

Hi folks! Welcome to Follow the Leader's first episode! In this episode, we play a game called Follow, by Ben Robbins. The players in this episode were Kales, Han, Alix, and Dora. (Direct quotes from the players are highlighted in their color.)

## GAME PREP

For this game, we chose the quest of *The Show*, which involves our characters trying to put on a show. The reasons why our quest was difficult were because the last show was a disaster and the script is a mess. Our other options were that we were being censored by the Powers-That-Be and that we had a shoestring budget, but Han said censorship didn't seem like a major problem for what was meant to be a "light-hearted show romp" and Dora pointed out that Alix's minor character ruled out the notion of a shoestring budget. (Alix: "You will have a shoestring budget if my character ends up unhappy.")

Next we selected our fellowship. Each player has two characters: a main character and a minor character, each ascribing to an archetype given by the rule book for the quest and each with a personal wish of something to get from the quest. The main characters are:

- Merril, the stage manager, played by Kales (Kales: "she absolutely does not get paid enough for this, come on guys...") who wants caution (Kales: "we're doing something really innovative here, so we have to make sure everything goes smoothly");
- Lucent Seomoon, the gloryhound, played by Han (Han: "he's like the embodiment of Primadonna by Marina and the Diamonds") who wants fame (Han: "I'm the most talented person here and soon everyone will know it");
- Persimmon Harlow, the victim of stage fright, played by Alix (Alix: "they believe that, acting is art, it's like serious art, you guys..."), who wants meaning (Alix: "challenge the audience");
- and Parker Young, the stagehand, played by Dora (Dora: "he's just excited to be here, y'all!") who wants family (Dora: "sometimes the real stars are the friends you made along the way.")

We had to determine what we wanted from one other character, going down the list (so Merril wants something from Lucent, Lucent wants something from Persimmon, etc), that the other character would not give. Merril wants respect from Lucent, which of course she won't get. Lucent wants glory from Persimmon— specifically, he wants their part. Persimmon wants love from Parker. And Parker wants forgiveness from Merril, as they've worked together before and he had a hand in whatever made the last show go wrong.

And then, our minor characters:

- Zephyr, the washed-up star, played by Kales;

- Kuiper Jasco, who is the reporter assigned to cover reviewing the show, played by Han (Han: “she does not want to be here and she doesn’t know shit about theater”);
- Grace Mitra, the moneybags, played by Alix (Alix: “her facecast is that lady who always somehow looks like she’s divorcing you”);
- and Marius Favors, the playwright, played by Dora (Dora: “they’re a student of the subject the play is about, why did you give them this shitty shitty script *it must be fixed*”).

None of these characters have wishes or want things from each other, but they’re there to flesh out the story.

Also established: everyone is relentlessly gay, Kales and Han can both do math, but Han can also drive so are they really gay?

## PLAY — CHALLENGE ONE (16:00)

In order to complete the quest, we complete three challenges. For our first challenge, Kales suggested we have to cut 20 minutes from the run time, and it’s difficult because our script so far is “only half of a story, and we have to figure out how to cut 20 minutes from the runtime without losing the entire plot.” We are also mid-switching playwrights, and they are intent on making the script perfect, and we’re just watching a pile of pages grow and grow with no end in sight.

FIRST SCENE: Lucent’s scene, with Persimmon and Marius. (18:56)

“In the movie version of this game, the first scene opens with Lucent, like, busting down the door of where Marius is doing the rewrites.” — Han

Lucent barges in, tosses his marked-up script onto the table, and accuses Marius of cutting most of his part. Marius snaps that Lucent’s role isn’t integral to “the mythology, the mythos! Have you never studied this?” Persimmon pipes in that they would appreciate if Lucent would knock next time, instead of barging in, as he scared them pretty badly. Lucent, barely keeping it together, tells Marius that he needs his equity card, and to make a good impression on the critics, and “there are things that I need that you’re not giving me.”

Persimmon agrees, and tells Marius that the real problem is that there are way too many jokes in the script, and what the story needs is real drama. Marius, sounding like a vein is about to pop in their forehead, just repeats “Real... drama,” and then faintly adds that the play is meant to be a comedy. Lucent points out that it’s like a Greek comedy, which isn’t actually funny. Marius repeats that they have a masters in the subject, to which Lucent and Persimmon both say they’ve done a lot of acting— Lucent in *Antigone* in high school, and Persimmon in lots of acting classes.

Persimmon asks why they'd want to make people laugh when they could make them cry, which Lucent agrees with. Marius, at the end of their rope, wonders why the actors would make their life easier when they could make Marius want to cry, and then concedes that they will take Lucent and Persimmon's points under advisement. Persimmon mutters that "no one really listens to the actors around here." Marius retorts that "you can't ignore them!" Lucent and Persimmon both decide to work on their lines, and Marius says, "And please tell Lucent what happens when you assume."

SECOND SCENE: Persimmon's scene, with Merrill and callouts from Parker and Lucent. (23:50)

"People are just passing between us as we're talking." — Kales

Persimmon comes to Merrill, worried that Marius is going to cut their part since Lucent barged in while they were working. Lucent is a good actor, but Persimmon wants to prove they can do it after the last show they starred in, where they couldn't do the role. They ask Merrill to make sure nothing's gonna happen to their part, and Merrill does her best to assure them that Lucent has no control over parts. "But he's like, scary. And tall." Merrill agrees with this, but final say over parts is up to the director and Marius. Persimmon says, again, that what should be cut is the jokes— "You understand this is supposed to be like— serious, acting, right?"

Lucent interrupts, before Merrill can retort, asking where his contour palette is. Merrill tells him to go talk to the stagehands, and tells Persimmon that the cutting isn't up to her either, and again, Persimmon should talk to Marius or the director. Persimmon points out she's one of the only people actually doing stuff, but Merrill isn't really in charge until tech starts.

"Isn't this tech? I saw someone..." "We don't have a script yet!"

Merril repeats that no one is getting cut, to which Persimmon replies that maybe some people should get cut, just not them. Merrill tells them to practice their lines, but rushes away mid-sentence when she spies someone falling off the stage. Persimmon announces, to no one in particular, that they are going to go practice their lines, because they're professional.

THIRD SCENE: Parker's scene, with Lucent. (28:30)

"It's an internship. Sometimes you clean out the gross makeup." — Han

Lucent barges in (again) while Parker is sorting makeup, as delegated by the head of makeup. (Lucent has knocked down a passing prop door and been like, "I've arrived." It's a bit.) He demands Parker's name, and Parker greets him as "Mr. Seomoon." Lucent is stunned to be referred to by that name, and Parker tells him that his mother told him it was polite to refer to people with an honorific and their last name.

"Jesus Christ. Okay."

Lucent demands to know where his contour palette is. Parker starts to reply, and Lucent interrupt to ask him if he knows what a contour palette is. “Do I... look like I know what a contour palette is?” “I don’t know, that’s why I’m asking.” “I really, really don’t, sir.” Parker offers to help Lucent go through the makeup he’s got, to which Lucent tells him that he doesn’t do makeup “bought at Target,” and demands to know where the head of makeup is. “I think Clarisse went on a smoke break three hours ago.” Lucent essentially gives up on Parker knowing where his palette is, and Parker asks how he’ll hope to learn if Lucent doesn’t tell him anything. “Are you training to be a makeup artist?” No, but if people are going to ask him about stuff— Lucent cuts him off before he can finish.

Lucent asks Parker if he’s new to the theater, which, yes, he’s a baby. But it means he has an outside perspective, so Lucent asks if it looks like the show is a disaster from the outside, as well as the inside. According to Parker, since no one’s lost any body parts it’s much better than the last show. Lucent admits defeat, goes off to find his palette, but wishes— “Fuck, what was your name?” “Parker.” “Parker.”— luck with the makeup.

#### FOURTH SCENE: Merrill’s scene, with Marius. (33:53)

“We’re gonna *talk* about this *script*. Does it have a *plot* yet.” — Kales

That’s where the scene starts. Marius gets extremely defensive of the script, and Merrill just has her head in her hands. It’s 140 pages long<sup>1</sup>, and besides the fact that Merrill doesn’t want to call that long of a show, no one is going to want to sit through it without an intermission. Marius says an intermission can be included— “How long is Wagner’s ring cycle?”<sup>2</sup>

Merril asks if there’s any way Marius can cut the script to two hours without losing any of the integrity of their “precious story.” Marius says they can cut all of the nuance of the “true vision of the hero’s journey,” reducing it to its “basest components,” and completely scrub it of “everything that makes it worth telling,” to which Merrill flatly replies, “So we cut out the jokes, is what I’m hearing.” Marius angrily agrees.

Merril sighs, and asks Marius to get it done for the next day so the actors have an actual script to work with. Marius agrees, and Merrill bemoans that she needs so much alcohol (more specifically, “five cups of vodka”), before leaving.

#### CONCLUDING THE CHALLENGE (37:07)

Time to see if we succeeded at the challenge. To do this, everyone contributes a number of stones, either red or white, and then we draw two stones to decide what happened. The first stone contributed is a red stone, if our main character is unhappy with the path the fellowship has taken. Two red stones may be contributed if the character wants the fellowship to fail the

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<sup>1</sup> 140 pages, if formatted correctly, would yield a 2 hour and 20 minute show, not including any intermission, since in the theater one page of text is equivalent to roughly one minute of stage time.

<sup>2</sup> 15 hours, apparently.

challenge, and no stones are contributed if the character is happy (relatively) with with the path the fellowship has taken. Han contributed a red stone, as Lucent was not promised his lines were safe, and someone took his contour palette. Kales also contributed a red stone, since although the script was cut by 20 minutes she wanted the show cut down to an hour and 40 minutes, and that's not happening.

The next stone contributed is if, as a player, we feel the fellowship succeeded or failed the challenge— white for yes, red for no. Han, Dora, and Kales contributed a white stone, and Alix contributed a red, since it didn't seem to them like anything productive happened. Dora says that Marius did their job, and Kales says that Merrill did more than her job, since really the director should have been handling this. We all realize that none of us are playing the director or named them, or knows who they are... cue X-Files theme, and TAZ reference.

So we draw our stones— one, and then another. The first draw was a white, and the second was a red, which in the rules of Follow means we lose the challenge and a character. Han asks if it makes the most sense that Marius just walks out, and Dora wonders if Marius cuts someone (Persimmon, since Alix says Lucent doesn't seem to be going anywhere.) Han wants to see more of Persimmon, though, so Dora decides that Marius throws all their papers in the trash, goes home, and doesn't come back.

Alix: "Persimmon fishes the papers out of the trash the next day and is like, "Well I'm just glad they cut all of the jokes."

END EPISODE