

Introduction

In every epic tale, Evil plots in the shadows to destroy the Forces of Good, preparing for the day when Darkness reigns supreme. But inevitably, Heroes rise up and courageously defeat this Evil, returning decency and justice to the land. Thank you mighty Heroes, for keeping the Light of Virtue shining!

But, what happens when the humiliated Minions of Evil scuttle back to their lairs? What happens when this epic tale takes place in a world called Kragmorta? What will the sneaky Servants of the Darkness do when they find themselves facing Rigor Mortis, the Evil Genius and Lord of the Lost Lands?

Rigor Mortis: Well, my slimy Servants, did you bring me the grey wizard's cloak, as I ordered you?

Shalma-Ne: The c-c-cloak! Of course, my Lord... We were going towards the wizard's tower but, while we were crossing the forest, this bungler goblin made us lose our way...

Rigor Mortis: Ah! Is that so, Nya-Khebo?

Nya-Khebo: But my Lord, it was not my fault! I was following the right path, when a terrible storm took us by surprise and Simur-Hadd advised us to make a detour to take shelter in a mine...

Rigor Mortis: We are afraid to get wet then, are we?

Simur-Hadd: Well yes, unfortunately this is true... But I did not want to...

Rigor Mortis: Simur-Hadd! For the umpteenth time, you have wrecked a most important mission! And for the umpteenth time, you will be severely punished! Stay where you are...

Game Description

Aye, Dark Overlord! (*ADO!* for short) is a fantasybased party game with a humorous and easygoing tone. To play, you only need a bit of quickthinking, some friends, and a willingness to have a lot of fun.

The game is simple to learn and easy to play. The wicked Servants of Rigor Mortis, the true and only Evil Genius, return home after their ump-teenth failed mission and must justify themselves to their Master, inventing stories and unlikely excuses, and laying the blame as much as possible on their fellow toadies.

The player who plays the Evil Genius has an important role in the game, too. He holds absolute power, and the Servants are his to command. He can choose to punish them or accept yet another apology. He judges if their excuses are worthy and if a Servant is too hesitant or too disrespectful.

And to those who can't come up with an excuse, he distributes Withering Looks...

Game Contents

The game includes:

- This Rulebook
- 121 Hint Cards
- 37 Action Cards
- 7 Withering Look Cards

Rules of Play

Player Roles

In *ADO!* the players must play one of two different parts: the Servants or the Dark Overlord.

Before playing, decide who shall play the part of the Dark Overlord in the first game. The choice may be made by random selection, by fair vote, or even by highly biased popularity contest.

All the other players are the Dark Overlord's Servants, the sneakiest and most treacherous creatures from Kragmorta or any other fantasy world imaginable. They should all possess certain distinctive characteristics: ineptitude, clumsiness, and the inability to carry out even the simplest task.

The Cards

ADO! is played using two types of cards:

hint Cards



The Hint Cards are the narrative cues that the player uses to create a story and justify himself to the Master. When using a Hint Card, a player can draw inspiration from any part of the title, the description, or the illustration, as long as the association with the card's content is obvious and, of course, accepted by the Dark Overlord. Note that the small icons in the upper left corner of the Hint Cards are used for the *Aye*, *Dark Master!* variant set of rules and are not used when playing *ADO*!



Action Cards

Action Cards must be played in combination with a Hint Card to perform a particular action. The actions allowed are represented by symbols:



A Pass the Buck action shifts the blame to another player, forcing him to start his turn.



A Freeze action attempts to disturb the narration of another player during his turn with a new Hint Card. (The player who plays the card does not take the turn; he simply bothers and generally annoys the player whose turn it is).

Some cards allow only one of the two actions; others allow the player to choose which one to perform. Note that the small icons in the upper left corner of the Action Cards are used for the *Aye*, *Dark Master!* variant set of rules and are not used when playing *ADO!*

The Dark Overlord's Cards



The game also contains special cards used by the Dark Overlord to dole out Withering Looks to the players. Withering Look Cards display one of three levels of the Dark Overlord's anger.

The **Uithering** Looks

The Dark Overlord assigns players Withering Looks during the game as the measure of his anger towards his Servants. The first player to receive a third Withering Look is considered responsible for the failure of the mission and is severely punished.

When a player receives his first Withering Look, he places a Withering Look Card representing the first level of anger face-up in front of himself. When he receives a second Withering Look, he flips the card over to the side representing the second level of anger. When he receives his third Withering Look, the game is over.

Setting up the Game

After the players have gathered around a table, they choose a Dark Overlord. This player takes on the role of Rigor Mortis, perhaps even wearing a long, black cloak to get into the part. The cards are sorted into two decks, Hint Cards and Action Cards (they can be recognized from their backs). Each player receives three Hint Cards and three Action Cards. After casting a long, baleful stare at his Servants, and observing a moment of ominous silence, the Dark Overlord starts the game.

Starting the Game

The Dark Overlord addresses one of his Servants, asking a question about the mission's results.

Examples: "Well my brave Servants. I ORDERED you to kidnap the Princess and bring her to me. Did you carry out your mission?"

"Slaves, did you raze the village near the Small Big Horn to the ground as I ordered you?"

"My faithful minions, have you finally found the Warts Elixir?"

The choice of the first player to be grilled is completely at the whim of the Dark Overlord. Then, the player questioned is forced to justify himself and his turn begins.

The Servant's Turn

During his turn, the Servant makes excuses for his many failures and tries to avoid angering the Dark Overlord. The excuses invented by the players should not necessarily be realistic or even plausible, given the humorous nature of the game. The more absurd they are, the funnier the game is. However, all the excuses must be consistent with the Hint Cards played.

A player's turn begins when he is questioned by the Dark Overlord or is the target of a Pass the Buck card. His turn ends when the player manages to play a Pass the Buck card on another player or receives a Withering Look. If the player was the target of a Pass the Buck card, he starts his turn by drawing a new Action Card from the deck. However, if the player was questioned by the Dark Overlord, he cannot draw an Action Card.

During his turn, a player must:

- Play at least one Hint Card to continue his story.
- Play a maximum of three Hint Cards during his turn, including the one played along with the Pass the Buck card.
- End his turn by playing a Pass the Buck card along with a Hint Card to shift blame to another Servant.

At the end of his turn, after playing the Pass the Buck card, the player draws enough Hint Cards from the deck to bring his hand back up to three cards.

Excessive hesitation, an inability to continue his story, or an inability to end his turn by playing a Pass the Buck card will provoke the Dark Overlord's anger, and the player will receive a Withering Look.

If a player does not have a Hint Card at the beginning of his turn, he automatically receives a Withering Look from the Dark Overlord.

If a player does not have a Pass the Buck card, he can choose to immediately receive a Withering Look and end his turn.

Note: It is strongly recommended that players maintain a tone of respect when addressing the Dark Overlord. If a player does not show enough deference, the Dark Overlord may take offense and resort to a Withering Look...

Out of Turn Actions

Outside of his turn, a Servant can disrupt the active player's narration by playing a Freeze card together with a Hint Card.

The Freeze card must be introduced with an appropriate statement (such as "Actually, this is not true...") and must have a connection to the player's narration. An incorrectly played Freeze card may anger the Overlord. The target of the Freeze action must react quickly and alter his story to accommodate the forced change. The Freeze card cannot be played during a Pass the Buck Action.

Note that playing a Freeze card does not allow a player to recover Hint or Action Cards.

The Servant's Hand

Each player starts the game with three Hint Cards and three Action Cards.

At the beginning of his turn, a player draws an Action Card if he has been targeted by a Pass the Buck card. If the Dark Overlord has questioned him, he does not.

When the player ends his turn by playing a Pass the Buck card, he draws enough Hint Cards from the deck to have three in his hand.

When a player receives a Withering Look, he must discard all his cards and draw three new Action Cards and three New Hint Cards.

When a Freeze card is played, no other card is drawn.

The Dark Overlord

During the game, besides overseeing the various phases of the game, the Dark Overlord must keep the Servants on a razor's edge.

He has the power to:

- Interrupt the players to demand further explanation.
- Introduce new narrative elements, independently from the Hint Cards.
- Rebuke and reprimand players as much as he likes, regardless of whose turn it is.
- Comment on the players' narration.
- Urge them to go on (for example, "I am getting bored...and you DO NOT want me to get bored, do you?").

The Dark Overlord's Anger!

The pathetic Servants constantly test the Dark Overlord's patience, and many situations can invoke his wrath, such as:

- No Pass the Buck card: if a player is unable to play a Pass the Buck card, he is required to declare it during his turn (always acting "in character," for instance stammering and trembling).
- No Hint Card: if a player finds himself with no Hint Card at the beginning of his turn.
- Being Slow: if, during the narration, a Servant pauses for a set amount of time (5–10 seconds, depending on the Dark Overlord's whim), he immediately angers the Dark Overlord.
- Being Boring: if the Servant gives a too-long and inconclusive narration.
- Unacceptable Hint: if, in the Dark Overlord's unquestionable opinion, the Hint Card is not used acceptably during the narration.

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- Do not call me "Boss"!: jokes, nicknames, and disrespectful behavior in regard to the Dark Overlord are immediately punished.
- Being Distracting: if a Servant disrupts the game with inconvenient small talk or useless interventions.
- At the Dark Overlord's whim: after all, he is the Evil Genius, Lord of the Lost Lands...

In all these cases, the Servant who angered the Dark Overlord receives a Withering Look. Afterwards, the Dark Overlord questions another player as at the beginning of the game.

Mercy, my Lord, Mercy!

After receiving the third Withering Look, a Servant has a last opportunity to save himself, begging for Mercy. If the Dark Overlord considers the plea adequate, the player can draw an Action Card from the deck. If the card does not display Rigor Mortis' skull, the Servant is safe and can continue the game as if he had never received the Withering Look.



Otherwise, the final curtain falls on the miserable Servant. Rigor Mortis has found the person responsible for the failure, and immediately punishes him...or he may, instead, decide to retire to his secret lair to work out a much more cruel punishment.

The plea has to be REAL, not a simple stammering, and must be presented in a funny way. It is important for the player to do his best to play the part of the slimy Servant, close to the final punishment and absolutely terrified at this prospect. Only with an adequate plea may the Servant hope to win the Dark Overlord's mercy.

End of the Game

A game of *ADO!* ends when a Servant gets eliminated by receiving three Withering Looks and failing to obtain mercy. At this point, a new game begins, in which the part of the Dark Overlord is played by the eliminated player (or by any other player if all players agree).

Other Rules

The "First Round" Rule

To better allow all players to take part in the game, a compulsory first round of the table must be played, in which, instead of playing a Pass the Buck card, all players perform one free Pass the Buck action without playing an Action Card. Each player must perform this Pass the Buck action against the player sitting to his right. After all players have had their first turn, it is then possible to play a Pass the Buck card as normal against other players.

During the first round, players are allowed to play Freeze cards. The Dark Overlord may distribute Withering Looks normally, but once a player receives one, the Dark Overlord must resume the game by questioning the player to the right of the Withering Look's target.

The "No Mirror Reflections" Rule

The Dark Overlord gets bored very easily, listening to his Servants' irrelevant blather. The only thing worse to listen to is a quarrel between two of them. If two players trade the blame between themselves repeatedly with the intent to cause one of them to receive a third Withering Look, the Dark Overlord may intervene in a much more impartial (and drastic) way by giving them both a Withering Look. At any rate, we strongly suggest not to allow more than two consecutive exchanges of the blame between two players.

The "Priority" Rule

If more than one card is played to disrupt a player's turn, the card played by the first person in clockwise order takes precedence above all the others. The other players must withdraw their cards and play them later...

However, never forget that the Dark Overlord always has the last word...on everything!



Aye, Dark Master!

Welcome to *Aye*, *Dark Master!*, a variant set of rules for *Aye*, *Dark Overlord!* designed to provide a more rules-based way to play without losing any of the fun!

Object of the Game

To win, a player must survive to the end of the game with the most Hint Cards played in front of him.

Components

The game uses the exact same Hint Cards, Action Cards, and Withering Look Cards as *ADO*!

hint Cards

These cards provide narrative elements for the Servants' excuses. Each Hint Card has an icon to identify which of the six types it is:



Person: This excuse involves a specific individual the Servant encountered.



Object: This excuse involves a specific item the Servant sought or possessed.



Place: This excuse involves a specific location the Servant visited.



Monster: This excuse involves the Servant being harassed by a specific type of creature.



Event: This excuse involves an activity or something that inspires an activity the Servant was involved in.



Wild: This excuse is so powerful, it can be played as any of the other five types.

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Action Cards

These cards are used for accusing and interrupting other Servants. They are also used by the Dark Master to challenge his minions' excuses and overrule their pitiful actions.

An Action Card with the Pass the Buck symbol is played to compel someone else to play a Hint Card of a specific type. The Dark Master may play a Pass the Buck card to challenge Hint Cards.

An Action Card with a Freeze symbol is played to interrupt other players. The Dark Master may play a Freeze card as a call for silence, negating the effects of an interruption.

Action Cards with both symbols may be used as either type.

Action Cards have a small icon to identify which type of Hint Card is required to respond to it. When playing an Action Card with a Wild icon, the player must choose one of the other five icons.

Mercy and No Mercy

Action Cards without Rigor Mortis' skull may be used as a Mercy card to allow a player to avoid advancing to the next level of Withering Look. However, the Dark Master may play them as a No Mercy card. A No Mercy card is played immediately after a Mercy card to negate its effects.

Withering Look Cards

The three levels of Withering Look Cards are used to track the severity of the Dark Master's anger.

Setting Up the Game

1. Shuffle the Hint Cards and place the Hint deck facedown within reach of all players.

- 2. Shuffle the Action Cards and place the Action deck facedown within reach of all players, with room for a discard pile.
- 3. Withering Look Cards should be placed within reach of all players.
- 4. Deal a hand of five Hint Cards and three Actions Cards to each player.
- 5. One player is selected to start as the Dark Master. How to choose this person? It should be utterly arbitrary and unfair. Just like real life.

Describing the Plan

Before the game begins, the Dark Master describes the original plan. The player who starts as the Dark Master draws three cards from the Hint deck to form the basis of the plan. They might provide what the ultimate goal had been, where the scheme was to unfold, or objects necessary to complete the plot. These cards should be left in the center of the table for players' refernence, but are not counted in anyone's final tally of played Hint Cards.

Example: Donna starts the game as the Dark Master. She draws "The Wizard's Cloak," "The Dwarfish Beer," and "The Demonic Pyramid" and places them on the table.

"Miserable cretins! I asked for one simple thing, and yet you have failed me. If I am to ruin the Dwarves' precious outdoor beer festival, I must wear something warm! Do you want me to catch pneumonia? 'Go to the top of the Demonic Pyramid,' I said. 'That's where the Cloak is!' But now, thanks to you, I must endure the dwarven revelry. The fur-lined cloak is still on the pyramid. Now someone explain to me, what happened?!"

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The Game Round

A round of play is composed of three phases:

- Draw Phase
- Accusation Phase
- Adjust Withering Look Phase

At the end of the round, the title of Dark Master is passed to the player to the left of the current Dark Master.

Draw Phase

During the Draw Phase, players discard as many of their Action Cards as they wish and then draw their hands back up to a total of five Hint Cards and three Action Cards. Hint Cards may not be discarded, and this is the only time a player can draw Hint Cards. By contrast, a player draws three new Action Cards immediately after he has played the last Action Card in his hand.

When the Action Card deck is empty, reshuffle the cards in the discard pile and reuse them. If the Hint Card deck is depleted, no more Hint Cards may be drawn.

Accusation Phase

The Accusation Phase starts with the Dark Master choosing one of his Servants and making a general accusation. The Dark Master does not need to play any Action Cards to make this general accusation.

Example: Dark Master Donna turns her attention to Adam. "You! What's your sorry excuse for failing to retrieve the wonderful Wizard's Cloak?"

The target must answer by playing a Hint Card of any type. If the Hint Card has a Wild icon, he must choose one of the other five types. He plays the card faceup in front of himself and makes up an elaborate tale that incorporates the content of the Hint Card that he played, the Dark Master's original plan, and a healthy dose of self-aggrandizing.

Unless lost to a challenge from the Dark Master, the Hint Card remains in front of the person who played it and counts toward his final tally of played Hint Cards.

If the player does not play a Hint Card, he receives a Withering Look, and the round advances to the Adjust Withering Look Phase.

Example: Adam plays the "The Exotic Beauty" Hint Card. "Oh most malevolent Master. As I obediently began climbing the stairs of the Demonic Pyramid, I was momentarily distracted by a beautiful temptress. I tried to appear suave and manly, but I fell down the stairs and twisted my ankle."

Once a Hint Card has been played, one of four things can happen:

- The Dark Master Challenges. The Dark Master can challenge the Hint Card by playing a Pass the Buck card.
- Another Player Interrupts. If the Dark Master does not challenge, any other player may interrupt by using a Freeze card. If more than one player attempts to interrupt, the Dark Master chooses who takes precedence. Neither the Dark Master not the Servant who played the Hint Card may interrupt.
- The Player Makes an Accusation. If there's no challenge or interruption, the player who just played the Hint Card may accuse another player with a Pass the Buck card.
- The Dark Master Accuses Again. If no one wants to challenge, interrupt, or accuse, the Dark Master makes another general accusation, as when the round began.

The Dark Master Challenges

Immediately after a Hint Card has been played and explained, the Dark Master may challenge it by playing a Pass the Buck card. The Pass the Buck card's icon indicates what type of Hint Card is required in response. If it is a Wild icon, the Dark Master must choose one of the five other types of icons when he plays it.

When challenging, the Dark Master should ask his underling a question appropriate to the type of Hint Card required for a response. If playing a Pass the Buck card with a Person icon, he should ask who was involved in this story; if playing one with a Place icon, he should ask where this story happened.

As always, any time an Action Card is played, it is discarded.

Example: After Adam plays his "Exotic Beauty" Hint Card, Dark Master Donna challenges, playing a Pass the Buck card with an Event icon. "Wait one moment. You? Appear suave and manly? What exactly were you doing to achieve that effect?"

The person who played the original Hint Card must now play another, this one of a type matching the Dark Master's Pass the Buck card.

Example: Adam must now play a Hint Card with an Event icon. He plays the "The Unstable Balloon" card. "I tried to impress her with my balloon, but as soon as I got in, it went 'PTHHBBT!' and I fell out." Adam now has two Hint Cards played in front of him.

Once the second Hint Card is played, the Dark Master may not challenge either of them further. Play continues with other players now having an opportunity to interrupt. If the player does not play a second Hint Card, the Dark Master places the challenged Hint Card in front of himself, to be added to his total at the end of the game. The player who lost the challenge receives a Withering Look, and the round moves to the Adjust Withering Look Phase.

Another Player Interrupts

If the Dark Master does not challenge the Hint Card, another Servant may try to interrupt with a Freeze card. By playing Freeze cards, players get the chance to play more Hint Cards. If more than one player tries to interrupt, the Dark Master determines who actually succeeds.

To play a Freeze card, it must have an icon that matches the Hint Card just played. A Freeze card with a Wild icon may be used as any of the other five types of icons.

When interrupting, the player should use the type of icon as a transition from the interrupted player's flimsy excuse to his own important explanation.

Example: Belinda just played "The Stone Giant," a Hint Card with a Monster icon, and Carl interrupts with a Freeze card with a Monster icon. "By funny coincidence, while she was wasting time with the Stone Giant, I was having my own unavoidable interaction with horrible creatures."

Even if interrupted, a Hint Card still counts for the final tally of the Servant who played it.

Once played, the Freeze card is discarded, and the player must follow it up by playing a Hint Card with the same icon. (If the Freeze card had a Wild icon, treat it as the icon it was used as.) After the Hint Card is played, play proceeds exactly as it did after the first Hint Card was played. If a player does not follow his Freeze card with a Hint Card, he receives a Withering Look and the round moves to the Adjust Withering Look Phase.

Having interrupted, Carl must now play a Hint Card with a Monster icon. He plays "The Puppy" card. "I was at the top of the pyramid when I noticed that the most adorable little Spaniel had fallen asleep on top of the cloak. I tried to nudge the little fellow off of it, but he woke up and sunk his vicious fangs into my throat."

Silence!

Immediately after a player has interrupted with a Freeze card, the Dark Master may forestall the interruption by playing a Freeze card of his own and demanding "Silence!" The Dark Master may call for silence using any Freeze card, regardless of the icon on it. Both Action Cards are discarded, and no further attempts to interrupt are allowed until a new Hint Card has been played.

Example: Belinda wants to interrupt Carl's story, playing a Freeze card with a Monster icon. "Your saccharine and frankly unconvincing tale of the small puppy calls to mind a creature—."

Dark Master Donna, however, plays a Freeze card of her own and demands, "Silence!" Both Action Cards are discarded, and Carl continues as if the interruption never happened.

The Player Accuses Someone Else

If the Dark Master does not challenge and no one else interrupts, the Servant who played the Hint Card may accuse one of the other Servants by playing a Pass the Buck card. The Pass the Buck card can have any sort of icon on it, but if it is a Wild icon, the player must choose one of the five other types of icons when he plays it. Once the Action Card is played, it is discarded. When accusing, the player should interrogate his peer in a way that is appropriate to the type of icon that is required for a response.

Example: Adam now wants to pass the blame on to Belinda. He plays a Pass the Buck card with a Monster icon. "What I want to know is why she was wasting time with some horrible beast while our precious Dark Master was stuck inside, cloakless. What sort of monster is more important than our dread lord's warmth?"

The targeted player must then play a Hint Card with an icon that matches the one on the Pass the Buck card just played. If an appropriate Hint Card is played, the round keeps going as before, with more challenges, interruptions, and accusations. If not, the targeted player receives a Withering Look and the round moves to the Adjust Withering Look Phase.

Of course, a player can never play a Pass the Buck card on the Dark Master. If someone forgets and tries to do so, he receives a Withering Look and the round moves to the Adjust Withering Look Phase.

The Dark Master Accuses Again

If, after a Hint Card is played, no one wants to challenge, interrupt, or accuse, the Dark Master simply chooses a player and makes another general accusation, as when the round began. The Dark Master does not play an Action Card to do so, and, as always, any type of Hint Card can answer a general accusation.

Adjust Withering Look Phase

Anytime a player is called upon to play a Hint Card and doesn't – or if someone accidentally makes an accusation against the Dark Master – that player receives a Withering Look and the round moves to the Adjust Withering Look Phase. During this phase, the player that received the Withering Look must advance to the next level of anger unless able to successfully beg for mercy from the Dark Master.

When a player advances to the first level of anger, he places a Withering Look Card in front of himself with the first level face up. When he advances to the next level, he flips the card over to the second level. When a player must advance to the final level, the Dark Master gives him the Withering Look Card with the third level, signalling certain doom for that player and the end of the game.

Mercy or No Mercy

Action Cards without Rigor Mortis' skull may be played by Servants as Mercy cards or by the Dark Master as No Mercy cards. When a player receives a Withering Look, he may play a Mercy Card to avoid advancing to the next level of anger. Note that even if a Mercy Card is played, a new round still begins. When begging for mercy, the player should make a genuine attempt to beg for forgiveness.

Example: Carl has just received a Withering Look, and the round advances to the Adjust Withering Look Phase. To avoid advancing to next level of Withering Look, Carl plays a Mercy Card. "Please don't be angry with me, my most malevolent master! I am unworthy of your humblest of burps. I beseech you to forgive me."

If the Dark Master does nothing, the player leaves his Withering Look Card as it was and a new round begins. The Dark Master, however, can play a No Mercy Card in response. A No Mercy card cancels the Mercy card and the Withering Look Card is adjusted as normal.

Example: After Carl's plea for forgiveness, Dark Master Belinda negates the Mercy Card with a No Mercy Card. Both cards are discarded, and Carl flips his Withering Look Card over from the first level to the second.

Only one Mercy Card may be played per round. The icons on the Action Cards are disregarded when using the them as Mercy or No Mercy Cards.

Ending the Round

The round ends after the Adjust Withering Look Phase, even if the player who received the Withering Look played a Mercy Card and did not advance to the next level of anger. The title of Dark Master is passed one person to the left, and a new round begins.

Ulinning the Game

If a player advances to the third Withering Look Card, the Dark Master metes out his doom and the game is over. The winner is the surviving player with the most Hint Cards played in front of him. In case of a tie, whichever player has the most Hint Cards played in front of him and was most recently the Dark Master wins the game.

Gredits

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