



I Say A Little
prayer

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I Say a Little Prayer

by Tor Kjetil Edland

Estimated duration: 5 hours

Number of players: 5 + 1 game master

Play style: Physical freeform - the scenes are played “larp style”, using the whole body, but without costumes or physical props.

Background

In 2011 Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø created the larp Just a Little Lovin' about a group of friends that were hit by the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s. At the time of writing this scenario, this larp has now been played three years in row, first in Norway, then Sweden, and in Denmark in the summer of 2013. This scenario builds upon the setting and some of the mechanics developed for Just a Little Lovin', but where Just a Little Lovin' is a larp for 60+ players over almost a week I Say a Little Prayer tells the story of a much smaller group of people who are part of the gay scene in the city they live in. We play out their sexual and romantic adventures and the story of how their friendship evolves over the course of several years in a community hard hit by the epidemic. Through the “lottery of death”-mechanic, which will be described in detail in the instructions for the game master, we find out which of these friends die from the epidemic and how this shapes the lives of the survivors who live on.

I would like to thank Hanne Grasmø for being a wonderful co-creator to work with when making Just a Little Lovin', this scenario would not have been made possible to write without the previous work done together with Hanne for Just a Little Lovin'. Some of the text also builds directly on material written by the both of us. I would also like to thank Henrik Maegaard for the striking cover illustration and Li Xin for her design of the tickets for the lottery of death. And finally I would like to thank Tobias Demediuk Bindset, Hanne Grasmø and Sanne Harder for reading through a draft of the scenario and giving valuable inputs to the design.

The AIDS epidemic in the 1980s

- We're all going to go crazy, living this epidemic every minute, while the rest of the world goes on out there, all around us, as if nothing is happening, going on with their own lives and not knowing what it's like, what we're going through. We're living through war, but where they're living it's peacetime, and we're all in the same country.

- Larry Kramer, American playwright and AIDS activist

The AIDS epidemic officially began on June 5, 1981, when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a strange case of pneumonia in 5 gay men in Los Angeles. In USA and Europe the disease mostly affected groups at the margin of society such as gay men, intravenous drug users and immigrants. Despite it being a contagious disease with a 100 % mortality rate and with no effective medicines it was at first largely ignored by the politicians and the media. Then around 1983 came a big media panic making people afraid of becoming infected by the dreaded disease by one of “those people”. When more accurate information about how the HIV virus spreads became available attention moved away again and the communities hit were to a large extent left to handle the prevention work and the emotional and practical care of those who became ill. In the Scandinavian countries there were small, but growing gay scenes in the early 1980s. For those gay men of the generation who came of age during those years it is not an uncommon experience to have lost half or even more of their friends from this time to the epidemic. In our safe Scandinavian countries it is unprecedented in modern times that a contagious disease ravages a section of our society like this. One aim of this scenario is to spread awareness about this part of our recent history. The medicines available now have resulted in big improvements in life expectancy for those who are infected with the virus. But in Scandinavia today approximately 800 people still become newly infected each year. This means that HIV and AIDS is not something that only belongs to the past or is something that only affect people in other places in the world.

Content

Background	p. 2
The AIDS epidemic in the 80s	p. 2
Instructions for the gamemaster	
Outline of the Story	p. 4
Equipment needed	p. 4
Before the game	p. 4
Act 1	p. 8
Act 2	p. 12
Epilogue	p. 15
Debrief	p. 15
Characters	
Daniel	p. 16
Robert	p. 18
Jim	p. 20
Tommy	p. 22
Benny	p. 24
Short character descriptions	p. 26
Scenes in act 2	p. 31
Cheat Sheet	p. 36
Lottery tickets	p. 38

Instructions for the gamemaster

Outline of the Story

The story of this scenario are 5 gay men living together in a shared apartment in the capital of one of the Scandinavian countries. The scene structure shifts between scenes putting the spotlight on one of the characters or on the relationship between the characters. We follow this group of friends over a couple of years in the early 1980s when the AIDS epidemic hit gay communities hard. Halfway through the story one of the characters will die of AIDS. And towards the very end of the story a second character will also die.

Equipment needed

- Small sound system with the following songs available:
 - *I Say a Little Prayer* by Aretha Franklin
 - *Tainted Love* by Soft Cell
 - *Love Resurrection* by Alison Moyet
 - *Funeral March (Piano Sonata nr. 2 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 35: III. Marche funebre: Lento* by Frederic Chopin

The songs are all available on Spotify and can be accessed in a playlist found here:
<http://spoti.fi/PEB67D>

- Lottery tickets with image of white feathers printed and cut out. See attachment to this script for the lottery tickets.
- Printouts of the characters and 5 copies each of the short character descriptions and scenes in act 2.

Before the game

This section should take approximately 45 minutes

Introductory round

You introduce yourself and tell the others one reason why you chose to game master this game. Tell the others about how you remember learning about AIDS for the first time. Then do a round where all the players introduce themselves and each give one reason why they want to play this game and describe how she or he remembers learning about AIDS for the first time.

Setting: A Scandinavian capital in the 1980s

I Say a Little Prayer is set in a Nordic capital in the 1980s. The game master decides which city this particular run will be set in. At that time Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm all had similar, rather small gay scenes with just a handful of bars and other venues that were the gay meeting spots in the city. So the feel of the game should be quite similar no matter which city you choose. Ask the players if they are from or know well one of these cities to determine which one it will be the best one to use. Also ask the players which language they would like to play the game in if this hasn't been determined before you gather with the players. In the scenario there are some specified lines that kicks off some of the scenes. Just translate those to a similar line in the language you are playing in if not playing in English.

If you are game mastering this scenario for a group outside of the Scandinavian countries there should be few problems in setting the game it in another city somewhere else in the world where there was an active gay scene in the 1980s.



Some young Scandinavians from the 1980s

Characters

When the game starts there are 5 main characters in the story, one for each player. During the course of the game two characters will die from AIDS, one approximately in the middle of the scenario and one towards the very end will be present as a shadow in act two. He will still be able to interact with the other characters through touch, looks and monologues.

The 5 main characters are friends who live together in a large but somewhat run down flat in the inner city. All the main characters are gay men. The gender of the players have no importance in who can play the game. Written character descriptions to be handed out to the players are found at the end of this script. When deciding on which participant should play which character, start by handing out the page with the short descriptions of the characters and ask each of the participants to mention the two characters they would most like to play. Then decide who plays which character based on this, trying to give everyone one of the two characters they wished for if possible. Hand out the character descriptions together with the scene instructions for act 1 for each character. Let everyone read through their characters.

Here is the short description for each character:

Daniel is a charming and enigmatic man who is well known in the gay scene as a drag show performer. His drag persona is named Lady Verona. He moves around the city becoming the most important person in people's life. He is good at bringing out the inner desires of others, but has problems doing the same for himself. Addicted to other's uncontrollable lust and heartbreaking dramas.

Robert is an outgoing and idealistic young dancer who met his big love, Jim, a year ago. He is both attention seeking and genuinely empathic with other people. The type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street.

Jim is a student of comparative literature and an aspiring young author who has recently moved into the shared flat where his big love Robert has been living. He is a bit torn between his devotion to his idealistic boyfriend Robert and his own ideology of questioning monogamy and traditional family structures.

Tommy is a struggling young aspiring actor vacillating between euphoria and despair. He throws himself hard at the city and it's people - losing control of his own actions and the situations he ends up in.

Benny is the new boy in town who has just moved to the city. He is eager to experience life, today – right now. He often acts before he thinks, and sometimes makes his own stories about emotions and other people that might not have much basis in reality.

Warm-up exercises

First exercise: Divide the players into two groups and join one of the groups so that there are three persons in each group. Each person stands with her or his eyes closed for about a minute while the others strokes and gently massages the whole body of the person. Tell the players before they start the exercise to avoid touching the crotch and breasts and ask if anyone has any other parts of the body that they would not like to be touched during the exercise.

Second exercise: Do a round where everyone says a little bit about their comfort zone when it comes to playing out scenes physically. How is it OK to touch each other and what type of touching will be too much? Then play a scene where everyone plays their character flirting physically with other men they meet. The players should walk around the room. No one should speak. When they encounter someone and starts flirting with that person they should stay in that interaction for about 15 seconds. The scene is not meant to “escalate”. It can have the same intensity throughout the scene.

You can play *Love Resurrection* by Alison Moyet in the background. Let the exercise last for the duration of the song.

Third exercise: Introduce **the spotlight technique**. When a character has the spotlight, this is a scene where all of the characters are present in their shared apartment and the one who has the spotlight is the centre of attention. He starts by narrating a short monologue. The other characters can speak and otherwise play out reactions in the scene, but they shouldn't take over the spotlight. The narrator then instructs one or more of the other players to enter a flashback scene with him. He states whether they are playing their main character in the game or someone else. If they are playing someone else the person in the spotlight describes who they are in one sentence. Then he describes what situation they are playing and if the situation should have a certain outcome. Then they play out the situation. The person in the spotlight decides when to cut the flashback. After he has done so he should continue his narration. The player ends the scene by sitting down.

Let each of the players try this out by taking the spotlight with a scene from the character's youth. It's up to each player to decide what the story of the scene is, but if one or more of the players don't have an idea for a scene ask them to let the scene be about them talking about the last Christmas that they have celebrated with their families.

In the game a player can chose to do a spotlight scene that is just a monologue without any flashbacks, but ask everyone to include a flashback for this exercise so that everyone gets to practice it.

After finishing the exercises it's a good time to take a 15 minutes break.

Act 1

Act 1 should take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Introductory text

Read the following:

“It is the spring of 1982, and we are in [*name of city*]. The 1970s have been a decade of women's liberation, youth rebellion, anti-war protests and sexual liberation. Not many years ago, if you were a gay man looking for love and sex in this city, that would only be possible under great secrecy and under the threat of public shame, loosing your job and being evicted from your home. This is still the reality for many, but a young man moving to the city can spend most of his social life in the growing gay scene. However, rumours are spreading about a new disease. In America they call it the gay cancer. It spreads through blood and sex, but people don't know that yet. Some people remember hearing rumours about a bad batch of the aphrodisiac drug *poppers* being suspected as the cause.

(Look at the players when reading the last sentence): No matter what you believe, there are surely other people who live harder than you. People who are much more at risk than you, right?”

Play the theme melody “I Say a Little Prayer”

Describing the apartment

All of the characters live together in a large and somewhat run down apartment in a central part of the city. Let the players take turns describing what is in the apartment and what it looks like with a couple of sentences each. If one or more of the players have problems getting their part of the description going you can ask questions like: What is the first thing that meets the eye as you enter the flat? What does the kitchen look like? Who sleeps where?

First round of character spotlight scenes

The first round of character spotlight scenes are played continuously without breaking between the scenes. All of the characters are gathered in the apartment. The character who has the spotlight is the narrator and tells the others about one aspect of their lives. The characters who are not in the spotlight can speak and otherwise play out their reactions to what they are hearing being told, but they shouldn't take over the spotlight. The narrator then instructs one or more of the other players to enter a flashback scene with him, either as their main character in the game or someone else. In the flashback they play out something that has happened in the life of the narrator. When one character is done with his spotlight scene he sit down among his friends and the next one gets up and starts his spotlight scene.

1. Daniel

What is the scene about: Relationships with passionate beginnings and abrupt endings. Daniel is doing a performance of “my eventful life” in front of his friends and is talking about what happened the last time he picked up a guy.

Start the scene with the line: “A good man is hard to find. Particularly when you are one of the bad ones, like me”.

End the scene by saying thank you sitting down among the other characters.

2. Robert

What is the scene about: Love of life and finding something interesting in every person and situation. Robert is displaying his unfiltered enthusiasm in front of his friends and is talking about what happened yesterday when he talked with a homeless man who used to be a sailor.

Start the scene with the line: “You know what happened to me yesterday?”

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

3. Jim

What is the scene about: Struggling between being honest and outspoken and the comforts of receiving financial support from a family that doesn't know he is gay. Jim talks about what happened when he had dinner with his parents at an expensive restaurant in the city.

Start the scene with the line: “I still get upset just thinking about the visit by my parents last week.”

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

4. Tommy

What is the scene about: Getting into bad situations while overly drunk. He talks about how he managed to accidentally injure a local celebrity while trying to flirt with him.

Start the scene with the line: “That night, at first things seemed to be going my way.”

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

5. Benny

What is the scene about: Recently having arrived in the city and eager to experience it all. Benny talks about how he went about finding out where in the city he could have a chance of meeting other gay guys.

Start the scene with the line: “Did you guys know that my first night in the city was also the first time I had sex with a guy?”

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

First round of relationship scenes.

These scenes are played straight forward without any flashbacks. As these scenes are played out we move towards the end of the year 1982. The gamemaster decides when to cut the scene.

6. Robert and Jim:

Setting: A bedroom in the apartment

Scene: Jim broaches the the subject of the two of them agreeing to be able to have sex with others outside of their relationship. He confesses that he already has had sex with others. At first Robert gets upset and sad, but before the end of the scene they reconcile and come to some sort of agreement.

7. Daniel and Tommy:

Setting: Backstage at the gay disco before Daniel is to perform in drag.

Tommy is helping Daniel with getting his outfit and make-up on. Daniel switches between giving Tommy compliments and sarcastic remarks, making Tommy uncertain of himself. Before the end of the scene Tommy tells Daniel that he has been attracted to Daniel since he moved into the apartment.

8. Benny and Jim:

Setting: A saturday night at the gay disco (play Soft Cell's *Tainted Love* on repeat in the background while this scene is being played.) In this scene the other players act as background extras in the disco playing other guests who are dancing to the music.

Benny and Jim comment on the men on the dance floor and discusses what type of men each of them they like and don't like. Jim uses the opportunity to flirt with Benny who flirts back. Before the end of the scene Benny is distracted by someone or something else that catches his attention and this ends the flirt, at least for now.

9. Robert and Tommy:

Setting: Late at night on the street outside the disco.

Tommy is drunk and he has been thrown out of the disco for behaving inappropriately towards other guests. They talk about what happened and Robert is trying to convince Tommy to let him follow him home. He changes between being exasperated with and feeling sorry for Tommy. Tommy goes through several moods during the scene such as happy and drunk, sad and drunk, angry and drunk; and tired and drunk.

10. Daniel and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment.

Danny is helping Benny put on a drag outfit for a party they are both going to later that night. It's Benny's first time dressing in drag and he is both excited and worried that he'll end up looking silly. While doing this they start talking about what how their relationships to the other people living in the apartment are at the moment. Benny's ambivalent feelings about what he thinks of Daniel is shown in some uncertain flirting from his side. How does Daniel respond?

11. Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

The Lottery of Death

The act ends with the Lottery of Death. The game master gathers everyone in a circle reads out loud the following:

“There is a new disease spreading throughout the world. It has now been given a name - AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It spreads through unprotected sex, the sharing of needles and blood transfusions. In our part of the world men who have sex with men are the group hardest hit by the new epidemic. Young men become incurably ill; their deteriorating immune system attacked by a multitude of opportunistic infections. There is no cure, and one of our five friends were one of those who died in 1983. Everyone must now write their name on the lottery tickets. One ticket if you are in low risk, and up to five tickets for someone with a very high risk. If you think that you have had unprotected sex with many different partners you have a high risk. When you are done put your tickets in this bowl in the middle.”

When performing the following section the game master could think of her or himself as a bureaucrat of death or detached undertaker. Take your time performing the lottery, and let the players wait for a little bit before you announce the result. When all characters have written their name on the tickets gathers them and move over to the far side of the room. Spend some time blending the tickets before drawing one of them. Announce which of the characters passed away in the following year by saying the following:

“In the early months of 1983 [*name of character*] fell ill and was diagnosed with AIDS”. He died before the end of the year.”

The game master then instructs the player of the character that has died that she or he can hold a monologue about how the character's last months were. Ask the player to think about the following questions before she or he begins the monologue:

- What were the first signs that you were becoming ill?
- What were the reactions from your friends?
- Did you tell your family?
- How did you experience being hospitalised?

When the monologue is finished explain the following to the players: The character who is dying lies down on the floor. The others gather around him and each one takes a firm grip on one part of his body. Little by little they should let go of the grip until they have removed their hands completely. The character who had the closest relationship to the character who is dying should be the last one to let go. When the last one has let go the person lying on the floor should close their eyes, and the scene ends. During this scene play the *Funeral March* by Frederic Chopin

End of act 1

Act 2

Act 2 should take a maximum of 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Explain to everyone that the character who died at the end of act 1 will be present as a shadow in act two. He can enter and exit any scene at will. He can interact with the other characters through touch, looks and monologues. The other character can react emotionally to the actions of the shadow, but they do not act upon “sensing his presence “; i.e. they do not for instance play on him actually being present as a ghost. Also explain to them that the content of the scenes in act 2 will have less predetermined content than in act 1 to enable the players to continue building on storylines that emerged from playing the scenes in act 1.

Hand out a copy of the Scenes in Act 2 sheet to each player.

Play the theme melody “I Say a Little Prayer”

Describing the apartment

Again let the players take turns describing what is in the apartment and what it looks like with a couple of sentences each. What has changed and what remains the same in the apartment since last time you described it? The player of the character who has died also take part in this round.

First scene of the act: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

What is the scene about: Remembering the dead friend and trying to deal with the fear of death.

Setting: The living room of the apartment. The day after the funeral of the friend who has died.

The four surviving friends are going through their dead friend’s belongings, packing them in boxes. The dead character is present as a shadow for the duration of this scene. Tell the players that everyone has by now realised that they are in danger of becoming sick and die themselves. How does each and everyone of them react on staring into the eyes of death? Do any of them suspect that they might be the one who infected the one who died and feel guilty about that?

The scene begins with one of the characters saying the line: “I think I’ll be the next one to go.” The game master decides when to cut the scene.

Character spotlight scenes

Once more each of the (surviving) characters will play a scene which puts the spotlight on their character. The game master can decide in which sequence the scenes should be

played, or if needed, ask the players if they have a preference on who goes first. Each player picks one of the following themes for their scene. More than one character can have the same theme for their scene:

- The fear of becoming infected and sick.
- Repressing the fear and living dangerously
- Loving someone and fearing you might lose them.
- The straight world's homophobia and fear of AIDS.
- Turning your life around; for better or for worse

There are no further predetermined instructions for these scenes, but the player should decide what the opening line is before starting the scene. If the player has problems deciding, help out by suggesting an opening line she or he can use.

The guidelines for how to play out these scenes are the same as in the first act with the player whose character has the spotlight deciding which other characters enter the scene in one or more flashbacks.

Relationship scenes

Each (surviving) character should also have relationship scenes with at least two other characters in act two. These scenes take place during 1984. As with the character spotlight scenes in act two it is not pre-determined what these scenes will be about or in which sequence they are played. Let the players themselves volunteer who will do scenes with whom, and in what sequence. Before each scene have the players together decide the setting on the scene (where it takes place) and to choose **two** themes for the scene from the following list. The themes chosen should be stated aloud before beginning to play the scene:

- Love of life
- Fear of death
- Despair
- Reconciliation
- Anger
- Sexual desire
- Dealing with grief
- Indecisiveness
- A turning point in life
- Our history together

Tell them that they should try to make each of the two themes present in the scene, but that it's fine that one of the themes ends up being the dominating one.

Give the two players the chance to briefly plan their scene before asking them to begin.

The gamemaster decides when to cut the scene.

Tainted Love or *Love Resurrection* can be played in the background of a scene if fitting with the setting of the scene.

When everyone has played two scenes each decide based on the time available if you will continue with some more scenes or if you should move on to the next section.

The Lottery of Death

The second act also ends with the Lottery of Death. The game master gathers everyone in a circle reads out loud the following:

“During 1984 and 1985 more and more people in the gay scene get ill and eventually die from AIDS. Some of those affected hang on to life for years, others deteriorate quickly and succumb to the epidemic within a year of first noticing the symptoms. Eventually a test is made available for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. But effective medicines are still many years away. How each person reacts to the unfolding epidemic varies. Some are terrified of becoming infected and fear almost any kind of sexual intimacy, others are careless - still having sex in ways they know are high risk. And others get organised - in spreading the message of safe sex, in forming buddy programs to care for the sick and to protest against the inaction of the governments of the world in the face of this epidemic. In our part of the world AIDS mostly kills gay men, a group society still sees as suspect and immoral. Two years after [name of first character who died] died, another one of our five friends were one of those who died. Everyone must now write their name on the lottery tickets. One ticket if you are in low risk, and up to five tickets for someone with a very high risk. If you think that you have had unprotected sex with many different partners you have a high risk. When you are done put your tickets in this bowl in the middle.”

When performing the following section the game master could think of her or himself as a bureaucrat of death or detached undertaker. Take your time performing the lottery, and let the players wait for a little bit before you announce the result. When all characters have written their name on the tickets gathers them and move over to the far side of the room. Spend some time blending the tickets before drawing one of them. Announce which of the characters passed away in the following year by saying the following:

“In 1985 [name of character] fell ill and was diagnosed with AIDS”. He died before the end of the year.””

The game master then instructs the player of the character that has died that she or he can hold a monologue about how the character’s last months were. Ask the player to think about the following questions before she or he begins the monologue.:

- What were the first signs that you were becoming ill?
- What were the reactions from your friends?
- Did you tell your family?
- How did you experience being hospitalised?

When the monologue is finished explain the following to the players: The character who is dying lies down on the floor. The others gather around him and each one takes a firm grip on one part of his body. Little by little they should let go of the grip until they have removed their hands completely. The character who had the closest relationship to the character who is dying should be the last one to let go. When the last one has let go the person lying on the floor should close their eyes, and the scene ends. During this scene play the *Funeral March* by Frederic Chopin

End of act 2

Epilogue

The epilogue should take approximately 10 minutes.

The three surviving characters have a last scene. It is early evening and they are in a part of the city that is down by the sea. They are putting lights on the water in remembrance of their dead friends. The two players whose characters have died silently play the presence of the dead characters. The game master decides when to cut the scene.

Play “I Say a Little Prayer”

Debrief

The debrief should take approximately 20 minutes.

First have a structured round where everyone (including the game master) answers the following two questions:

1. How do I feel right now?
2. What feelings do I have about the character I have just played? (The game master answers the question What are my feelings about having game mastered this game?)

Then have an open discussion facilitated by the game master.

Daniel

Daniel is a charming and enigmatic man who is well known in the gay scene as a drag show performer. His drag persona is named Lady Verona. For a time he has moved around the city quickly becoming the most important person in people's lives. He is good at bringing out the inner desires others but has problems doing the same for himself. Addicted to other's uncontrollable lust and heartbreaking dramas.

Daniel can be secretive about his past. He tells stories about his childhood as an adopted child of a wealthy couple, but his friends always wonder which part of them are true and which are exaggerations. It's clear that he has little contact with this family now. Many would be surprised to learn that Daniel graduated from high school with the best grades in his class. He studied chemistry in university and now he has a part time job in the lab of the city's largest hospital. Could he have aspired for a scientific career? Probably, but the late nights on stage as a drag performer have always got his passions flowing in a whole different way than any prospects of a tenured position. It wouldn't really do to wear a feather boa to the 8 am lecture anyway.

5 defining characteristics of Daniel's personality:

- Charismatic
- Centre of attention
- Unafraid
- Detached
- Ambiguous

Daniel's scenes in Act 1

Scene 1: Spotlight scene

What is the scene about: Relationships with passionate beginnings and abrupt endings. Daniel is doing a performance of "my eventful life" in front of his friends and is talking about what happened the last time he picked up a guy.

Start the scene with the line: "A good man is hard to find. Particularly when you are one of the bad ones, like me"

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

Scene 7: Daniel and Tommy

Setting: Backstage at the gay disco before Daniel is to perform in Drag.

Tommy is helping Daniel with getting his outfit and make-up on. Daniel switches between giving Tommy compliments and sarcastic remarks, making Tommy uncertain of himself. Before the end of the scene Tommy tells Daniel that he has been attracted to Daniel since he moved into the apartment.

Scene 10: Daniel and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment.

Danny is helping Benny put on a drag outfit for a party they are both going to later that night. It's Benny's first time dressing in drag and he is both excited and worried that he'll end up looking silly. While doing this they start talking about what how their relationships to the other people living in the apartment are at the moment. Benny's ambivalent feelings about what he thinks of Daniel is shown in some uncertain flirting from his side. How does Daniel respond?

Scene 11: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

Robert

Robert is an outgoing and idealistic young dancer who met his big love Jim a year ago. He is both attention seeking and genuinely empathic with other people. The type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street.

Robert falls easily in love, with ideas, new people, clothes and musicals. He can be obsessive when he's in love, and he can make foolish, selfish, and even dangerous choices. But usually his heart has room enough for many people. He really wants to help others if they are miserable, and he cries easily when others feels down. Being the youngest of 5 brothers and 2 sisters he's used to having people around him all the time. He grew up on a farm in another part of the country and discovered his love of dancing at school. The first time he applied to the dance academy in the city he got accepted so he moved there the summer he became 18. These days he's so busy that he usually only visits his family for Christmas or when someone celebrates an anniversary birthday. Only one of his sisters has ever seen one of his dance performances. She came one year ago when he had a small part in the big musical success that year. at But his family always sends flowers. Many people in his home village would say that city life must be hard, but Robert doesn't think so. When you make friends and become lovers with the right people, magic happens.

5 defining characteristics of Robert's personality:

- Spontaneous
- Empathic
- Emotional
- Brave
- Primadonna

Robert's scenes in Act 1

Scene 2: Spotlight scene:

What is the scene about: Love of life and finding something interesting in every person and situation. Robert is displaying his unfiltered enthusiasm in front of his friends and is talking about what happened yesterday when he talked with a homeless man who used to be a sailor.

Start the scene with the line: "You know what happened to me yesterday?"

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

Scene 6: Robert and Jim

Setting: A bedroom in the apartment

Scene: Jim broaches the the subject of the two of them agreeing to be able to have sex with others outside of their relationship. He confesses that he already has had sex with others. Robert first gets upset and sad, but before the end of the scene they reconcile and come to some sort of agreement.

Scene 9: Robert and Tommy

Setting: Late at night on the street outside the disco.

Tommy is drunk and he has been thrown out of the disco for behaving inappropriately towards other guests. They talk about what happened and Robert is trying to convince Tommy to let him follow him home. He changes between being exasperated with and feeling sorry for Tommy. Tommy goes through several drunken moods in the scene.

Scene 11: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

Jim

Jim is a student of comparative literature and an aspiring young author who has recently moved in to the shared flat where his big love Robert has been living. He is a bit torn between his devotion to his idealistic boyfriend Robert and his own ideologically questioning of monogamy and traditional family structures.

Jim was a hyperactive child that only calmed down when reading; absorbed by the stories coming off the page. His family is wealthy, his father being the director of one of the country's largest producers of consumer goods. Tiring of children's books he read all kinds of adult literature from an early age, often only grasping the content partly. He often appeared older than his real age, at least intellectually. So adults were often surprised of how emotional he could become when faced by what they considered the smallest thing. Even now he can suddenly get very upset and angry over a thing someone said or did, getting even more frustrated when people don't understand his reaction. Sometimes when he starts laughing it can be hard for him to stop. And if he gets sad he can't help ending up crying in public. His parents have met Robert while visiting the city but he was just presented as a very good friend. Jim tells himself that he is afraid of hurting his mother's feelings, but if being honest with himself, he is probably more afraid of losing the steady transfers of money that pays for all of his living expenses as a student in the city. His dream is to become an author whose works are important in the lives of the readers; to be an important voice of this age. His fear is to get his dreams stunted and end up teaching in a mediocre high school pestering bored kids with classics they are unable to relate to.

5 defining characteristics of Jim's personality:

- Impulsive
- Inner calling
- Jealous
- Impressionable
- Bombastic

Jim's scenes in Act 1

Scene 3: Spotlight scene

What is the scene about: Struggling between being honest and outspoken and the comforts of receiving financial support from a family that doesn't know he is gay. Jim talks about what happened when he had dinner with his parents at an expensive restaurant in the city.

Start the scene with the line: "I still get upset just thinking about the visit by my parents last week."

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

Scene 6. Robert and Jim

Setting: A bedroom in the apartment

Scene: Jim broaches the the subject of the two of them agreeing to be able to have sex with others outside of their relationship. He confesses that he already has had sex with others. Robert first gets upset and sad, but before the end of the scene they reconcile and come to some sort of agreement.

Scene 8. Benny and Jim

Setting: A saturday night at the gay disco

Benny and Jim comments on the men on the dance floor and discusses what type of men each of them they likes and don't likes. Jim uses the opportunity to flirt with Benny who flirts back. Before the end of the scene Benny is distracted by someone or something else that catches his attention and this ends the flirt, at least for now.

Scene 11: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

Tommy

Tommy is a struggling young aspiring actor vacillating between euphoria and despair. He throws himself hard at the city and it's people - losing control of his own actions and the situations he ends up in.

This year has so far contained one suicide attempt and three drug and alcohol induced blackouts. But it also brought him his happiest Christmas ever, after Daniel and Robert invited him to live with them after he had been thrown out of his old apartment. Tommy has broken contact with a homophobic father and a mother struggling with addiction. Now he feels that he has found a new family with the friends he is living with. His acting career is currently going nowhere. He earns some money from working in the ticket booth in a theatre. But very few of the many auditions Tommy attends are successful, and he breaks into despair every time. He has done some underground theatre, without payment, of course. The peak of his career so far was last year when he played a zombie in several scenes in a quite popular horror movie. When life is good, Tommy feels like it's his last day, and he needs to make the most out of it, fast forward, crazy action, strong emotions. In this mood he's a fantastic companion for any party or project. Letting any man who hits on him be successful. If others like him, he tends to have no limits, he would do whatever they say. On other days he curses the fact that he is gay, believing that to be the cause of his problems.

5 defining characteristics of Tommy's personality:

- Hopeful
- Damaged
- Intense
- Ashamed
- Unfiltered

Tommy's scenes in Act 1

Scene 4: Spotlight Scene

What is the scene about: Getting into bad situations while overly drunk. He talks about how he managed to accidentally injure a local celebrity while trying to flirt with him.

Start the scene with the line: "That night, at first things seemed to be going my way."

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

Scene 7: Daniel and Tommy

Setting: Backstage at the gay disco before Daniel is to perform in Drag.

Tommy is helping Daniel with getting his outfit and make-up on. Daniel switches between giving Tommy compliments and sarcastic remarks, making Tommy uncertain of himself. Before the end of the scene Tommy tells Daniel that he has been attracted to Daniel since he moved into the apartment.

Scene 9: Robert and Tommy

Setting: Late at night on the street outside the disco.

Tommy is drunk and he has been thrown out of the disco for behaving inappropriately towards other guests. They talk about what happened and Robert is trying to convince Tommy to let him follow him home. He changes between being exasperated with and feeling sorry for Tommy. Tommy goes through several drunken moods in the scene.

Scene 11: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

Benny

Benny is the new boy in town who has just moved to the city. He is eager to experience life, today – right now. He often acts before he thinks, and sometimes makes his own stories about emotions and other people that might not have much basis in reality.

That small industrial town. Benny never understood what wrong he had done to have to endure his teenage years in such a dreary place. At heart he's a city boy. Even though he has never actually lived in a city before he moved here, he knows that this is where he belongs. The last year of high school was pretty rough. Rumours started spreading at school that he was gay, and there was a small group of boys that got rather mean with their bullying. But then Benny wasn't very good at being careful. When he realised he was gay he told at least 6 of his closest female friends, so obviously it wasn't really a secret anymore. It was really embarrassing when the guy he had had a crush on for a year found out about it. After graduation he decided to not stay around. He hasn't decided yet what he wants to do with his life here in the city but he hopes to get a job as a waiter or bartender for now. For sure he will get to know a lot of people that can help open up opportunities for him. He tells his mother not worry whenever she calls. Benny has never felt better and he's sure he'll be able to figure things out.

5 defining characteristics of Benny's personality:

- Impatient
- Vivid imagination
- Trusting
- Optimistic
- Straight forward

Benny's scenes in Act 1

Scene 5. Benny:

What is the scene about: Recently having arrived in the city and eager to experience it all. Benny talks about how he went about finding out where in the city he could have a chance of meeting other gay guys.

Start the scene with the line: "Did you guys know that my first night in the city was also the first time I had sex with a guy?"

End the scene by saying thank you and sitting down among the other characters.

Scene 8. Benny and Jim:

Setting: A Saturday night at the gay disco

Benny and Jim comments on the men on the dance floor and discusses what type of men each of them they likes and don't likes. Jim uses the opportunity to flirt with Benny who flirts back. Before the end of the scene Benny is distracted by someone or something else that catches his attention and this ends the flirt, at least for now.

Scene 10: Daniel and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment.

Danny is helping Benny put on a drag outfit for a party they are both going to later that night. It's Benny's first time dressing in drag and he is both excited and worried that he'll end up looking silly. While doing this they start talking about what how their relationships to the other people living in the apartment are at the moment. Benny's ambivalent feelings about what he thinks of Daniel is shown in some uncertain flirting from his side. How does Daniel respond?

Scene 11: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

Setting: The living room of the apartment

It's the day after a big party held in the apartment. All 5 sit around drinking coffee and talking about the party and their time living together. Benny, who moved in last, has now been living there for three months. During the scene the players should try to follow up on some of the relationships and storylines established in the previous scenes.

Short character descriptions

Daniel is a charming and enigmatic man who is well known in the gay scene as a drag show performer. His drag persona is named Lady Verona. He moves around the city becoming the most important person in people's life. He is good at bringing out the inner desires of others, but has problems doing the same for himself. Addicted to other's uncontrollable lust and heartbreaking dramas.

Robert is an outgoing and idealistic young dancer who met his big love, Jim, a year ago. He is both attention seeking and genuinely empathic with other people. The type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street.

Jim is a student of comparative literature and an aspiring young author who has recently moved into the shared flat where his big love Robert has been living. He is a bit torn between his devotion to his idealistic boyfriend Robert and his own ideology of questioning monogamy and traditional family structures.

Tommy is a struggling young aspiring actor vacillating between euphoria and despair. He throws himself hard at the city and its people - losing control of his own actions and the situations he ends up in.

Benny is the new boy in town who has just moved to the city. He is eager to experience life, today – right now. He often acts before he thinks, and sometimes makes his own stories about emotions and other people that might not have much basis in reality.

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Scenes in Act 2

First scene of the act: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

What is the scene about: Remembering the dead friend and trying to deal with the fear of death.

Setting: The living room of the apartment. The day after the funeral of the friend who has died.

The four surviving friends are going through their dead friend's belongings, packing them in boxes. Everyone has by now realised that they are in danger of becoming sick and die themselves. How does each and everyone of them react on staring into the eyes of death? Do any of them suspect that they might be the one who infected the one who died and feel guilty about that?

The scene begins with one of the characters saying the line: "I think I'll be the next one to go."

Character spotlight scene

Each player picks one of the following themes for their scene. More than one character can have the same theme for their scene:

- The fear of becoming infected and sick.
- Repressing the fear and living dangerously
- Loving someone and fearing you might lose them.
- The straight world's homophobia and fear of AIDS.
- Turning your life around; for better or for worse

Relationship scenes

Each (surviving) character should also have relationship scenes with at least two other characters in act two. Together decide with the player you are doing a scene with what the setting on the scene is (where it takes place) and to chose **two** themes for the scene from the following list:

- Love of life
- Fear of death
- Despair
- Reconciliation
- Anger
- Sexual desire
- Dealing with grief
- Indecisiveness
- A turning point in life
- Our history together

First scene of the act: Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny

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Cheat Sheet

Before the Game (45 min)

1. **Introductory round** - All the players give one reason why they want to play this game and describe learning about AIDS for the first time.
2. **Setting** - Decide which city the story will take place in.
3. **Assigning characters** - Hand out the short character descriptions and ask the players to state two characters they would like to play. Then decide who plays which character.
4. **Warm up exercise 1** - In groups of 3 each person stands with her or his eyes closed for about a minute while the others strokes and gently massages her / him.
5. **Warm up exercise 2:** Do a round about personal comfort zone in playing out scenes physically. Then play a scene with the characters flirting with other men they meet (without dialogue) while walking around the room. Play *Love Resurrection* during the exercise.
6. **Warm up exercise 3:** Introduction of the spotlight technique. Explain the technique, then let each of the players do a spotlight scene with a scene from the character's youth.

Act 1 (1 hour and 30 minutes)

1. Read the **Introductory text**
2. **Theme melody** - Play *I Say a Little Prayer*
3. **Describing the apartment** - Let the players take turns describing the apartment.
4. **Character spotlight scenes** - Played in the following order:
 - Daniel
 - Robert
 - Jim
 - Tommy
 - Benny
5. **Relationship scenes** - Played in the following order:
 - Robert and Jim
 - Daniel and Tommy
 - Benny and Jim (*Play Tainted Love* during the scene)
 - Robert and Tommy
 - Daniel and Benny
 - Daniel, Robert, Jim, Tommy and Benny
6. **The lottery of death**
 - Read the Act 1 Lottery of Death text and hand out lottery tickets
 - Perform the lottery and announce which of the characters died by saying:
"In the early months of 1983 [*name of character*] fell ill and was diagnosed with AIDS". He died before the end of the year."
 - The player of the character who dies in this act holds a monologue.
 - The characters who is dying lies down on the floor. The others takes a firm grip on one part of his body. Little by little they should let go of the grip until they have removed their hands completely. When the last one has let go the person lying on the floor should close their eyes. Play Chopin's *Funeral March* during this scene.

Act 2 (1 hour and 15 minutes)

1. **The dead character as shadow** - Explain that the character who died at the end of act 1 will be present as a shadow in act 2.
2. **Act 2 scenes** - Hand out a copy of the Scenes in Act 2 sheet to each player.
3. **Theme melody** - Play *I Say a Little Prayer*
4. **Describing the apartment** - Let the players take turns describing what the apartment looks like now.
5. **First scene of the act:** All the characters
6. **Character spotlight scenes** - Each player picks one of the listed themes for their scene.
7. **Relationship scenes** - Each (surviving) character should have relationship scenes with at least two other characters. The players together decide the setting and picks two of the listed themes for their scene.
8. **The lottery of death**
 - Read the Act 2 Lottery of Death text and hand out lottery tickets
 - Perform the lottery and announce which of the characters died by saying: "In the early months of 1985 [*name of character*] fell ill and was diagnosed with AIDS". He died before the end of the year."
 - The player of the character who dies in this act holds a monologue.
 - The characters who is dying lies down on the floor. The others takes a firm grip on one part of his body. Little by little they should let go of the grip until they have removed their hands completely. When the last one has let go the person lying on the floor should close their eyes. Play Chopin's *Funeral March* during this scene.

Epilogue (10 minutes)

1. **Last scene** - The three surviving characters have a last scene putting lights on the water in remembrance of their dead friends.
2. **Theme melody** - Play *I Say a Little Prayer*

Debrief (20 minutes)

1. **Debrief round** - A round where everyone answers the following two questions:
 - How do I feel right now?
 - What feelings do I have about the character I have just played?
2. **Open discussion** facilitated by the game master.



