

You're So Cute When You're Angry

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Players – 3

Playtime – 10 minutes

Supplies – Five tablecloths. These may also be bedsheets, window curtains, duvet covers, valances, mizzen sails or half-platoon tents, as long as they are inconveniently large to handle without assistance. Something to keep time, like a mobile phone or a stopwatch.

Themes – weaponized incompetence, relationships, patriarchy, oppression, domestic division of labour, misogyny

This is a micro-larp designed for three players: the Woman, Her Boyfriend, and Her Guilt.

All players should read these instructions before playing.

The larp consists of three scenes that depict the events around three different dinners hosted by the Woman and Her Boyfriend.

Keeping time is very important. This duty falls to Her Guilt.

After playing, debrief. Discuss between yourselves how the larp made you feel, any problems that arose, and any thoughts it sparked.

This larp was originally designed at the Games of the Oppressed workshop at the Tampere University Game Research Lab. It owes a debt of inspiration to the *#Feminism* nano-game anthology, edited by Misha Bushyager, Lizzie Stark, and Anna Westerling, and published by Fëa Livia.

Setup

Before each scene, Her Boyfriend unfolds and spreads out the tablecloths in a messy pile on a table, and Her Guilt sets the timer ready. At the start, this will be for two minutes. In further scenes, it may be less.

Characters

The Woman must make sure the house is clean and the tablecloths are folded away before the guests arrive. Her job is to make the night go as smoothly as possible, and not piss off Her Boyfriend or provoke Her Guilt. She is in love with Her Boyfriend despite his unwillingness to help with chores, and wants the relationship to work.

Her Boyfriend will not be of any help, and does not see it as his job to be. If the Woman doesn't ask him to help and does the chores all by herself, he will be appreciative and compliment her.

However, if the Woman tries to get him to help, he doesn't want to. He's not interested. It's not his job. Here's a selection of lines you could use, or come up with your own.

- You are so sensitive.
- I was just kidding.
- You are so cute when you are angry.
- You are just saying it because you've been watching too much feminist content.
- Stop being so uptight, it's fine, I'll do it later.
- When we first met you were so much more carefree.
- You'd be prettier if you smiled more.
- You're overreacting.
- Stop nagging.
- But you do it so much better.

Her Boyfriend will mess up the tablecloths at the end of each scene.

Her Guilt is the Woman's internalized misogyny. Her Guilt makes sure the Woman is a good host and a good girlfriend. She keeps the time. She will give the Woman feedback both before the dinner and afterwards. Before the dinner, she berates the woman if she is argumentative with her boyfriend or if she is not folding the tablecloths fast enough.

After each dinner, she judges the Woman.

If the house was untidy, she will tell the woman the guests think she is a slob and will never want to see her again. If the Woman picked an argument with her Boyfriend, she will tell that the guests could feel the tension and she was a bad host. Her Guilt is a harsh character.

However, if the Woman quietly folded the tablecloths, Her Guilt will be silent. For now.

Play

Each scene has two parts, before the dinner and after the dinner.

It is early evening. You have friends coming over. They're due to arrive in just a few minutes. The Woman has been busy in the kitchen. Her Boyfriend was supposed to clean. He hasn't. There is a mess on the floor, the table is not set, and he's still playing video games. It is up to the Woman to make this dinner work. There is not enough time. The guests are her boss and his wife; cancelling is not an option.

The Woman must neatly fold away the tablecloths. She has two minutes. She will be judged. Help should be asked. It will not be received.

Once the time is up, the doorbell rings and the guests arrive. Cut to after the dinner, when the guests have departed.

After the first and second night, Her Boyfriend resets the mess of tablecloths and leaves them again in a pile on the table.

Her Guilt judges the Woman's performance, taking into account both the neatness and speed of folding the tablecloths as well as how nicely she behaved towards Her Boyfriend. For each tablecloth that has not been neatly folded within the two-minute time limit, Her Guilt subtracts ten seconds from the timer for the next night. Lost seconds are gone for good; catching up on the second night will not recover them for the third.

This happens three times in escalating misery.

On the first night, the Woman's goal is to make the dinner go well and keep Her Boyfriend happy and Her Guilt silent. The Boyfriend's goal is to do nothing. He cannot assist.

On the second night, the Woman's goal is to make the dinner go well, get Her Boyfriend to help, and keep Her Guilt silent. Her Boyfriend's goal is to do nothing, and rationalize it.

On the third night, the Woman is in pain and incapacitated. Her goal is to get Her Boyfriend to do at least something. Her Boyfriend's goal is to do nothing. Everything is just fine, isn't it?

After the third night, the Woman gives a monologue on her feelings about the situation. The larp ends.

In accordance with the Games of the Oppressed framework, the players then discuss the larp's structure and how the dynamic would have to change to make it fair and liberate the Woman from her oppression. The players redesign the game with this in mind, switch roles, and play again. An ideal redesign focuses on one or two changes to the game's structure.

After play, the players debrief, and fold the tablecloths together and pack them away.