENE

2

SCENE

2

SCENE

2

SCENE

3

SCENE

3

SCENE

3

SCENE

3

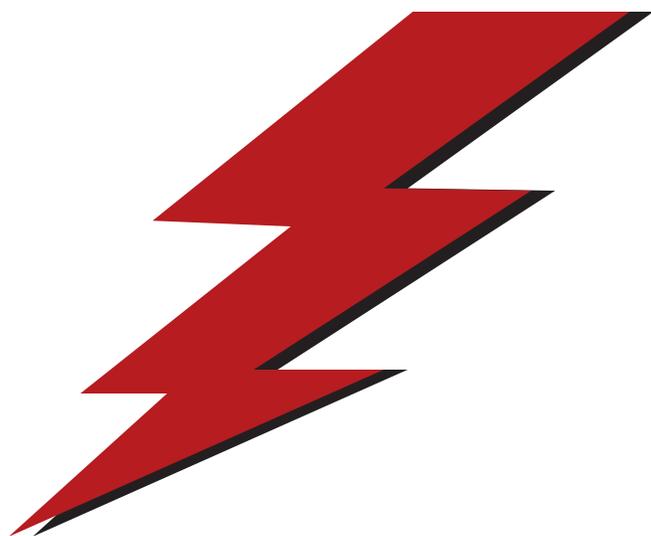
SCENE

3

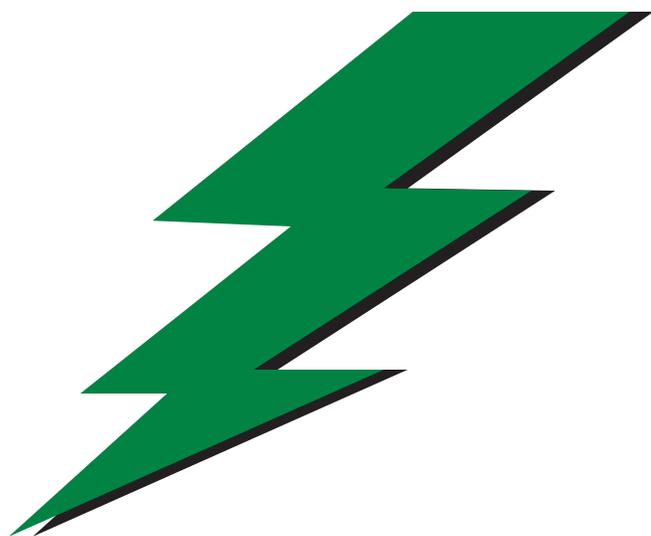
SCENE

3

KING



DUNK



SCENE BREAKDOWN

Scene One

Waiting for the hospital to call. King has overdosed, badly, and is probably going to die. You have all seen this coming, and not one of you did a thing to stop it. *Ends after 15 minutes.*

Scene Two

A week earlier. It's party time in the Submarine Room and King is in rare form, giving everyone gifts. Drugs are flowing and the good times are rolling. *Ends when King says it does.*

Scene Three

Hours after Scene One. King is dead, and his father has asked you to divide up his disposable assets quickly in any combination you deem appropriate and fair. *Ends when everything is divided.*

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KING

Character Information

A decade ago you were the most popular entertainer in the world. During Scenes One and Three you are gone, and you will play King as a whisper of memory or conscience. During Scene Two you are very much alive, although clearly on the downward slope.

Game Information

Dunk holds your checkbook. If you want to give someone money in any amount, tell Dunk.

At the end of Scene One, collect everyone's gift card and award it to them during Scene Two. Take the cards they didn't choose and give some of them out as well, if you wish.

DUNK

Character Information

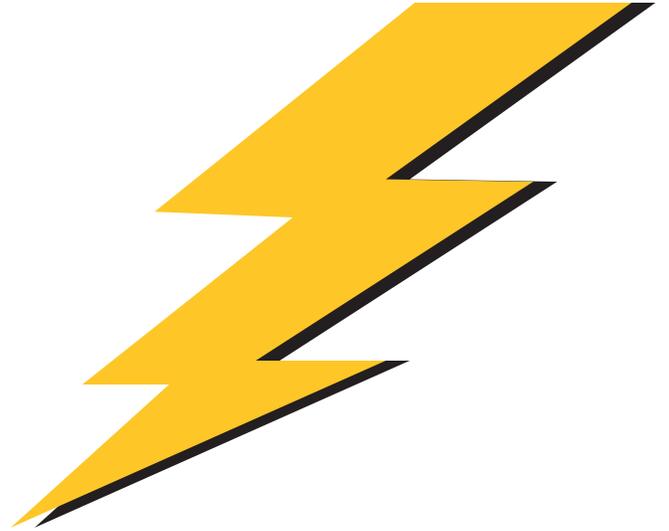
You are King's personal aide and closest friend. You and Wicker stood up for him at his wedding.

Game Information

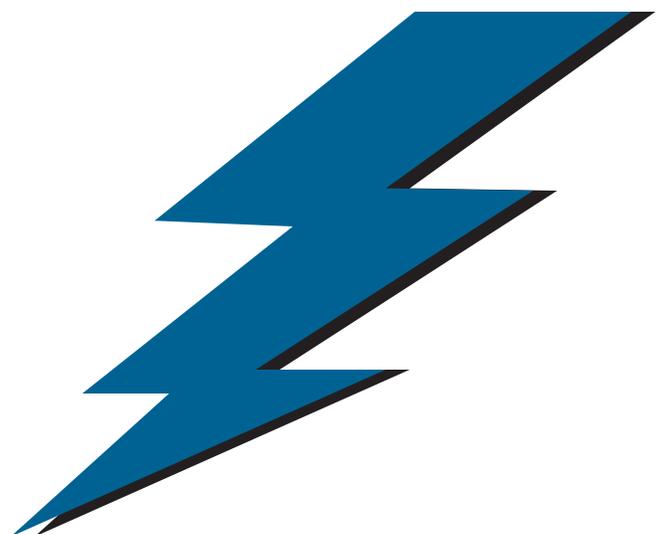
You hold the checkbook. If King asks you to write someone a check, do it. If King's spirit moves you to write someone a check, go right ahead.

You also have a sheet needed in Scene 3.

WICKER



SHAB



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WICKER

Character Information

You are King's confidante and closest friend. You and Dunk stood up for him at his wedding.

Game Information

You hold the drugs. King's personal physician supplied them but you filled the prescriptions. If King asks you for drugs, supply them. If King's spirit moves you to supply drugs to someone else, go right ahead.

You also have a sheet needed in Scene 3.

SHAB

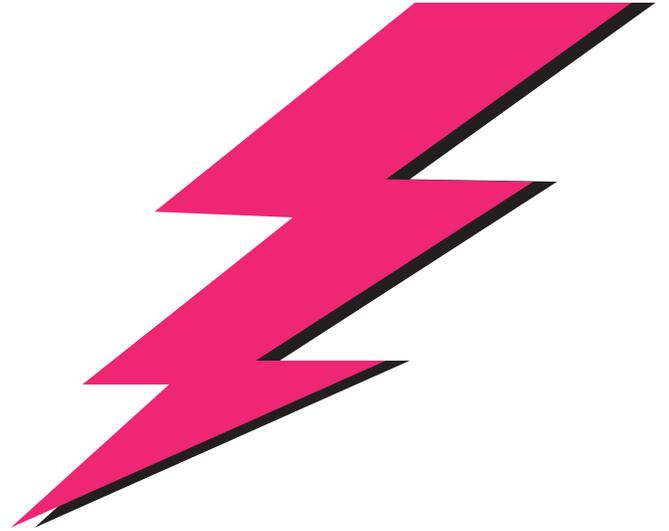
Character Information

You are King's main bodyguard and oldest friend. A first cousin, you've known him since you were both in grade school.

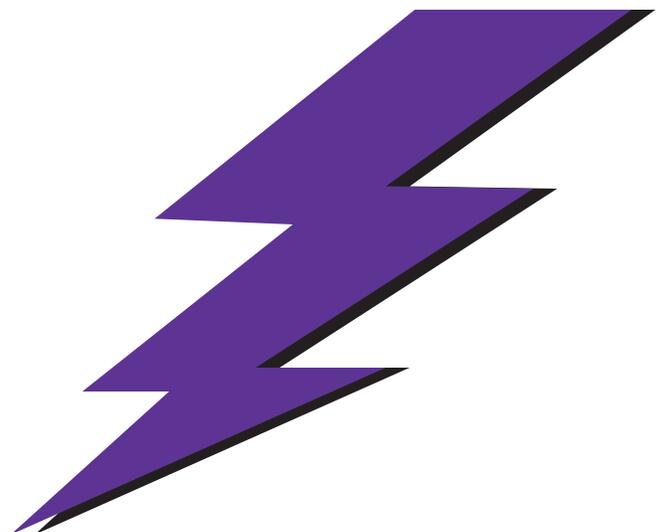
Game Information

King has been very generous with you. Protect him and his legacy. Family first in all things.

JET



MOXLEY



SCENE BREAKDOWN

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JET

Character Information

The most recent addition to King's inner circle, you are a B-list Hollywood Scenor and occasional hustler. You worked with King on one of his films and the two of you became fast friends.

Game Information

You like King but he would understand that business is business, and this is an opportunity to boost your own profile.

MOXLEY

Character Information

You are King's main bodyguard and oldest friend. In addition, you are a recording engineer and songwriter. You actually managed him for a while, and toured with him early in his career. King has covered two of your tunes as deep album tracks, although you were uncredited and paid a pittance.

Game Information

You deserve better than what King has given you. He owes you big time, alive or dead. It should've been you that shot to the stratosphere, not him.

You are under contract with Kingtone LLC, King's production company.