

THE STORYTELLER'S GRIMOIRE

A printable card game for those who love to tell tales in the dark. Print the pages, cut along the lines, and gather your circle. Inside you'll find a deck of story starters—single, chilling sparks meant to wake the storyteller hiding inside you.



Before You Begin

The oldest stories were never written down. They were whispered around fires, passed from mouth to ear, growing stranger with every telling. This game returns you to that ritual.

Each card holds a beginning. The ending belongs to you. There are no wrong answers here—only the tale you alone could tell.

How to Play

This covers everything you need to prepare the deck and choose your way to play.

Setup

1. Print the card pages on cardstock if you have it, or regular paper if you don't.
2. Cut along the lines to free each card from the page.
3. Shuffle the deck and set it face down where everyone can reach it.
4. Set the mood: dim the lights, light a candle, and let the shadows gather close.

A small tip: the darker the room, the braver the stories. Let the silence do some of the work.

Mode One — The Solo Tale

Best for a quiet night alone or one storyteller holding the room.

1. Draw a single card from the top of the deck.
2. Take up to five minutes to let the story take shape in your mind.
3. When you're ready, tell it aloud—out loud always feels truer than in your head.

Mode Two — The Woven Narrative

Best for gatherings, parties, and sleepovers. This is where the tale turns unpredictable.

1. One person draws a card and begins the story.
2. After a few sentences, they pass it to the next person, who picks up where the last voice left off.
3. Keep passing until everyone who wishes to has added a thread.
4. The last storyteller must bring it to an end—however dark or strange that ending turns out to be.

Common mistake to avoid: don't plan the whole story in advance. The best chills come from being surprised by your own circle.

You find your child's drawing taped inside a kitchen cabinet in your new house. It shows your family standing in the yard—but there's a fourth figure none of you recognize.

The voicemail is from your own number. In it, your voice is panicked, begging: "Don't answer the door tonight. I know what happens if you do."

Every photograph in your grandmother's album has a small shadow in the background—farther back in the earliest ones, nearer in each that follows. In the newest one, it stands just behind her shoulder.

You purchase an old wristwatch from an antique store. Each morning you wake a year older, with memories of days that haven't happened yet.

The lighthouse you tend goes dark for exactly one minute every night at 3:00 a.m. This morning, you found wet footprints leading from the locked door to your bed.

You buy a vintage radio at a flea market. It only plays one station, broadcasting distress calls from a ship that vanished 50 years ago—until one night, the voice reading the coordinates is your own.

You volunteer to feed a neighbor's cat while she's away. The cat is fine, but every night more of the furniture is turned to face the hallway—and she's been gone three days longer than she said.

Your reflection has started blinking a half-second after you do. You tell yourself it's exhaustion, until one night it mouths something before the sound reaches you.

The town holds a festival every autumn to "thank the ones below." You moved here last spring and never asked what that meant. Tonight, they're knocking on your door.

You find a recipe card in your late mother's handwriting. The ingredients are ordinary. The final instruction reads: "Set one portion aside. If it is gone by morning, do not make this again."

A song you've never heard plays from the radio, and you know every word. By the second verse, you realize you're the one singing it—and the radio is off. When the song ends, something in the house begins humming it back.

You buy a secondhand coat with a name stitched inside the collar. People keep calling you by that name. Yesterday, someone mentioned your old apartment, and you remembered what was hidden behind the bathroom wall.

The new houseplant follows the sun like any other. But at night, every leaf turns to face your bedroom door.

You wake on a train you don't remember boarding. The other passengers sit perfectly still, each wearing your face from a different era. The conductor whispers that your stop was three lifetimes ago.

A door appears in your hallway where no door has ever been. Through the keyhole, you can see your own living room—but the figure on the couch turns and meets your eye, holding the key to the door.

Your phone's photo gallery fills with pictures of you sleeping. You live alone, and in the newest one, someone is pulling the blanket down from your face.

The diary you find in the attic ends mid-sentence on today's date. The handwriting is yours, though you've never seen the book before.

Each night, the painting in the stairwell shows the same misty field. Last night, a small figure stood at the tree line. Tonight, it's halfway across.

Your younger sibling has an imaginary friend named Mr. Quiet. Lately, Mr. Quiet has been leaving notes—and they're signed with your dead father's name.

You answer a wrong-number call from a frightened stranger begging for help. They describe their house in perfect detail. It's your house. They're upstairs.

While digging in your garden, your shovel strikes a small wooden box. Inside is a tarnished silver bell and a warning: "Do not ring it after midnight. The buried may mistake it for mercy."

You find an old film reel labeled with your name and a year you weren't yet born. When you play it, you watch yourself walk into a room you've never entered—and lock the door behind you.

A child's nursery rhyme, when played backward, is a direct invitation to something ancient and hungry. You accidentally hummed it all day.

The last thing you remember is walking into a corn maze at a harvest festival. You wake in the middle of it to a sky with no sun, and the corn around you is dead, black, and whispering.

You receive a letter with no return address, written in a hand you almost recognize. It contains a single sentence: "They know you remember."

On a late-night drive, you pick up a hitchhiker who seems friendly enough. They ask to be dropped at a crossroads that doesn't exist on any map, then remind you this is where you left them last time.

The town's beloved old librarian passes away. In her will, she leaves you a single, locked book and a note that says, "Don't let the words out."

You work the night shift at a morgue. One of the bodies on your table sits up and asks for a glass of water, as if continuing a conversation you do not remember starting.

Late at night, you glance at your bedroom window and see your reflection. But something feels off—it's not mirroring your movements. Then you realize... It's standing outside, watching you.

You rent a house with one room sealed shut by a single unbroken chain. When you ask the landlord about it, he says, "It only opens for the ones who stay."

You purchase a beautiful antique mirror. It reflects your room perfectly, except for one small detail: the door to your closet is always slightly ajar.

After a séance, something cold follows you home. Each night, it whispers the story of how the darkness took it—and pauses, as though expecting you to remember the rest.