



# Fire from ashes

A ritual larp  
by Lorenzo Trenti



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a ritual freeform larp by Lorenzo Trenti [[mrvalis.itch.io](https://mrvalis.itch.io)]  
for Golden Cobra Challenge 2023

being a sequel/remix of *Burial by Ash* by Sadia Bies (Golden Cobra 2019)  
changing the tone to *optimistic*  
and using the ingredient *destruction & rebirth* from Golden Cobra 2017

*English is not my mother language: please be charitable if you find errors or inaccuracies.  
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## **Premise**

The world has ended some time ago, in a whimper. The last candle has been blown out. But the story goes on.

You are Potentialities: shadows of things to come, tasked with reimagining the next world and becoming part of it.

What will you make of this new world for humankind? Will you keep the fire burning?

## **Requirements**

This game needs 4-10 participants and is played in person, in an open space, at evening or night. You'll need to light a real campfire, so please provide all the necessary experience to manage a fire in terms of safety for you and the environment (neither the author of the scenario nor the Golden Cobra committee are responsible for any trouble or damage of any kind coming from playing this game).

You'll need:

- some place where you can light a campfire and sit comfortably around it
- a lighter
- paper and pens
- wood of different sizes

Estimated game time is 60-120 minutes.

## **Setup**

Gather the players in the gaming area. Read the setup and explain the rules and principles. Sit together and light the fire, the bare minimum so that it doesn't immediately go out.

Share safety mechanics (e.g. lines and veils, open door policy, etc.).

## **Rules**

You've lit the fire from the ashes of the previous world. Now it's up to you to make a new one.

At the beginning of the game you are mere Potentialities. In the course of the game you'll evoke glimpses of the future world, until you'll finally become it, one by one.

You won't be inventing a fantasy world, or a what if, or an utopian present, nor the story from a mythic past. The new world will start as the world where you, me and the players are living just right now; it will be set in the same year you are playing and, indeed, will be fundamentally similar to the real world.

In no particular order, start by sharing a joyful sensation of the world that awaits you. Try using just one of the five senses and take a snapshot of the life that will be. Use "you", addressing one of the other characters.

- You smell the fragrance of coffee in the morning
- You feel a warm hug from your wife

- You see green mountains with wind turbines
- You taste the unexpected spiciness of a sandwich
- You hear your name as soon as you got off the train

Whenever you share one of those future memories, take one little wooden stick, point it at the character you are speaking to, and add it to the fire.

You're not alive yet, so having esitations is perfectly normal. Everyone can add a doubt in the form of a question, regarding a shared future memory – especially the one addressed to you. A doubt casts a shadow about the joy inside the future memory.

- After the coffee I need to go to work. Will there be time to have a life outside a stressful job?
- What if I have doubts about my feelings towards my wife?
- Will the wind turbines be enough to prevent pollution in this area?
- A poor man appears, looking at my sandwich. How can I eat while there are persons in state of need?
- What if the man calling my name is a man I don't want to meet?

You can cast a doubt on the last memory until there is silence. If someone else starts telling another future memory, the former memory is preserved from doubt.

When you share a doubt, write it on a piece of paper and put it near the wood pile (use a rock or something so that the wind doesn't blow it away).

No more than one doubt against every single memory.

Collect the memories the other players are donating you and let a character slowly emerge from these contributions. Use questions to refine this character.

Try to become someone of the new world. No presidents nor worldly-important people – just ordinary citizens with a regular life.

When you think you have your character, take one of the biggest woods and put it in the fire.

Declare “in the new world I'll be...” and say your name.

From now on you play a different game. You no longer receive memories nor cast doubts. Instead, you can pick one of the doubts of any character (including yours), re-read it and put it into the fire.

To resolve the doubt stand by the fire and play a little scene – just saying a sentence or two – where your character puts again a grain of hope in that memory. Try relating your character to that situation and to the character at the center of that memory.

- “Congratulations”, I tell you, shaking your hand, “and welcome on board. You'll find that reading books to children is a very sustainable activity, even for someone so busy like you”.
- “My friend, let's have a beer and tell me what happened wit your wife”.
- “I'll stop buying products from the factory that pollutes this beatiful environment”.

- “Thanks for your sandwich, pal! Quite spicy... do you have also some water...?”
- I stare at you and sigh. “I didn't want to meet you. But we have to discuss the inheritance”.

### **Players' principles**

Play keeping in mind these principles:

- Silence is valuable. Say something only if it's important. Otherwise, listen to your feelings and the sounds of the crackling fire.
- Don't try to be original. Just go with the flow. Something obvious for you will be completely unexpected to others.
- Don't try to have something in mind in advance. Just build on what the other players say. Be consistent.

### **Ending the game**

The game ends if the fire goes out, without living flame. You can try reliving it by adding a future memory (little stick) or becoming a character (wood). But if the fire goes out, the new world will start with all the Potentialities that have become a character; the unexpressed one will dissolve as dreams of what could have been.

Otherwise, the game end when just one player is left without a character. In this case, this player collects all the unresolved doubts, re-reads them aloud and puts them at safe in a pocket. Those will be doubts and shadow that will be permanent part of the future world. But it will still be a beautiful place.

### **Debriefing**

Have a short conversation about the game just after it ends.

Can you see the world around you? Do you like it? What can you do to put some hope in it?

