

As Long as We Don't Tell Anyone

A scenario by Anneli Friedner



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Introduction for the game master

As Long as We Don't Tell Anyone is a game about the unsaid, the not-right-now and not-right-here. Maybe about decorum. I think it's another of those games that's mostly about trying to figure out a relationship dynamic; how it changes with the circumstances, and how ideas of what is appropriate will affect it.

The players explore it in pairs, playing two characters who need to figure out their relationship to each other. The main design idea is to limit them in various ways, through a set of scenes that all have strict rules for how they are allowed to communicate. The scenario is not fully transparent to the players beforehand – as I want them to immerse in their struggles to say all those things they want to say.

As the game master, you set up the room and facilitate the pre-game workshop. There are many short exercises, so one of your important jobs is to keep track of the time. You print the player materials and hand them out during the pre-game workshop – these contain most of the actual game design. Read through and get familiar with the workshop and game structure before the play. It might also be good to consider things like what ending cue to use or how you want to instruct the workshop exercises. Feel free to do what works best for you.

During the game, the players read the scene instructions from their handouts. You start each scene and give the ending cue to the players, then wait about half a minute before ending the scene. You play music in the mid-game disco scene and in the end. I've tried to explain the whole game structure in the script and write the workshop down exercise-by-exercise so that you can use it as a support when running the game.

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The what if-mechanic is inspired by Erland Nylund's scenario "Hug him and die",
and many of the pre-game workshop exercises are originally taught to me by Maria Carlsson.
The cover photo is by Gaelle Marcel / unsplash.com

Introduction for the players

Dear players, this is a note from the author:

I wanted to write a larp about the people I never kissed.

I wanted to tell the story of those relationships that never became anything or were doomed before they even started. About not having a script for how to communicate that you like someone, because the whole situation is absurd and you shouldn't be in it the first place. I wanted to make a larp about the *let's just be friends* and the *that's not really possible* and the *as long as we don't tell anyone*. This is that larp.

You play it in pairs, exploring four love stories that were perhaps never meant to be. It begins when one of you say that "we need to talk". Then you play through a series of scenes and find out in the end if you ever did manage to have that talk. Your characters will have to try to figure out their relationship dynamic, even though the game keeps putting obstacles in their way.

I also wanted to explore what happens when you limit the possibilities to communicate. How do you talk about that awkward crush you have when you suddenly get limited to body language or text messages only? What happens when you sit close to someone with a lot of things you want to say, not saying any of them because there's no real room for it? Maybe the stakes are too high, and you just don't dare to speak out about it. I wanted to tell a story about craving to talk, craving to act, but realising you have to behave and keep silent.

All the characters have things they want to say to each other. These are not transparent to you players beforehand, because I want you to immerse in their struggle to communicate. There are no quick fixes, and no easily achieved happily ever afters. Hopefully they will still be simmering, bittersweet and emotional stories of unfulfilled love.

Basic game structure

- The game is made for 2-16 players (played in pairs, any even number) and one game master. The runtime is 3 - 3,5 hours
- Pre-game workshop (approximately 60 minutes) where the players develop the characters and their relationship.
- The starting scene that will end with one of the players saying "We need to talk about something"

- The upcoming 14 scenes where they play them through the relationship and see if they manage to talk about that something and solve it.
- The final scene where they are back where they started and have a chance to wrap it up and decide on their ending.

Set-up and space design

This game is designed to be flexible and is played in pairs. How many players it takes is mostly restricted by the size of the room. All pairs have the same order of the scenes in their plot, and change scenes at the same time.

Create “home zones” for the pairs by taping squares on the floor or using different rooms. Each of these needs at least a few chairs to create the various locations (a classroom, a bedroom) for the scenes. You also need one blindfold per player.

Setting up the different kinds of scenes

Location scenes

Some scenes are played in surroundings that are well-known to you (a classroom, a bedroom, a kitchen, a train). Use minimal props (chairs, a table) to decide what they look like.

Abstract scenes

The abstract scenes (silent scene, hope scene, fear scene, what if-scene) are played without props in an empty space. The emphasis in these scenes is on the interaction between the players.

The disco scene

In the disco scene all pairs will be playing in the same physical space. They act as background characters in each other’s games. Turn the lights down and blast loud music. After the ending cue, play the last song. It should of course be a slow dance.

Here are a few songs that fit the theme of the larp, including a slow dance to end the scene with: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/751TkIxjIH5xWWLRF3EaWh?si=1b57353901504cda>

Messenger app scenes

Three scenes in this scenario are played over messenger apps. I’ve found that the most immersive way to do this is to let the players use their phones to send messages and emojis in

character. There is time in the workshop for setting this up through the app of their own choice. In case the players don't want to use phones – bring a pile of post it notes and a pencil for each player and let them send the text messages by writing on these.

Midnight deep talk scene

This one is set up as a location scene, but all players are blindfolded.

Material for the players

The handout materials for the players are found in the appendix. Here comes an overview of them:

The plot cards

These give a short introduction to the plots the players can choose from. Show them to the players and read them out loud. Each pair of players choose in the pre-game workshop which plot they will play.

The characters

When the players have decided what plot they want to play, you hand out the characters. Each character contains a short description of the character and their main plot for the game, the *things you need to talk about*. These are supposed to be non-transparent to the players beforehand, so don't let them read each other's characters. The players are free to develop the characters during the workshop.

The scene instructions

Each pair of players are given the handout with the scene instructions for their plot. This paper contains a description for what rules they will follow in each scene and what to do when they hear the end cue. The players are free to read one scene at a time or peek forwards in the scene structure as they like.

For easy overview, the scene instructions always follow the same pattern. Most scenes are identical in all the four plots. The rules of each scene are usually the same, so what differentiates the plots from each other is only the sentence explaining the setting and sometimes the ending cue instruction.

Scene number and title

- The first bullet gives an introduction to the setting and what kind of scene this is.
- The second bullet explains what your communication in this scene is like.
- The third one contains what rules and restrictions you have to follow in this scene.
- The fourth tells what you'll do when you get the ending cue.

Pre-game workshop (ca 60 min)

Welcome

Introduce the players to the game by reading the *Introduction to the players* on page 1.

This larp is played in pairs. Allow the players who have a set idea whom they want to play with to do that, and use any random method to pair up the rest.

Player ice-breakers

You start off with some workshop exercises that's mostly about establishing connection and communication between the players. The point here is to break some ice and get them a bit more comfortable. Communicate to the players *why* we do these things. Non-verbal to connect with each other. And talk because it's also a game about communicating and being vulnerable.

1. Something touchy or non-verbal - the match exercise.

Each pair get a match and balance it between them with their fingertips (one person on each side). Practice moving it around without dropping it¹.

2. Tell something personal - icebreaker.

Let the players warm up by telling each other something personal about themselves, related to love and relationships.

I've asked "Did you ever have a crush on someone without telling them?" and given the pairs a few minutes each to tell each other about the answer.

Handing out characters

Now it is time for the pairs to choose a plot card for themselves. There are four to choose between: *Creative writing*, *Commitment issues*, *No homo*, *Forbidden fruit*. The plot cards are found in the appendix.

Instruct the players:

- You can pick any plot, the scene structure is the same, and it doesn't matter if everyone plays the same plot. These contain a short description of the couple you will be playing. Decide who is who and read your characters. Do not read each other's characters.
- You will develop the characters and the relationship during the workshop. The characters are very brief, so feel free to add on to them as much as you like.

¹ If the explanation doesn't make sense, here's a video clip showing it
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1943943029153306>

You should not mention the “Things you need to talk about” during the workshop, since this is your main plot for the game.

Moving and touching

Instruct the players:

- Give each other a very brief introduction of your characters and start figuring out their relationship by determining how they touch and move together. How do they stand together? Sit together? Walk together? You calibrate these questions physically by trying it out, not only talking.

Physical boundaries

- The safety mechanic used in this game is saying the words “off game” followed by what you want to say (i.e. “*Off game, don’t touch my glasses*”).

Since most of the game is about the tension of romantic and sexual attraction *not* happening, this game doesn’t have a set mechanic to enact kissing, sex etc. Likely, eventual sex between the characters will happen off-screen between the scenes.

Give each pair of players a few minutes to discuss their physical boundaries and how they feel comfortable playing these activities.

The “try it”-mechanic

- This calibration mechanic is used in the two “what if”-scenes in the game, and is explained in the scene instructions. The players thus don’t need to remember it now, but it is a good idea to mention that it *is* meant as a calibration tool.

In the “what if”-scenes the players take turn mentioning hypothetical things that might happen, ie “What if I decided to just do it, walk up to you and kiss you in front of everyone?”.

The co-player can then chose to reply with “Then I think I would...” and continue the scene talking about hypothetical scenarios. They can also reply with “Try it!”, in which case you play the scene out and explore what happens.

Developing the characters

Instruct the players:

- Sit down facing the same direction, one in front of the other. The person in the back will give their partner a back rub². The person in the front will talk about their character. Who are you? If the talking player gets stuck the other player can ask a few questions to help get them started again.

When they've done this for a few minutes, tell them to switch places and repeat.

- Lay down on the floor ear to ear, feet in opposite directions, and look up at the ceiling. Talk about who you are in this relationship? What is your dynamic like?

(e.g., What do you usually do together? Who takes most initiatives? Do you flirt – what is it like? How intimate are you, physically and emotionally? How do you solve conflicts between you?)

Don't mention the *things you need to talk about* conflicts from the plot cards. Here you are to figure out your "normal" dynamic before those get into play.

Explain the game structure to the players

The overall theme of this game is to figure out a relationship dynamic, and all the characters have been given their personal plot: the *things we need to talk* about. But will they manage to do so, and will it make things easier or complicate them even more?

The game uses a dramatic structure where the first scene is to set a feel-good lighthearted mood before the "We need to talk" comes up. It's followed by a number of warm-up scenes where communication is heavily restricted. Dramatic potential is added through the fear zone, the disco scene and the midnight deep talk scene as a climax. The "what if"-scene may escalate this or give you a second chance. It then contains a few more heavily restricted scenes before they end up at the same place as they started.

There are 14 scenes in total. Your handouts contain short written instructions for each scene that you will read before it. The GM starts the scenes. When you hear the end cue you have

² One point of this is to make the players relax, another to get more comfortable with touching and calibrating touch. Thus, this is a good place in the workshop to practice telling the co-player what feels good and not.

approximately 30 seconds to follow the end cue instructions of the plot card, and the scene ends.

When a scene is done you read the instructions for the next scene, set up the props you need, and wait for the GM to start the next scene.

Set up the special scenes

Explain the different kinds of scenes (see page 4) to the players and make sure they have the appropriate props. The players are free to build up the location scenes in play, as it is not very important for the game what they look like.

Make sure the players have a blindfold each for the midnight deep talk scene.

For the text message scenes, I recommend that the players use their phones. Let them decide what app they want to use for this and exchange contact information (my playtesters used Facebook Messenger by temporarily changing the name of the co-player). If the players can't use their phones, provide them with a stack of post it notes and a pencil each.

Right before game start

- What is the conflict? In this last exercise you look at each other and silently think of a few things your character thinks about the other person. Don't share these with each other.

Running the game (ca 110 min)

The pairs will play 14 short scenes in a given order (see appendix 2). All plots follow the same scene structure, so it is possible to play multiple pairs at the same time. The pairs can decide to all play the same plot, or choose different ones.

The players are given short written instructions for each scene. The communication rules are the same for all plots, but they fit differently into the narrative. The GM will set the scene and start it. For some scenes there are special directions for how to use music or lighting.

The GM signals with an end cue³ when about half a minute is left of the scene. The players have been given an instruction on what to do when they get this signal. When they've done it, you cut the scene.

There is no room for the players to negotiate off game what's happened between the scenes (except after the disco scene), so they have to fill in the gaps by improvising in character.

Game ending and post game

Give the players the end cue for the last scene. Wait about one minute for them to finish the game and start the ending song. It is this instrumental piano intro (0.00-1.15):

<https://www.youtubetrimmer.com/view/?v=sSDnW6pBbdU&end=74>

There is no structured post game activity. But give the players an opportunity to shortly talk it through with their co-player.

³ Chose a sound that will be easy for the players to hear, like a bell or clinking a glass.

Runtime scene overview

Scene	Rules/props	Timestamps
1. Light and easy start scene	Location scene. No restrictions.	
2. Careful formal scene	Location scene. No touch or personal topics	
3. In a hurry scene	Max. one minute long	
4. Text message scene	Text based communication only	
5. The hope zone	Non-diegetic scene exploring the characters hopes. Hypothetical.	
6. The fear zone	Non-diegetic, monologues only	
7. The disco	Loud disco music, out of home zones After ending cue – play a slow dance that lasts a few minutes, while the players calibrate what happens after the scene.	~55 min ⁴
8. Emoji scene	Text based communication only	
9. Midnight deep talk	Location scene. All players wear blindfolds.	
10. What if - zone	Non-diegetic. Hypothetical.	~75 min
11. Silent zone	Abstract scene. No talking	
12. Careful formal scene	Location scene. No touch or personal topics	
13. Text message scene	Text based communication only	
14. Back to start	Location scene. No restrictions After the end cue, wait 1-2 minutes, then play the ending song	

⁴ These are guideline timestamps from the playtest.

Plot cards

Creative Writing

Creative writing can be very emotional, sure. And writing your heart out in brilliant stories to your teacher is ok, I guess. And them really understanding and connecting with you, sure. And this student apparently likes you a lot and you also find them very sexually attractive, but that would be totally wrong to act on, for sure. Unless you're both consenting adults, right?

Characters: Teacher, Student

Commitment issues

You've been... seeing each other... Dating... Hanging out... for a few months now. Dating? Being in a relationship? What does those words even mean? Is it love? What's love got to do with it? You met at work, you like each other and you're both in that age when people around you start to wonder when and how you'll settle down. But how do you know when someone is the right person, and what if you're not even sure something as "the right person" exists?

Characters: Safety, Freedom

No homo

It's so lucky that we live in a time when, even in high school, you can be a heterosexual person who loves and supports your awesome gay best friend and no one even think it's weird. And it's pretty great that you can be openly gay, have a same-sex straight best friend, and not have to worry about them constantly imagining you're secretly in love with them or something. Because that seems quite old... and a bit prejudiced. Right?

Characters: Straight, Queer

Forbidden fruit

You met through a shared hobby, and used to date years ago. Maybe you were in love? Maybe it was only about the sex and you always knew it'd never work out between you. Maybe that's just something you've told your current partners. Does it even matter anyway?

What does matter is that you are both married, although not to each other, that formally you're just friends and that there is obviously a certain tension between you two. Maybe it would be wisest to just ignore it. Although polyamory and open relationships seems to be everywhere these days, so maybe you don't have to?

Characters: Poly, Mono

Appendix 1: Characters

Student

You are twenty-two years old and study creative writing. Like many young adults, you've struggled to find your place in the world, and writing stories is one way for you to find your own voice and explore what is actually meaningful to you. It helps you articulate your thoughts and fantasies, and it gives you a sense of purpose to be able to share them with others. You are hungry for life and hungry for new experiences and stories to tell.

You have this beautiful, intelligent, funny teacher. They've encouraged you to write your heart out in your stories, to give them more colour and depth, and you gladly do. You feel so connected to them through this writing. Like they really listen to you, and that they really want to. Not too many people have done that in your life so far, and it makes you feel seen and understood. Also, they're incredibly hot. A little old perhaps, early thirties? But you really think you two connect. Sometimes you even think they're flirting with you – but that might just be wishful thinking on your part. Maybe it would be super weird getting romantically involved with your teacher. But if you're both consenting adults...?

What you need to talk about:

You have a crush on your creative writing teacher.

You feel very emotionally connected to them, having shared all of your stories.

You want them to show you parts of life you haven't experienced yet.

You hope that this could possibly lead to a romantic relationship.

Teacher

Most people who know you will say you're passionate for life in general, but your biggest passion in life has always been literature. You understood quite early that you are a better reader than you are a writer. You have an eye for the original, the interesting, what makes a story stand out.

You are in your early thirties and teach creative writing. One of your students sticks out as brilliant, emotional and creative. They write amazing stories full of life and depth, and seem far older than their twenty-two years of age. Embarrassingly enough, you find yourself deeply moved by their texts, which makes you feel very connected.

You want to encourage them to keep growing as a person and collecting new experiences. You also can't help noticing that they are very attractive. And that there seem to be a certain tension between you. While you are both adults, it would still be deeply unethical to sleep with your students and it could probably get you fired. But also... you can't help thinking about it.

What you need to talk about:

You are sexually attracted to one of your students.

You think they are a brilliant storyteller that has a gift for creative writing and you want them to keep evolve.

You enjoy flirting with them and don't want to hurt their feelings.

You don't think it would be possible for you to have an equal relationship with someone that much younger.

Safety

You met Freedom at work, have been seeing each other for few months and it mostly feels very good. You have fun together, you have shared interests, the sex is great. But you haven't really said "I love you" yet, or met each other's families. You are not Facebook official yet. You wish you were.

You are in an age where it feels about time you start getting a plan for your life. You have your own apartment, and you feel like you are too old to fuck around and try different things. It is time to settle. You need security and stability. But can you trust Freedom to be the person you will spend it with?

What you need to talk about:

You want to say "I love you"

You want Freedom to publicly acknowledge your relationship.

You want a committed relationship where you plan to move in together.

Maybe you want Freedom to be the parent of your future children?

Freedom

You met Safety at work, have been dating for a few months and it mostly feels very good. You have fun together, you have shared interests, the sex is great. But you haven't really said "I love you" yet, or met each other's families. You are not Facebook official. You feel no need to be.

Honestly, the whole idea of committing to someone by following societal norms for how relationships should evolve scare you, and you would prefer to take it day by day. In your last relationship you felt strangled by your partner's expectations, and you don't want to ruin your connection with Safety by overthinking the future. You live with a few friends in a shared apartment and you just want to love passionately and freely.

What you need to talk about:

You want to say "I love you"

You are not comfortable with publically being in a relationship with someone.

You are afraid that you won't live up to Safety's expectations and they'll stop loving you.

You have a huge need for personal space and don't like feeling controlled.

Straight

You have always thought about yourself as a normal and average person. You like the stability of your middle class nuclear family and the feeling of belonging in a group where everyone share something, like your sports team or your high school class. You enjoy the privileges adults give you because you're well-mannered and polite.

Queer is not at all like that. You are classmates and became friends in the first year of high school. They're always the rebel and you kind of admire them for that. They argue with teachers. They wear weird clothes. They're really smart actually. Of course when they came out as gay, you found it quite predictable. It would be just as odd imagining Queer as a straight person, as it would imagining yourself as anything *but* straight. And apart from the occasional no homo-comments, you're really supportive. Because Queer is actually an amazing person and the world would be so much more beautiful if we could just accept them as they are, and also, same-sex attraction isn't that strange after all? I mean, just look at Queer... if you were gay you would totally have a crush on them. A huge crush. But you're not, right?

What you need to talk about:

You identify as heterosexual

You're crushing on your gay best friend

Even if you would be willing to adjust your own self-image to be not as straight as you thought, you're not willing to come out as bisexual.

You don't like sticking out or drawing attention to yourself.

Queer

The unofficial rules for how you need to be to fit in have always been strict in the place you grew up, and you've never been good at following them. Most people around here are so polished and polite in that passive-aggressive way. You've always been the one who speaks your mind. Who sticks out. Who can't really fit into that box even when you're trying.

When you met Straight you realised you didn't have to try. You are classmates and became friends in the first year of high school. They are always so kind and loving, and you really like that about them. With Straight's loving support and friendship you've blossomed up and dared to explore and express yourself. With the motto "wear it like a crown" you've decided to be loud and proud. You've come out as gay. You wear whatever awesome queer and weird styles you feel like. You still speak your mind and argue with authorities.

Exploring the world as an openly queer teenager is of course also somewhat rough. There aren't many of you out here, and you just want to be loved and accepted for who you are. As in real love, not someone's bi-curious experiment or dirty little secret. But it's so hard! And also, how are you even supposed to know what love feels like? I guess if Straight wasn't so ridiculously heterosexual, you'd wonder if they have a crush on you. But you really wouldn't want to ruin your friendship by even suggesting that. It's probably just you being weird and misinterpreting everything.

What you need to talk about:

You actually do care a lot what people think about you.

You have a strong need to be accepted by Straight. Them turning away from you would be devastating.

You've noticed some kind of attraction or tension between you and that is scary.

You really want someone to love you and to dare to do it openly and proudly.

Poly

You've always identified as polyamorous and loudly proclaimed your belief in ethical non-monogamy. You are the first one to give the advice that a relationship doesn't have to end just because one of you has met someone else that they are attracted to, because there is always the option to open up the relationship. The most important thing is that you have an open and honest conversation with all involved parties.

Honestly, though, your open relationship with X is singing on the last verse. You're bored and restless and want to move on. And this is probably not at all unrelated to the fact that Mono, that you used to date a few years ago, has come back into your life through your shared hobby again, and you are crushing so hard on them.

The sexual tension is one thing. You have always been very attracted to each other. Mono keeps flirting with you and it fills you with butterflies. You just want them to keep flirting, touching, seeing you. You actually don't know what kind of agreement they have with their partner, as they never mention it. But you certainly hope it's an open relationship, because you want more of Mono in your life.

What you need to talk about:

You generally think monogamy is unethical and oppressive.

You really want to escalate your relationship with Mono, romantically and sexually.

You want to have an honest conversation about their relationship to their spouse.

It is important for you to feel like you have the moral high ground.

Mono

Your married life is actually quite fulfilling. You and Y have lots of shared interests, a beautiful home, emotional and financial safety together. It would be a perfect marriage if it wasn't for the sex. You simply don't find each other very attractive anymore and when you try to sleep together it ends up frustrating and unfulfilling. Honestly, you've given up trying. To you, opening up your relationship and getting those aspects fulfilled with someone else seems like the obvious solution. Unfortunately Y doesn't agree at all. Just bringing the topic up in conversation is almost impossible. A real marriage is monogamous, period, and the two of you have a real marriage.

And then there is Poly. Someone you used to date but never fell in love with. You are definitely attracted to them, but sexually rather than emotionally. It's almost ridiculous how much they affect you. Maybe you shouldn't flirt with them, but it's too thrilling and too rewarding to resist. Sometimes it's quite innocent. Sometimes it's definitely-not-innocent-at-all. And honestly, you love it. You want to keep flirting with them. You want to do more than flirting with them. You're probably even up for sleeping with them, as long as you don't tell anyone. After all, what Y doesn't know can't harm them.

What you need to talk about:

You flirt with Poly and find sexual attention from them extremely rewarding.

You are in a monogamous relationship.

You want to keep Poly out of your love life.

You would probably cheat and have sex with Poly, but you're afraid they will judge you for it.

Appendix 2: Scene instructions for the players

Scenes: Creative Writing

Scene 1 - The classroom

- You are alone in a classroom, since *student* asked to stay after class to get feedback on their latest short story.
- Your communication in this scene is fun, light-hearted and flirty.
- You talk about the story but may also spin off into other subjects.
No movement restrictions
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that there is something you need to talk about.

Scene 2 - Professional roles

- You sit down opposite each other on the metro when the car gets filled up with other teachers and the headmaster of the school. These are not played in the scene but they can hear everything you say.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict facade of teacher-student relationship in this scene and may talk about how schoolwork is doing, the weather etc. You may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that here's your stop and rise to get off.

Scene 3 - In a corridor

- You bump into each other in an empty school corridor. You are both on your way to classes and in a hurry.
- Your communication in this scene is quick and stressed.
- You may say whatever you wish. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you really need to run.

Scene 4 - Over a messenger app

- You are home in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: you send one last text message, then stop answering.

Scene 5 - The hope zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different fantasies about what directions your relationship could go in. Nothing in this scene actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this scene is hopeful, longing and strictly hypothetical, so you get a chance to articulate various hopes and dreams.
- One of you start saying “What if...” and something that you want to happen. The other one of you may either reply with “Then I think...” and answer with what you’d want to do in that scenario. Or you may say “Try it”. In that case, you’ll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say “But that’s just strictly hypothetical, of course”

Scene 6 - The fear zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. The other player will hear your thoughts, but their character will not.
- Your communication in this scene is monologue-based. You may pick up things the other player says in their monologue, but don’t turn it into a conversation.
- You talk to yourself about what you are afraid of and how everything might go wrong.
- Start this scene sitting or standing back to back. You are allowed to turn around and face each other, to touch, or to move further away.
- When you get the ending cue: you turn silent and look at each other.

Scene 7 - At the disco

- A few days has passed since you sent text messages. You bump into each other at a local club, where you both came with respective friends from outside school to have a great night. It is late, the music is loud and you are both pretty drunk.
- Your communication in this scene is bold and honest, maybe flirty. You will have to stand closer, scream or use body language to hear each other over the music.
- You may talk about anything, but don’t spoil the great party mood. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you offers the other one to leave the place together. A last slow dance song will play, during which you have time to agree what happened after you left the disco.

Scene 8 - The emoji zone

- It is the day after the disco scene and you are in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted to emojis only.
- You may not touch or look at each other in this scene

- When you get the ending cue: send a last emoji and then stop answering

Scene 9 - The midnight deeptalk

- It is late night after the emoji scene and you are both at *teacher's* place. This scene is your characters' chance to open up and have a deeptalk.
- Your communication in this scene is vulnerable and emotional.
- You start the scene sitting or standing in different parts of the room, maybe on different pieces of furniture. You are both blindfolded in this scene. You may move as you like, but not remove the blindfolds.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say that it's getting late and you should sleep. Decide if you do this in the same place, or if *student* goes home.

Scene 10 - The "What if..." zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different hypothetical scenarios for the future. Nothing in this zone actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this zone is strictly hypothetical, so you are allowed to experiment with a lot of different things that might happen.
- One of you start saying "What if..." and something that might would happen. The other one of you may either reply with "Then I think..." and answer with what you'd do in that scenario. Or you may say "Try it". In that case, you'll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say "But that's just strictly hypothetical, of course".

Scene 11 - The silent zone

- It's the day after the midnight deep talk. This scene is abstract, but still happens. Communicate with bodies what you can't say in words.
- Your communication in this scene is non-verbal. You may use body language, touch, breath, noises etc to communicate, but no talking.
- When you get the ending cue, you get still and wait for the scene to end.

Scene 12 - Back in school

- You meet in a school corridor between classes. It is full of people that can see and hear you.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict facade of teacher-student relationship in this scene and may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.

- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that they have to go and you both leave for class.

Scene 13 - Over a messenger app

- You have a lunch break, and sit in two different rooms in the school sending each other text messages. Later today you will have your weekly class, where one is a student and the other one is a teacher.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you text “class starts soon”, then leave.

Scene 14 - In the classroom

- You are back where you started, in the classroom after the weekly writing class. When class ended, *student* asked to stay and ask some questions about an assignment.
- This is the ending scene of the game, where you have an opportunity to tie it all together. You may talk about anything you want, no movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue you have about one minute to wrap up the scene before the ending song plays and the game is over.

Scenes: Commitment issues

Scene 1 - Freedom's place

- You are alone making Friday night dinner in the apartment where Freedom lives with a few friends.
- Your communication in this scene is fun, light-hearted and flirty.
- You talk about the food you're making and how the week has been, but may also spin off into other subjects.
No movement restrictions
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that there is something you need to talk about.

Scene 2 - At work

- You are eating lunch in the break room of your shared workplace. There are a bunch of other colleagues present that can hear anything you say.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a colleague relationship in this scene and may talk about how work is doing, the weather etc. You may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you have to get back to work and leave.

Scene 3 - In a corridor

- You bump into each other in an empty office corridor. You are both on your way to meetings and in a hurry.
- Your communication in this scene is quick and stressed.
- You may say whatever you wish. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you really need to run and leave.

Scene 4 - Over a messenger app

- You are home in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: you send one last text message, then stop answering.

Scene 5 - The hope zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different fantasies about what directions your relationship could go in. Nothing in this scene actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this scene is hopeful, longing and strictly hypothetical, so you get a chance to articulate various hopes and dreams.
- One of you start saying “What if...” and something that you want to happen. The other one of you may either reply with “Then I think...” and answer with what you’d want to do in that scenario. Or you may say “Try it”. In that case, you’ll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say “But that’s just strictly hypothetical, of course”

Scene 6 - The fear zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. The other player will hear your thoughts, but their character will not.
- Your communication in this scene is monologue-based. You may pick up things the other player says in their monologue, but don’t turn it into a conversation.
- You talk to yourself about what you are afraid of and how everything might go wrong.
- Start this scene sitting or standing back to back. You are allowed to turn around and face each other, to touch, or to move further away.
- When you get the ending cue: you turn silent and look at each other.

Scene 7 - At the disco

- A few days has passed since you sent text messages. You bump into each other at a local club, where you both came with friends to have a great night. It is late, the music is loud and you are both pretty drunk.
- Your communication in this scene is bold and honest. You will have to stand closer, scream or use body language to hear each other over the music.
- You may talk about anything, but don’t spoil the great party mood. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you offers the other one to leave the place together. A last slow dance song will play, during which you have time to agree what happened after you left the disco.

Scene 8 - The emoji zone

- It is the day after the disco scene and you are hungover in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted to emojis only.
- You may not touch or look at each other in this scene

- When you get the ending cue: send a last emoji and then stop answering

Scene 9 - The midnight deeptalk

- It is late night after the emoji scene and you are both at Safety's place. This scene is your characters' chance to open up and have a deeptalk.
- Your communication in this scene is vulnerable and emotional.
- You start the scene sitting or standing in different parts of the room. You are both blindfolded in this scene. You may move as you like, but not remove the blindfolds.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say that it's getting late and you should sleep.

Scene 10 - The "What if..." zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different hypothetical scenarios for the future. Nothing in this zone actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this zone is strictly hypothetical, so you are allowed to experiment with a lot of different things that might happen.
- One of you start saying "What if..." and something that might would happen. The other one of you may either reply with "Then I think..." and answer with what you'd do in that scenario. Or you may say "Try it". In that case, you'll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say "But that's just strictly hypothetical, of course".

Scene 11 - The silent zone

- It's the day after the midnight deep talk. This scene is abstract, but still happens. Communicate with bodies what you can't say in words.
- Your communication in this scene is non-verbal. You may use body language, touch, breath, noises etc to communicate, but no talking.
- When you get the ending cue, you get still and wait for the scene to end.

Scene 12 - Back at work

- You meet in an office corridor. It is full of people that can see and hear you.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict colleague relationship in this scene and may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that the meeting is about to start, and you leave.

Scene 13 - Over a messenger app

- It is Friday, and you are in your respective apartments after work. Later tonight you will meet up at Freedom's place to make dinner together.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you text "See you at 19", then stop answering.

Scene 14 - Freedom's place

- You are back where you started, at Freedom's place making dinner together.
- This is the ending scene of the game, where you have an opportunity to tie it all together. You may talk about anything you want, no movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue you have about one minute to wrap up the scene before the ending song plays and the game is over.

Scenes: No homo

Scene 1 - Straight's place

- You are hanging out in Straight's room a Thursday evening. This is something you regularly do. Watching a movie, painting nails or playing video games together.
- Your communication in this scene is fun, light-hearted and flirty.
- You talk about what movie to watch and how the week has been, but may also spin off into other subjects.
No movement restrictions
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that there is something you need to talk about.

Scene 2 - On the train

- You are on the train to school. There are a few classmates and a teacher next to you who can hear anything you say.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a colleague relationship in this scene and may talk about how school is doing, the weather etc. You may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that here's your stop and rise to get off.

Scene 3 - In a corridor

- You bump into each other in an empty school corridor. You are both on your way to different classes and in a hurry.
- Your communication in this scene is quick and stressed.
- You may say whatever you wish. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you really need to run.

Scene 4 - Over a messenger app

- You are home in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: you send one last text message, then stop answering.

Scene 5 - The hope zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different fantasies about what directions your relationship could go in. Nothing in this scene actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this scene is hopeful, longing and strictly hypothetical, so you get a chance to articulate various hopes and dreams.
- One of you start saying “What if...” and something that you want to happen. The other one of you may either reply with “Then I think...” and answer with what you’d want to do in that scenario. Or you may say “Try it”. In that case, you’ll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say “But that’s just strictly hypothetical, of course”

Scene 6 - The fear zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. The other player will hear your thoughts, but their character will not.
- Your communication in this scene is monologue-based. You may pick up things the other player says in their monologue, but don’t turn it into a conversation.
- You talk to yourself about what you are afraid of and how everything might go wrong.
- Start this scene sitting or standing back to back. You are allowed to turn around and face each other, to touch, or to move further away.
- When you get the ending cue: you turn silent and look at each other.

Scene 7 - At a party

- A few days has passed since you sent text messages. You hang out with each other at a party, where you came with some friends to have a great night. It is late, the music is loud and you are both pretty drunk.
- Your communication in this scene is bold and honest. You will have to stand closer, scream or use body language to hear each other over the music.
- You may talk about anything, but don’t spoil the great party mood. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you offers the other one to leave the place together. A last slow dance song will play, during which you have time to agree what happened after you left the party.

Scene 8 - The emoji zone

- It is the day after the disco scene and you are hungover in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted to emojis only.
- You may not touch or look at each other in this scene

- When you get the ending cue: send a last emoji and then stop answering

Scene 9 - The midnight deeptalk

- It is late night after the emoji scene and you are both at Queer's place. This scene is your characters' chance to open up and have a deeptalk.
- Your communication in this scene is vulnerable and emotional.
- You start the scene sitting or standing in different parts of the room. You are both blindfolded in this scene. You may move as you like, but not remove the blindfolds.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say that it's getting late and you should sleep.

Scene 10 - The "What if..." zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different hypothetical scenarios for the future. Nothing in this zone actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this zone is strictly hypothetical, so you are allowed to experiment with a lot of different things that might happen.
- One of you start saying "What if..." and something that might would happen. The other one of you may either reply with "Then I think..." and answer with what you'd do in that scenario. Or you may say "Try it". In that case, you'll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say "But that's just strictly hypothetical, of course".

Scene 11 - The silent zone

- It's the day after the midnight deep talk. This scene is abstract, but still happens. Communicate with bodies what you can't say in words.
- Your communication in this scene is non-verbal. You may use body language, touch, breath, noises etc to communicate, but no talking.
- When you get the ending cue, you get still and wait for the scene to end.

Scene 12 - Back at school

- You meet in a school corridor. It is full of people that can see and hear you.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict colleague relationship in this scene and may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that your class is about to start, and you leave.

Scene 13 - Over a messenger app

- It is Friday, and you are on two different buses, riding home from school. Later tonight you will meet up at Straight's place for the regular movie night.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you text "See you at 19", then stop answering.

Scene 14 - Straight's place

- You are back where you started, at Straight's place making dinner together.
- This is the ending scene of the game, where you have an opportunity to tie it all together. You may talk about anything you want, no movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue you have about one minute to wrap up the scene before the ending song plays and the game is over.

Scenes: Forbidden Fruit

Scene 1 - The café

- You are alone in a café, having a casual coffee together as old friends do.
- Your communication in this scene is fun, light-hearted and flirty.
- You talk about your shared hobby, but may also spin off into other subjects.
No movement restrictions
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that there is something you need to talk about.

Scene 2 - Professional roles

- You've just taken up work together on a hobby-related event, when you get surrounded by friends and/or family members in front of whom you need to stay professional.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict facade of shallow friendship in this scene and may talk about how the event is going, the weather etc. You may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you have something important to do and leave the scene.

Scene 3 - In a corridor

- You bump into each other in an empty corridor. You are both on your way to important meetings and in a hurry.
- Your communication in this scene is quick and stressed.
- You may say whatever you wish. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that you really need to run.

Scene 4 - Over a messenger app

- You are home in your respective bedrooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: you send one last text message, then stop answering.

Scene 5 - The hope zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different fantasies about what directions your relationship could go in. Nothing in this scene actually happens within the narrative.

- Your communication in this scene is hopeful, longing and strictly hypothetical, so you get a chance to articulate various hopes and dreams.
- One of you start saying “What if...” and something that you want to happen. The other one of you may either reply with “Then I think...” and answer with what you’d want to do in that scenario. Or you may say “Try it”. In that case, you’ll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say “But that’s just strictly hypothetical, of course”

Scene 6 - The fear zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. The other player will hear your thoughts, but their character will not.
- Your communication in this scene is monologue-based. You may pick up things the other player says in their monologue, but don’t turn it into a conversation.
- You talk to yourself about what you are afraid of and how everything might go wrong.
- Start this scene sitting or standing back to back. You are allowed to turn around and face each other, to touch, or to move further away.
- When you get the ending cue: you turn silent and look at each other.

Scene 7 - At a party

- A few days has passed since you sent text messages. You are on a conference for the hobby, and tonight there is a big party. Your spouses are not here. It is late, the music is loud and you are both pretty drunk.
- Your communication in this scene is bold and honest, maybe flirty. You will have to stand closer, scream or use body language to hear each other over the music.
- You may talk about anything, but don’t spoil the great party mood. No movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you offers the other one to leave the place together. A last slow dance song will play, during which you have time to agree what happened after you left the party.

Scene 8 - The emoji zone

- It is the day after the disco scene and you are in your respective hotel rooms.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted to emojis only. Push them over to the other side.
- You may not touch or look at each other in this scene
- When you get the ending cue: send a last emoji and then stop answering

Scene 9 - The midnight deeptalk

- It is late night after the emoji scene and you are both in *poly's* hotel room. This scene is your characters' chance to open up and have a deep talk.
- Your communication in this scene is vulnerable and emotional.
- You start the scene sitting or standing in different parts of the room, maybe on different pieces of furniture. You are both blindfolded in this scene. You may move as you like, but not remove the blindfolds.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say that it's getting late and you should sleep. Decide if you do this in the same place, or if *mono* goes home.

Scene 10 - The "What if..." zone

- This is a scene that takes place inside your head. You help each other act out different hypothetical scenarios for the future. Nothing in this zone actually happens within the narrative.
- Your communication in this zone is strictly hypothetical, so you are allowed to experiment with a lot of different things that might happen.
- One of you start saying "What if..." and something that might would happen. The other one of you may either reply with "Then I think..." and answer with what you'd do in that scenario. Or you may say "Try it". In that case, you'll act that scene out and play the consequences.
- When you get the ending cue, one of you say "But that's just strictly hypothetical, of course".

Scene 11 - The silent zone

- It's the day after the midnight deep talk. This scene is abstract, but still happens. Communicate with bodies what you can't say in words.
- Your communication in this scene is non-verbal. You may use body language, touch, breath, noises etc to communicate, but no talking.
- When you get the ending cue, you get still and wait for the scene to end.

Scene 12 - Back in your local association

- You meet in a corridor between meetings. It is full of people that can see and hear you.
- Your communication in this scene is formal and careful.
- You must keep up a strict facade of shallow friendliness in this scene and may not talk about anything too personal. You may not touch each other.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you say that they have to go and you both leave the scene.

Scene 13 - Over a messenger app

- It is evening in your respective homes. You start a text message conversation to set the time and place where you will have coffee tomorrow. Then you just keep chatting.
- Your communication in this scene is restricted by the format - you write text messages to each other.
- You are not allowed to touch each other or look at each other in this scene.
- When you get the ending cue: one of you text “see you tomorrow”, then stop.

Scene 14 - In the café

- You are back where you started, alone in a café.
- This is the ending scene of the game, where you have an opportunity to tie it all together. You may talk about anything you want, no movement restrictions.
- When you get the ending cue you have about one minute to wrap up the scene before the ending song plays and the game is over.

Appendix 3: Larp pitches for Stockholm Scenario Festival

As Long as We Don't Tell Anyone

Unspoken - Relationships - Obstacles

Short description (300 characters)

How do you admit that you like someone? Especially if that someone is your teacher, your one night stand or your gay best friend? Two people struggle to communicate while the game design keeps putting obstacles in the way. A simmering, bittersweet story about love that was maybe never meant to be.

Long description (1200 characters)

How do you admit that you like someone? Especially if that someone is your teacher, your one night stand or your gay best friend?

This is a game played in pairs about love stories that were perhaps never meant to be. It begins when one of you say that "we need to talk". Then you play through a series of scenes and find out in the end if you ever did manage to have that talk. You choose two characters who try to figure out their relationship, even though there are many obstacles in the way. It is a game about *the unsaid*, the *not right now and not right here*, and the *as long as we don't tell anyone*.

The game is built around a series of scenes that limit your communication in different ways and makes it even harder to say all those things you haven't told each other. How do you talk about that awkward crush you have when you suddenly get limited to body language or text messages only? What happens when you sit close to someone with a lot of things you want to say, not saying any of them because there's no real room for it? A story about craving to talk, craving to act, but realising you have to behave and keep silent.

A simmering, low-key slice of life drama about bittersweet love.