

## Games people play.

Life isn't a game. Nobody wins.

Monopoly is a game, Ludo is a game, even Snakes and Ladders. If I had invented those, I would be retired now. Instead, I'm stuck in a soulless glass box with my mate Tony for 8 hours a day. We research and develop new board games for a generation who would rather kill things on a four-inch phone screen and take their chances with aliens. Kids these days want instant gratification and their problems solved in sound bites on TikTok. They want hacks to make their lives easy. Adults are the same. My work can be soul destroying.

But last night I got lucky.

I invented the ultimate adults board game. I created the prototype in a few hours with a laser printer, my efforts fuelled by rage and guile in equal measure.

My new game has a classic Monopoly style layout with four key points on the square board midway down each side, but instead of railway stations, they are bad behaviours: Treachery, Infidelity, Duplicity and Disloyalty. A moral compass to be avoided.

In between these four places, all other points on the board reflect all the positive human behaviours like kindness, caring, love, humanity, strength, empathy. So many to choose from, so many to live by. These were easy to complete and landing on the positive places earn massive points. I changed 'free parking' to a relaxation space.

'Jail' stays, as it should.

The twist is that landing on Treachery, Infidelity, Duplicity or Disloyalty, removes all the points you gained. I haven't yet worked out punishment but give me time.

The start for all players is, unsurprisingly, 'birth' and rolling the dice moves the player around the board. Completing an 'all positive' round gives you a rebirth and a warm feeling. Unlike Monopoly, no money is involved as that after all, is the root of all evil. Tony taught me that. Tony has taught me a lot about morality and the Bible.

Tony believes himself to be a good guy, a good friend and morally superior. But, last night with a headache starting, I skipped my planned meal with friends and headed home. I don't know what made me approach my house on foot rather than parking in the garage with its noisy electric opening door. Perhaps I was mulling over ideas or enjoying the fresh air. But when I saw a naked Tony and my wife spreadeagled on the dining room table, my head cleared immediately, and the new board game was born: Betrayal.

I must remember to thank Tony for the inspiration and for being the first to hit every negative place, missing every positive human behaviour and epitomising betrayal.

As the royalties roll in, he won't see any of them, nor will she.

469 words