

The Game Master

written by

Hélène Sellier

FADE IN

1- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

Scandinavian furniture. Nobody in the almost empty space except for two women in their thirties, sitting.

Faint electrical sounds.

CHARLIE

No way I'm telling you about this!

LEA

Come on... Can't be worse than the poodle incident.

CHARLIE

(with a forced laugh)

I told you before, this night doesn't exist.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(in a serious tone)

And this time, it's not the same.

LEA

(sighing)

You're always in impossible situations.

CHARLIE

Believe me, it's never on purpose.

LEA

Never?

CHARLIE

Well, not anymore...

LEA

So what did you accidentally do?

LEA (CONT'D)

A trip to Helsinki? A see-through pull-over as a gift to your mum? Your hot yoga teacher?

CHARLIE

(after a pause)

Promise you won't say I'm crazy?

LEA

I promise I won't say it...

CHARLIE
 (showing her phone)
 Well, check this out...

2- INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

Crowded space, bright with yellow dusk light. Shelves full of board games. A table with dice, snacks, pens, and papers. Five players in a D&D session. Charlie is one of them. The game master is off-camera. Everything seems still.

We hear the sounds of Charlie and Lea's respiration.

3- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

Two customers arrive in the background. A waitress is taking their order.

Whir of the coffee maker and clinks of plates.

LEA
 (disappointed)
 What I am supposed to see?

LEA (CONT'D)
 That you have too much money?

LEA (CONT'D)
 Or that you found a new hobby...
 Again.

CHARLIE
 (in a breath)
 The camera is a gift from my
 parents.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (Insistently)
 And you have to keep watching.

LEA
 Ok, ok. But don't take it
 personally if I'm falling asleep.

LEA (CONT'D)
 I preferred when your passion was
 driving your landlord nuts.

LEA (CONT'D)
 At least, there were twists and
 turns.

CHARLIE
 (in an assertive voice)
 You're the one who wanted to see
 me. To know why I am freaked out...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Well, here it is.

4-INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

The sun has set, the room is darker. Four of the five players seem agitated. We see quick movements, happening now and then. Charlie seems motionless.

Muffled conversations in the background.

5- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

The coffee shop is no longer empty, but the two women are still secluded from the other customers.

The background conversations are getting louder and louder.

LEA
 (annoyed)
 At the risk of repeating myself...
 What I'm supposed to see?

CHARLIE
 (vigorously)
 You need to keep watching.

LEA
 Ok, ok. Gosh, don't take it like
 that!

6- INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

The daylight is replaced by the sickly glow of fluorescent lights. The four players constantly gesticulate, nervously rocking on their chairs, impatiently fiddling with dice, periodically standing up... Charlie doesn't seem to move.

We hear Charlie's voice, as if very close.

CHARLIE
 (coarsely)
 I began doing role-playing games on
 Thursday nights about... five
 months ago.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 This is, like, our fifteen session.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I learned to really appreciate
 them. And now...

7- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

The coffee shop is full of customers. Lea and Charlie are huddled together in the corner they occupy since the beginning.

Lively conversations and laughs in the background.

LEA
 (surprised)
 My god, Charlie, you're crying...

LEA (CONT'D)
 What the fuck happened?

CHARLIE
 Watch... You need to keep watching.

LEA
 Of course, of course. Don't worry.
 Everything's ok, you know.

8- INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

The fluorescent lights flicker at random. The four players are moving more and more rapidly, standing up and sitting down, pacing around the table, going off frame and coming back. Charlie seems immobile.

We hear Charlie's voice. An uninterrupted mumble, sometimes punctuated by Lea's gasps.

CHARLIE
 Something felt off, from the
 beginning.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I found him strange. You know, the
 game master.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But I discarded the feeling. A new
place, a new activity, new
people... Those sorts of things.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I should have said something.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
'Cause he always began the session
by asking us what we wished for
that night.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I always said to relax.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
When I went there, I only wanted to
forget about my day at work.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Every day, I deal with entitled
idiots and impulsive assholes, you
know.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And, usually, people said stuff
like have fun, or gain xp, or
manage to role-play their
character...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But this time, it was different.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We were stuck in prison, you see.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I mean, our characters were in
jail.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We had spent three evenings trying
to figure out how to escape.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
People were frustrated...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We talked about this between
ourselves, on the discord channel.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
They said they'll tell him they
wanted to speed up, to move things
forwards.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I was happy with the pace, but I
didn't want to stir up a long
conversation by text message.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh god, I should have said
something.

9- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

Lea and Charlie share their table with a young child and her
mother, apparently trying to get him to eat a snack.

We hear his cries and her sighs, but only faintly.

LEA
(in a low voice)
Charlie, what happened to them?

CHARLIE
(in a neutral tone)
I don't know...

LEA
(in an irritated tone)
How can you not know?

CHARLIE
I can't remember.

LEA
(rapidly)
Have you tried calling them? Going
to their place?

CHARLIE
(shakingly)
They're nowhere to be found.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
The police...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
They concluded I wasn't a suspect
anymore.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But they're still searching.

LEA
(gently)
Charlie... You can tell me
anything, you know that, right?

CHARLIE
I would... if I could.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(vigorously)
I can't remember anything, Lea.
Anything.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But I found this footage on my
phone, this morning.

LEA
Just before I called you, right?

CHARLIE
Yes. But you need to keep watching.
Until the end.

10- INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

The fluorescent lights flicker more and more frequently. The
four players are rapidly moving. There is an uninterrupted
movement. Charlie is nowhere to be seen.

The sobbing of the child becomes very present, covering Lea
and Charlie's disjointed breathing noises. Until it suddenly
stops.

11- INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

The mother and the child have left, and the coffee shop is
emptying.

Sounds of chairs scraping on the floor, door opening and
closing, blinds being drawn.

LEA
Charlie... Charlie, look at me.

LEA (CONT'D)
Where were you at this point?

CHARLIE
(staring vacantly in
space)
I don't know. I can't remember.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But keep watching. There's more.

12- INT. GAME STORE - EVENING

GoPro footage. Time lapse.

The footage is now mainly black. When we see the four players, their position shift. Seating on the table. Leaning on the wall. Kneeling on the floor. Clinging to the front door.

We hear nothing.

LEA
Charlie... Please, tell me...

LEA (CONT'D)
(in a murmur)
What did you wish for?

CHARLIE
I can't remember...

FADE OUT