

JUST

A

LITTLE

LOVIN'

THE LARP SCRIPT

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HANNE "HANK" GRASMO
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Just a Little Lovin'
The Larp Script

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Special thanks to:

All organizers, facilitators, helpers and players of earlier JaLL runs.

Character text contribution (2011): *Hilde Bryhn and Eirik Fatland.*

Workshop development (2012): *Petter Karlsson, Anna-Karin Lindner and Miriam Lundquist.*

Design of funeral programs and lottery tickets: *Xin Li.*

Additional texts and articles: *Kat Jones, Tova Gerge, Sarah Lynne-Bowman, Eleanor Saitta, Eric Winther Paisley.*

Editing and feedback on texts: *Anne Serup Grove.*

Kickstarter video and fundraising zoom party: *Frida Sofie Jansen.*

Distribution of books: *Tyra Larsdatter Grasmø.*

Thank you to our Sponsors and Major Sponsor on Kickstarter for making this book possible: Alexis Moisand, Alexis Sandrén, Anders Karls, Andie Nordgren, Arne Handt, Arvid Björklund, Brian Bors, Clinton Rickards and Luke Meunier, Eleanor Saitta / The Attic, Erik Winther Paisley, Evan Torner, Gabriel MARCH, Gavin Treep, Holger Marklund, Ingrid Giltvedt Storrø, J. Tuomas Harviainen, Jamie MacDonald, John M. E. Machate, Jonaya Kemper, Joonas Iivonen, Lars Kristian Løveng Sunde, Leiandros, LoLV Peregrin, Make a Scene Scenario Festival, Minnesota, USA, Mark Redacted, Moyra Turkington, Oskar ”Simon” Lilliehorn, Participation | Design | Agency, Petter Karlsson, Rachael Storey, Rasmus Teilmann, René Kragh Pedersen, Sarah Jane (SJ) Murdock, Seth J. Fogarty, Shervyn, Stefano Kewan Lee, Wolfgang Westmark Gajhede and Ravn - en forening for laivere.

Published by Volvemål Grasmø, org nr 984794312

ISBN 978-82-303-5060-7 (print)

ISBN 978-82-303-5061-4 (PDF)

Printed at TopTryk, Denmark

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Foreword

By Jaakko Stenros

In July of 2011 I participated in a larp that has stayed with me for over a decade. This impactful and deeply meaningful experience helped me address and approach questions of history and identity; it made me appreciate my own life in a new way; it rendered the art of consciously and thoughtfully designing experiences visible through its example; and it thrust me in loving, visceral, and heart-breaking social situations with people – many of whom have since become close friends. That larp was *Just a Little Lovin'*.

The work is surprisingly easy to explain. *Just a Little Lovin'* is a larp – meaning that it is a live action role-playing game – about the beginning of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the early 1980s. Played over four or five days, the larp depicts three Fourth of July parties on consecutive years in upstate New York, where two groups of people – a group of “fags and dykes”, and a group of cancer survivors – come together. The central themes are desire, friendship, and fear of death.

Just a Little Lovin' was played for the first time just outside of Oslo, Norway, in the beginning of July in 2011. The larp, designed by Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø, has since been staged seven times with some additional writing and fine-tuning in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Each run has had 54-70 player participants, a production crew, and either Edland or Grasmø or both present. Over the years *Just a Little Lovin'* has gathered a reputation as an impactful, harrowing, and particularly well-designed larp. It is a *Nordic larp* in the sense that it draws from this specific design and play tradition that uses concise bespoke mechanics, emphasises the thematic aspects of the setting, a shared dramatic arc, continuous and realistic social interaction, and the embodied player experience of “being there”. In many ways it is the epitome of a specific Nordic larp design philosophy: It is an original creative work aimed at adults that is specific and deeply meaningful, has substantial real-world relevance, and contains no fantastic genre elements.



Now, after tending and caring for this work for a decade, Edland and Grasmø have decided to release the larp. This book contains the larp script as well as reflections of how and why the larp was made, how it has been produced, and what is important in staging it. In addition, the book collects reflective essays that the experience of the larp has inspired. In this foreword I contextualize the work, explore its meaning and impact, and grapple with my own experience with it.

A DECADE AGO

Before the very first staging of the larp, the website of *Just a Little Lovin'* described its setting in the following way:

Two groups of friends from New York City celebrate the 4th of July in upstate New York. The 1970s have been a decade of women's liberation, youth rebellion, anti-war protests and sexual promiscuity. This changed America forever, but the early 1980s is also a time of a resurging conservative movement which President Ronald Reagan is the sunny face of. Gay men are migrating to New York to become part of the vibrant and hedonistic scene in Greenwich Village. Unbeknownst to everyone however the HIV virus has started spreading in the city. An article in the New York Times last summer described a mysterious "gay cancer", but its cause remains still unknown.

The backstory of the larp outlined that in two neighbouring upstate New York cabins, two groups had traditionally gathered to celebrate Independence Day in the United States. In one a group of gays and lesbians attended Mr. T. 's celebration, and in the other a group of cancer survivors, many of whom were hippies and swingers, gathered to reaffirm and strengthen their pact to support each other and to live life to the fullest. A year before the larp's beginning the two groups had mixed together for the first time and since that had been fun. At the beginning of the larp the fence separating the cabins had been removed and the two parties had been combined. The larp website continues:

During the larp we play three 4th of July parties of 1982, 1983 and 1984. Every morning after breakfast there is an act break where we find out what has happened with the characters and their relationships the following year before the next act starts one year later. When

the game starts neither the players nor the characters know who will become infected by the virus, but the lives of all the characters will be deeply affected by the epidemic. Our goal for the game is that all the characters will have friendships that are important to them, experience a little bit of lovin' at the summer parties and feel the fear of death as people around them start to become infected.

The larp consisted of three acts, each portraying a consecutive Fourth of July party. All the parties had a similar structure (arriving, barbeque dinner, an assortment of program items usually including a drag show, fireworks, sleep, breakfast, etc.), which provided a familiar structure to play out the drama (as discussed by Eleanor Saitta in an article in this book). Each act started around five in the evening and went on until eleven on the following morning. Between the acts, mechanics were used to determine who would get sick and die, the players negotiated what had happened during the year, and criticism was voiced as to what had worked during play and what had not, enabling players to make corrections. In the end characters who died were put in caskets, and the lids were closed. The runtime of the larp is followed by debriefing, discussion, contextualizing knowledge and advocacy about the HIV/AIDS epidemic today, and an afterparty. In total the larp lasted four days (five for later runs), counting the preparations and debriefing.

The repeating structure of the days, and the time jumps between the different days, brings the focus on the characters and their interpersonal relationships. The themes – desire, friendship, and fear of death – are constantly present; the characters are linked through friendships, they are also looking for love and sex in the party atmosphere, and fear of death is pervasive both from cancer and HIV/AIDS. Specific mechanics are in use for death (each morning there is a simple lottery, where each character expresses how dangerously they have lived by selecting how many tokens to put in) and for sex (the “phallus method” of simulating sex). While metatechniques are in use, the play is mostly uninterrupted and a strong feeling of being there emerges as participants perform and inhabit their characters.

PLAYING THE LARP

Understanding the impact of *Just a Little Lovin'* ten years later is difficult as so much has happened in a decade. When the larp premiered, the self-understanding of Nordic larp as an artistic tradition was developing rapidly, and designers were pushing boundaries of what larp design could do. *Blackbox larps* were just emerging, and the impact of freeform role-play scenario design was strong. *Metatechniques*, designed operations to enhance

the experience by breaking the boundary between the player and the character, were a relatively new innovation. *Bleed*, the word for the common experience of emotions of the character affecting the player (and vice versa), had just entered the communal lexicon a few years before. Larps about specific issues, experiences, and themes were all the rage, but for example feminist thinking and queer theory had not impacted larp design to the extent that is common today. This was also before the emergence of the *blockbuster larp* formula, creating big and loud larps inspired by specific films or television shows.

Just a Little Lovin' uses a number of techniques to create the experience. It is not a continuous three-day larp, but divides the time into three acts, all taking place in different years. Between these acts there is time to reflect and workshop the events of the next section of runtime. The larp also features a blackbox (nowadays often called a meta room), where it is possible to play out past and future events, as well as dreams and alternatives. Then there is the lottery of death to bring in the impact of the “gay plague”, the invitation and consent mechanic of the feathers, the phallus method for playing out sexual encounters, the monologues spoken out loud after sex to gesture at intimacy, and the midnight drink to enable changing the direction of one’s character (all explained later in this book). Some of these mechanics were adopted from other larps, some were created specifically for this work, but this bespoke combination is consciously created to foster a specific experience in a way that is also aesthetically coherent.

Just a Little Lovin' is a mature work of larp by two designers who know their form of expression very well. It addresses foundational human experience without the scaffolding of distancing through allegory, fantasy, or relying on well-known existing intellectual property. Furthermore, it is a confident work in that it does not wink at the audience or make apologies for its earnest handling of the topic. This makes it demanding to play. A player needs to commit to the work and show something real of themselves to make the nuanced human interactions come alive. The stakes are high for each participant.

This was not the first Nordic larp with gay characters, but *Just a Little Lovin'* was the first larp about the gay experience. This was clear already from the website, which did not look at gays from the outside. Importantly, the characters were written with respect towards queer history, from the point of view of queer experiences with era appropriate words, not through a straight gaze or with the language of 2011, let alone 2021. (The larp script in this book similarly uses authentic queer vernacular of the time to evoke the spirit of an era). However, the larp was not aimed at only gay players; everyone was invited to join. This time playing gay was not about parody, comedy, and stereotypes, but about empathy: Recognizing the shared humanity and capturing a sliver of a possibility of a lived experience.

The setting and scenography of the larp are important in transporting one to a specific moment, but *Just a Little Lovin'* is not aiming at an authentic environment, but a dramatically compelling and thematically appropriate,

real-enough simulation. The point is not to play the exact right pieces of music and to drop correct pop cultural references, but to inhabit a version of the past. What makes the larp feel meaningful and impactful and real is the other people. Human experience is at the core of larp – and it is the hardest to describe in rules, to show in pictures, or to capture in writing.

Pretending to be someone else for three days, with people who are also pretending that you are this other person, can feel very real. And even if everything else is pretend, the human connections, the human interaction, is real.

I have tried to write about this play experience for a decade, for *Just a Little Lovin'* is my most meaningful larp experience, but I am still unable to express in words why playing Mr. T., a gay man working in advertising, had such an impact on me. He was the host of the party, devoted to his guests, friends, lovers, and job. The everyday life, the chats and conversation, the celebration and the petty fights were meaningful in their full recognition of the queer experience. But as the young friends and lovers and protégés of my Mr. T. started to die, it felt like the death of the future. This annihilation of a way of living, of culture, was almost more than I could bear. I contemplated quitting the larp, as it resonated so strongly with my own experiences growing up gay during the death sentence era of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

And the hardest part to talk about is the impact of the other players. How a specific conversation or a post coital insult, a drag performance or a hug, a haunting look or a shared cry form a tapestry of pretended reality, that nevertheless feels real. I miss these people, even now.

This is a larp where I felt seen, where experiences that I had not been able to name and put into words were not only treated as real, but processed. It resonated, in a very profound way, with my thinking about shame, anger, fairness, self-worth, parenting, and legacy. It remains my most profound larp experience.

IDENTITY POLITICS

As the larp addresses sensitive and still raw experiences, it has prompted discussion on whether it is okay to play on HIV/AIDS, who can stage this kind of play, how to ensure that the different intersections present are accounted for, and how to ensure that the play is “respectful”. Already before the very first run of *Just a Little Lovin'* was staged, the website of the larp prompted a discussion in the culture pages of the Swedish yellow press paper *Expressen*. Critic Philip Teir opened the discussion where he compared theatre and larp and expressed worry that the director and the playwright are being replaced by the game designer. Theatre treats its subjects with care, Teir argues, but larp

(partially as it lacks audience), maybe does not do that. Teir asks pointedly who has the right to play being sick. This led to a debate between numerous critics, commentators, and the larp's designers. Tova Gerge's account of this debate, "*Larp and Aesthetic Responsibility*" can be found in last section of this book. It serves as an interesting time capsule from a moment when larp was just knocking on the door of art establishments.

Teir's question, however, is interesting and has come up several times in different forms since. Is this grief tourism? Is this just frivolous 1980s nostalgia? Who gets to inhabit these stories?

These points of criticism often contain the idea that larps are games, and games are incapable of handling sensitive subjects. Larp designers and players tend to disagree with this. However, the cultural stigma of play and games as frivolous is strong – as is the notion that an artist relinquishing power and agency to the participants to meaningfully co-create the final work diminishes their potency as an auteur. Participatory works carry a stigma – and they are also often treated as not-art.

However, that larps are able to tackle sensitive issues in a nuanced way does not mean that they are always successful. A larp script is a vulnerable document, as by nature larp is co-creative, meaning that integrity and compassion cannot be guaranteed by the designers. Organizers and players need to commit to the work. This larp certainly has a surface of 1980s nostalgia in a way that can be read as a celebration of an era or as a superfluous fashion choice. The design goal here is to link to traditions of Pride where the connection between glam and politics has a rich history in queer resistance. A player also tends to get out from a larp what they put in; it is possible to engage with *Just a Little Lovin'* without honesty, integrity, or commitment.

A good rule of thumb in addressing minority lived experience is the ideal from policy making: *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis*. "Nothing about us without us." However, with a larp touching on a number of topics including HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ people, New York, and cancer survivors, not all of these intersections were present in the original design team. *Just a Little Lovin'* is created by queer people about queer people, by people who have worked extensively with HIV/AIDS, and who put in significant effort to research the themes, topics, and experiences addressed in the larp. Furthermore, the different runs of the larp have been since played by queer people, New Yorkers, people with different experiences with and around cancer, HIV positive people, and gay people who lived in New York at the time and lost lovers to the epidemic. These co-creators have contributed to the emotional honesty of the piece.

Reading players' reflections of the larp shows that it has not been an excuse for a nostalgic theme party. Sarah Lynne Bowman's article in this book contains numerous quotes from players for whom the larp was intense, meaningful, and mind opening. This book also contains Erik Winther Paisley's deeply personal reflective essay on the larp's impact on him as a gay man. There are numerous

other accounts of play, such as *The Book of Just a Little Lovin'* (2013 Denmark Run). Furthermore, in an article I co-wrote with Tanja Sihvonen, “Queer while Larping. Community, Identity, and Affective Labor in Nordic Live Action Role-Playing”, *Just a Little Lovin'* comes up repeatedly as a key experience of queer larpers – and has even served as a key turning point in players’ gender transition.

What these accounts echo is glimpsing what it might have been like to live in a time when one’s whole community starts to unravel through death, but also in recognizing a queer community one is part of and its history. Being seen fully in one’s queer identity and having that identity reflected back also comes up again and again – indicative of the drought of queer larp and queer play before *Just a Little Lovin'*.

As *Just a Little Lovin'* has become “the gay larp” or “the queer larp”, other aspects of it have received less attention. The experience of the cancer survivors has been debated much less. The largest change to the work was done before it was staged in the United States. The runs in Europe did not foreground race and racialization. Yet, the idea of New York queer scenes that are mostly white, or where race does not play a significant part, was inconceivable in the American context. Thus, the workshop manuscript was updated, and the player characters and workshop manuscript were, by request, partially rewritten for the 2017 run to adapt them to the racial identities of the players.

The lasting legacy of *Just a Little Lovin'*, however, is probably not just in showing that larps about queer topics with queering metatechniques can be successful and meaningful, or in the design excellence it showcased, or even in the portrayal of a specific historical moment. All of these are clear in Edland and Grasmo’s work, and it is wonderful that they have made the larp available for everyone through this book. The legacy of *Just a Little Lovin'* is in trailblazing a site for queer identity exploration and community building. For a decade it carved a place for queer play and queer players, and in the process built a community of international queer players who have then taken these lessons to other larps and player communities. A larp about desire, friendship, and fear of death created a community forged through these foundational human experiences.

Jaakko Stenros, PhD, is a University Lecturer in Game Studies at Tampere University. He has published nine books and more than 80 articles on role-play, play, and games. He has larped since 1995.

From Larp to Book

By Tor Kjetil Edland & Hanne Grasmo
the designers of *Just a little lovin'*

In 2005 we were “rebels”. Fighting together under the banner of a phenomenon that would later be coined as *bleed*. As the programme committee of the Nordic larp convention *Knutepunkt*, our goal was to get larpers to reflect on the intersections of larp and life, of one’s character and oneself – and to not fear that these might bleed into each other in significant ways. At that time, not maintaining a strict boundary between player and character was regarded as almost dangerous, and larpers would often say “it wasn’t me doing that, it was my character”. We wanted to blur that line; we wanted our lives to affect larp, and larp to have an effect on our lives. We wanted to change the world: or, at the very least, evoke reflections and insights. Something else we shared was our belief in the magic of rituals and ceremonies – we love real-life emotions and metaphysical experiences. We closed *Knutepunkt* that year with a ritual (to much perplexity from participants) involving a life-size aluminium cow, with smoke coming out of it while Hanne solemnly declared: “This is the Cow of Larp.”

In 2010, we started to design an ambitious larp together, and it lives on a decade later. This is the story about us, our visions, and how *Just a Little Lovin'* was created and re-created.

WHO ARE WE?

Is it important who we, the designers, are? We believe anyone can make a fictional story about topics that are important to them. But the viewpoints and flavours of the final product will be shaped by what the creators bring with them when engaging with the material for the story. What we wanted was to design a larp about AIDS, gay culture, alternative cultures, New York in the

80s, and cancer survivors. We wanted to write about us: a story that would have an impact on ourselves and our Nordic network of larpers. We started this journey in 2010 as two Norwegian Nordic larp designers in our 40s.

When Tor Kjetil started university in 1990, he knew that he wanted to be part of what was then called the gay and lesbian movement, which later became the LGBT or queer movement. For the next few years, alongside studies in social anthropology and comparative religion, his life was filled with organizing community events in the Norwegian university town of Bergen as well as international human rights work. Being part of the scene and the movement at that time meant that the HIV epidemic was everywhere both in work and in private life. Tor Kjetil and his colleagues worked against the stigmatization and fear of people living with HIV, and were both giving and receiving constant reminders to protect themselves. The people he got to know who were 10 years older than him had come of age during the early 1980s, and many of them were living with the virus. AIDS was still considered a death sentence, as truly effective treatments would not become available until later that decade. In the third act in *Just a Little Lovin'* there is a blackbox scene where characters can take an HIV test. During the first run of the larp this was created spontaneously during runtime, and it has stayed a part of the design since then. Tor Kjetil thought back to his own experiences, and to the stories told by his friends of sitting in the waiting room – and the feelings generated by taking that particular test – when framing the scene for the players.

Hanne was a high-school teacher, a mum, and the holder of a masters degree in sociology, even before she became a larper and larp designer. She was openly bisexual and kink-positive, and old enough to have been a part of gay and queer culture when the AIDS epidemic hit Norway – with memories of silly advice like “never sit on a toilet seat” to avoid getting infected by HIV. Her engagement was awakened in an enormous double bed at a queer festival, where the organization for HIV-positive people invited everyone up in the bed, to hold and hug, and show no fear. Hanne has an activist soul and has been part of many alternative scenes, including “The Sexual Society” in San Francisco in the 90s; where gay, straight, kinky people and HIV-positive folks and sexpositive artists found ways to have safe sex. She was in the forefront of promoting safer sex in Norway as a journalist and later as chief editor of the sexual political and erotic magazine *Cupido*, and with her 1994 book *Kjærlighetsboka – en bok for unge om sex (The Book of Love – a book for youth about sex)*, a pleasure-positive sex book for teenagers. When Hanne found larp, she was all-in. First by writing a popular-science book on larp called *Laiv – Levende rollespill* (Gyldendal Fakta, 1998), and then by co-founding the Nordic larp convention *Knutepunkt*. She even studied theatre directing for a year, to better understand this form of interactive theatre. Her

latest project combines her interests in sexuality and larp, under her PhD project entitled “Role-play and Sexual arousal”, currently underway in Game Studies at Tampere University.

Anna Emilie Groth has an academic background in Medicine, Performance Art, and Gender Studies, and wrote her master’s thesis on how to change views on gender performance through larp. She has worked as a dramaturgy consultant focusing on interactive design. Anna is a specialist in facilitation and workshops, who helps to create a variety of events and developments within the arts: this plays into her role in this publication, by using her expertise to realize the best possible communication of this larp script.

Anna first got involved in *Just a Little Lovin’* when she played the larp herself in 2013, and later as a main organizer in 2015. Since then she has been an integrated part of the organizer community behind the larp. When queer larpers in 2013 began to march at Copenhagen Pride, Anna was part of the organizing team behind *Geek Pride*, as the group was named. Creating awareness of queer people in the larp and cosplay community at Copenhagen Pride became an important issue to her, and still is to this day.

In 2018 Anna, Tor Kjetil Edland, and Karete Jacobsen Meland decided to design the larp *The Future is Straight* about the queer community, focusing on another relevant issue: gay conversion therapy. This larp only has queer characters, and it is only possible because of the existence of *Just a Little Lovin’* and many other queer and political larps.

We want our art to have an impact. We both joined the network of larp designers called *Weltschmerz*, in Oslo, around the year 2000. Their stated aim was to organize intense and meaningful larp experiences from our own world; the here and now, instead of fantasy worlds. *Weltschmerz* organized, for instance, *Amerika* (with an anarchist A at the end), which was covered on national TV. This larp was an artwork of a garbage dump in the main square in the city of Oslo, where larpers lived for a weekend and the audience were invited in as “poverty tourists”. The theme was a critique of the consumer society and of the dream of big money.

Around the same time there were several developments in the Nordic larp scene that deeply influenced the design of *Just a Little Lovin’*. The “long-form” tradition of Nordic larp was becoming influenced by the tradition of freeform and jeepform games, which typically had no costumes or scenography, but involved a gamemaster acting as a “director” of tightly scripted scenes, and innovative game mechanics enhancing the theme and story. In 2007 the larp *En stilla middag med familjen* (*A Nice Evening with the Family*) became notable for its use of *metatechniques* to provide narrative information directly to players, breaking the previous ideal of players being seamlessly and continuously ingame. In the following years, the creative challenge of

using and creating just the right metatechniques to enhance the narrative was enthusiastically picked up by many larp designers, and we were among them.

CREATING THE LARP

The process of designing the larp started with Tor Kjetil, who had been mulling over the idea of doing a larp about the gay scene at the start of the AIDS epidemic. The working title for this idea was “Fire Island” – a reference to the unrestrained and visibly gay Fourth of July weekend parties held there in New York in the 1970s. The idea was discussed with Hanne, who had already been pondering another idea for a larp addressing the AIDS crisis in many African countries.

In 2010 we decided to start designing the larp. After we found what we thought was the perfect theme song for the larp, we settled on the title *Just a Little Lovin’*. We also decided that we wanted to have characters not only from the gay and lesbian scene, but also a piece of “straight America”. We landed on including a group of young cancer survivors, representing different aspects of alternative America – and of course these characters were not all entirely straight, in the end.

At the time, AIDS was the only epidemic in our lifetime that held up a mirror of sudden death to our generation, in our part of the world, and at the same time linked death with desire. But after the arrival of antiretroviral medicines, this epidemic receded from public debate and consciousness. AIDS settled in sections of society often branded as “other” by the mainstream, and was seen as a problem of those groups and not of society as a whole. We wanted to frame our story in the 1980s gay scene in New York, to lift the two themes *death* and *desire*, and combine them with *friendship*. The types of crowds we depict in the game are not so far removed from our own. Had this happened today, it could have been us and our friends. We hoped to investigate them as linked themes, not separately – death that arrives in the middle of the party.

Even though the story is set in the 80s, we wanted to say something about our own lives, our fears, what we long for, and how we get along when a crisis appears. We also wanted to explore how we could use sexuality as a tool and engine to tell stories of emotions other than desire and arousal, because we know how sexuality can bring so many other emotions and insights with it.

To make a gay/queer larp also meant to challenge a heteronormative larp culture. As far as we know, a large Nordic larp with a majority of gay characters hadn’t been done before. Several queer/playing-with-gender larps had been done in the Nordic tradition, but not an expressly gay one. The main themes of

the larp are fundamental to the human condition, and we assumed they would be relatable for all the participants.

Death is something our generation uses as entertainment, but few of us ever really see or talk about actual death, our own death. On the other hand we seem to be obsessed with desire, but in larps it was often handled very superficially. The frame of the story is America – the home of the brave. It can be hard, if you are from the United States yourself, to grasp what a huge symbolic impact the USA has in many parts of the world, including the Nordic countries. We have an intimate relationship with certain versions of America, even those of us who have never been there. It is the place dreams are made – the freedom, the music, the free sex, the queer and kinky subcultures! It is also a place we fall out of love with – the narrow-minded, crassly consumerist, judgemental USA. By choosing the setting to be American we were really writing about our own culture, not about the real USA.

SPREAD THE LOVE

In our Nordic larp tradition of bespoke larps, the majority of longer larps are not made to be rerun: and a lot of the design, especially for workshops and production, only exists in the larpwrights' minds. Larp scenario festivals, like *Grenslandet*, *Stockholm Scenario Festival*, and *Fastaval*, have been game-changers for this, gathering great designers of freeforms and chamber larps that last 1–4 hours. These larps are designed in such a way that anyone can pick up the well-made script and just run it. Over the last decade it's also become more common for longer larps to be rerun; but not from a complete script that can be picked up and run by new organizers. Most of these reruns are done either by, or in close cooperation with, the original designers.

This was how reruns of *Just a Little Lovin'* have been organized, until now. Right after the first run we got a phone call from Miriam Lundquist, the head of *Lajvverkstaden* – a professional larp company that works with idealistic projects. She had played in the first (and what we thought would be the only) run of the larp. She wanted to run the larp in Sweden in the summer of 2012. We immediately agreed and made a plan to work together to make it happen. Petter Karlsson and Anna-Karin Linder joined as main organizers. Organizing with three new people started the process of documenting the larp design in text, because we had to communicate it to new people. The fundamental structure of the workshop design was made for the 2012 run, and this outline was used as an important tool during runtime, at later larps. We also developed

the HIV testing scene, and made notes about location and scenography design, props and production. This first larp script was tweaked and added to in the following years with each new organizing team. The third author of this book, Anna Emilie Groth, first played the larp in the first run in Denmark in 2013, and joined in 2015 as organizer together with Flemming H. Jacobsen, and as facilitator together with Hanne, Tor Kjetil, Helene Willer Piironen, and Petter Karlsson. Anna repeated the role of workshop and debrief facilitator for the run in Finland in 2018. Anna has made several important contributions to the evolving design of the larp, such as new workshop exercises, adjustments to the directions for the act end scenes, a fleshed-out system for creating new characters for players whose characters have died, more organizer characters, and a fleshed-out HIV testing scene in the third act.

Together with the written characters, this means that a large part of the larp design has been written down for a while now, with adjustments and additions being added year by year. This is probably a common state for many Nordic larps: the written material exists, but in incomplete form, which makes it difficult to rerun the larp without active involvement of the original designers. This book represents the last steps of making *Just a Little Lovin'* into a true larp script.

GAYIFICATION OF NORDIC LARP

One of our goals in making *Just a Little Lovin'* was to bring gay stories, and queer characters with depth and agency, into Nordic larping. Just through the many reruns, including outside the Nordics, this has already happened. The larps have spawned tight-knit networks of "*Just a Little Lovin'* alumni", many of whom are LGBT or queer. Gay and queer larpers have found each other, across much of Europe, and in the US.

At every *Knutepunkt* there is now a drag show inspired by our larp, as well as a one-hour *Just a Little Lovin'* party with 80s disco, dressing up, and making out. For some years now, there have been separate parties for men, for women, and for trans participants (where all who thus identify are welcome) to help us find each other at a con, where flirting is one of the major activities. Five years ago a group for queer larpers was created on Facebook, which is still alive and kicking with hundreds of members. Queer characters and queer stories have become an important part of the discourse in the Nordic larp scene, both in larps themselves and also in academia, in the last decade: so it feels safe to say that *Just a Little Lovin'* has been an important part of gayification of Nordic larp.

But did this larping experience also have effects on the players, or even on the outside world, as well?

As we were writing this article we suddenly realized that we both have had a “really queer decade” since 2011. Both of us have for instance become “professionally queer”: Tor Kjetil as International Advisor in FRI (the Norwegian Organisation for Gender and Sexual Diversity), and Hanne as Project Manager for the LGBTI-centre (National Knowledge Centre for sexual orientation and gender identity – within the Norwegian government). Both of us have said yes to several queer board positions, written more queer larps, played more queer characters, and enjoyed more queer clubs and parties. Hanne had her first long-time relationship with a woman during this last decade, and also quit her job to make an impact on the world by volunteering for refugees at Lesbos for 10 months. Could it be that *Just a Little Lovin’* had that impact on us?

Even if it is anecdotal, a lot of participants of *Just a Little Lovin’* tell us that the larp changed their lives. Some decided to take a chance on love, change their job, or quit an unhealthy relationship. Many trans and gender non-conforming people expressed their gender publicly at *Just a Little Lovin’*, and some transitioned after the larp. Many came out as bisexual, people started doing drag professionally, and many embraced their kinks openly. Some have engaged themselves in queer-, gender- and HIV-politics. And a lot of us, at least in the first years, met up at Pride parades in the Nordic countries, to make our own “larpers sections” and socialize with other *Just a Little Lovin’* alumni.

WHY THIS BOOK?

And now we are publishing the script to *Just a Little Lovin’*, so as to have a documented version that we can share with the world. Organizing this larp has taken a lot of our time. We have welcomed working with new co-organizers, helping them make new runs of the larp in their own countries. All of the groups of organizers contained several people who had already played the larp, and some organizers became part of the team for several runs. But we were not ready to release the larp for just anyone to run. We felt there was a risk that a larp with HIV and AIDS as a main theme and with a majority of gay and queer characters could be horribly bungled, in the wrong hands. But at the same time we said to each other that in the future we thought we would be ready to release a script. And now that time has come. Anna Emilie Groth, who has a professional background in dramaturgy and communication, has been instrumental in the creation of this publication: through encouragement as far back as 2015, active support in taking the leap, and together with us turning the preexisting material into a cohesive script.

Even with the existing material, the task of making this book has involved extensive rewrites, and the creation of some brand new texts, to make this as complete a script as we are able to; in which Anna has played a big part.

We are also very grateful to have gotten Anne Serup Grove on board for the graphic design of the book. Anne has gone above and beyond this task, and has shaped the finished script in many ways, through editing with a sharp eye for how to communicate and present the material to the reader in a way which makes it as clear and consistent as presently possible.

We want to give the larp back to our communities. We wish to let people who are interested in reading the design have access to it. We hope new groups of organizers will pick up this book and make their version of the larp without us, the original designers. So the next times that *Just a Little Lovin'* runs, we will not be involved, beyond having published this larp script as raw material to be formed and interpreted by new people's artistic vision.

It is an experiment: Will it work, to transfer the knowledge needed for a longform larp into text, and back into future runs of the larp again? We feel that fear of failure shouldn't steer what we dare to do creatively. We trust that future larp organizers who take on the large piece of work it is to produce *Just a Little Lovin'* will do so for good reasons; and we look forward to hearing their stories, their debates about the choices they made, and the experiences they had.

The core design of *Just a Little Lovin'* has remained the same since we ran it for the first time. But some significant changes have also been made for different runs. Some of these made it into this book, and others not. We chose to publish a version that reflects the Nordic larp tradition that we come from and our preferences in larping and facilitation. Some of our recommendations in this book will not be the right one for every larp culture. We just hope that future organizers make an attempt to understand the design, and then change what they need and want according to their artistic vision and based on their understanding of their player culture.

But this is not only a book for potential larp organizers. It is also a work of documentation, for people in the art scene and in cultural funds to understand the large amount of work and design necessary to make such a larp as this. To understand what larp can be through this particular example. To maybe get some ideas why interactive theatre is not the same as larp. Larp is a peculiar and unique artform. It is truly interactive and co-creative. A larp script tries to do something potentially foolhardy – to put on the page something that only becomes truly alive in runtime, when the participants take on their characters and start to play.

How to Read this Book

How you will dive into the pages of this book depends on who you are: Are you a larp organizer who wants to understand the design; someone curious about this specific story; or someone who wants to understand Nordic larp as an artform?

If you are considering running *Just a Little Lovin'*, you will need to read all of parts 1, 2, and 3 before deciding. However, this publication is also intended as an encyclopedic tool to be available during preparation. Part 2 is especially relevant for the production crew, while part 3 is relevant for the story crew.

The workshop explanation and the metascene scripts are detailed, so it will be possible for you to follow them step by step. But we encourage you to make the larp your own, find other exercises in the workshop, make tweaks to the metascenes, build a fantastic scenography or strip it down to the minimum, or even include more (or less) in the characters. It is all up to you now. Larp is co-creative, and we are happy if you freshen up the story and adapt it to your playerbase. On the other hand, we want you to closely read our intentions and the thoughts behind our design, so that any changes that you make are to enhance the story that will be made. We have tried to explain our visions and the focus points of the design: this is mostly aimed at future organizers of *Just a Little Lovin'*.

Right before the larp, as an organizer you will need the tools found in the appendixes. In the digital publication you can just print the appendixes as they are.

Some of you will come to this book because you are players who might already have played the larp, or who want to. In this case, you might find it interesting to jump here and there in the script, for the parts you are interested in. You may find it amusing to read the foreword and introduction from the designers, as well as the articles in part 4, to frame your experience. Another

possible approach is to deep dive and read all the characters, to feel the story and see how it comes alive in your mind's eye. This is best done with a tarot deck beside you, so you can explore the added layers to the characters' personalities. You don't need to fear ruining anything by reading all of the characters, as we have designed the larp to be transparent: The characters are all openly available online before the larp. But we do advise, if you are playing the larp, not to read the metascenes of *Lottery of Death* and the *Act end scripts*: these parts are best experienced at the larp itself.

If you want to read this book because you are curious about Nordic larp – either because you work within culture and art, or you are a researcher – then we hope that reading all the different parts will give you valuable insight into bespoke design of a long-form larp. We invite you to cite freely, from parts 1, 2, 3 and the *Appendix*, if it is relevant for your work. If you wish to explore further, we have included a list of references at the end of the *Appendix*. You can also read the republished articles in part 4, to frame this monograph of what we believe is the artwork *Just a Little Lovin'*.

Introducing

JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

The following text is the information we have shared about *Just a Little Lovin'* on webpages for the larp when the larp has been open for players to sign up.

THE SETTING

1982: IT WAS THE SUMMER

AIDS CAME TO NEW YORK CITY

Two groups of friends from New York City celebrate the 4th of July in upstate New York, at the former Saratoga rehab center. The 1970s have been a decade of women's liberation, youth rebellion, anti-war protests and sexual promiscuity. This changed America forever, but the early 1980s is also a time of a resurgent conservative movement which President Ronald Reagan is the sunny face of. Gay men are migrating to New York to become part of the vibrant and hedonistic scene in Greenwich Village. Unbeknownst to everyone however, the hiv virus has started spreading in The City. An article in the New York Times last summer described a mysterious "gay cancer", but it's cause remains still unknown.

THREE 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS

During the larp we play three 4th of July parties of 1982, 1983 and 1984. Every morning after breakfast there is an act break where we find out what has happened with the characters and their relationships the following year, before the next act starts one year later. When the game starts neither the players nor the characters know who will become infected by the virus, but the lives of all the characters will be deeply affected by the epidemic.

Our goal for the larp is that all the characters will have friendships that are important to them, experience a little bit of lovin' at the summer parties and feel the fear of death as people around them start to become infected.

A STORY ABOUT TWO CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

The story will follow two groups of friends: Mr. T's very gay 4th of July party, and the close knitted friendship circle formed by Saratoga cancer survivors.

The gay and lesbian group revolves around Terrence Thurlow ("Mr. T." among friends and enemies alike), a successful and openly gay owner of a public relations company. Every 4th of July he hosts a party for friends, past- and future lovers, as well as new acquaintances from the scene, which he finds interesting enough to receive an invitation. This is a party people want to be at, so unless you have front row seats at the latest Liza Minnelli show on the very same night, you will be there. A subgroup linked to Mr. T's party is some of New York's finest lesbians. They have been invited to the party by Pen, Mr. T's friend and secretary. The Mr. T party represents many of the subcultural gay scenes in New York anno 1982, from Leather Men to Intellectuals and Activists.

In upstate New York, not far from the small town of Saratoga, there is what used to be the Saratoga Centre for Hope and Healing, a rehabilitation center for young people with cancer. The core of the other group of close knit friends met each other as teenagers at the rehabilitation centre and have stayed connected ever since. Joani, Kohana and Kim are the informal leaders of this group, and it was those three who took the initiative to write down The Saratoga Pact. In a ritual they all promised each other to stay friends and to live their life to the fullest.

After the center closed its doors five years ago, this group of former patients linked by The Pact, started to gather here for the 4th of July. In 1977 they all slept in tents down by the lake, but from 1978 they were allowed to rent a part of the old institution. Every year they renew their pact of friendship. The rest of this group are spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends of the cancer survivors. As in many close groups of friends there are many overlapping and past (and future?) relationships in this group making friendships and lovelies sometimes quite complicated. These young cancer survivors have learned to celebrate life fully. Some of them are frequent visitors to free-spirited places like swinger's clubs and some are practitioners of alternative forms of spirituality. The Saratoga group all represent The Alternative America of the 80s.

Last year Mr. T decided he wanted to get out of the city for the 4th of July party and asked Pen, his secretary, to find a place that was remote, but not too far from the city and next to a lake. The result was that Mr. T also

rented a house for his guests at the former Saratoga Centre for Hope and Healing. This year, in 1982 both groups will return to Saratoga. Last year the two parties were largely separate, but late into the night they started merging. It is likely that this will happen to a greater extent this year.

CHARACTERS AND GROUPS

Each character starts their story in a core group. Most of the core groups consist of just three people, but some are bigger. As designers of the larp we created these small groups to offer the players dramatic structures and deep relationships. We hope this will lead to interesting interaction and the beginning of a story that most likely will circle round the themes of friendship, desire and fear of death. All characters are also given connections outside of the core group.

Every character belongs to either Mr. T's party or The Saratoga Friendship Pact. In addition everyone has a social group, a subculture or social circle, which they hang out with back in New York City.

You can read the short version of all characters in *Characters - Overview*

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Pink dollars isn't a formally organized group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending habits and the amount of consumed champagne. Mr. T. is of course part of this network.

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. "Leather men" was at the time (and still are) a code for gay men into S&M. It's more run like a voluntary organization, or MC club, than a commercial bar or disco. Only members, and guests who arrive with members, are admitted. Cruisers Club has a high level of discretion, people do often not even tell other gays that they go there, and no one ever tells what happens in the club. Few people would in 1982 admit they are into S&M (which most of the club members are). Also only men are admitted into the club. The Dark Room at the venue is set up by the Cruisers Club, but is open for all (gay) men into anonymous sex.

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by "The Queen of Manhattan" (Nate). It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up

in drag themselves, and those that fancy those that do. But straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on “girl’s night out.” In addition to its professional performers Club Diamond holds regular amateur nights. At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage. The players in this circle are encouraged to think about if their character would like to participate. (Remember you don’t have to sing, drag queens generally mime to popular “Diva songs”.)

The Cubby Hole: Even in a large city like New York there aren’t many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It is a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricacies of the love.

The Spirituals: Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, the 80s are characterized by increasing commercialization of various forms of alternative practices. This is also an age where self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired with ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teacher or guru or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

The L-Club: “Living the lifestyle” is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. The L-Club is a swinger’s club in Brooklyn that has differently themed nights. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third (or 4-5-6-7) person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam war. In the early 80s the main focus of the peace movement was the threat of nuclear war and the American government’s support to military dictatorships in Latin-America.

Peggy’s (Pepper’s) Diner: A 24 hour diner located among the gay clubs and bars in Greenwich Village. For Mr. T’s 4th of July party they have been invited to organize the food. The staff are known for their unique personalities. Many of the guests at the party are regular visitors to this diner, well known for the warm personality of its owner and the eccentricity of its serving staff. Mr. T has paid the owner to bring some of their staff to the party to organize the barbeque. The owner of the diner is named Peggy if played as a female character or Pepper if played as a male character.

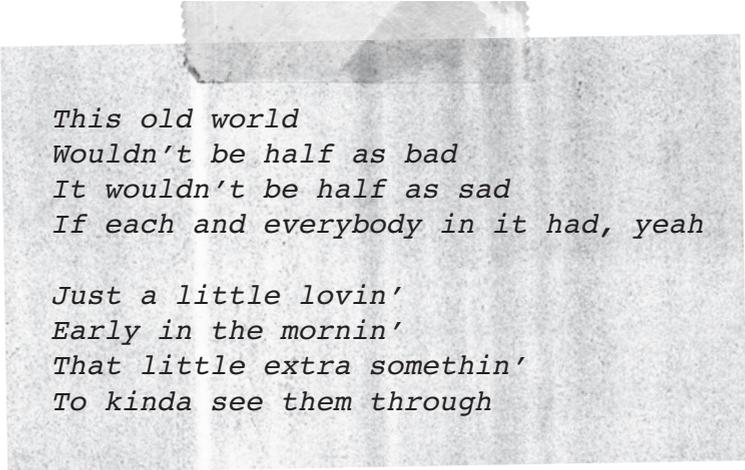
HOW GAY IS THIS LARP

The answer to this flippant question is: Pretty gay but not exclusively so... When AIDS came to the Western world in the 80s, the gay community was hit more severely than most other sectors of society. This larp reflects that in the story we want to tell, the narrative circles around homosexual life, and death. More than half of the characters will be male and the majority (but not all) of the characters are gay or bisexual. We expect that the setting of the game will make it natural for physical intimacy between many of the characters, and we want this to be portrayed in a “gay” manner. Any actual sex scenes between characters will be simulated through dramatic game mechanics (*metatechniques*), which will be workshoped before the game starts.

In addition to the many gay male characters the larp also contains characters who belong to a vibrant lesbian scene. And many of the characters representing “AlternativeAmerica” in the Saratoga friends group are not entirely heterosexual.

THEME SONG

The title *Just a Little Lovin'* has been borrowed from Dusty Springfield's classic soul song. Dusty's songs are favorites for a lot of the characters. This is also the theme song for the larp. The song opens and ends each act. It is all we can ever hope for, right? When we dive into the darkest corner of the disco to fulfill our desires. And when we one bright day meet the face of death in the mirror.



*This old world
Wouldn't be half as bad
It wouldn't be half as sad
If each and everybody in it had, yeah*

*Just a little lovin'
Early in the mornin'
That little extra somethin'
To kinda see them through*

Earlier Runs of

JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

JaLL has had runs almost every year the last 10 years except 2014 and 2020. It has been produced in seven different countries, and there have been participants from more than 23 different countries. Here is an overview of the central people who have produced *JaLL* through the years - many more contributed and are part of the JaLL community.

Just a Little Lovin' 2011 - Norway

The larp was first produced by the designers Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmo. Hilde Bryhn and Eirik Fatland wrote some of the original characters. Astrid Solgård made more than 20 original works of art for the scenography of the game. Eliot Wieslander helped out with a part of the workshops.

Just a Little Lovin' 2012 - Sweden

The second run of the larp was produced by Miriam Lundqvist, Anna-Karin Linder and Petter Karlsson through LajvVerkstaden in association with Tor Kjetil Edland, Hanne Grasmo and workshop facilitator Morgan Jarl.

Just a Little Lovin' 2013 - Denmark

The third run of the larp was produced by Flemming H. Jacobsen, Nynne Søs Rasmussen and Helene Willer Piironen through Rollespilsfabrikken in association with Tor Kjetil Edland. Petter Karlsson and Morgan Jarl were co-organizer and workshop facilitators.

Just a Little Lovin' 2015 - Denmark

The fourth run of the larp was produced by Anna Emilie Groth and Flemming H. Jacobsen in association with Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmo. Petter Karlsson and Helene Willer were co-organizers and workshop facilitators, and the larp had a scenography team consisting of Alex K. Uth, Sarah Piyannah Cederstrand and Rasmus Teilmann.

Just a Little Lovin' 2016 - France

The fifth run of the larp was produced by Leïla Teteau-Sourel and Baptiste Cazes in association with Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmo. Others on the team in France were Stéphane Rigoni, Stéphanie Ailloud, Pascal Meunier and Joaquim Wilquin. The translators, in addition to Leïla, Stéphanie, Stephan and Joaquim, were: Hortense Oudot, Bruno Cailloux and Frédérique Boursicot.

Just a Little Lovin' 2017 - Minnesota, USA

The sixth run of the larp was produced by Heather Silsbee, Kat Jones, Jon Cole, and Evan Torner in association with Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø, with help from Laura Boylan Bowman. Rewriting for the larp was done by Kat Jones, Heather Silsbee, Sarah Lynne Bowman, Moyra Turkington, Laura Boylan Bowman, Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø. Fredrik Hatlestrand joined as on-site organizer from Norway when Hanne got ill.

Just a Little Lovin' 2018 - Finland

The seventh run of the larp was produced by Tonja Goldblatt, Joonas Iivonen, Suvii Korhonen, Essi Kuukka, Jamie MacDonald, Pauliina Männistö and Essi Santala, with co-organizers and workshop facilitators Petter Karlsson, Anna Groth, Helene Willer Piironen and Tor Kjetil Edland. Anna Groth designed the additional organizer characters.

Just a Little Lovin' 2019 - UK

The eighth run of the larp was produced by Mo Holkar, Will Osmond, David Owen, Karolina Soltys, Craig Wakeford and Laura Wood. Co-organizers and workshop facilitators were Benjamin Palmer, Petter Karlsson, Tor Kjetil Edland, Jonaya Kemper and Hanne Grasmø. The larp had a scenography team consisting of Laurie Innes and Sille Storihle.

Coming up: Just a Little Lovin' 2022 - France

The upcoming ninth run of the larp is being produced by JC Larping and Leïla Teteau-Sourel.

PLAYERS OF JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

A total of 495 players, in addition to organizers in character, have participated in *JaLL* from 2011 - 2019, from (at least) 23 countries: Belarus, Belgium, Canada, China, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, The United Kingdom and USA. Some players have participated in more than one run.

Norway 2011 - July 10–13:	60 players.
Sweden 2012 - June 8–13:	54 players.
Denmark 2013 - August 5–10:	64 players.
Denmark 2015 - June 21–26:	65 players.
France 2016 - July 4-9:	61 players.
USA 2017 - August 7–12:	55 players.
Finland 2018 - June 4–10:	66 players.
UK 2019 - June 30 - August 4:	70 players.



Just a little
lovin'.

Structure

OF JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

The larp Just a little lovin', including workshops and debrief, lasts five days from player arrival to player departure, with an optional (though advisable) 6th day. The larp itself consists of three acts, 1982, 1983 and 1984. Each act ends with a metascene resolving who dies before the act breaks, the last metascene being the end scene of the larp.

ACT AND ACT BREAK FUNCTION

Having three acts, portraying the same celebration three times in a row, aims to give the narrative the power of repetition, almost like rituals performed together. The player will feel like time is passing for their character. They remember what happened last year and can talk about it in the next act. This helps the players immerse themselves into the story. If the player chooses to stay with their core group or other important relations, they can also deepen their conflicts and their bonds by telling the story again in a new way. Another important reason for having three acts is the breaks between them: The larp aims to describe the development of the AIDS pandemic, and its impact on gay and other communities. To do this, the story covers a span of several years. That said, the story is not aiming to be historically correct and so is compressed to depict the course of the epidemic, which in real life took place over 6-9 years. It has been distilled down into three parts for this larp. The story moves from "free love" in the first year, to the time when AIDS is named and connected with gay men, when everyone is affected by the uncertainty and fear. In the last act many will have died and others are living with grief, but the friendships of the survivors are strengthened.

The Act Breaks pause the story to jump forward a whole year. The player groups will resolve what has happened during that year between their characters in the Act Break workshops. Workshops create the groundwork for

better co-creation, for greater safety and for building braver and better stories together. By including act breaks in the design, the players are afforded agency to steer and refine their experience. Still, the workshop has been planned so that players are guided by the vision of the larp in their decisions. Read more about that in the designers' article *Out of our hands* (found in *Articles*).

TIMELINE AND EVENTS

Day one:

Arrival, supper.
Pre-larp Workshop part one.

Day two:

Breakfast.
Pre-larp Workshop part two, lunch, workshop continues.
Personal preparation time.
ACT 1 "DESIRE": 4th of July 1982.

Day three:

Breakfast still ingame (1982).
Metascenes: Lottery of Death & Funeral.
Act break, lunch and Workshop 2.
Personal preparation time.
ACT 2 "FEAR OF DEATH": 4th of July 1983.

Day four:

Breakfast still ingame (1983).
Metascenes: Lottery of Death & Funeral.
Act break: Lunch and Workshop 3.
ACT 3 "FRIENDSHIP": 4th of July 1984.

Day five:

Breakfast still ingame (1984).
Metascenes: Lottery of Death & Funeral.
Debrief: Lunch and Workshop 4.
Cleaning up & Departure, alternatively:

Dinner & After-Party (Optional)

Day six:

Breakfast and Departure

TIMELINE & EVENTS

DAY

1

ARRIVAL

WORKSHOP 1 - PART 1

DAY

2

WORKSHOP 1 - PART 2

PERSONAL PREPARATIONS TIME

1982

Act 1
DESIRE

DAY

3

META SCENES {
LOTTERY OF DEATH
FUNERAL

ACT BREAK 1

WORKSHOP 2

PERSONAL PREPARATIONS TIME

1983

Act 2
FEAR OF DEATH

DAY

4

META SCENES {
LOTTERY OF DEATH
FUNERAL

ACT BREAK 2

WORKSHOP 3

PERSONAL PREPARATIONS TIME

1984

HIV TEST

DAY

5

Act 3
FRIENDSHIP

META SCENES {
LOTTERY OF DEATH
FUNERAL

ACT BREAK 3

WORKSHOP 4: DEBRIEF

CLEAN UP & DEPARTURE

What You Need

TO RUN THIS LARP

TIME FRAME: FIVE DAYS

The larp *Just a Little Lovin'*, including workshops and debrief, lasts a minimum of five days from player arrival to player departure. Day 1 starts in the early evening, and the players may leave in the early afternoon on Day 5. Runtime, including act breaks, will start in the afternoon on Day 2, and end mid-day on Day 5. Depending on how much scenography you will add yourself, you might need extra days as organizers.

We recommend adding a 6th day, which will enable you to have a party out-of-character Day 5, and one last overnight stay as a group. A debrief-session the day after can be more efficient than right after the game ends. *Just a Little Lovin'* can be a strong emotional experience for many of the players, then they need time to debrief, get out of character and spend time with the other players to deal with bleed they may struggle with.

HUMAN RESOURCES

You need to have separate crews for Story production and Practical production. If you want to run *Just a Little Lovin'* smoothly, here are our recommendations:

Minimum 5 person production team before/after the larp:

- © **Story production (2+ people):** Head of **communication**, responsible for communicating with players before the larp, info, and casting (including safety screening) and Head of **story** (including text materials, spatial design, food design, workshops, and program for the larp). At least one member in the Story

production team should have played the larp before.

- 🕒 **Practical production (3+ people):** Head of **practical planning** (location, transport, building the spatial design) and Head of **economy and funding**. (Can be the same as Head of communication or Head of Practical). Head of rigging down and tidying up (can be same as Head of Rigging)

An additional minimum of 5 people are needed for the production team **during** the larp, on site:

Practical production (3+):

- 🕒 Head of **Rigging** the location and scenography (can be the same as Head of Practical) + helpers (can be players).
- 🕒 Head of **Kitchen** + helpers from players or other organizers.
- 🕒 Head of **Safety**: Non-player during duty time. Remember to have at least one designated driver at all times.
- 🕒 A new crew to tear down the set and tidy up is suggested, as the production team may be worn out after five days.

Story production (2+):

- 🕒 Head of **Workshops** with 3-4 well-trained and informed workshop facilitators. It is best not to ask players to run workshops, but facilitators can be recruited from crew members who are also responsible for other tasks. One Workshop leader should be assigned per group, which will contain 10-15 players each.
- 🕒 Head of **Story** during the larp (including organizing metascenes, act ends, help with players/characters narrative and joint events). Three helpers should be responsible for role-playing as the two “bureaucrat Angels” and Death at the end of each Act.

Optional:

- 🕒 Participants especially, but also organizers, might be worn out and shaky after the larp with a strong need to talk to each other. While it is good to count on SOME help from the participants, we suggest you bring in a separate, fresh crew to shoulder most of the burden of rigging down and tidying up.

LOCATION

Just a Little Lovin' requires a private location where players can feel comfortable playing heavy or intimate scenes without being observed or overheard by outsiders. The site should feature a place to prepare food for everyone and enough space for all players to be able to eat at the same time. It must also feature sleeping facilities for all players and organizers. Preferably, sleeping arrangements should be organized by in-larp groups, because the larp will also continue through the night and some play might happen in the sleeping quarters. We recommend that at minimum you arrange sleeping quarters so that the two main groups are divided accordingly: Mr T's party including the Cubby Hole and the Saratoga friends. Some players may need a private offgame sleeping area. They can still in-game have "their room" together with their core group.

For offgame purposes you need at least one offgame room for rest and for safety reasons. You will also need an offgame room to gather the larp production crews during runtime for meetings.

To play the larp, you must rig play areas as described in *Location and Scenography*, with one place indoors to gather all the players at the same time (for workshops, meals, and act ends) and 6-7 other rooms inside. Outside, you need 3-4 different spaces.

WHAT TO BRING

This is a check-list of different props, costumes, and other items that are necessary to run the larp. How and why to use them are described later in the book (see parenthetical information).

PROPS

- American flag** to raise on a flagpole.
- Decorations** fitting for a 4th of July party.
- Saratoga Pact** (made by the young cancer survivors at Saratoga rehab center) to be buried at their holy site. (See *The Saratoga Friendship Pact*)
- Box** to keep Saratoga Pact in.
- Black and Pink feathers**, for the Inviting metatechnique (*Guideli-*

nes for how to play). At least 150 feathers of each color.

- **15-25 phalluses**, preferably in an Eighties pink color, for the Phallus metatechnique for sexual encounters (in *How to act out erotic scenes*).
- **Dungeon equipment** for the Dark room. (See *Location and Scenography*).
- **Pillow room equipment**. (See *Location and Scenography*).
- **Midnight Green Drink**, including something to make it with and **natural food coloring** to make it green. **Small glasses** to serve the magical green drink in: one for each character.
- **Five coffins with lids**, preferably as full-size wooden boxes, but can also be more symbolic in representation. **Five small pillows** for the characters' heads in the coffins.
- **Condoms**: Some for Act 2 and many for Act 3. (None in the first act).
- **Paper balloons** to send up (to commemorate the dead), or **paper floats with candles** for a lake or a river, or you may find a different way to commemorate the dead at midnight (Act 2 and Act 3).
- **Beads of two different colors**, or another way for health personnel to randomly choose who is infected for the HIV test metascene in Act 3.
- **Real life First Aid kit(s)** for treatment of actual injuries. This may be used both offgame and while in character.
- *Optional*: **Fireworks**, but at least have **sparklers** or **candles** to light for the 4th of July celebration.

LIGHT AND SOUND

- **Basic theatre lights** (for the Blackbox).
- **Basic sound system** (portable for indoors and outdoor use).
- **Colored lights** and/or **disco ball** to make the right atmosphere in the Disco.
- **Downloaded song file** of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” Dolly Parton version. Remember **printouts** of the lyrics for everyone (see *Appendix*).
- **Downloaded song file** of “Just a Little Lovin’” by Dusty Springfield from the album *Dusty in Memphis*.
- **Downloaded sound of church bells** to be played near the coffins during the Fear of Death metascene.

COSTUMES

- **Outfits for “The Bureaucratic Angels”**: Suits fitting for two fu-

neral undertakers / “Bureaucrats of Death” for the Lottery of Death metascene.

- **A hat** for one of the Angels to draw the lottery tickets from.
- **20-40 pens** carried by the Angels, so participants can write their names on lottery tickets.
- **Outfit for the “Death” for the Lottery of Death metascene.** Make Death look queer and non-cliché.
- **Nurses’ and doctors’ outfits** for the HIV test metascene in Act 3.

NECESSARY PRINTOUTS

- **Day-to-day program** to put on the wall.
- **Rules for play and metatechniques** to put on the walls of the Blackbox, outside Dark room, offgame room, and restrooms.
- **Overview of characters** to be placed in each restroom and offgame room. (See *Characters - Overview*).
- **Tickets for the Lottery of Death** metascene (800-1000 tickets). (See *Appendix*. Remember to cut them beforehand).
- **Funeral programs.** (See *Appendix*).
- **Registration form** for HIV test results for Act 3 (See *Appendix*).
- *Optional:* Cards describing each illness for the Fear of Death metascene. (See *Appendix*).
- **Workshop/Act Break manuscripts** for each workshop and debrief facilitator.
- **Act Break scripts** for the two Angels and Death. (See *Scripts and Scenes*).
- **Verses 2 and 3 from The Star-Spangled Banner** for Death’s funeral speech. (See *Appendix*).

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER HELPFUL ITEMS

- ☞ **A printer with paper** for any materials you forgot to produce beforehand and for signs and other materials that emerge as important during play.
- ☞ **Pens and cardboard** to note important things and provide an easy way to make signs.
- ☞ **Name Tags** with character names for all players



Location and Scenography

This section will give advice on how to plan and organize *Just a Little Lovin'*. Every production team is free to decide and interpret what is the best way to organize this larp; new ideas and developments have been how the larp has evolved during its first decade. On the other hand, the following practical details are very much interwoven in the design. Therefore, we wish to share our thoughts and visions for the practical production. It is important that those responsible for the practical organisation understand how the larp's practical matters are designed and planned will have a huge impact on the story.

In the chapter *Location and Scenography*, we give details about each of the play areas needed for the larp and explain what the vision about these places are.

NOTES ON ATMOSPHERE

How do we create the gay '80s atmosphere we want as a frame for *Just a Little Lovin'*? It can be quite simple. The main scenography themes are:

- ☉ Pieces of gay, queer and alternative New York culture that member would bring with them to vacation in a summer house.
- ☉ Items the two circles of friends would bring with them to create a jolly 4th of July atmosphere.

For the Saratoga friends, these items have a vibe of a New Age hippie style. Meanwhile, Mr. T might have brought interesting pieces of contemporary art to put on the walls in the section of the former Saratoga Rehab Center that he rents.

It is important that these pieces represent the gay, lesbian and alternative subcultures that existed in New York at that time without being in The City.

'80s posters and art can be a great addition to the atmosphere, in particular motifs that are homoerotic; '80s Expressionist, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, or '80s Pop Art such as Patrick Nagel.

Other nice-to-have pieces of scenography in the common areas:

- 🕒 **Light bulb chains** outdoors.
- 🕒 **American decorations** for that 4th of July feel.
- 🕒 **Twister and other items for outdoor party games**, for instance badminton, volleyball, an egg-on-a-spoon run, or a pie eating contest.
- 🕒 **Disco-ball, glittery materials, and colored lights** for the disco.
- 🕒 **A campfire place** for Drum circles
- 🕒 **Drums and other instruments**
- 🕒 **Crystals, tarot cards**, and other New Age spirituality items

Ingame areas

BLACKBOX

The Blackbox is a neutral room to play all kinds of metascenes during runtime. It would be good to have two rooms each with a blackbox due to the numbers of players. Note that it is also possible to play metascenes elsewhere (not just in a blackbox) as long as the involved players decide it to be a metaspace. Metascenes outside of the Blackbox must be away from other players and may be best to run outdoors.

To make the right atmosphere for the scene, include some basic theatre lights or a lighting system and a way to play music (such as from Spotify) that players may operate themselves. Make sure that the device is hooked up to the Internet, or that the music is accessible offline.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **Room with neutral or cloth-covered walls.** The room should be a bit isolated from play in terms of sound and away from direct play areas.
- 🕒 **No direct sunlight** nor view through windows.
- 🕒 **Possibly a few chairs and other pieces of furniture**, such as table, mattresses, pillows, etc.
- 🕒 **Some basic theatre lights**
- 🕒 **Basic sound system**
- 🕒 **Rules for metascenes** on the wall.

BARBEQUE SITE

If possible, include barbeque pits in order to grill the dinners outside. 4th of July games may happen here too, as well as the Remembrance of the Dead, and the Green Drink Ceremony.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **Enough barbeque pits** for the amount of food to be made.

- ☞ **Buffet style tables** (3-5). Players can pick and grill their own food.
- ☞ **A short distance** from the kitchen.

DARK ROOM

The Dark Room represents a place to have anonymous “gay” sex, similar to the the dark rooms that were in many gay bars and S&M dungeons (S&M was what BDSM was called in the 80’ties). The Dark Room is intended to be a bit secluded; characters can slip in and out discretely. Not everyone in Mr T.’s party would frequent such places, so it should still feel like one is breaking the norm by going in.

There are rules for stepping into this space. By entering the Dark Room, characters have consented to have sex with everyone there. Inside there is no talking, just whispers. If players need to negotiate, they must step outside. See more about these rules in *How to act out erotic scenes* found in *Guidelines for how to play*.

This is not a REAL dungeon like one might see in downtown New York, but more like a provisional place that The Cruisers Club has set up for the night. Try to make it feel more dirty and secret - like a urinal for anonymous gay encounters - than the luxurious Dungeons one might find today.

Specifications:

- ☞ **One or two rooms secluded** from other main play areas, maybe even with a door to lock. It should fit at least 15 people at a time, but need not be a big space.
- ☞ **One place (or more) to tie someone.**
- ☞ **One place (or more) to bend someone over** to spank them or play out a scene of fucking someone from behind.
- ☞ **A bench and/or a few chairs** for characters to sit and watch, or use in sex scene.
- ☞ **Very dim lights**, but not pitch black. Maybe coloured lights.
- ☞ **Rules for Dark room and sex metascenes** outside the door (*How to act out erotic scenes*).
- ☞ **Pink Phalluses** available for sex metascenes.
- ☞ A small sound system.

Optional:

- ☞ **Glory holes** to play out scenes of anonymous sex, such as a wooden board with holes in it or even just a cloth with holes.

- 🕒 **A monitor** for showing porn. We recommend procuring Vintage porn from online,
- 🕒 **Some BDSM equipment**, either communal items or equipment that participants in the leather scene bring themselves.
- 🕒 **Other S&M and gay porn effects** like props and posters on the wall.
- 🕒 A discreet place to talk outside.

DINER

The Diner is where characters gather for meals and where the Lottery of Death metascene takes place. Pre-larp briefings might also be held here. It is important that everyone in the larp fits in this space and that there is seating for all. Everyone will be present here for the morning Lottery of Death metascenes at the end of each Act.

The feel of the room should be informal, but you can if you like try to recreate a typical American Diner feel, maybe featuring identical tablecloths. Since it is the 4th of July, include some American flag decorations and other 4th of July props.

The Diner's function during the game is to provide a non-structured meeting place where players do not have to be in their groups or social circles. During and after meals, they can come into contact with people they didn't know before. It is also a communal area to sit, drink, and flirt for those who don't want to be on the dance floor at night.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **One big space with dining tables and seats** for all participants.
- 🕒 **A good system for distributing food for 70 people:** Several big buffet style tables where participants can serve themselves. You want to avoid a huge line.
- 🕒 **A kitchen** in the next room or very close by with equipment enough to make food for all and do the dishes.
- 🕒 **Decorations** to make the space look like an American diner on 4th of July.
- 🕒 **A space where the Bureaucrat Angels can draw the lottery** (if it is held here) and a small sound system to play music during this metascene.

DISCO

The Disco should have the atmosphere of a gay '80s disco. However, since this larp takes place in the countryside and not a real club, it can be rudimentary and set up very easily. It will also double as the Drag Show stage (but this show can also be held outside if the weather and venue allows it).

The function of the Disco ingame is to be a place where desire builds up and burns, where characters can go to dance away their sorrows, and where they can find hook-up partners for the night. It is important to note that if your DJ - the Tony character - is well-informed about the narratives in the larp, he has a great opportunity to enhance and build up the emotions and tensions by choosing the right music. The disco is also a possible location for the Lottery of Death metascene if the Diner is not used for that, as torn up party decorations and empty beer cans can make for an evocative setting.

Specifications:

- ☞ **A good dance floor**, but not so big that it will feel empty if just a few people dance at a time.
- ☞ **Dark corners (and seating space).**
- ☞ **A good sound system.**
- ☞ **The DJ (Tony) should be visible** and in communication with the dance floor. Maybe add a mic for him.
- ☞ **Designated stage area**, which doesn't have to be a real stage.
- ☞ **Backstage area for drag queens** to get dressed with enough mirrors and lights to apply make up.

Optional:

- ☞ **Shimmering cloth and posters** can be used for good effect.
- ☞ **Disco ball.**
- ☞ **Seating for the show.** You might decide that it gives a better atmosphere to have everyone stand up. If so, your show must not be too long.
- ☞ **Stripper pole** and/or a place for go-go-dancer.

FLAG POLE

A place outside to raise the American Flag and sing The Star-Spangled Banner. (Every Act starts with this ceremony).

Specifications:

- 🕒 A Flag pole, with someone who knows how to raise a flag.
- 🕒 An American flag.
- 🕒 Room enough for all participants to stand around.
- 🕒 A sound system to playback Dolly Parton's "The Star-Spangled Banner."

FUNERAL SITE

Used for staged burial metascenes. It must be away from the regular play site, preferably outside. One production had a real church to run these scenes; another production used the blackbox space for this. You do not have to make scenography around this; the coffins are enough. If you have a beautiful space in nature, it will enhance the experience.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **5 coffins with lids** that may be put on top. This is how the person in the coffin knows if they died or is just close to death.
- 🕒 **Cover** to protect the coffins if they are placed outdoors or if you need to hide them from the players, for instance in the blackbox.
- 🕒 **Enough room for the mourners.** All players should be present.
- 🕒 **A designated "stage area" for Death to address the mourners.** This can be right in front of the coffins.
- 🕒 **Sound system**, portable if outdoors, to play the sound of church bells (playback), funeral music, and the song "Just a Little Lovin'," which marks the end of each Act.
- 🕒 **15 funeral programs total**, with 5 for each Act. (See Appendix).

Optional:

- 🕒 **Cards of illness** that characters drawn in the Lottery who do not die may select. (See Appendix).

KIOSK

A place where characters can buy soft drinks, light beer, and some snacks during runtime. It should be open right after Flag raising, but does not need to be open all the time. Post business hours on the kiosk.

It can be very basic, such as a window or a table that characters can approach to place their order. Decide if you need to sell for real money—which will require a system—or as part of the larp fee. Buying from the kiosk is an

important play scene to warm-up characters for play. We suggest that Hank, the organizer character who is the janitor of Saratoga, is the one to man the kiosk, at least in Act 1. It is also a way for the organizers to get a feel for their players, especially if someone is alone and does not connect easily. Try to use this “shop play” to connect with and support players, helping their character to come through. Hank’s player needs to know the characters and narratives well to best support players in this way.

Specifications:

- ☞ A **table** in a little room, a **window**, or a **corner** of the diner.
- ☞ A **chilled room** with a lot of drinks and snacks nearby.
- ☞ A **homemade sign** with “Hank’s Kiosk” which states business hours.
- ☞ **Room** for both Hank and other organizers to **take shifts** in selling soft drinks, alcohol free beer, and light snacks.
- ☞ A **monetary system**.

Note: Drinking real alcohol or doing drugs during play is not allowed for reasons of consent.

PILLOW ROOM

The New Age room for rituals and community talk. This is also a place for the Saratoga friends to have free-spirited sexual encounters. The Saratoga friends made this room as cuddle place and something to give the party a more erotic and sensual feel. Joani holds her neo-tantra workshops here. This room should have a warm and cozy feel.

Specifications:

- ☞ Lots of **pillows, candles, incense** and general New Age items.
- ☞ **Pink phalluses and feathers**.

Optional:

- ☞ Include a **love swing, sex toys, or massage oils**.

OUTDOOR CEREMONIAL SPACE

Atmospheric open place outdoors to gather for 4th of July festivities together in all Acts. If possible, characters can watch the 4th of July fireworks from this place and/or hold safely lit sparklers. Also used in Act 2 and Act 3 for having midnight Remembrance of the Dead memorials for each of the friends who

have passed away in the last year. We suggest either sending paper floats with candles out on a lake or sending up a paper balloon for each deceased person.

After the Remembrance of the Dead, at midnight, the magical Green Drink shall be served here (or a nearby place indoors). The Green Drink has a metatechnique effect and shall be distributed to everyone (See *Guidelines for how to play*).

Specifications:

- 🕒 **Outdoor place** to gather everyone at night for the 4th of July celebration.
- 🕒 **Include enough light to see**, such as coloured light bulbs or torches.
- 🕒 **Include props** for characters to make a memorial to remember their closest friends who passed away.
- 🕒 **A table and trays and glasses** with midnight Green Drinks for all.

SARATOGA PACT SITE

Sacred outdoors location where the Saratoga Pact is buried. A place for Saratoga's cancer survivors to gather for the reading and renewal of the pact. This happens early in the Act each year.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **A beautiful place outdoors**, such as under a huge tree. The site should be a bit away from any main buildings.
- 🕒 **Enough space for 25 people to stand in a circle.**
- 🕒 **A written pact in a box**, which is buried in dirt or leaves. (See *The Saratoga Friendship Pact*).

Optional:

- 🕒 **Objects to hang in the trees** or otherwise mark the place. Consider what the young members of the Saratoga friends would have placed there to commemorate the location.

Sleeping Quarters

Ideally, characters' sleeping quarters will remain with their core group in the same room, at least for the first year. In our tradition of Nordic larp, staying in-character and having low key interaction in the sleeping quarters is an important part of the immersive experience. Another aspect of having ingame sleeping quarters is that bedrooms can be good locations for intimate scenes between ingame couples, friends getting ready for the party together, and lovers' quarrels. If you have a new partner, you may want to sleep in the same room as this person for the next year. (Some people may need private sleeping quarters, they can still be assigned to a room with their group). We also prefer to keep the main two groups apart:

1. The gay community around Mr T. This group also includes the lesbian guests of Pen.
2. The cancer survivors of Saratoga.

It is part of the story design that one group of the larp has survived Death, while the other group will soon face it. Physically keeping the two groups to themselves for changing, night talks, and morning routines can help build a tight knit circle of friends.

Specifications:

- 🕒 **Beds for all**, preferably with core groups in the same room.
- 🕒 **Try to keep apart** Mr. T's party and the Saratoga friends.
- 🕒 We **advise against** organising the sleeping quarters according to **social circles**, as this will split up many core groups. The social circles are meant to be networks outside the core friends and narratives.
- 🕒 **Enough showers, mirrors and places to change** and do make-up.

Optional:

- 🕒 **Keep some** of the showers and restrooms for sexual ingame interactions. Others can be kept out-of-game to allow players their privacy.

Note: All ingame sex in *Just a Little Lovin'* takes place with the players' costuming on. Therefore, a sex scene in a bedroom, bathroom, or shower would not occur in the nude.

Offgame Room(s)

One or two rooms should be set aside where players can rest, cry, use their cell phones for emergencies, or get support from organizers or other players. The Head of Safety (and/or the person assigned to offgame safety duty) should be easy to reach or in the room. In addition, players may want to talk with organizers on the Story Team here to get help if they feel unsure how to proceed with their character or story arc.

Suggestions:

- 📍 **Comfortable chairs.**
- 📍 **A place to lay down** to rest.
- 📍 **Blankets.**
- 📍 **Coffee, tea, soft drinks, snacks, and sweets.**
- 📍 **Headphones with soothing music.**
- 📍 **Coloring books.**
- 📍 **Places to charge phones.**
- 📍 **Organizers** to talk with, as well as access to Safety people and the Story team.
- 📍 **Sign on the door** saying Offgame room.
- 📍 **Metatechnique and other game rules** on the wall. (See *Guidelines for how to play*).
- 📍 **A folder with all the characters** ready to read.



Food and Kitchen

This chapter will outline every meal you need, including ingame meals and what the players will eat during workshops, debriefing, and act break times. It will also explain the purpose for the ingame food choices.

KITCHEN DURING RUNTIME

The Head of Kitchen should make plans to take care of the kitchen crew and the players' needs. Just a couple of suggestions:

- 🕒 **Have the list of allergies and diets on the wall** in the kitchen. **Place signs on the food** that indicate special dietary needs.
- 🕒 **Ensure the kitchen team members** do not have workshops or metascenes where they are needed that overlap with their kitchen shifts.
- 🕒 **Assign a driver** to make trips to buy extra food or other supplies during runtime.

OFFGAME FOOD

- 🕒 **Arrival day: Supper.**
Something easy, but filling. Players will arrive at different times, so it's good if it is something you can keep warm. Soups or casseroles will serve you well.
- 🕒 **Snacks during workshop times and act breaks.**
Coffee, tea, sweets, crackers, other sugar free snacks, and fruit.
- 🕒 **First day: Breakfast and Lunch.**
Second and Third day: Lunch.

Very easy and fast to make and eat to avoid stealing time from the organizers and participants. In the Norwegian tradition, we would serve bread and some sort of spread. Maybe fruit, eggs, or veggies.

🕒 **Last day: Lunch.**

Maybe a sandwich to take with them if you want to tidy up and leave fast. If you have time for some nutritious and comforting foods, you can make your participants happy with this extra effort.

Optional:

🕒 **Last day: Dinner and Breakfast .**

- 🕒 If you choose to keep the players for one extra wind-down day, host a dinner party and serve breakfast the next morning.

INGAME FOOD

🕒 **Barbeque: Three days at dinner time.**

To create the feeling of time passing and at the same time being part of some grand story, it is important to serve approximately the same food every year. The repetition is a huge part of the design, and it should be enhanced by the meals.

Why Barbeque? It can be cooked and served outside and would provide a great occasion for characters to mingle between different groups. Outdoor barbecues may mix well with 4th of July games or entertainment. "For vegetarian and vegan participants, provide plenty of high protein and vegetable options. Reserve one barbeque pit that will not be used to cook meat.

We also think that in a larp like *Just a Little Lovin'*, not everybody will be ready to eat at the same time and there will be many different food requirements. Giving players the ability to grill the things they want to eat when they want to eat it gives them more freedom and is less work for organizers. It is not important that the food is extravagant in any way. It is more important that there is a good and relaxed feel around this main meal for the characters in the story. To avoid queues, make enough spaces to fetch food and provide several barbeque pits. If it is rainy and you do not have a roof outside, grill outside and eat inside.

🕒 **Kiosk and drinks.**

Three meals a day is not enough for most people, so providing snacks and drinks to buy is crucial for people to keep up their

motivation and have enough energy to play. If you are short on budget, you can also earn some money from the sales in the kiosk too. You might choose to keep it open 1-2 hours a day between the meals.

🕒 **Breakfast, three days**

Breakfast must be served in a space that has room for every participant to sit down. This is the place for the Lottery of Death metascene and everyone should be in the room at the time you decide, after having finished eating. You may choose to make a traditional “American diner” breakfast if you have resources. It will add to the atmosphere, but is not necessary.



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Casting

The organizers have to figure out a way to cast according to their vision and player base. Think about how you can prioritize queer players, players with HIV-experience and non-white players. Since this larp centres around gay history and AIDS, we have in our previous runs prioritized the ones that have strong links to the history, like gay men and people with personal experience of HIV.

Casting in former runs has been a mix of who the player writes they want to play in a sign-up form, and a vision of making diverse groups in terms of gender, player experience, age, and other identity markers.

Because we believe that real life experiences are brought with the players into the larp, we have set some rules about gender balance. It is possible for every gender to play every character, and its our vision to welcome as many gender queer participants as possible. But we do try to assign male-identifying players to male characters when possible, especially for the gay characters. These are our suggestions:

- ☞ At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of gay men should be played by people identifying as male.
- ☞ At least half of the heterosexual men should be played by people identifying as male.
- ☞ At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the lesbian women should be played by people identifying as women.

Of course if your player base is different, you should change these specifications accordingly.

HOW TO SCALE FOR FEWER PLAYERS

Just a Little Lovin' is a large and intricate larp with 66 possible characters for players. They are intertwined with each other with multiple connecting relationships written into the characters. If you are to run the larp without a full cast, we recommend you keep this in mind when adjusting:

- ④ When cutting characters you should always **keep the core groups intact**. Don't drop individual characters from different core groups but rather **cut entire core groups** to allow all players to have their core group storylines intact.
- ④ There are very few characters that in themselves are essential to the larp. But we recommend that you **don't drop the three following core groups: Mr. T's Inner Circle, Heart of Saratoga and Nate and His Men of Ambition**.
- ④ **Remove "broken links"** to characters that are not in the game to avoid confusing the players. After removing relationship text to characters not in the game, you look through the characters to see if you need to create additional ones.
- ④ **Tony**. A player character who can also be played by any organizer, who have done most of their organizing work before the game itself and so can be ingame during most of runtime. He has an important function playing music at the disco. Trying to match the scenes happening with the right ingame music might be a task you want to give to an organizer.

Player Information

This text contains information that we recommend sending to participants who have a confirmed spot at the larp. Before sign-up, information is also shared on the website and/or social media, such as Facebook groups (see *Introducing Just a Little Lovin'* for inspiration): but it is not certain that the players will have read through it all. Therefore, send directly to the players the information that you want to be sure is read beforehand.

METATECHNIQUES AND GAME MECHANICS

The larp is designed with high transparency, which means that the players have access to the characters of other players and to the mechanics and narrative of the larp. Therefore, players should be familiar with the metatechniques and game mechanics while preparing for the larp; so they can use this knowledge as a framework to understand the playing style, and can negotiate interaction and boundaries with players they are going to interact with during the larp.

On the other hand, a detailed description can be intimidating and confusing. Sending a summary of the metatechniques and game mechanics is therefore recommended. This summary is included below. A more detailed description about the different techniques can be found in *Guidelines for how to play*.

Metatechniques and game mechanics to be emailed:

- 🕒 The setting of the game, the characters, and the groups
- 🕒 Summary of dramatic game mechanics
 - 🕒 Feathers
 - 🕒 Blackbox

- © Roleplaying sex scenes
- © Kohana and Kim's Magical Green Drink

PRACTICAL AND OTHER INFORMATION

In addition to the information about metatechniques and game mechanics, the organizers will probably also want to include other information about the practical circumstances, and other larp material that should be easily available for the player.

This is a general list, and there will always be other information that is relevant to include with regard to any specific run of *Just a Little Lovin'*.

Practical and other information to be emailed:

- © **Character sheet**, which includes information about the core group, as well as the social circle for the character.
- © Access to *Overview Of Characters*.
- © **The Saratoga pact**, for people playing in the Saratoga friends (see who in *The Saratoga Friendship Pact*).
- © **The safety rules** (*See Runtime production - Safety*).
- © **Code of conduct** (*See Runtime production - Safety*).
- © **Practical information** such as: what to do before arrival, transportation, what to bring, and how to clean up after the game.
- © Other topics relevant to a particular run.

INFORMATION MAIL

The setting of the game, the characters, and the groups

The information about The Setting found in Introducing Just A Little Lovin' can be copied and sent to the participants.

Summary of the dramatic game mechanics

This larp incorporates the use of some dramatic game mechanics (or “metatechniques”) that participants can employ. Dramatic game mechanics seek to enable play that isn’t possible with a purely “realistic“ playing style. The aim is thus to strengthen the drama of the larp, by pulling what is inside the character’s head out into real game situations. We will explain and practise the game mechanics in the workshop before game start: but for your information, here is an overview of the techniques which will be used for this game:

FEATHERS

There will be feathers of two different colours scattered around for you to pick up – pink and black.

- ☉ The pink feathers are used to initiate a sex scene with other characters. If the other character(s) accepts the feather, the players start an offgame negotiation about how to play the sex scene.
- ☉ The black feathers are used to invite someone to join in a metascene in the blackbox, which will be about the feelings or memories of the one offering the feather. If the other character(s) accepts the feather, the players start an offgame negotiation about how to play the blackbox scene.

A metascene initiated by a black feather does not actually take place in the timeline of the larp. The pink feathers, however, are used to initiate sexual scenes that happen right there and then between the actual characters.

BLACKBOX

A room at the game site will be designated as a blackbox. The blackbox can be used to play scenes from the past, imaginary scenes, and possible futures. For past and imaginary scenes, we can imagine that in the timeline of the larp, the scene played out represents thoughts going through the mind of the character who initiates the scene. An organizer or other participant can be present in the blackbox and give input and suggestions as a director to the scenes that the participants want to experience; or the participants in the scene can just do that themselves before starting the scene. The blackbox can also be used by participants who want to have an offgame discussion about where their characters’ story is heading, and to agree on scenes that they want to play out during the game.

ROLEPLAYING SEX SCENES

In *Just a Little Lovin'* we hope for sex scenes that build and bend the story, for the characters involved and for others that might witness the scene. Sexual encounters can be a tool for bringing up a multitude of emotions, not just sexual arousal.

Sex in *Just a Little Lovin'*:

- ☞ Is visual and direct. Often in a semi-public setting.
- ☞ Aims to create the feeling of gay culture, even for heterosexuals and lesbians.
- ☞ Helps build strong character emotions: horniness and desire, desperation and sorrow, detachment and pure joy, jealousy, shame, and pride.
- ☞ Is designed to be safe for the players, but also capable of portraying sex in a more direct way than many other replacement techniques for sex in larps.

The game mechanic is called “The Phallus method” and must always have these elements:

- ☞ Offgame negotiation.
- ☞ A Phallus (a prop which the organizers will provide).
- ☞ Participants must have their clothes on.
- ☞ Monologues from each character at the end of the scene.
- ☞ The specific details of how to negotiate and use this technique ingame will be explained and practised in the pre-larp workshops, with the aim of making you feel safe and comfortable to use these techniques to enhance your gaming experience.

KOHANA AND KIM'S MAGICAL GREEN DRINK

This is a tradition that the Saratoga friends have had for many years. Around midnight, Kohana and Kim will serve everyone their “magical” green drink to spice up the party. At the larp, all the guests of Mr. T will also receive this. In the game this will be a moment for everyone to choose a direction for their own story for the rest of the act. Either:

- ☞ Double the intensity of the storyline that you are already playing on, or;
- ☞ Do the opposite: turn your character's direction 180 degrees and start playing on something other than what you have done so far this evening.

The Saratoga Friendship Pact

This document should be sent out together with the characters to all players in the Saratoga Friendship Pact party group (see list below)

10 years ago, the youth that were staying at the Saratoga Rehabilitation Centre for Youth Recovering from Cancer swore a pact to always stay true to life and always remain friends. The pact was sworn at a beautiful place outside in nature (find a suitable place at the larp site):

*We are survivors and we promise to stay true to life and each other.
 We promise to follow our true passions and interests without compromise
 We promise to keep our bonds strong, no matter what happens
 We promise to stay true to this pact without exception*

This pact was written down, signed by the pact members, put in a box, and dug down right there. These youth signed it 10 years ago, and they are back here every Independence Day to renew it:

PACT MEMBERS :

KOHANA
 JOANI
 KIM
 CHANTELLE
 BEATRICE
 MAX
 MARY LOU
 LAWRENCE

WALLACE
 HOLLY
 BEVERLY
 BARBARA
 SAM
 LESTER
 EVELYN
 TOMASZ
 LIZZIE

OTHER CHARACTERS THAT BECAME PART OF THE GANG :

- Gwen** - became Lester's girlfriend (and later wife) almost 10 years ago.
- Katie** - started the Indigo house together with Holly three years ago.
- Harvey** - moved into the Indigo house right from the start three years ago.
- Claire** - became Barbara's girlfriend two years ago.
- Sterling** - became Chantelle's boyfriend (and later husband) almost one year and a half ago.
- Allison** - moved into the Indigo house about a year ago.
- Dennis** - he's a guest at a Saratoga summer party for the first time.
- Mickey** - he's a guest at a Saratoga summer party for the first time.





Runtime Production

This chapter will provide advice and checklists for what to remember during the event.

To run *Just a Little Lovin'* with as little stress as possible, you need to have a responsible crew containing the minimum of people stated in *What you need to run this larp*, although more are preferable. How you want to organise yourself is up to your traditions and style, but you have to decide on the following before the event starts running:

- 🕒 **The producer:** Who is the responsible leader during the event, who will keep track of time, all the events, and all the tasks that must be fulfilled?
- 🕒 **Crew member meetings:** Are there meetings for all the crew? When and where? How often will the *production core team* meet during the larp and who will be in that team? Do you have an undisturbed room for meetings?
- 🕒 **Decisions:** Who will make decisions along the way? How much responsibility is delegated to whom?
- 🕒 **Shopping:** Do you need to shop during the event? Where? Who will do that? Do you have a car for shopping?
- 🕒 **Backup plans:** What are your backup plans for organizers getting ill or becoming indisposed? What are your plans for crisis situations, such as participants not showing up, having to leave, or getting kicked out for safety reasons?
- 🕒 **Cell phones:** Where will players keep and charge their cell phones during runtime?
- 🕒 **Accessibility:** What can you offer for people with mobility issues, for instance. This must be clearly communicated and cared for before the larp.

SAFETY

Safety specifications you need to include:

- **A Code of Conduct** for your larp.
- **Fire safety**, including extinguishers that everybody knows where to find.
- **First aid kit and heart starter** that everybody knows where to find. Some people with first aid training are necessary for a big larp. These people can be recruited from both staff and players.
- **A designated driver** at all times and a **back up** if this person is out driving or otherwise unable. The back up may be recruited from among the players.
- **A phone number** family members can call in case of an emergency, since the players will not have their cell phones in play.
- **Hygiene routines**, including making sure soap, antibacterial sanitizer, and cleaning remedies are available onsite.
- **A safety person** on duty, offgame, at all times. Remember to post their phone number on the wall in the offgame room. Consider if walkie-talkies may be necessary.
- **A back-up plan** if the safety staff are busy taking care of someone else.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A Code of Conduct is designed with the aim that all players feel included, supported, and safe at all times. You may design your own rules, but you can also use some of the excellent Codes of Conduct for larp events that have been made already. The Code of Conduct is meant to be agreed on by all participants before the larp, including players and crew members. You should include under what conditions players are no longer welcome at the larp and should be removed, for instance illegal drug use, violence, or harassment.

For health reasons, players should fill out a form with any medical conditions they might have. This will also include food allergies, which will be needed by the kitchen staff. Ask players for a phone number of a contact person that you should call in case of an emergency.

It is important that at least one safety person is on duty, and offgame, at all times. Therefore, there must be a safety team that can support the Head of safety. These team members can be people from the crew that have other tasks when the larp is not running. They should be able to tackle both physical

safety issues (like injuries and illness), social safety issues (like quarrels or harassment), and players' mental issues (like feeling lonely, have anxiety, or having a breakdown). They do not need to have any professional education in crisis management, but should be able to bring the player to safety and to contact the right outside help, if needed.

PLAYER SUPPORT

Player support at Just a Little Lovin' comprises three different aspects. Firstly, to provide the best possible safety for players (as explained earlier in this chapter), including in relation to others present at the larp; secondly, to help them enjoy a good larp experience; and lastly, just to give some support to help them with fixing practical needs.

These are some of the issues that might happen during the larp, which it would be good to plan for:

- ☞ **Someone gets their period** (out of sync) and needs tampons or other sanitary equipment.
- ☞ **Someone might need condoms and lube** for real (outside of the game), so as to be safe.
- ☞ **Someone has issues back home**, and feels it difficult to keep on playing. You can listen to them; give them a break in the offgame room; and also give the message that "life is more important than larp," if they need to leave.
- ☞ **A player feels totally out of things**, with their character or with their core group. Someone from the Story team can support them, give suggestions, and develop the character in a more playable way.
- ☞ **A player feels "everybody else is having sex and flirting, and I am not."** Find out if this is really important to them (because, one does not have to do these things to enjoy JaLL). If so, suggest that they plan something with one player who they trust, in the next act break; or maybe plan a scene with one of the organizer characters.
- ☞ **A player wants to talk about everything** nice or awful they have experienced, is very happy, and wants to tell you about all of their plans and to get your advice on them. Maybe it's better not to use your time for this? Tell the player that it is totally up to them how to play out the story, and that you have no say in that. Suggest that they could check out with a co-player instead? It is important that you do not create a culture of "talking with the game masters": it is not how this larp is designed.

Workshops and Act Breaks

Review the workshops and act break scripts. Remember that either the Head of Story or the delegated Head of Workshop should oversee this part. We recommend briefing all workshop and debrief staff at the same time so that they have a clear mutual understanding of the structure of the scripts and exercises.

Remember that crew who are also participants in the larp need to attend every minute of the workshops. They cannot be rigging, driving, or making food while workshops are happening or they will miss crucial information about the setting, the safety procedures, and calibrating with their co-players in their groups.

One part of the workshop will happen with all the participants in the same room. Before this workshop, you need to:

- Print out the **workshop manuscripts** (in *Appendix*).
- Decide who will perform the different parts of the **workshop**. Make sure all workshop leaders are present. If not, find back-ups.
- Make character **name signs** available, at arrival time of players. Remember to only use character names and character gender pronouns, or else it might be confusing for players to remember each other's gender and name at the larp.
- Provide enough **chairs** for everyone.
- Provide **A/V technology** for workshop holders to show Powerpoints, films, or play music as needed.
- Establish enough **space** for participants to break out in smaller groups in the room.
- Create a plan for how to handle breakout groups.
- Establish a **space** where chairs can be set aside, as some of the workshop will take place on the floor.
- Remember to take in account how to provide **accessibility** for people with mobility issues.

Part of the workshops will take place in groups of 15 people. These groups, led by the same facilitator, will stay the same during all workshops, act breaks, and debriefing sessions (see *Workshop 1* for more information and *Appendix* for printout). These groups should fit in one room each with room for sitting on chairs in a circle, as well as space for workshop exercises. Each facilitator and their assigned player group should gather in the same space every time.

Make sure to:

- **Brief each facilitator** on which group they will lead and where to go.
- **Provide a printed workshop manuscript** for each facilitator (see *Appendix*).
- **Provide** enough chairs for each group member.

For the first workshop exercises, each group will need:

- **Black and pink feathers**, with one of each given to each participant.
- **Phalluses** or something similar for half of the participants in each group.

Before the larp, part of the workshop will take place during lunch. The social groups will sit together.

- **Designate a table** for each social group. **Place a sign on the table** with the name of each social group on it.

STARTING THE LARP AND EACH SUBSEQUENT ACT

Each Act starts in the exact same way at the same place. This is designed to give the players the feeling that a year has passed. Remember to:

- **Set up a portable sound system** outside to play “Just a Little Lovin” by Dusty Springfield.
- **Have the Head of Story repeat** how the larp will start, how it will end, and what to think about when the music plays.
- **Guide everybody to walk** to the place where they will start the larp, with the characters entering the 4th of July party together with some of their closest friends.
- **Ask players to stand** there in a relaxed freezed position.
- **Play “Just a Little Lovin.”** When the song ends, players will be in character and the larp will start.

BARBEQUE

- **Start heating up** the barbeque pits either before the larp starts or right after.
- **Assign** a designated crew to barbeque duties.

RAISING THE FLAG

Ideally, raising the flag will take place in the same location that the players arrive in character. If not, you may need to move the sound system to play *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Remember to:

- **Provide** an American flag.
- **Recruit someone** who knows how to raise it.
- **Bring** the portable sound system with the song uploaded.
- **Assign someone** to play the song “The Star-Spangled Banner” as sung by Dolly Parton.
- **Give the character Pen the lyrics** for “The Star-Spangled Banner” to hand out.

DRAG SHOW AND DISCO

These specifications will differ if you have the Drag show and Disco in the same space vs. two different spaces. To create the feelings of time passing and recurring rituals, keep each of these spaces consistent each year. Make sure to:

- **Establish the line-up** for the Drag show, which should contain all performers that the characters Nate and DJ Tony have agreed upon that year and the songs they will play. When possible, the characters in the band Urban Renaissance should headline the show and perform at the end of the set due to their fame.
- **Download** or otherwise acquire these songs ahead of time.
- **Provide a handheld mic** for Nate, who will be the announcer for the show, as well as other performers who may need it.
- **Perform** a sound check for each song.
- **Check the lights** and **turn them on** for the Drag show and Disco.
- **Remind Nate's player** that the show should not be longer than an hour, and that not everybody needs to perform each year, especially if they are not drag queens. No character should perform more than one song/Act each year.
- **Provide the drag queens** enough time to dress and put on make-up, as well as a backstage space for them to get ready.
- **Set up** enough chairs in front of the stage/performance space for the audience. You may choose to move these chairs quickly to the side for Urban Renaissance's song to get people excited and moving.
- **Remove chairs** from the dance floor and **start the dance music** right after the show.

METASCENE: LOTTERY OF DEATH

Every player shall be present at the end of breakfast. After breakfast, the Lottery of Death metascene will start when the two bureaucratic Angels of Death arrive (see *Scripts and Scenes - Lottery of Death*). Keep in mind:

- The bureaucratic Angels of Death should **change costumes in time**. Remember to look more worn-out and dirty each year.
- **Bring printed lottery tickets** for the Angels to distribute (300 cut-out tickets)
- **Bring pens** for the Angels to distribute (20-30)
- **Make sure there are seats** for everyone

- **Bring a hat to put the lottery tickets in.** One of the Angels will arrive in it as a costume piece.
- **Print the script of text** that the Angels will recite. Make sure to **rehearse** beforehand.
- **Instruct the characters to write their names** on the number of tickets that best represents their level of risk based upon the events of the last night and their activities over the last year. Everyone will submit one (1) ticket, but characters may submit up to five (5).
- **Angels may put an extra ticket** or more for especially high risk individuals.
- **Draw the names of 10-15 persons** that will meet the fear of death each year and will leave with the Bureaucratic Angels.
- The rest of the characters **wait in the breakfast room**, until they are picked up by Death herself.

METASCENE: MEETING FEAR OF DEATH

The bureaucratic Angels of Death will lead the characters drawn from the Lottery slowly to the space where the five open coffins are. The characters will have to wait outside the area, while the five persons who will be chosen to lay down are drawn by the Angels.

- **Prepare the site** for the coffins ahead of time.
- **Print out five (5) funeral programs** for each year for a total of fifteen (15) (see *Appendix*).
- **Bring a white pen** to write the names on the black funeral programs.
- **Set up the sound system** to play the church bells, funeral music, and the “Just a Little Lovin’” song.
- **Place the lids** over those people in coffins who were randomly chosen to die: 2 in the first year; 3 in the second year; and 5 in the last year. (The lids will be removed for the Funeral scene).
- *Optional:* **Bring the cards of illness** for characters to randomly draw who were selected in the Lottery but who did not die (see *Appendix*).
- **Death will arrive** where the rest of the players are and **lead them to the funeral site** when the Meeting the Fear of Death is concluded.
- The characters who survived will **be released** and **will meet the others** on the way to the Funeral.

METASCENE: FUNERAL

Following Death, all players minus the ones in the coffins will walk slowly to the Funeral site (see *Manuscript: The Funeral*). Remember:

- **Print out and bring** verses 2 and 3 of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” for Death to read.
- The dead characters **will lie with their eyes closed** in coffins with lids off and room enough around so people can sit a little while by their loved one to grieve.
- The bureaucratic Angels of Death **will stand by** at the site.
- **Bring the portable sound system** to play “Just a Little Lovin’” to end the Act. This song will also end the larp after Act 3.

ENDING EACH ACT

After the music has ended, players are meant to be out-of-character, but it is not always easy to de-role and transition offgame. Keep in mind:

- The Head of Story or Head of Workshops **must be ready to take charge** right after the music ends.
- **Give people time and space to cry and/or talk** before you provide information or start the workshops again. We recommend at least ten minutes.
- **A member of the Story team should inform** players with characters that died what will happen now. Players can choose to create a new character or choose one of the ready made ones. (See how to in *Developing new characters*).
- **Print out the Act Break script** and have facilitators ready to lead the debrief and other exercises (see *Appendix*).
- **Provide players with clear information** about when and where to debrief, eat, and meet for the common workshop.
- For the debrief, **meet in the same workshop groups** in a circle of chairs, preferably in the same space as before if possible.

NEW GROUPS AND NEW CHARACTERS

Between each Act, a year has passed. The characters will return to the same place on 4th of July one year later. Each core group has to decide together whether to continue the current direction of their story, take their story in

another direction, or to splinter or dissolve the group. In the latter case, characters may join other core groups or form new ones.

- **A Story Team member needs to help players create new characters** if their previous character died (see *Developing new characters*).
- Additionally, a member should **help the core groups develop their story** in between Acts.
- In the big group, **introduce the new characters** to the rest of the larp. **Find core and social groups** for them.
- **Introduce any new social groups that have arisen** during Year 2 and 3 to the rest of the larp.
- **Make time for players to get ready** with costumes and make-up for the next Year, as well as providing the possibility for characters to change sleeping quarters if sleeping in-character.

DEBRIEFING AFTER THE LARP

Different players might need different types of spaces to de-role from their character and process their feelings (see *Workshop 4: Debrief and deroleing*).

- **Assign one person to be responsible for handling logistics**, including tidying up.
- **Assign one person to be responsible for extra debriefing** and the time management of this activity.
- **Designate a room to relax and be in silence** for those who do not want to talk.
- **Provide pen and paper** for those who need to write.
- **Provide water, coffee, and food.**
- If you want to keep the players for another night to have an after-larp party, be sure to **provide space for people who do not want to drink nor dance, but talk.**
- If you all stay one night more, a more thorough debrief may be added the day after.



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Music

IN JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

Music forms an important part of this larp. Each act begins and ends with the same song, *Just a Little Lovin'* by Dusty Springfield. Our scene is a gay, queer, and alternative 4th of July party in the early 1980s. The music of the era should surround the players a lot of the time: while mingling before the barbeque, dancing later that night in the disco, and while cruising in the dark room. Hopefully the organizers can enhance certain emotions or scenes that are happening, by putting on the right song.

We have included five playlists that can be used to create this soundscape. Three of the playlists are for each of the three acts, 1982, 1983, and 1984. These are meant to be used both as playlists to keep running in the background while people are barbecuing, and for more planned sets in the disco. The playlists are made from a combination of the themes of the acts and the release dates of the songs. These playlists have been kept quite accurate in terms of when music was released, but some exceptions have been made for songs that fit particularly well in an act. But the music has been kept to songs released by the end of the first half of the 1980s. The songs are not duplicated in these three playlists, and it is entirely possible to play songs from a different playlist than the current act.

The playlist “Dark Room” is meant for use in the dark room as a continuous soundscape, whenever the dark room is open for cruising. This list hasn’t been organized by year, and can be used for all three acts. The playlist “Dyke Hour” was made for the possible ingame happening in which the lesbians take over the dark room for a women-only party. But, it can be used for any ingame lesbian party that is spontaneously organized, if the organizers hear about it and want to add a themed playlist to it.

The playlists don’t necessarily cover all music played at *Just a Little Lovin'*. There are many other songs from the era that could be included. There is no playlist for the pillow room set up by the Saratoga Friends, and organizers can make a playlist fitting for that location as well.

In addition to putting on themed playlists at specific times and locations, it is also possible to target particular songs to scenes that are happening, and to the general atmosphere of the larp at any particular moment. The disco is particularly suitable for that type of curated music. This requires that the person playing Tony the DJ – or anyone else controlling the music of the dancefloor – should know the playlists well, and should have a sense of what is happening in the room. This has been done with great success at earlier runs!

Spotify playlists are available. Links to these can be found in *References*.

So then – let the music play!

SCENE SPECIFIC MUSIC

Dusty Springfield, *Just a Little Lovin'*
 Dolly Parton, *The Star-Spangled Banner*
 Brian Eno, *1/1* (Ambient 1, Music for Airports)
 Frédéric Chopin, *Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35* (Funeral March)
 [Any collection of sound effects recordings], *Church Bells*

ACT 1, 1982

Abba, *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)*
 Alicia Bridges, *I Love the Nightlife*
 Amanda Lear, *Fashion Pack (Studio 54)*
 Amanda Lear, *Pretty Boys*
 Anita Ward, *Ring My Bell*
 The B-52s, *Private Idaho*
 Blondie, *Call Me*
 Carol Jiani, *Hit 'N' Run Lover*
 Chaka Khan, *I'm Every Woman*
 Chaka Khan, *What Cha' Gonna Do for Me*
 Chaz Jankel, *Ai No Corrida*
 Cher, *Take Me Home*
 Cheryl Lynn, *Got to Be Real*
 The Clash, *Rock the Casba*
 Dan Hartman, *Relight My Fire*
 David Bowie, *Cat People (Putting Out Fire)*
 David Bowie, *Fashion*

David Bowie, *John, I'm Only Dancing*
Depeche Mode, *Just Can't Get Enough*
Depeche Mode, *What's Your Name*
Diana Ross, *I'm Coming Out*
Diana Ross, *Upside Down*
Dolman, *High Sex Drive*
Donna Summer, *Hot Stuff*
Donna Summer, *Love Is in Control (Finger on the Trigger)*
Duran Duran, *Careless Memories*
Duran Duran, *Girls on Film*
Duran Duran, *Rio*
Earlene Bentley, *The Boys Come to Town*
Earth, 'Wind & Fire, *Boogie Wonderland*
Earth, 'Wind & Fire, *Let's Groove*
The Flirts, *Passion*
Gloria Gaynor, *I Am What I Am*
Grace Jones, *Nightclubbing*
Grace Jones, *On Your Knees*
Grace Jones, *Pull Up to the Bumper*
Hazell Dean, *Searchin' (I Gotta Find a Man)*
Heaven 17, *Temptation*
Herbie Hancock, *Magic Number*
The Human League, *Don't You Want Me*
Janet Jackson, *Young Love*
Kajagoogoo, *Too Shy*
Kate Bush, *Kashka from Baghdad*
Kate Bush, *Wuthering Heights*
Kim Carnes, *Bette Davis Eyes*
Kool & The Gang, *Celebration*
Kool & The Gang, *Get Down on It*
Leif Garrett, *I Was Made For Dancin'*
Lou Reed, *Walk on the Wild Side*
Madonna, *Holiday*
Madonna, *Lucky Star*
Marvin Gaye, *Sexual Healing*
Michael Jackson, *Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough*
Michael Jackson, *Rock With You*
Miquel Brown, *So Many Men, So Little Time*
Olivia Newton-John, *Physical*
Patti Smith, *Because the Night*
The Pointer Sisters, *I'm So Excited*
Prince, *1999*
Prince, *Little Red Corvette*
Prince, *Sexuality*
Queen, *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*
Queen, *Don't Stop Me Now*

Rick James, *Give It To Me Baby*
 Roxy Music, *More Than This*
 Sheena Easton, *For Your Eyes Only*
 Smokey Robinson, *Cruisin'*
 The S.O.S. Band, *Take Your Time (Do It Right)*
 Stevie Nicks, *Edge of Seventeen*
 Survivor, *Eye of the Tiger*
 Sylvester, *Do You Wanna Funk?*
 Sylvester, *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*
 Toni Basil, *Mickey*
 Village People, *Go West*
 Yazoo, *Goodbye '70s*

ACT 2, 1983

The B-52s, *'Song For a Future Generation'*
 Bananarama, *'Cruel Summer'*
 Bananarama, *'Hot Line to Heaven'*
 The Bar-Kays, *'Freakshow on the Dance Floor'*
 Bauhaus, *'She's in Parties'*
 Billy Idol, *'White Wedding Pt. 1'*
 Chaka Khan, *'Ain't Nobody'*
 The Cure, *'Let's Go to Bed'*
 The Cure, *'The Walk'*
 David Bowie, *'Ashes to Ashes'*
 David Bowie, *'China Girl'*
 Depeche Mode, *'Get the Balance Right'*
 Depeche Mode, *'Leave in Silence'*
 Depeche Mode, *'Master and Servant'*
 Divine, *'Shoot Your Shot'*
 Donna Summer, *'She Works Hard for the Money'*
 Duran Duran, *'Hungry Like the Wolf'*
 Duran Duran, *'Union of the Snake'*
 Duran Duran, *'The Wild Boys'*
 Earlene Bentley, *'Caught in the Act'*
 Eurythmics, *'Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)'*
 Eurythmics, *'Who's That Girl'*
 Evelyn Thomas, *'Masquerade'*
 The Flirts, *'Danger'*
 A Flock Of Seagulls, *'I Ran (So Far Away)'*
 Freeez, *'I.O.U.'*
 Frida, *'I Know There Is Something Going On'*
 Grace Jones, *'I've Seen That Face Before (Libertango)'*
 Grace Jones, *'Private Life'*

Grace Jones, *'Use Me'*
Hazzell Dean, *'They Say It's Gonna Rain'*
Iggy Pop, *'The Passenger'*
Jessica Williams, *'Queen of Fools'*
Jessica Williams, *'Tie Me Down'*
Joan Armatrading, *'Me Myself and I'*
Joy Division, *'Love Will Tear Us Apart'*
Joy Division, *'She's Lost Control'*
Kate Bush, *'Babooshka'*
Klaus Nomi, *'Total Eclipse'*
Klaus Nomi, *'You Don't Own Me'*
Kraftwerk, *'The Model'*
Laid Back, *'White Horse'*
Laura Branningan, *'Gloria'*
Madonna, *'Material Girl'*
Man 2 Man, *'All Men Are Beasts'*
Michael Jackson, *'Beat It'*
Michael Jackson, *'Billie Jean'*
Michael Sembello, *'Maniac'*
New Order, *'Blue Monday'*
Patrice Rushen, *'Forget Me Nots'*
Prince, *'When Doves Cry'*
Queen, *'Another One Bites the Dust'*
Queen, *'Radio Ga Ga'*
Siouxsie and the Banshees, *'Spellbound'*
Sister Sledge, *'Lost in Music'*
The Smiths, *'Hand In Glove'*
The Smiths, *'Handsome Devil'*
The Smiths, *'This Charming Man'*
Soft Cell, *'Bedsitter'*
Soft Cell, *'Sex Dwarf'*
Soft Cell, *'Tainted Love'*
The Specials, *'Ghost Town'*
Stevie Nicks, *'Stop Draggin' My Heart Around'*
Sylvester, *'Sell My Soul'*
Talking Heads, *'Burning Down the House'*
Talking Heads, *'Psycho Killer'*
Talk Talk, *'Talk Talk'*
Talk Talk, *'Today'*
The Police, *'Spirits in the Material World'*
Ultravox, *'The Voice'*
Ultravox, *'We Came to Dance'*
Yazoo, *'Don't Go'*
Yazoo, *'Situation'*
Yello, *'Bostich'*
Yes, *'Owner of a Lonely Heart'*

ACT 3, 1984

ABC, *The Look of Love (Part 1)*
a-ha, *Living a Boy's Adventure Tale*
Alison Moyet, *Love Resurrection*
Aretha Franklin, *Think'* (from The Blues Brothers soundtrack)
The Art of Noise, *Moments in Love*
Bronski Beat, *Smalltown Boy*
Cass Elliot, *Dream A Little Dream of Me*
Cass Elliot, *Make Your Own Kind of Music*
Chaka Khan, *This Is My Night*
Commodores, *Nightshift*
Culture Club, *Do You Really Want to Hurt Me*
Culture Club, *Karma Chameleon*
The Cure, *The Lovecats*
Cyndi Lauper, *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*
Cyndi Lauper, *She Bop*
David Bowie, *Let's Dance*
David Bowie, *Modern Love*
Deniece Williams, *Let's Hear It for the Boy*
Depeche Mode, *People Are People*
Divine, *Love Reaction*
Duran Duran, *Save a Prayer*
Eartha Kitt, *Where Is My Man*
Elton John, *I'm Still Standing*
Eurythmics, *Here Comes the Rain Again*
Evelyn Thomas, *High Energy*
The Flirts, *Dancing Madly Backwards*
Frankie Goes To Hollywood, *Relax*
Freeez, *Pop Goes My Love*
George Michael, *Careless Whisper*
Gloria Gaynor, *I Will Survive*
Gloria Gaynor, *Reach Out I'll Be There*
Grace Jones, *My Jamaican Guy*
Grover Washington, Jr., *Just the Two of Us*
Hazell Dean, *Whatever I Do (Wherever I Go)*
Irene Cara, *Flashdance... What a Feeling*
Japan, *Ghosts*
Jermaine Jackson, *Tell Me I'm Not Dreaming (To Good to Be True)*
Joan Armatrading, *Turn Out the Light*
Kate Bush, *Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)*
Kelly Marie, *Breakout*
Laura Brannigan, *Self Control*

Madonna, *Everybody*
 Madonna, *Like a Virgin*
 Marc Almond, *'his House Is Haunted*
 Marsha Raven, *Catch Me, I'm Falling in Love*
 Miami Sound Machine, *Dr. Beat*
 Nicci Gable, *Strange Desire*
 Nico, *My Heart Is Empty*
 Pet Shop Boys, *I Want a Lover*
 Pet Shop Boys, *One More Chance*¹
 The Pointer Sisters, *I'm So Excited – 12" Remix*
 The Pointer Sisters, *Jump (For My Love)*
 The Police, *Every Breath You Take*
 Prince, *Purple Rain*
 Prince, *When Doves Cry*
 Queen, *I Want To Break Free*
 Queen, *It's a Hard Life*
 Sade, *Smooth Operator*
 Sade, *Your Love Is King*
 Shannon, *Give Me Tonight*
 Shannon, *Let the Music Play*
 Sister Sledge, *We Are Family*
 The Smiths, *There Is a Light That Never Goes Out*
 The Smiths, *This Charming Man*
 Spandau Ballet, *Gold*
 Stevie Nicks, *Nightbird*
 Talking Heads, *Life During Wartime*
 Talk Talk, *It's My Life*
 Talk Talk, *Today*
 The Weather Girls, *It's Raining Men*
 Wham!, *Club Tropicana*
 Wham!, *Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go*
 Yazoo, *Ode to Boy*
 Yazoo, *Sweet Thing*
 Yello, *Lost Again*

DARK ROOM

Anne Clark, *Sleeper in Metropolis*
 The Art of Noise, *Moments in Love*
 Bauhaus, *She's in Parties*
 DAF, *Mein Herz Macht Bum*

¹ One More Chance was released as a single in 1984 but the 1987 re-recording for the album *Actually* is the one generally available now. So just use that one.

DAF, *Sato-Sato*
DAF, *Was ziehst du an heute Nacht*
Depeche Mode, *Master and Servant*
Die Krupps, *Goldfinger*
Divine, *Shoot Your Shot*
Dolman, *High Sex Drive*
Duran Duran, *Save a Prayer*
Duran Duran, *Wild Boys – Wilder Than Wild Boys Extended Mix*
Earth, 'Wind & Fire, *Let's Groove*
Eurythmics, *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)*
Frankie Goes To Hollywood, *Relax*
Frankie Goes To Hollywood, *Welcome to the Pleasuredome*
Front 242, *Take One*
Grace Jones, *I've Seen That Face Before (Libertango)*
Grace Jones, *Pull Up to the Bumper*
Grace Jones, *Use Me*
Joy Division, *Love Will Tear Us Apart*
Judas Priest, *Riding on the Wind*
Judas Priest, *You've Got Another Thing Comin'*
Klein & M.B.O., *Dirty Talk*
Laid Back, *White Horse*
Lou Reed, *Walk on the Wild Side*
Man 2 Man, *All Men Are Beasts*
Man 2 Man, *Male Stripper*
Marvin Gaye, *Sexual Healing*
The Neon Judgement, *Fashion Party*
Prince, *Head*
Prince, *Jack U Off*
Prince, *Sexuality*
Soft Cell, *Bedsitter – Extended Version*
Soft Cell, *Sex Dwarf*
Soft Cell, *Tainted Love / Where Did Our Love Go*
Twilight 22, *Electric Kingdom*
The Velvet Underground, *I'm Waiting for the Man*
Village People, *Hot Cop*
Yazoo, *Don't Go*
Yazoo, *Ode to Boy*
Yello, *I Love You*
Yello, *Lost Again*
ZZ Top, *Gimme All Your Lovin'*
ZZ Top, *Sharp Dressed Man*

DYKE HOUR

Alison Moyet, *Love Resurrection*
Alix Dobkin, *A Woman's Love*
Aretha Franklin, *I Say a Little Prayer*
Aretha Franklin, *Think*
Barbara Streisand, *Woman in Love*
Blondie, *Call Me*
Cass Elliot, *Dream a Little Dream of Me*
Chaka Khan, *I'm Every Woman*
Chaka Khan, *This is My Night*
Cindy Lauper, *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*
Cindy Lauper, *She Bop*
Dolly Parton, *9 to 5*
Donna Summer, *Hot Stuff*
Donna Summer, *She Works Hard for the Money*
Dusty Springfield, *I Close My Eyes and Count to Ten*
Dusty Springfield, *Little by Little*
Eurythmics, *Here Comes the Rain Again*
Grace Jones, *Nightclubbing*
Grace Jones, *Private Life*
Janis Joplin, *Trust Me*
Joan Armatrading, *Me Myself I*
Joan Armatrading, *Turn Out the Light*
Joan Armatrading, *The Weakness in Me*
Kim Carnes, *Bette Davis Eyes*
Kool & The Gang, *Ladies Night*
Laura Brannigan, *Self Control*
Lisa Dal Bello, *Gonna Get Close To You*
Nina Simone, *Feeling Good*
Nina Simone, *I Put a Spell on You*
Peggy Lee, *Fever*
Sade, *Your Love Is King*
Shirley Bassey, *Light My Fire*
Siouxsie and the Banshees, *Spellbound*



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Workshops

Overview

Just a Little Lovin' is designed with a lot of time for workshops. This is to make a brave space to play the story and to be able to go deeper into the themes of the larp. We have four workshops: one before the game starts, two between acts, and one after the game has ended.

As an introduction to the workshops, here is some general advice regarding facilitation, and also for the story team who will handle the planning and running of the workshops. As well as an overview of the design and structure of the workshops, it gives a general understanding of the different elements and how they interact.

FACILITATION ADVICE

It is our belief that it is best to *do* first and *then* take questions in most of the exercises of all of the workshops. This is a larp where explicit sexual behaviour and boundary-seeking action are essential parts of the experience - and this is also a part of the workshops. To just dive into new things with an open mind should be encouraged throughout the workshop.

That said, you have to point out that all participants must take responsibility for their own boundaries, and that they can walk in and out of exercises during the workshop. This is called “the rule of two feet”. That also means that participants can rejoin as soon as they feel like it.

ROLES OF THE STORY TEAM

This chart explains the different roles needed for the story team, with regard to responsibilities and main tasks. The roles can of course be combined and tasks can be handled by others, but this is a good starting point for building the story team for a *Just a Little Lovin'* run – and it has been tested through the different runs of the larp over the last ten years.

The roles are: Head of story (the narrative), Head of workshop, Workshop facilitators, and Debrief facilitators.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	TASKS?
Head of story (narrative)	Last word about narrative setting, characters, and metatechniques. Head manager for the other roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate with the Head of workshop so the narrative aligns with the workshops. ● Make adjustments in workshops to create the narrative planned for.
Head of workshop	Keep structure and time for the workshops. Be sure everyone with tasks in the workshop is properly informed and trained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delegate different parts of the workshop to workshop facilitators. ● Produce workshop manuscripts in print. ● Introduce and keep the program as a whole. ● Make adjustments during the larp.
Workshop facilitators	Prepare for the parts of the workshop that they will be leading, for instance by doing all the exercises beforehand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring manuscripts for talks and exercises. ● Bring handouts, props, and other things needed for the workshop activities
Debrief facilitators (team leaders)	Lead the group-based parts of the workshop (15 persons). Be sure to have personal experience in all exercises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather the same group every workshop (also between and after each act). ● Bring workshop manuscript for each act. ● Bring feathers and phalluses for the first workshop.

WORKSHOP DESIGN

The pre-larp workshop has several goals with regard to preparing the players for the larp. It gives the players a common historical backdrop for the larp, and how to build on that during the larp, thus creating a common ground for exploring and expanding the fiction together.

The workshop is designed to enable the players to participate fully in the larp, build their characters, and create a common understanding of how to play. An important way of doing that is to make sure that, by the time the larp starts, a safe space has been created among the players: where every player can be brave on their own terms. Therefore the pre-larp workshop needs to be a space where players can test their boundaries and all metatechniques, and can build relations with each other.

The workshop before the larp has several different elements, and consists of lectures, exercises, and group discussions. It often shifts between these different types of interaction: to match the content of the workshop, but also to keep the participants engaged and energized throughout the process.

The pre-larp workshop is described as if the larp takes place Tuesday evening to Sunday morning, and the times are guidelines for how the pace of the workshop should be.

Each section has an explanation of what is the objective of that part of the workshop. This is to give you, as organizers, the opportunity to adjust the workshop without losing important elements.

Between the larp's three acts, there are two act-break workshops that focus on calibrating play going from one act into the next. Between each act a year has passed, and these workshops create a space where the players can reflect on their story and experience so far, and then themselves steer their story into the next act and have the opportunity to co-create their own narrative and relations.

In the act-break workshops the players therefore need to calibrate the narrative and relations in their core groups, decide whether to stay in them or create new groups, and calibrate in their social circle or change it. It is important in this

process that there is no right or wrong way to adjust your play; the goal is to find the best possible development for all of the players, and the starting point for the next act.

The strength of the act-break workshops is in having all players reflect upon their play so far, and actively choose to either stay on their path or change parts of it. In that way the act breaks create an alibi for all players to optimize their experience without it interfering with the game design or with other people's play. The effect of this is both flexibility and ownership of each player's story and experience: and it also builds on the brave space created in the pre-larp workshop, letting players dare to go deeper into a narrative or relation because of the option to adjust and steer them in the act breaks.

The post-larp workshop focuses on getting the players out of the fiction and characters, while having opportunities to reflect together on the insights and experiences that the players have had. It thereby creates a connection between the fiction and the players' (real) life, and which parts of the experience they would like to keep and which they will let go away.

Just a Little Lovin' can be an emotional and tough experience for some players. Therefore, a part of the post-larp workshop is also to create space for personal aftercare, and more unstructured opportunities for the players to talk and reflect together.

WORKSHOP FRAMEWORK

This overview of the workshop framework gives an idea of how the different elements in the workshop play together, and what function they have in relation to preparing the players for the larp. It can also be a helpful tool for the story team to keep an overview while running the workshops.

WORKSHOP	FUNCTION + MEANS	CONTENT
<p>Workshop 1</p> <p>Pre-larp.</p> <p>Spread over the first evening and second day.</p>	<p>This first workshop will enable the players to participate fully in the larp, build their characters, and create a common understanding of how to play.</p> <p>By the time the larp starts, the goal is to have a safe space for every player to be brave in.</p> <p>It should give the participants an opportunity to test all metatechniques, build relations with each other, and give a historical backdrop for the larp.</p> <p>The workshop has different elements, and consists of lectures, exercises, and communication in groups.</p>	<p><u>First evening workshop:</u></p> <p>Tour of location Welcome and info Short introduction Nonverbal communication Active Choice Line (in character) Core group workshop Schedule presentation</p> <hr/> <p><u>Second day workshop:</u></p> <p><i>Just a Little Lovin'</i> song Act breaks Fiction brief for 1982 Exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Walking into character ● Negotiations, communication offgame, and safety <p>Introduction on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Blackbox ● Green Drink ● Sex rules ● Metatechniques <p>Technique workshop Groups for act-break workshops & debrief Additional info on play on sex Lunch in social circles Playing Difference at JaLL Gathering three main groups Practise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Act start ● Dance workshop <p>Info about game start and act breaks</p>

Act 1

<p>Workshop 2</p> <p>First Act Break</p> <p>Day 3, before and after lunch.</p>	<p>The second workshop is for calibrating characters, narratives and stories, and to be able to create new ones. The act break workshops will give the players agency.</p> <p>The goal is to establish the debrief groups as a place to reflect and get support: both for play and personally.</p> <p>At the end of the workshop the goal is to have common ground on what has happened the past year, and how we will play the next theme: <i>Fear of Death</i>.</p>	<p>Info about act break workshop</p> <p>Debrief group session</p> <p>Creating new characters and downtime</p> <p>Brief on the world in 1983</p> <p>Anxiety exercise for 1983</p> <p>Lunch with a social circle</p> <p>Core group exercise</p> <p>Break before game start</p>
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Act 2

<p>Workshop 2</p> <p>Second Act Break</p> <p>Day 4, before and after lunch.</p>	<p>The third workshop has the same focus and goals as the second.</p> <p>Meeting in the same debrief groups for the third time should make it possible to engage in personal conversations and to learn about the others' experiences.</p> <p>At the end of the workshop the goal is to have common ground on what has happened the past year, to have established new social circles, and to know how we will play the final act's theme: <i>Friendship</i>.</p>	<p>Info about act break workshop</p> <p>Debrief group session</p> <p>Creating new characters</p> <p>Brief on the world in 1984</p> <p>The trust game for 1984</p> <p>Lunch with a social circle</p> <p>Core group exercise</p> <p>Break before game start</p>
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Act 3

Game end

<p>Workshop 4</p> <p>Out of game</p> <p>Day 5, a while after Game End, with optional continuation the 6th day after breakfast.</p>	<p>The last workshop has a goal that everybody will leave their character and relations in a positive way, and keep the experiences and insights they might have.</p> <p>It will have exercises of both deroleing (leave character behind) and debriefing (what has happened?), as well as free time to come out from the larp in the way each player prefers.</p>	<p>Take off costumes ritual</p> <p>Debrief in debrief groups</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>Schedule for the rest of the day and possibly tomorrow</p> <p>Letter exercise</p> <p>Contextualisation: Talk about HIV/AIDS today, or other relevant topics, scheduled here.</p>
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100%

Workshop 1

PRE-LARP

As mentioned before, the pre-larp workshop's goal is to create a brave space to play the story and to be able to go deeper into the themes of the larp. Therefore, Workshop 1 is designed to create trust and closeness, and to be sure all players are on the same page about play style, narrative, metatechniques, consent, and safety. All workshops are mandatory, but the 'rule of two feet' applies here just as it does in the larp as a whole. Anyone can remove themselves from an exercise if they feel they need to do so.

This larp is designed to be 'turn up and play'. As long as you have your costumes, you can just show up for the start of the first workshop, without needing to do anything beforehand. In fact, we specifically do not encourage pre-play before the larp.

PROGRAM FOR PRE-LARP WORKSHOP

Day 1:

- 🕒 Tour of location: walk.
- 🕒 Welcome and practical information: short info.
- 🕒 Introduction to the larp: talk.
- 🕒 Non-verbal communication: exercises.
- 🕒 Character development: exercises.
- 🕒 Get to know your core group: exercises.
- 🕒 Schedule for next day: short info.
- 🕒 (End of day 1)

Day 2:

- 🕒 "Just a Little Lovin'" song: music and short info.
- 🕒 Practical info: short info.

- 🕒 Info about act breaks: talk.
- 🕒 Fiction brief 1982: talk.
- 🕒 Organizers' characters: short info. (All organizers should be present.)
- 🕒 Character development: exercises.
- 🕒 Negotiations, communications, and safety: talk and exercises.
- 🕒 Brake and cut: exercises.
- 🕒 Blackbox and Green Drink: talk.
- 🕒 Introduction to sex techniques: talk and demonstration.
- 🕒 Meet in debrief groups: Technique workshop: sex play and Blackbox: exercises.
- 🕒 (In debrief groups: About BDSM and play in the dark room: talk.)
- 🕒 Lunch with your social group.
- 🕒 Playing on difference in JaLL: talk.
- 🕒 Meet in circle of friends (Mr. T, Pen friends, Saratoga): discussion and exercise.
- 🕒 Practise Start scene for the larp: exercise and singing.
- 🕒 (Game start)

Day 1:

Arrival day

NAME TAGS ON ARRIVAL

Lay out name tags with character names for the players to put on. Instruct them to wear these for the workshop.

19:30 - 20:00

TOUR OF LOCATION

Type: *Activities in groups*

Keywords: *Introduction tour, Area knowledge*

Focus: *To give all the players an introduction to the different places at the location – both ingame and offgame areas.*

After arrival and dinner the participants are given a tour of the location. It is a good idea to split up the participants into smaller groups. The tour should be quick and without long explanations, but thorough enough for them to recall it during the workshop. See *Location and Scenography* for a description of the locations.

Besides workshop areas, mention the following places:

Offgame locations:

- 📍 Organizers room (where you always can find an organizer during runtime)
- 📍 Smoking areas
- 📍 Toilets and baths
- 📍 First-aid equipment and fire extinguishers

Ingame locations:

- 📍 Diner (where meals are served)
- 📍 Sleeping areas

- 🕒 Kiosk
- 🕒 Disco
- 🕒 Blackbox room(s)
- 🕒 Pillow room
- 🕒 Flagpole (start of each act location)
- 🕒 Dark room

20:00 - 20:15

WELCOME AND INFO ABOUT THE THE LARP WE WILL PLAY

Type: Lecture

Keywords: Welcome, Practical information

Focus: Officially welcome all the players to the larp and present the production team, and also give practical information. Remember to add any site-specific practical information.

- 🕒 **Give a warm welcome** to all the participants, and present all of the team.
- 🕒 Teach everyone that **‘the raised hand’** means: Be quiet. When a workshop leader raises their hand, you should also raise your hand and be quiet: and if you see others do this action, you do the same. Practise it twice.
- 🕒 Find a way to let everybody **introduce themselves** briefly. Here’s an example: Get everyone to stand up and make a long alphabetical line with the first letter in their name; Let them say every name out loud. A similar line can be done for country names, shoe sizes, height, character names, age, or how long a time they have travelled to come here.
- 🕒 Practical information. This will of course vary from location to location, but important subjects to cover are
 - 🕒 Meeting point in case of emergencies.
 - 🕒 Fire and smoking rules (remember to also cover use of hairspray!)
 - 🕒 Safety people:
 - 🕒 These are people that can always be approached, if you want to go offgame and talk to them.
 - 🕒 This can be done by asking one of them to “take a walk with me” (this is also the way that participants

can go offgame to talk and calibrate, which will be introduced later in the workshop).

- Ⓢ Introduction to offgame areas, and some guidelines for using the space.
 - Ⓢ **No room parties:** keep the party in the common areas.
 - Ⓢ **Nudity is OK ingame.** Please remember that not everybody's character body aligns with their offgame body – this shouldn't interfere with your immersion. Remember that sex scenes always happen with clothes on, so even skinny dipping is never a sex act.
 - Ⓢ **Always use English,** so that everyone can join any conversation.
 - Ⓢ **Arrive in time** back to the workshop after breaks.
 - Ⓢ **No alcohol** during the game.
 - Ⓢ There is a **rule of two feet** for both the workshops and the larp as a whole. If you find yourself in a situation that is not for you, it is your decision to walk away and not participate in the exercise or scene. If you do so during a workshop, you are encouraged to stay and watch, so you can still get the necessary information by seeing others do the exercise.

20:15 - 20:30

SHORT INTRODUCTION

TO THE LARP WE WILL PLAY TOGETHER

Type: Talk

Keywords: Structure of the larp, Playing style

Focus: This is a short introduction to how to play the larp, and the structures within its narrative – and how to play on AIDS and HIV. The focus is to create a common ground for participants on how to play the larp together.

Ask everyone to find the other members of their core groups and sit next to them. Here is a script that can be read out loud, to give an introduction to the game:

Just a Little Lovin' is a story about a group of characters living through the early years of the AIDS epidemic. The story is set in the gay, lesbian, and alternative scenes in the US at the time. But it's also meant to be a

universal story about friendship, desire, and fear of death. Some of you will know a lot about the time that we are going to portray – others will not. So don't worry too much about getting the historical details right. Focus on the story that you're telling together. And by the end, you will likely know more and feel a stronger connection to the era and community we are portraying.

The core group is the starting point for telling the story about your character. If this was a film, you three would be the main characters. If you enjoy the story that emerges, you can play on this with your core group through all three acts. But you can of course change direction. If you finish this particular story, or if you don't get what you wished for from your core group in this first act, do not despair. In the next two act breaks you can create other stories and new relations.

The social circles are the flavour and act as your backdrop. The meaning of them is to represent the gay and lesbian communities of New York, as well as an alternative counterculture represented by the Saratoga friends. We couldn't build The Big Apple out here, but we have chosen some important groups we want to represent the urban US of the 80s. You can remain in your social circle throughout the game; or you can change it, to match the development of your character.

The character description is your personality. Don't be afraid to add to it and modify it. Use what works for you, and let your character develop organically throughout the story. Don't feel constrained by "the designers wanted this character this way," if that blocks game opportunities that you wish to explore. If in doubt, come and talk to us about things you are struggling with.

The three acts represent three important aspects of life, which we wish you to dive

into. These themes are: desire, fear of death, and friendship. Each act has one of these as its main focus, but they will all be present in all three acts.

One thing we really want your help with, regarding characters and core groups, is story development. Pace yourself, and keep the interesting vibes or difficulties without trying to make a full-blown conflict. Don't burn all your bridges. Build up a conflict, and then have a reconciliation, so you can repeat the cycle later. We believe in the power of repetition. It can give you more story, more immersion, and more real interactions. The game itself is built on repetition: the same 4th of July celebration three years in a row, with some of the same things happening every year – similar, but also changing a bit year by year.

We want to say something about the role of AIDS and cancer in the story. We chose AIDS to tell our story, because before COVID it was the only plague in modern time that had this frightening and pandemic effect on a large scale in our Western societies. AIDS represents fear of death. It is connected to desire, and friendships are crucial when facing the devastation brought by the epidemic.

The Saratoga friends have a great importance in our story, as those who have already faced and survived death: and cancer is the other large and feared disease of our time. When the story begins, Saratogians are already survivors, while Mr. T's party is going to face death soon.

Finally, both for the workshops and for the larp, we encourage you to actively opt in and opt out of exercises and scenes. We call this "the rule of two feet". Everyone can leave an activity when they feel that this is not for them, and need a break from what is happening in the moment. But we know you are brave, and want to challenge yourself, or else you would

not have signed up for this larp. So join us in creating “brave spaces” both for others and for yourself, so we can all dare to step deep into this story of fear and desire.

20:30-20:45

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Type: Workshop – whole group

Keywords: Flirting, Affection, Physical contact

Focus: Desire and friendship are central themes of the larp. This exercise eases the participants into non-verbal communication of desire and affection. It ends with a cruising scene, where the players get to freely flirt to pick someone up and negotiate a mimicked blow job. This is a warm-up to the phallus metatechnique.

These exercises should be done in one continuous session without breaks. They end in the cruising scene, where the participants can freely explore the different flirting and non-verbal interactions.

In these exercises the participants create an inner and outer circle by standing in pairs facing each other. Each exercise is short, and both circles shift to their left between the exercises. Make sure there is space (half an arm’s length) between the participants in each circle, so they have space to move individually.

Friendship circle exercises:

- ☉ 30 sec: “Look into each other’s eyes. Feel the other person: take in, and send back, only positive emotions. Send the love.”
 - ☉ Shift to the left
- ☉ 30 sec: “Look into each other’s eyes and hold hands – with the same warm feelings as before.”
 - ☉ Shift to the left
- ☉ 10 sec: “Hug each other. Feel the warm energy between you. Relax and surrender to the hug.”
 - ☉ Shift to the left
- ☉ 30 sec: “Hug each other. Feel the other person, their warmth, their smell. Listen to their breathing.”

Desire circle exercises: *Move hand – escalating, de-escalating*

In these exercises, one person is passive, the other active. The passive partner is responsible for signalling ‘stop’; and the active partner is responsible for having a slow pace, so that it’s possible to stop.

- ☉ **Demonstrate** first: Touch hands with the person across from you in the other circle. The passive one of the pair stays still, while the active one slides their hand up from the other’s hand to their shoulder. At some point the passive one should say ‘stop’ – the active one then removes their hand gently. Then switch active and passive roles, and repeat.
 - ☉ Shift to the left.
- ☉ Same exercise – different part of the body. Then switch roles.
 - ☉ Shift to the left.
- ☉ Try to figure out, without words, who is leading (escalating) and following (deescalating).

Cruising scene: To accompany this exercise, play a song from the 1982 JaLL playlist, for instance ‘Let’s Groove’ by Earth, Wind and Fire. Break up the circles: the participants should stand randomly, spread out across the whole space.

- ☉ Setup: *Everybody is an anonymous man in a gay cruising scene.*
- ☉ Instruct the participants to **move around, to flirt, and to pick up someone**. Then non-verbally decide who is going down on their knees to suck the other. Don’t play out the sex for now. Just get down on your knees and then get right up again to continue cruising.

Put on the music and let the participants play it out until each has had a couple of hookups.

20:45 - 21:00

ACTIVE CHOICE LINES (IN CHARACTER)

Type: *Workshop – whole group*

Keywords: *Social status, Character development*

Focus: *This exercise is to get the participants to reflect on their character in relation to the rest of the group.*

Divide the players into two groups: Mr. T’s party (including Pen’s friends) and the Saratoga friends. Each of these groups will form a separate active choice line, so that they are comparing just with themselves, not with the other group.

In this exercise each participant should place themselves on a line according to what fits with their character. The **exercise is non-verbal and all negotiation is non-verbal**. It doesn't have to be an exact line – it can be more like a string of zones, with people bunched in approximately the same place if they can't decide who should be before whom. And they can always adjust their positions during the exercise: they don't have to pick the right spot straight away.

Instructions:

- 🕒 *Imagine there is a scale from here to here (across the length of the room).*
- 🕒 *Place yourself, without talking to others, representing where your character belongs on that scale, according to the following statements and questions. Don't start moving until after I finish with the statement.*
- 🕒 *The first one: from 'rich' to 'poor' (point to the ends of the line as you say them).*
- 🕒 **(They should now move into a line.)**
- 🕒 *Look around you and notice who is standing close to you, and who are far away. (Give them 10 sec to look around – still in silence).*
- 🕒 **(Then move on to the next statement.)**

Try to keep a quiet and concentrated space between each active choice line and the next, otherwise it can be hard to keep the concentration throughout. People enjoy this activity, and it can easily become noisy and chaotic.

The following are statements the facilitator can pose. It's not necessary to ask all of them, or to ask in this particular order – go with the mood in the room:

- 🕒 Rich – poor
- 🕒 Controlled – reckless
- 🕒 Idealist – materialist
- 🕒 How accomplished are you at flirting? Very – not at all
- 🕒 How in touch with their emotions is your character? A lot – not at all
- 🕒 Number of sex partners? High – none
- 🕒 Number of close friends? High – low
- 🕒 Amount of anxiety/fears? High – low

For the last active choice line the facilitator should ask:

- 🕒 *How gay is your character, on a scale of 1 to 7? (According to Kinsey's scale: 1 = 100% heterosexual, 4 = bisexual, 7 = 100%*

homosexual.) Point out the places on the line that correspond with 100 % heterosexual, with bisexuality in the middle, and then with 100 % gay.

21:00



21:15 - 21:45

CORE GROUP WORKSHOP

Type: Exercise in core groups

Keywords: Building relations

Focus: These questions and exercises are to get the core groups to build relations and negotiate how to play together.

Start with an introduction to the core groups and their function, the play style, and how the act breaks can be used to switch around the core groups.

Core group introduction questions 15 MIN

Ask the players to divide into their core groups, where they should talk about the following topics. The questions can be written on a flipchart, or something similar.

- ☉ Character and relation presentations (5 min)
- ☉ What happened just before the first act starts? (5 min)
- ☉ How would you like to play with each other? (style, things I would like to happen, etc.) (5 min)

FIND AS PRINTOUT IN APPENDIX

Core groups – exercise 10 MIN

Every core group should discuss “What is our story about?”, meaning what is the common narrative that they will explore together. (‘Frozen picture’ is an activity that asks the groups to create a visual representation of the relationship between the characters using their own bodies.)

Make pictures that represent the core group’s story with:

- ☉ A frozen picture;
- ☉ Moving in a loop, like an animated GIF.

And as the last thing:

- Find one word or phrase that summarizes your group's story as it goes into the first act.

21:45 - 22:10

SCHEDULE

Present the schedule for the next day, and give any other practical information:

Breakfast:	09:00–09:50
Workshop:	10:00–15:30
Lunch:	13:00–13:50
Free time, get ready:	15:30–17:30
Start of larp:	17:30

22:10

WORKSHOP ENDS

Free time for players. Right after the workshop ends, the following groups can meet:

- Cruisers Club and dark room players: Meet in the dark room to get to know the facilities.
- Performing characters and DJ: Meet by the stage to talk practicalities about the show in the Act 1.

Day 2: Game Start

10:00

JUST A LITTLE LOVIN' SONG

Type: Talk

Keywords: Theme song

Focus: Get to know the song that starts and ends each act.

Instruct the participants that each act will start and end with this song being played, and that it will be at times where all participants are gathered. Play the song.

2 MIN

PRACTICAL DETAILS ABOUT SCHEDULE

Info about the schedule for the game

Repeat the pre-larp schedule:

Workshop:	10.00–15.30
Lunch:	13.00–13.50
Free time, get ready:	15.30–17.30
Start of larp:	17.30

Write out the times according to when the larp starts. Here is an example.

17:30	Meet in costume for game start.
17:45	Welcome by Mr. T. Singing of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', for the flag raising. Saratoga pact ceremony right after.
22:00	Drag show hosted by Nate. Disco, after the drag show.
24:00	Fireworks/paper balloons, Magical green drink. Party continues in the disco.

When you make your own schedule, be sure to print out and put up in off game areas.

5 MIN

INFO ABOUT THE ACT BREAK

Type: Talk

Keywords: Lottery of Death

Focus: Here players are instructed about the Act End Scene – The Lottery of Death – and how they should act and react in this metascene. It is important to only give the following information, and no more – so that the rest of the scene is unknown to the participants.

Instructions for the end scene *The Lottery of Death*:

Script to be **read out loud**:

On each morning of the larp, breakfast is served from 9 to 10, and by 10 you need to be in the diner where the metascene will be held – even if you don't want to eat breakfast. Find a seat and stay there.¹

We will enter a metascene called The Lottery of Death. You are still your character, but we will play out the impact of the epidemic in the following year in a stylized manner. Play out your character's emotions: but you cannot interrupt what happens. Follow the instructions.

You will be asked to decide how much risk your character has been exposed to. High risk is having unprotected penetrative sex with multiple partners: and being the passive partner in a sex act has a higher risk than being the active partner.

Some characters will die of the disease every year. It will be decided randomly, as a part of this scene. You will be instructed how it will

¹ Although, one run of JaLL chose to move everyone into the disco after breakfast instead, because their diner was a chain of small rooms rather than one big one.

work. After this scene has ended, we will have an act break: the act break begins after the 'Just a Little Lovin'' song has been played, as that will mark the end of the act. Those of you whose characters died will workshop new characters with us.

10:10

15 MIN

1982 FICTION BRIEF

Type: Talk

Keywords: Group presentation, AIDS knowledge 1982

Focus: Presentation of how we play the fiction of JaLL at the start of the larp in 1982. How to play on historical knowledge, and which groups are represented in the larp.

This brief, and the other fiction briefs in the act break workshops, can be read out loud as written here; or the facilitator can create their own talk around the content:

This is a larp set in the USA in the early 1980s. Use what you know, but remember that relationships, drama, and emotions are more important in this game than historical accuracy.

Most people had a binary view of sexuality: homosexual or heterosexual. This is before 'queer'.

The New York gay scene is situated around Christopher Street and Greenwich Village. This is the time of the discos and bathhouses. Most gay and bisexual people are in the closet at work, and to most people that aren't close friends. The lesbian scene is much smaller, with just a handful of lesbian bars, like the Cubby Hole – which is open to male friends as well.

Alternative New York is represented in JaLL by the Saratoga friends. New Age spirituality has arrived in the 80s, often with sex-positive gurus. Some are "Lifestylers" – that's what swingers were called at the time. One reason why you find many of the Saratoga friends in this alternative scene is because they as teenagers

swore a pact, here at Saratoga rehab center:
 "To live life to the fullest".

What was known about AIDS in 1982?

- A mysterious illness has hit some gay men, primarily in San Francisco and New York.
- The term AIDS is not yet invented – it is called GRID or gay cancer.
- The theme of Act 1 is Desire. Don't let any rumours about a disease they haven't even found yet dissuade you from partying and having sex.

The mainstream media, including the *New York Times*, has barely covered the epidemic. The gay bi-weekly newspaper the *New York Native* is the only publication in the city writing anything about it. Most of the Saratoga people have probably not heard about it at all.

The notorious author of *Faggots*, Larry Kramer, and a few others are trying to raise the alarm, and are telling people that going to the bathhouses is probably a risky thing to do. But many gays are deeply suspicious of Kramer's agenda after he harshly criticized what, according to him, was the superficial promiscuity of the gay scene. Many people think that he is probably using this disease as an opportunity to moralize again.²

So what most of you will do in the first act is to possibly talk a bit about it, but shrug it off. There isn't any proof yet about how people are getting this thing: and it's probably people who live wilder than you who are at risk.

² A typical quote from the *New York Native* debate by writer Robert Chesley: [...] *the concealed meaning of Kramer's emotionalism is the triumph of guilt: that gay men deserve to die for their promiscuity. Read anything by Kramer closely. I think you'll find that the subtext is always: the wages of gay sin is death. I am not downplaying the seriousness of Kaposi's sarcoma. But something else is happening here, which is also serious: gay homophobia and anti-eroticism.*

Ask if anyone has questions about the above presentation.

10:25

ORGANIZERS IN CHARACTERS

Present the organizer characters:

- ☉ Peggy's diner
- ☉ Café Noir
- ☉ Hank

10:30 - 10:45

WALKING AND DANCING INTO CHARACTER

Type: Workshop – whole group

Key words: getting into character, Inner emotions

Focus: This exercise is to try to act as your character with focus on different emotions. It is an exercise where the characters don't react to each other, but focus on themselves.

Instructions for the exercise:

- ☉ **Spread out** in the room.
- ☉ **Start walking**, and try to **keep a good distance** from each other.
- ☉ **Relax** your neck, shoulders, arms, back; and take a deep breath.
- ☉ Slowly **start walking as your character**. (Here the facilitator can help, with questions like: What do you do with your hands? How is your posture? How do you present yourself?)
- ☉ Now we are going to try out different moods (give them 30 seconds for each mood):
 - ☉ Tired
 - ☉ Too late for a job interview
 - ☉ Sick from a heavy cold
 - ☉ On your way to an exciting date
- ☉ And now, dance as your character (put on music for this part):
 - ☉ Ready for a flirt
 - ☉ Your lover cheated on you
 - ☉ You have never been so in love before

10:45 - 11:25

NEGOTIATIONS, OFFGAME COMMUNICATION, AND SAFETY

The next four parts of the workshop are about how to negotiate between players offgame, and safety rules for the larp. They are connected, and should be held together. The parts are:

- 🕒 The role of the feathers in the game.
- 🕒 Sex scenes and other potentially heavy scenes.
- 🕒 Consent negotiations.
- 🕒 Escalation, brake, and cut.
- 🕒 Rule of two feet.

Tell the participants that every part of this information will be practised in smaller groups, later.

5 MIN

FEATHERS: NEGOTIATING SEX AND BLACKBOX SCENES

Type: Talk

Keywords: Offgame, Negotiation

Focus: This focuses on explaining the way that players should negotiate sex scenes and blackbox scenes; and that the method can also be used for other types of scenes, as needed.

In this larp you should always negotiate sex scenes and blackbox scenes. You are also encouraged to use the negotiation technique for any other scenes where that will make you feel safer in playing out the scene you have in mind with your co-players. Remember the rule of two feet: if you feel uncomfortable in a scene you can always leave it. You can also stop the scene with the safety words 'cut' and 'brake', which will be explained later.

First, offer your co-player a pink or a black feather. The feathers will be found lying around in the play area, and by the blackbox. Offering someone a pink feather is an invitation to play a sex scene. Offering someone a black feather is an invitation to play a blackbox scene.

You then negotiate offgame together (as yourselves, not as your characters). This may take just a few minutes: try to keep it less than ten minutes.

- ☉ *Explain:* The person who has the idea for the scene explains the idea to the other. The other person either accepts to negotiate about the idea, or declines. Do not list specifics here, but rather the overall concept.
- ☉ *Negotiate:* First question to decide is: “What mood do we want to achieve?” Then, the initiator continues the negotiation with the phrase: “How would you like to play this?” Then discuss your physical and emotional borders for playing out the scene
- ☉ *Resolution:* Then you should talk together about: How does the scene end? And do we need aftercare?

10 MIN

CONSENT NEGOTIATIONS

Type: *Workshop – whole group*

Keywords: *Negotiation, Feathers, Exercise*

Focus: *Trying out the instructions about feathers and negotiating scenes, with a focus on understanding the structure of it: and getting to try it both as an initiator and as the receiver of a feather.*

This is how a sex scene could play out from start to end. Start the exercise by explaining how this plays out. This is acted out afterwards by two facilitators to make it more clear:

- ☉ Once a player has accepted a pink feather, the two players step offgame to negotiate.
- ☉ The initiator who offered the feather asks, “*How would you like to play this?*” Do not offer suggestions. The response will be from the *player*, not the character.
- ☉ When you respond, you must be specific. Answers like, “*I’m up for anything*” can mean different things to different people. By being specific, both people are more likely to know exactly which boundaries are set. If a player cannot be specific, the negotiations are over and the scene is not played.
- ☉ After the person receiving the feather names a specific action, such as “*I am comfortable with being held in a tight embrace*”, then they ask the same question to the initiator. “*How would you like to play this?*” The initiator’s boundaries may actually be higher than the responder, and that’s okay! Each person gets to say yes or no to play suggestions.

Facilitators demonstrate

Now, two of the facilitators act out an example of the technique:

- A:** *offers pink feather*
- B:** *accepts feather*
- A:** "How would you like to play this?"
- B:** "I am comfortable with making out, and playing out the scene physically, like a theatre scene, and have the phallus like a penis between my legs – but not touching my genitals."
- A:** "I'm not comfortable with making out, but playing the scene out theatre-style with the phallus between your legs is fine. I am comfortable with simulating oral sex with the phallus."
- B:** "Okay! I'm comfortable with this suggestion"

Consent practice exercise

Now it is time for the players to try out negotiating consent for a scene.

- 🕒 **Find a partner** standing close to you.
- 🕒 We're going to **practise consent**, but not an actual sex scene: that will come later. You are playing a random person on the dancefloor, not your character.
- 🕒 When the exercise starts, you will **casually flirt** with someone near you, dancing closer to them slowly from in front.
- 🕒 **Take turns** offering and accepting the pink feather. Pick who will be the initiator first.
- 🕒 After the feather is accepted, **step offgame**.
- 🕒 The initiator asks, "**How would you like to play this?**"
- 🕒 The receiver **answers something specific**. They then will ask the same question to the initiator.
- 🕒 Once you find an **agreement, then switch**, with the responder now acting as initiator.

Sum up the exercise by pointing out:

Always negotiate when you're planning to play

a sex scene or a blackbox scene. You can also negotiate any other type of scene. Use the technique to make you feel safe about playing with your co-players. But if you want to negotiate a scene that is not a sex scene or a blackbox scene, then you don't need a feather. Just ask your co-player to go offgame with you.

10 MIN

ESCALATION, BRAKE AND CUT

Type: *Workshop, Exercise in smaller groups*

Keywords: *Safety words, Boundaries*

Focus: *Practising safety words and techniques used in the larp – and also practising how to safely initiate and negotiate physical play non-verbally.*

This exercise is for trying out safety words, and at the same time how to escalate play in a safe way. We have safety words in order to be able to play bravely. We should all commit to our co-players: trusting that all of us will use these safety words when we need them.

Explain and demonstrate escalation:

- 🕒 The “instigator” has the responsibility to go slow and to be attentive to signals from the co-player.
- 🕒 The “receiver” has the main responsibility for using nonverbal refusal (signalling physically ingame by moving their hand, for instance) or using the safety words “brake” or “cut”.
- 🕒 A tap-out (two taps on the other’s body) can also be used to signal cut.
- 🕒 Be aware that the instigator and receiver roles can change during a scene.
- 🕒 Do not initiate scenes from behind without prior agreement. Maintain eye contact.

Explain and demonstrate brake and cut:

Brake:

- 🕒 If someone says “brake” – you de-escalate the scene without stopping play.
- 🕒 You can talk to the person who used brake later on, by asking them to go for a walk to re-negotiate your play. This is not mandatory.

Cut:

- 🕒 If someone says “cut” – everyone who is in the scene stops the scene. That means, everyone who hears it.
- 🕒 When someone cuts a scene, offer to have a short chat about what they need. Talk right now, or agree to do it later. It’s up to the person who cuts whether they want to talk about their reasons for the cut or not.
- 🕒 Speak with organizers or a safety person if you need to talk things through.

Exercise on brake and de-escalation:

Now the players get to practise, in pairs, how to non-verbally de-escalate, and how to “brake” scenes. This is instructed as followed:

- 🕒 Everyone practises the following scene, which you will play twice: first de-escalating it non-verbally, and then with “brake”.
- 🕒 The scene is a coming-on scene. The scene is leading into a kiss. First, non-verbal signs, and second, brake, should be used so that the kiss doesn’t happen.
- 🕒 Include how the scene continues, or what you say to each other afterwards.

Ask everyone to gather briefly in their core groups:

- 🕒 Everyone defines one situation where they think they might say cut, and one where they might say brake.

2 MIN

RULE OF TWO FEET

Type: Talk

Keywords: Opt in, Out out

Focus: The rule of two feet is an open door policy both for the workshops and the larp. As a player you can always leave a scene or situation that you are uncomfortable staying in.

In regard to the “the rule of two feet”, explain the following to the players:

- 🕒 If you want an ingame reason to leave a scene, you can just say something like, “I need to take a walk.”
- 🕒 It is completely fine to leave a scene and/or take a full break from

the game.

- ☉ It is your own responsibility as a player to move away from a scene that you don't want to witness or be part of.
- ☉ It is the responsibility of all of us as co-players to not make it difficult or awkward for other people to leave when they need to do so.

10 MIN

SHORT BREAK

11:25 - 11:30

INTRO

BLACKBOX AND GREEN DRINK

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Metatechnique, Escalation*

Focus: *Introducing the purpose of doing scenes in the blackbox, and how to initiate that. Also, introducing the green drink as a way of escalating play at the end of the evening in each Act.*

BLACKBOX SCENES

Introduce the players to blackbox scenes by explaining:

- ☉ You initiate blackbox scenes by presenting someone with a black feather. If they accept the feather, you go offgame together to negotiate the scene.
- ☉ You can play out different types of scenes in the blackbox that can't happen at the larp. They might be scenes from someone's past, from a possible future, or more imaginary and abstract scenes.
- ☉ In the blackbox you can play other characters than the one you play at the larp. If you wish, one person can take the role of director.
- ☉ The person who invited the other(s) to the blackbox defines what the scene is about and who is in it. The scene is finished by one of the players saying "thank you".
- ☉ If the blackbox room is unavailable, you can make a "temporary" blackbox somewhere else as well. Just make sure that it is away from the rest of the larp.

THE GREEN DRINK AT MIDNIGHT

Kim and Kohana's magical Green Drink, and the ritual of drinking it, works like a way of escalating the game for all of the players. But you as a player can choose how you wish to play on it.

Introduce players to the Green Drink by explaining:

- ☉ Kim and Kohana will prepare a drink every midnight, which will be served to all the characters.
- ☉ The drink is made of ginger, lemon, brown sugar, and food colouring. Ingame it's some sort of funky hippie drink. If you are allergic to any of the ingredients, then just pretend that you have drunk it.
- ☉ After you have had the drink, you decide: do you want to increase the intensity of what your character is already doing, or do you want to turn around and go in a different direction for the remainder of the night? The drink is therefore more a meta-function rather than an ingame "magic potion."

11:30 - 11:50

20 MIN

INTRO TO SEX RULES AND METATECHNIQUES

Type: *Talk and demonstration*

Keywords: *Sex rules, Phallus metatechnique, Safety*

Focus: *Introduction to the larp's sex technique ("The Phallus Method"), linked together with negotiation and safety measures. Also, a thorough demonstration of different ways to use The Phallus Method to show the variety in types of sex scenes and moods that can be played out.*

The technique we use to simulate sex in Just a Little Lovin' is designed specifically for the mood we want for this game, and is called "The Phallus Method". Since the scenes we want to show often will be between men, and will be casual and driven by desire, we absolutely believe that a phallus (or several) is needed. We want the feel of "gay sex" even for heterosexual and lesbian characters.

But, most importantly, we like sexual activity in Just a Little Lovin' to be an engine for a wide range of emotions and relations. You should be digging in to your character while having sex.

The sex scenes in Just a Little Lovin' should be:

- 🕒 **Visual and direct.** Often in a semi-public setting.
- 🕒 Played with breath, sounds, movements, facial expression. **Think theatre, and immerse into the scene.**
- 🕒 Aiming to **create the feeling of gay culture**, even for heterosexual and lesbian characters.
- 🕒 Helping to build strong emotions.
- 🕒 **Feeling safe** enough for the players, but also **being challenging** enough.

See *How to act out erotic scenes* for more information on design thoughts around playing sex scenes at Just a Little Lovin'.

THE PHALLUS METHOD

This builds on the negotiating technique already practised before. Now we move on to how to play out the actual sex scenes.

First the no-gos in sex scenes:

- 🕒 No real genital sex, or fondling of genitals or breasts.
- 🕒 Keep clothes on (at least underwear). This also goes for any BDSM scenes.
- 🕒 Anyone can at any time stop the action (cut / brake / non-verbal refusal / tap-out).

The four steps to sex scenes:

Step 1: Invite with feather.

Step 2: Negotiate how to play out the scene. (Explain, negotiate, resolution.)

Step 3: Find a phallus and start the scene: either the ones made for the larp, or any other suitable object. Then take a deep breath and play out the scene as agreed.

Step 4: Each character holds a short monologue. The monologues are not something the characters hear, only the players. Always do monologues, even when you have sex in a public place or in the dark room (here you can whisper).

It is important to build up to the sex scene in the play, and then present the pink feather, as well as continuing play after the monologues – so it becomes a part of your narrative.

If you want to use a condom, it must be available to the character. No gay man would think of using a condom in 1982, however.

There are special rules for the dark room that will be explained later.

DEMONSTRATION OF HOW TO USE THE PHALLUS METHOD

Here the different workshop facilitators will show different variants on how to use The Phallus Method. It is good to show a variety of ways, and both with two men, two women, a man and a woman, fisting or other kinks, and so on. This also functions as a way to take the pressure of the players in actually trying out the method later.

Introduce the players to the demonstration:

- ☉ The aim of The Phallus Method is to give everyone a variety of ways to use it to play out sex scenes.
- ☉ Some of these ways will be relevant for you, and others you will decide are not.
- ☉ Through negotiating with each other you will decide together a way to play out sex scenes that will be fun for all.

Demonstrate the different ways the phallus can be used, with a suitable player or facilitator interacting through the phallus. Make sure to talk beforehand to the people you are demonstrating the technique with, so that they are okay with it.

Good examples of scenes that can be demonstrated:

- ☉ **Oral sex** (you don't need to put in the mouth – if you do, use disinfectant on the phallus)
- ☉ **Lesbian sex** (phallus flat on the stomach between hands (not like a penis)).
- ☉ **Fisting** (phallus held on the side of the hip – pressing small of back with other fist)

- ☉ **Fucking** (two versions – phallus between the legs of the active partner touching the thigh of the passive partnew, or phallus in front of the person being fucked)
- ☉ **Masturbation/Handjob** (either sticking up between the thighs, or on the side of the thigh)
- ☉ **Group sex** with more than two people (more phalluses, or focus on one person)

Explain and demonstrate **how monologues at end of sex scenes work** for all of the scenes.

And as a last point – kissing:

- ☉ There is no specific replacement technique for kissing.
- ☉ Negotiate before kissing another player.
- ☉ Caressing face / neck are examples of other ways of playing intimacy.

Take questions about how to play sex scenes.

11:50 - 12:40

TECHNIQUES WORKSHOP

Type: Workshop in debrief groups

Keywords: Blackbox scenes, The Phallus Method

Focus: In smaller groups the players get to try out both blackbox and sex scenes, so they have tried both before the larp. These groups are also the debrief groups used between acts and after the larp.

The facilitator for this part of the workshop should be the same facilitator who will run the act-break and after-larp debrief talks with the same group.

Note to the Workshop facilitators: It can ease insecurities more effectively if you explain the exercise matter-of-factly; rather than increasing the nervousness of participants by presenting the exercise in a way that enforces that this is a “scary exercise”. Everybody already knows about the “rule of two feet”. Encourage anyone who uses that to stay and watch the exercises, even if they are not trying it themselves, so they at least get the same information as their co-players.

WORKSHOP + DEBRIEF GROUPS

Mention that this is also their debrief group, and that they will be meeting up in the same group in the same room in each act break and also after the larp. Then a short introduction round:

- ☉ Say your name, your character name and one thing you have in common with your character.

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Group 1 (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- The Writers (Abner, Eli, Jerrod)
- The Shared Flat in SoHo (Daniel, Reginald, Trevor)
- Flow to the Beat (Francis, Artie, Tony)
- Love is Just a Four Letter Word (Mary Lou, Lawrence, Max)

Group 2: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- A Star is Torn (Chantelle, Beatrice, Sterling)
- The Boys in the Band (Skye, Rain, Simon)
- Heart of Saratoga (Kim, Kohana, Joani)
- Amazons (Barbara, Sam, Claire)

Group 3: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- Four Women among the Boys (Katherine, Kimberly, Charlotte, Santiago)
- Studio 54 Dope Crew (Sorrento, Enrique, Leon, Diego)
- Nate and His Men of Ambition (Nate, Bruce, Sinclair)

Group 4: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- Mr. T's Inner Circle (Mr. T, Pen, Andrew)
- Veterans of the Scene and New Boy in Town (Steven, Diane, Bret)
- Family of Friends (Fernando, Nick, Jimmy, Marcus)

Group 5: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- Indigo house (Harvey, Katie, Holly, Allison, Wallace, Beverly, Dennis)
- Let's Play Master and Servant (Lester, Gwen, Mickey)
- Pepper's Diner (Pepper, Howard, Harriet, Priest)

Group 6: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

- Freshwomen and the Dutch Boy (Morgan, Dutch, Rosemary, Dawn)
- Displaced Passions (Chain, Evelyn, Lizzie, Tomasz)
- In Therapy (Walter, Ike, Ruben)

15 MIN

BLACKBOX SCENES

WORKSHOP 1

- ④ Ask two people in the group with experience in black-boxing to help you demonstrate one short scene.

Imaginary scene: A youth and father at the grave of the youth's mother. The presence of the dead mother is also a character in the scene

Have a short talk before each scene about what the scene is about. The facilitator plays one of the three characters. Don't let the scene run for very long, and end the scene by saying "thank you".

- ④ Break the debrief group into core groups, which will do this exercise in parallel. Everyone will practise a scene with the people in their core group, that depicts some event or day in at least one of the character's lives. It should be a flashback, ie. from before the date that the larp starts. It doesn't have to be realistic.

One volunteers as the initiator – they present the feather to the others to start discussing what the scene is about and which character each person will play.

Remember to end the scene by saying "Thank you".

Each core group then spends 5 minutes planning a scene that they can play together in the blackbox during the first act.

30 MIN

SEX IN JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

Practise inviting with feather

- ④ Repeat the explanation of how to invite someone to a sex scene with a pink feather.
- ④ Everyone walks around and practises inviting and rejecting a sex scene. No words.
 - ④ Half of the players have pink feathers.
 - ④ To start with, everyone should reject all offers of a pink feather.
 - ④ Then, instruct everyone to accept one – when they have accepted, they and the offerer should walk off the floor,

waiting for everyone to finish.

- ☉ Repeat the exercise again, switching so that it is the other half of the players who start with pink feathers and who do the inviting

In the larp itself, if you don't have a pink feather at hand, just say – “pink feather?”

Next, repeat how the sequence of sex scenes works:

1. Invite with feather.
2. Talk offgame how to play out the scene, using the consent negotiations practised earlier. “How would you like to play this?” Ask each other what you want out of the scene and make sure both are OK with it. Talk about how you will play out the scene: from the beginning, through the middle, to the end. Be concrete on how you will use the phallus.
3. Find a phallus, either the ones made for the game or any suitable object. Then take a deep breath and play out the scene as agreed.
4. Each character holds a short monologue.

MOANING EXERCISE (TO INTRODUCE BREATH)

To warm up to start using sound and breath in sex scenes, you do a moaning exercise with the players:

- ☉ Start by **standing shoulder-to-shoulder** in a circle facing outwards.
- ☉ The players are welcome to close their eyes if they want to.
- ☉ **Take a deep breath together.**
- ☉ Start **making moans** of excitement and pleasure, and slowly build up to climax.

SEX SCENES

Now the players should try out playing out sex scenes with each other. Pair up the players, so that they play out the two types of scenes with the same person.

Play out the following

- ☉ Scene one – play this out step by step, instructed by facilitator
One character is a bit shy or self-conscious. The other is eager but a bit drunk.
- ☉ Scene two – play through the entire sequence from start to finish, without interruption
One is angry at a regular partner, and is just having sex with someone else to get back at them. The other one experienced something really bad today that they are trying to forget.

Finish up by answering questions: and tell the players where and when to meet up for the next part of the workshop, which will be with all of them back together.

10 MIN

SHORT BREAK

12.50 - 13:00

SPECIAL RULES FOR DARK ROOM, AND BDSM

Type: Lecture

Keywords: Dark room, Sex technique

Focus: In the dark room at JaLL, different rules apply to when you have sex scenes in other places. Here, those rules are explained: plus how to have BDSM sex scenes.

Explain the following to the participants about the dark room and BDSM:

- ☉ Mr. T's dark room is inspired by, and is in some ways a combination of, a BDSM dungeon, a dark room in a gay bar, and a gay bath house. It will be possible to play out scenes of "anonymous sex" and BDSM sessions there.
- ☉ When you enter the dark room, you have already agreed to negotiate, so we don't use pink feathers there. But you should still always do a negotiation on how to play any sex/play scene. You can do so in lowered voices in the room itself. Or, if you believe that you are on your way to play an emotionally tough scene, then we recommend you step outside to have a full negotiation together.

HOW TO ACT IN THE DARK ROOM

- Ⓢ No loud casual speaking is allowed – but still hold monologues after sex scenes.
- Ⓢ Women are not allowed (except if the lesbians or the swingers have agreed with the Cruisers Club to have their own hour of access). This is a gay secret world. (At least, it is so ingame... but of course this is larp, so female characters might decide to sneak into the room).

GUIDELINES FOR A BDSM SCENE

- Ⓢ You don't need to present pink feathers in the dark room to have sex. (But outside the dark room, you should use a pink feather for a BDSM scene.)
- Ⓢ No real bondage. Keep one hand free; use rope such that you can get out of it yourself if needed.
- Ⓢ Agree on whether you will play with no actual pain, or light pain (either way, ingame pretend it to be harder than it is) – use theatrical ways of inflicting pain.
- Ⓢ No phallus is needed, if penetration isn't a part of the scene.
- Ⓢ Use BDSM stopwords ingame: Yellow (brake) and Red (cut).
- Ⓢ Ingame etiquette: don't interrupt or engage in another person's scene without asking; you haven't negotiated your way in. But please do play that you are “watching and wanking!”
- Ⓢ Typically, Cruisers Club members spend a lot of time there, but they don't own it – all men are welcome.
- Ⓢ End all sex scenes with monologues here as well.

Take questions about how to play in the dark room.

13:00 - 14:00

LUNCH IN SOCIAL CIRCLES

Type: Talk in smaller groups

Keywords: Social circle, Relations

Focus: Building and defining the social scenes in JaLL among the players.

The participants gather in their social circles during lunch, to define how the relations are between the members of the social circle, and what they do together in the circle.

The social circles are:

- 📍 Pink Dollars
- 📍 Cruisers Club
- 📍 Club Diamond
- 📍 Studio 54
- 📍 The Cubby Hole
- 📍 The Literary Circle
- 📍 The L Club
- 📍 The Brooklyn Book Cafe
- 📍 Spirituals

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Make signs with each social circle and put them along with the following instructions on the lunch tables, so the groups can find each other right away.

During lunch the social circle groups should do as follows:

- 📍 Everyone presents their characters. Which of the other characters are you closest to?
- 📍 Decide on at least one thing that your social circle will do together during the first Act.
- 📍 Think of one secret story that only the members of the social circle will know.

14:00 - 14:30

PLAYING ON DIFFERENCE

Type: Talk and group discussion

Keywords: Now and then, Discrimination

Focus: This talk is to get some pointers on how to play on different subjects relating to discrimination and phobia.

The full talk written by Kat Jones for the *Just a Little Lovin'* run in the USA

in 2017 can be found *Playing differences*. This can be used as inspiration and resource material for organizers to create their own talk for this section of the workshop.

Guidelines that should be conveyed to the players in this section:

Race and racism:

- ☞ Racism is not a valid theme for play at Just a Little Lovin'. That is, characters should not encounter these discriminatory thoughts or behaviors at Mr. T's big gay 4th of July party.
- ☞ All players should wait for a character to bring up their race or ethnicity before pointing it out or playing on it. In other words, don't make it a THING unless the player in question wants it to be a THING.
- ☞ Players who want to explore themes of racism with their character are encouraged to stage private, optional scenes in the blackbox.

Homophobia:

- ☞ Homophobia is also not a central theme of the game: although in Act 2, gay characters may experience some tension from the Saratoga friends as a result of the AIDS crisis.
- ☞ Players wishing to explore scenes with homophobia can invite others to participate in private, optional scenes in the blackbox.

Other forms of discrimination:

- ☞ Transphobia, biphobia, and misogyny are valid themes for play at Just a Little Lovin'. These oppressions can come up at Mr. T's big gay 4th of July party as microaggressions; more subtle ways of signaling difference and exclusion.
- ☞ Microaggressions do not include slurs and name calling.
- ☞ Players wishing to explore more severe forms of this discrimination can invite others to participate in private, optional scenes in the blackbox.

DISCUSSION IN CORE GROUPS

Ask the players to go into their core groups and discuss the following questions:

- Ⓒ How do discrimination and prejudice affect your character? How would you like to play on them?
- Ⓒ How would you like us to play on them with you?
- Ⓒ What should we play on together? What should we avoid playing on?

14:30 - 15:15

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GATHERING IN PARTY GROUPS

Type: Workshop in party groups

Keywords: Party group, Character presentation

Focus: To establish the different parties, and for players to get a sense of who is part of the same party as them, and what has happened in the past within the party group.

One facilitator should be present with each party group, to guide them through the relationship therapy exercise and the question round.

RELATIONSHIP THERAPY EXERCISE

This is an exercise that gives a short introduction to all the characters that are in the same party – those being: the Saratoga pact, Mr. T's party (gay scene) and Mr. T's Party (Pen's friends). The instruction for the exercise is to tell the others about a relationship problem that the character has: and in that way, the character is presented in relation to those closest to them.

When the facilitator has all members of the party gathered, ask them to stand in a circle so everyone can see each other, and give this instruction:

Stay in this circle, so you can all see each other. One by one, each of you will now tell everyone about a relationship problem that you have, as if you were in therapy. Keep it short, so as to give time to everyone. Please tell us your name first.

The other parts of this workshop are different between the three groups.

Saratoga characters:

- Ⓒ First, all should go to the SARATOGA PACT PLACE.

- 🕒 Relationship therapy (presentation of characters).
- 🕒 Practise the Saratoga pact ritual.

Mr. T's party (gay scene):

- 🕒 Relationship therapy (presentation of characters).
- 🕒 Make another round: What happened to your character at the New Year's party at Mr. T's?

Pen's friends:

- 🕒 Relationship therapy (presentation of characters).
- 🕒 Make another round: What happened to your character at the New Year's party at the Cubby Hole?
- 🕒 Talk about life in the lesbian scene in New York.

15:15 - 15:30

PRACTISE RAISING OF THE FLAG

Type: Workshop whole group

Keywords: Act start, singing

Focus: All the players practise what is going to happen at the start of each act – raising the US flag.

When each act is about to begin, all the players start in frozen positions while the 'Just a Little Lovin'' song plays. When the song ends, play begins. All players are present at this scene. Everyone has arrived at the Saratoga Rehab Centre for the party. After a short time, everyone will gather by the flagpole, raise the flag and sing 'The Star-Spangled Banner'.

Practise Act Start:

- 🕒 All players should gather around the flagpole.
- 🕒 Pen passes out lyrics to the song to everyone.
- 🕒 Hank and Andrew make the flag ready to be raised.
- 🕒 Play Dolly Parton's recording of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' while people sing along and the flag is raised.

15:30-17:30

BREAK BEFORE GAME START

Type: Self-organized time

Keywords: Last preparations, Getting into costumes

Focus: Time before the larp starts, when players can take care of themselves and get into costumes for the larp.

In the break players should do what they need to get ready for the start of the larp. Including resting, getting into costume, talking with relations etc. This is self-organized, but it is a good thing to remind people to be mindful of different needs in this period, and not take up all of the other players' time.

17:30-17:45

ABOUT GAME START AND ACT BREAKS

Before the larp starts, gather all players together. When they arrive, instruct them to stand in their core groups so that everyone can see everyone.

- ☉ **Start in a freeze position** in groups while 'Just a Little Lovin' is played. Game starts when the song ends.
- ☉ Tomorrow morning:
 - ☉ **Breakfast** will be from 9–10.
 - ☉ **Be at the diner at 10.** We will enter a metascene which is the Lottery of Death. **Don't go offgame during this.** You are still your character, but we play out the impact of the epidemic in the following year in a stylized way. *Play your character's emotions, but you cannot interrupt what happens.* **Follow the instructions.** You will be asked to decide how much risk your character has been exposed to. High risk is having unprotected penetrative sex with multiple partners: being a passive partner has higher risk than being an active partner.
- ☉ One or more characters will die in each act. If this happens to you, you will enter the game in the next act as a new character. The act will end with the playing of the *Just a Little Lovin'* song. When the song ends you are out of character.

All players should now go to the flagpole area, and get ready to get into a freeze position. While standing in the freeze position, think about what you dream of will happen this 4th of July.

17:45

GAME START

Workshop 2

FIRST ACT BREAK

The function of the workshop between Act 1 and Act 2 is for the players to reflect on their story and experiences from the first act and to be ready to play the next act – a year later – even better, and maybe more intensely? Hearing stories from other players may also give a richer experience of the larp.

Both act breaks are designed to enable the players to steer their story and to give them the opportunity to be co-creative of their own narrative and relations. It is important that the core groups calibrate, as well as any other important relations that have occurred. Give the core groups space to find interesting ways to deepen their story: but if the core group did not work, or the story did not, then the act break is the time for these players to find new interesting stories to explore.

Remember 1983, Act 2, is all about “Fear of Death”, and during this workshop the players are encouraged to find ways to include this in their play.

PROGRAM FOR WORKSHOP 2:

- 🕒 Gather in the debrief groups.
- 🕒 (Create new characters for the players whose characters died during the last act). Free time to talk with relations, and think of what happened between 1982 and 1983.
- 🕒 Fiction brief for the next act.
- 🕒 Meet with social circles during lunch.
- 🕒 Meet with core groups. (Stay with the story and group, change the story, change group.)

19:30-20:00

INFO ABOUT ACT BREAK WORKSHOP

Right after the act ends, inform all the players of the programme for the act break workshop, and where to meet up with their debrief groups.

Make sure to brief the players with characters who died about the process for making new characters and getting into new social circles and core groups.

11:15-12:15

DEBRIEF GROUP SESSION

Type: Debrief in smaller groups, same as before, with same facilitator.

Keywords: Deroleing, Reflection

Focus: The debrief group session is to get out of character and reflect upon the act just played, in order to use it in the rest of the act break workshop.

Gather in the five debrief groups – the same groups as in the pre-larp workshop, with the same facilitators.

Together with the players, you run three rounds of different reflections, which reflect on the act just played. Ask in the group if someone wants to start each round. The players should not comment on each others' answers, but give them space to describe their feelings for themselves. (Of course, the answers can relate to each other.)

The reflection rounds are:

1. Round: "I have been playing xxx, and now I am yyy."
This is to transition from the character to the player, and land together.
2. Round: How am I doing now?
This should be short, maybe just one sentence. After all players have had their turn, you can elaborate if you wish.
3. Round: Significant moments for my character.
Describe a significant moment in the last act for your character.
Keep the answers short and concrete.

12:15-13:00

CREATING NEW CHARACTERS AND DOWNTIME

People whose character died get help from facilitators with creating new characters. See chapter 2.8, about creating new characters, for details of the process.

The other players have some downtime during this time.

13:00-13:20

1983 FICTION BRIEF

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Fiction brief, Inspirational material*

Focus: *The brief is a way to give an overview of how life is in New York in regard to the gay community and the HIV and AIDS epidemic in 1983.*

This should be more or less read out as written, and is a briefing for Act 2, which takes place in 1983:

1982 July 27, the term AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is proposed at a meeting in Washington of gay community leaders, federal bureaucrats, and the CDC.

A number of AIDS-specific voluntary organisations have been set up in the USA. The writer Larry Kramer was one of the founders of the organisation Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). They organise fundraisers in the gay community and try to spread awareness of the disease. They are not successful in getting the attention of the city government in doing more to help seriously ill AIDS patients, whom the New York hospitals are ill equipped to handle. Unlike in San Francisco, a separate AIDS ward in one hospital is not established in New York. Some health personnel refuse to work with AIDS patients, and it is common that they are treated in full protective gear.

The Mayor of New York, Ed Koch, avoids the issue; and very few resources are allocated to dealing with the steadily increasing crisis. President Ronald Reagan does not even mention the word AIDS.

In December a 20-month old child who had received multiple transfusions of blood and blood products dies from infections related to AIDS. Also in December, the CDC report the first cases of possible mother-to-child transmission of AIDS. By the end of 1982, many more people are taking notice of this new disease, as it is clearer that a much wider group of people are going to be affected.

In May 1983, doctors at the Institut Pasteur in France report that they have isolated a new virus, which they suggest might be the cause of AIDS. Little notice is taken of this announcement at the time, but a sample of the virus is sent to the CDC.

It is clear that HIV is spread through sex, but how contagious the disease is is uncertain. In May 1983 the pamphlet "How to have sex in an Epidemic: One Approach" is self-published by Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen. The first printing is quickly sold out, and demand is high in a community hungry for advice and information. But many distrust the information or choose to ignore it.

At this point, you know more people who have died of AIDS. And there are those who you suspect or know are sick. The ones who are most neglected are those from the most marginalized populations: trans people, sex workers, and people of color. There is also a "straight epidemic" among people of Haitian descent and their sex partners in the New York area. A few health professionals working in affected communities have tried to raise the alarm about this aspect of the epidemic, but little or no attention is being paid to this.

In this act you should play on the fear of being infected. Those characters who consider themselves straight should be wary of gay and other queer people possibly being infectious. And characters can shift between being paranoid and reckless; possibly on the same night.

13:20 - 13:45

ANXIETY EXERCISE

Type: Workshop whole group

Keywords: Mood, Fear of death, Anxiety

Focus: This exercise is to get a sense for the anxiety and fear that surrounds the gay community and the unknown about the AIDS epidemic growing in New York.

This is a mood exercise where the feeling of the situation is more important than interacting with the right relations. Give the following instructions to the players:

- 🕒 Everyone is present for a cultural opening in NYC.
- 🕒 Play on anxiety for getting infected while socializing with different people.
- 🕒 Then stop talking, and instead pick a sound of anxiety and use that in the interaction with others.

13:45 - 14:30

LUNCH WITH A SOCIAL CIRCLE

Type: Interaction in social circles

Keywords: Relations, Social groups

Focus: Players have to actively decide on which social circle to be part of in Act 2. They can stay in the same or change to a new one.

Put names of social circles on the tables in the diner.

Then you should instruct the players to do the following:

- 🕒 The players should first decide if they want to change social circles and or stay with the same.
- 🕒 Then go and sit with that social circle.

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- ☞ It is the responsibility of the old crowd that the new characters are included in the crowd.
- ☞ Find an in for the new character(s) – establish which people have become that character's connections in the social circle.

14:30 - 15:30

CORE GROUP EXERCISE

Type: *Workshop with core groups*

Keywords: *Close relations, Character narratives*

Focus: *The core groups are a big part of the characters' narrative. This exercise is to consider if it is still relevant for the players to stay in the same core groups, or to change it.*

Give the following instructions to the players:

- ☞ Gather in old core groups (in one large space so people can move if necessary).
- ☞ You have a maximum of 10 minutes to decide if it remains intact or not.
 - ☞ IF YES it is intact or partly intact, then start talking: but remain close by, you might get new group members to connect to your group.
 - ☞ IF NO and you break up the core group and:
 - ☞ you don't know where to go – find a facilitator to help guide you;
 - ☞ I'm not in the same core group but I know where to go – go there directly.

When the core groups have settled, they should go through the questions listed below. Give the following message to all the players in plenum:

In the old or new core groups you do this. We recommend that you only go on until 15.30, and if you finish early you can talk to other important relations. You also have time before the game to talk to each other, even if you are not in the same core group. We start again at 17.30.

Questions for the core group – act break 1:

- ☉ Briefly: What has happened during the year – and how has it affected my relationships with the others in the group?
- ☉ What has just happened before this starts?
- ☉ How would you like to play with each other? (Style, things I would like to happen, etc.)
- ☉ Play one scene that constitutes the feeling for your group / something important that has just happened.

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15:30 - 17:30

BREAK BEFORE GAME START

Duration: 2 hours

Type: Self-organized time

Keywords: Last preparations, Getting into costumes

Focus: Time before the larp starts, where players can take care of themselves and get into costumes for the larp.

In the break players should do what they need to get ready for the start of the larp. Including resting, getting into costume, talking with relations, etc. This is self-organized, but it is a good thing to remind people to be mindful of different needs in this period, and not take up all of the other players' time.

17:30

ACT START



Workshop 3

SECOND ACT BREAK

The function of the workshop between Act 2 and Act 3 is for the players to reflect on their story and experiences from the second act, and to be ready to play the next act – a year later – even better, and maybe more intensely. Hearing stories from other players may also give a richer experience of the larp. Both act breaks are designed to enable the players to steer their story and to give them the opportunity to be co-creative of their own narrative and relations.

Remember: 1984, Act 3, is all about *Friendship*, and during this workshop the players are encouraged to find ways to include this in their play.

PROGRAM FOR WORKSHOP 3:

- 🕒 Gather in the debrief groups.
- 🕒 (Create new characters for the players whose characters died during the last act). Free time to talk with relations, and think of what happened between 1983 and 1984.
- 🕒 Fiction brief for the next act.
- 🕒 Meet with social circles during lunch. There will be new social circles to join this year.
- 🕒 Meet with core groups. (Stay with the story and group, change the story, change group.)

11.00 - 11:15

INFO ABOUT ACT BREAK WORKSHOP

Right after the act ends, inform all the players of the programme for the act break workshop, and where to meet up with their debrief groups.

Make sure to brief the players with characters who died about the process for making new characters and getting into new social circles and core groups.

11:15 - 11:45

DEBRIEF GROUP SESSION

Type: *Debrief in smaller groups*

Keywords: *Deroleing, Reflection*

Focus: *The debrief group session is to get out of character and reflect upon the act just played, in order to use it in the rest of the act break workshop.*

Gather in the five debrief groups – the same groups as in the pre-larp workshop, with the same facilitators.

Together with the players, run three rounds of different reflections, which reflect on the act just played. Ask in the group if someone wants to start each round. The players should not comment on each others' answers, but should give them space to describe their feelings for themselves (of course, the answers can relate to each other).

The reflection rounds are:

1. Round: "I have been playing xxx, and now I am yyy."
This is to transition from character to player, and to be present as players during the debrief.
2. Round: How am I doing now?
This should be short, maybe just one sentence. After all players have had their turn, you can elaborate if you wish.
3. Round: Significant moments for my character.
Describe a significant moment in the last act for your character.
Keep the answers short and concrete.

19:30-20:00

CREATING NEW CHARACTERS AND DOWNTIME

People whose character died get help from facilitators with creating new characters (see *Creating new characters*), about creating new characters, for details of the process.

Meanwhile the other players have some downtime.

13:00-13:15

1984 FICTION BRIEF

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Fiction brief, Inspirational material*

Focus: *The brief is a way to give an overview of how life in New York is in regard to the gay community and the HIV and AIDS epidemic in 1984.*

This should be more or less read out as written, and is a briefing for the 3rd act, which takes place in 1984:

In the summer of 1983, the People Living with AIDS movement is born out of organizers of support groups in New York and California meeting at a conference in Denver and establishing the Denver principles:

We condemn attempts to label us as 'victims,' a term that implies defeat; and we are only occasionally 'patients,' a term that implies passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others. We are 'People With AIDS'.

'People With AIDS' recommendations for all people:

Support us in our struggle against those who would fire us from our jobs, evict us from our homes, refuse to touch us, or separate us from our loved ones, our community or our peers; since available evidence does not support the view that AIDS can be spread by casual, social contact.

In San Francisco, all the gay bathhouses and private sex clubs were closed. That didn't happen in New York, but several of them closed anyway due to a drop in the number of visitors.

There was an increase in homophobic violence across the country, caused by gays being blamed for spreading AIDS. These attacks were mostly only covered by the gay magazines and not mainstream media.

On April 23rd 1984, the United States Health Secretary Margaret Heckler announced that there would soon be a commercially available test able to detect the HIV virus with "essentially 100 percent certainty". The first version of the test had a higher degree of false positives and negatives than later versions: and both The New York Native and many activists warned people against the test, as there was widespread worry about government and insurance companies getting access to lists of people infected.

Researchers did a study of antibodies in high-risk populations, and estimated that 65% of sexually-active gay men in San Francisco were infected. The number in New York at the same time is likely to be of the same magnitude.

Some politicians and religious leaders called for mass sackings of gay people from health care jobs, or internment of those infected fueling the resistance to the test. Some clinics however met this by offering anonymous tests to give patients confidential information on their status.

The test would become available in 1985, but in our story, we have moved that forward: so, when we meet for the 4th of July party in 1984, the test has been generally available for some months already. So you as a character can choose if you have taken the test or not, in a meta-scene that we will be doing in the beginning of the next act.

More and more AIDS patients are seriously ill at home, and volunteer buddy programmes are started to help and comfort sufferers. Many health care institutions refuse to take AIDS patients. Funeral homes refuse to take care of the bodies of people who have died of AIDS.

HIV prevention campaigns become much more visible in the gay community, and the guidance given is more specific and given with greater certainty. With penetrative sex, use condom and lubricant. Do not swallow semen. Kissing and non-penetrative forms of sex carry little risk of infection.

13:15 - 13:20

BRIEFING ON HIV TESTING SCENE

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Briefing, HIV testing scene, metascene*

Focus: *Briefing on how to participate in the HIV testing scene, and how to decide whether or not to take the test.*

At the briefing for Act 3 the players should be briefed about the test scene, what will happen, and how to participate in it. It's especially important to mention the way that the test is performed, and how it is possible to opt out of this part. See *Metascene - HIV testing scene* for more information.

Important information to give the players about the test scene is:

- 🕒 When and where the test scene is taking place.
- 🕒 How to, afterwards, play on the scene.
- 🕒 The test method and how to opt out.
- 🕒 How to act towards others present in the scene.

It is important that only a few players choose to take the test, as taking a HIV test at that time was still highly controversial. Most people would be afraid of doing it, and would rather not know the result: as there was no treatment at the time, and being confirmed as HIV-positive carried a lot of stigma. But some of the characters probably will have taken the test. Players should decide for themselves if taking the test when it becomes available makes sense for their character.

13:20 - 13:45

THE TRUST GAME

Type: Workshop – whole group

Keywords: Friendship, Trust, Comfort

Focus: This exercise is to create a sense of trusting others to lead you the right way. It is to build the sense of friendship for the 3rd act.

Exercise instructions:

- 🕒 Get together in your core groups from Act 2.
- 🕒 One person closes their eyes and is guided by the others around in the space.
- 🕒 Move slowly and keep physical contact at all times.
- 🕒 Make sure the person feels safe and guided.
- 🕒 Change around, so that all in the core group get to be guided.

13:45 - 14:30

LUNCH WITH A SOCIAL CIRCLE

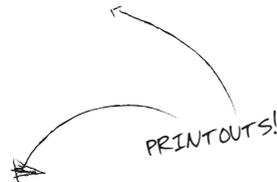
Type: Interaction in social circles

Keywords: Relations, Social groups

Focus: Players have to actively decide on which social circle to be part of in Act 3. They can stay in the same circle or change to a new one.

Put names of social circles on the tables in the diner. This year there are two new groups:

- 🕒 Radical faeries
- 🕒 AIDS activists



Then you should instruct the players to do the following:

- 🕒 The players should first decide if they want to change social circles and or stay with the same.
- 🕒 Then go and sit with that social circle.
- 🕒 It is the responsibility of the old crowd that the new characters are included in the crowd.
- 🕒 Find an in for the new character(s) – establish which people have become that character's connections in the social circle.

14:30 - 15:30

CORE GROUP EXERCISE

Type: Workshop with core groups

Keywords: Close relations, Character narratives

Focus: The core groups are a big part of the characters' narratives. This exercise is to consider if it is still relevant for the players to stay in the same core groups, or if they should change.

Give the following instructions to the players:

- ☉ Gather in old core groups (in one large space so people can move if necessary).
- ☉ You have a maximum of 10 minutes to decide if it remains intact or not.
 - ☉ IF YES it is intact or partly intact, then start talking: but remain close by, you might get new group members to connect to your group.
 - ☉ IF NO and you break up the core group and:
 - ☉ you don't know where to go – find a facilitator to help guide you;
 - ☉ I'm not in the same core group but I know where to go – go there directly.

When the core groups have settled, they should go through the questions listed below. Give the following message to all the players in plenum:

In the old or new core groups you do this. We recommend that you only go on until 15.30, and if you finish early you can talk to other important relations. You also have time before the game to talk to each other, even if you are not in the same core group. We start again at 17.30.

Questions for the core group act break 2

PRINTOUT IN APPENDIX

- ☉ Briefly: What has happened during the year – and how has it affected my relationships with the others in the group?
- ☉ What has just happened before this starts?

- 🕒 How would you like to play with each other? (Style, things I would like to happen, etc.)
- 🕒 Play one scene that constitutes the feeling for your group / something important that has just happened.

15:30 - 17:30

BREAK BEFORE GAME START

Duration: 2 hours.**Type:** Self-organized time**Keywords:** Last preparations, Getting into costumes**Focus:** Time before the larp starts, where players can take care of themselves and get into costumes for the larp.

In the break players should do what they need to get ready for the start of the larp. Including resting, getting into costume, talking with relations, etc. This is self-organized, but it is a good thing to remind people to be mindful of different needs in this period, and not take up all of the other players' time.

17:30

ACT START

18:00

AFTER FLAG-SCENE IN START OF

ACT 3: HIV-TEST IN BLACKBOX

See Meta-scene: *HIV-testing, found in Scripts and Scenes* for the specifics about how to run it.

Workshop 4

POST-LARP WORKSHOP

The post-larp workshop is focused on deroleing and debriefing the experience. This allows the players to leave the 80s and their stories behind; but at the same time to keep any insights and experiences that they want to, when they go back into the real-life world. This can be helped along by talks that contextualize the players' experience, with focus on the larp's themes.

After the larp has ended, and people have had some time to cry, hug, and ease down from the experience, it is time to wrap up the larp and relations, come properly out of character, and have the personal aftercare that each individual needs. This workshop script includes suggestions for how you can do that, but feel free to use your own proven methods. Be aware that some players will need to talk the experience through, while others will need space for themselves.

PROGRAM FOR POST-LARP WORKSHOP:

- 🕒 Deroleing exercise
- 🕒 Debrief in groups
- 🕒 Information about leaving and selfcare
- 🕒 Contextualization
- 🕒 Exercise: Letter to your character

11:00 - 11:30

TAKING OFF COSTUMES RITUAL

Type: Deroleing exercise

Keywords: Deroleing, Ritual

Focus: Parting with the character right after the larp, by physically removing a part of the costume that symbolizes the character.

This is a short exercise that should be done right after the larp ends, near the funeral scene area.

The exercise is the following:

- ☉ All participants **stand in a circle and take off something** – items of clothing, jewellery, possession, etc – that is part of their character.
- ☉ This is **done at people's own pace** – when you feel ready, go into the middle and place the thing on the ground.
- ☉ **Remain in the circle** until everyone has placed their thing in the middle.
- ☉ Then everyone **holds hands in the ring**, and sends a friendship handshake around, where a hand squish is sent like a wave around the circle. This ends the exercise.

The function of the exercise is to start the deroleing right after the larp has ended, as a way to start the process of the players getting back into themselves and saying goodbye to the characters they have played. This can be done by many different exercises that focus on getting back into one's own body and letting go of the character.

11:30 - 12:30

DEBRIEF IN GROUPS

Type: Debrief in smaller groups

Keywords: Deroleing, Reflection, Ending the larp experience

Focus: The debrief group session is to get out of character and think about both the act just played and the larp as a whole, in order to reflect upon the whole experience. This is the only debrief session at the larp.

Players gather in the five debrief groups – the same groups as in every workshop, with the same facilitators.

Together with the players, the facilitator runs four rounds of different reflections, which reflect on the act just played and on the larp as a whole.

Ask in the group if someone wants to start each round. The players should not comment on each other's answers, but should give them space to describe their feelings for themselves (of course, the answers can relate to each other).

Reflection debrief:

1. **Round:** Each player says; "I have been playing xxx and now I am yyy". This is to transition from the character to the player, and is an introduction step for the four reflection rounds.
2. **Round:** How am I doing now?
This should be short, maybe just one sentence. After all players have had their turn, some players can elaborate if you wish.
3. **Round:** Significant moments for my character.
Describe a significant moment in the last act for your character. Keep the answers short and concrete.
4. **Round:** One thing I would like to leave and not take with me. Here the players should focus on experiences they want to separate from themselves.
5. **Round:** One thing I would like to take with me from the experience of having played my character at this larp. This should focus on what the players can take with them into their real life.

DEBRIEF BUDDIES

If the players want to find a debrief buddy to check in with a couple of weeks after the larp, this should be facilitated at the end of the debrief group session. This is optional, and comes with the following recommendations:

- ☉ We recommend you **exchange contact information** with someone here in the debrief group IF you want to.
- ☉ We then recommend you to **check up on each other** in a couple of weeks. It could be via an email, a facebook message, a phone call, or a physical meeting.

Inform the players that they are now "JaLL alumni", and they should join the community on Facebook when returning home.

If needed, the facilitator can check up on specific players who need some guidance around landing from the experience. This is the best opportunity to do so, as the rest of the program is more individual, and the facilitator has followed this small group of players throughout the larp and can have built a trustful connection with them.

13:30 - 14:30

LUNCH

14:30 - 14:45

INFORMATION ON PROGRAM

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Practical information, Aftercare, Personal needs*

Focus: *This is to give all players practical information for the rest of the experience until they leave. Here also some guidelines are shared on how to respect each other's boundaries, and on selfcare.*

Right after lunch the players should be given information about the rest of the post-larp program, as the time after this is more loosely structured. This is also a good time to thank the diner staff, the players, and the organizers of the larp.

Here is the information that is important to convey to the players after they have played *Just a Little Lovin'*. More specific practical information about cleanup, transportation, the afterparty, and rules for the location are not included, as this varies from place to place.

This should include practical information about

- ☉ The rest of the day and next day.
- ☉ The afterparty, if there is one.
- ☉ Transportation and leaving the location.

INFORMATION ABOUT LARP BLUES

Just a Little Lovin' is an emotional and possibly draining larp that affects its players in different ways. This talk should be about how to best practise selfcare, and more immediately focus on creating a safe space for all players in the post-larp period.

Here are some focus points that you may include, but of course these should be adjusted accordingly to the specific run – both regarding the player group’s composition and the organizers’ experiences:

- ☉ **Awareness of each other:** We are now on the other side of the larp, and people you have played with are slowly coming back to themselves. Everyone is more sensitive and vulnerable in this period, so be extra aware and forgiving towards each other.
- ☉ **Awareness of different people’s needs:** After the larp the players are going to need different things to cope with the experience. Some want to take a nap, some want to talk with the people they played with, and some want to dance! There is no correct way to react, but be mindful that your needs might not correspond with the needs of others.
- ☉ **Ask if you need something:** Be extra careful to ask before doing in this post-larp period. That means ask people if they want to engage in different activities with you – like talking, going for a walk, hug, etc. – respect a ‘no’, and don’t ask for an explanation or a promise about a later encounter, unless the person brings it up themselves.
- ☉ **Be open to others if you want to:** No-one owes it to others to be available and open to conversations or other things. It is important to first of all do what you need, and take care of those needs before accommodating the needs of others. Bear this in mind also in the period after you return home.

Remind the players that the safety team is still in place during the post-larp time, and can help with further debriefing or other needs.

14 : 45

LETTER WRITING EXERCISE

Type: Solo exercise

Keywords: Getting out of character, Character/player relation, Debrief

Focus: An exercise done individually, where the player reflects upon their experience and the narrative of the character they have played. It can be done throughout the post-larp time.

This is a voluntary letter-writing exercise, for players who feel that it makes sense to do so as a part of their debrief for the larp. The exercise can be done whenever it suits the players, and the instructions for it should be given at the end of the information meeting after lunch.

It is a good idea to have a specific wall for the letters. Here you can hang up the instructions for the exercise, and have paper and pens available for players who want to participate.

Instructions for the exercise:

- 🕒 Paper and pens are available by the letter wall.
- 🕒 Take 30 minutes to write a letter from you as a player to your character (in English).
- 🕒 Hang it on the wall if you want to, or keep it for yourself.

16:30

CONTEXTUALIZATION**Type:** Talk**Keywords:** Contextualization to real stories, AIDS/HIV, Cancer**Focus:** This is composed of short talks from people who have experiences that relate to the larp's themes and narrative. This is to contextualize the players' larp experiences.

This is an optional part of the post-larp program, but it can be quite rewarding to the players to hear personal talks about similar experiences to the ones they have played.

The contextualization speakers can be people invited specifically to talk about a subject or it could be organizers or players who want to share their personal story – often there are some people in the player group with relevant experiences. The subject of the talks could be about HIV/AIDS today, cancer, or other topics which relate to the themes from the larp, that the organizers want to highlight into reflections for the players.

The talks should be fairly short – max of 15 minutes – and it should be optional for the players to participate, so as to take into account people's different needs.



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*Scripts
and
Scenes*

Design and Function

The act end scenes are a kind of metascenes, which represent the development of the HIV epidemic in New York and the funerals of the year between this and the next 4th of July.

The scenes have a layer of metaphysics, because they are driven by the presence of two “Bureaucratic Angels” that act out very scripted scenes - and Death itself is present in the scenes. It is as if the characters at the end of each act experience a dream-scene, where the fear of death takes centre stage.

The end scenes consist of three parts:

- ☉ the **Lottery of Death** scene, where every character is faced with the changes of getting sick with AIDS,
- ☉ the **Fear of Death** scene, where the ones who are chosen in the lottery are experiencing a scare of getting sick with HIV or dying of AIDS,
- ☉ the **Funeral** scene, where the community mourns the characters who died of AIDS that year.

The manuscripted scenes are acted out every morning for the act to end - therefore there are three such scenes, one for each year. The whole larp ends right after the last one.

FUNCTION OF THE ACT ENDS

The overall function of these scenes are for all players to feel the fear of death - no matter which character you play. The scene randomizes who gets sick or dies, by the use of an actual lottery where the tickets have names on them. This ensures that all characters have a risk of not

making it through to the next act. The elements of these scenes play into the unease of not knowing what is going to happen and players just having to go along with it. This is also why the third act scene is different from the two others - to keep the element of fear and unpredictability.

The Lottery of Death is designed to portray how randomly the spread of HIV hits; your sexual behavior may result in more lottery tickets, but it is still up to luck whether or not you get sick. Furthermore, if you do get infected with HIV, it is not certain how the virus will affect you - whether you will live with the virus without symptoms or get AIDS and die from it. The lottery has some variables and rules to create a development that is somewhat realistic. This includes rules about who can get sick with HIV and dies of AIDS each year; for instance, lesbians cannot die the first year.

The funeral scenes between two acts symbolise the increasing number of funerals the young gay community in real-life NY had to attend.

METACHARACTERS

Three different characters are part of all three acts. If you use the Doctor, that character is only present in the first and second acts. The characters are heavily scripted, and are part of the feel of the scene.

THE BUREAUCRATIC ANGELS

The Angels are in *Just a Little Lovin'* portrayed as a kind of bureaucrats that work with the random process in which people die. They are two among many in this profession. When the AIDS pandemic hits New York, they have to take care of "the Lottery of Death" that determines who gets sick and who dies. They work for Death, and are used to working with the randomness of the Lottery of Death, but they are saddened by how young the people are who die of AIDS.

The Angels are dressed in black suits with ties, black shoes and white shirts. The first year they are well put together and more official; then they get stressed the second year, and are exhausted the third year. This should also be portrayed in their costume - they get more and more tired and messy over the years.

DEATH

Death in JaLL is portrayed as a quite neutral figure. Death only talks very rarely and is the one holding the funerals for the ones who die of AIDS. Death should appear regal and somewhat above the concerns of humans. Death stays the same constant through the years. You may as organizer find your own queer twist on how to portray Death.

THE DOCTOR

The Doctor is a symbolic character, which is used in an optional scene where the people who did not get HIV or die of AIDS still get some sort of health issue. The Doctor should be dressed in a doctor coat at the least, and may have other attributes associated with a doctor. Same costume as in the HIV test metascene in the third act.

LABORATORY REPORT

TEST RESULT

HIV POSITIVE

HIV NEGATIVE

HIV-1 DNA TEST

IF THIS IS MARKED HIV POSITIVE USE PATIENT'S APPROPRIATE
LA PROTECTIVE FOR OTHER IMMUNODEFICIENT STATES
FOLLOWED BY THE HIV SEROLOGICAL CHART SECTION (1012)

Preparations

Before the larp it is important to get coffins for the funeral scene - this may be symbolic home-made boxes, or actual coffins. For the real coffins, you can often get a collaboration with a local church or undertaker to donate them after use, and get coffins with minor manufacturing defects. Remember that players come in different sizes. In regards to material for the scenes, please see the practical production section. It is also important to cast three people to play Death and Death's two Bureaucratic Angels, and have them prepare for those characters.

In the morning before the end scene, there are some last minute preparations that need to be done. Organizers, besides the three playing Angels and Death, need to do these preparations. It is important that no one sees these characters before the scene starts - this applies to all of the three act end scenes.

Preparations for the Lottery of Death:

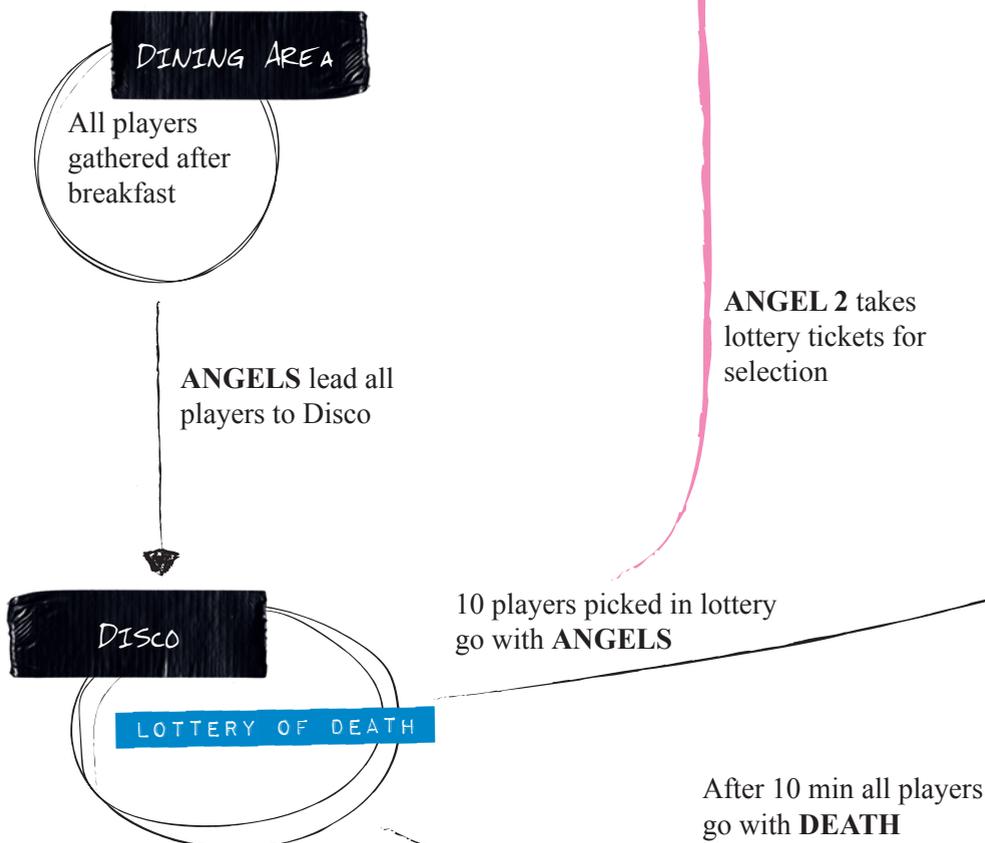
- ☉ The three people playing the two Bureaucratic Angels and Death put on their costumes and prepare them according to each year. You can also have an extra person in a doctor's suit for an additional optional scene for some players.
- ☉ Checklist for props: Hat, lottery tickets (print and cut out designed lottery tickets), pens + optional extra stuff each year to symbolize the mood of the year.
- ☉ The lottery of Death scene can be played either in the diner or in the disco. If played in the disco, create a morning after feel in the room: let in some light, put empty cans around, have music ready to be put on a loop (*First Light* by Brian Eno).

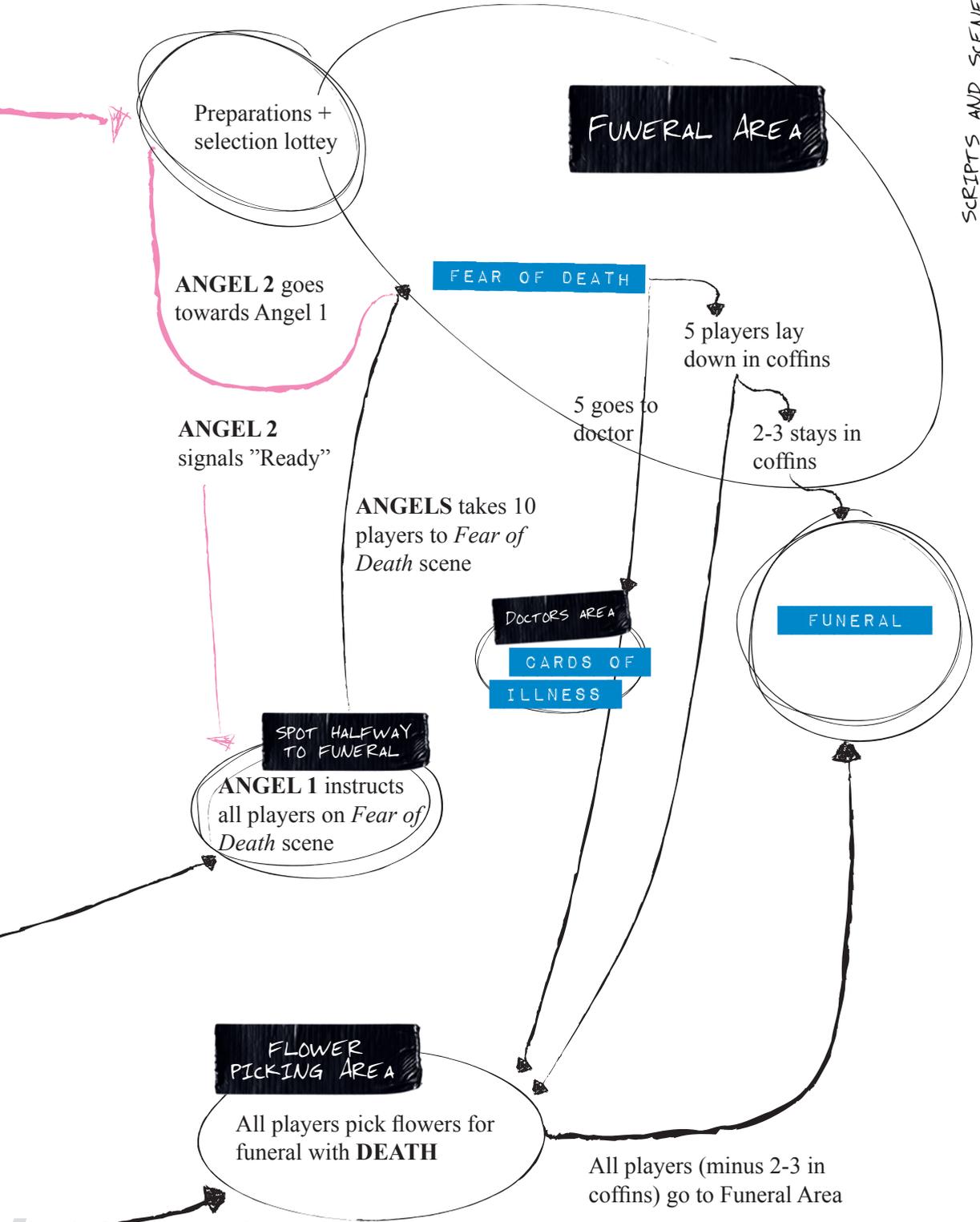
Preparations at the funeral site (2 people minimum):

- ☉ Five coffins are placed at the funeral site. Have lids ready (one first year, three second year)
- ☉ Check that the funeral programs (print out pre-design programs) + pen (to write name on funeral program) are ready at the funeral site.
- ☉ Set up wireless speakers. Check the sound by putting on funeral music (Chopin's Funeral March), Church Bells and *Just a Little Lovin'*.
- ☉ One person is in the chapel in a doctor suit (if using this option).

Act End Scene 1 & 2

MOVEMENTS





Act End Scene 3

MOVEMENTS

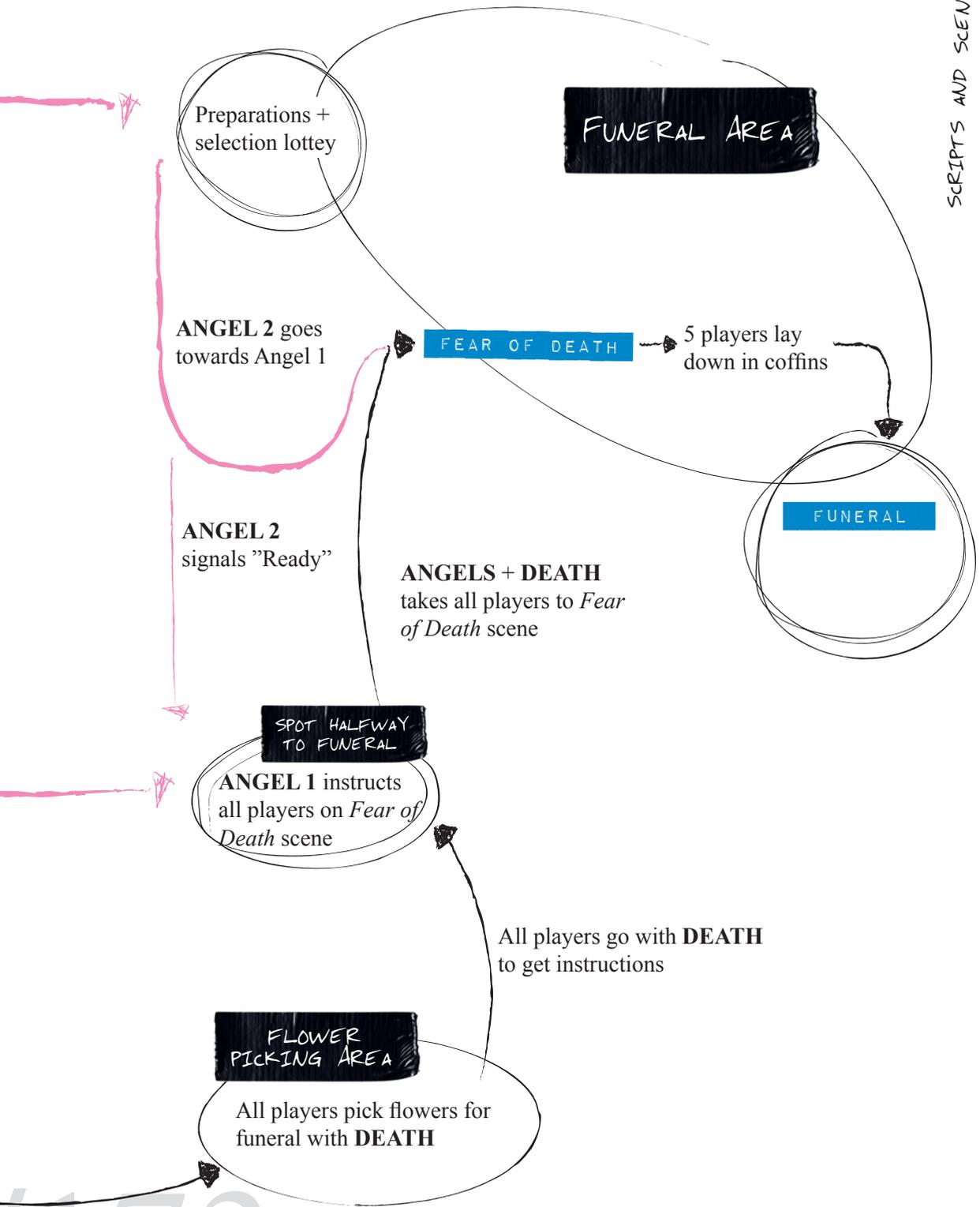


ANGEL 2 takes lottery tickets for selection

ANGEL 1

ANGELS go towards Funeral Area

After 10 min all players go with DEATH



Preparations + selection lottery

FUNERAL AREA

ANGEL 2 goes towards Angel 1

FEAR OF DEATH

5 players lay down in coffins

FUNERAL

ANGEL 2 signals "Ready"

ANGELS + DEATH takes all players to *Fear of Death* scene

SPOT HALFWAY TO FUNERAL

ANGEL 1 instructs all players on *Fear of Death* scene

All players go with **DEATH** to get instructions

FLOWER PICKING AREA

All players pick flowers for funeral with **DEATH**



Scripts of Act End

The ways the act ends differ are marked in the script. Act End 3 has a different structure from the two others. The whole Act End scene takes about 1,5 hours, and should take place right after the players have had breakfast. The players should be informed in the workshop that they need to be in the dining area at this time, so no one misses the Act End Scene.

SCRIPT: LOTTERY OF DEATH

The Lottery of Death starts as soon as the Bureaucratic Angels walk into the dining area. The first time this happens, it can take some time for the players to realize that the scene starts, but the best effect is if the presence of the Angels creates silence by itself. The entire scene can be played out in the diner or you can decide to move the players from the diner to the disco to do the lottery there. Advantages of doing it in the disco can be that the players get a couple of minutes to adjust to the scene and might pay better attention to what the Angels are saying. They can also choose which characters to sit beside during the scene and the location gives more scenography possibilities. Advantages of doing it in the diner can be that the scene gets a less unreal and abrupt feel when not moving them from where they are eating breakfast. For some players it will also be an advantage that they can play the scene seated around a table where it is easier to write on the lottery tickets.

1. If playing the scene in the diner the Angels should tell everyone to stay seated where they are. If playing the scene in the disco they should tell everyone to come with them to the disco and find a place to sit. The person playing Death should at the same time hide nearby, if possible somewhere where they can still follow the scene - to be ready to join the scene later.

2. Then the Lottery of Death scene takes place. This is a scripted scene, where the players put tickets in the Lottery of Death - 1 to 5 - depending on how their sexual behavior has been. The full script for each year is at the end of this chapter.

For each year the mood of the scene changes, as the AIDS epidemic evolves. This should be incorporated into how the Angels play the scripted scenes.

Mood for each year:

- ☉ Year 1: The party is over
- ☉ Year 2: Sorrow/In a hurry, lots to do.
- ☉ Year 3: Exhausted. Given up

Resumé of the Lottery of Death scenes:

Everybody gets lottery tickets and pens, and puts 1-5 tickets with their name on back in a hat.

1st and 2nd year: Hank¹ is called to draw 10 (15 in year 2)² different names from the hat. Hank draws lottery tickets one by one and reads aloud the names on them. If the person has been picked before, just lay aside the ticket. All names are delivered to the Angels before leaving. The Angels are waiting by the door.

Everyone who is called is asked to stand up, and wait until everyone is standing. The Angels then ask them to follow them, and lead the chosen ones towards the funeral area.

3rd year: After all tickets are collected in the hat, the Angels leave with the hat with the lottery tickets in it, without drawing any names before they leave. The players are told to wait and follow Death when they come.

3. Hank stays with the remaining people - which in year 3 is all the players - and tells them: "Wait, don't talk, just think: What happened with you and your friends during the next year?" Hank or another organizer puts on music on low volume on loop (*First Light* by Brian Eno) in the room where the lottery takes place.
4. After approximately 10 minutes, or after receiving a signal on for instance a cellphone from the organizers at the funeral site, Death

1 You can also assign another character to do this task.

2 You can choose to keep this at 10 in year 2 as well, in particular if you are running the larp with fewer than the full amount of players. This manuscript for the Angels of Death uses 15 as the number for year 2 so remember to change that if deciding to keep it at 10 characters drawn for year 2.

comes out and stands in front of the players.

Death instructs the players: “Follow me.”

Everybody stands up and follows Death and stops on the way, some distance from the funeral area.

Death then instructs the players: “Find a flower/a leaf/ a branch to show your respect, lay them down on the ones you have lost.”

2nd and 3rd year: Death adds; “You need even more flowers this year than the year before.”

5. When everyone (1st year: 9 persons, 2nd year: 7 persons) that still lives has returned, Death leads everyone into the funeral area. (See “The Funeral script.”) The person playing Death should keep track of how many have returned.

In year 3, everyone enters the chapel/ the funeral site at the same time, after having picked flowers together.

SCRIPT: FEAR OF DEATH

(FOR PLAYERS CHOSEN BY THE LOTTERY)

This scene is for the players that get picked in the Lottery of Death year 1 and 2. In year 3 all players take part in the scene, after they have picked flowers with Death.

SCRIPT FOR YEAR 1 AND 2:

- Ⓒ The chosen follow the Angels to the funeral area. Halfway to the funeral area, at a place where you can't see the area itself, the Angels stop. One goes to the funeral site and does a second lottery (explained further down), and the other Angel explains to the players what will happen at the site;

“You will now enter Fear of Death. You will enter in silence, and stay silent as long as you are there. In this “chapel” you will find five coffins. Search for your name in the coffins. If you see your name on a funeral program, lay down in that coffin. If you don't find your name, return back here, outside. If you're in a coffin, and the lid is put on, you are dead. If your coffin does not get a lid on it,

and you hear the church bells, we will tell you to rise up again. Your character is not dead, but the player now knows that the character is infected with HIV, even though the character might not know it.”

- ④ The Angel that went to prepare the scene should then give a signal to mark that the players may come to the funeral site.
- ④ At the funeral site, the players are asked with a non-verbal handgesture to approach the coffins. Here, they look at the funeral programs in the coffins. The people whose names are written on programs lie down. The Angels should remove the funeral programs from the coffins as the players lie down, as the funeral programs of those who die will be given to Death to read during the funeral service.
- ④ The Angels pick up one coffin lid at a time and go from coffin to coffin - back and forth - and pause 5 seconds over each person. Then place the lid on the people who are dead (this has been settled before by lottery.) This is repeated until all the characters who are dead have a lid on their coffin (two people in year 1 and three people in year 2).
- ④ The sound of church bells is played three times.
- ④ Then the ones who survived are helped out of the coffins and sent back to meet up with the players that are picking flowers with Death. Death should let the newly arrived get a chance to pick some flowers, and then slowly begin to lead the group towards the funeral area.
- ④ The lids of the coffins of the characters that died are removed and the empty coffins are removed. The players of the dead characters remain in the coffins. Then the Angels wait to receive the group coming with Death.

SCRIPT FOR YEAR 3:

- ④ The Angels go to the funeral area before the players and Death. One stays halfway there to meet the players with Death. The other goes to the funeral site with the lottery tickets in the hat.
- ④ The players follow Death towards the funeral site, pick flowers, and then at the halfway mark meet with one Angel, who explains what is about to happen:
 “You will now enter Fear of Death. In there you will find coffins.

Walk past the coffins and look into each one of them to see if your name is there. You will walk in a line following Death. No matter what you see, you will keep walking until you join the funeral congregation.”

- ☉ Then the players follow Death and the Angel in a line to the funeral site.
Everyone is guided to enter the funeral site in one long line behind Death. When all characters have walked past the coffins to see what names are placed in them, they all form the funeral congregation - including those whose names are in the coffins - standing in a half circle facing the coffins. The Angels help with navigating people into the right place.

SCRIPT: FEAR OF DEATH

(FOR BUREAUCRATIC ANGELS)

Deciding who ends up in the coffins at the funeral area:

YEAR 1:

2 characters die in year 1.

- ☉ Five of the 10 names are drawn randomly. Those five are the ones ending up in a coffin.
- ☉ From those 5 names, draw two - those characters die and the funeral programs with their names are placed in coffins number 2 and 4.
- ☉ The funeral programs for the characters that do not die, and who don't get the lid put on their coffin, are placed in coffins number 1,3 and 5.

Two special rules for year 1:

1. Lesbian characters should not be among the five characters in the coffins - redraw if this happens.
2. The two characters that die should not be Mr. T women or characters from Saratoga - redraw if that happens.

Note: From this system the Angels will know which coffins to place the lid on, symbolizing the character's death, without having to talk to anyone at the funeral area: The first year it's coffins 2 and 4, and year 2, it's coffins 1, 3 and 5. Therefore, the whole scene with placing the players in coffins and placing the lids on them should be done without talking - only with the music playing. Practicing this as part of the on-site preparation is advised.

YEAR 2 :

Three characters die in year 2.

- ☉ Five of the 15 names are drawn randomly.
- ☉ Then draw until you have a total of three characters who die. And place their funeral programs in coffins 1, 3 and 5.
- ☉ The funeral programs for the characters that do not die, and who don't get the lid put on their coffin, are placed in coffins 2 and 4.

Special rule for year 2:

- ☉ If one or more of the 5 names drawn were in a coffin last year, then that character is among the three who die.

YEAR 3 :

Draw until you have 5 names. All 5 characters who end up in the coffins die in this last scene.

Special rule for year 3:

- ☉ If the character has tested HIV-negative in the metascene about testing played out in Act 3, they are "immune" and will not be among those that die in the last scene. Bring the list of the test results with you and redraw if you draw anyone who has tested negative.

SCRIPT: THE FUNERAL

After the Fear of Death scene is over, and the players have gathered in front of the coffins at the funeral area, the funeral scene begins. Here, the scripts differ between year 1 and 2, and year 3 - as no one is lying in the coffins when the funeral scene begins in year 3, but everyone has seen the names on the funeral programs which are placed in the coffins. The Angels should give Death the funeral programs with the names of those who have died.

YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2

- ☉ Death goes up to the altar.
- ☉ The players are signaled to go to the coffins and lay down flowers on the dead bodies by one of the Angels saying: “Honor the dead by laying down your flowers.” Then people should return to stand in front of the coffins in a group.
- ☉ Death says: “We are gathered here in the memory of [name]“ for each of the characters that have died. Death then reads verses 2 and 3 of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”
- ☉ Church bells chime three times.
- ☉ Play the whole song “Just a Little Lovin’,” marking the end of the act.
- ☉ Then the players should briefly be informed when and where the act break workshop starts. It is important that there is some time for the players to rest before the workshop.
- ☉ Let people leave the funeral site at their own pace.

YEAR 3

After all the players have gone by the coffins and are standing in a half circle in front of the coffins, the funeral scene begins.

- ☉ Death goes to the altar.
- ☉ Death says: “We are gathered here in the memory of [name]“ for each of the characters that have died, one by one. Death pauses between them, and the Angels walk to the character just mentioned by Death and guide them to lie down in their coffin.
- ☉ When all 5 are in the coffins, the congregation are instructed to lay flowers on their friends who have died by one of the Angels saying: “Honor the dead by laying down your flowers.”
- ☉ When the players have returned to the congregation, Death reads verses 2 and 3 of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” (*See appendix*)
- ☉ Church bells chime three times.
- ☉ Play the whole song “Just a Little Lovin’,” marking the end of the larp.
- ☉ Then the players should briefly be informed when and where the debrief begins. It is important that there is some time for the players to rest before the debrief.
- ☉ Let people leave the funeral site at their own pace.

SCRIPT: THE DOCTOR'S VISIT

This is an optional addition to the script for the players that got chosen in the lottery, but did not get placed in coffins. This scene takes place in year 1 and 2 right after the group of players that got chosen from the lottery of death have looked in the coffins. Instead of going directly back to the rest of the players, they go to a person standing a bit away from the funeral site - dressed as a doctor. This is a symbolic visit to the doctor.

For this scene you need the cards which you can find in the appendix. These cards have different diagnoses that are not HIV. The player can then decide how to play on this in the next act.

Script of the doctor's visit - year 1 and 2:

- ④ The Angels send those players who are not lying down in coffins to the doctor standing a bit away from the funeral site. These are 5 players in year 1, and 10 in year 2.
- ④ One by one, the players get to draw a card from the deck held by the Doctor. The Doctor says to each one: "This is what I said to you. You can now return to your friends."
- ④ The player should then give back the card to the Doctor.
- ④ After everybody has gotten a diagnosis via the cards, they are asked to go back and join the rest of the players, who are picking flowers with Death.

Manuscript

LOTTERY OF DEATH

The two people playing Angels should learn these manuscripts by heart, and use only the script in the Lottery of Death scenes. Remember to inform the person drawing the lottery about their function in the scene. The manuscript assumes that it is Hank who draws the lottery. Change this to another character name if someone else is assigned this task.

Angel 1: A1

Angel 2: A2

Directions are written in italics.

YEAR 1:

ANGEL 1

So this is New York City, United States of America, year 1982?

ANGEL 2

Yes, that is correct. Our duty here is to host the Lottery of Death. Pen, lottery tickets, hat. OK.

ANGEL 1

Then we can start.

They start to give out tickets and pens

ANGEL 1

We must pick ten people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

So many? But most of these people are still young?

ANGEL 1

There is a new disease in the City. It spreads through blood and sex... but they don't know that yet.

ANGEL 2

That's a shame. But anyways: Everyone must write their name on lottery tickets, 1 if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

ANGEL 1

Come on, write your names on one, two, three, four or five tickets! And when you're done, put the tickets in the hat.

Repeat this, or keep silent until everyone has put their tickets in.

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in.

ANGEL 2

Hank, can you please come forward?

ANGEL 1

Hank, your duty is now to spin the wheel of Fortune. You must draw ten names from the hat.

ANGEL 2

If your name is heard, please stand up and wait.

Hank draws names, reads out loud. Put the names in a pile. If the same name is drawn a second time, lay aside without reading. When ten people are standing, they bring the ten lottery tickets to the Angels.

ANGEL 1

You who are now standing, follow us.

YEAR 2:

The Angels are stressed and in a hurry.

ANGEL 1

New York City, again, United States of America, year 1983!

ANGEL 2

Yes, correct. Our duty's still to host the (fucking) Lottery of Death.

(sigh)

Pen, lottery tickets, hat. OK.

ANGEL 1

Then we can start

They start to give out tickets and pens.

ANGEL 1

We must pick fifteen people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

It's too many! Too many! Most of these people are still young!

ANGEL 1

AIDS has arrived in the City, you know, it spreads through blood and sex, but they still haven't figured that out... So now they fear almost everything...

ANGEL 2

That's a shame. But anyways: Everyone must write their name on lottery tickets, 1, if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

(Hesitates in passing out tickets.)

ANGEL 1

(To the other Angel)

Come on, we don't have all day! Hurry up!

(To the people gathered in the cafeteria)

Write your names on one, two, three or five tickets! And when you're done, tickets in hat.

(Repeats this, or keeps silent until everyone has put in their tickets.)

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in,

ANGEL 2

Hank, come forward!... Please...

ANGEL 1

Hank, you know your duty is to spin the wheel of Fortune. You must draw fifteen names from the hat.

ANGEL 2

If your name is heard, please stand up and wait.

Hank draws names, reads out loud. Put the names in a pile. If the same name is drawn a second time, lay aside without reading. When fifteen people are standing, they bring the fifteen lottery tickets to the Angels.

ANGEL 1

You who are now standing, follow us.

YEAR 3:

The Angels are worn out, tired, messy.

ANGEL 1

(Tired/slow)

New York City, city of dreams, United States of America, year 1984.

ANGEL 2

Yes.... Our duty's still to host the Lottery of Death.

(sigh)

Pen, lottery tickets, hat.

ANGEL 1

Start all over;

They start to give out tickets and pens.

ANGEL 1

We must pick more people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

It's so many already, so many. And most of them - still young.

ANGEL 1

AIDS has arrived in the city. Everyone knows it spreads through blood and sex... but fear and desire make them forget.

ANGEL 2

That's a shame... But anyways:

(mechanically)

Everyone write names on lottery tickets, 1 if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

ANGEL 1

Come on, please...

(mechanically)

Write your names on one, two, three, four or five tickets! And when you're done, tickets in hat.

(Repeats this, or keeps silent until everyone has put in their tickets)

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in.

ANGEL 2

Wait, all of you. And when Death arrives, follow them.

The two Angels leave without anyone.

Metascene

HIV-TESTING

At the beginning of Act 3 the players have the option to participate in a metascene, set up in the blackbox or other location chosen for this scene. It is a symbolic scene about getting tested for HIV in one of the free test centres.

When the HIV test first became available, anyone who feared they might be infected found it frightening to take the test. Testing positive for HIV could result in getting ostracized from social scenes, and losing your job. Each player can participate in the scene if it feels right for their characters, but try to avoid a situation where too many of them decide to take the test. It's best if many of the characters still don't know their status in the last act.

In the act break between Act 2 and 3, the players should be briefed on how to participate in this metascene. Before this scene is played, the organizers should designate a risk factor for each character (explained below): then during the scene, a result is drawn for each character who chooses to do the test, determining whether they test positive or negative for HIV.

FUNCTION

This scene is a sort of communal flashback scene for all the characters that have visited a test centre during the last year. The characters are therefore not there all together, but can choose to have gone with a friend for support, or decided to get tested with a partner.

By taking the test, the players can play on actually knowing their HIV status in Act 3: and getting tested either positive or negative can create play – on dealing with being sick, or dealing with survivor's remorse. Actively choosing

not to take a HIV test, and to leave it unknown, is also a way to create a specific kind of play.

THE TESTING SYSTEM

To determine the result of the HIV tests, the organizers should make an overview with all the character names (test document is found in *appendix*).

In the overview the organizers should give each character a rating, based on the character description and on their impression of how the character has been played in this particular run. The ratings are High risk, Medium risk, Low risk, and No risk. For example, lesbian characters without any other risk factors will be No risk.

- ☉ High risk characters have a 60% chance of being infected
- ☉ Medium risk 40%
- ☉ Low risk 10%
- ☉ No risk 0%

In the test situation in the scene, a nurse will determine the test result using a lottery based on the risk rating for the character being tested. To determine whether the character is positive or negative, beads of two different colours, eg. white for positive and brown for negative, are sorted into three jars, one for each risk percentage. The high-risk jar contains 60% colour 1 (positive), and 40% colour 2 (negative); the medium-risk 40% colour 1 (positive) and 60% colour 2 (negative); and the low-risk 10% colour 1 (positive) and 90% colour 2 (negative).

The test is done in this way:

- ☉ Check what risk rating has been determined for the character.
- ☉ Choose the corresponding jar, and draw one bead from it.
- ☉ If a “positive result” bead is drawn, the result is positive for HIV, and vice versa.
- ☉ Replace the bead in the jar.
- ☉ Write the test result down and give it to the doctor, who tells the character the outcome of the test.

In this way it is still a lottery whether or not a character gets diagnosed with HIV, but their sexual behaviour and orientation plays into the chances to begin with.

META-CHARACTERS

At the metascene there is one doctor and one or two nurses, who are functional characters portrayed by organizers. All of the staff in the clinic are polite and professional. They should play the scene as if they are used to working in the test clinic, and this is just another day at the office. This leaves space for the players to react to the test result in the way they want to.

To give the feeling of being treated professionally and neutrally, and of feeling like just one patient out of many, it's recommended that the staff characters use the same phrases and procedures during the scene.

To underline the tense experience of being tested, you can contrast it by creating a more friendly and empathetic atmosphere among the nurses and doctor – eg. engage in friendly co-worker chit-chat about weekend plans and the like, keeping answers light and normative; while remaining formal with the people being tested.

THE DOCTOR:

The doctor can wear a white coat on top of 80s office clothing, preferably with a stethoscope, pens in the pocket, and other doctor attributes. The doctor should not wear a mask, and should be professional and neutral in the way they deliver the test result.

THE NURSES:

The nurses can be dressed in nurses' uniforms, or white coats with 80s clothes underneath. They should be quite neutral in their behaviour. One nurse gets people from the waiting area and tests them – the other nurse takes the test and develops the result for the doctor. The nurses should wear face masks.

SCENOGRAPHY

The setting for the test scene consists of two sections – the testing area and the waiting room. Players join the scene by placing themselves in the waiting room, and sit there until it is their turn to get tested.

Most of the players' time is therefore spent in waiting to get tested, and here they get to play on the trepidation and agony of waiting. Some might also end

up leaving again before getting tested, if they decide that their character can't go through with it after all.

The scene can be done very minimalistically in a blackbox with minimum scenography, or it can have a more elaborate setup. Here are some suggestions for what the two areas can contain.

THE WAITING ROOM

This can have a long row of chairs placed along the walls, and as a separator between the waiting room and the test area. It's fine if there's some space between the people waiting, and therefore empty chairs. An audible aspect can be light waiting-room music playing in the background – in Finland 2018, acoustic saxophone music was used.

THE TEST AREA

A table for testing, with a chair for the patient and a chair for the nurse opposite each other. The table can have a variety of doctor's-office props, and a good trick is to sterilize the table and the patient's chair between players – the smell adds to the experience of being in a clinic.

There should also be a table that is hidden in the corner, where the second nurse can do the test for HIV developed for the larp. This table should have some sort of screen in front of it to hide the process. This could just be a sheet of cardboard.

The doctor can have a table with two chairs in front of it (in case a friend joins the consultation). Here the doctor will deliver the test result, and give a paper with the result to the player. Flyers or other informational material can also be used in this scene.

THE SCRIPT

Every player goes through the same different elements of the test scene, one by one – sometimes alone and sometimes together with a friend. Therefore this will be a description of an experience for one player during the HIV testing scene.

WAITING ROOM:

First the player joins the scene by getting seated in the waiting room – alone or with a friend/partner.

CALLED TO THE TESTING:

The first nurse calls the player into the test area; the player is given a test form to fill out, and is tested. The test can be done in different ways. In reality getting tested for HIV is done through a blood sample, but any test action can give the sense of taking a test. One method that can be used is a strap tightened around the arm, to simulate the procedure before taking a blood sample. Another method is using a cotton swab to take a saliva sample. The goal is to have the feel of having a test taken, so feel free to create your own method.

After the test is done, the player is shown to the doctor's office, where the doctor will deliver the test result in a neutral and professional manner, and give the test result on paper as well. There are no treatments available at this point in history, so the doctor should not give advice in regards to this, but just give the result without any followup options.

AFTER THE METASCENE:

After the metascene has ended, the player should go outside and join the larp again, now knowing their character's HIV status. They can decide for themselves how long they have known, and which people to tell. They can also do flashback scenes in the blackbox, if they want to play on having told some of their relations before the 4th of July party.



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Guidelines for play

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Safety Rules

Each participant is in charge of their own experience. Only they can communicate their boundaries and what kind of experience they want to have. Everyone should take responsibility for their experience and actions, and should be attentive to their fellow participants' signals. During the game everyone can always opt in and opt out of play situations (*Rule of two feet*). A character can at any time choose to enter or leave a situation.

But sometimes a scene takes an unexpected turn, and then the 'cut and brake' rules can help a participant when things go wrong. They should then say one of these two words out loud:

- 🗣️ **Cut:** everyone in the room steps out of the game and resolves the concern offgame. They make sure that the person who said cut is OK and can get the necessary break from the game.'
- 🗣️ **Brake:** the scene continues but with less intensity, and the participants manoeuvre it towards a natural end.

Feathers

To initiate two types of scenes – blackbox scenes and sex scenes – there are black and pink feathers. They should be available at all locations. The feathers add a bit of visual elegance to the process of invitation into these types of scene, and contain a subtle reference to an important source of inspiration – the play *Angels in Amerca, A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, by Tony Kushner.

How to act out the offering of feathers:

- ☉ **The pink feathers** are used to **invite other characters to a sex scene** – this can be one or more people. If the other character(s) accepts the feather, the players start an offgame negotiation about how to play the sex scene (*see The Phallus Method*). The feather can be offered in extension to flirtation and intimate play, but also without prior interaction as part of the gay cruising scene. If the feather is not accepted, the scene continues without commenting on the offering. Declining a feather does not equate to breaking or cutting the scene.
- ☉ **The black feathers** are used to **invite someone to join in a meta-scene in the blackbox**, which is about the feelings or memories of the character offering the feather. If the other character(s) accepts the feather, the players start an offgame negotiation about how to play the blackbox scene. The offering of a black feather doesn't have to have a connection to a scene happening in the larp, as the blackbox scene can take place before, after, or outside the fictional real time, or can take a more abstract form. The player being offered the black feather can refuse it; or can agree to meet up later, rather than right at that moment.

If there are no feathers available, the players can also say “black feather” or “pink feather”. This should be seen as metacommunication happening between the two players.

Blackbox

One or more rooms at the game site will be designated as blackboxes, and will during runtime be used only for blackbox scenes, including sex scenes. During the workshops, these locations can be used for debrief and exercises.

Blackbox scenes can be scenes from the past, possible futures, or more abstract and imaginative scenes. They are a way for the players to explore scenes that don't make sense, or that don't fit into the real time (or place) of the larp. Only the player's imagination sets the boundaries of the possibilities of blackbox scenes.

The blackbox scene is based around the initiating player's character. Other participating players can take on any role or character, in or out of the larp – like someone's parent, or a doctor. Anyone present at the larp can be asked to act as a director, and give input and suggestions beforehand or as the scene takes place.

For more abstract scenes, it could be a feeling expressed physically: it could also be a dream sequence, or a scene where things are personified. For example: playing a scene where a character is struggling with cancer, where one player is playing the cancer and another is playing the character's consciousness. Here it is possible to play out the character's inner feelings and thoughts, to create a physical feeling of these when returning to the real time of the fiction.

To play a blackbox scene a player should:

- 🕒 Have an idea for a blackbox scene.
- 🕒 Offer black feathers to the people they want to join the scene.
- 🕒 Go to a blackbox.
- 🕒 Together with the other players participating, negotiate the scene.
- 🕒 Play out the scene in the blackbox.
- 🕒 The scene ends when a player says "thank you".

The players negotiate the blackbox scene the same way they negotiate sex scenes: *Explain, negotiate, resolve* (see *The Phallus Method*). The negotiation should take less than 10 minutes. Sometimes the players realize they need more people – then the negotiation has to start over.



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Kohana and Kim's Magical Green Drink

The Green Drink is a metatechnique affording all players the opportunity to stop and briefly consider the quality of their story, without leaving the game or resulting in confusion. It is a ritual scene where all players participate, and therefore it affects the whole larp.

It allows the players to make a conscious choice and use their agency to change what they might want, or need, to be changed in their narrative. This turning point can be confusing or overwhelming for some players, as it can be experienced as an expectation to act in a certain way. They are, however, fully in charge of their own narrative: and it can be helpful to underline this.

In the game this will be a moment where players can choose a new direction for their own story for the rest of the act. They can either:

- ☞ Double the intensity of the storyline that they are already playing on, or;
- ☞ Do the opposite: turn their character's trajectory 180 degrees and start playing on something other than what they have done so far that evening, or;
- ☞ Decide to keep the intensity level and to stay with their current direction of play.

The Green Drink is, and has for years been, an intricate part of the Saratoga Friends' New Age practices. It is served to all at midnight and is a "magical" drink to spice up the party. All guests, including Mr. T's, participate in the ritual. The players playing Kohana and Kim are responsible for facilitating the scene, but the organizers should make the practical arrangements for the

event. The players of Kohana and Kim should be briefed on the scene before the larp.

The drink has previously been made of ginger, lemon, and green food dye; but can be made of whatever is available in your country to create a bright green beverage. Do bear in mind the need to check that no person present is allergic to any of the ingredients. All players will drink the drink, so make enough for everyone. The function of the action is more important than the actual drink – so feel free to change it to suit the run.

How to Act Out Erotic Scenes

This chapter discusses the sex metatechniques made for *Just a Little Lovin'*, and is meant for the story production team, and especially workshop facilitators. In the handouts before the larp (see *Appendix*) the players will get an overview, but the methods are better workshopped and practised right before the larp to get the players on board and on the same page regarding how to play them out.

Why have sex in character explains our visions for erotic play and how to use sexual scenes to tell a more interesting and personal story. *The Phallus Method* is what we call our metatechnique, and in this part we describe it in detail and give examples on how to use it. The larp includes *The dark room*, a mix between a BDSM dungeon and a dark room in a gay bar, which is our site for playing out anonymous (gay) sexual encounters. This room has special rules, and we explain them in this chapter. To be sure about how this larp limits sexual meta-play (for instance by keeping clothes on), we list this in its own chapter *Restrictions for meta-sex*.

WHY HAVE SEX IN CHARACTER?

This larp is a physical larp, and is suited to people who want to touch and be touched by other players. When it comes to playing out erotic scenes, you must at least be comfortable seeing others act them out. Most players will also participate themselves.

In *Just a Little Lovin'* players will use sexuality as an engine for a wide range of emotions, relations, and reasons. Do you think playing out sexual feelings at larps takes focus away from your character? This larp has a different attitude to this. With the help of metatechniques, we hope that the players can dig deeper into their characters while having sex.

Sexuality is a powerful tool for other emotions, such as vulnerability, intimacy, fear, and wholeness. If you dare to play out horniness, lust, desire – you might gather courage to open your heart for other emotions.

Most of us have experienced the most powerful feelings while having, or trying to have, some kind of erotic interaction. Some of the most memorable negative emotions, such as rejection, or fear of rejection, shame, suppression of another, or loss of control. On the other hand, also some of the most powerful and enjoyable memories: extreme togetherness and wholeness, exploding happiness, pure lust, the feeling of being seen and appreciated.

If we try to do larp-sex without horniness, while we massage shoulders or just talk it through, we have a suspicion that our minds will wander to the acts that we try to represent in such a detached way. The players may think about actual fucking, sucking, fingering, anal sex, spanking, bondage, threesomes – or whatever their imagination gets a kick out of.

But if we dare to let our character, and ourselves, get horny, and find more realistic ways to play out what's going on – we can continue roleplaying, build relations, and find a deeper layer in our character. We can dig deeper into our characters and relationships, while having (larp-)sex.

One really big problem with not playing out realistic erotic acts is that we easily fall into heteronormative ideas of what kind of sex our characters might have had (while massaging), often centered around just intercourse and ejaculation and the act being done in two minutes. But if your characters must play out the realistic act of what really happened, you can get more variety. All the flaws, the rejection, or a sudden interruption, may create a certain relation, tension, and story between the characters.

In *Just a Little Lovin'* we have designed for sex scenes that will build the story and bend the story: for the characters involved, and for others that might witness the scenes.

Sex in this larp should be visual and direct, often in a semi-public setting. We dream of creating the feeling of gay culture, even for heterosexuals and lesbians. The metatechnique *The Phallus Method* will hopefully help build strong emotions: horniness and desire, desperation and sorrow, anger and power, detachment and pure joy, creating soulmates and foes, jealousy, shame and pride; and so on.

THE PHALLUS METHOD

HOW TO PLAY AN EROTIC SCENE

The Phallus Method must feel safe enough to the players, but also challenging enough. It is important that the workshop holders have practised the meta-techniques for sex themselves, and feel confident in talking about erotic play in general. The workshop on this part **MUST** include practise, not just describing it to the players (see *Workshop 1*).

From experience we have seen players being very anxious about the method before the event, but understanding it and enjoying it when it's explained and practised in the workshop. This is why we do not want to go into detail before arriving at the larp. This is also why we cannot stress enough that every player must try it in the workshop before the larp, so they can better decide if and how to use it during the larp. The workshop facilitators must be confident enough to hold the space, and both make a safe place and dare to challenge the players a bit. Of course it is always possible to opt out for individual players – that is actually a very important part of playing this kind of larp. You can always, at any point, say “cut” or “brake” (see *Guidelines for how to play*) or use “The rule of two feet” (just walk away). But it is also a wish to make the players safe enough to play their way into – and out of – sexual encounters.

A. Flirt/ask ingame

The build-up to sex is similar to real life, no particular mechanic needed.

B. Offer a pink feather

- 🕒 **Find a pink feather** – either on site somewhere, or in the black-box. (If your character is of the horny sort, always carry one in your pocket.)
- 🕒 **Present** the feather to the other(s).
- 🕒 YES = the other person **accepts the feather**, and you can head for the blackbox (or somewhere else that is secluded) to have a meta-sex scene.
- 🕒 NO = the other player just **pretends the feather's not there**, and the scene with the character just continues in a different direction. They will then NOT play a sex act together.
- 🕒 **Repeat** if you want more participants.

C. Prepare for the blackbox

When the other(s) have accepted the pink feather, preparations for the sex scene can start:

- ☉ **Move to a blackbox** or improvise one yourself. The blackbox room(s) can be used for all kinds of scenes, including sexual scenes. Or use anywhere, inside or outside, that the participants agree upon.
- ☉ For gay male characters, **the dark room** is a location designed for anonymous sex: but any sex scenes in this room will of course be played out as well. Other groups can make an arrangement ingame to borrow the dark room. There are specific rules for the dark room (see *Special Rules*).
- ☉ **Go offgame before the scene** (does not necessarily apply in the dark room).
 - ☉ **Agree on how to play** it out, personal boundaries, maybe talk about where the scene might go.
 - ☉ If someone is invited in as an **onlooker**, agree on whether the character will actually happen to walk in on or otherwise watch the act, or if it is just a participant present in the blackbox at the time.
- ☉ **Find one (or more) phalluses.**

There will be phallus props available. At least one of the participants must have a phallus. It can also be a stick, a candle or a vegetable, if you can't get hold of one of the ingame props (eg. in the blackbox). The phallus can be strapped on, or held in your hand, or squeezed between your legs.

D. Erotic scene with phallus

- ☉ **Keep your clothes on.**
- ☉ **Have a phallus ready.** The phallus is **gender-free**, everyone can use one. It will simulate hetero sex, and lesbian sex, as well as gay sex. The most active partner can use the phallus, but it is not limited to this, and it can change during the scene.
- ☉ Before you start, **be mindful of what kind of emotions** you wish your character to explore in the scene.
- ☉ The sex scene should be **as visual and emotionally real as possible.**
- ☉ **You should have fun**, even if your character doesn't!
- ☉ **Take two deep breaths together**, and then start.

The sex scene could be simulated in different ways:

- 🕒 **A phallus** (dildo or similar), hand-held or strapped on.
- 🕒 **Physical contact between hands and arms.**
- 🕒 **Physical contact between the phallus and the participants' bodies** (hands, hips, legs...) for instance if the sex scene simulates penetration, and you don't have to rub it against genitals.
- 🕒 **Fucking from behind**, grip the others hip or shoulders to help simulate the movements.
- 🕒 **Sucking**, hold the sucker's head, to help simulate the movements (you don't actually have to have the phallus in your mouth).
- 🕒 Feel free to **simulate with sounds**, for instance sounds of orgasm, or pain.
- 🕒 If you want to **use a condom**, it must be available to the character from the start (in your pocket etc). **No gay man would think of using a condom in 1982.**

E. End the scene: Monologue

- 🕒 The scene ends at the agreed-upon point, or when one of the participants says "*monologue time*". Sit or lie down beside each other, no need to look into each other's faces.
- 🕒 Every participant **says out loud**, one by one, **the thoughts** running through their head at the end of sex: Just random thoughts (did I remember to buy milk?), how do they feel now, how was it, describing something about the other or themselves.
- 🕒 When everybody's monologues are done, you go out of the blackbox space, and back to the larp reality.
- 🕒 The sex you've had happened for real (ingame), but the characters did not hear each other's thoughts.

GENERAL RULES

- 🕒 **No real genital sex or fondling** genitals or breasts in the blackbox.
- 🕒 **Keep clothes on** (underwear at least). This also goes for any S&M scenes.
- 🕒 Anyone can at any time stop the action in the blackbox. You can just leave the room, or use **cut** or **brake**.

- 🕒 **Kissing is kissing.** There is no specific technique for kissing, so check in with your co-player before attempting to kiss them. A player is **always free to reject** any attempted kissing.
- 🕒 **Intimacy without kissing** can be done by closeness and caressing with hands.
- 🕒 **Explain, negotiate, resolve** for negotiation for both sex and black box scenes.

SPECIAL RULES

DARK ROOM, AND (BD)SM

The Cruisers Club dark room is inspired by and is in some ways a combination of a *BDSM dungeon*, a *dark room* in a gay bar, and a *gay bathhouse*. It will be possible to play out scenes of anonymous sex and S&M sessions (as it was called back in the 80s) there. It was built by the janitor Hank, on request from Mr. T.

Sex in the dark room

- 🕒 When you **enter** the dark room, you have **accepted a pink feather** from anyone inside the room.
- 🕒 **Choose** whether to be active – find yourself a phallus. Or passive – watch others and wait until someone might invite. Or maybe just use a phallus to do a self-love scene.
- 🕒 You may use your phallus just for **wanking** while watching.
- 🕒 With a phallus, anyone may encounter anyone they like. Here *the general rules apply*.

How to act in the dark room

- 🕒 **No speaking allowed** (maybe brief whispering).
- 🕒 **The goal is to get horny:** Either to look (and wank) or to have sex with one or more people.
- 🕒 You – as a player – *can see*. But for your character it is *so dark* that you are anonymous, even if you interact with characters you know well.

Female characters are not allowed, this is a gay secret world (ingame: but of course this is larp, so female or heterosexual characters might make a deal to borrow the room for their scene).

To play a S&M scene

- 🕒 The details must be agreed upon with all participants, offgame, before the start.
- 🕒 No real bondage (only rope that you can get out of by yourself).
- 🕒 Agree on whether you will play with no pain or light/moderate pain. Pretend that it's harder than it is offgame. This is theatre play.
- 🕒 No phallus is needed if penetration isn't a part of the scene.
- 🕒 Use BDSM ingame stop words: Yellow (brake) and Red (cut).
- 🕒 End with monologues.



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Playing Differences

LECTURE AND WORKSHOP

By Kat Jones

At the US run of Just a Little Lovin' in 2017 Kat Jones held a part of the workshop about race, gender, trans issues, class and homophobia and how that played a part in the larp. This was mostly a lecture where the players got the background knowledge needed for the American context the larp was being played in.

We have chosen to include this talk as inspirational material for the part of the pre-larp workshop concerning these topics. This article can be a source of inspiration for the organizers to adapt this part of the workshop to their own cultural context. Some specific guidelines on playing on different types of discrimination are also included in the chapter Workshop 1: Pre-larp.

This workshop will focus on race, gender, trans* issues, class, and homophobia from an intersectional framework. It will deal with both how to play characters with identities different than your own, but also how to approach differences in game in respectful and productive ways.

JaLL aims to capture the spirit of the times, even if that means straying away from complete historical accuracy. While we hope to explore the complexities of community, incorporating certain tensions, we do not need to play on all historical “isms” in order to do this. The themes, relationships, drama and emotions are more important in this game than historical accuracy. The experiences of you, the players, are more important than historical accuracy.

BACKGROUND

PUERTO RICANS IN NYC

In the 1970s–1990s, the city’s Puerto Rican population reached its peak, spiking at nearly 12% of the city’s overall population and almost 80% of its Hispanic population.

Founded by writer Jesús Colón, the artist-built Nuyorican Movement set out to empower Puerto Rican migrants while highlighting the unique issues and challenges they faced. Evolving eventually into a local phenomenon, a prominent subculture of self-identifying “Nuyoricans” emerged, fusing the identities of New Yorker and Puerto Rican, solidifying the historically unstable Puerto Ricans’ position in New York City.

Many Puerto Ricans faced blatant and structural racism while struggling to find the “American Dream” in the United States. While Puerto Rico is a US territory, Puerto Ricans have historically been viewed as outsiders in NYC. Employed in labor-intensive jobs, working long hours with little pay, and living in poor, dangerous neighborhoods, the Puerto Rican experience has been one of resilience and struggle in the United States.

CLASS IN THE 80’S

Around 1981, as the economy slowly recovers from the stagnant wages and inflation of the 1970s, wealth and affluence are publicly celebrated. It is the age of the yuppie. Conspicuous consumption is no longer taboo, but instead is encouraged. Success, measured in the attainment of money and status, is of primary importance for many young professionals.

Money is not perfectly correlated with status. Some high status characters, especially within the respective subcultures/communities, may lack economic power or resources.

It takes \$\$ to ascend to the highest rungs of society, but once you arrive, the amount you have matters less and less.

Characters identified as WASPs have a particular race and class identity. They are part of a coveted group that was brought up believing they are better than everyone else—because of their breeding even more than their money. Tensions may exist between “old money” WASPs and “new money” yuppies.

Things like comportment and behavior are increasingly important. Above all, you don’t want to stick out, or, if you do, it has to be done in the correct manner.

While middle-class identity is often considered the default in the US, for immigrant families or individuals who grew up poor, a middle-class identity is an aspiration and achievement.

Working-class identity is also a source of pride for many. Claiming a working-class identity might be a way for people to distance themselves from, and offer a critique of, the yuppie culture of excess.

TRANS AND NON-BINARY

Transgender and non-binary folks have always existed, but haven't always identified in the same ways. People like Sylvester, Sylvia Rivera, and Marsha P. Johnson were figures in the gay community who challenged binary ideas of gender. Trans folks played important roles in the gay community of the 80's; for instance, Marsha P. Johnson is often credited with starting the Stonewall uprising. But they were also marginalized by that same community. Drag queens and trans women faced a certain degree of stigma and scrutiny from the gay community for open displays of femininity. Drag was not the celebrated cultural phenomenon we see today. Drag queens and trans people faced violence for their non-conforming gender presentations -- and still do in many places. Gender identity, sexuality, and gender expression were often lumped together and put under the "gay" umbrella.

WHY PLAY ON DISCRIMINATION AT ALL??

The setting of the 1980s and the design of Just a Little Lovin' encourages some amount of play on discrimination. JaLL aims for historical "authenticity" rather than total historical accuracy. Part of this authenticity is creating a community that has tensions, differences, and sub-groups, just like real communities do. These tensions and differences provide drama, conflict, and emotions for characters and their players to explore. We want these differences to provide interesting and productive play and enhance the core themes of friendship, desire, and fear of death.

Sexuality is intersectional! It is also important to create characters that have a race, gender, and class background because these factors all impact how characters experience their sexuality—a core theme of JaLL. While we've chosen to downplay the way these differences manifest in the JaLL community, completely ignoring the tensions caused by these differences would also go against the spirit of the experience.

Racism and other forms of discrimination also had a tremendous impact on people's experiences during the AIDS crisis: as one survivor commented, many marginalized people felt the crisis was "not just neglect, but a purposeful death sentence perpetuated by the Reagan administration." Think about how experiences of marginalization might impact your character. What resources can they draw from? How might their experiences cause them to become more conservative or more radicalized?

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

RACE AND RACISM

Our goal is to create a space for community support in times of crisis. So, while characters of color certainly would have experienced racism in their lives outside of the larp, the characters within the larp will be understood to be more accepting than the general public.

Racism is not a valid theme for play at Just a Little Lovin'. That is, characters should not encounter these discriminatory thoughts or behaviors at Mr. T's big gay 4th of July party.

All players should wait for a character to bring up their race or ethnicity before pointing it out or playing on it, in other words don't make it a THING unless the player in question wants it to be a THING.

Players who want to explore themes of racism with their character are encouraged to stage private, optional scenes in the Blackbox. If you're not comfortable with certain content remember the "Look Down."

We recognize this larp is an idealized space. In reality POC in the LGBTQ community did, and still do, experience discrimination and marginalization. Yet we also realize that as players, many of you will not want to play on these experiences of marginalization during JaLL. Thus we've attempted to create a space where players can opt-in to explore these themes at the level they are comfortable.

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia is also not a central theme of the game, though at later parties, gay characters may experience some tension from the Saratoga friends as a result of the AIDS crisis. Players wishing to explore themes of homophobia can invite others to participate in private, optional scenes in the Blackbox.

CLASS AND CLASSISM

The larp features financially and politically powerful individuals, middle class people, and working class characters. Class dynamics often affect how the larp plays out, particularly in terms of characters with less means seeking help from those with resources during the crisis, as the larp focuses on the community helping one another through times of tragedy.

OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Transphobia, biphobia, and misogyny are valid themes for play at Just a Little Lovin'. These oppressions can come up at Mr. T's big gay 4th of July party as microaggressions, more subtle ways of signaling difference and exclusion. Microaggressions exclude slurs and namecalling. Players wishing to explore more severe forms of this discrimination can invite others to participate in private, optional scenes in the Blackbox.

EXAMPLES:

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE

Acceptable

- ☞ Gay men show little sexual interest in Nick, a trans man.
- ☞ Cisgender characters don't understand transgender identity and feel entitled to an explanation.
- ☞ A character has a same-sex lover; others refer to them as gay or lesbian regardless of their identity.
- ☞ A bisexual character is told to "pick a side" or "just come out as gay already."
- ☞ Characters publically worry that their bisexual lover will cheat on them.
- ☞ Men call an adult woman "sweetie" or "dear."

Unacceptable

- ☞ A character bars Nick, a trans man, from a gathering of gay men saying, "Real men only."

- 🕒 A group of characters confront a character in drag to tell them that their gender expression is invalid.
- 🕒 A member of the Literary Circle encourages others to not attend the drag show, saying "Drag isn't art, it's mockery of women."
- 🕒 Characters show sexual interest in Nuyorican characters for their "exotic" qualities.
- 🕒 A character expresses disgust at open displays of gay sexuality.
- 🕒 A man asks a woman to clear his dirty dishes for him.

RACE, ETHNICITY AND SEXUALITY

Race and ethnicity impacts sexuality in ways other than racism. In adapting JaLL for a North American player base, it was important that we didn't whitewash the setting of NYC or the gay community. Regardless of "shared" gender and sexuality, people of color are affected by different things, perceived differently, and move through the world in different ways. Queerness shows up in different ways across cultures. By giving all characters a race and ethnicity, we hope to recognize these intersections.

Race and ethnicity can also provide potential alliances, communities, and resources for your character. These identities can be experienced as positive, even if they also contribute to marginalization. People deal with ethnicities in different ways. Ethnic identity can be a source of strength and pride, a burden, an obligation (or expectation) to engage in certain behaviors or alliances, or a source of stigma and discrimination. White ethnicity is often viewed more as "optional"; the positive aspects can be chosen without the negative aspects being emphasized.

PLAYING A DIFFERENT IDENTITY THAN YOURSELF

You as a player decide how your character's identities (race, class, gender, sexuality) impact your character. They may matter differently in different situations, among different people, or in different years. Focus on representing the facts of *how* your character's identity shapes their experience rather than specific cultural markers. The *how* can be a background *how*--it doesn't have to be the most central part of your character.

Be respectful, play as people not stereotypes, stay reflexive.

- ☉ Forgive people if they make mistakes, re-calibrate, have a discussion during act breaks.
- ☉ Avoid playing caricatures:
 - ☉ Think of ways your character challenges stereotypes
 - ☉ How/why does your character embrace certain aspects of their identity?
 - ☉ How/why does your character downplay or hide certain aspects of their identity?
 - ☉ How can you challenge assumptions that other people might make about your character?
 - ☉ Focus play on the themes rather than trying to capture a culture you're unfamiliar with.

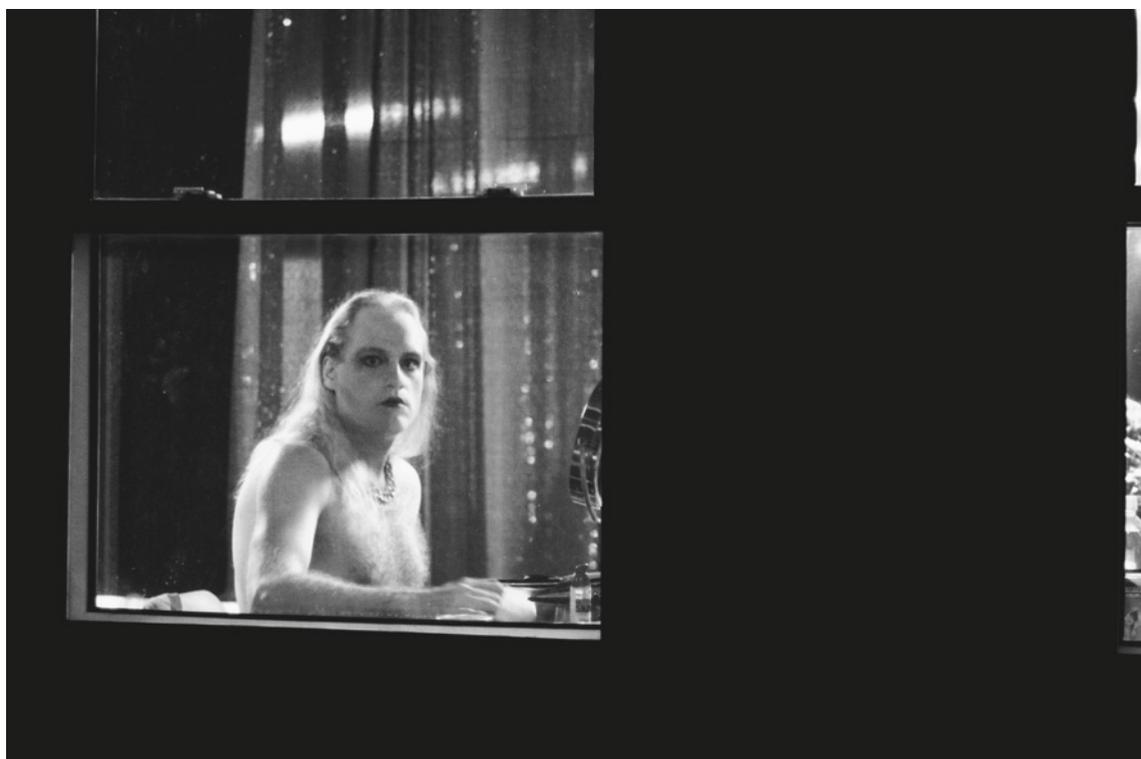
Here are some experiences to think about for players playing outside their ethnicity:

- ☉ POC ethnicity is emphasized, White ethnicity is often erased.
- ☉ But for some White ethnic communities in the 80's there is still a strong ethnic identity and expectations associated with it.
- ☉ Is your character an immigrant vs. 1st generation, 2nd generation?
- ☉ Discrimination/Othering can be aimed outwards or inwards - immigrants vs. first generation often clash and make fun of each other, in-group tensions exist in many ethnic groups (based on region, class, color, etc.)
- ☉ When you bring up your character's ethnicity, how does it feel? How does your character feel about their ethnicity? What assumptions might other characters make about them based on their ethnicity?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Split into Core Groups and discuss the following questions:

- ☉ How do these factors affect your character? How would you like to play them?
- ☉ How would you like us to play on them with you?
- ☉ What should we play on? What should we avoid playing on?



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Character Design

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Character Design

The basis for creating the characters in *Just a Little Lovin'* is the core groups. The character concepts and the core group concepts were born together in a brainstorming of ideas for characters and storylines that would fit the setting and our overarching story about a community hit by the AIDS epidemic. It is not an attempt to make a definite attempt at representing all groups that were part of this epoch in history in New York and the United States. But when the characters were written, it was with the aim of having a wide variety of characters with different personalities and backgrounds; and from different sections of the gay, queer, and alternative scenes.

The characters are built around core groups of 3–4 characters (in one instance 7 characters). The core relationships and storylines written into these characters are made to be interesting to play on for all three acts, as the characters and their relationships change and evolve over the years. The character design however also allows for core group storylines to have come to their conclusions before the end of the game. So, to help players not be stuck in ingame relationships that have run their course, it's also possible to change core groups, and form new ones, in each act break.

Each character belongs to a social circle, whose description is part of the character sheet. The social circles have no storylines per se written into them. But they represent different sections of the setting, and social contacts for each player to create storylines from. Just as with the core group, a player can decide in between Acts to switch social circles, if their character has developed in play in such a way that it makes sense for them to become part of a new subcultural scene in the city.

The characters are structured into different sections: with a short background story, a personal issue, relationships to other characters, and five bullet points of short defining characteristics. The reason for this structure is to avoid a “wall of text” style of character briefing where all the information is mixed into the background story. With our chosen structure, the

information is easier to access for the reader: and different participants can choose different parts of the character to put more emphasis on.

A tarot card for each character was part of the writing process, to give inspiration to a wide variety of personalities. It has also been included in the character briefing given to the players, to give inspiration in a different way than text can provide. The image itself could inspire a player to imagine new sides to their character. If they wanted, they could also look up what their character's particular tarot card represents as an archetype and a way of being in the world. The cards used were *The Cosmic Tribe* tarot by Stevee Postman.¹ In the version of the characters found in this book, only the names of the cards are listed. These names are those used in *The Cosmic Tribe* tarot, and in cases where there are more common names for the cards these are mentioned in parenthesis.

Once a player has received a character, it's that player's prerogative to make the character their own. How each player will interpret the character, and how their story develops, is in their hands once the game starts. The character text also only covers a piece of what that fictional person's life and personality could be. So the player can and will add and create new content for the characters as they play them out in interaction with their co-players.

ETHNICITY AND RACE OF THE CHARACTERS

Only some of the characters have ethnicity/race explicitly included in their description. Mr. T. is described as coming from a wealthy WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) family. There are a few Jewish characters, and a few Puerto Rican characters. But for most of the characters this aspect has been left blank and open for the participants to decide if they want to specify it.

When *Just a Little Lovin'* was run in the USA in 2017, participants were asked if they wanted their own racial/ethnic background reflected in their characters. The characters of the participants who wanted this were adjusted to include elements reflecting this and making the character from a specific background. Producers who run this larp are encouraged to do the same, if they feel that this would be a good thing to do for their player base. If they feel they lack the knowledge to do this, they can adjust the character together with the player, and/or seek help from people more knowledgeable about the history and lived experiences of the group that the character's background will reflect.

Organizer Characters

At *Just a Little Lovin'* it is important for producers to be able to go in and out of the game during runtime, both to be available for players and also to be able to get a sense of how the game is going. It is also a way to be able to help with practical things during runtime, without disturbing the immersion.

Here are some of the characters developed for the production team; both for main producers and for kitchen and practical volunteers. You can use them as they are, or as inspiration for creating your own characters. In that regard here is a short description of the function of these producer characters, and some dos and don'ts that are good to have in mind while using them.

As a producer in the larp it is important that you are always able to go offgame to do other tasks without causing any ingame trouble for the players. Play in a way that doesn't make players dependent on a producer character to move forward with their story.

HANK

The character of Hank is well suited to a producer who wants to have a lot of contact with players ingame, as he is part of a social circle in the gay scene (Cruiser's Club), and he also has a relationship to the Saratoga friends from back when they were at the rehabilitation centre, working as the janitor at the centre. Hank also manages a kiosk selling refreshments and snacks ingame.

PEGGY'S/PEPPER'S DINER

Peggy/Pepper is a character that exists both in a female version (Peggy) and male version (Pepper). This is a character well suited to the producer who is in charge of the food at the larp. The other three characters in this group (**Howard, Harriet, and Priest**) are also well suited to crew members who will

be working in the kitchen and who also want to have a roleplaying experience. These characters have some substantive relationships with player characters written into them, and Peggy/Pepper is meant to be a character who many of the player characters know and relate to.

CAFE NOIR

The characters in this group are all people trying to make it in showbiz in New York, and who are taking odd jobs to put food on the table. Café Noir is an off-off-Broadway theatre. All of the characters (**Abby, David, Fiona, Paul, Summer, Timmy and Tom**) in this group are friends who work there in different backstage jobs. They are here as helping hands at Mr. T's 4th of July party. These characters are meant to be used by producers and crew who want to have an ingame persona and add a little roleplaying as they move around ingame. They only have relations with each other, and while playing them it is important to not get very involved in central relations between player characters. These characters can be adjusted and changed as the producers who will play them see fit. It is not necessary to use all of them.

Inspiration: The group is inspired by Performance Space 122¹, which was founded in 1980 in an abandoned public school. It was a non-profit art organisation where a lot of queer performers have performed and been part of its development.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performance_Space_New_York

Character Overview

SARATOGA FRIENDS

THE HEART OF SARATOGA

CORE GROUP

Joani

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga and Spirituals one of the leading tantric gurus in America. Wife of Kohana.

Kohana

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga and Spirituals husband of Joani. Masculinity guru who strives to both fully embrace his masculinity and to break with the destructive patriarchy.

Kim

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga. She is the spirit of the 80s personified. Project manager for hire, life and career planning advisor.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

A STAR IS TORN

Chantelle

An energetic, fun, and self-centered woman with ambitions to become the next great pop star with her new HI-NRG single.

Beatrice

Last year she had to return to chemo again. Is the cancer finally gone now? Writing a self-help book. Empatic but also tends to know what's best for other people. Finds an outlet for her frustrations at the swingers club The L Club.

Sterling

Chantelle's producer and husband. Socially a bit reserved with a strong passion for music and a recent interest in alternative spirituality.

LOVE IS JUST A FOUR LETTER WORD

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Mary Lou** Up-and-coming singer-songwriter with a complicated relationship to Max and Lawrence, the fathers of her two sons. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Lawrence** Calls his life “a pleasurable chaos”. Has some problems keeping appointments, jobs, and girlfriends. Owner and manager of The L Club. The L Club
- Max** Some guys just got it. It doesn’t have to be elegant, it doesn’t have to be refined. If you got it you get sex with women whenever you want. Max is this kind of guy, without being a slick player or having the looks of a heartthrob. The L Club

THE INDIGO HOUSE

- Holly** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family. A modern-day priestess of Dionysus, in her home there is enough for everyone: sex wine, food, passion, and drama. Spirituals
- Katie** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family. The ideologist of the co-housing movement and their particular agreement on polyfidelity. Worships the Goddess. Spirituals
- Wallace** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family. Owns an art gallery, and in general is a difficult person to ignore. This past year the entire Indigo house has been involved in the quest for Wallace’s potency which mysteriously seems to have disappeared. Spirituals

- Beverly** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family. Has a passion for photo journalism, which she wants to develop. She longs for pleasure but she has problems really finding it in her life. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Harvey** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family. A somewhat neurotic culture journalist seeking to live out his bisexuality. The L Club
- Allison** Member of the Indigo house co-housing family, working in Wallace's art gallery. Wants everyone to be friends, and to do what she wants when she wants it. Doesn't identify as lesbian but primarily interested in women. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Dennis** Possible new member of the Indigo house co-housing family. Not one of the original Saratoga group. A former Vietnam veteran turned peace activist. The Brooklyn Book Café

THE AMAZONS

- Barbara** Founder of the Amazons, a feminist health movement. A natural networker and well-known pillar of New York's lesbian scene. The Cubby Hole
- Claire** Former model turned organiser for labour unions and the Democratic party. Barbara's girlfriend. Claire isn't one of the original Saratoga group, but is also a survivor of breast cancer. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Sam** The irresistible bad butch girl you can't help fall in love with. Notorious in the gay scene (and amongst Pen's guests in particular) for her highly public rows and jealousy dramas. The Cubby Hole

LET'S PLAY MASTER AND SERVANT

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Lester** Stock broker and "the sensitive yuppie". The L Club
Married to Gwen and an active practitioner of
S&M (submissive).
- Gwen** She's not one of the original Saratoga cancer The L Club
survivors, but has been part of their group for
many years through her marriage to Lester.
Active practitioner of S&M (submissive). Talks
freely about sensitive subjects.
- Mickey** Art student and bisexual S&M Master. The L Club
Recently moved in with married couple Lester
and Gwen.

DISPLACED PASSIONS

- Evelyn** A burning idealist and cynic at the same The L Club
time, Evelyn is a medical doctor working on
projects in Africa. A disciplined worker who
thinks the best way to wind down is sex with
no attachments.
- Tomasz** Everyone's friend, slacker, and jack of all Spirituals
trades, who according to others should soon
find out what he wants to do with his life.
Currently in a (probably doomed) relationship
with the strange girl Lizzie.
- Lizzie** Lizzie hates it when she feels shy, and goes The Brooklyn
over the top to overcompensate for it. Her Book Café
social timing is often off. Hopelessly in love
with her boyfriend's (gay) best friend.
- Chain** Chain wants to become rich, find true love, Cruisers Club
and fuck all the rich and beautiful men in New
York, all at the same time. Go-go dancer and
porn model.

MR. T'S PARTY (GAY SCENE)

MR. T'S INNER CIRCLE

CORE GROUP

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Mr. T The charismatic, rich, fun-loving and Pink Dollars
Terrence shameless host of the party. Owner of the
Thurlow T-Buzz advertising agency.

Pen Mr. T's secretary and friend. Cool-headed Cubby Hole
 power dresser. Loves life on full speed and
 being in control at the wheel. She has invited
 some of her own friends to the party.

Andrew The emotional core of Mr. T's inner circle Cruisers Club
 and of the Cruisers Club. Tends to become
 everyone's trusted friend.

VETERANS OF THE SCENE AND NEW BOY IN TOWN

Steven The leader of Cruisers Club. An emotionally Cruisers Club
 mature left-wing university lecturer with a
 working-class background.

Diane A self-declared fag hag, Diane has taken it upon Club Diamond
 herself not to be outdone in outrageousness by
 any of the many drag queens she knows and
 loves.

Bret The new boy in town who has just come to Not part of any
 New York. Eager to experience life, today - social scene at
 right now! the beginning
 of act 1

NATE AND HIS MEN OF AMBITION

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Nate** *The Queen of Manhattan* Owner of Club Diamond. He's used to having his life break apart and having to build something new from the ashes. Performs as drag queen each night of the game. Club Diamond
- Sinclair Everett** Son of a senator from an old Democrat family, now running for congress and living a secret double life. Has a passion for drag shows and musicals. Pink Dollars
- Bruce** Yuppie, this is your age. He is the rags to riches story. High on testosterone, money, and the high life of the city. Pink Dollars

THE WRITERS

- Abner Finkel** Nihilistic poet whose favourite word is "Dionysian". Motto: "Deconstruct literature, deconstruct life, deconstruct relationships". The Literary Circle
- Eli** Intellectual hot-shot who loves the envy he gets from being the youngest PhD student at the faculty. Balances sarcasm with wit and tenderness. The Literary Circle
- Jerrod** An aspiring author who met his true love at last year's party. A bit torn between the influence of his idealistic boyfriend Reginald, and the iconoclastic intellectual guru Abner. The Literary Circle

THE SHARED FLAT IN SOHO

- Reginald** A dancer who met his true love Jerrod at Club Diamond last year's party. Both attention-seeking and genuinely empathic with other people, Jerrod is the type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street.
- Daniel** The star of Club Diamond. He moves around Club Diamond
Lady Verona the scene, becoming the most important person in people's lives. But then one day he's gone – maybe he'll come back, maybe he won't. Performs as drag queen each night of the game.
- Trevor** Struggling young actor vacillating between Club Diamond euphoria and despair. Throws himself hard at the city and its people - losing control of his own actions and the situations he ends up in.

FAMILY OF FRIENDS

- Fernando** Bartender at Club Diamond. Not straight Club Diamond acting – never could do it, and never wanted to try. One of the most visible gay activists in the city. Confrontational and passionate.
- Nick** A man of trans experience, and the editor of a The Literary
small independent gay magazine. Nick is an Circle intellectual who was born in the Soviet Union.
- Marcus** A temperamental political activist who has Club Diamond broken with his conservative Christian family, and happens to be a passionate amateur drag performer.
- Jimmy** Former addict turned apostle for alternative Cruisers Club healthy living. Lives and loves with a close knit group of friends.

IN THERAPY

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Walter** Psychologist recovering from an emotional breakdown of his own. Cruisers Club
- Ruben** The heir of a technology company moving into the new area of cellular phones. Generous with his friends, but has a tendency of wanting to own those close to him. Pink Dollars
- Ike** Ike struggles with being both a bit shy and having a strong need for finding his own independent place in the world. Lives with his wealthy boyfriend Ruben. Pink Dollars

STUDIO 54 CREW

- Sorrento** The notorious party fixer at Studio 54. He is eccentric, chaotic, and extroverted. Studio 54
- Leon** One of the biggest disco stars of the 70s, now with a now struggling career. Studio 54
- Enrique** This young bartender/medical student tries to do and be everything at once. It's not a question whether things will crash, it's just a question of when and how. Studio 54
- Diego** Leon's son, who gets a kick out of being an object of desire to many, and already being a regular at the hottest clubs in town. Ambitious, ambivalent, and naive. Studio 54

THE BOYS IN THE BAND

- Skye** The narcissistic singer in the New Romantics- Studio 54 style band Urban Renaissance. He keeps them guessing, ever changing, ever loved, ever lonely.
- Rain** Guitarist for Urban Renaissance; the serious, The Literary melancholic, and elder brother of the band's Circle singer, Skye. A recent invitee to the The Literary Salon.
- Simon** Synth player in Urban Renaissance, with an Cruisers Club instinctive need to rebel against authority. Never afraid, but his own emotions confuse him. New member of Cruiser's Club.

FLOW TO THE BEAT

- Artie** Katherine's younger brother and the whiz kid Pink Dollars of New York radio, with his very own talk show. Also a volunteer counsellor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre.
- Francis** An established dancer and choreographer on Club Diamond Broadway. Also a volunteer counsellor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre. In a relationship with Tony, the record store owner.
- Tony** *This character is well suited as an organiser Studio 54 character but can also be given to a player.*
The owner of the small but well-stocked Tony's records in Greenwich Village. He has been asked to play music for the party. He's also a volunteer counciler at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, and in a relationship with the dancer Francis. He is the DJ of the party each night of the larp.

MR. T'S PARTY (PEN'S GUESTS)

FOUR WOMEN AMONG THE BOYS

CORE GROUP

Santiago

Visual artist originally from a prominent family in Puerto Rico. She is well read, with strong opinions on politics and most other aspects of life. Motto: "Consistency is overrated". Pen's girlfriend.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The Literary Circle

Katherine

Editor of The City section in *The New York Times*. For Katherine there are few things in life so far that can't be solved by making a five-step plan, or collecting favours from the right contacts.

Pink Dollars

Charlotte

Mr. T's lawyer. More quiet and composed than most people at the party. But when things matter to her, her composed and analytical mind usually lets her steer the conversation towards a place where she can get her way.

The Cubby Hole

Kimberly

Photographer, uncompromising extrovert, individualist, and feminist making her own rules for how life should be. Charlotte's girlfriend.

The Cubby Hole

- Morgan** Morgan is the radical young feminist intellectual who is good at creating drama amongst friends and lovers. She has a certain type of magnetism that keeps others fascinated, even when they are angry with her. The Cubby Hole
- Dawn** Dawn is the young butch who escaped from the religious sect where she grew up. Works as a stage hand at an off-Broadway theatre. The Cubby Hole
- Rosemary** Rosemary is an anthropology student who is into alterantive spirituality and is a wannabe feminist occultist. Spirituals
- Dutch Douglas** Dutch is the “lesbro” straight boy hanging out with the lesbians. Occasional backpacker and aspiring adventurer. The Cubby Hole

ORGANIZER AND CREW CHARACTERS

HANK

The friendly (but lonely) janitor working at Cruisers Club Saratoga. Hank stayed behind in the town of Saratoga when the rehabilitation center closed, and hasn't moved on with his life since. He's got strong arms and low self esteem; he tries to keep smiling and give everyone a helping hand. The "kids" he knew from the centre come back every summer and give joy to his miserable life; with them he feels like he's in a circle of friends. Hank doesn't know many other gay men and has never had a boyfriend, but once in a while he takes the trip to NYC to find some pleasure in the city and the Cruisers Club.

CAFÉ NOIR

**Abby, David,
Fiona, Paul,
Summer,
Timmy, Tom**

A selection of 7 characters for organisers to use.

Crew hired by Mr. T to make his fourth of July party run smoothly and with great fabulousness. They are all working at an off-off-Broadway theatre as stage-hands and technicians.

- Peggy/Pepper** This character may be played as female or male. As the owner of Peggy's/Pepper's Diner on Christopher Street, they involve themselves in the relations and intrigues of friends and guests, comforting desolate souls at night and hooking people up with each other at the diner after the bars have closed (giving name to the expression a "Peggy/Pepper -date"). Only the needy and lost get a job at their diner. They have broken contact with their rich family, refusing any financial help from them.
- Howard** An self-confident young man who hasn't let his sometimes quite severe psychiatric problems dampen his lust for life. Diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was 17, he was sleeping on the streets when he got the job at the diner. Howard has found his big love in Harriet, and doesn't fool around with other women. Men, however, can be an "uncomplicated outlet".
- Harriet** A determined young woman and artist who scoffs at the bipolar diagnosis a doctor once gave her. They just want to keep her down and she's not going to let them. Although quite known in some circles, her art bring her no income, but at least on most days she enjoys working at the diner to make a living.
- Priest** Former Methodist Vicar and Street mission priest who now works at the Diner.



Developing New Characters

After the first Lottery of death, two characters will die of AIDS, and again after the second death lottery, three characters will die. That means their players need to play new characters for the rest of the larp - which for some players will be two thirds of the larp. All players are aware of the small risk of their character dying during the larp, but the process of deciding on and getting excited about a new character takes place at the larp.

Right after the Lottery of death, a producer should talk to the players whose characters just died and plan for a meeting to develop new characters for them. Often they need a short break and some time to process the often very emotional funeral scene, but it is best to develop a new character before the act break workshop, where they should focus on getting into new core groups and social circles.

THE "HOW TO"

It is important to thoroughly guide the players in the choosing or creating of a new character. They may often be a bit sad about having to play another character, and still be affected by the emotional scene they just went through. Therefore, make sure to give them time to think through their choices, and make them aware that if they change their mind during the process, they can go back and redo it.

We strongly advise against the player choosing the same core and social group, but they can choose to be part of the same party - Mr. T's party or Saratoga. This process is therefore also designed to get the player excited about getting to play a new character in new groups, and thus get a different angle on the larp's themes.

It is important to take into account the theme for the specific act while developing the characters. If you are developing a character with a player going into Act 2, where the theme is “fear of death”, it is important that the starting point for this character is in line with the theme. This can be a fear of dying in general, a fear of getting infected and therefore not wanting to be close to gay men, or internalized homophobia and agonizing over previously risky behavior. If you are creating a character going into Act 3, it is important to focus on this Act’s theme of “friendship,” and thus it is encouraged that the player creates a character with focus on connecting with people, creating new opportunities for the community, facing the fear previously experienced or helping others to do the same, or activism.

To exemplify this we can look at the new character Connor/Connie, who is a nurse working with AIDS patients. Starting in Act 2, this character would be extremely afraid of AIDS, and are used to working in full protection gear while dealing with their patients. On the other hand, if you are playing this character starting in Act 3, they could be a person debunking myths about HIV and AIDS, working as an activist and spreading the word about safe sex.

Keeping the main themes of the acts in mind while facilitating the process of making new characters is important, so that the new characters fit into the overall narrative of the larp - and thus into the existing characters’ stories.

This overview is a step by step guide to how to develop a new character with a player. You might wish to do the process with a facilitator and player working in individual pairs, if you have several facilitators, or you may gather everyone needing a new character and do the process as a group.

Step by step: how to develop a new character with a player:

1. Talk through the questions listed below to define the type of play the player wants
2. With your point of departure being the player’s answers, select two/ three short character concepts that could be suitable for the player.
3. Let the player fill in keywords while going through the character development questions listed in the character sheets.
4. Help the player get in contact with a new social group/core group, and perhaps other relations.

QUESTIONS

These questions are to help narrow down what kind of pre-created characters might be relevant for the player, or if they want to create a new character (see guide below). It is important that you as a facilitator have read through all the extra characters, and have a good idea of what they entail - you can use the overview of characters as a reminder.

Defining type of play

- ☞ How far away from your current group do you want to play? (they have to play in new core and social group - but can be part of the same party)
- ☞ Which sexualities do you want to play?
- ☞ Are there circles/groups you are interested in/ don't want to play in?
- ☞ Are there characters/players you want to play with?
- ☞ What type of play are you interested in? (party, deep conversations, dark room, spirituality etc.)
- ☞ Is there anything you don't want as part of your story?

LIST OF NEW CHARACTERS

You can find the full characters in alphabetical order further on, but here, you will find an overview with possible social circles and keywords as a guide to finding 1 - 3 characters for the player to take a look at.

Because it is impossible to foresee which characters die, the new character concepts are spread out between the different social circles and the two parties, so there is more than one option for all players.

Allan / Allie

The airline steward

(HAVE THEM PRINTED OUT)

Possible social circles: Studio 54, Club Diamond, Cubby Hole

Keywords: Outgoing, crave confirmation, party the trouble away, flirtatious

Connor / Connie

The nurse working with AIDS patients

Possible social circles: The Brooklyn Book Café, Studio 54, The Cubby Hole

Keywords: outspoken, coping with death, brutally honest, confrontational

Donald / Dorothy

The owner of a small flower store with many of the party guests as regular customers

Possible social circles: Cruisers Club, Spirituals, The L Club

Keywords: Quirky, open, flirt the pain away, hopeful

Eric / Erica

The scandalised soap opera actor entering a new phase in life

Possible social circles: Pink Dollars, Club Diamond, The Brooklyn Book Café

Keywords: passionate, rising from the ashes, emotionally connecting

Gregor / Grace

The new employee at Peggy's Diner

Possible social circles: Peggy's Diner, The L Club, Spirituals, Studio 54

Keywords: curious, talkative, imaginative, dependent on others

Scott / Sally

The journalist with war zone experience searching for interesting people from the scene to portray in a feature article

Possible social circles: The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café, Pink Dollars

Keywords: fearless, opinionated, physical, needy

Victor / Victoria

A nurse who worked here at the Saratoga Centre for Hope and Healing 10 years ago

Possible social circles: Spirituals, The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café

Keywords: survivor, optimist, people pleaser, social

Only for the Act 3 (1984):**Jacob / Janice**

The HIV-positive smuggler of AIDS medications

Possible social circles: The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club, The Literary Salon

Keywords: impulsive, provocative, frustrated, judgemental

MAKING A CHARACTER FROM SCRATCH

Sometimes the player has an idea of what they would like to play on which isn't represented in the pre-written character concepts. For this, there is an empty character concept sheet that they can use for filling out in collaboration with a producer.

This should not be the first option for the players, only for those people that already have some ideas about what kind of character they would like to play. This could also be used if they get an idea based on the pre-written characters during the talk with a producer - for example if they want to combine two characters.

As for all the other characters, it is important that people be aware that the player may change their character to match other characters when they go out to find the other groups.

CHARACTER SHEET

NAME : _____

PROFESSION : _____

GENDER : _____

SEXUAL ORIENTATION : _____

QUESTIONS FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

These questions are meant to help you develop your character. Talk about them with an organizer before filling in notes. Remember, it is always okay to change/develop things as you talk to your new social circle and core group.

PERSONALITY :

General personality trait:

You are afraid of...:

You long for... :

When you are feeling down or struggling with something...:

When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something...:

The one thing everybody loves about you:

CORE GROUP : _____

SOCIAL CIRCLE : _____

SCENE : Mr. T's party - Pen's friends - Saratoga Friends

One relationship which is a close friendship:

One relationship which is a romantic/sexual relationship of some duration:

One antagonistic relationship with potential for reconciliation (optional):

Allan/Allie
THE AIRLINE STEWARD

Possible social circles: *Studio 54, Club Diamond, Cubby Hole*

Keywords: *outgoing, crave confirmation, party the trouble away, flirtatious*

Description:

- ☞ You are a modern-day nomad establishing relationships in cities around the world.
- ☞ You are fun-loving, flirtatious, and not afraid to try things for the first time.
- ☞ You are afraid of being lonely and seek positive confirmation from other people.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get over it by partying hard.
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get their mind off it by trying to get them to smile, by doing something nice for them.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Connor/Connie
THE NURSE WORKING
WITH AIDS PATIENTS

Possible social circles: *The Brooklyn Book Café, Studio 54, The Cubby Hole*

Keywords: *outspoken coping with death, brutally honest, confrontational*

Description:

- ☞ You are an outspoken and direct person, establishing relationships with others by being genuine and honest.
- ☞ You love to share truth and secrets at parties, when everybody is a bit drunk.
- ☞ You are afraid of not being able to cope anymore with the stream of suffering and dying that surrounds you.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to hear some of your favourite songs being played LOUD!
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to tell them what they need to hear, not what they want to hear.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Donald/Dorothy
THE OWNER OF A SMALL
FLOWER STORE WHERE MANY OF
THE PARTY GUESTS ARE REGULAR
CUSTOMERS

Possible social circles: *Cruisers Club, Spirituals, The L Club (Lifestylers)*

Keywords: *quirky, open, flirt the pain away, hopeful*

Description:

- ☉ You have a quirky personality. You like telling strange little stories which are not very clear to whoever is listening.
- ☉ You like to talk with everyone. You don't always need to talk so much yourself. You are a good listener.
- ☉ You are afraid of never finding true love.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to shift the mood by finding someone charming or interesting to flirt with.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to listen to them to find something you can help them with, even if it's just a little thing.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Eriel/Erica
THE SCANDAL-HIT SOAP-OPERA
ACTOR ENTERING A NEW
PHASE IN LIFE

Possible social circles: *Pink Dollars, Studio 54, The Brooklyn Book Café*

Keywords: *passionate, rising from the ashes, emotional connecting*

Description:

- ☉ You are passionate to the point of obsession about the things in life you currently care the most about.
- ☉ At parties you enjoy taking the spotlight for a moment and then passing it on.
- ☉ You have recently been exposed to a public scandal that has damaged your career as an actor. You are afraid of becoming a story of failure.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to tell someone what is going on with you.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to find things in yourself that let you connect to their problem.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Gregor Grace

THE NEW EMPLOYEE
IN THE DINER

Possible social circles: *Peggy's/ Pepper's Diner, The L Club, Spirituals, Studio 54*

Keywords: *curious, talkative, imaginative, dependent on others*

Description:

- ☞ You are a bubbly, curious, and talkative person who smiles a lot.
- ☞ At parties you enjoy sharing your own and other people's personal stories. You don't need to be absolutely sure about something before sharing it.
- ☞ You are afraid of dying alone.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to get other people's input on those feelings, and input on what decisions you should make.
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you give them advice – even when it is not asked for.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Jacobi Janice
THE HIV-POSITIVE SMUGGLER
OF AIDS MEDICINES

Possible social circles: *The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club, The Literary Salon*

Keywords: *idealist, impulsive, listener, frustrated*

Description:

- ☞ You are an impulsive person, aware that you probably have a limited time left to live: and you try to make sure that you make use of that time to the fullest.
- ☞ At parties you enjoy getting people to share stories and secrets with you.
- ☞ You are afraid of dying without your life having been significant to others.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to find someone willing to listen to you rant about the injustice of the world.
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you are supportive if you feel their struggle is real. If you feel they are just feeling sorry for themselves without good reason, you try to help them get a real perspective on things.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Luke/Lucy

THE PIONEER IN THE
RADICAL FAERIES MOVEMENT

Possible social circles: *Spirituals, The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club*

Keywords: *experimental, creative, serious, guiding*

Description:

- ☉ You are a person who follows your passions and who is not afraid of experimentation to achieve insights and experiences.
- ☉ At parties you enjoy establishing spaces where people can be creative, challenge themselves, and their wild selves.
- ☉ You are afraid of not being taken seriously by other people.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to shake it out of your body by doing something physical.
- ☉ You are good at bringing out issues people are struggling with, that they are afraid to deal with head-on.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Scott/Sally
THE JOURNALIST WITH WARZONE
EXPERIENCE, SEARCHING FOR
INTERESTING PEOPLE FROM
THE SCENE TO PORTRAY IN A
FEATURE ARTICLE

Possible social circles: *The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café, Pink Dollars*

Keywords: *fearless, opinionated, physical, needy*

Description:

- ☉ You are a fearless person, with many opinions, who likes a good discussion.
- ☉ At parties you like to get to know new people by dancing with them.
- ☉ You are afraid of being trapped and losing your freedom.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to feel connected to other people; mentally or physically.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, if it's a friend you buy them a drink: if it's a source for a story, you interview them as gently as possible while still getting the story.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Victori/Victoria

A NURSE WHO TEN YEARS AGO
WORKED HERE AT THE SARATOGA
CENTRE FOR HOPE AND HEALING

Possible social circles: *Spirituals, The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café*

Keywords: *survivor, optimist, people pleaser, social*

Description:

- 🕒 You are a person who has faced and overcome several serious life crises without losing your optimism and warm personality.
- 🕒 At parties you like to organize a surprise, or special small event, that will make the evening more special.
- 🕒 You are afraid of other people disliking and judging you.
- 🕒 When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to get out and have fun with friends you care about.
- 🕒 When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get their friends to become aware of the situation and to relate to that person in a good way.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*



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Joani

IN HEART OF SARATOGA

*Give thanks cause we alive, and been through the gutter
Now we see the horizon
It's clear to me now
Used to be confused, took a lot of years to see how
Now, we moving planets
Take the average mind and expand it*

...

*Tell me, how long has it been
Is everything, everything alright my friend
You see, time is passing, people asking how come none of
this ain't lasting
Money will, make people deal like they don't even have to
feel
But no, it ain't real, it ain't real*

Santana, *Day of Celebration*

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heteroflexible woman

PROFESSION: Tantric guru

TAROT: High Priestess

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Nasopharyngeal
cancer (starts in the upper part of the throat, behind the nose)

1255

LIFE SO FAR

Joani has always felt a connection with the Divine. When she grew up in the Bronx, her mother and father always brought her to church, and sometimes to Harlem Gospel Nights. There she would hear God speaking directly to her, giving her signs. Coming of age in the 70s, she dismissed the God of patriarchy, and instead embraced The Goddess. Joani is her priestess. In the 70s she was a free spirit, living on air, love, and music, and had countless lovers of both sexes. Daffodillian, her seven-year-old son, was conceived amongst Daffodils at a concert, but she doesn't remember his father's face. Kohana was always Daffodillian's "stand-in" father. And now, finally, Kohana is her legal mate and eternal love. Kohana and Joani are the closest the Saratoga friends have to leaders. And during the last years she has become one of the leading Tantra gurus in America, conducting courses for both men and women. She feels that she manages to be both fully present in her life and relationships, and to be continuously connected to the divine force that creates and maintains the universe. And, well, sometimes she just explodes, but destruction is an important part of the divine as well. One reason to explode is if Joani's best friend Kim – and ex-wife of Kohana – tries too hard to steer Kohana's or Joani's lives.

Personal Issue: Her hippie ideals have faded. The 80s came with a new focus on individual success – or maybe it was just a natural part of getting older. Now Joani often finds herself calculating how to get the most money out of everything. Has she become greedy – or just realistic, now that she has a child who is growing older? She never was any kind of ascetic denier of the pleasures in life. So what's really wrong in wanting those nice clothes, gourmet food, and a bit of designer furniture? But she does try to hide it, as she doesn't want to be seen as shallow and materialistic.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

INSTINCTIVE
PHYSICAL (TOUCH AND SHOW, MORE THAN TALK)
CALM
RECEIVER
DEMANDING

CORE GROUP

Heart of Saratoga is your CORE GROUP, where your story starts:

Kohana: Your husband. Finally, life has found its perfect balance. Kohana is the other half your soul always longed for. Strange that he didn't realise it before! You spent so many years as best friends, but you longed for him in secret and waited for him to understand it for himself. It happened, after a ten-hour-long ritual in the woods. You married just three months later. You can make love for hours and hours, shifting from one Kama Sutra position to another. He has learned to control his body so that he can come without spilling semen. You touch and talk and keep the erotic power awake between you, also in the moments when there's no room or time for becoming One. You don't share your love with anyone else – this relationship has more than enough of it. Kohana now wants a child, but you don't know if that's a good idea. Daffodillian is enough, you are at the height of your career, and you don't really want to put that on hold because of another baby.

Kim: your best friend and Kohana's ex-wife. For some years you lived a carefree hippie life together with her and Kohana, but she never understood his need for spirituality. She wasn't jealous when you two got together, but you hate it when you sense that she still feels she owns him. This last month you have grown more and more irritated, and when you understood that Kohana had given her a key to your new home, you exploded! You are now in a place where you don't share every thought with her anymore, but Kohana has kept his relationship to her very close. You want her out of your daily life, but you need to keep the friendship intact because you need her to help you in business matters. On top of this, you are also quite upset that, as is traditional, it will be Kim and Kohana who will serve the Green Magic Drink together, not you and Kohana.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and Spirituals

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by

syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Cohabitants – When you and Kohana bought this big new house in Brooklyn, you had room for some good friends from the Saratoga days:

Tomasz: Pleasant company, especially when you let him practice yoni-massage on you. A very important way to relax after a hard day. But he is not always so tidy, and he never has his rent money on time. And you're not sure if he will be such a good influence on Daffodillian when he grows older.

Evelyn: Straightforward and clever. She doesn't spend that much time at home, but when she does, you two might have some earth-shaking "discussion" about spirituality, of which she has none. She makes you furious when she accuses you of making money by manipulating people's emotions. You respect the important work she does as a doctor. And she always pays rent.

Going to your tantra lessons

Holly: She has a strong connection with the Earth and her own body, but maybe she should learn to control it more. She is an enthusiastic and regular participant in your tantra workshops. Recently you have started talking about how she should think about starting training to hold workshops herself as well. Maybe first as an assistant to you?

Katie: A regular participant in your tantra workshops. She has a strong spirit

but she seems to have some resistance to letting the divine fill her, as she has generally shown a strong tendency to want to dissect the experience in terms of politics and ideology.

Sam: She attends when not in jail or other type of trouble. She is like a younger sister; you helped her a lot back in Saratoga, and she's had difficult times. She still does.

Beatrice: Very good friend and tantra student. She has an independent mind, not taking all of your explanations at face value.

Tomasz: When he feels like it, but he has no discipline for practicing regularly.

Dennis: A prospective new member of the Indigo house (run by Holly and Katie) who has very recently attended a couple of free tantra evenings.

Rosemary: At the party you recognize this intelligent but slightly awkward young woman as someone who has been to your session a number of times.

Barbara: Went to tantra before, when she was together with Sam.

Others

Gwen: The lovely wife of your Saratoga friend Lester. You really wish she would join your tantric courses. She has the personal potential to become a wonderful teacher as well! And **Lester**, her husband, is both wealthy and has a great passion for yoga. You plan to convince him that investing some money in your centre would be both a spiritually and financially great thing to do.

Jimmy: Sensitive young man who was at the Tree of Life rehab centre, where you did some tantra workshops previously. You think you were a good influence on him. There were some serious issues in his relationship with his mother.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- You are ovulating, so you try hard to reject or evade any attempts from Kohana to make love these days as it could result in another pregnancy. You are very experienced in using the rhythm method, and it has worked 100% so far.
- Organise a tantric breathing ritual to kick off the party.

Kohana (Carl)

IN HEART OF SARATOGA

*Take me through the centuries to supersonic years
Electrifying enemy is drowning in his tears
All I have to give you is a love that never dies
The symptom of the universe is written in your eyes*

*Mother mooch is calling me back to her silver womb
Father of creation takes me from my stolen tomb
Seventh night the unicorn is waiting in the skies
A symptom of the universe, a love that never dies*

*Take my hand, my child of love come step inside my tears
Swim the magic ocean I've been crying all these years
When our love will ride away into eternal skies
A symptom of the universe, a love that never dies*

Black Sabbath, Symptom of the Universe

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man

PROFESSION: Masculinity guru (workshops for men only, drum circles, lectures, and books)

TAROT: The Universe (The World)

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Hodgkin's disease (classical type – a form of lymphoma. For him it started under his armpits).

260/

LIFE SO FAR

His family, a good middle class one from Staten Island, believe it was the cancer that turned their son Carl, a careless and lazy student and basketball player, into the spiritual, strong, and sensitive (but to them very weird) Kohana. The truth is it was Saratoga and the friendship pact. *And* the girl who nearly damaged his masculinity, Barbara. She was his first big love, and when she rejected him and his penis, he felt castrated. He became aware of how damaging girls' perceptions can be to masculinity. Kohana has striven for many years to both fully embrace his masculinity and to break with the destructive patriarchy that has enslaved humanity for millennia. To achieve this, he has had to dig deep, both in himself and in nature itself. After the incident with Barbara, it was Kim who grabbed his attention. She has a lot of masculinity herself, and maybe that made him weaker than he liked. She still feels like a twin soul, and he is kind of dependent on her. But it is with Joani, his partner of more than three years now, that his life feels fulfilled. Joani and Kohana are the closest the Saratoga friends have to leaders. After Joani and him became one, his masculinity journey felt like it had travelled to where it should be. Everything in his life since has become harmonic and successful. He has started to make a comfortable amount of money on his books and workshops, and he and Joani are frequent guests on talk radio and other media. They have bought a big house in Brooklyn, both to hold workshops in and to live in. There's even a few rooms to rent out. But now with the mortgage on the house they also rely on that steady stream of cash. Before becoming Joani's partner, Kohana cried a lot, screaming and drumming out his anger and despair in the woods with other men. He still does, only now he doesn't feel it quite so deeply himself; he does it to teach others.

Personal Issue: He wants to embrace everyone and is not capable of rejecting anyone who knocks at his door. He will always have time. But a friend to everyone is a friend to none. When he is not capable of prioritising those who mean the most to him, they can feel forgotten and hurt, and in the end he can risk losing them. He has lost contact with family members and childhood friends this way.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

WISE
PRIDEFUL
TEACHER
LOVER
SENSITIVE MAN (CRYING, TOUCHING, SPEAKS OF FEELINGS)

CORE GROUP

Heart of Saratoga is your CORE GROUP, where your story starts:

Kim: Your ex-wife. You met at Saratoga and became a couple there. For a couple of years you lived a carefree hippie life together with her, often together with Joani, who was best friends with your both. You loved Kim, but honestly you often still dreamt of Barbara. Kim and you had an open relationship, but Joani was always a friend back then, not a lover. Kim helped you by establishing the drum circle as a concept, even if she never understood your need for spirituality. With her help you were able to draw some money from it. But at the end of the 70s you two were not like lovers anymore, just business partners and good friends. Even if you still think she is too pushy, she is your support and adviser and she can come and go as she pleases in your home, and she often nags you if the house is not tidy, or if something should be upgraded. You even got her a key.

Joani: Your wife. Finally, life has found its perfect balance. Joani is the other half your soul always longed for. Strange you didn't realise it before! You spent many years as best friends, but the erotic spark between you was revealed three years ago, after a ten-hour-long ritual in the woods. You married just three months later. She is Priestess of the Earth, you are Shaman of the Sun; Yin and Yang, Love and Power. She makes you feel like a true Man in a way a hundred drum circles could not. Joani has a son, Daffodilian, conceived maybe at Woodstock or another great gathering. He is seven and doesn't know his father, so you have become his male ideal. You have known him since birth, but you dream of a love-child of your own. Kim didn't want any children, and now you're trying to convince Joani to create a life together, to "sign your pact". You feel "The Family" is your next spiritual journey, but she is reluctant.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

***Saratoga Friendship Pact* and Spirituals**

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting

them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Members of the drum circle

Sterling: New enthusiastic drum circle member, married to Saratoga friend Chantelle. He has told the circle that he has issues with his own insecurities.

Lawrence: Saratoga friend. Manager of the L Club (a swingers club). You like him a lot, even if you cannot understand the need for “orgies”. What he needs is a female counterpart, to find peace and balance in life. And you know he longs for love.

Wallace: Saratoga friend and owner of a gallery in Brooklyn. You know he’s got problems with impotence these days – a good reason to go to a Men’s workshop!

Cohabitants – When you and Joani brought the big new house in Brooklyn, you had room for some good friends from the Saratoga days:

Tomasz: You are a bit like an older brother to him. He can be somewhat immature. He’s on a journey but takes his own good time on it. But he is uncomplicated and relaxing to be with. He occasionally participates in the drum circles.

Evelyn: She is strong and masculine, but seems to reject the possibilities for deeper personal growth. You don’t like her quarrels with Joani, and often leave

the house when they're going at it. Sometimes it seems like she's trying to hit on you, but when you don't respond she quickly loses interest.

Female inspirators

Holly: Saratoga friend. Continuous flirt and muse. You have danced and kissed, but never more than that. You feel very inspired by her way of living, her energy, and her ability to meet the world with an open heart.

Barbara: Your first big love from Saratoga. You idolised her and were helplessly in love, so when she started to flirt back, and you started kissing after 3-4 weeks of intense flirting, you felt you'd found Heaven on Earth. But then she agreed to come up to your room, and when the door was closed, her bra was off, and you pulled out your stiff dick, she was terrified, screamed in fear, panicked and ran out of the room. You had some very hard months after this; you couldn't make your penis hard, and were even thinking of suicide. Now you can laugh about it, but it took a long time.

Claire: Barbara's partner. You got a sudden connection to her at last year's party, after the magic green drink (see below). She told you about her wishes for rougher sex, and you suddenly told her the entire story about you and Barbara. You hope she didn't tell anyone, at least not Barbara.

One instruction for your character for all 3 acts:

- Together with Kim: Serve the Magic Green Drink to everyone at midnight. This is a tradition from the Saratoga days. You still do it every year at the Summer party. This year Joani thinks she should be doing it with you, but you will stick to traditions. (The drink is a metatechnique – people should double the intensity of the direction their character is going at the time, or turn around and go in a completely different direction with their play.)

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Joani is ovulating; try to convince her to go to the sacred Saratoga place and make a child with you there. If she rejects you, cry and tell someone about your misery. If she actually agrees, cry out of joy, but have problems with performance due to too much excitement.
- Organise a talking/drumming circle for every man who wants to join but in particular to help Wallace with his problem.

Kim

IN HEART OF SARATOGA

I hope when you are my age, you'll be able to say – as I have been able to say: We lived in freedom. Our lives were a statement, not an apology.

Ronald Reagan

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Woman of currently hetero-sexual disposition

PROFESSION: Project manager for hire, life and career planning advisor

TAROT: The Magician

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Basal-cell carcinoma (the most common and least lethal form of skin cancer)

LIFE SO FAR

Kim is the Spirit of the 80s. Branded as difficult and stubborn already as a child, Kim has never made any excuses for who she is and where life leads her. The meek will not inherit the Earth – they will be pushed over by those who know what they want in this world. Girls weren't supposed to be this stubborn!

Kim's memories of endless hours with an assortment of child development specialists has left her with a great deal of scepticism towards any therapist. She believes that the problems a person has in life are caused by one of two things: 1) Lack of belief in oneself, or 2) Other people whose interests or values clash with one's own. To get where you want, you have to believe in your own worth and abilities and you have to learn how to outmaneuver those who want to stop you from going there. Her parents stopped worrying so much about her as she got older, though nowadays her relationship with her parents is more businesslike and formal. When she got skin cancer as a teenager she blamed her parents for carelessly having let her spend long summers outdoors without protection at their summer house in Florida. She wasn't really afraid of dying. The concept was ridiculous really. Of course she would survive. Even though the treatments often left her nauseated and exhausted, she always took her medicine exactly on time and insisted to her parents that she would follow dietary recommendations to the letter. After a year, the cancer was completely gone and it has not reappeared. Her experience with cancer has left her convinced that no matter what your health problem is you can help beat the disease by *wanting* to fight it. Motivation is key to everything you want to achieve in life, whether that's pure survival, earning money, becoming famous, or getting the partners you want. Kim is well aware that she can appear intimidating to many men, so if there is someone she is interested in she is good at molding her behaviour in such a way as to grasp the other person's interest. But she is almost always the one who takes the first step in approaching someone, even if the man believes otherwise.

Personal Issue: Needs to feel totally in control of her own life. Enjoys having influence over other people's life choices, but hates to depend on others herself. Lives on a strict health regimen – only losers destroy their health with junk food and endless hours in front of the TV. She is never outdoors without sunblock.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

INDIVIDUALIST
PERSUASIVE
PERCEPTIVE
CONTROL FREAK
IMPATIENT

CORE GROUP

Heart of Saratoga is your CORE GROUP, and where your story starts:

Kohana: Your ex-husband. You met at Saratoga and became a couple there. For a couple of years you lived a carefree hippie life together with him and your best friend Joani. Kohana and you had an open relationship, but Joani was always a friend, not a lover. You did love Kohana, but you probably married him mostly to spite your parents. By the time the 70s were drawing to a close and your life started becoming more established it was apparent to you that you had become more friends than lovers and that it was time to move on. You still come and go as you please in Kohana and Joani's house, though.

Joani: She was your best friend from the Saratoga days and still is. You never fought over Kohana, but it wasn't really a surprise to you that they got together shortly after you broke up with him. You've never really shared her and Kohana's deep fascination for the spiritual, although you participated out of curiosity during the 70s. You've always admired her ability to draw people into her universe. Joani has a seven-year-old boy, Daffodillian, who is the closest thing you'll ever have to your own child.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and *Studio 54*

Studio 54 is probably the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it is known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly. Kim often goes there with business contacts.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER

ENRIQUE - BARTENDER

LEON

DIEGO

SKYE

KIM

CHANTELLE

STERLING

TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Sterling: Life and career planning client. A lot of potential, but a bit too timid and reserved. You can help with that.

Lawrence: Life and career planning client. He's a friend from the Saratoga days who's always been charming and enthusiastic, but very unstructured. You've gone to his swinger's club, the L Club, a couple of times with different dates. Fun place, but he seems to be unable to actually start making a living from it.

Chantelle: Apart from yourself, maybe the most ambitious of the Saratoga friends. She really wants to get somewhere. But does she have the necessary staying power? You're currently her personal trainer.

Tomasz: A good cuddly friend to unwind with. In a way, out of all the Saratoga friends he is the most different to you, but then again, refusing to take part in the rat race requires some willpower as well.

Sam and Barbara: You had a one night stand with Sam at a Saratoga party five years ago. Sam's girlfriend Barbara caught you in the act and their relationship ended there. Barbara pretends to not be cross about it.

Diego: Young model and current lover picked up at Studio 54. You've been on a couple of dates with him after you first met where you have been the one to pick up the bill.

One instruction for your character for all 3 acts:

- Together with Kohana: Serve the Magic Green Potion of Ecstasy to everyone at midnight. This is a tradition from the Saratoga days. You still do it every year at the Summer party. (The drink is a metatechnique – people should double the intensity of the direction their character is going at the time, or turn around and go in a completely different direction with their play.)

Suggestions for a thing the character can do in the 1st act:

- Find out that Diego is at the party next door, and that the host himself seems to carry a torch for him. Great, nothing spices up a day like a little bit of competition. Kim has good gaydar and “bidar”; the other guests at Mr. T's party who might play for both teams (at least as the characters are written) are: Eli, Ike, Skye, and Chain.

Chantelle

IN A STAR IS TORN

*Baby look at me
And tell me what you see
You ain't seen the best of me yet
Give me time I'll make you forget the rest*

Remember my name

Irene Cara, *Fame*

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman with bicurious side

PROFESSION: Up and coming HI-NRG star

TAROT: Ace of Wands

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Skin cancer – basal-cell carcinoma (the most common and least lethal form of skin cancer)

LIFE SO FAR

Chantelle is an energetic, fun, and self-centered young woman, charming towards almost everyone, but not always so generous when talking about people when they're not in the room. Growing up in a suburban middle-class

family in Staten Island, young Chantelle always considered Manhattan to be the promised land, where all the exciting people lived glamorous lives. She knew she wanted to be one of them one day. When she received the news that a strange rash on her neck was actually skin cancer, it was naturally a great shock for a 14-year-old girl. She wasn't really worried about dying so much as she feared that she would never get to experience all the wonderful things she had imagined her life as an adult would be. She had nightmares about getting horribly disfigured and ugly. At the Saratoga rehabilitation center she made some very good friends, most of them some years older than herself. She thought the friendship pact they swore one summer night was the most exciting thing at the time, but now it seems like all that happened ages ago. Many of the people are still great fun to hang out with once in a while though. Now Chantelle has found her goal in life: to break into the music industry, become a celebrity, be the voice of just this moment in time – to sing the songs people dance their asses off to, make love to, and adore her for.

Personal Issue: She enjoys the warm and fuzzy feeling of being good to someone, but her immaturity manifests itself in a certain lack of real empathy towards other people.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

ATTENTION-DRIVEN
MANIPULATIVE
EMOTIONALLY IMMATURE
EFFORTLESSLY CHARMING
FIERY

CORE GROUP

A Star is Torn is your CORE GROUP, and where your story starts:

Sterling: You have been married to Sterling for a year now, after having been together for only a few months. You love him, you really do, but sometimes you worry about whether it was wise as a career move to not remain single and accessible in the eyes of future fans. Your personalities are like fire and water, but you like to think that you complete each other, like beats to a song. And he is the one that opened doors for you in the music industry.

Beatrice: Your best friend from when you were both at Saratoga, you have remained close ever since even though your lives have taken very different paths. Beatrice recently experienced the return of her cancer and had to

undergo extensive treatments. You feel very sorry for her bad luck and as an act of charity, you allow that Sterling and yourself are her occasional lovers. You don't really mind that she has a lot of opinions and advice on how to improve your life. If you like the advice you try to follow it, if not, you just smile and ignore it.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and *Studio 54*

Studio 54 is the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it is known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER

ENRIQUE - BARTENDER

LEON

DIEGO

SKYE

KIM

CHANTELLE

STERLING

TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Kim: You've always admired Kim. She is so disciplined and dedicated in getting where she wants to be in life. That also means that you have difficulty saying no to her suggestions. She is currently your personal trainer.

Max: You know Max is bad news. You've known that since you lost your virginity to him many years ago. But still, even after all these years, sometimes you just end up in bed with him. It's even happened a couple of times since you married Sterling.

Chain: You want to acquire diva status among the gay crowd, and who better to help you with that than Evelyn's gay brother? He seems

to know (and sleep with) a lot of influential people in gay New York.

Hank: The janitor at the Saratoga rehabilitation centre. He always had a special eye for you, almost like an uncle. When you lived at the rehabilitation centre you cried a lot of brave and bitter tears on his shoulder, and often confided in him. You have kept some contact with each other over the years with some random letters, and when the Saratoga gang started to rent a house here in the summertime, you two reconnected. He's the one who just lets you be one hundred percent yourself.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Get to know who among Mr.T's guests might be your most useful connections for your career.
- Perform a song for the guests at the party with playback (you can also save this for the second act).

Beatrice

IN A STAR IS TORN

*Someone saw you
By the waterside
Nothing you can do will change her
This is not the time for secrets
Save your breath*

It's time for sex with strangers

Marianne Faithfull, *Sex with Strangers*

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Hetrosexual woman with bicurious side

PROFESSION: Educated as nurse but on disability pension, writing a self-help book.

TAROT: Ten of Swords

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Chronic myelogenous leukemia

LIFE SO FAR

Of the Saratoga kids that survived their ordeal with cancer at a young age, Beatrice is probably the one who has had the most health problems in the

years since. Last year she had to go back to chemo again. Is the cancer finally gone now? No one knows for sure. Probably not. But how long before it comes back? Beatrice grew up in the suburbs of Long Island. Both her parents were teachers. She was one of those kids who had lots of friends and some organised activity or another almost every day of the week. When she became sick in her teens, the fact that she couldn't participate anymore, and that when her friends visited her they looked at her with big sorrowful eyes – those were the things she just couldn't stand. The treatments made her really nauseated and drained her of energy. After she got better, she stayed at the Saratoga rehabilitation centre for a long time. The friendships she made there were and still are extremely important in her life, and she is one of the members of the group who take the friendship pact most seriously. She has a lot of empathy for people around her but also tends to know what's best for them. Even when her cancer was gone, she continued to suffer from fatigue and nausea. She was told that with her form of cancer there was a quite high chance that it would return, but that if she was lucky she could live many years free of the disease. But right after last year's summer party it returned, and she had to go back into treatment. It went into remission once again, but her health is still recovering from the ordeal. She's had to put on hold her dream to help people in a similar situation by becoming a specialist nurse in a cancer ward. Instead she spends her days thinking, talking to people, and writing. She's writing a book that she hopes will be groundbreaking in its honesty and fresh insight in the genre of self-help literature. She hasn't got a book deal with a publishing house or anything like that yet; she knows that will come in time. Lately she has started visiting Lawrence's swingers club, the L Club. In the beginning she just had some light hearted adventures with some couples there. But one night she went alone into a room where the rule was that any man in there could fuck her, one after the other. It felt awful and liberating at the same time. She's come back several times to "gang bang night", and she is very unsure about exactly why she's doing it or how she feels about it.

Personal Issue: Disease has constrained her life. She wants to project that she is coping well with adversity, so she hides the resentment and bitterness she feels about why it had to be her that was hit so hard. She suffers from periods of insomnia, and of feeling very tired and extremely restless at the same time.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

MARTYR
PERSUASIVE
NUMB
TRANSGRESSIVE
WIDE AWAKE

CORE GROUP

A Star is Torn is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Chantelle: Chantelle was your best friend at the Saratoga centre. Your lives and priorities have developed in very different directions, but you are still close. You know that Chantelle only listens when she wants to, but you can't help trying to provide some guidance in her life. Both she and her husband Sterling are your occasional lovers. They seem to think that this is the only sex you get and you let them live on under this illusion.

Sterling: Chantelle's husband and your occasional lover (when Chantelle allows it). Sweet guy really. You usually only see him together with Chantelle, and you would like to get to know him better by talking with him, just the two of you.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The Saratoga Friendship Pact and *The L Club*

“Living the lifestyle” is a common expression among swingers – people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow to celebrate life through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages a swingers club in Brooklyn that has differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Walter: Walter was your first boyfriend. He was quite a bit older than you. The sex was tepid, but the conversations excellent. You even got engaged. But as you were driving down from Saratoga after your first stay there, he broke up with you. He told you that he was gay and couldn't marry you. When you see him at the party, it's the first time you're seeing him in a couple of years.

Joani: She is a good friend from the Saratoga days and one of the people you have kept contact with the most. You have participated in a number of her tantra workshops. You have found the new perspective it has given you very rewarding, but you are not content with just accepting Joani's interpretation of the spiritual aspects of life. Now you want to make your own interpretations of your experiences.

Lawrence: Another friend from the Saratoga days. You remember being in love with him back then, but Mary Lou grabbed him before you could. He runs the swingers club you have started to go to. Some others in the Saratoga gang go there too, but you think he is the only one among your friends who knows that you sometimes go to "gang-bang night", and he understands that one should be discreet about such things. Of course, with him knowing about your "adventures" at the club you can't really ask him on a date, or can you?

Beverly: You two are the most regular members of the "Grief Circle", where you talk about people and things in life you have lost to disease, and help motivate each other in coping and moving forward in life. Your pain is different from hers, but there is a fundamental connection that binds you together.

Holly: Friend from the Saratoga days and also a member of the Grief Circle. She is a woman with a lot of empathy, but you think she sometimes leaves herself a bit too vulnerable. If she doesn't take care she will end up getting hurt by those more selfish than herself.

The Grief Circle

The Grief Circle was formed by some of the Saratoga friends after they returned from their stay at the centre. The idea was to have a safe space to voice despair and feelings of loss and grief over people or other things in life that had been lost. The circle used to be bigger, as some now feel that they need to leave those things behind and concentrate on the future. But these still regularly come to gatherings:

BEATRICE
BEVERLY
HOLLY

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Have a good open-hearted conversation between friends with Lawrence, then after a while start flirting with him. Do the same thing with Sterling.
- Lead a meeting of the “Grief Circle” – sharing heavy thoughts and getting any crying over and done with for today so that you can really let go when it’s time to party.

Sterling IN A STAR IS TORN

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the sacred
wunderkind
You took me behind a disused railway line
And said, "I know a place where we can go
Where we are not known"*

*And then you gave me something that I won't
forget too soon
But I can't believe that you'd ever care
And this is why you will never care*

But these things take time

The Smiths, *These Things Take Time*

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man with bicurious side

PROFESSION: Studio musician, producer

TAROT: Hermit

LIFE SO FAR

The Steel City of Pittsburgh isn't that far from New York City, but when Sterling grew up it could just as well have been on another planet. He became obsessively interested in music from an early age, taping the pop music shows on the radio every week and saving money to buy Rolling Stone magazine.

He was shy around girls, and his girlfriends were usually not the ones he was secretly in love with, but the more brash decisive girls who decided that they wanted Sterling as their boyfriend. He also experimented with an older boy in the neighbourhood once when he was 14, in the tool shed. But the idea of it was more sexy than the actual quick act felt, and he's never told anyone about it. During his teenage years and early twenties he played in a number of bands that never amounted to much, but he was more technically skilled than any of his band-mates – enough to open doors for him to get work as a studio musician when he moved to New York City. After a while he learned sound technique well enough to produce some of the club acts in town. Sometimes when he's out at the cool clubs with these people he feels stabs of nervousness – to them, is he still that dorky boy from Pittsburgh, or has he left that behind for good? Chantelle was one of those pretty girls that were always at the parties. He wasn't surprised that they ended up in bed in the early hours after a party – that just sometimes happened those days – but that it became something serious and that they are actually married now still astonishes him. She's not always so easy being married to, but he loves her and he will do his part in making her a bright new star.

Personal Issue: Fights against his own timidity. Switches between standing quietly on the side, and jumping right into something without really thinking before he acts.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

DREAMER
THE SOCIAL NETWORKER WITH A LONELINESS INSIDE
EAGER
ABRUPT
BUILDER

CORE GROUP

A Star is Torn is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Chantelle: You have been married to Chantelle for a year now, after having been together for only a few months. Your personalities are like fire and water, and sometimes you feel you spend a lot of energy maneuvering around in her emotional landscape. But you like to think that you complement each other, and you do share the love of a good beat and a catchy song. She has the potential to become a star, and you will help make this a reality.

Beatrice: Chantelle's best friend from when they were both at the Saratoga rehabilitation centre. Beatrice recently experienced the return of her cancer

and had to undergo extensive treatments. Chantelle feels very sorry for her bad luck and allows that both she and you are Beatrice's occasional lovers – as an act of charity. She is more of an intellectual type than Chantelle and has some very good and helpful insights into how to improve one's life.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Studio 54 is probably the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it is known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING
TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Kim: A forceful but also charming woman. A while ago you started going to her for life and career counseling sessions. She seems to be very good at getting what she wants in life and you feel your conversations with her are expanding your personal horizons.

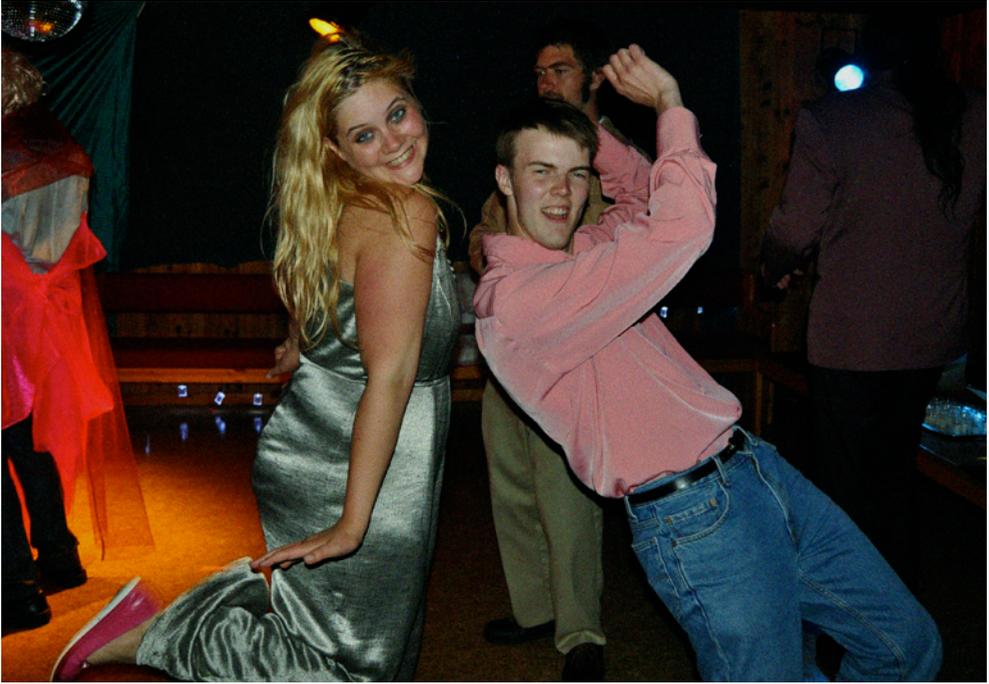
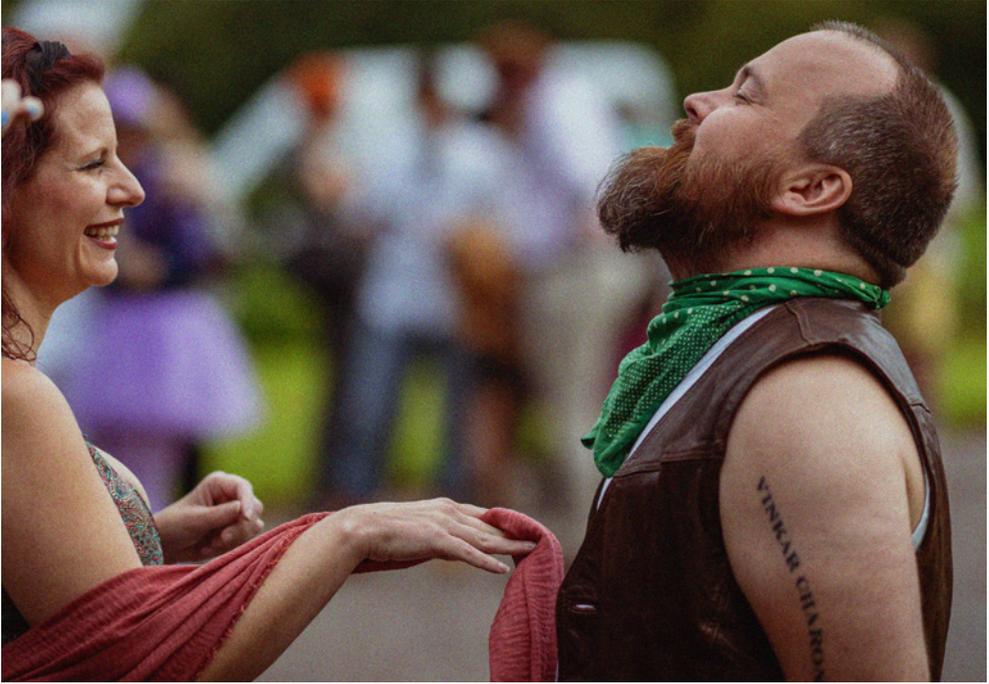
Kohana: He's somewhat of an informal leader among the Saratoga gang. For you he is quite a new acquaintance, and you have participated in his drum circle and masculinity workshops just a couple of times. It felt a bit weird and embarrassing at first, but also strangely exhilarating, like a secret boys club you missed getting invited to when you were growing up.

Wallace: He's as passionate about art as you are about music. You often hang out together when you meet at Studio 54 and Chantelle is off somewhere, trying to catch a word with the latest celebrity she's spotted.

Mary Lou: You helped this talented singer/songwriter and friend of Chantelle get the right people in the music industry to listen to her demo tape. Now she's recording her first album.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Be an eager participant in a drum circle or other type of ritual organised by Kohana
- Flirt and/or make out with the wrong person during the party





Mary Lou

IN LOVE IS JUST A FOUR
LETTER WORD

*Seems like only yesterday
I left my mind behind
Down in the Gypsy Café
With a friend of a friend of mine
She sat with a baby heavy on her knee
Yet spoke of life most free from slavery
With eyes that showed no trace of misery
A phrase in connection first with she occurred
That love is just a four-letter word*

**Joan Baez/Bob Dylan, Love is Just a Four
Letter Word**

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman

PROFESSION: Singer/songwriter

TAROT: Queen of Swords

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Wilms tumour
(cancer of one of the kidneys)

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LIFE SO FAR

Mary Lou likes her life. She really does – even though her mother keeps pestering her to leave the good-for-nothing men she’s had children with, the guys from her days at the Saratoga rehabilitation centre. Well, they can be quite hopeless, but whenever someone makes her sad or angry she writes a song about them. She grew up in a typical Middle America suburban family: two brothers, a stay-at-home mom, and an overworked “stay away from home” dad. She was barely a teenager when it was discovered that she had cancer – she’d been suffering from strange pains in her chest for months. Mary Lou had thought that she was just love-sick after her first boyfriend broke up with her to go steady with her best friend Mary instead. They had to remove the kidney, but luckily the cancer hadn’t spread to the other kidney, or to other parts of her body. Her mother was consumed with guilt and became a total health freak, convinced that she must have destroyed her daughter’s kidney by using too much canned and frozen food in her cooking and allowing too much candy. The only effect this had on Mary Lou was giving her a somewhat neurotic relationship to chocolate and ice cream that remains to this day. She craves it immensely at times, but feels guilty whenever she eats it.

Her special on-off relationships with both Max and Lawrence started at Saratoga; the three of them were very close, even though it wasn’t anything sexual or romantic at the time, at least not for Mary Lou. That she now has a child with each of them really wasn’t part of her plan. She was going to be a professional working woman, not dependent on any man. Being a single mother, living with her sons China and Orion in a too-small apartment, and trying to work out daily life schedules with Max and Lawrence is far from a traditional suburban life. She even dislikes having become so responsible since she became a mother. She wants to keep her alternative lifestyle, be a good mother and find success as a musician all at the same time. She’s been writing and singing her own songs for years now, but until recently only considered it a hobby. But now she has quit her studies to work full-time on her music career. With some help from Sterling, who put her in contact with the right people, she got a contract and will soon start recording her debut album. She hasn’t told her friends yet that they might recognise some of the situations and people described in the songs.

Personal Issue: She doesn’t want to become her mother, and strives to be more tolerant and open-minded than she really is. She is attracted to, and falls in love with, men she can not bear to live with. Sometimes she gets hit by a paralyzing fear of death for no apparent reason.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

STRIVES TO BE NON-CONFORMIST
ANALYTIC AND SELF-REFLECTIVE

AMBITIOUS
HUMOROUS
AVOIDS CONFRONTATIONS

CORE GROUP

Love is Just a Four Letter Word is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Max: Close friend from the Saratoga days, on and off lover, and mother to your oldest son, China. You love him as a friend and as China's father, but know that you should try to keep away from any rebounds with him. You know he leads an uninhibited sex life, although the extent of it isn't really clear to you.

Lawrence: Close friend from the Saratoga days, your most recent regular boyfriend, and father to your younger son Orion. You two lived together until recently when you decided to break up with him. Lawrence started to run his swingers club – The L Club – when you were pregnant, and as much as you tried to fit into the role of the tolerant partner, you were uncomfortable with the entire concept. You tried going there with him yourself a couple of times, but got angry with yourself for being at a sex club without really wanting to be there yourself, but just because you wanted to please your partner. You believe that Lawrence was emotionally damaged by having no boundaries from his parents, who are both sexologists. You never really admitted it, but you are holding a bit of a grudge against him for not understanding how it felt for you. Your latest quarrel with Lawrence was when you tried to teach Orion not to touch his genitals while sitting at the dinner table, and Lawrence accused you of inhibiting the child's sexual development.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

The Saratoga Friendship Pact and ***The Brooklyn Book Café***

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam War as more and more people started questioning the motivations and costs of fighting there for more than a decade. Now in the early 80s, the main focus of the peace movement is the threat of nuclear war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as "unpatriotic".

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These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

RELATIONSHIPS

Katie: Your best friend and babysitter to your kids. You look up to Katie and would like to be more like her. Katie always knows what to say and takes on confrontation then and there. You just write a song about it later. You appreciate her advice, but sometimes it riles you that she also has so many views on rearing children without having any of her own.

Dennis: Friend from the peace movement and Vietnam veteran. He might be moving in with Katie and her big alternative family. You once wrote a song based on a very special conversation with Dennis about his experiences in Vietnam. You even used some of his exact phrases, but never credited him. You never really thought about it, and you feel the song is yours and yours alone, like all the other songs you write.

Sterling: He works in the music industry and helped you get the right people to listen to your demo tape. It irritates you to see how Chantelle, your friend from the Saratoga days and Sterling's wife, continuously emotionally manipulates him.

Dutch: A guy who has come to a couple of your concerts. He told you he got his nickname from being a straight guy hanging out with lesbians. Despite being young, he's traveled quite a bit and seems like a nice, relaxed guy. You wouldn't mind getting to know him better.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Start a conversation with Max and Lawrence about the importance of structured parenting. Try to get all of you to arrive at an agreement on how to organise things with the children in the future. Try to be very constructive but struggle to hide your irritation with these two men.
- You are starting to worry that your songwriting is becoming a bit too self-absorbed. Maybe there are some interesting characters and stories among the people at that gay party next door? It would be great to get some first-hand exposure to some *Walk on the Wild Side* material.

Lawrence

IN LOVE IS JUST A FOUR
LETTER WORD

*When it comes to sex, the most important six inches
are the ones between the ears.*

Dr. Ruth

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man

PROFESSION: Part-time job running a swingers club, different odd jobs
that don't last for long

TAROT: Queen of Wands

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Wilms tumor
(cancer of one of the kidneys)

LIFE SO FAR

Lawrence is the son of two progressive sex therapists, who taught him to be open-minded and ideologically aware of the false and unnatural boundaries modern society puts on sexuality. His first sexual experiences as a teenager were with people who frequented his parents' house – guests who came and stayed for weeks. He is aware that other people might find this kind of upbringing quite shocking, but Lawrence never felt the need for any teenage rebellion. He is very much in sync with his parents ideologically. His parents

seemed more terrified for their only child than he was when he got diagnosed with cancer at an early age. But he trusted the doctors when they told him that he would be all right, he just needed an operation to remove one of his kidneys. Mostly he has very bad memories of how nauseating the treatment was. To this day whenever the feeling of nausea hits him, Lawrence gets upset and the feeling fills him with fear.

At Saratoga he met someone who had the same type of cancer as himself, Mary Lou, and they formed a special bond, even if they wouldn't become lovers until years later. Lawrence loves to be the center of attention and a facilitator of fun and pleasure for others. A couple of years ago, he achieved his dream of opening up a swingers club that he manages, The L Club. The club has themed nights like couples only, gang-bang night, girls only, and S&M/bondage Thursdays. He calls his life "a pleasurable chaos". He definitely has some problems keeping appointments, jobs, girlfriends... he doesn't earn enough money from the club, so he has to scrape by through all kinds of odd jobs on the side. Several of his Saratoga friends are regulars at the club nights and he knows quite a lot of intimate stuff about many of his friends. He can be a bit of a "sex geek" in his enthusiastic and matter-of-fact discussions on equipment and techniques related to sex. But he is kind and loving and, at heart, a bit of a romantic.

Personal Issue: Not very good at sensing subtle hints. If people around him are angry with him or are otherwise experiencing some kind of emotional thing, Lawrence doesn't tend to notice it unless it hits him in the face.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

ENTHUSIASTIC
OPTIMIST
ABSENT-MINDED
ENCOURAGING
CHATTY

CORE GROUP

Love is Just a Four Letter Word is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Mary Lou: Close friend from the Saratoga days, most recent girlfriend, and mother to your son Orion. She recently broke up with you, and you never really understood why. You still care a lot about her and would like to get together again. You want to give your son the same enlightened upbringing you yourself received, and you have been arguing with Mary Lou about this.

Your latest quarrel was when Mary Lou tried to teach Orion not to touch his genitals while sitting at the kitchen table and you tried to explain to her that she shouldn't shame him, something that could inhibit natural sexual and emotional development.

Max: Friendly competitor for Mary Lou's attention, and a good friend ever since you were together at Saratoga. He is an occasional visitor to the L Club. But he seems to easily pick up women wherever he is. When you've talked about him to your parents they opinionated that his behaviour was consistent with someone suffering from hyper-sexuality.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

The Saratoga Friendship Pact and *The L Club*

"Living the lifestyle" is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow "to celebrate life" through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Kim: Friend from the Saratoga days, and occasional guest at the club, with different dates every time she visits. Kim is a life and career planning advisor. You are one of her clients, and you hope it will help with keeping the L Club going because as it stands, it's not making you enough money to live on.

Barbara: Good friend from the Saratoga days. You tell her everything. She used to be a regular at The L Club's girls-only nights before getting together with Claire.

Beatrice: Another friend from the Saratoga days. She has suffered relapses with cancer and has had a harder time than many of the rest of you from Saratoga. Lately she has started visiting the club on "gang-bang night", getting the attention of a lot of guys at once. You don't think any of her other friends know about this. She's really very sweet and you hope she those nights are giving her what she needs right now.

Kohana: Masculinity and drum circle guru. You are a member of his drum circle. You look up to him; you'd really love to have Kohana's type of masculine and sexual energy. You'd love to see him join in at The L Club, but he and Joani seem to be very monogamous.

Allison and Harvey: Two members of the collective living space called Indigo house. Harvey is a regular at the club, with Allison as an occasional guest. They always split up when there and seek out separate partners, which you think isn't really in accordance with the Indigo house rules.

Lester and Gwen: Regulars at S&M and bondage nights. Both are submissive, so you are happy for them that they've found their Master, **Mickey**. Mickey is a young man who fascinates you; he's exploring the depths of both sexuality and art. Maybe you could become involved in one of his art projects in some way? And if he ever needs some space away from Lester and Gwen, he can of course crash at your place.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Try to talk with Mary Lou about getting back together. What would it take for her to be willing to try again?
- You have women's only nights at the club that are quite popular, but no gay nights as they tend to go to their own clubs. Maybe you could try to find out from Mr.T's guests whether there could be a market for gay nights at your friendly neighborhood L Club? What type of equipment and atmosphere would they need to be invested?

Max

IN LOVE IS JUST A FOUR
LETTER WORD

All I know is that to me
You look like you're lots of fun
Open up your lovin' arms
Watch out, here I come

You spin me right round, baby
Right round like a record, baby
Right round round round
You spin me right round, baby
Right round like a record, baby
Right round round round

**Dead or Alive, You Spin Me
Round (Like a Record)**

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man with bi-curious side

PROFESSION: Owns and runs his own hardware store

TAROT: Wheel of Fortune

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Testicular cancer

LIFE SO FAR

Some guys just got it. It doesn't have to be elegant, it doesn't have to be refined, but if you got it you get sex when you want it. Max has got it. He's no "player", he's just a regular, scruffy, charming guy who likes to get intimate with people – usually women, but at last year's party he also hooked up with a drag queen who was a guest at Mr. T's party. When his friends were surprised at this, he just said that she looked like a lady enough for him, and anyway you gotta try everything once, don't you?

Max grew up on the Upper East Side to enormous wealth; his father had built a business empire from the bottom. Young Max was always obsessed with fitting in. He was diagnosed with testicular cancer at the early age of 15, and he spent time at the Saratoga rehabilitation center as a 17-year-old. He was also subjected to experimental medical treatment. Many years later a doctor suggested that the treatment might have resulted in a condition of hypersexuality. But this was never properly diagnosed, and Max himself does not feel there is a problem. He doesn't think that there is anything wrong with his sexuality. He was well known to the New York social scene for his hedonistic lifestyle and personal style, and for the many scandals he caused as a filthy rich teenager, but that was in the past. His father sent him away to military school to sober up and straighten up, a plan that failed utterly. At military school, Max discovered the pleasure of seducing one or more women whenever he was on leave. Back from one year in the service, Max squandered as much of his parents' money as he could get his hands on, partying 24/7. Eventually, after causing scandal after scandal, he was disowned by his family. This seemed to be just the thing Max needed to wake up and find his own direction in life. He still knows his way around a posh cocktail party, but he has turned his back on the pressure of fitting in to high society, and now dresses and behaves like a middle-class American. Some people probably believe that he is richer than he actually is, not knowing that he is completely cut off from the family fortune. Max decided to show his family that he was capable of creating a successful business on his own. He managed to turn a profit with his own hardware store by the age of 22, and he is now planning to expand by opening a second store. It was during this time that he hooked up for a while with old flame Mary Lou from the Saratoga days. He thought he was infertile, so he never really bothered to use a condom unless the woman demanded it. He is surprised that he could even make someone pregnant, so sometimes he wonders if their son China really is his child, or someone else's. He has had sex with well over 100 women, but as far as he knows none of the others have become pregnant. Nowadays his style has changed a bit – he still worships the hedonistic lifestyle, but he has cut back on the drugs and the booze. They were never as important to him as the sex anyway.

Personal Issue: No matter what situation he gets himself into, he refuses to admit that he himself might actually have some personal issues worth looking into. Some of the subtleties of normal human interaction elude him completely.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

HYPERSEXUAL
EXPERIMENTAL
STRAIGHTFORWARD
CARELESS
CAREFREE

CORE GROUP

Love is Just a Four Letter Word is your CORE GROUP, and where your story starts:

Mary Lou: Your lover from way back and mother to your son China. You have never lived together, but you feel a deeper connection to Mary Lou than to your many other lovers. You are trying to be there for China – though you sometimes doubt that the kid is yours since you had a testicle removed and the doctors always warned you that you probably could never be a father. But you really care about Mary Lou, and you find it difficult to make up your mind whether or not it is worth it to make an issue out of it. On the other hand, if there is another father out there, he deserves to know.

Lawrence: Friendly competitor for Mary Lou’s attention and a good friend ever since you were together at the centre in Saratoga. You suspect that Lawrence could be China’s father and are debating whether or not to tell him about this. You are an occasional visitor to the L Club, the swingers club that Lawrence manages. But you don’t really need that kind of “dedicated place” to find your fun.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and *The L Club*

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These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Chantelle: You took her virginity and have had repeated one night stands with her over the years. She wants what you once had.

Lizzie: You lost your virginity to her at Saratoga when you were 15. Just like with many other women you know, her behaviour can be completely incomprehensible sometimes.

Evelyn: One of the old Saratoga friends. Occasional no-nonsense lover. An idealist with some hard edges.

Lester: A good older friend at Saratoga, but you've lost contact with him over the years. Occasionally Lester used to get you to bind him to a tree and whip him with some branches. You found it exciting, but never got as turned on as Lester obviously did.

Lady Verona (Daniel): You had a sexual encounter at the party next door during last year's 4th of July. This dude can be a pretty sexy lady.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Ask for advice from someone in the Saratoga gang on whether to talk to Mary Lou about your suspicion that China might not be your son.
- It was quite fun fooling around with some of the gays at last year's party. Two parties with fuckable people at both – it would be disappointing if there were less action for you this year than the last. Let loose and get to know strangers. Your style of flirting can be very to the point.

Holly

IN INDIGO HOUSE

*To where the water and the earth caress
And the down of a peach says mmh, yes,
Do I look for those millionaires
Like a Machiavellian girl would
When I could wear a sunset? mmh, yes,*

And how we'd wished to live in the sensual world
Kate Bush, The Sensual World

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual woman

PROFESSION: Nurse

TAROT: Queen of Disks

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Acute
lymphoblastic leukemia

LIFE SO FAR

A modern day priestess of Dionysus, Holly's home has enough for everyone – sex, wine, food, passion, and drama. It's her mission to fight all the ways we repress ourselves. Not everyone agrees. She's even been reprimanded at work for being too open about private things with patients. It's not that Holly is a

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gossip – she rarely says anything directly negative about a person. But ever since she was a child, Holly has been unable to keep secrets, including her own. Her mother or friends never had to wonder how Holly really felt inside, because she would tell them, right away at the moment she felt it. The period when Holly had cancer was as terrible for her mother as it was for Holly herself. Holly wasn't able to conceal how terrified, sad, and unwell she felt when the doctors were trying to make her well again. Holly's father had also died of cancer just the year before, so she was sure she wasn't going to survive either. So when she did pull through, she really felt deep down that cliché of having received life as a gift. The friendships she formed at Saratoga are very important to her, and she takes the friendship pact very seriously. It was clear to her when she left the rehabilitation center that she wanted to become a nurse so that she could help other sufferers of serious diseases.

Three years ago she met Katie. When they started talking about the co-housing movement and the concept of polyfidelity, something clicked in place for Holly. She wanted a big family, and because she falls in love so easily, she was scared of becoming a multiple divorcee. In a family of polyfidelity everyone is an equal partner and agrees to restrict sexual activity to other members of the group. A few months later she and Katie established the Indigo House with some of her old friends from Saratoga, as well as some new friends. It feels like a perfect arrangement. Life is great when you are surrounded by people you love.

Personal Issue: Lack of discretion, so she has at times hurt other people's feelings by revealing their secrets to others. Wearing her emotions on her sleeve can make her a target at times for manipulation.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

NURTURING
INSISTING
CONFIDING
RESOURCEFUL
EMPATHIC

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Katie: Fellow founder of the Indigo House. You have very different temperaments: Katie is much more ideological than you, and also more conscious of how agreed-upon rules are important when so many different people live together. Together you complement each other; without either one

of you, you're sure the house would soon fall apart. In front of others, you nearly always support her point of view.

Wallace: Fellow family member of the Indigo House and friend from the Saratoga days. You were the first person he had sex with. He was kind of clumsy back then, but in a charming way. His confidence has increased a lot since he was a teenager, but these last few months he has suffered from impotence and it's really gnawing at him, and you as well. Wherever the solution lies – therapy, dream quests, pharmaceuticals – you will help him find it.

Beverly: Fellow family member of the Indigo House and friend from the Saratoga days. When she arrived at Saratoga her twin brother had just died from the same form of cancer. She kept to herself at first, and you were the person that got her to open up and connect to other people again. You still share a special bond, and you still both participate in the grief circle (see below), where you remember those you have lost.

Harvey: Fellow family member of the Indigo House. Originally he was Katie's boyfriend, who seemed eager to join her dream of a house of polyfidelity. Sometimes when you two are in the same room everyone else gets a headache. He talks even more than you do. He theorises maybe a bit more, but you two share a compulsion to talk about anything that's on your mind, no matter how abstract or personal.

Allison: The most recent member of the Indigo House, Allison moved in a year ago. She started working in Wallace's art gallery, and shortly after, Wallace became adamant that she was just the person the fellowship needed. She is a cheerful and fun young woman and Holly likes having her in the house, but she has also noticed that Allison can be quite self-centered.

Dennis: A friend of Allison who has been visiting the house a lot lately. He's a peace activist who experienced horrible things as a soldier in Vietnam. You feel drawn to him. He has expressed interest in joining the Indigo house, which you think sounds like a wonderful idea.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and Spirituals

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by

syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Joani: You are an enthusiastic and regular participant in Joani's tantra workshops. Recently Joani has started saying that you should think about starting training to hold your own workshops as well. Maybe first as an assistant to Joani?

Kohana: He has been a continuous flirt since the Saratoga days, but it was first Kim and then Joani that he ended up with. You both know that it could have been you two, and it gives you a special connection.

Lester: Your ex-boyfriend from the Saratoga days. He is such a wonderful and sensitive person. One night you spied on him being whipped by Max out in the forest. You thought at the time that it was just some sort of prank. But it became apparent to you later that this is really Lester's thing. He likes being abused and dominated. Sadly, that is not a game you can play. You don't like to be mean to anyone, even if it is just for play! So your relationship didn't last.

Tomasz: You have tried several times in the past to convince him to move into the Indigo House. He would be a great emotional influence in the house. He spends quite a lot of time with you and the rest of the gang, often sleeping over.

Beatrice: Your friend from the Saratoga days and key figure in organizing the grief circle. In recent years she has struggled a lot with her health. You wish you could make things easier for her.

Rosemary: - You remember meeting this young woman a couple of times at Joani's sessions. She's intelligent and spiritually dedicated. You think you might even have flirted with her a bit.

The Grief Circle

The Grief Circle was formed by some of the Saratoga friends after they returned from their stay at the centre. The idea was to have a safe space to voice despair and feelings of loss and grief over people or other things in life that had been lost. The circle used to be bigger, as some now feel that they need to leave those things behind and concentrate on the future. But these still regularly come to gatherings:

BEATRICE
BEVERLY
HOLLY

Suggestions for three things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Be very open about your feelings, and not just towards your friends. Confide in strangers.
- If anyone in the Indigo house or anyone else for that matter is having a row, try to reconcile them. Don't let them get away with trying to ignore each other.
- Give Katie support about rules for the party.

Katie (Katriel)

IN INDIGO HOUSE

Each time we don't say what we wanna say, we're dying.

Yoko Ono

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual woman

PROFESSION: PhD student and exhibition manager in Wallace's art gallery

TAROT: Four of Disks

LIFE SO FAR

Katie is the ideologist behind Indigo House's co-housing movement and their particular agreement on polyfidelity. In a family of polyfidelity everyone is an equal partner and agrees to restrict sexual activity to other members of the group. Katie's the one who takes responsibility for gathering everyone in the house to discuss problems and arrive at acceptable solutions for everyone. She can be a bit strict on her criteria for what constitutes a good, correct alternative lifestyle. Katie was born Katriel, the oldest daughter in a traditional Jewish family. When she was little, Katie loved hearing stories from the Talmud told by her grandfather, who was a rabbi. As she grew older her relationship to

her parents became complicated. From a very young age, Katriel resented how her parents seemed to care about her younger brothers' school grades, but not hers, even though they were better. She was academic enough to be accepted to medical school. In college she became a well-read and outspoken feminist, continuously arguing with her parents and her brothers whenever she visited home. For many years she was involved with a Jewish women's group who wanted to reform religious practice, but eventually she came to the conclusion that Judaism was an irredeemably patriarchal religion. Since reading *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk three years ago, her quest has been to get in touch with a feminist spirituality centered on the Goddess. That was part of the inspiration for starting the Indigo House together with Holly.

Another important change in her life came when she quit medical school. Her parents still haven't recovered from the shock. They had finally come to terms with the fact that it was their daughter who would get the most substantial education, and now she was just up and quitting! Katie had actually lost faith in traditional medicine, and she now believes that there are healthier ways to cure most diseases than putting a lot of potentially poisonous pharmaceuticals into the body. She's currently writing a PhD about art and feminism, as well as working as an exhibition manager in Wallace's art gallery to finance her studies.

Personal Issue: Focusing on her idea of community and fellowship can sometimes overshadow her ability to really see the individuals in the group. Hates feeling ambivalent about anything, and may make abrupt decisions just to make this feeling go away.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

STRUCTURED
IDEOLOGICAL
PERSISTENT
COMMUNITARIAN
PASSIONATE

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Holly: Fellow founder of the Indigo House. You have very different temperaments; Holly is much more emotional and not as organized as you, but you compliment each other: With either one of you missing, you're sure the house would soon fall apart. She's usually a great support in discussions in the house, even though her angle on things is different from yours.

Harvey: You met each other at university. You were attracted to him the first time you spoke at a party, and made sure that you saw each other soon after. Being in a relationship with Harvey was somewhat difficult as you never quite managed to find out in what sense you were a traditional couple and in what ways you had your own arrangements. You have to admit that you could get quite jealous at times, unable to come to terms with him having sex with other women, even if you had agreed that it was okay under certain circumstances. Moving in together with a small group of other people was the perfect solution: you are not jealous of him having sex with other family members, as long as he keeps to the rule of not doing anything with anyone outside the house.

Wallace: He moved into the house quite soon after it was started. Wallace is one of Holly's friends from Saratoga, and currently also your boss at the gallery. As long as he doesn't try to micromanage the areas that are your responsibility, it works well. You think he is too stressed out about his erectile dysfunction at this moment. It is so traditionally patriarchal to focus on that. He should just use the opportunity to expand his sexual repertoire.

Beverly: She's another one of Holly's Saratoga friends. She lost her twin brother to cancer and still carries a sadness wherever she goes. You like being close to her, maybe because she has more spiritual and emotional weight than your other family members.

Allison: The newest member of the house. Sometimes you wonder if she takes your family arrangement seriously enough. It's great to have such spirit for life, but she should learn to focus less on herself and more on the community.

Dennis: He was your boyfriend during first year of college, but you broke it off when he decided not to apply for exemption from the draft, and went to Vietnam. It wasn't so much as not being able to bear the fear of him being injured or killed, as much as a total disagreement between you about the war. Innocent civilians killed in the name of American imperialism! You felt a bit vindicated and relieved when you saw him on TV a few years later, as a spokesperson for veterans who were now against the war, but you didn't meet him again until recently when Allison brought him home. You don't know yet how you feel about him moving in. You are definitely still attracted to him, but you have to find out what your relationship is now after all these years.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Spirituals.

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly started to spread in popular

culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Mary Lou: She's your best friend and you often babysit her two sons China and Orion. Mary Lou is an incredibly smart woman but she suffers from not being able to stand up for herself in some situations, realising afterwards what she should have said. It's difficult for you to avoid giving advice on child rearing, even if you know that can irritate Mary Lou. But apart from that you can talk about everything with each other.

Joani: You are a regular and committed participant in Joani's tantra workshops, but you are aware of the necessity to avoid being swept away by the experience, and to analyze it with a critical frame of mind. On occasion you have voiced some points of criticism. How dependent is tantra on patriarchal hinduism? And the entire thing about delaying orgasms, doesn't that show some hostility to sexuality in general?

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Katie has prepared some proposed rules for the members of the Indigo House for this summer party. Early in the larp gather everyone for a house meeting to discuss this. Don't give up until you have all reached some kind of common agreement.

- You are sometimes a bit envious of the communitarian fellowship created by the Saratoga pact, which you aren't part of. Maybe being here at Saratoga is a good opportunity to organise your own ritual with the members of the Indigo House. Talk with Holly about this, and if she agrees try to gather everyone for a ritual at some beautiful place outdoors.

Wallace

IN INDIGO HOUSE

"Worrying is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere."

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man with bicurious side (he's mostly attracted to women, but he can easily get attracted to people who are attracted to him, no matter the gender)

PROFESSION: Owner of his own art gallery in Brooklyn

TAROT: Nine of Swords

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Skin cancer (melanoma)

LIFE SO FAR

Wallace doesn't really mind people being angry with him – that's much better than being ignored. Although, Wallace is difficult to ignore. If you try, he'll

just do something you can't even pretend not to notice. However, that didn't really work with his mother. Wallace knows something about not being loved. His father was a traveling salesman, and seldom home. Wallace was an only child, so he spent most of his time at home with his mother. She was never mean or abusive towards him, but always distant and slightly irritated. One day when he was 11, she just left without telling anyone. Neither Wallace nor his father ever saw her again. His father's next wife, Vivian, was the complete opposite. She moved into the house with two children of her own and was constantly present. At the beginning, Wallace found her quite scary in all her boisterous presence, while having other children around constantly was also a challenge for a boy who had spent too much time alone. But eventually he warmed up and learned a valuable lesson. One shouldn't crouch in a corner being afraid of other people. *Don't excuse yourself for existing. If people don't like your presence, it's their problem, not yours.*

When Wallace got cancer in his early 20s, his stepmother didn't let him believe for a second that he would die, and she would visit the hospital every day. At Saratoga he was one of the older kids, and he delighted in not being the lonely boy in the corner. No matter who you were before arriving at Saratoga, you didn't have to be lonely there. After getting well again he completed the business degree he had started before getting sick, but by the time he was going to leave university he knew he couldn't stand a typical business environment with people keeping their distance and plotting coolly behind each other's backs. When he realised that he could use his business skills in the art world, he got a new sense of determination. Now he had ambitions that actually meant something to him. After several years of working for others, he started to run his own art gallery in Brooklyn, close to where he lives, together with the others in the Indigo House.

He recently created a minor art scandal by hosting the humorous exhibition *Sissy Boys*, with photos of feminine young boys doing very girly things. The exhibition was condemned by the gay rights movement. A more personal scandal is his lack of erection: this last year the entire Indigo House has been involved in a quest for Wallace's mysteriously missing potency. This is an extremely frustrating situation for Wallace, and not just for the obvious reasons that it would be for most men. A man who can't get his dick hard is a man that can be ignored. There has to be a cure, and soon! This issue has brought him into the alternative spirituality circles that many of his Saratoga friends have been talking about so much. Maybe the solution is there? Either way, he is starting to really enjoy the strong emotional and sometimes wacky experiences you can have searching for that inner enlightenment.

Personal Issue: Strong need for feeling loved by people he cares about. Really hates being ignored. Being alone and not loved by anyone is his greatest fear.

EXTRAVAGANT
DETERMINED
TENSE
MIND WORKS OVERTIME
BETTER AT INITIATING THAN COMPLETING

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Holly: She's a fellow family member of the Indigo House and friend from the Saratoga days. She was the first person you had sex with. You fumbled along, but that didn't matter with warm and confident Holly. You didn't really become a couple back then, but it was great meeting her during vacations and reunion parties. After a party where you got intimate with both Holly and her friend Katie, they told you about their plan for starting a house of polyfidelity. You voiced your enthusiasm for joining them, and so it was. In a family of polyfidelity everyone is an equal partner and agrees to restrict sexual activity to other members of the group.

Katie: She is the "ideologist" among you, really burning for the idea of a family beyond traditional marriage. She's a very capable organiser, which is great both in her job as an exhibition manager at your gallery, and in the house – it needs someone like that to keep it together. You usually let her have her way in all practical issues, but you love the occasional heated political discussion with her. And there is nothing like sex after a good loud debate.

Beverly: Fellow family member of the Indigo House and friend from the Saratoga days. You lived together when you studied at college for a while, but there wasn't anything sexual about your relationship then. Grieving for her twin brother, she wasn't ready for anything like that. It was great when you both moved into the Indigo House and sex became a natural part of your relationship as well. She can still get quite sad though, sometimes for no apparent reason. After sex, she sometimes starts crying, confiding things to you, but that probably just shows that you are a person she really trusts.

Harvey: As the only two men in the house you have bonded, and you make sure you make time for guys' activities, without any of the women. Harvey used to be Katie's boyfriend before they both became part of the house, but doesn't seem to have any jealousy issues. It's somewhat grating

that lately he's been talking so much about being bisexual and what a pity it is that you can't "perform" at the moment. It sure doesn't help to get pressure from the only man in the house in addition to all the women!

Allison: Fellow family member of the Indigo House. After working in Wallace's gallery for just a month, she became your new best friend and flirt. She was very enthusiastic about the idea of the Indigo House, and you both agreed that you should convince the others to let her move in as well. She is pleasant to work with but not very good at taking orders from anyone, so you usually just let her manage her work (as physical space and sales manager) as she pleases, as she is good at handling both the customers and the artists.

Dennis: Allison really wants him to move into the house, and he seems like a great guy. It could be good to get some more masculine energy in the house, but you feel a bit jealous about the connection he seems to have with Holly. And you really need to fix this virility problem of yours, before another man moves in permanently.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and Spirituals

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Kohana: A friend from the Saratoga days, he's a masculinity and drum circle guru. You have been a regular participant at his workshops. Maybe the solution to your problem could be there?

Sterling: Husband of fellow Saratoga survivor Chantelle. He's as nerdy about music as you are about art. You sometimes go out with him and Chantelle to Studio 54 when you're in the mood to let loose on the dance floor. You and Sterling hang together in the club, while Chantelle is off somewhere trying to catch a word with whatever celebrity she's spotted.

Diane: At first you thought that this make-up artist was a drag queen when you met her at last year's party as one of Mr. T's guests. But one quiet Monday you found out in your gallery office that she was all woman. This is something you of course haven't told anyone in the Indigo House about. That day you didn't have any erectile problems, though, so you wouldn't mind seeing her again.

Santiago: She's an artist potentially scheduled to have an exhibition in your gallery. You should discuss the concept of the possible exhibition with her.

Nick: The editor of the gay magazine *Out NY*. He launched a ferocious attack against *Sissy Boys* in an editorial. To your delight, some gay activists, led by him, staged a protest action inside your gallery one Sunday, when there were a lot of people in the gallery to witness the commotion. Excellent!

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- It's the big summer party. This has to be the night when you'll find a solution for your impotence problem. Decide for yourself how that goes.
- When you meet Nick and his political buddies at the party maybe you should use the opportunity to get into a heated discussion with them about sexual liberation not having to mean that you lose all sense of humour (you can make up details about the exhibition in question, and who the artist of the exhibition was).

Beverly

IN INDIGO HOUSE

You can't take a picture of this. It's already gone.

Nate Fisher in Six Feet Under

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman

PROFESSION: Fundraising and public relations manager at the American Red Cross

TAROT: Seven of Disks

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Osteosarcoma
(in the bones of the body, luckily the doctors saved your arm, but it sometimes hurts)

LIFE SO FAR

Beverly was with her twin brother at the rehabilitation center. When he died, it was like losing a part of herself. Life before and after Sebastian died feels like the lives of two different persons. He died when they were both 16. Even though Beverly's adult life has always been the life of a singular person on her own, she often imagines that in some alternative reality, there lives a different

Beverly, the same age as herself, but with her brother still alive. The days she gets most upset are the ones when she has a hard time remembering something about Sebastian – what he looked like, something he did, or what expressions he used. She’s tired of hearing how she needs to move on with her life, so she is careful not to speak about this outside of the Grief Circle. And she *has* moved on with her life! She and Sebastian were affected by the same type of hereditary cancer at about the same time. He got sick a few months before her. When she was cured and sent to the Saratoga rehabilitation center, just a few months after his death, at first she kept to herself and ignored the others there. But Holly and the other friends she got there helped her get back to her life. In the years since, she has felt a strong need to be close to one or more of the friends of the Saratoga pact at all times. She has felt quite lost at the times when she hasn’t had them near. Maybe that is why she now lives with three of the pact members and is the colleague of a fourth. In college she developed a passion for photography. At first she only took pictures of her own life and her friends, but lately she has become more interested in the field of documentary photography in general. She uses it on the occasional trip to Africa as part of her job, but she has started thinking about trying to go into it full time.

Personal Issue: She longs for pleasure and that’s one of the reasons she became part of the Indigo House – but she has problems really finding genuine pleasure in her life.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

RESTLESS
OBSERVER
MELANCHOLIC
IDEALIST
IMMEDIATE

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Holly: She was the person who got you to open up and connect to other people again. You still share a special bond, and you still both participate in the Grief Circle, where you remember those you have lost. Holly had already lost her father to cancer before she got sick herself.

Katie: The founder of the Indigo House, together with Holly. You admire her principled attitude and her ability to bring up discussions that might be unpopular with others. You couldn’t take that role yourself, but you agree

with her that there would be little point in trying a radical experiment like the Indigo House if you didn't regularly discuss the realities of what that means with each other.

Wallace: Fellow family member of the Indigo House and friend from the Saratoga days. You lived together when you studied at college for a while, but there wasn't anything sexual about your relationship then. You weren't ready for anything like that. So it was a bit strange when you both moved into the Indigo House and started that kind of relationship. You really care about him. Right now you feel a bit guilty about his impotence problem, wondering if you are part of the cause. After sex you often start crying, confiding things to him. Maybe you have created some kind of psychological trigger between sex and sadness for him?

Harvey: Fellow family member of the Indigo House, Harvey was originally Katie's boyfriend, who seemed eager to join in her dream of a house of polyfidelity. You admire his openness about himself, but sometimes it can be a bit too much as well. You think that he is very beautiful when you catch him in those moments where he is just silent, not so aware of himself or other people around him.

Allison: The most recent member to join Indigo House, she moved in a year ago. She started working in Wallace's art gallery and after a short time he was adamant that she was just the person the fellowship needed. She is a cheerful and fun young woman but can be quite self-centered at times. You admire her ability to just have fun, without a care about tomorrow.

Dennis: He's a friend of Allison's who has been visiting the house a lot lately; a peace activist who experienced horrible things as a soldier in Vietnam. You have had some really good conversations about politics and living in a world of injustice and suffering. He has expressed interest in joining the Indigo House, something you think sounds like a good idea. But you feel the need to get to know him on a deeper personal level before you are absolutely sure.

RELATIONSHIPS

Evelyn: Your friend from the Saratoga days and colleague at the Red Cross. She is often stationed in Africa for long stretches of time. You both interpreted the Saratoga pact to not only be about your little group, no matter how important those people are to you, but also about doing something meaningful for the world.

Beatrice: You two are the most regular members of the Grief Circle. Here you talk about people and things in life you have lost to disease, and help and

motivate each other in coping with this and moving forward in life. Your pain is different from hers, but there is a fundamental connection which binds you together.

The Grief Circle

The Grief Circle was formed by some of the Saratoga friends after they returned from their stay at the centre. The idea was to have a safe space to voice despair and feelings of loss and grief over people or other things in life that had been lost. The circle used to be bigger, as some now feel that they need to leave those things behind and concentrate on the future. But these still regularly come to gatherings:

BEATRICE
BEVERLY
HOLLY

SOCIAL CIRCLES

The Saratoga Friendship Pact and The Brooklyn Book Café

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam War as more and more people started questioning the motivations and costs of fighting there for more than a decade. Now in the early 80s, the main focus of the peace movement is the threat of nuclear war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as "unpatriotic".

These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Take pictures of your friends and strangers when they believe that no one is watching them – trying to catch those honest moments.
- Decide to really have fun tonight and throw yourself into the party, either succeeding fully or feeling alienated and a bit lost after a while.

Harvey

IN INDIGO HOUSE

Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night.

Woody Allen

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual Man

PROFESSION: Columnist for the *Village Voice*

TAROT: Eight of Swords

LIFE SO FAR

Current favorite diagnosis: Hypomania (literally, "below mania"), a mood state characterised by a persistent and pervasive elevated (euphoric) or irritable mood, as well as thoughts and behaviors that are consistent with such a mood state. Individuals in a hypomanic state have a decreased need for sleep, are extremely outgoing and competitive, and have a great deal of energy. Oh, and they tend to confide about their own personal problems to... well, anyone who will listen. Harvey grew up in a secular, intellectual

Jewish family in Manhattan. His teenage rebellion involved becoming a conservative Jew for a year, pestering his family with insisting on strict observation of Kosher rules. The phase passed, and if he talks about it, now he claims that he and God are currently “not on speaking terms”. He knows the city like the inside of his pocket, and considers his current home in Brooklyn almost rural. In truth, he has rarely traveled outside of New York apart from a couple of vacations to California, and claims that the people living in fly-over country are just plain incomprehensible. He’s not so conceited as some might believe. It’s partly an act, and also down to his distinct type of humor. Sometimes it can be difficult to know where the satirical act ends and the real person begins. There are few jobs that give so much cultural capital as being a regular contributor to the Village Voice, and he knows it. He is a keen observer of all things cultural and has a writing style to back it up. His insight, however, is usually better when it’s on the people and phenomena around him, than on his own life and relationships.

Personal Issue: Continues talking in situations where it would serve him better to shut up and act instead. He has only recently realised he is bisexual. A household of polyfidelity would seem an ideal place for living out that side of himself as well, so it’s really frustrating that the only other man in the family is not up to it at the moment.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

TALKATIVE
FRUSTRATED
DIZZY
AMBIVALENT
HONEST

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Katie: You met each other at university. You fell in love with her the first time you spoke, but it was she who decided that you two were a couple. Although she was anything than conventional, it would feel a bit too traditional if you were to marry a Jewish girl from New York. In terms of jealousy, her behavior was quite erratic, sometimes insisting that you should both get out and have sex with other people, but then becoming very jealous when you did. So when she suggested starting a house of polyfidelity together with Holly and some other friends, you immediately agreed to the idea, hoping it might strike the perfect balance in your relationship.

Holly: Sometimes when you two are in the same room, everyone else gets a headache. She talks as much as you do, and you share the predisposition to talk about anything that's on your mind, no matter how personal.

Allison: The most recent member of the Indigo House, Allison moved in a year ago. First she started working in Wallace's art gallery and after a short time Wallace became adamant that she was just the person the fellowship needed. She is a cheerful and fun young woman, and without telling the others, you have on a few occasions visited Lawrence's swingers club as a couple. If you only had sex with each other there, that would probably still be in accordance with the rules of the house. But Allison is mostly into women, so you have always split up when visiting the L Club.

Wallace: Wallace is one of Holly's friends from her time as a young cancer patient, and has lived in the Indigo House almost since the start. As the only two men in the house you have bonded very well and enjoy your guys' nights without any of the women. You've been attracted to him since the start but never did anything up until now apart from flirting and suggesting. He is currently suffering from erectile dysfunction. You would love to be the one to solve that issue for him.

Beverly: Fellow family member of the Indigo House. You are very different. Beverly speaks mostly through the pictures she takes. You know she has some tragedy in her past. You rather think that articulating more explicitly what she wants from life now would really help her.

Dennis: Allison really wants him to move into the house, and he seems like a great guy. But you are a bit sceptical about having a guy who's completely heterosexual move into the house. You intend to get to know him better at the party, and see how he is around all the alternative and gay people who will be here tonight.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The L Club

“Living the lifestyle” is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow “to celebrate life” through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find

a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Beatrice: You know her as a friend of Holly, Wallace, and Beverly from the Saratoga days. But last time you met her was at Lawrence's club at gang bang night, the first time you went there without Allison. She was the woman in the center of it all, receiving one man after the other, including you. She didn't recognise you, actually she didn't even look at you. The experience has left you deeply fascinated with her, breaking the boundaries of everything society deems proper and tasteful for a woman, in such a wonderful way.

Lizzie: An interesting though slightly unhinged friend. Also one of Holly, Wallace and Beverly's friends from the Saratoga days. You manage to get her to open up you think. The things she tells you are not always consistent with each other, but they are always strongly felt.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Find someone among Mr. T's guests who could give you "the gay experience" you've been craving. If you succeed, maybe you get really nervous and have a hard time actually getting to the act, instead of just talking and talking.
- You have just quit seeing your therapist over "irreconcilable differences", so you are looking for a new one. Discover that Walter (Mr. T's party) is a therapist and try to find out whether he could be a good replacement (talk with him and any of his patients that you manage to identify).

Allison

IN INDIGO HOUSE

Girls just wanna have fun.

Cyndi Lauper

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual woman – prefers women but men are OK too, under the right circumstances

PROFESSION: Physical space and sales manager at Wallace's art gallery

TAROT: Princess of Cups (Page of Cups)

LIFE SO FAR

"We are here because we want to be free, are we not? Rules should only be guidelines. Let's all be friends and let me do exactly what I want when I want to." Life is an adventure and the Indigo House is such a fun and interesting place to experience it. Allison grew up on Fifth Avenue in an enormous apartment overlooking Central Park. Her father is one of the wealthiest men in the city and her mother had a career as a modestly successful actress on

Broadway. They divorced when Allison was only five, but her mother was savvy enough to get a generous divorce agreement, so she grew up in the big luxurious apartment together with her mother and her Puerto Rican nanny. She didn't see her father very often and these days she meets him only a couple of times a year. Allison isn't really rich herself, but every time she sees her father he remembers to transfer some money to her. She hasn't told anybody in Indigo House how wealthy her father is, because she doesn't want to be seen as a spoiled rich girl. She isn't exactly a liar, but she is good at presenting the parts of reality she wants other people to see. Her strongest interest is contemporary art, but she never had the drive or talent to try to make it as an artist herself. She is a competent organiser and a social animal, though, both of which serve her well in her current job and future ambitions. She moved into the Indigo House about a year ago.

Personal Issue: The unbearable lightness of being. How can Allison cope when the party's over and those dreary and sad things intrude into her life?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS :

OPTIMIST
EMOTIONAL
SPOILT
ENTHUSIASTIC
CARELESS

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Wallace: He's a fellow family member of the Indigo House. After working in Wallace's gallery for just a month you became his new best friend and flirt. You loved the idea of the Indigo House, and got him as enthusiastic as yourself on the idea of you moving in. He's also your boss, but he doesn't, you know, boss you around much. And now that's he's having problems with getting it up, it's actually nicer and cuddlier to have sex with him as well.

Holly: Founder of the Indigo House together with Katie. Holly is such a wonderful and warm woman. You are totally in love with her. It irks you that she seems to think you are immature.

Katie: Founder of the Indigo House together with Holly. She is the one you are most often in conflict with in the house. She's very intelligent and you respect her, but she could really try to be less of a control freak.

Harvey: Fellow family member of the Indigo house. A smart intellectual who writes for the coolest publication in the City, *The Village Voice*, Harvey was originally Katie's boyfriend. Without telling the others, the two of you have occasionally visited Lawrence's swingers club, the L Club, as a couple. This would probably be in accordance with the polyfidelity rules of the house, if you only had had sex with each other at the club. But you have always split up when visiting the club, searching individually for someone who catches your interest.

Beverly: You see it as your mission to get poor Beverly to thoroughly enjoy life. Apparently her twin brother died many years ago, but she still carries the sorrow around like a heavy rock.

Dennis: Through your involvement in an organisation working for nuclear disarmament, you met Dennis, a Vietnam veteran turned peace activist. He feels real, in a more substantial way than other people you know. You've brought him to parties and Sunday dinners in the house many times now, and it was you who suggested to him and the others that he should move in – and a decision about that will be reached soon. He seems to have the hots for Holly.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam War as more and more people started questioning the motivations and costs of fighting there for more than a decade. Now in the early 80s, the main focus of the peace movement is the threat of nuclear war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as "unpatriotic".

These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

RELATIONSHIPS

Lawrence: The owner of a swingers club called The L Club. You love his attitude to life. If he had been a woman you would have wanted to be his girlfriend.

Sam: She has visited the Indigo House a couple of times and you think you're in love. OK, hooking up with her would be like dating a criminal; she's been to jail after all. And it would be against the rules of the house. But you plan to flirt and dance with her at the party. And whatever happens after that, well, you are going to go with the flow.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- At the house meeting protest against Katie's proposed rules before eventually agreeing. Later, as the party gets going, forget all about what it was you agreed to.
- Be curious about who the lesbians are among Mr T's guests. Get to know them and find out if any of them are particularly interesting.

Dennis

IN INDIGO HOUSE

Now the labor leader's screamin'
when they close the missile plants,
United Fruit screams at the Cuban shore,
Call it "Peace" or call it "Treason,"
Call it "Love" or call it "Reason,"
But I ain't marchin' any more,
No I ain't marchin' any more

Phil Ochs, *I Ain't Marching Anymore*

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man

PROFESSION: Physiotherapist and masseur

TAROT: Four of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Vietnam veteran turned peace activist; a person with a lot of integrity who usually manages to mask the traumas of war. Through his new good friend Allison, he's gotten to know the Indigo House recently. He has decided to go along with her plan to try to convince the others that he should become a member of the house. But is he truly interested in the lifestyle, or does he

just have a massive crush on Holly? Today, he's joining the gang from Indigo House for this Fourth of July celebration to see if he would be a good fit for them.

Dennis had an uncomplicated childhood. Popular with his classmates, sporty, and a boy who made his parents proud by having a strong sense of right and wrong from an early age. He wouldn't allow the socially awkward kids to be bullied while he was around. His parents were Rockefeller Republicans, and he spent a lot of his childhood and youth in Albany, New York, where his father served as a state senator. In college he was drafted to go to Vietnam. As a college student he could have applied for an exemption, but he made his father proud by not doing so. He felt it was his duty to go when his country was at war. His girlfriend Katie, who was vehemently opposed to the war, broke up with him as he left. The next couple of years changed Dennis fundamentally. He saw horrible things, and he experienced first-hand that the armed forces were nothing like the well-run, honorable organisation he had always envisioned. And more and more he began to question what the Americans were doing in this country far away – killing and getting killed. He received a serious blast injury in his left leg, and spent several months in hospital recuperating. Luckily he regained the full use of his leg, but there is a recurring pain that has never gone away.

After being discharged he joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), to his parents' horror, becoming an outspoken leader in the movement. He is still very active in the peace movement, but now the work is mostly focused on nuclear disarmament and protesting against US support for military dictatorships in Latin America. Still haunted by dreams and images that won't go away from his time in the war, he has become very focused on bodily well-being and relaxation, both for himself and in the treatment of others as part of his job as physiotherapist and masseur.

Personal Issue: Disillusionment in his former ideals have led him to become sceptical of becoming swept up in other people's ideologies, while at the same time longing for the fellowship he once felt from shared convictions and community. In this particular setting: he has not had a whole lot of exposure to gay culture, and might not always manage to be as tolerant as he would like to think he is.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

PHYSICAL
QUESTIONING
MASCULINE
SELF-SEEKING
DEFENSIVE

CORE GROUP

Indigo House is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Katie: Your former girlfriend from first year of college. She broke up with you when you went to Vietnam, and you hadn't seen her for many years when Allison introduced you to the Indigo House. She rebelled against her upbringing sooner than you did. You've understood that she is the ideological core of this experiment in polyfidelity. It's strange meeting her again. You are still attracted to her, but how much have you changed in the years that have passed since then?

Allison: You met bubbly Allison in the peace movement. You hit it off at once, but you noticed that she wasn't really into you in *that* way. But she makes your day brighter when you spend time with her. She was the one who introduced you to the Indigo House and brought you to parties and Sunday dinners several times now. She was the one who suggested to you and the others in the house that you should move in.

Holly: A warm and sensual woman you feel very attracted to, and the main reason that you feel drawn to the idea of joining the Indigo House. If this polyfidelity thing doesn't work out, maybe it could be just the two of you?

Harvey, Wallace, and Beverly: The remaining three members of the Indigo House. Harvey is very talkative and seems to be a good discussion partner, but will he just become irritating if you see him every day? Wallace has an outgoing personality, but Allison has told you that he is struggling with impotence at the moment, poor guy. Beverly is a melancholic girl who takes a lot of pictures.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam War as more and more people started questioning the motivations and costs of fighting there for more than a decade. Now in the early 80s, the main focus of the peace movement is the threat of nuclear war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as "unpatriotic".

These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

RELATIONSHIPS

Mary Lou: Friend from the peace movement and talented singer/songwriter. Mary Lou once wrote a song based on a very special conversation you had with her about your experiences in Vietnam. She has performed the song in several veteran and peace movement events, but never mentioned your name. You wonder whether or not she will use the song on her new album, because if she does, you'd really like her to mention your name in the credits.

Joani: Well known in alternative circles as a leading tantra guru, and a friend of several of the people in the Indigo House. Strong sensual energy. You've joined a couple of tantra workshops with her just to try it.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Have someone confide in you by offering them a massage, letting them talk about themselves and their views on issues and other people, prodding them gently along with questions.
- Make a couple of insensitive slightly homophobic jokes, apologising profusely if you notice anyone becoming offended.

Barbara

IN AMAZONS

*Hello, is it me you're looking for?
I can see it in your eyes
I can see it in your smile
You're all I've ever wanted
My arms are open wide
Cos you know just what to say
And you know just what to do
And I want to tell you so much, I love you*

Lionel Richie, Hello

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Leader of the Amazons organisation, educated as a social worker

TAROT: Queen of Cups

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Breast cancer

LIFE SO FAR

After surviving breast cancer at young age, Barbara founded the Amazons, a feminist health movement. The name was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the

removal of breasts in the treatment of breast cancer. She is proud of making her own living doing this work, and has been interviewed in the media several times about it. She's a natural networker who thrives equally at feminist rallies, at Lawrence's swingers club on Ladies night (in between relationships, before she met Claire), or at fundraising events on the Upper East Side. She can blend in everywhere; strong as an Amazon Queen, but with a tender approach to people. She is an old-fashioned romantic at heart, something her dearest Claire has experienced. Barbara never thinks she gets enough gifts and attention, and always has to beg her partner for romantic candlelight dinners. Maybe Claire finds her a bit too bourgeois?

Barbara was raised as the only child in a progressive middle class family, who supported her as a lesbian from the moment she came out, during her first year in college. Her family had also been there for her when the cancer hit. At just 14, she was one of the few women who got breast cancer at an early age. After losing one of her breasts to cancer, Barbara developed what she would call a screwed-up food obsession. As an adult, she has gotten better at controlling it, but she still often eats nearly nothing when others are watching, then secretly raids the kitchen at night for all things fat, sweet, and unhealthy. Sometimes she feels so guilty that she has to do situps or run. She has never told anyone about this, but Claire probably has her suspicions. Barbara also has another secret: she was date raped once when she was in high school, and can feel uncomfortable if alone in a room with a man. She is very good at telling other abuse victims she meets that it's not their fault and that it helps to be open and talk about it, but she herself hasn't told this story to anyone.

Personal Issue: The struggle to present a successful facade, hiding flaws, while pretending to everyone that she is totally honest and open.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

ROMANTIC
TENDER
TEAMBUILDER
FACADE-BUILDER
TALKING BEHIND OTHERS BACKS

CORE GROUP

The Amazons is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Claire: Girlfriend for the last two years, but she's known you from the Amazons since she became a member four years ago. She is very political, with union organising and democratic election campaigns, and has your full respect for

that. But you think it also takes too much time, and you wish there were more time to just be a couple. There's been too little time in bed as well lately; you want long, passionate nights. She can also be a bit jealous sometimes. But you have a very strong bond, and you are monogamous, which is important to you. You had a big quarrel the night before driving off to Saratoga - Claire wants Sam to move out of the house immediately.

Sam: Ex-girlfriend and old friend from the Saratoga days. She has lived at your place for the last three weeks. You still love her, but can't live with her. But you will be there for her when she needs you. She was notoriously unfaithful when she drank, and the relationship ended when you caught her with another Saratoga friend, Kim.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and ***The Cubby Hole***

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Gwen: Your soulmate and best friend. She is married to Lester from Saratoga, whom you also like a lot. You have long weekly chats on the phone; you can tell her everything and she is maybe the person you feel the most love towards. You could do anything for her to make her happy, and you have deep

respect for her volunteer health work. Sometimes you both help each other with campaigns and events. There is only one thing that bothers you about her life, and that is her obsession with S&M. You don't like it at all, and last week on the phone when she suggested it was something you could try too, you got really angry! But you didn't dare say anything to damage your friendship. She and Lester have gone as far as bringing their Master, Mickey, to the 4th of July party. This isn't a sex camp!

Lawrence: Good friend who manages the swingers club, the L Club.

Joani: You and Sam went together to her tantra courses when you were dating. You have always liked Joani, and think she is a much better fit for Kohana than Kim. Together they are the perfect "leaders" of the Saratoga pact.

Kohana: Back in the days at Saratoga you did make out with him once, even if you knew inside you were lesbian. Everything was perfect, until he took out his prick. That scared you off and you abruptly left his room.

Kim: The slut you caught Sam together with. You pretend you don't mind anymore, but you do. She was nice back then, when she was together with Kohana. She pretends to be so preppy and in control, but you know better.

Dawn: A young woman you dated for a short while not long before you met Claire. She was quite out of control at times and seemed to have no concern for your feelings. You've seen her around sometimes without talking much with her. You hope she's become more mature now. There were things you really liked about her, so you hope she gets her act together.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Talk to some close friends about what Gwen told you about Mickey and S&M, and try to gather support for talking some sense into them concerning bringing him here.
- Sometime late in the party: Because you are very upset about a quarrel with Claire about Sam (or something else that has happened), raid the kitchen for something you crave. When the guilt hits, try to exercise the calories off on the dance floor.

Claire

IN AMAZONS

You can't do it unless you organise.

Samuel Gompers

Integrity is doing the right thing, even if nobody is watching.

Jim Stovall

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman (but heterosexual before she met Barbara)

PROFESSION: ✓ Union representative, small scale investor; former youth model

TAROT: Princess of Swords (Page of Swords)

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Breast cancer (mastectomy on one side)

LIFE SO FAR

Claire's a born and bred working class New Yorker, spotted as a model at the age of 14. She was always "one of the guys" while growing up, so it was strange to become a well-known bikini model all over the country. Both her grandfather and father were dockworkers and her mother an office cleaner, so her significant income as a successful youth model contributed to the family finances. They even moved to a bigger home. She felt like a Cinderella in those days, only waiting for the right Prince to come along. But alas, the strong hereditary risk of breast cancer came instead. Both her mother and grandmother had died of it. She survived, only losing one breast in the process. Her working class background had made her wise enough to make sure she was covered by solid insurance, though four years ago she still had to take the company to court to have them pay what they owed her. That was when she met Barbara and the Amazons, who supported her through this fight. Two years ago the close companionship with Barbara turned out to be love, and they are still a "perfect couple". Claire didn't have much contact with the lesbian scene before meeting Barbara; it was Barbara's personality and high ideals that seduced Claire into a relationship with a woman. Before the cancer, Claire got a lot of her self-worth from her looks, but through the illness and fight in court she became a "Princess of Swords", fighting one battle after the other.

At first people might notice her honey-sweet voice and big smile and think that she's tender and weak, but her heart and will are strong. She feels she knows what is right, and will tell you so! When she got the near-million-dollar settlement from the insurance company, she invested half and gave the rest to charity: The Amazons, of course, where she is now a stakeholder, as well as some smaller health campaigns and progressive causes. She now works for the Transport Workers Union, and also uses a lot of her time for political campaigns - for the Union, the Amazons, and door-to-door campaigning for Democrats at every election. Lately the big battle has been about Wal-Mart's union busting, and now there's the campaign for Sinclair Everett running for a democrat seat in Congress in your district.

Personal Issue: Always knows what's best for everyone, can be very rigid if she perceives something as being a matter of what is right and what is wrong.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SELF-DETERMINED
HIGH IDEALS
RATIONAL, TO THE POINT OF HEARTLESSNESS
FRANK
VINDICTIVE

CORE GROUP

The Amazons is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Barbara: Your girlfriend for two years, whom you met in the Amazons. Barbara is a bourgeois pretty girl, a networker and a diplomat, and she makes you happy and confident. You try to build her up, as she has done with you, but sometimes you can be too harsh with her and her way of building up a facade. Her obsession with healthy food is one of the things you quarrel about. But lately you wonder if she sneaks out in the night to eat? The other thing you don't like is that she talks too much about other people. But you appreciate her thoughts about fidelity and honesty, as neither of you wants to share this love with somebody else, and you have high ideals about being honest with each other. Even if you don't like Barbara's hedonistic past at the Lifestyle swingers club, you secretly would like much rougher sex than she can offer, or even imagine. You read hard-core porn mags in secret, with lesbian fisting, and hetero "stallion" porn with men with huge dicks. This is the one thing you won't share with her, or anybody else. You feel kind of silly having a secret stash of porn mags in the garage, just like your Dad used to. Maybe your occasional longing for male company is something that could destroy your wonderful relationship with Barbara in the end.

Sam: Barbara's ex-girlfriend has been living at your place for the last three weeks. Sam means trouble; she makes you jealous - and even afraid when she is drunk and angry. But Barbara has made you promise to not say anything negative to her and keep your opinions to yourself, even though you want her out of the house immediately. So you have tried to just give Sam some friendly advice, but the girl seems to be totally out of control. The day before you left for Saratoga, you and Barbara quarreled about this, and Sam might have overheard you. Maybe she'd be better off in jail; you wouldn't hesitate to turn her to the police if she did something illegal. But at the same time, Sam sure has a way of getting into your bad and sexy fantasies.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

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war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as “unpatriotic”.

These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

RELATIONSHIPS

Sinclair Everett: A democrat running as a Member of Congress. You volunteer for his campaign and have met him at meetings. You will be very surprised when you encounter him with Mr. T's gang. He is married and has two children!

Kohana: A masculine and secure man who makes you feel womanly. After drinking his magic green drink at last summer's 4th of July party, you stayed with him at the “Holy Place” of the Saratoga friends in the woods. In a moment of open trust and strong bonding, you revealed just a little bit about your fantasy of Barbara being a bit rougher in bed, and he told you his big secret: how he loved Barbara at the Saratoga Rehab Centre, and how he felt like she castrated him when she screamed and ran out of the room that time they were making out and he took his trousers down. In fact, that was why he started his masculinity movement and drum circles; he wanted to take back his masculinity. When he found out that she was a lesbian, he understood it all and now he can just laugh about the incident, and wishes you and Barbara all the best! But maybe his past love for Barbara makes you a little bit jealous?

Lester: You met Lester (and Gwen, his wife) during the court case with the investment company. He works as a stockbroker so when you won the case, you got him to invest half of your settlement. He's a pleasant guy and you trust him. You've gained some extra income from the investment, but not all that much, and now you haven't heard updates for two months. It's important for you to make money, because you need it to put it into the Amazons and other projects, so you should ask him for an update.

Gwen: Barbara's best friend. You are a bit jealous of their hour-long talks on the phone, but you find Gwen very lovable.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Approach Sinclair and express your disbelief in his double life. But maybe also be open to help him and tie yourself closer to his campaign.
- Do something very nice for Barbara to make up for the quarrel, and try with good intentions to convince her to confront Sam, and kick her out of your flat.

Sam (antha)

IN AMAZONS

All my life, my heart has yearned for a thing I cannot name.

Andre Breton

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Butch lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Tattoo artist

TAROT: Princess of Wands (Page of Wands)

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Breast cancer

LIFE SO FAR

Sam is the irresistible bad butch girl you can't help fall in love with. She is notorious in the lesbian scene for her highly public rows and jealousy dramas, and really can't control herself while drinking. Sam recently landed a stay in prison for punching someone so hard she ended up in hospital. She finds occasional inner peace in Joani's tantra rituals. Leaving home at 17, she left behind a mother who drank too much red wine while dreaming of an acting career that was never to be, her loser of a husband who is not Sam's father, and

a much younger half-brother (Mickey). Sam never had many friends among the girls; she dressed like a boy, acted like a boy, and played (American) football with the boys. She never was a nice girl – more a rebel that refused to take orders from anyone, secretly dreaming of a nice little princess of her own. Barbara was that kind of princess, when they met at the Saratoga rehab centre. They both had the same type of cancer and had one breast removed, which they bonded over instantly. It was Sam who started to call them Amazons, long before Barbara founded the organisation.

Sam is the kind of gal who would sometimes go without any breast prosthetics, and who would flash her scar at the beach, or on the disco floor, just to shock. This made her a good companion for “nice girl” Barbara when getting attention for the organisation. The Saratoga days were the happiest in Sam’s life. Trouble started again when she and Barbara moved in together in a small flat in New York. Too much drinking, too much hooking up with other girls, and too much getting into trouble hanging out with the wrong crew. Barbara always understood, licking Sam’s wounds, helping her back on feet. She also supported her tattoo career. That is the only thing she’s really proud of. And she really has great artistic skills. She is quite known, all over the states, for her retro-futuristic tattoo style. She was even on a TV show once. Sam has been to jail twice before, and was recently let out after the bar incident. When she got out she didn’t have anywhere to live, and Barbara offered to let her crash at their place, until she’s back on her feet again.

Personal Issue: Sam doesn’t really know how to be close to anyone, other than through sex. She has no close friends among men, just “good-time buddies”. Girls, hetero and lesbian alike, always fall in love with her, and she gives them sex, but the more someone loves her, and tries to get close, the worse she tends to treat them. Her other issue is alcohol – when she doesn’t drink she is a powerful personality, loyal and caring for her friends, but it’s like drinking brings her demons out.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

PROVOCATIVE
ATTRACTIVE
INSECURE
BUTCH
INDEPENDENT

CORE GROUP

The Amazons is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Barbara: Your ex-girlfriend, still your best friend and savior. In the end she

lost patience with you, finding you in bed fucking Kim at a Saratoga reunion party. But still, she continues to stand up for you. Trouble seems to like you, especially when you drink. But Barbara is never prejudiced or tries to change you. You know she still loves you. You want to be close, but you don't really want her as a girlfriend anymore. You don't want anyone really.

Claire: Barbara's current girlfriend. You've lived at their place for the last three weeks. She is an idealistic girl, like Barbara, but much weaker. She doesn't deserve the title of Amazon. She provokes you with "well meant" advice, her honey-sweet voice covering up how much she dislikes you. Honestly, it makes you jealous to see the grip she's got on Barbara.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Mickey: Half-brother. You haven't seen him for five years; you two never were very close. You didn't know he was going to be at the party. You don't want him gossiping about your miserable stay in jail to your mother, but you are eager to hear news from home. You love your mother, and are deeply

ashamed of having let her down, instead of taking care of her. But you can't stand the idiot of a husband she has, and Mickey is of his blood.

Lester & Gwen: Cool couple, you've always liked Lester and support him in keeping the Saratoga pact holy. His wonderful partner Gwen is what a mother, or sister, should be like. You look up to her for her idealism and lovely soul, but feel a bit shy in her presence.

Joani: She's like an older sister. You wish you could be like her, but you just aren't. She has taught you some tricks to calm down, at least. You made out with her once at Saratoga, before you and Barbara were lovers.

Kim: Hot, but mostly straight, businesslike woman. She was the one Barbara caught you with at a gathering 5-6 years ago.

Santiago: An ex-lover and visual artist; you still love her work. You two had two or three nice and passionate months together, until she turned too clingy and wanted a relationship. You disappeared from her flat, and haven't seen her since.

Allison: A friend, carefree and innocent. You are quite sure she's lesbian even though she's living in this slightly odd bisexual collective called the Indigo House. You've visited them a couple of times, mainly because of Allison.

Morgan: If you are out on the scene and feeling bored you often seek out Morgan. It's rare to meet someone as unapologetic as yourself. You're almost not mad at her anymore for tricking you into getting into a fight with an ex-girlfriend of hers a year ago (that wasn't the fight that landed you in jail). You told her to get lost when she was one of the few who visited you in jail a month ago, but you appreciate that she wasn't afraid to come down there.

Dawn: A regular at the Cubby Hole and friend of Morgan. You've flirted with her a couple of times there but haven't pursued it further. Maybe it's time to do that now, should you be in the mood.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Try to make Claire be honest with you, and if she is, let your insecurity burst out in anger.
- The skanks in jail are all you have touched for the last months. You need to find a sweet gal to get it on with. Deepen your voice and suggest something kinky, whispering in her ear. Better with a new one, than an old flame.

Lester

IN LETS PLAY MASTER AND
SEREVANT

"It's when facing the limits of life that we truly have an opportunity to view our lives as a whole."

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man, submissive (can be dominated by men, but prefers sex with women)

PROFESSION: Stock Broker and owner of Yoga and Tai Chi center

TAROT: Knight of Cups (King of Cups)

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Stomach cancer

LIFE SO FAR

"You don't have to shut off your emotions just because you are good at earning money and enjoy life's luxuries." Lester had a wealthy, sorrow-free, normal childhood and youth, with a caring mother and a distant father. He lived in uptown Manhattan, until the cancer hit him in the stomach. His family couldn't handle the disaster, and didn't even manage to talk about it, or take care of his tumbling emotions. He had always been an emotional kid, but never had anyone to be close to. That was until he came to the Saratoga rehab center; the

turning point in Lester's life. There he found the support and intimacy he had lacked. He feels intensely that the Friendship Pact is important and real, and he would never break it.

He had top marks at the New York School of Economics and his father's contacts made him into a successful stockbroker. He is also helped by the harmony and happiness that his wife and soul-mate Gwen brings into his life. He particularly enjoys bringing his idealist wife to functions where the other guys arrive with their second trophy wives, and she starts talking about the gonorrhea prevention campaign she's working on. He is grateful that his wife shares his interest in S&M – the only problem is that they both prefer the submissive part – but, well, if you lack something, you just have to outsource it. Lester recently founded the Good Life Yoga Center. He is continuously striving to find balance between materialism and idealism, the soft and the hard. Indulging in S&M pleasure and meditative yoga training both give him positive energy. But he has never really had to work hard to get somewhere. He is quick to respond to other people's initiatives, but he can also lose interest quite fast.

Personal Issue: If he, or the world around him, is not in harmony, his fear of disaster can make him apathetic. In worst cases, he gets hysterical – though this happens seldom. Losing Gwen is the worst personal disaster he could think of.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

EMOTIONAL
INTUITIVE
RESPONSIVE
HEDONISTIC
LUCKY

CORE GROUP

Let's play Master and servant is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Gwen: Your wife of eight years. You met her just some weeks after you got home from the centre in Saratoga (10 years ago), and you immediately fell in love with her for her straightforwardness, love for life, and compassion for others. Now she is included with the others at Saratoga. That you both get turned on by S&M is important, but it's your deep friendship that will make this relationship last forever. You have a daughter together, Isabella (6), who's

staying with her grandparents for the weekend. She often does this, so you and Gwen are free to indulge in your open-minded sexual life. Gwen's latest "journey towards self love" can be a bit too self-centred for you. It feels like she cares a lot more about her own needs than yours. And you need more of her attention, as she is your only really close friend.

Mickey: Your young Master for a couple of months now. You and Gwen disagree on whether you should tell this to everyone, or just say he is a friend living in your house (as you feel is the best). You can see how much he means to Gwen's happiness, and to have a Master brings you joy as well. He doesn't have sex with you; he dominates and plays sadistic games. But to be honest, he also brings out some jealousy issues you haven't felt before. It might be best if he didn't live together with you. Both your daily life and sex life is about a lot more than S&M for you.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga friendship pact and The L Club

"Living the lifestyle" is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow "to celebrate life" through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Lawrence: It's cool that he runs a swingers club; you like this relaxed and chaotic guy a lot. It was you who convinced him to have special S&M-nights at the club, which Gwen and you attended for a while.

Barbara: Best friend of Gwen. You think Gwen tells her too much about your private life. But you highly respect her idealism.

Max: You developed a special friendship with him at Saratoga, which you haven't maintained very much since. He even tried dominating you in the woods a couple of times, bound you to a tree and whipped you with a branch. This was your first experience with this kind of thing, and you even think you fell in love with him for a while.

Holly: Ex-girlfriend. A wonderful woman and your girlfriend during the Saratoga days, but she couldn't handle your passion for S&M, so the relationship didn't last.

Claire: A client of yours; you invested half of her court case settlement money from the insurance company she sued. Right now a significant portion of the investments are with shares in Wal-Mart, and they have now tripled their value, and are still rising rapidly. You should share this good news with her.

Hank: The janitor at Saratoga. He's a simple and good soul; you like him and trust him. But there's something weird about the glances he sends your way. Maybe it's about the time he ran into you and Max in the woods. You hope he doesn't think you're gay. He needs to loosen up. Yoga would do him good.

also

People of "Pink Dollars" (you don't know them, but recognise their faces as part of the power elite of NYC):

Bruce: You know this yuppie from the New York Stock Exchange, but you didn't know he was gay.

Mr. T: Successful and charismatic owner of T-Buzz advertising company.

Ruben Harlow: Innovative owner of Transatlantic technologies. He makes cellular phones (you sure wanna have one).

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Define together with Gwen what you will tell others about Mickey.
- Recreate the good old Saratoga atmosphere, mattresses on the floor, everybody talking and touching each other. Be enthusiastic about the ritual you will do together at the place where you first made the pact, and try to share that energy with the others.



Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.

Oscar Wilde

AGE: 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman, submissive

PROFESSION: Housewife and community health worker (mostly voluntary); studied international politics and ancient Greek art

TAROT: Two of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

Gwen was selected leader of her Girl Scouts *and* prom queen. Not because she was the most clever or most beautiful, but because of her personality. It's impossible to not love her. Her mother died when she was quite young and her father remarried three times. Every time, Gwen and her stepmother built a close and happy relationship, which remained even when Gwen's father grew tired of his wife. So now she has three mothers, but no siblings. For Gwen it's all about trust and relationships. The reason people have so many bad and violent relationships is because they haven't learned to talk about the difficult things. Gwen has never been afraid of starting a conversation about, say, how

to best prevent genital herpes if she feels there is someone who needs to be informed about the facts. She is a brave community health worker, and she can talk with anyone from governors to sex workers. And it was she who brought up the issue of S&M in the relationship with Lester. He was relieved to find out they shared this interest, but of course it was a bit disappointing when it turned out they both wanted to be submissive. After a long and unsatisfying search at a swingers club, they have now found a solution: Mickey. Due to her satisfying sex life with Lester and Mickey, Gwen feels turned on most of the time these days. She thinks that this gives her an abundance of energy to help others and make the world a better place!

Personal Issue: She is on a journey to find true self-love. Focusing on her own needs can give her some blind spots in regards to others. But she believes that her deep understanding of herself makes her an expert in what everybody else needs.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

ENTHUSIASTIC
VALUES HERSELF
PASSIONATE
PUSHY
SELF-INDULGENT

CORE GROUP

Let's play Master and servant is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Lester: Your husband of 8 years, whom you met just some weeks after he got home from the centre in Saratoga (10 years ago). He was beaming with energy, and didn't seem to have been ill at all. Your compassion, and passion, for each other is deep and long-lasting. You have a daughter together, Isabella (6), who's staying at her grandparents' for the weekend. She often does this, so you are free to indulge in your open-minded sex life. It annoys you that he is always so laid-back, even passive, and has tons of patience for everything to just solve itself. He wanted you to stay at home and not have to work, and you did, but you use a lot of your time for community health work. Some of it you get paid for, but you are not in need as Lester has a very good income.

Mickey: Your young Master for the past few months. You and Lester disagree on whether you should tell this to everyone (as is your opinion), or just say he is a friend living in your house. Bringing him into your life has made you feel fulfilled, grounded, and totally in harmony with yourself and the world. He

is the thing that was missing in your life. You need to be dominated to have a satisfying sex life and also to feel thoroughly loved for who you are. You fantasise about him deciding more for you (and Lester), not only during sex, but in daily life.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The L Club. “Living the lifestyle” is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow “to celebrate life” through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Barbara: You made friends with her at the first Saratoga get-together Lester brought you to, eight years ago. She is now your best friend. You have long chats on the phone every week, and sometimes you help each other organise campaigns and events. Two days ago you revealed to her why Mickey lives in your house. She wasn't really happy for you, so it seems that this is something that will take some time for Barbara to fully understand.

Claire: Barbara's girlfriend. You think they are good for each other. She is a dedicated activist like yourself. She just has to remember that a relationship needs work and time, too.

Sam: One of the Saratoga friends, Sam is a young woman with a lot of fire in her, but who lacks the ability to prevent things from getting out of control and messing up her life. You know that you are a person she trusts.

Joani: The “leader” of Saratoga. You love and admire her. But the tantra-stuff is maybe too soft for your taste. Holding back orgasms? Why? But of course, you can try anything once.

Kohana: You feel dragged towards his masculinity. Men roaring in the woods while playing drums... mm-hmm. You get an image in your head of a fantasy – of you as the only woman in the woods, the one to be sacrificed...

Steven: You understood last year that he is an experienced Master. You wish to convince him to take you down to the secret dark room which the gays have created with props brought with them from the city.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Hold a lecture about STDs for the Saratoga people – maybe convince Lawrence (the swingers club owner) to have a similar lecture at his club.
- Find a secret place outdoors for a session with Mickey, Lester, and you.

Mickey

IN LETS PLAY MASTER AND
SEREVANT

*Domination's the name of the game
In bed or in life.
They're both just the same.
Except in one you're fulfilled
At the end of the day*

Depeche Mode, Master and Servant

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual man, and open about it, as well as S&M Master

PROFESSION: Art student, supplemented with some benefits (free house, food, and sometimes pocket money) from helping Lester and Gwen

TAROT: Three of Swords

LIFE SO FAR

His father was a working-class hero, his mother a red-wine-loving failed actress. Mickey grew up in suburban New Jersey, with alluring fantasies of being the next Andy Warhol. His mother always encouraged him to follow his dreams, so art was the natural path for Mickey. Now he is a financially struggling art student who got involved in the S&M scene at a young age out of curiosity – and a need for cash. An experienced Domina (double his age)

trained him first as a slave, and then in the art of being Dominant. Mickey has great acting abilities, useful for Dominating and for flawless lying. No one knows the real Mickey; he always hides behind a multitude of masks, often coming across confident and rough. He is a very popular Master among men and women alike. Until a couple of months ago, he lived with a well-off man called Eliah Steinberg, but then Eliah got sick from this mysterious “gay plague”. Mickey was his lover and Daddy (he liked to play naughty school boy). He kept house around the apartment for the months when Eliah was at the hospital, but had to move out on very short notice when Eliah died. Luckily for Mickey, he had already met this wealthy couple, Lester and Gwen, who were in need of a Master, and the chemistry sparked. Mickey now stays at their apartment. They are a couple who love each other to bits, but they both prefer to be slaves. Enter the young Master. He wants to keep the good times rolling with them, pretending to be happy-go-lucky to cover the feeling of loss and confusion he feels after Eliah’s death.

Personal Issue: Lies are better than truth; dreams are better than reality. Will Mickey be loved if he unveils his masks?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS :

DREAMER
DARING
UNTRUSTING
CONFUSED
LOOKS OUT FOR HIMSELF FIRST

CORE GROUP

Let’s play Master and servant is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Gwen: A lovely, quite sexy housewife, and now your slave. It makes you feel powerful to “break down” such a resourceful and strong lady. She’s so grateful for all you throw at her, often begging for more. You focus most on her while you’re playing; isn’t that what most husbands want? Her confidence in talking about everything difficult makes it easy to become friends with her as well. Even though you’ve met only recently, you feel a kind of love towards her. But she can be a bit pushy sometimes, trying to “top from the bottom”.

Lester: Her husband, a patient, generous, and nice buddy. He liked to be spanked and dominated by men too, but you think he is heterosexual. Lately he has turned a bit sour; maybe there are problems at work, or in the relationship

with Gwen? He is not so fun to play with when he's moody, so you prefer Gwen. He doesn't want you to be out about the relationship you've got with the couple, and that's fine for you. You're used to secrecy.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The L Club. "Living the lifestyle" is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow "to celebrate life" through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY
GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Sam: Surprise! Your half sister is at the party too! You two never had much contact. Your mother had her before marriage, and Sam moved out when she was 16. You know that she has had some trouble with drinking.

Andrew: You recognise him from Carnegie Hall. Eliah Steinberg – the wealthy man you lived by and who died, was a colleague of his. Eliah was a renowned producer at Carnegie, and you have been to some events together where you met Andrew. He seems very kind – maybe one to talk with about Eliah.

Lawrence: You know him as the owner of the swingers club, where you have been with Lester and Gwen and before that with other "dates" at their S&M nights. He's an amusing guy, and authentic in a way few people are. If the mood strikes you, you'd like to get to know him better tonight at the party.

Francis: After Eliah died you went down to the gay and lesbian community centre to find out if they knew more about this gay plague. You spoke to Francis, a dancer and volunteer counselor. He seemed like a sweet guy, but he didn't have any more facts about the situation, and you just told him "maybe later" when he asked you if you wanted to talk about how you were feeling.

Priest: (now working at Peggy's / Pepper's Diner) The only one you showed your vulnerability to, when Eliah was dying. You met her late at night at the diner. She listened carefully to your story and even took you home and gave you a hot chocolate and a bed for the night. No sex needed, even if for you that would probably have felt like a good way to close the evening off.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Join the Grief Circle: Beatrice and Beverly lead a small group who take care of feelings of loss and grief. You need to take care of (as in, get rid of) your mourning after Eliah's death. Maybe this could be a quick fix?
- Find a secret place in the woods for a session with Gwen and you, if Lester is busy (or secretly with someone else if both of your slaves are busy).

Evelyn

IN DISPLACED PASSIONS

"Of course I hope that my work makes some kind of a difference, but I'm not doing this because I'm some sort of self-effacing saint. No amount of charity will stop people from dying from causes that could have been prevented if these people mattered to those in power."

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman

PROFESSION: Doctor and development aid worker in the American Red Cross

TAROT: Knight of Wands (King of Wands)

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Acute lymphoblastic leukemia

LIFE SO FAR

Evelyn is a burning idealist and a bit of a cynic at the same time. A former peace corps volunteer who is now a doctor working on projects in Africa, she knows there is actually a very interesting world outside of Manhattan. Evelyn grew up in a small town in Upstate New York, the daughter of the town doctor. Both she and her brother Cedric were strong-willed children, but where he had

problems sitting still in a classroom, Evelyn was the type of bright kid that got good grades without having to put in all that much of an effort. Actually the young Evelyn relished being presented with tasks that were a bit above her level, so that she had to struggle to solve them. She's still like that. If there is a lack of real challenge in her life she gets lazy and discontent. That was maybe the most awful thing about the period in her life when she was treated for leukemia – it was a shock to find out that she had a deadly disease of course, and the treatments made her really ill. But the truly terrible thing for Evelyn was that the only thing she herself could do to influence the outcome of the disease was just lie there, receiving treatment. There was nothing she could do to affect the outcome, whether she would live or die, nothing at all.

The year after the doctors declared that she was well again and that the cancer was gone from her body, she volunteered for the American peace corps, traveling to Kenya to work for a year on a clean water and hygiene project. When she came back home she started her studies as planned and went on to medical school, to her father's satisfaction. But she had become something of a burning idealist who was nevertheless aware of how unjust the world was. You could either passively be part of that system or you could try to make a difference through what you dedicate your life to. After graduating as a doctor she wanted to get back to the African continent as soon as possible. She now travels regularly to different parts of Africa as part of her job in the Red Cross, sometimes on vaccination campaigns in rural areas, sometimes leaving New York on a day's notice when there is a disaster that requires immediate relief efforts. She is a disciplined worker who likes to push herself hard in challenging circumstances. For her the best way to wind down from the hard work and life-or-death situations she has to deal with every day is some quick sex (with no strings attached!) with a fellow expat or local cutie. Nothing shakes off weariness and emotional drain like that. At home in New York she finds that a visit to Lawrence's swingers club is an efficient way to get physical, although the selection of male guests there sometimes could be better.

Personal Issue: Her impatience can cause her to be rude, pushy, and careless on occasion. She can be very critical of potential love partners and afraid to get tied down, so most of her relationships never last for long.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IDEALISTIC
TEMPERAMENTAL
RASH
SCEPTICAL
RESTLESS

CORE GROUP

Displaced Passions is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Chain (Cedric): Your brother. You find his stage name, or whatever it is, a bit silly so you still prefer to call him Cedric. He's living a rather reckless life, and you are worried about him. But you refuse to get into the role of being his mother. He has to make his own mistakes in life. If he actually wants your help you'll be there for him.

Lizzie: A good friend from the Saratoga days. She has a particular kind of personality that doesn't work well in all social situations, but you've always liked that aspect of her. She's smarter than many people give her credit for, and she feels almost like a little sister.

Tomasz: Another friend from the Saratoga days and a former boyfriend. Many years ago you were a couple for a year, but your directions in life were just too different. He totally lacks your drive and seems to just drift aimlessly through life. You still sometimes have this hopeless romantic thought about another life, living in peace and love with him in the countryside. But you just shrug it off. Now you live in the same house in Brooklyn together with Kohana and Joani. He is currently dating Lizzie.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Saratoga Friendship Pact and The L Club

"Living the lifestyle" is a common expression among swingers, people who are part of the subculture of swingers clubs and partner swapping. Quite a few of the Saratoga friends have interpreted their vow "to celebrate life" through living out their sexual fantasies. Lawrence owns and manages this swingers club in Brooklyn with differently themed nights, and many of his friends are current or past guests. The level of sexual activity with other people than your partner can vary a lot. Some people come to the club to swap partners or find a third person for the night, while others prefer to just have sex with their regular partner in a semi-public setting.

These characters have the L Club as their primary social circle:

LAWRENCE - OWNER AND MANAGER OF THE L CLUB
BEATRICE
MAX
HARVEY

356/

GWEN
LESTER
MICKEY
EVELYN

RELATIONSHIPS

Beverly: Another friend from the Saratoga days, now a colleague at the Red Cross. She works in the public relations department and has accompanied you a few times to Africa to take photos and write articles about the realities in the field. Her twin brother died of the same type of cancer that Beverly suffered, and it left a wound in her that you as a friend are well aware of.

Kohana and Joani: You now live in the same house in Brooklyn as this couple. You don't share their interest in alternative spirituality and get very skeptical when they start talking about the healing potential of some of their alternative practices. Positive thinking and altered states of consciousness will not eradicate malaria... But as part of the Saratoga gang, you do share a history together, and it wouldn't be fun living with people who were too alike and had the same opinions as yourself.

Max: He's a relaxed and straightforward person. Suits you well and you've ended up in bed with him at the end of several Saratoga parties. You know he's probably fucked half of New York, but so what – you're not giving birth to his children.

Dutch: You met this young man while you were on a mission in Central America. You spent an intense week with him. What's he doing here at that other gay party? He sure didn't seem gay when you met him.

Suggestions for three things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Get into a political argument with some yuppie or otherwise privileged person among the guests of Mr. T (or with Mr. T himself – he runs an advertising agency...)
- Talk about the article you've read in the New York Times about the mysterious "gay cancer". You're certain that it has nothing to do with cancer – a particular sexual orientation can't be a risk factor for cancer. Ask probing questions about people's drug habits and sexual practices – just because you're curious and to see if you can come up with some theories on what might be going on. You know of course that this is not really your field – you're just sating your curiosity.
- Today is Tomasz's 30th birthday. Plan a surprise with Chain, Lizzie, and any other friends to celebrate this.

Tomasz

IN DISPLACED PASSIONS

Gonna see the river man
Gonna tell him all I can
About the ban
On feeling free

If he tells me all he knows
About the way his river flows
I don't suppose
It's meant for me

Oh, how they come and go

Nick Drake, *River Man*

AGE: Turning 30 on the Fourth of July 1982

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man

PROFESSION: No regular profession – different odd jobs

TAROT: The Fool

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Brain tumour
(Low-grade glioma)

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LIFE SO FAR

Everyone's friend and jack of all trades, who according to others should soon find out what he wants to do with his life. *No need to voluntarily enter the box. I mean, chill guys.* Tomasz takes time to experience life in the now, instead of always worrying about what the future might bring. The fourth of July is his birthday – this year's party is also his 30th birthday. He's not going to let that turn into another occasion for people to nag him about his life. He grew up in New Jersey in a Polish-American lower middle-class family, but he doesn't really remember all that much about what his childhood was like before he got diagnosed with a brain tumour as a teenager. He was very close to dying, and after the treatments and surgery to remove the tumour, he had to do physiotherapy for a long time to regain his motor skills. The cancer hasn't come back, but he has a problem with occasional memory loss that never really disappeared. Of course the reason for that could also be that Tomasz smokes pot on a very regular basis. He is more careful with other drugs. He does have very few strict principles on what he will never do. He'll try most things in life at least once – or was it two or three times...

For Tomasz both life and death are very present realities. Maybe he'll live for a hundred years, maybe he'll die tomorrow. No use then in slaving away for a career or some future wealth, when every day can be the last. Better to do the things you want to and that you can do today, rather than sacrifice the moment to some dream that might just prove to be fool's gold if you were ever to get there. Currently, he lives in a shared house in Brooklyn with some of his friends from Saratoga, constantly behind on his rent. If he has one passion that he dreams of realising sometime in the future it would be to be an important member of an alternative commune – not the leader exactly – but someone who was an important part of something bigger. Someone who would be key in shaping a different way of living than the one you are all caught up in now. When he's high, Tomasz can go on at length about this dream.

Personal Issue: Can be indecisive and conflict-shy. Doesn't bend to other people's will, but will skirt around the side instead of facing any confrontations head-on.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

RELAXED
ADVENTUROUS
CARELESS
WARM
PERCEPTIVE

CORE GROUP

Displaced Passions is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Lizzie: One of your friends from back in the days at the Saratoga centre. Since you've known her for so many years it's a bit strange to suddenly be a couple. It just kind of happened a couple of months back, and why not? You find her somewhat erratic behaviour and the tendency to say the wrong thing at the wrong time quite charming.

Evelyn: Another friend who you share a lot of history with. Now you live in the same house in Brooklyn, but Evelyn spends a lot of the year working in Africa. Many years ago you were a couple for a year, but your directions in life were just too different. She went off to medical school, and you, well, just hung around. You still have a certain tenderness for each other though.

Chain: Evelyn's younger brother, whom you've gotten to know well only this last year. But you have become very good friends and meet each other quite often. Of course you are very different. He's a loud gay guy working in the sex industry, but you're just in tune with each other. Drugs are very often involved when you two hang out together.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Saratoga Friendship Pact and Spirituals

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They're often characterised by syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Kohana: He has always functioned a bit like an older brother for you. Now you live in the same house in Brooklyn. The drum circles he organises are really cool as well. Makes your mind travel to surprising places.

Joani: Kohana's wife and the one who organises most of the practical issues in the house where you live. She's a good friend and a wise woman who knows a lot of deep stuff, but she's not always so relaxed. She can give you a hard time sometimes when her mood is foul. The good times are when she lets you practice yoni-massage on her; you make her relaxed then. But makes you a bit confused – is it cheating or not, and why does she never give you something nice back? If she says “jump” you will do it. She and Kohana are the only two people you would summon all your powers to help, if they needed it.

Kim: Her way of living her life is almost the opposite of yours: always a new project with clearly defined goals for what she wants to achieve. Nevertheless you have stayed friends through the years. You think she likes to unwind with you, since you don't expect anything from her.

Holly: Holly has several times in her past tried to convince you to move into the Indigo House. Maybe her five “husbands and wives” aren't enough for her? Binding yourself to their arrangement wouldn't really be your thing you think, but you spend quite a lot of time with Holly and the rest of that gang, often sleeping over in the house.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Decide on something a bit nontraditional to mark the celebration of your 30th birthday, preferably at the start of the party. (Or maybe your friends have planned a surprise? Talk to your co-players in advance to plan this.)
- Realise that Lizzie is obsessed with Chain, and try to figure out what to do about it.

Lizzie

IN DISPLACED PASSIONS

Strangelove
Strange highs and strange lows
Strangelove
That's how my love goes
Strangelove
Will you give it to me
Will you take the pain
I will give it to you
Again and again
And will you return it
Depeche Mode, Strangelove

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Woman and in love

PROFESSION: Call Centre Manager

TAROT: The Moon

SURVIVED THE FOLLOWING TYPE OF CANCER: Hodgkin's
lymphoma (a cancer originating from white blood cells)

LIFE SO FAR

Lizzie believes in the one true love. Oh, she's no prude. Repressed, you can't be yourself. But she met her true love at last year's party, and imagine: it was the little brother of a fellow pact member! He just doesn't know it yet. But she's been there watching him from afar and now, closer and closer... She hates it when she feels shy, and goes over the top to disprove it. Her social timing is often off, but she can also surprise others with her insight on people – things that no one else sees. For Lizzie the time she spent at the Saratoga rehabilitation centre as a youth was the best time she can remember. Before that she had been quite a lonely child. Not that she had thought of herself as lonely – she learned to read at an early age and it was hard for her parents to pry her away from her books and get her to go out to play with other children. But at Saratoga she got really close to all these wonderful friends. And they all had this painful story together. They could all die tomorrow! Lizzie was quite convinced that the cancer would kill her soon. She was afraid of death, but she also fantasised about how her funeral would be – how even her stupid brother would cry. But she got well again. She survived, and so did most of her friends.

She thought she would like studying at the university, but she never really managed to decide on what she wanted out of it. She has a B.A. degree, but the break before deciding on what her master's should be has become a lengthy one. Currently she works as manager at a call centre, phoning people to convince them to give money to various charities – a job that others might have found boring, but she finds meaningful and important. On the side she is writing a collection of short stories. She hasn't told her friends this, as they are the models for the characters in the stories. During this last year more and more of her emotional energy has been consumed by the somewhat unhinged love she feels for Chain, and a lot of time has been spent spying on him and his wild life.

Personal Issue: She is ruled by strong emotions that drive her to make up her own stories about the world and the people around her, instead of trying to see things as they actually are and deal with them realistically. She makes up stories to herself about how things are going to turn out in the future, if she just does and says things in a certain way – and gets disappointed when people don't respond according to plan.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

STORYTELLER
PASSIONATE
IDEALISTIC

AWKWARD
DISRUPTIVE

CORE GROUP

Displaced Passions is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Chain: You met Evelyn's little brother at last year's party as he was one of the guests in the summer house next door. It was love at first sight: an all-consuming, one-sided love. You've been stalking him for the last year. First it was almost just for fun, but now it has become an unhealthy obsession. You need to get to know him for real during the party. Make him be filled by your love, so you can awaken his love for you as well.

Tomasz: He was a good friend from the time at the centre. So easy to be with. It feels like he has always been there. There really hadn't been anything between you until recently. You really like him, you do. But you feel a bit guilty sometimes when you realise that you got together a couple of months ago mainly because you found out that he was a good friend of Chain, and by being with Tomasz you could get closer to Chain through him.

Evelyn: You have always looked up to Evelyn. She is so no-nonsense, very secure in her opinions, and doing important stuff with her life, saving children in far-off countries. You trust her, and she is maybe one of the few people you actually listen to when she tries to talk some sense into you whenever you get a bit unhinged. She's a bit like the big sister you never had.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

The Saratoga Friendship Pact and *The Brooklyn Book Café*

The Brooklyn Book Café is a gathering place for people active in the peace movement. It often hosts political debates and intimate concerts, where Mary Lou is among the regular performers. The American peace movement grew strong during the Vietnam War as more and more people started questioning the motivations and costs of fighting there for more than a decade. Now in the early 80s, the main focus of the peace movement is the threat of nuclear war and the American government's support of military dictatorships in Latin America. Peace organisations stage marches, vigils, and debates on a regular basis. Conservative Americans often criticise them as "unpatriotic".

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These characters have the Brooklyn Book Café as their primary social circle:

DENNIS
ALLISON
MARY LOU
BEVERLY
LIZZIE
CLAIRE

RELATIONSHIPS

Max: He lost his virginity to you when he was 15 and you 17. You know he has had a lot of women since then so you are kind of proud of having been the first. You still can't help flirting a bit with him even though you are very much in love with someone else.

Harvey: You get happy every time you meet him, and you feel you can talk to him about everything. He also tells you all kinds of things about his life. You are writing a story about him and the other people in the Indigo House. You should try to get some more material during the summer party.

Hank: The janitor at Saratoga. He was always easy to convince to help you with all your plans; smuggling cigarettes to the youngsters or hiding booze without telling the principal. You trust him and like him, and will keep his secret to yourself: you think he is in love with Lester.

Suggestions for three things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Behave a bit inconsistently: shy and reserved one moment, too loud and imposing the next.
- Devise the “perfect” plan for getting Chain to have feelings for you. Maybe a walk under the stars? Or a hot thrust under the stars! Just the two of you.
- Today is Tomasz’s 30th birthday. Plan a surprise with Evelyn, Chain, and any other friends to celebrate this.

Chain

IN DISPLACED PASSIONS

*The wild boys are calling
On their way back from the fire
In August moon's surrender to
A dust cloud on the rise
Wild boys fallen far from glory
Reckless and so hungered
On the razor's edge you trail
Wild boys always shine*

Duran Duran, Wild Boys

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man with bicurious side

PROFESSION: Go-go dancer, porn model, fortune seeker

TAROT: Prince of Wands (Knight of Wands)

IN MR. TS!

LIFE SO FAR

Moderation is for wimps. Chain wants to become filthy rich, find his one true love, and fuck all the rich, famous and beautiful men in New York – all at the same time. He earns his living as a porn model and go-go dancer. It's not like he needs a steady job – someone else usually pays for his partying. Chain

was born Cedric and grew up in a small town in Upstate New York, the son of the town doctor. He was a bright kid, but his restlessness and unruly nature made for quite bad grades in school, unlike his more disciplined older sister Evelyn. He completed high school, but not without constantly getting into trouble and being threatened with expulsion several times. As soon as he was out of school he moved to the City to make his fortune. He didn't really have a very clear plan on how he was going to go about this, but he trusted his luck and that opportunities would present themselves. In general he always found men more interesting than women, so the gay scene in Greenwich Village was what he threw himself into – getting men to buy him drinks and drugs; staying sometimes here, sometimes there, in the apartment of temporary lovers. He's had his share of disappointments and bad experiences, but he brushes it off and gets right up again. He enjoys being with people and starts getting depressed if he's on his own for too long. But he can't stand people who put on an air of superiority just because he earns some money out of other people's desire for him.

Personal Issue: Unrealistic expectations, self-destructive tendencies masked as self confidence and a feeling of invulnerability.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

LOUD
SHORT ATTENTION SPAN
OPTIMISTIC
CRAVES ATTENTION
TOUGH-SKINNED

CORE GROUP

Displaced Passions is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Evelyn: When Evelyn got cancer, you were just a child. You grew close to your sister and became afraid of losing her. Her life is very different from yours, and you don't want to worry her, so there are some things you just avoid telling her.

Tomasz: Good buddy and cool soulmate. One of Evelyn's friends from back in the days at the cancer rehabilitation centre. This last year you've gotten to know him well. Great guy that you hang out with a lot. Calms you down and helps you focus.

Lizzie: Tomasz's girlfriend, also one of Evelyn's friends from back in the days at the cancer rehabilitation centre. She's a bit strange, but you have the impression that she likes you.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It's more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters are Club members:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: The host of the party and your "sponsor". He pays for the studio apartment you are staying in at the moment – just because you're such a fun and sexy person. You recognise the dependency in this, but hell, if a great guy wants to give you stuff, why not?

Steven: The president of Cruiser's Club has taught you quite a few tricks on club nights. Too bad he's almost exclusively a top.

Kimberly: Photographer who takes all kinds of pictures. The ones of you are mostly the explicit kind - for mags like *Honcho*. She has a girlfriend, but she's way too flirtatious to be completely lesbian, you're sure of that.

Enrique: A buddy who works part time at one of the hottest clubs in the City, Studio 54, and who provides you with dope when your free rations of the stuff aren't available.

Leon: A star you are dating, or at least doing things that resembles dating with. Of course he isn't renting you – he just knows how to spend and pay for a good time!

Simon: You met this young musician at Studio 54. He's a cool guy with a

rough edge so you introduced him to Cruisers Club. You egg each other on in new adventures in the club, or out on the town in other bars and nightclubs.

Chantelle: A friend of your sister from the Saratoga gang who is trying to make it as a HI-NRG artist. If she actually becomes a famous artist it would be good to know her.

Suggestions for three things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Dance, party, and flirt in a very direct way – decide on two other characters who you try to seduce on the same night.
- Do an improvised strip-tease when you feel like spicing up the party. (Don't take off more clothes than you as a player feel comfortable with!)
- Today is Tomasz's 30th birthday. Plan a surprise with Evelyn, Lizzie, and any other friends to celebrate this.

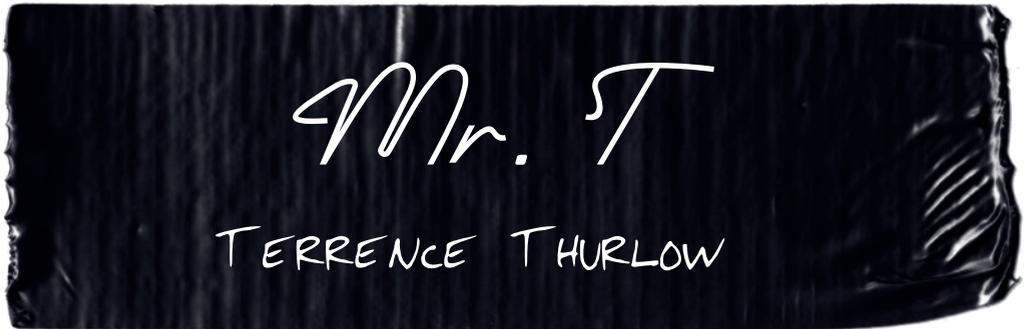


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"So many men, so much money, so little time."

AGE: 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Owner and manager of T-Buzz advertising agency

TAROT: The Emperor

LIFE SO FAR

A born-and-bred New England WASP, Terrence was born to privilege; raised in a family of self-confident men and haughty women, he has never doubted that he is a person who matters and whose ideas and desires have a rightful place in the world. Growing tired of the enclosed circles of Boston he moved down to New York in the early 60s and immediately felt that this was home. Ignoring protestations from parents and old friends that advertising was a base trade to get into, he knew it would suit his temperament and was confident that he could make a career out of it. He was right. His networking skills, combined with the constant flow of ideas going through his mind resulted in him now owning and managing his own agency with more than 20 employees and twice as many regular freelancers. It's now the seventh year in a row that he hosts a Fourth of July party here in Saratoga in Upstate New York. Using

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the closed-down rehabilitation centre as a party venue has been a stroke of genius. He can fit all the friends and acquaintances he wants to have here and there are no pesky neighbours to start complaining when the going gets hot later in the night.

There are many things to love about New York. Although he could never be an artist himself, he's passionately come to love the vibrant art scene of this metropolis. He loves going to exhibitions and is starting to have quite the collection of pieces at home (and in his friends' homes). Terrence also loves getting to know some of the many artists trying to make it in the city, trying to judge for himself which of them has that special something, and getting a taste of what drives each one of them. Many of his rich friends also collect art but for him it is deeper. Sometimes an artwork will speak to him in ways it would probably be impossible to convey accurately in words. And if someone asks him why he looks emotional when looking at a painting, he'll just smile enigmatically and fire off a witty remark.

Personal Issue: A sense of entitlement and over-confidence that the universe will always smile on Terrence Thurlow.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SHAMELESS
MAGNETIC
GENEROUS
SELF-INDULGENT
LOYAL

CORE GROUP

Mr. T's Inner Circle is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Andrew: He's been your best friend for 15 years, someone you can tell everything to. It is nice to have a buddy outside of Pink Dollars; you didn't have any close friends like him when you grew up, probably because you had to hide behind that bland, straight-passing mask. In the beginning of your friendship with Andrew you had sex now and then. You do not share his taste for The Cruisers, at least not as a fixed "day after day" thing. Now you appreciate him for his personal support and being your confidant. But maybe you take it a bit for granted that Andrew will always be there?

Pen: Pen is a rock. Your chief secretary, close friend, and the big sister you never had. You are two people with very different temperaments who nevertheless are totally in sync. You can't imagine managing things without her, so when she wants something it is rare that the idea is turned down.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Fernando: A cute Puerto Rican who is even cuter when he gets all political. Although you have a hard time taking any type of politics too seriously, you have always been attracted to people with burning convictions. He was invited for the first time at last summer's party where you two really hit it off. You have met only occasionally in the year since.

Diego: Another attractive young Puerto Rican who is trying to make it as a model. You just met him at the club last week and are quite besotted with him, so he obviously had to be invited to the party.

Chain: Delightful, fun, and sexy young model and dancer who you have decided to "sponsor" by letting him stay for free in a studio you're currently not using. Absolutely out of control of course, but boys will be boys.

Nate: One of the city's most interesting characters whose penetrating glance can unnerve even you at times. You have invested a bit of money in Club Diamond, even if it has no immediate prospects of earning him much profit.

Bruce: Your go-to guy for trading in stocks. One of the most talented hotshots on Wall Street, and the get-togethers in his penthouse are legendary.

Charlotte: A trusted employee. Lawyer. You asked her to help Sorrento with some legal troubles related to a charge of possession of drugs recently.

Sorrento: Former lover and good contact to have as the event manager at Studio 54.

Skye: Fascinating young singer invited to the party, along with his fellow band members.

Ruben: Big-time customer. You have shared several long and inebriated nights talking about the things one talks about in the middle of the night. Sometimes you envy his ability for long, romantic relationships, but honestly you do not have time for all that wooing.

Ike: Talented designer and former employee, but he has now left your company to work for the company of his boyfriend, Ruben.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- If things quiet down a little during the party, set in motion some activity to spice up things a bit. It is Fourth of July after all, and you are the host.
- Talk (and flirt) with as many of the guests as possible, and also get to know many of the Saratoga people, asking personal questions from the get-go.

Pen

IN MR. T'S INNER CIRCLE

"How is it possible to be both energetic as a squirrel and calm as the face of Buddha?"

AGE: 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Chief Secretary to Mr. T

TAROT: Balance (Temperance)

BUT SHE HAS HER OWN "PEN'S CIRCLE" TOO

LIFE SO FAR

A native New Yorker and cool-headed power dresser, Pen loves the city and everything about it. New York City is actually the only thing she sometimes gets slightly sentimental about. She's no cynic, but ever since she started working as an assistant secretary in a law firm when she was 19, she's enjoyed the days everyone else describes as madness – those days when you don't believe it's possible to juggle all the tasks that are up in the air, but in the end you'll manage to catch all the important ones at least. She loves life at full speed, and being in control at the wheel. Some friends are surprised that she's still a secretary, but managing Mr. T is perfectly challenging enough. Anyway, she has power in the company equal to none, apart from Mr. T, and

he pays her better than many mid-level managers in other companies anyway. She's recently hooked up with a very interesting and attractive artist, who calls herself Santiago. Her taste in women goes towards the complicated ones who aren't pushovers. Pen prefers to surround herself with people a bit crazier than herself, participating in it all with a wry smile.

Personal Issue: How well would she deal with actually dropping some of those important balancing balls? She is overconfident about always being able to control things that others can't.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

MULTITASKER
SARCASTIC
FIXER
PARTY ANIMAL
ENJOYS BALANCING ON THE EDGE

CORE GROUP

Mr. T's Inner Circle is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Mr. T: Boss and "little brother". You two have a natural symbiosis that other people might find strange. It's perfectly possible to boss around your boss when you have the connections you do. He wants you to manage him, and you admire his creativity and devil-may-care attitude.

Andrew: Mr. T's best friend from way back has become a good friend of yours as well. It's good to have someone to share the joys and frustrations of looking after Mr. T with. You have many good openhearted conversations about your own lives as well. However, you often grow a bit tired of him always worrying about one thing or another.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party and *The Cubby Hole*

Mr. T's Party: Pen is the organising brain behind much of the Fourth of July party. She has also invited a select group from the lesbian scene in the city, who are **Pen's Guests**.

These guests are:

SANTIAGO
KATHERINE
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
ROSEMARY

The Cubby Hole: Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend..

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Santiago: You met her at the opening of one of her exhibitions, and you both seemed to have decided almost before even exchanging pleasantries that the other one was an interesting woman. Who knows how long it will last. It might be over next week or it might last for 10 years, or more.

Kimberly: Former girlfriend who works as a freelancer for T-Buzz, among others. You are still friends and she is a blast to party with, but finding other women and the occasional undressed male model in her own bed was in the end one straw too many for Pen.

Charlotte: A co-worker who has become a good friend. Pen recognises a lot of herself in Charlotte. They have a secret "ritual" every Friday at work –

smoking a bit of heroin to wind down after a hectic week. That other people get addicted and lose control to this stuff just adds an extra little edge to it.

Katherine: You know that it aggravates her that you are happy working as Mr. T's (well paid) secretary. You think Katherine is one of those women who can't enjoy what they have because they are continuously looking for the next thing. But you must admit that at times you do envy her the social capital she gets from being a New York Times editor. You like each other, you really do, but there is a constant game of competition in the way you relate to each other.

Morgan: You got to know this young intellectual when she moved to New York, and you introduced her to who's who in the lesbian scene. You've often flirted but nothing in particular has happened, which probably is a good thing. You know that Morgan can be a complicated person to deal with for those close to her.

Ike: A talented young man who used to work at T-Buzz before his somewhat possessive boyfriend made him quit to join his own company. You became good buddies while he worked there. Maybe you should help him become more independent and convince him to come back to the company?

Peggy/Pepper: You have hired the manager of the Diner in Christopher Street and their crew to do the food at the party for the last three Fourth of July parties, and so it is this year as well. You sometimes stop by the diner if you are in that part of Manhattan. The employees are original and the clientele very mixed and queer in all possible meanings of the word.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Make sure Mr. T organises some fun and daring activities for the guests.
- Party like there's no tomorrow but still be in control of yourself (at least for the most part...)

Andrew

IN MR. T'S INNER CIRCLE

*And we would be so grand at the game
Carefree together that it does seem a shame
That you can't see your future with me
'Cause you'd be, oh, so easy to love*

Cole Porter, *You'd Be So Easy To Love*

AGE: 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Director of bookings at Carnegie Hall

TAROT: Ten of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Andrew has known Terrence (Mr. T) since they were both fresh young faces in the city, and they quickly became best friends. Just like Terrence, Andrew hails from New England, but while Terrence is from an old wealthy family, Andrew is the son of a shopkeeper and a teacher in a small town in Massachusetts. It is probably from his mother, the teacher, that he inherited his great love of art and music. He dreamt for a long time about being on the stage himself. His singing voice is not bad, but it was never exceptional. He spent his first year in New York trying to get a break on Broadway, but when he relinquished this dream and started trying to get jobs backstage, his career really got moving. He has a knack for arts administration, making things happen, and worrying about all the little practical things that a production needs to come to life. Andrew is the

emotional core of Mr. T's inner circle. Andrew is dependable like no one else, but also a bit of an emotional swamp. He tends to get emotionally involved in the problems of his friends, being both an empathic person and a bit of a meddler. The Cruisers Club is probably the only place he forgets his worrying for some pleasant moments, when he's not fixing practical stuff.

Personal Issue: Well liked by everyone, Andrew struggles to experience the true love he yearns for, as he tends to end up as everyone's trusted friend.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

LISTENER
WORRIER
ROMANTIC
HEADSTRONG
SOCIAL GLUE

CORE GROUP

Mr. T's Inner Circle is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Mr. T/Terrence: Your best friend for many years and also your first true love. You fell in love with Terrence almost immediately after you met, but never quite managed to do anything more about it than a couple shallow one-nighters in the beginning. And after a while your friendship became too deep and important, so you put those feelings on hold.

Pen: Terrence's secretary and "big sister" has become your good friend as well. It's good to have someone to share the joys and frustrations of looking after Mr. T. You two have many good open-hearted conversations about your own lives as well. Sometimes you do grow a bit tired of her cocksure attitude, though.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It's more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Steven: A long time friend from Cruisers Club. You hit it off right from the start. For a short while you tried being a couple, but it didn't really work out sexually, as you are both tops. Steven is the president of Cruisers while you take on many of the practical tasks that keep the club running.

Bret: A cute young guy you met when he was visiting Cruisers for the first time, and who you took home for the night. On impulse you invited him to the Fourth of July party this coming weekend. You were taken quite by surprise when you discovered that Bret is Steven's nephew and currently living in his flat.

Walter: A good friend and fellow member of Cruisers, and you've topped him on a few occasions at the club. Recently you have also started to go to therapy sessions with him. It's quite uncomfortable, but you are also getting a bit addicted to spilling your beans in these sessions.

Reginald: Through your contacts you managed to secure a job on the chorus line for this talented young man in the nude musical *Oh Calcutta*. He is always very charming and you've invited him to Cruisers club, but he hasn't made an appearance there yet.

Mickey: Eliah Steinberg, a well known producer at Carnegie Hall recently died suddenly (of the mysterious gay cancer, it's said). You will recognise Mickey as his young live-in lover.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Be the "social glue" at the party, making sure everyone is included in the fun.
- Get things going in the dark room as the evening turns into night.

Steven

IN VETERANS IN THE SCENE
AND NEW BOYS IN TOWN

"Politics, religion, sex. No party is complete without it."

AGE: 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Lecturer in Criminology at City University of New York;
part time work in prison

TAROT: Knight of Disks (King of Disks)

LIFE SO FAR

Steven grew up in Flint, Michigan, where both his parents worked in a car factory. He knew from when he was very young that he wanted more from life than just graduating from high school and getting a job in one of the factories. A bright kid, he did well at school, but he never was afraid of physical work either, working evenings and summers to earn money that he would be free to spend as he liked. His family are Roman Catholic and active churchgoers. He enjoyed the flow of the masses, but when he got older he developed a strong skepticism to the reactionary positions of the church. These days he's very outspoken on the topic of the inherent repressive structures of organised

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religion, but he still ends up visiting a church once in a while when he feels a need to do so. He feels very ambivalent about this though. Being a masculine guy he was able to “pass” while in high school, even though he had quite a few fleeting sexual encounters with buddies that they didn’t speak about afterwards. With his good grades he got a scholarship to CUNY. Not wanting to become a bleeding-heart liberal detached from true radicalism and the realities on the ground, he decided to major in criminology and at the same time get actual experience working in the corrective services. Although he now has secured a lecturing position at the University, he still works some weekends in a state penitentiary. He is one of the founders and current President of the gay leather club called Cruisers. He identifies as a top in the sexual vocabulary of the scene. He doesn’t currently have a boyfriend, but kind of misses one. But he’s not ready for something involving any kind of vow of monogamy.

Personal Issue: Resentful of people who haven’t had to work to get where they are. There’s also not always a full match between Steven’s spoken ideals and what he actually ends up doing.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

EMPATHIC
PROMISCUOUS
PASSIONATELY LEFTIST
LECTURING
PLAYFUL

CORE GROUP

Veterans of the Scene and New Boy in Town is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Diane: Your closest friend and a self proclaimed fag hag. You share a flat with her. At times you get on each other’s nerves as you are quite different. Diane is more interested in the latest celebrity gossip and watching reruns of old Joan Crawford movies than in leftist politics. But you both love keeping each other updated on your latest adventures.

Bret: Your young nephew from back home who showed up on your doorstep a week ago. Of course you couldn’t turn him away, so for the last week he has been on your couch. You understood probably before he did himself that he was gay, when you visited his family during the holidays, so you feel a certain responsibility for providing some determined guidance. You are uncertain about how you feel about him being picked up at Cruisers by Andrew a few nights ago (this was a night you weren’t at the club).

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It's more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Andrew: A long-time friend from Cruisers Club. You hit it off right from the start. You tried for a short while being a couple, but it didn't really work out sexually as you are both tops. You are the president of Cruisers, while Andrew takes on many of the practical tasks that keep the club running.

Abner: You started a friendship with the poet Abner at a party, where you embarrassed everyone by having a very loud and long political discussion. It's refreshing to be with people who you can have real discussions with without having to cushion your opinions in social niceties.

Walter: Long-time member of Cruisers. You are both rather exhibitionist and enjoy challenges, like doing hard core sessions together at the club and being the first ones to try out new techniques. It was you who made him become a gay friendly therapist "certified" by the gay rights movement.

Chain: This young man is one of the youngest members of Cruisers Club. He wants it all and who are you to say he can't get it? But life isn't a fairy tale and you are afraid he will get burned. Well, his mistakes are his own to make.

Hank: The janitor at Saratoga. He's a member of Cruisers Club, but he doesn't come to New York very often, so you don't know him well. Hank's supposed to be a Master, but is too passive to get things going, so you have helped him

by suggesting club members you trust to play with. You have even tried to train him a bit yourself. During the last Fourth of July party at Saratoga you asked him to help you decorate a dark room for the weekend. He has helped make that happen for this year's party as well.

Morgan: One of your brighter students and an interesting young feminist to talk with. You've had lunches with her on campus a couple of times. She's managed to get you to talk about Cruisers Club, and now she seems to wish there was something similar in the lesbian scene in the city.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Host an educational demonstration in Mr. T's dark room of something fetish-related: for example, "good and safe knots when tying someone up" or "don't whip like a wimp – how to get the right attitude when playing the Master".
- Take responsibility and intervene if your nephew Bret is about to do something stupid.

Diane

IN VETERANS IN THE SCENE
AND NEW BOYS IN TOWN

I'll try anything once, twice if I like it, three times to make sure.

Mae West

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman and fag hag

PROFESSION: Make-up artist

TAROT: Ace of Disks

LIFE SO FAR

Diane grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. Her father was a travelling salesman who died of a heart attack when Diane was 14 years old. She was the oldest out of four sisters and one brother. Her mother was a hairdresser and struggled to make ends meet, so Diane and her sisters had to start working after school from an early age. As she grew older Diane started to have very mixed feelings about the city where she grew up. She loved the Southern food, singing in the church choir, the country music, and the friendliness of most people. But she also disliked how judgmental many people often were. She has no issues with the Lord, only with some of his representatives down here! In high school Diane understood that she had become a girl the other girls looked down on as “loose”. And that was just because she had had two boyfriends and two

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almost boyfriends! Well, she *had* had sex with all of them in their cars, up at that parking spot on the hill that a lot of young people drove out to on weekend nights. But for how many nights were you supposed to sit on the back row of the movie theatre and kiss a little without going any further? And she got really tired of the game everyone was supposed to play where the boy kept pushing and the girl was supposed to say no, no, no even though she really wanted to.

When she was 20 she decided that it was time for her to stretch her wings and get some new adventures in life. So she decided to move to New York to pursue a passion she had: becoming a make-up artist working for the extravagant and the famous. That was more than ten years ago now, and that is what she is doing; making good business working freelance as a make-up artist for theatre shows, weddings, and photoshoots. Sometimes she misses her family in Memphis. She goes home to visit them every Thanksgiving. But her friends in New York are her new family now. And almost all of her closest friends here are gay men. For Diane, even though she's straight herself, the straight world just seems colourless and tame compared with the wild adventures she can have with her gay friends. And of course she also can't stand "proper" citizens who think they should stand in judgement over other people. Diane has taken upon herself not to be outdone in outrageousness by any of the many drag queens she knows and loves.

Personal Issue: She can be very bombastic about some things in life. If she decides that a person is wonderful in every way, or that a love affair is most certainly doomed, it is hard to get her to reconsider her overly quick conclusions.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS :

LOUD
PRACTICAL
ROMANTIC
GENEROUS
GIVES UP TOO QUICKLY

CORE GROUP

Veterans of the Scene and New Boy in Town is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Steven: Your closest friend, with whom you share an apartment. He is both a leftist intellectual and the leader of the gay leather club *Cruisers*. At times you

get on each other's nerves as you are quite different. You are more interested in the latest celebrity gossip and watching reruns of old Joan Crawford movies than in leftist politics. But you love keeping each other updated on your latest adventures.

Bret: Steven's young nephew from back home, who showed up on your doorstep a week ago. Of course he couldn't turn him away so for the last week he has been on the couch. You have already "adopted" him and have promised him to show him all the wonders of the Big Apple.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Daniel: A good friend and drag performer at Club Diamond. Sometimes you work on shows together. You've seen how he sometimes plays with other people's emotions and you are not afraid to call him out on it. You think that you are maybe the person in his life he is the most honest with.

Marcus: A regular at Club Diamond who sometimes gets up onstage to do a drag number on open mic nights. You have helped him with his outfit and makeup on several occasions. He has a conflicted relationship with God due to a strict conservative Christian upbringing. A couple of times you have gone to church together here in New York.

Trevor: This young aspiring actor is a mess. You've had some fun, drunken bouts together, where you have spilled your hearts to each other. But he has a tendency to get into all kinds of stupid shit when drunk or high on something. Maybe you should try hanging out during daytime sometimes as well.

Wallace: An intense man from the Saratoga friends whom you met for the first time at last year's party. He owns an art gallery in Brooklyn. Once on a quiet Monday when you visited the gallery you ended up having a secret fling in his office. He can't be open about it, because everyone in this strange Indigo House he lives in is supposed to only sleep with others in the house. So this will probably lead exactly nowhere, but even so you wouldn't mind a second date.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Perform at the open stage hosted by The Queen of Manhattan and/or get involved in helping someone else prepare for their performance.
- Ask very direct questions about the sexual orientation of people you don't know very well. Is one of the guys you are talking with straight or bi and eligible for being your flirt for the night?

Bret

IN VETERANS IN THE SCENE
AND NEW BOYS IN TOWN

"Right here, right now! He wants it. Something to shake the dull boredom of small town Michigan away for good."

AGE: 18

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Unemployed actor

TAROT: The Sun

LIFE SO FAR

Flint, Michigan. Bret never understood what he had done wrong to have to endure his teenage years in such a dreary place. At heart he's a city boy. Even though he had never actually lived in a city up until about a week ago, he knows that this is where he belongs. And he knows that he is meant for the theatre stage. Even though growing up in Flint he hasn't had too many opportunities to watch plays on stage, he has devoured all kinds of movies the other kids didn't know about at one of the cinemas in town, on their feature-length Independent Tuesdays. This last year of high school has been pretty rough. Rumours started spreading at school that he was gay, and there was a small group of jocks that got mean with their bullying. But then Bret also

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wasn't very good at being careful. When he realised he was gay, he told at least six 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. His drama teacher was one of the main reasons he made it through this last year of high school, believing in him and encouraging him to do something with his talent. After graduation he decided to not stick around. His blue-collar parents couldn't afford to send him to a real university, and he sure isn't interested in a place at the local community college. So one week ago he arrived on the Greyhound bus, ready to make it in the big city.

Personal Issue: Acts before he thinks. Makes up his own stories about emotions and other people that might not have much basis in reality.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IMPATIENT
VIVID IMAGINATION
TRUSTING
OPTIMISTIC
STRAIGHTFORWARD

CORE GROUP

Veterans of the Scene and New Boy in Town is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Steven: Your favourite uncle. He is the only one in the family with a higher education. You picked up quite early that he was gay, even though your parents didn't really talk about it. You hadn't actually told him that you were coming to New York, because you were afraid that he would tell you not to. Even though he gave you a good lecture when you showed up at his doorstep, he has let you sleep on the couch for the last week.

Diane: Steven's friend and flatmate. A self-declared "fag hag". She is so much fun and has promised you to show you the wonders of the Big Apple. If Uncle Steven gets tired of having you around, you hope Diane can help you convince him to let you stay.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Is a part of Mr T's party by Andrew's invitation

Social Circles: None yet, but wants to get in everywhere

RELATIONSHIPS

Andrew: You met this charming and sympathetic older guy at the leather club *Cruisers* two nights ago. And he even has a really exciting job at Carnegie Hall! You came to the club with this other guy, but you forgot about him when you started talking with Andrew. You went home with him for the night, and got invited to the Fourth of July party the next morning.

Peggy/Pepper: While having a coffee at this diner in the Village where all the gays go, the eccentric and cool owner first asked you if you want to work some shifts in the diner, and then told you this strange thing: they're convinced that you are a "seer" – whatever that is. You have to ask them more about this – sounds exciting and mysterious.

Howard: Works as a waiter at the diner. You overheard one of the guests at the diner say that Howard doesn't have "all his marbles", whatever that was supposed to mean. He seems like an interesting guy with good energy to you. And you think he's pretty cute. You don't think he's straight even if he has a girlfriend, Harriett, who also works at the diner. She's intense and fun but seems to be quite possessive of Howard.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Flirt with both Andrew and a new guy you meet at the party; have a hard time deciding what or who you really want.
- Try to get to know people who can help you with your so-far non-existent acting career.

Alate

'THE QUEEN OF MANHATTEN'

Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.

Oscar Wilde

AGE: 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man and drag queen

PROFESSION: Night club owner and drag show host

TAROT: Death

LIFE SO FAR

The owner of the most innovative drag show club in Manhattan, Club Diamond. You have been many different persons throughout your life, and you're used to seeing your life break apart and having to build something new from the ashes. The most fringe scenes of the city are known to you; at the same time you're well connected to men of power and money. Life has taught you to distrust most people. Despite, or perhaps because of this, you also crave their attention, their adulation, and their love. Your life is one of true passions and false smiles – you excel at the art of creating intimacy through confession

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(which builds trust, but does not reveal anything truly damning). When the intrigues grow too large and complicated, when too many people doubt you and whatever life story you have invented, you simply burn the bridges and start another life. You have been a fisherman in Connecticut, a second-rate actor in London, a farm hand in Venezuela, and a 30-year old corrupting 19- and 20-year olds at a business college. After building and liquidating an import/export business in Austin, Texas, you returned to your native New York, and spent your capital at a six-month-long binge of champagne and fuckery, where you connected to most of the subcultures of gay and straight New York. Then one night you came up with the idea for a truly glamorous drag club hosted by a truly glamorous Queen – Club Diamond. Now, finally, you are living a life you truly enjoy. You are the Queen of Manhattan, and you even allow yourself some amount of empathy towards the beautiful people that have made your club their home.

Personal Issue: You came of age in a time when homosexuality was a sin. Life in the closet taught you to always hide your true self from others, and that habit persists even though you are – at present – blatantly open about your homosexuality and transvestism. You live in the moment, in the role you have adopted, and you live it to excess. But you sometimes lie to excess, too, fabricating whole life stories and anecdotes of intimate encounters with people you’ve never met. Your constant fear is being exposed – a fear you can subdue only with more attention, more glamour, more intoxication, more superficial friendships... but the people you meet *do* matter to you, and now you have finally found a life you are not willing to give up. That makes it all the more dangerous. You know that your days of fleeing are over. Be it tomorrow or in 30 years, this is where you will make your last stand. And these are the people you will do it with.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

FLAMBOYANT
ATTENTION-GRABBING
GRACIOUS
HABITUAL LIAR
JEALOUS

CORE GROUP

Men of ambition is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Bruce: A fun-loving yuppie boy you met during your brief stint at college. You think you were one of his first sexual experiences. You were much more experienced than him. Now things are more equal between you, and in many

ways you are two kindred souls who share the conviction that one's life only becomes what you make of it yourself. He's the nearest thing to an old friend you have in New York.

Sinclair: Your handsome, posh boyfriend-of-the-moment, though he keeps your relationship secret from the world in order to pursue a political career. You understand him all too well.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

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These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Daniel aka Lady Verona: A talented and demanding drag show star. He works for you, performing at Club Diamond. You have plenty of respect for him, though you are constantly jealous he might upstage you. If you are in a phase where you think that there actually is something good and usable from the latest Top 20, then Daniel wants to daydream back in time with evergreen "diva"-music. And if you are planning a full set with classic Cole Porter songs, then Daniel has discovered some obscure New Wave band with a song that he *needs* to do a number to.

Fernando: He works for you as a bartender in Club Diamond. He's cute.

Trevor: Daniel's suicidal sidekick. A drag.

Mr. T: You're one of the few who can penetrate his facade.

Leon: A guy you met and made love to, way back when he was an innocent gospel boy, long before he became a disco star. You were a fisherman back then.

One instruction for your character for all three acts:

- Host a drag/variety show; draw on all your friendships and connections to ensure that it is well-attended and warmly received. Let one part of it be an open-to-all "amateur" section. (Please be aware you may have to firmly limit the time the show takes, so the night is not all about the drag show. Other characters than the drag artists need not to perform every year, and no-one needs more than one song each year.)

Suggestions for one thing the character can do in the 1st act:

- Tell two contradicting life stories to two different groups of people. Behave as if everyone is your best friend.

Sinclair Everett

IN MEN OF AMBITION

No habit or quality is more easily acquired than hypocrisy, nor any thing sooner learned than to deny the sentiments of our hearts and the principle we act from: but the seeds of every passion are innate to us, and nobody comes into the world without them.

Bernard de Mandeville

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man (publicly heterosexual and married)

PROFESSION: Politician

TAROT: Prince of Cups (Knight of Cups)

LIFE SO FAR

You're the son of a senator from an old Democrat family, running for congress for the first time this fall, living the secret double life of a career politician, and you love to get in drag when in private circles. Maybe you'd rather be on that stage instead of in Congress? Your true passion is for performance: the Broadway musical (you attend all the opening nights), the love you can feel from a warmed-up crowd of political supporters, the glitter and glamour of

drag at Club Diamond. You are a product of New England aristocracy: elite private schools, Yale University, prestigious luncheons and fundraisers. Your father taught you to master the two-handed handshake, the overwhelmingly sincere smile, and the art of extracting funds and favours from the rich and powerful. Your mother, the perfect senator's wife, was the ultimate hostess, and introduced you to Mary, a woman of her own kind. The two of you entered into a loveless marriage in 1975. You have two children together (a boy and a girl), and you maintain perfect facades even inside the marriage. For you, entering politics was simply the path of least resistance. The one thing you do enjoy about it, aside from the posh lifestyle, is the showmanship and the attention. You are a rising star in the Democratic party of New York, sure to win the Democratic primary to run as the candidate for a competitive seat on Long Island. The general election will be held this November. All politicians have their vices; you have partied in dresses and high heels at closed gay parties and had several secret boyfriends over the years. But is the gap between your public and private personae growing too thin – merely by being here? The thought that you are risking your career has entered into your head, but you brush it off. The future is bright for Sinclair Everett.

Personal Issue: You are caught between political ambition and personal passion. You are currently seeking funds from the gay community, and hope you might someday actually do some good for the cause. But you cannot, ever, hope to be elected or reelected if your hypocrisy is found out.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SUPERFICIAL
CHARMING
CHARISMATIC
DIPLOMATIC
MOODY

CORE GROUP

Men of ambition is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Nate: Your current (and secret) boyfriend. You admire him, desire him, seek to emulate him, are easily swayed by him – but do you love him?

Bruce: Nate's old friend, and also your best friend at the moment. The two of you share a desire to let off steam with a good cocaine-fueled party, and a taste for boys in drag. Your political connections are useful to him, his financial connections are useful to you.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Claire: A guest at the Saratoga party and a volunteer on your election campaign committee. When you meet her at the party you need to convince her to stay silent about your homosexual activities, and also to remain on your election campaign team.

Mr. T: A major financial contributor to your election campaign, and host of this secret breathing space of a party.

Katherine: The editor of the City section of *The New York Times* and an influential woman you can trust. You like to have her around, so you invite her to all the important functions organised by you and your wife Mary. She's lesbian and you trust her to be discreet about everything she knows about your double life.

Artie: Katherine's younger brother and the whiz kid of New York's radio stations, with his very own talk show. Despite his showy style in public, he is actually someone you feel you can talk to about real stuff in life without pretending. One time when you both shared stories about your first (and hopeless) crushes as teenagers, he really reminded you of that one boy in high school – so you kissed him, but you both just laughed about it afterwards.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Solicit votes, donations, and volunteers for your congressional run while taking care that people understand you are to remain in the closet.
- Discover that Claire is at the party and realise that she does not know of your double life; make sure her lips stay shut while her enthusiasm for you remains.

Bruce

IN MEN OF AMBITION

Opportunities multiply as they are seized.

Sun Tzu, The Art of War

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Stockbroker

TAROT: Knight of Swords (King of Swords)

LIFE SO FAR

Yuppie, this is your age. A rags to riches story. High on testosterone, money, and the high life of the city. Life doesn't get better than a glass of Veuve Clicquot in one hand and a pretty, dolled-up boy in the other. Dad's at the steel mill, your hypochondriac mom is in need of constant care, and good-for-nothing siblings are bent on going exactly nowhere with their sorry lives. You worked and worked and squeezed your way into a reputable college with scholarships; specialised in finance, and got your first gig on the trading floor even before you graduated. You sent a wad of cash back to your family along with a letter that read, literally, "Fuck you". Life as a trader means riding a constant adrenaline high and testosterone flaring, grabbing a phone out

of someone's hand and screaming "Sell! Sell now!", and refining your gut instinct to an art form. And then the markets close, and you ride through the city in limousines while balding investors drool over equally expensive call girls. You always order three times more food than you will ever eat, just to show you can. You meet gorgeous boys in luxurious gyms, fuck on velvet beds under statues of Greek gods, and strut into the club with a glittering smile that radiates confidence and says *I'm made of money*. Lounging with some pretty boy in a champagne-filled rooftop jacuzzi under the neon glow of Manhattan: This is Life, and your hunger for it will never be satiated. Lately, your desire for boys in drag rules your taste, and is met at your old friend Nate's place, Club Diamond.

Personal Issues: Achieving success as a stockbroker and fit in with the all-straight good old boys, while still retaining the energy to party with the glamorous boys at Club Diamond, has cost you so many other parts of your life and personality: friendship, family, insecurity, guilt, the ability to relax or simply pause and think. You can sometimes feel these shut-down parts of yourself hammering on the iron doors you have them locked behind. Will they manage to escape, or will you succeed in keeping them subdued?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

COMPETITIVE
HEDONISTIC
DOMINANT
MANIPULATIVE
FLASHY

CORE GROUP

Men of ambition is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Nate: One of your first fucks, when you both were in college. At the time Nate, more than 10 years your senior, was far more experienced. Now things are more equal between you, and in many ways you are two kindred souls who share the conviction that one's life becomes only what you make of it yourself. Together you are the gatekeepers of the best parts of gay New York. And when he's in drag, he's truly the Queen of all times. But sometimes you are still a bit puzzled by who he really is.

Sinclair: Nate's boyfriend, and also your best friend at the moment. The two of you share the desire to let off steam with a good cocaine-fueled party, and a taste for queens – though he probably wants to be one himself, while you just want to seduce those sweet "girls". His political connections are useful to you;

your money connections are useful to him. And you both need to keep your mouths zipped about your nighttime pursuits. But you are well aware that as a politician, he has more to lose in this game than you do.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: Customer and regular guest at your parties. You are his go-to stockbroker. You are also a shareholder in T-Buzz, Mr. T's ad agency.

Daniel (Lady Verona): The Princess of the Drag Queens at Club Diamond, you had been circling him for a while, and had no problems scoring a one night stand with him recently. Since then you have been considering if you should pursue this as something more. You are pretty sure that Daniel could be interested. But you know Daniel's type, and have no illusions about the fact that a lot of his attraction to you has to do with money and position. And you are fine with that, as a starting point. What is the point of having money if it can't help you get what you want?

Jerrod: A student you've noticed at Club Diamond sometimes. Very pretty when he gets some make-up on. Too bad he and his boyfriend seem to be playing this monogamy act - he turned down your half-joking offer to come

home with you for a late night party of some “champagne, cocaine and group sex”. You sensed that he was intrigued, though...

Artie: The whiz kid of New York’s radio stations with his very own talk show, he’s a regular guest at your parties. He likes to tease that your cynicism is just an act and that deep down you have a warm, beating heart. Well, he is easy to relax around, so he probably sees more of that side of you than others do. Pretty cute too, now that you think about it.

Lester: You will recognise him as a competing trader you have seen at the New York Stock Exchange.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Go for a jog, then persuade someone else to shower you with champagne.
- Round up the three youngest, most naive guys you can find. Give them a taste of the good life, while you brag about your Wall Street exploits.

Abner Finkel

IN THE WRITERS

My own experience is that a certain kind of genius among students is best brought out in bed.

Alan Ginsberg

AGE : 40s or 50s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING : Gay man

PROFESSION : Poet

TAROT : The Tower

LIFE SO FAR

Abner is a radical poet with nihilistic and anarchist leanings. His favorite word is “Dionysian” and his motto is: “Deconstruct literature, deconstruct life, deconstruct relationships.” Born into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, at 10 years old he had read through most of the school library and exhausted both his parents and the local rabbi with a constant stream of existential questions. When he was 15 his first letter was published in *The New York Times*, in support of the anti-colonial uprisings in East Africa at the time. His parents were both members of the communist party, and party meetings were often held in his home. He had one other sibling, Edith, four years younger. She was an introverted and nervous child, who tried to commit suicide with Abner’s razor blade when she was 14. She survived that episode, but it left Abner

with a mixture of deep guilt and resentment for Edith, and of people who try to make others accomplices in their own stories of misery. One recurring theme in Abner's writing is the hypocrisy that is America, and the tendency for Americans on the one hand to blame themselves for things for which they should blame those in power, and on the other hand to blame providence or luck or their neighbours for their own failings.

Abner has been a notorious part of the literary scene now for almost two decades. He is considered a spiritual younger brother of the Beat generation, a label he abhors. The gay liberation movement is too bourgeois and too socialist at the same time, but he still can't help accepting their invitations to participate in debates where they derive pleasure from his intellectual whippings. A rebellion was necessary, but the 70s became a pastel Peter Pan rebellion. The 80s will be something different. A terrible, superficial, egoistical, and wonderful epoch of steel and glass. At least now everyone seems ready to burn those allergy-inducing "flowers in our hair".

Personal Issue: Misanthropic analysis of the world can become a self-fulfilling prophecy in his own life and in his relationships to other people.

55 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

UNCOMPROMISING
SARCASTIC
EASILY BORED
INSIGHTFUL
LAYERS ON TOP OF EACH OTHER, MASKING WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

CORE GROUP

The Writers is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Eli: One of those genial students whose talents were brought out in bed. He ended up moving in and becoming your partner, but only after you insisted that monogamy was absolutely out of the question. For the last couple of years the relationship has been one of platonic love (though Abner of course despises Plato). The relationship is one of loving bickering, but with your darkness as a potential destructive undercurrent.

Jerrod: A talented young student who has become something of a disciple of yours. You invited him to the literary salon because of his beautiful ... mind. His boyfriend Reginald is perceptive enough to view you with scepticism.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and The Literary Salon

The Literary Salon is a series of private regular gatherings held regularly in the apartment you and Eli share. By invitation only – from you. Among this crowd it's not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD
SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Santiago: Visual artist and a good friend with whom you exchange barbs on a regular basis. Member of the Literary Salon.

Steven: Left-wing academic, leader of Cruisers Club, and at times oh-so-political social scientist. You started a friendship with Steven at a party where you embarrassed everyone by having a very loud and long political discussion. But it's good to be able to have real discussions with someone, without them getting upset and taking it personally.

Nick: Nick was given the name Nadja by his Russian family in the belief that the child was a girl. But he has taken the reins of his own destiny, and decided that he will be a man named Nick. He is the editor of a local gay magazine. You wholeheartedly approve of him going from (seemingly) heterosexual woman to gay man. Some of his editorials in the magazine can be a bit trite and obvious at times though.

Daniel (Lady Verona): This delightfully fucked up drag queen was your one night stand at last year's party.

Rain: Young musician who is a new addition to the Literary Salon. Could rock lyrics be good poetry?

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Stage a reading of a couple of your poems. Cut the reading short by heaping abuse on the audience for being so meek and polite towards the trash you are reading. Storm off in a huff before reappearing a short while later in a splendid mood and with drinks for all.
- Flirt by using literary and intellectual phrases and pepper your regular (non-flirting) conversations with vulgarities and explicit language.



*Out beyond our ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing
there is a field. I'll meet you there.*

Rumi

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Public identity: Gay man. Private identity: bisexual man who is gay by conviction.

PROFESSION: PhD student in comparative literature at Columbia University

TAROT: The Chariot

LIFE SO FAR

Eli is the intellectual hot-shot who loves to analyze and question taken-for-granted truths about life, literature, and politics. He wants to bridge the gap between radical theory and real world politics, which could actually achieve increased rights for gays and lesbians. He balances sarcasm with wit and tenderness. Eli grew up in a Jewish family in Los Angeles, with both his parents working as lecturers at UCLA. The house was constantly the venue for dinner parties with guests from academia or the entertainment industry. Young Eli always liked to hang around adults. They were more fun to talk

with than other children. Feeling the need to get some space between himself and his doting parents when he was ready to go off to university, he moved to New York at the age of 18. He loves New York, but he enjoys putting on his sunny Californian demeanor at times just to bug the many neurotic and somber intellectuals you meet at the university. In California he had only dated girls, but after being seduced by his lecturer Abner, that seemed like such a boring and suburban thing to do. Although he still gets attracted to women as well as men, he believes that the sexual liberation manifesting itself in gay culture and politics is supremely important in freeing the shackled minds of America.

Eli is a student of contemporary literature, and has on several occasions announced that he has neither interest in nor talent for writing literature himself. He prefers to dissect the works of others. Secretly, he has written some short stories this past year. He hasn't had the courage to show them to Abner yet. Jerrod is the only one to whom he has shown one of them. (*Feel free to be "inspired" by another author's short story if you want to bring "your" short story to the larp.*)

Personal Issue: Rushes forward to the extent that sometimes he simply doesn't notice the reactions and feelings of others.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

ACHIEVER

RESTLESS

PHYSICAL

ANALYTICAL

DISSENTING FOR THE SAKE OF THE ARGUMENT

CORE GROUP

The Writers is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Abner: For the last couple of years the relationship has been one of platonic love (even though Abner of course despises Plato). There is plenty of loving bickering, but Abner's darkness adds a potentially destructive undercurrent. You know nothing in life is constant, but the way things are now, it's very hard for you to imagine a life without Abner being the most important person in it.

Jerrod: A talented young student who has become something of Abner's disciple. You like to tease both Jerrod and his boyfriend Reginald by declaring that you are next in line should Reginald ever tire of Jerrod.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and The Literary salon

The Literary salon is a series of private regular gatherings in the apartment you and Abner share. Attendance at these gatherings is by invitation only. Among this crowd it's not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD
SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Marcus: A good friend who is also active in the gay liberation movement. You generally tend to agree more with him in political matters than you do with Abner's nihilistic radicalism.

Rain: You met Rain for the first time last week. You were spending the day at a café in Greenwich Village where you had a very good conversation with this young musician seated on the table next to you. You discovered a shared passion for the poems of Arthur Rimbaud. He is now a new recruit to the literary salon.

Tony: You are a regular customer in his record store in Greenwich Village. For a while you dated him a bit on the side. But he decided that your relationship to Abner made it feel too "messy" (his words) and now he's seeing someone else. You've remained friends though.

Nick: You write reviews of books and theatre plays for the gay magazine which Nick is the editor of. You admire that he has taken the radical step of deciding that he wants to live as a gay man having been born and raised as Nadja. His mixture of intellectuality and shyness makes him quickly flustered if anyone flirts with him, so you like to do exactly that occasionally.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Gather a group to play an improvised party game, which includes literary references, personal confessions, or both.
- Be very physical with a character you have no intentions of hitting on sexually, and be confused if they interpret your behaviour as an invitation to sex.

Jerrod

IN THE WRITERS

When love and skill work together expect a masterpiece.

John Ruskin

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Literature student at Columbia University

TAROT: Emergence (Judgement)

LIFE SO FAR

Jerrod is an aspiring author who met his true love at last year's party. He's torn between having found a man he loves passionately, and his ideological questioning of monogamy and traditional family structures. He was a hyperactive child who only calmed down when reading, absorbed by the stories that came off the page. His family is wealthy – his father is a Public Relations Executive of Baskin Robbins, the famous ice cream brand. Tiring of children's books, he read all kinds of adult literature from an early age, often only partly grasping the content. He often appeared older than his real age, at least intellectually. So adults were often surprised by 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.

Most of his childhood he spent in California, but when he started studying he convinced his parents to pay for an education at New York's prestigious Columbia University. The idea of New York City always held a particular mystique for him. He hasn't told his parents that he is gay. They met Reginald when they visited him in the city earlier this year, but he was presented as a very good friend. Jerrod tells himself that he is afraid of hurting his mother's feelings, but if he's honest with himself, he is probably more afraid of losing the steady transfers of money that enable him to study at Columbia. He loves going to the drags shows at Club Diamond, and sometimes graces the stage himself when it's amateur night. His dream is to become an author whose works are important in the lives of the readers. To be able to describe the human condition as it is, at this stage of history. To be an important voice of this age. His fear is to see his dreams stunted and end up teaching English in a mediocre high school, pestering bored kids with classics they are unable to relate to.

Personal Issue: Somewhat emotionally immature, despite being a very intelligent young man. Gets frustrated when he feels that people around him refuse to understand how he feels.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IMPULSIVE
INNER CALLING
JEALOUS
IMPRESSIONABLE
BOMBASTIC

CORE GROUP

The Writers is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Abner: He was one of your favourite poets even before you met him. You admire his ability to be so unapologetic towards life and art. You really enjoy having become part of his circle and want him to like having you there. You're sometimes afraid of saying something stupid when he's around.

Eli: Abner's boyfriend. He sometimes flirts quite a bit with you, but just in a friendly way – you think. You are the only person he has shown some of his own writing to, which must mean that you are a person he trusts.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and The Literary salon

The Literary salon is a series of private regular gatherings in the home of the famous poet Abner and his boyfriend Eli. Attendance at these gatherings is by invitation only. Among this crowd it's not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD
SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Reginald: You met each other at last year's Fourth of July party and became a couple immediately afterwards. You know he'll do anything for you, and he is maybe the only person you feel truly understands you. You are still very much in love with him, and you don't want to hurt his feelings. But discussions with Abner and Eli have made you question the whole concept of monogamy, even if you don't feel any strong immediate urge to be with anyone other than Reginald right now.

Daniel and Trevor: Reginald's flatmates. Daniel is a fascinating person who performs in drag under the name Lady Verona. You never quite know if his barbs are good-natured, or meant to sting. It's never boring with him around at least. Trevor is a young aspiring actor who is fun to party with, but who tends to be his own worst enemy and gets himself entangled in trouble.

Bruce: A wealthy and self-confident stockbroker you've met at Club Diamond. He asked you home once for "champagne, cocaine, and group sex". You're still not sure if he was serious or just joking. You couldn't accept of course,

but you are really curious if the parties at his penthouse are as wonderfully decadent and magnificent as you imagine.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Do a stage number in the drag show organised by Nate.
- Have an emotional outburst that others probably will feel is wildly overreacting.

Reginald

IN FLAT IN SOHO

*No one on earth could feel like this
I'm thrown and overblown with bliss
There must be an angel
Playing with my heart*

*I walk into an empty room
And suddenly my heart goes boom
It's an orchestra of angels
And they're playing with my heart*

Eurythmics, *There must be angel (Playing with my heart)*

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Chorus line dancer, occasional model

TAROT: Lovers

LIFE SO FAR

A young and fairly successful dancer who met his true love at last year's party, Reginald is both attention-seeking and genuinely empathic with other people. The type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street. Reginald falls in love easily: with ideas, new people, clothes, musicals,

music... and he's obsessive when in love. He can make foolish, selfish, and even dangerous choices. Usually his heart has enough room for many people; he really wants to help, and he cries with others when they feel down. He is the youngest of five brothers and two sisters all raised on a big ranch, with traditional ideas of genders and sexuality. Reginald secretly practiced dance in the barn. His family never said anything mean about his femininity, and never tried to get him to stop dancing, but they never encouraged him either. Only one of his sisters has ever seen one of his performances on Broadway, but the family always sends flowers. Some say Broadway life is hard, but Jerrod doesn't think so. When he makes friends and lovers with the right people, magic just happens. He feels like he has an angel by his side, who also guides him to help others, like Trevor. Sometimes he wonders if he should dedicate his whole life to helping others, not merely making them happy with his dancing.

Ever since Jerrod first walked through the doors of Peggy's/Pepper's Diner it has been one of his favourite places in the city. Always open and filled with interesting people, both happy and miserable. A couple of months ago P told him that he should start working some shifts there, because he "belonged there". So why not; he enjoys the place, working irregular hours with uncertain wages as a dancer, and P is very flexible when it comes to letting him take shifts when he's available.

Personal Issue: For now, everything in life appears to be easy and happy. If he wants to become wise, does he have to learn through loss and pain and suffering? Will he change as a person when faced with adversity?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

DEPENDENT
NAVE/THOUGHTLESS
EMPHATIC
BRAVE
PRIMADONNA

CORE GROUP

Shared Flat in Soho is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Daniel/ Lady Verona: Your best friend – almost like family for the last three years. You are maybe the person who knows his ups and downs best, and he has told you about his story of a lost childhood at an orphanage. He feels like a big brother, but a difficult and fascinating one. Life would be boring without

him. He also gives you professional stage input. And he owns the contract of the flat you share with him and Trevor.

Trevor: Best friend and close soulmate. You saved his life, when you found him dirty, freezing, and trying to take his own life, two days before Christmas.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers..)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Jerrod: The missing part of yourself. True love forever. It hurts even to think about life without him. Or to think of him with someone else. It's been a wonderful year, since you met him at last year's Fourth of July party. You will do anything to keep his love, including follow his paths of exploration even if they feel strange to you.

Tony: This record store owner and DJ recently moved into an apartment with his boyfriend Francis right next door to where you live with Trevor and Daniel. Apparently he knows Daniel from way back. He's told you that he and Francis volunteer as counselors at the gay and lesbian community centre. If you have the time, maybe you should offer to do that as well?

Francis: Fellow dancer who has a more established career than you. Earlier this year you performed together in a short-lived piece off-Broadway, and now he's moved in next door. He's really flirtatious. You like him but try to avoid flirting with him when Jerrod is around. That he lives with his boyfriend Tony just next door is another reason to go easy around Francis.

Kimberley: A sweet lesbian photographer you have great chemistry with. But not so much chemistry that you appreciate her trying to kiss you the last time you were modelling for her.

Andrew: He helped you get a nice job at Broadway (in *Oh Calcutta* - the "nude" musical). He is a very kind gentleman. You went with him to Cruisers Club a couple of times, but that is not your cup of tea. But you feel you owe him help if he would ever need it.

Abner: Famous poet and Jerrod's literary guru. Creepy old man.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Show the whole world how big the love between you and Jerrod is. Cuddle together, bring him flowers, dance for him, have a "make-believe engagement"?
- Make people dance (at the disco), especially those who seem to be a bit down.



Daniel

'LADY VERONA'

Boredom: the desire for desires.

Leo Tolstoy

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man and drag queen who teases girls too, just for evil fun

PROFESSION: Lab assistant (University chem lab) and drag queen

TAROT: The Devil

LIFE SO FAR

Charming and enigmatic both as a man and as his drag persona Lady Verona, he is the star of Club Diamond. Daniel moves around the city becoming the most important person in people's lives. But then one day he's gone; maybe he'll come back, maybe he won't. Does Daniel even know what he's running from? Being a homosexual? Maybe it's the past: he was brought up in an orphanage and then adopted by a rich, eccentric, middle-aged couple at the age of 11. His adopted father still bathed him (but never exactly abused him) when he was 17. So he left for The Big Apple. These days he has little contact with the family; a visit once every summer out of politeness.

Or is he running from a lost future? Since he graduated from college, with A in most subjects, he has secretly dreamt of a scientific career, but so far his only real success has been at Club Diamond. The star-status at the club and in the gay community, as a cultural symbol walking first in pride marches, is not easy to combine with a bigger career than this lab assistant job he's had for the last 10 years (and which few know about). Performing in drag is something that gives him admiration and adoration from others. But the years are passing by. How much longer can Lady Verona be a star? For a long time Daniel thought he might become a "domestic gay" in a couple. It's now been three years since Daniel's partner of seven years left him. They never lived together. Larry was a straight-passing guy in the closet. Some gay guys can't handle their lovers being in drag during sex. For Larry it was the opposite. Did he ever love and desire Daniel, or was it just Lady Verona for Larry? It ended of course. On a loud and sour note. And Larry moved back to a wife from whom he had previously claimed to be divorced.

Personal Issue: He brings out others' inner desires, but has trouble finding out what his own truly felt desires are. He gets addicted to others' uncontrollable lust and heartbreaking dramas.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

MANIPULATIVE
DEPENDENT
LIVES TO EXCESS
AMBITIOUS
SECRETIVE

CORE GROUP

Shared Flat in Soho is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Reginald: He's lived in your flat for three years. Little brothers are easy to manipulate. It was you that made him fall in love with Jerrod, and you who made them believe it would last forever. At least that is the story you tell yourself. You perform the role of being his best friend, and make him feel valuable. Some days you think this has become the truth. He really *is* your best friend. On other days the performance is all there is. He thinks he knows you and your moods, but you are sure he would be disgusted with you if he really knew you.

Trevor: He's lived in your flat since Christmas. His dramatic ups and downs amuse you. He's the kind of guy you like to keep around, and the lovemaking

is terrific! It irritates you that he doesn't like to fuck you in full Lady Verona splendor, only as Daniel. Next time you'll dress up as a Castro clone just to mock him. Maybe you are a bit jealous of the soul-deep friendship he shares with Reginald? Maybe you should put in an effort and use your contacts to give his acting career a boost with a Broadway opportunity?

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Nate: You admire him, and are grateful for the opportunity to be a star. But you're fully aware that she is the Queen, and you will forever be the Princess of Club Diamond. If you go too far with Nate, you fear you will be kicked out the door. You always argue about music choices for the shows. If you are in a phase where you want evergreen "diva" music, Nate will insist on something from the latest Top 20. And if you want to do something to an edgy new New Wave song, then Nate will suddenly be all up in the air about old tunes from Cole Porter musicals.

Tony: This record store owner and DJ recently moved into a spare studio apartment right next to the flat in Soho. He's a friend from way back, but

you fell out with each other during your relationship with Larry. Tony never liked him, and tried to get you to drop Larry. So you dropped Tony as a friend instead. Now you see that Tony might have had a point. You recently patched up the friendship and he seems less uptight these days. So when he had to move out of his old apartment that was being turned into offices, you tipped him about an available studio apartment right next to yours. He moved in there with his dancer boyfriend Francis.

Abner (and his circle of intellectuals): If only you were considered smart enough to be invited to one of their literary salons! You've tried to get to know him on every Fourth of July, and you had a randy session with him at last year's party.

Bruce: Regular at Club Diamond and a glitzy, self-confident guy. You recently had a one night stand with him, and you probably wouldn't say no to an encore. Having an affair with a wealthy stockbroker is quite exciting in itself, isn't it? Could it be something more? Too early to tell, but no reason to hold back before the journey has even begun.

Diane: A good friend and make-up artist. Sometimes you work on shows together. She sometimes catches you when you play with other people's emotions and she is not afraid to call you out on it. She is probably the person in your life that you are the most honest with.

Max: Sexy straight guy from the Saratoga friends group that you had a quickie with at last year's party.

Howard: A waiter at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner, he is a guy you actually trust with your secrets, at least when you're late-night blasted. You like to tell him tales of your exploits, and he listens wide-eyed. He has a "colourful psyche" as well you know. Another strange bird that has flown into the city in a vain attempt to try to make sense of life.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Manipulate a drama for someone, just for amusement.
- Have Trevor stroke your ego (and body) before the night's big performance.

Trevor

IN FLAT IN SOHO

Friday is the 13th, so to 24th is not so long to go
Though my face don't show
My temperature is gettin' too-o low
I've seen it all in a dream
I know just how it's gonna feel
Like not to be alive anymore.

*I'll be dead by X-mas now anyway
Tell me will you remember me that day*

Hanoi Rocks, Dead by X-mas

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Works in the ticket booth at Carnegie Hall

TAROT: Five of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

An intelligent, young wannabe actor vacillating between euphoria and despair. Trevor has broken all contact with his homophobic family, and now throws himself hard at the city and its people, losing control of his 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 Reginald saved him from the streets. His two current flatmates, Daniel and Reginald, both treated him like family. They put a walkman in the Christmas stocking for Trevor, and they shared a sumptuous and atmospheric dinner, asking for nothing in return. Reginald even found this job for him at Carnegie Hall. But few, if any, of the many auditions Trevor attends are successful, and he breaks into desperation and despair every time. He has done some underground theatre, without payment, of course. The peak of his career was early on in his audition days, when he got a fairly big part in a horror movie, playing a teenager who gets turned into a zombie. He was only in one scene. But he was the main character in that scene and he played it well!

When life is good, Trevor feels like he needs to live it 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. Anyone who tries can hit on him and do him. Or more precisely, any man. He would never let a woman touch him erotically. Trevor is convinced that it is his mother, a violent drug addict, who has killed all his attractions for women. Trevor usually ran away from her mean moods; he hid up a big tree in the park and pretended to talk with his father, an actor who now has a career in Hollywood, playing supporting characters – and who left his mother when he was seven. He has never dared to tell any of them that he's gay. He wishes that a lot of things about himself and his life would be different, but it varies from day to day what he would like to change, and in what way.

Personal Issue: If others like him, he has no limits, he'll do whatever they say.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

DEPRESSION
SHAME
HOPEFUL
BROKEN
INTENSE

CORE GROUP

Shared Flat in Soho is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Reginald: Your angel, saviour, and soul mate. Where your path is mostly covered in darkness, he is always walking on sunshine.

Daniel/ Lady Verona: With him, you have so many feelings and types of relationships all mixed together. He is a friend, and lately a passionate lover.

You would do anything for him, except make love to him when he is in drag – he looks so damn much like your mother (and you know he would get incredibly mad if you told him so)! But you help him dress for his shows; maybe he can help you find a back door into Broadway?

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Tony: This record store owner and DJ recently moved into an apartment right next door to where you live with Reginald and Daniel. Apparently he knows Daniel from way back. He's told you that he and his live-in boyfriend Francis volunteer as counselors at the gay and lesbian community centre. You were a bit worried when you heard that, but he seems like he isn't the probing, moralising type. Maybe he can help you get an in somewhere?

Francis: This dancer just moved in next door with his boyfriend Tony. He seems like the perfect boyfriend. You wish you had someone like that. Not that you really believe that you'd be able to grab him from Tony, but maybe a one night stand could be within reach?

Nate: Owner of Club Diamond. He has a strong, magnetic force, a darkness, and the will to destroy everything in order to start something new. When you sit at Club Diamond, late nights and early mornings, you want to just dive into it all, under the magic power of a place like this, to be born anew. But you think if you were ever to try dressing up in drag, a lot of old demons would sink their claws into you. Why can't you be more carefree about these things, like most of your friends are?

Leon: The first and only time you were let in at the famous Studio 54, you were hit on by this big disco star. You don't know why you did it, but suddenly you had bitten his cheek so hard he started bleeding. It came to fighting, and you were kicked out of the club. For life.

Diane: This fag hag is a lot of fun. You've had some drunken bouts together where you have spilled your hearts to each other. But sometimes she can be just as intimidating as the drag queens she hangs out with.

Andrew: Director of bookings at Carnegie Hall. You wish he would notice you, but he hasn't, even if he says a polite greeting every morning.

Suggestions for things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Try to make friends with someone in the crew of Studio 54, or someone who seems rich and influential in general.
- Make a short performance to catch people's attention.

Fernando

IN FAMILY OF FRIENDS

Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

Attributed to Howard Thurman

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Bartender at Club Diamond

TAROT: Prince of Swords (Knight of Swords)

LIFE SO FAR

Fernando is not straight-acting. Never could do it, and never wanted to try. From a working-class Puerto Rican family, he always knew he was different from his brothers. He had the most amazing and pleasant sexual experience as a 13-year-old with his best friend, and that established once and for all for him that he was gay. He's never had a problem with who he is, even whenever he got his ass kicked. He licked his wounds and learned to hit back – harder. His mother cried for three whole weeks when she realised that he was gay. But she didn't even shed a tear when he was sentenced to juvenile prison for violence

against a police officer, and Fernando is sure she was relieved when they took him away. He never returned to his parents' home. He attended culinary school for a year, then decided to move out of the kitchen and into the bar.

Fernando is a rock star at Club Diamond. He is both approachable and hard-to-get – *and believe me, many have tried*. Always energetic, always smiling, he is the bartender that always remembers your name, who will call you a cab when you're too drunk, and will get into your business if you bring it to the bar. Fernando's perceptiveness has surprised many, and if you are one of the lucky ones allowed to stay in Club Diamond after hours, you will learn that he has a great talent for law – he is a true “street jurist” and a political talent. If he had been born on the Upper East Side (and straight), he would probably have been running for congress by now, but instead he loves his back-alley-big-city activist life. He is one of the most visible gay activists in the city. He is confrontational and passionate.

Personal Issue: His confidence and pride make him strong, but could also have their downsides. If you cross him, he can lose his cool and he's not always great at anger management.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

CHARISMATIC
PERCIPIENT
PASSIONATE
AGGRESSIVE
HUMOURIST

CORE GROUP

Family of Friends is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Marcus: Very close friend. You helped him accept who he is and break with his repressive family. Without you, he might have been unhappily married to Blaire by now. He is an intelligent man who contributes a lot to the discussions in the movement.

Jimmy: Another very close friend, Jimmy means the world to you. He is so vulnerable and special, warm and compassionate, yet also tough and independent. He puts greater weight on the transformative powers of reconciliation than you do.

Nick: Very close friend. There is a bit of a competition between the two of you – who is the leader in your “family of friends”? You like to discuss and

challenge each other – there is mutual respect, but discussions also sometimes end in quarrels. Nick, coming from a family that fled the Soviet Union, is anti-socialist, while Fernando is a political radical and sympathetic to socialism. Falling out and then making up again seems to be a pattern of this friendship. Both of you like to make grand statements about friendship, honesty, and the meaning of life, when making up again after a quarrel.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: You were invited to the party for the first time last year and really hit it off with the host. You and Mr. T are really different, but sometimes opposites attract. You had a hot sexual encounter during last year's party and have had a couple of dates in the city since then.

Nate: The Boss at Club Diamond. Nate seems to be one of those people who is very hard to get to know for real. This makes you a little insecure around him. But you feel that it is important to have a good relationship with your boss.

Sinclair: Nate's secret boyfriend. Lives his secret gay life in Club Diamond, but keeps up his fake marriage and heterosexual act in order to stay in the running for a seat in Congress. This double act will never last...

Lady Verona/Daniel: Fernando's colleague at Club Diamond. A true drag queen diva. He likes to toy with people's emotions, and you have experienced what it's like being on the receiving end of his game.

Enrique: You grew up on the same street. He works at Studio 54 now and is studying pre-med. He seems very busy, so you don't see him very often, but when you meet occasionally out on the town you tend to have good honest conversations.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Talk to/flirt/joke with as many people as possible, mapping the room and the people in it . The goal is to have a great party, but even more, to convince some of the rich and famous to get on board and support the gay rights movement.
- If given the opportunity, pick a fight to establish that you don't let anyone – especially not spoiled, rich people – step on your toes.



All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.

Anatole France

AGE : 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING : Gay man. Born with unrecognised unclear gender characteristics, and was assigned female at birth. Identifies as a transgender and homosexual man and has started gender-confirming treatment (testosterone).

PROFESSION : Editor and writer in small independent gay magazine (*OUTNY* magazine)

TAROT : Ace of Swords

LIFE SO FAR

Nick was born into an intellectual family in Kiev and named Nadia after his grandmother. Many years later, long after arriving in the US, his crying mother confessed that the doctors in the hospital had discovered some abnormalities, but after a closer examination of the infant, determined the child to be female. Well, that was never true for Nick, who grew up on a battlefield fighting for his right to wear pants and play rough games with the boys, against his mother

and sister who made their best efforts to make him a real girl. Nick's father was arrested for illegal political activities, and his family fled to the US in 1975.

After being examined by American doctors one year ago, Nick was accepted into "the program". A team of doctors and psychiatrists and so-called gender experts determined that Nick was born with both male and female sexual characteristics. After this conclusion was drawn, Nick got to choose a new name for himself, and left Nadia behind as he left the hospital. Everything felt right. He was accepted as a candidate for sex reassignment surgery.

He has started his hormonal treatment, but he has put surgery on hold for the time being. He needs to sort out a couple of things, because even though he feels like a man, his extraordinary body, the body he was born with, is still him. Nick needs to feel that he is calling the shots, not the eager doctors who think they have found some lost, tragic Soviet Union victim to rescue. Anyway, the surgery would be expensive and he doesn't really make a lot of money from the magazine. Nick is not a crybaby. He knows that life is a struggle, and he knows that you'll regret it in the end if you just go for the solution that seems to be the easiest one at the time. Nick is a man, and Nick loves men. Now, with his hormonal treatment, he has reached a new puberty, and feels like a teenage boy cliché – filled with sexual desire and utter embarrassment. Being a blushing, horny teenager, feels overwhelming and out of character for the intellectual and, previously, almost asexual Nick. Burying sexual desires might have worked before, but now, Nick is really longing to find a guy (or maybe several?) who will be able to understand and desire him.

Personal Issue: Believing that most people are ignorant and spoiled, and will benefit from getting their world rocked a little by being disclosed or exposed to unpleasant truths.

There are still many issues yet to sort out with the medical aspects of transitioning. Top surgery? Yes, probably... Remove uterus? Yes, probably... or maybe... getting rid of menstruation with the hormones was a huge relief. But the doctors' obsession with making him look like a "normal" man leaves him a bit puzzled. It is his body, the one he was born with, and he needs to be in charge of these decisions.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

UNCOMPROMISING
PRIVATE
LOYAL
SERIOUS
ANALYTICAL

CORE GROUP

Family of Friends is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Fernando: Very close friend. There is a bit of competition between the two of you – who is the leader in your “family of friends”? You like to discuss and challenge each other – you respect each other, but discussions also easily fall into quarrels. Fernando has a tendency to romanticise socialism. You, having fled the Soviet Union, know better. Falling out – and then making up again – seems to be a pattern of this friendship. Both of you like to make grand statements about friendship, honesty, and the meaning of life when making up again after a quarrel.

Marcus: Marcus volunteers as a journalist for *OUT NY* magazine. Marcus and you are determined to find some rich investor to invest in your mag. He is really talented, but you find his repressed anger issues annoying at times. Otherwise, you make such a good team!

Jimmy: Jimmy is a very close friend with a hard life behind him. You really respect him for turning his life around. You don’t really agree with the healthy and clean living Jimmy is so enthusiastic about, but admire that he has been able to take charge of his own life.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T’s Party (Gay scene) and *The Literary salon*

The Literary salon is a series of private regular gatherings in the home of the famous poet Abner and his boyfriend Eli. Attendance at these gatherings is by invitation only. Among this crowd it’s not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD

SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Walter: A gay psychologist who is on the official list of gay-friendly therapists. You have gone regularly to sessions with him ever since you started transitioning. He has encouraged you to only use your new name, Nick, in all situations where that is possible.

Wallace: A gallery owner in Brooklyn who just hosted a really homophobic, supposedly humorous art exhibition called *Sissy Boy*. Nick slammed him in an editorial, and also organised a protest action one Sunday at the gallery.

Eli: A PhD student in literature who writes reviews of books and theatre plays for the magazine. He's probably the person in the literary circle with the most easy-going personality. Sometimes you feel he's flirting with you. But then, Eli has a very open and welcoming attitude towards everybody, so it's difficult to tell.

Abner: You admire him but often disagree strongly with him on matters of gender theory and strategies for the gay liberation movement.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Conspire with Marcus to get a rich and powerful guest to invest in the magazine.
- Develop a crush on some guy you meet at the party. Interrogate your friends to find out if they have any info on the guy you have your eyes on. If they sense what is really going on, deny it firmly. You just think he seems like an intelligent person...

Marcus

IN FAMILY OF FRIENDS

I think that one reason many of us do not really take into the marrow of our bones this message of the unconditional love of God is this: we dwell excessively on ourselves and on our mistakes. And so we keep asking, 'Who am I that the Lord should love me?' Instead we ought to be asking, 'Who are you, O my God, that you love me so much?' The Lord knows and accepts that we humans are mistake-makers.

John Powell

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Studies journalism at New York University, volunteers at *OUTNY* magazine

TAROT: Princess of Disks (Page of Disks)

LIFE SO FAR

Marcus comes from a conservative Christian family, with whom he severed contact a few years ago. He used to hide his sexuality and lead a carefully planned double life, engaged to be married to his childhood sweetheart Blaire. He still feels terrible for deceiving her and breaking her heart. Fernando

guided him and gave him the courage to break with his family and helped him find the strength to understand that it is they – and the world they live in – who are wrong, not him! He is grateful to Fernando, but sometimes he wonders if he is right about leaving everything behind, or if Jimmy is right when he encourages Marcus to go back and give them one more chance to reconcile. Marcus is still a conflicted Christian. He left the congregation behind, but he can still feel close to God, and experiences episodes of divine presence. Sometimes he experiences that he can absorb other people’s feelings or physical or emotional pain. He believes it is God guiding him, and that he has a purpose, but he will seldom share these experiences with others, fearing that they will think he is crazy. He is quite discreet about his religious beliefs in general.

Marcus loves a good discussion, and he has the ability to change his opinion when faced with good arguments. He talks a lot, but he tries to be a great listener, too. He strives to always stay calm and appear rational, but sometimes he loses his temper. Marcus was raised not to show anger, so he struggles with shame after losing his cool. Marcus volunteers as a journalist for *OUT NY* magazine. He is active in the gay rights movement, and he has a political and somewhat philosophical capacity that is a welcome addition to *OUT NY*. Nick and Marcus are determined to find some rich people to invest in their magazine, and are making strategic plans to attract the right people in order to strengthen the influence of their publication.

Marcus was ultimately inspired to start performing in drag after seeing the show *Jesus Chrissy Superstar* with drag superstar International Chrissy. Yes, Marcus believes in God, but he has lost faith in many of his followers. Seeing that show for the first time was such an amazing experience, cleansing through glamour and laughter. Marcus’ alter ego on amateur night at Club Diamond is Miss Fortunata, a strong, sexy, funny, and glamorous diva who performs songs about misfortunes in love.

Personal Issue: Still a conflicted Christian – he sometimes feels a strong divine presence, and when on his own, he finds himself arguing out loud with God. He believes he has a “sixth sense” and that he sometimes can absorb other people’s feelings or symptoms.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

RIGHTEOUS
IMPRESSIONABLE
CLAIRVOYANT
GUILT-DRIVEN
RELIGIOUS

CORE GROUP

Family of Friends is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Fernando: Very close friend – he helped you accept who you are, and made you break away from your family to find your own way in life. Without Fernando, you believe that you would be unhappily married to Blaire, denying your true self. You look up to Fernando, and feel that it is difficult to admit to him that you have strong spiritual experiences, or that you are uncertain about whether or not you should try to reach out to your family to try to start a process of reconciliation.

Jimmy: Very close friend with whom you are in love. Jimmy has managed to forgive and love his mother. He was there when she died. He firmly believes that forgiving and loving the mother that gave birth to you will be helpful in healing. You have dreams you have told no one about (so far) about having a normal family life with Jimmy as your wedded husband. You know that Jimmy has issues with traditional family life, but that is probably due to his difficult childhood. You think that Jimmy will change his mind if you two were to fall in love.

Nick: Very close friend, and your boss at *OUT NY* magazine. Nick is a trans man and you're secretly finding the whole gender-identity-crisis a bit difficult to fully understand. Nick was born Nadja and is now Nick, OK, that's perfectly fine. But how does one know what gender one truly is? Does your passion for dressing up in drag means that you should think about if you might be a woman, fully or partly, or is that a stupid thought? You want to discuss this with Nick but are afraid that you might say something hurtful or stupid.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and *Club Diamond*

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It's primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls' night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don't have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular "diva" numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Eli: A good friend who is also active in the gay rights movement. Eli is a PhD student in literature, and he has a warm and carefree energy that always makes you feel good. Eli and Abner's relationship is purely platonic. You don't understand why they still stay together, depriving themselves the opportunity to find a real and passionate relationship.

Simon: Young musician and face from the scene, with whom you often have discussions about life and politics. You've spoken to him many times when out on the bars in Christopher Street. You have tried to convince him to participate in political happenings. You also tease him a bit about probably being afraid of being seen as gay, now that he has a prospective career in music.

Diane: A fag hag who is a regular at Club Diamond. She is great fun to be around and has helped you with your outfit and make-up on several occasions. She is someone you can speak to about your issues with God. A couple of times you have gone to church together here in New York.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Talk with God when you think you are alone.
- Conspire with Nick to get some rich and powerful party guests to invest in the magazine.

Jimmy

IN FAMILY OF FRIENDS

What I was really hanging around for, I was trying to feel some kind of a good-bye. I mean I've left schools and places I didn't even know I was leaving them. I hate that. I don't care if it's a sad goodbye or a bad goodbye, but when I leave a place I like to know I'm leaving it. If you don't, you feel even worse.

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Bicycle courier, part-time yoga teacher

TAROT: Prince of Disks (Knight of Disks)

LIFE SO FAR

An independent soul with a lonely childhood, Jimmy grew up with his mother who moved from place to place around the United States. He never knew his dad, but his mother compensated by constantly looking for love for herself and her son and bringing new “fathers” into Jimmy’s life all the time; men who knew how to drink, swear, and gain respect from “bitches and bastards”.

As a child, Jimmy never blamed his mother, but he hated her boyfriends with a passion. These men are all characters in Jimmy's unfinished novel/script, which he hides from everybody. The characters represent images of what is wrong with the heterosexual male norm. Jimmy is toying with the idea of attempting to have the script published, but he has not yet had the courage to show it to anyone. He began working on it as part of his therapy after he attempted suicide at the age of 16, and it is personal and painful; but might it also be great?

Jimmy spent his childhood practicing his chameleon act, trying to fit in at new places with new people over and over again. He never really felt that he managed to convince anyone, hence never really feeling close to or trusting people. As a teenager, he developed a destructive habit of trading sex for drugs. Getting high made everything clear and easy. Now as an adult he is clean and sober. He spent years in therapy living in an alternative institution for teenagers called The Tree of Life, a vast location far away from temptations. He left the institution at 19 and managed to finish school and get himself a basic education. He did find a new path, and is now a strong ambassador for healthy living, meditation, cleansing, and yoga. Some friends are surprised that he combines this with being a member of the gay leather sex club *Cruisers*, but he finds the particular combination of control and sex there particularly liberating, at least on most visits.

His mother died some years ago. Before she died, they reconciled, and Jimmy was there with her when she passed away. Jimmy has now found a new, close-knit family of friends for whom he would do anything.

Personal Issue: He's convinced that the true path to balanced living is through truly understanding who you are, and being willing to help others – sometimes intruding with well-meant advice to others.

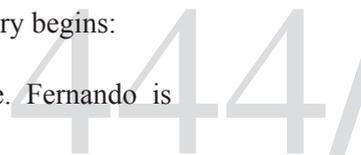
5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

EMPATHIC
INDEPENDENT
HEALTHY
SPITEFUL
LOYAL

CORE GROUP

Family of Friends is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Fernando: A very close friend with whom you're in love. Fernando is



amazing, charismatic, loving, warm, and wise. You are determined to win him over and make him yours, but you have to be careful not to ruin the friendship, so you take a step-by-step approach. You believe that you are the only one who really can see the whole of Fernando; how vulnerable he really is, how he needs to go back and settle things with his parents before it is too late, how he needs to fully heal himself so he can open up his heart to true love.

Marcus: Very close friend. Marcus had to leave his family – he claims they would never accept him for who he is. You managed to forgive and love your mother in the end so you believe strongly in the power of reconciliation. You firmly believe that if he forgives and loves the mother that gave birth to him, Marcus will heal as well.

Nick: Very close friend and editor of *OUT NY* magazine. You are sometimes jealous of Nick and Fernando’s friendship – suspecting that their connection is special and that it will end up in true love.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T’s Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It’s more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or “traditionally masculine” aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Hank: The janitor at Saratoga. He's a member of Cruisers Club, but you don't see him there very often. You let him dominate you at the club once, and he did exactly what you told him to. A good hand to help you, when there is nothing better around. Therefore it seemed like a good idea to ask him again when you spotted him here at Saratoga last year. You didn't end up having sex after the spanking session; he just wanked you off and disappeared.

Joani: She was an instructor at The Tree of Life, and inspired you to reconcile with your mother. You have not been in touch since you left The Tree of Life six years ago.

Lester: He owns a renowned yoga center, where you would really like to work. You know who he is, but he doesn't know who you are.

Howard: A waiter at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner. You are unsure if you remember his name, was it Harry or Henry? But he picked you up at closing time, and sucked your dick by the Hudson River a month ago.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Teach someone yoga-breathing and/or make a special herbal drink and share with others.
- Look for someone who might be able to advise you on how to get further with your writing.

Walter

IN THERAPY

If it's very painful for you to criticise your friends – you're safe in doing it. But if you take the slightest pleasure in it, that's the time to hold your tongue.

Alice Duer Miller

Passion and strife bow down the mind.

Virgil

AGE: 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Openly gay man with relationships with women in the past

PROFESSION: Psychologist and therapist

TAROT: Five of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Most people perceive Walter as a caring and open-hearted person, but he's also quite emotionally invasive. He tries hard to make his friends (and clients) happy, but it has happened more than once that he has thrown them out in conflict and personal catastrophe. It's as if he enjoys bringing out the worst in people, telling them it's good for them, to keep his own severe pain at an

arm's length. He still struggles in dealing with the memories of the physical and emotional abuse he suffered from a tyrannical father while growing up. In the 70s, he was part of the psychedelic therapy wave (with patients and therapists taking LSD together), but he has now left it. He now works more in the direction of EST, where the therapist peels off every layer of personality and breaks the client to nothing before building them up again. This method is often done as group therapy. As he has personal friends in therapy, his professional conduct can sometimes be under question.

Walter had a serious longtime relationship with a man ten years older, Eric – a relationship that ended in a dramatic breakup more than a year ago. Walter suffered a personal breakdown partly because of this, and still talks a lot about him. He wasn't at the summer party last year. He was depressed and even had a short stay at a mental hospital. The breakdown is hard for him to talk about. He has been to Mr. T's party the last six years. It's a great place to meet friends and find new clients. He has too few now, since for months he was incapable of holding any therapy sessions.

Personal Issue: Guilt. He will not have peace of heart until he has cleared out every moral failure he has done, thinking more of his own need for resolution than his effect on other people's lives.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SINCERE
HIGH IDEALS
RUMINATING AND GUILT-DRIVEN
SELF-APOLOGETIC
MORBID HUMOUR

CORE GROUP

In therapy is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Ruben: Your very best friend since school days. He felt like the brother you never had, and you were inseparable as youngsters. When Ruben told you he was wondering if he was gay, of course you took him to gay clubs, even if you had a girlfriend at that time. He's the only one who knows you had a breakdown last summer, and you know your secrets are safe with him – anyway, you didn't go into much detail about it.

Ike: You knew him before he came to therapy, since he's Ruben's boyfriend, and you often visit them or go to parties together. Through therapy sessions

you've gotten to know Ike better, and you like what you see. Once, Ruben was too held up at work to come to therapy, and you offered to massage Ike, a kind of "body therapy". When you saw his wonderful hard-on, you couldn't help but give him a hand job. You know this would get Ruben mad with jealousy, but in your defence it wasn't exactly infidelity.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It's more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Beatrice: Your girlfriend of six years, you even planned to marry her. Then she got cancer, and you couldn't handle it. You left her while she was convalescing here at Saratoga. The reason you gave her was that you're gay, and in love with another man. You have stuck to that since, and live now as a homosexual man. But really, you love humans, not genders. (Your character doesn't know she will be at this party.)

Steven: Long-time member and leader of Cruisers Club. You are both rather exhibitionist and enjoy challenges, like doing hard core sessions together at the club and being the first ones to try out new techniques. It was him who made you become a gay-friendly therapist "certified" by the gay rights movement.

Charlotte: A patient. She is a control freak who needs to let go. She thinks she doesn't need therapy, but she is a crumpled ball of nerves. Before she can be a good mother, she must discover herself.

Andrew: A good friend from Cruisers Club and also a patient. His main issue is to find a partner. He is everybody's friend, but can never find one who loves him. He tends to fall in love with the wrong guys.

Nick: A patient and editor for a small gay rights magazine. He was born in the Soviet Union as an intersex child and raised as a girl, but feels like a man. It was you who told him to start to use a male name. He has now turned in an application for the sex reassignment process.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Browse both parties for whoever might need therapy, and can afford it. Maybe even set up a short EST showcase for a group to promote yourself.
- Make a crazy semi-public S&M session with Steven, to forget all your sorrows.

Ruben McHallow

IN THERAPY

"What goes around, comes around."

AGE : 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING : Gay man

PROFESSION : Owner of Transatlantic Technologies

TAROT : Nine of Disks

LIFE SO FAR

Ruben is a wealthy and kind gentleman, but a hard nail if people or obstacles cross his path to happiness. His only fear is not being loved; then, his voice might reach a high pitch and tears swell out of the ball of pain in his stomach. Both his parents died in a house fire, 16 years ago, and he inherited a technology company making calculators; a company that's now moving into the new area of cellular phones. He has always had a knack for earning money. He works steadily and hard to achieve success, both in business and in private life, striving for personal security and a harmonic love life. Ruben is generous with his friends, but also has a tendency of wanting to own those close to him.

His sister Peggy/brother Pepper (depending on how that character is played) never wanted anything of the inheritance. Ruben has more or less lost contact with his sibling, after several attempts to try to help with their diner business, and that help was rejected.

But in the last years, Ruben has finally received all the love he has yearned for, through his relationship with his young Adonis, Ike. Ruben is a great admirer of ancient Greek history, romanticising the Erastes and Eromenos relationships between an older, wiser man, and a beautiful, energetic youth. This is why he feels very stressed about the recent turn in their love life, where they have had a number of painful arguments. They have even had a loud quarrel at the office. Ike seems ungrateful, and perhaps he's even thinking of leaving?

Personal Issue: He hates it when someone refuses his generosity, experiencing this as a loss of control. He has tried very hard to help his sibling, and now it bothers him a lot that the other person he loves most, Ike, seems to be withdrawing from his support, too.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

DEDICATED
GENEROUS
POSSESSIVE
HARD-WORKING
SCHEMER

CORE GROUP

In therapy is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Ike: Boyfriend of two and a half years. You have lived together in your huge flat in Manhattan for two years. It is you who introduced him to homosexual love. In the beginning, much of your attraction was about sex, but now you feel deep, eternal love for him. You love to give him gifts, massage, or expensive bubbles in a hot tub. You have no urge to have sex every day (or every week). He is young and a bit unstable, therefore it feels safe that you have gotten him to start working in your business. Besides, he is a very talented designer. You have recently given him a private art teacher, so he can learn classical painting as well.

Walter: Your best friend, going back to school days. It was he who taught you to drink and smoke joints. When you told him that you were gay, he went with you to gay meeting places, but you two stayed friends, not lovers. He had

a girlfriend, Beatrice, for many years. Now he is a totally open homosexual. You have tried some therapy sessions with him earlier (about the trouble with your sibling), and you are happy about the regular sessions Ike and you have with him now.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Peggy/Pepper: Your sweet sibling whom you love, but who maybe doesn't love you back. P is the only one remaining of your close family. Since none of you has children, who will inherit your wealth? Even if your money is rejected, you both stay polite when you meet.

Mr. T: You are a major customer of his ad agency; in fact you met Ike when he was working for Mr. T on a project for you. You have shared lots of nice dinner parties with Terrence Thurlow (his real name).

Pen: You think Mr. T gives away too much power to his chief secretary. You think it's because he is lazy in some areas, which you don't like. Pen is anything but lazy.

Enrique: Bartender at Studio 54. You chased him off once when you visited Studio 54 with Ike, and he was flirting a bit too obviously with Ike.

Howard: A waiter at the diner and a one night fling three years ago. It is a fond memory. He has a girlfriend now so you guess he must be in the closet.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Ask for an extra therapy session with Walter, because you are afraid of making a scene with Ike in the middle of the party.
- Mingle with *Pink Dollars* and everyone who can be useful in your business. You want to impress them with the advantages of cellular phones.

Ike

IN THERAPY

You dress me up
I'm your puppet
You buy me things
I love it
You bring me food
I need it
You give me love
I feed it

And look at the two of us in sympathy
With everything we see
I never want anything, it's easy
You buy whatever I need
But look at my hopes, look at my dreams
The currency we've spent
I love you, you pay my rent
I love you, you pay my rent

Pet Shop Boys, Rent

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man (but feels secretly attracted to some women too)

PROFESSION: Designer in Transatlantic Technologies

TAROT: Two of Disks

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LIFE SO FAR

Life has run smoothly so far for Ike. After getting top marks studying design in college, he made his way straight into a well paid job at T-Buzz advertising company. He had a nice childhood in a middle-class family with two elder sisters who love him, even after he came out of the closet as homosexual. He has always been a bit quiet and shy, never having many friends, but no enemies, either. Homosexual? Well, he didn't know he was before he met Ruben, a big-time customer for T-Buzz. Ruben embraced him in a tornado of attraction. Yes, Ike had had fantasies about other men, but sometimes about girls too. He'd never had a boyfriend or girlfriend before, nor been part of the gay scene, he'd just had some short one night stands with casual girls. But with Ruben he felt like a Prince, worthy and loved. The wild sex, at least during the first year, made him feel strongly for Ruben, but lately everything has been a bit dull. And he feels that Ruben is acting almost like his father, trying to rule over him. So Ike struggles with being both a bit shy, and having a strong need to find his own independent place in the world. After he changed workplace to Ruben's company, their quarrels have become more frequent and louder, once even at the office. To try to solve this they started doing therapy with Walter three months ago.

Personal Issue: Who is Ike, and who does he want to be? He feels a new strength, standing up for himself and his point of view. But will he gain or lose power staying with Ruben?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

MOODY
RESTRICTED
UP-AND-COMING
GOLD-DIGGER
NAGGY

CORE GROUP

In therapy is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Ruben: Your boyfriend of two and a half years; you have lived with him in his huge flat in Manhattan for two of those years. Yeah, you love him and feel lucky to share his wealth and interesting life. But you never dreamt about having a new Daddy. You regret that you started to work in his business and left T-Buzz. And you feel an urge to party by yourself and with people your

own age. You didn't have any male lovers before him (or after). But you don't want to break his heart, or your own.

Walter: Ruben's best friend, so you knew him before he became your therapist. He's a very flirtatious man, more erotically powerful than Ruben. Once, Ruben was too held up at work to come to the therapy session, and Walter ended up massaging you and gave you a wonderful handjob. It still makes you horny to think about it, though you are scared about Ruben finding out. Even though you don't really feel that it was infidelity, you know he will be dreadfully jealous if he finds out. And you like your joint therapy sessions; it feels like they give you more room to express your point of view.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

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MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Pen: The secretary of Mr. T, Pen was a close friend but you don't see her very much these days. You opened up to each other a lot. She told you strange things about female sexuality, and about drugs she's tried.

Mr. T (Terrence): You were happy that he gave you the opportunity for such a great job, and feel you have disappointed him a lot by quitting.

Enrique: Bartender at Studio 54. Very charming and clever young man. He has given Ruben and you special attention at the club, since Ruben is pink money through and through. He tried to flirt with you, but Ruben got angry and sent him away. You like him, and would like to make friends with him.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Secretly flirt with Walter, or other attractive men.
- Try to speak with Pen about your personal dilemma: should you tell Ruben about the little “intermezzo” between you and Walter? Or should you hide it, and try more of the same?

Sorrento

IN STUDIO 54 CREW

Do you really think it is weakness that yields to temptation? I tell you that there are terrible temptations which it requires strength, strength and courage, to yield to.

Oscar Wilde

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Event manager at Studio 54

TAROT: Seven of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

The notorious party fixer at Studio 54, Sorrento is eccentric, chaotic, and extroverted. He makes things happen and knows all the rich and famous people who are guests at the club. He grew up in an Italian-American family in Brooklyn, the son of a former champion track runner. Sorrento was an energetic child, active in all kinds of sports from an early age. He was popular with the other kids because he was so good at sports, but also because he was always coming up with new pranks. This of course also often got him into trouble. During the last years of high school, however, he lost all interest

in sports – to the disappointment of his father who had hoped that he would go on to a good university on an athletic scholarship. He threw himself into heavy partying, but still managed to get passable grades. The following year he started studying for a BA in Business, while working nights and weekends as a bartender to pay for his studies. He quickly understood that there could be a lot of money in the emerging world of discotheques. Always a pushy charmer, he managed to convince some contacts to invest in his first club in Manhattan, called the Scepter. It was a success in terms of the people it attracted and how much attention it got, but expenses became too high, so after a year the club had to close.

But Sorrento's talents had been noticed, so though his bank account was now empty, he was hired as event manager at the newly opened Studio 54 disco in 1977. He soon became almost as famous among the crowd there as the celebrities who were regular guests; his talent for booking sexy and upcoming acts and his talent for self-promotion both paid off. The club was raided in 1979 and closed for a while on charges of tax evasion. The original owners were sent to jail for a year, and had to pass on their ownership of the club. Sorrento is now one of several owners, and with him being the most visible one of them, he's the current face of Studio 54. This past year things have only gotten crazier. Sorrento is firmly convinced that he still is in control of things, and he is good at snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, but recently he was careless and got arrested for possession of drugs while driving home one early morning. He was released on bail today, and then traveled upstate to Saratoga together with his new favourite person, a lawyer called Charlotte.

Personal Issue: Lurches back and forth between cynicism and wishful thinking. Needs to find all kinds of outlets for his energy and passions, and is often careless with himself and others in how he does this.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IMAGINATIVE
UNHINGED
ADDICTED
RESTLESS
EXPLICIT

CORE GROUP

Studio 54 Crew is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Leon: He was one of the regulars at Studio 54 from early on, one of your lovers (among many), and you still have some rebounds. Sometimes your

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egos can really clash, and you might not be on speaking terms with each other for weeks. He's also one of your "business partners" in chemical substances, together with Enrique.

Enrique: One of the bartenders at Studio 54 who got the job because you fancied him. Oh so sweet and innocent he was – once. Now this young man is the kingpin of the trade in chemical substances at the club. You don't sell yourself of course, but you are entitled to a good cut of the profits.

Diego: Leon's son. Really quite irresponsible to let one's young son hang around with you guys. Not that you are complaining. You've had sex with him a couple of times, but you really must try to be more sober the next time it happens.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Studio 54

Studio 54 is the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it's known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: A former lover; you two go way back. Even though you are crazier and more unhinged than most of the *pink dollars* types, you have become a natural part of this network informally organised by Mr. T. He recently sent you a lawyer who helped you out of jail, just this morning.

Charlotte: A smug but competent young lawyer who helped you out on bail, and you are convinced she'll assist you in dodging further unfortunate legal problems.

Tony: A record store owner and DJ who occasionally works at Studio 54. It was hilarious that time you had sex with him, after the club had closed in the DJ booth, and he got hysterical just because you landed on and broke some rare maxi singles of his. The rest of the night he kept muttering that music was a “higher form of pleasure than sex”. Well, he was pretty high that night.

Skye: Ah, the young narcissists who are in love with themselves. Such an exquisite, delightful, and stylish example of the breed.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Make an entrance together with Charlotte shortly after the larp has started, sharing the exaggerated horrors you had to endure in the holding cell at the police station with everyone.
- Offer one or more of the young characters (for instance Bret, Jerrod, Trevor, Jimmy, Ike, or Mickey) a part time job as a bartender at Studio 54. Hold an “audition” together with Enrique to find the most eligible candidate.



*I've been burned
Whenever I've followed all the rules
So I've learned
That playing it fair is just for fools
I'm fighting and win or lose
I'm not minding my P's and Q's*

Dusty Springfield, I'll Try Anything

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Disco star with a struggling career

TAROT: Seven of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Leon was one of the biggest disco stars of the 70s, famous for being obviously gay, and very successful in an age when this was rare. He's still famous, but his expensive habits have started to become a problem now, and it's been two years since his last big hit. Leon grew up in New Orleans as the child of a jazz singer, spending a lot of his childhood in the mythical French Quarter. His mother was only 17 when he was born, and he never knew his father. A couple of years later she married a jazz drummer whose band she had joined as a vocalist. They never made it big in the music industry, but as the years

passed they became a respected part of the local scene. His family, both those he shares genes with and his step family, is a mixture of white, Creole, Latino, and African American, so he has picked up fragments of traditions and culture from different groups. He was always a very feminine boy, so the years at school weren't easy, but he learned from his mother never to apologise for who you are, and he inherited the love for music and being on stage from his parents. He was able to scrape by, living off his music as a local soul act for a couple of years, but when disco hit with the modern beat, the glamorous costumes, the celebration of life and partying – he knew he had found his musical home.

He struggled for a year in Los Angeles, at one point even ending up living on the street before he got a recording contract. But when success came, it came hard and fast. In the late 70s he was one of the most famous disco performers in the US, having scored several top 10 hits, the biggest being *I Was Made for Dancin'* (*I Was Made for Dancin'* by Leif Garrett is used in-game as Leon's greatest hit). His record company kept pressuring him to tone down the "queeny" mannerisms, but having arrived as a star, he felt invulnerable and would instead just do something outrageous to piss them off.

During the years of success he developed very expensive habits. He struggles a bit to keep his head over water now, between paying for his swanky penthouse apartment and buying drinks and dope for everyone who's a friend at Studio 54. Lately he's started not only using the stuff, but also selling it to some other celebrities frequenting the club, to get some extra income while waiting for his next big hit.

Personal Issue: Addicted to stardom and success. Can get sulky if not being given enough attention by people around him. Likes to live hard.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

COURAGEOUS
FLAMBOYANT
SELF-CENTERED
EXTRAVAGANT
RASH

CORE GROUP

Studio 54 Crew is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Diego: Many years ago you had a brief affair with a woman named Esmeralda, while you were still a teenager, just to see if it would work with a woman. Little did you know that it would result in a child. You lost contact with Esmeralda, and only found out about Diego last year. It was a shock to you, and there

were some touching reunion pieces that were printed in the celebrity pages. Since you only got to know him as a grown young man, your relationship has become more that of friends than a traditional father-son one. You're really not the most responsible parent; you've done lines of coke together with your son – though you did tell him that he should only try “a little bit”. And on one occasion when he brought a friend his own age home to the apartment, you ended up seducing the friend.

Enrique: A new close friend, occasional lover, and business partner in chemical substances. This bartender is so much more fun to hang out with than many of your old friends who have all these expectations of you. He supplies the dope you use and sell. The power dynamics between the struggling star and the young supplier are constantly shifting, also making the relationship a challenging one.

Sorrento: You've known him since you started going to Studio 54. He was one of your lovers, and you still have some “rebounds” with him. You like people crazier than yourself, but sometimes your egos can really clash and you might not be on speaking terms with each other for weeks. He's also one of your partners in the drug business together with Enrique.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Studio 54

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These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING
TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Nate: It was strange meeting Nate again. He was one of the first men you had sex with, way back. At that time he was a fisherman you met while on an outing with the youth gospel choir. You've reconnected with the new Nate in New York, and you visit his Club Diamond quite often. But it's hard to remember in what ways this is the same person as the fisherman you met many years ago.

Trevor: Weird young dude who you were hot on one night at Studio 54, but who suddenly bit you so hard that you started bleeding. Trevor was of course immediately hauled out of the club.

Chain: You take him out, you buy him things. You don't think of him as a rented boyfriend, but others might get that impression.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Have sudden, very visible mood swings, from euphoric and generous to resentful and grouchy.
- Publicly declare that you are retiring as an artist – ask Nate to symbolically bury Leon the king of disco, then one hour later announce your new HI-NRG single, which will be out next month.

Enrique

IN STUDIO 54 CREW

If you want the honest spiritual truth, my prayer is this:

Dear God, get me out of this mess.

Rita Mae Brown

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Bartender, dope dealer, medical student

TAROT: Hanged Man

LIFE SO FAR

Enrique is the young man who tries to do and be everything at once: working as bartender at the hottest club in town, studying medicine during the day, and managing a thriving cocaine business. It's not a question whether things will crash, it's a question of when and how. Enrique grew up as the eldest son in a large Puerto Rican family in Spanish Harlem. He was anything but a shy child, running around exploring the streets, as soon as his mother would let him out of sight. He never wanted to "escape" from the neighborhood. He enjoys knowing everyone on his street, always finding the right way to talk to anyone, whether it's the grandmothers or the corner boys. But he wants to

get somewhere in life, keeping his connection to the community, while getting new experiences and friends downtown as well. He was a bright kid who did very well at school, and despite the rundown state of the school, some of the teachers were good and noticed him. His family have great hopes in him. After high school he got a small scholarship to study pre-med at City University of New York.

How he ended up at Studio 54 working to help pay for his studies was much by chance. He went with some friends to get into the fabled disco, but he was the only one they let in. He felt a bit guilty leaving his friends outside, but he wasn't going to let this opportunity slide. Never being afraid to talk to strangers, he danced, flirted, and talked to a lot of people that night, only finding out afterwards that some of them were real celebrities. It was obvious that Sorrento, one of the managers, fancied him, so Enrique jokingly told him that he was looking for a job. And he took him up on the offer to come back the next day, to see if he would be a good fit. When he showed up the next day Sorrento had forgotten all about it, but he still got the job. Working at Studio 54 is different from being a bartender at other clubs. Sorrento wants the bartenders to be cool and visible, and party with the guests in after-parties held down in the cellar. Drugs are everywhere, and even though Enrique convinces himself that he is in control, his consumption has increased more and more. He has also ended up inheriting the coordination of drug sales in the club after Benjamin, another bartender, skipped town. Now Enrique is the one getting the stuff from the wholesalers and handing it out to select dealers.

Personal Issue: Overstretched. It's not just that there aren't enough hours in the day. He feels like he's not able to change course, even though the car is heading towards a steep curve at full speed.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

HECTIC
BRIGHT
DIZZY
SURRENDERING
CONSCIENTIOUS

CORE GROUP

Studio 54 Crew is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Diego: Your second cousin and good friend. You know that you were the first person he had sex with. You've hinted that he could become involved in "the trade". There are a lot of good potential customers in the fashion business.

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When you were younger, and he told you that Leon, the disco star, was his father you didn't really believe him. But it turned out to be true.

Sorrento: Your crazy boss and occasional lover. Gets a good cut from the profit of the drug trade. It's weird, but you feel like you are almost family now.

Leon: This star has actually become a good friend and occasional lover, as well as one of your dealers to a select clientele. The power dynamics between the struggling star and the young supplier are constantly shifting, also making the relationship a challenging one.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

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ENRIQUE - BARTENDER

LEON

DIEGO

SKYE

KIM

CHANTELLE

STERLING

TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Santiago: You shared a flat for a time with this fellow Puerto Rican when you moved out of your parents flat. You've become good friends and you hang out often, even after you moved into your own apartment. She's an artist with a strong personality, and a firm grasp on who she is.

Fernando: You grew up on the same street. He works at Club Diamond now also as a bartender, and is very politically active. When you meet occasionally out of the town, you tend to have good honest conversations.

Ike: The boyfriend of a wealthy businessman, Ruben. You tried to flirt with him once when they were visiting the club, but his uptight, old boyfriend reacted as if you were making out in front of him and chased you off. They are both at the party.

Simon: This young musician is one of your customers. He's a cute guy so you've given him access to some of the backroom parties at Studio 54. Too bad your schedule is so hectic. You were about to have sex with him once, in a broom closet behind the bar. But before you had really time to do anything, you had to run off because something was about to happen on stage that you had to help prepare. Maybe some other time.

Chain: A buddy who enjoys life on the wild side, and occasional buyer of chemical substances.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Provide dope for a select group of friends. (Powdered sugar works well to represent cocaine.) If others find out that you have the stuff let them buy some for the right price.
- Have a minor breakdown sometime during the night, crying and confiding in a person you don't know very well.

Diego

IN STUDIO 54 CREW

"Shine like a star: a young man whose ambitions are easily overlooked by those just looking at his charming smile."

AGE: 17

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man (but can feel attracted to some women who are good at "taking charge" as well)

PROFESSION: Model

TAROT: The Star

LIFE SO FAR

According to himself he's 19 but rumors have it that he is younger. Diego dropped out of school when he started getting jobs as a fashion model. He gets a kick out of being an object of desire to many, and of already being a regular at the hottest clubs in town. He grew up in Spanish Harlem, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The family consisted of his mother Esmeralda and two different step-fathers, who each stayed about five years, and three half-sisters. Diego knew that none of them was his real dad; he was sometimes teased by some of the other boys in the street about not being a real Puerto Rican. As a young teenager he wasn't very interested in girls, but he had no problems passing as a straight kid. Girls kept falling in love with him constantly, and

he was always going out with some girl or another. He wasn't interested in pushing things any further than that, so his first sexual experience was with his second cousin Enrique, who is now one of his best friends. His mother always dreamt about becoming a famous singer, but even though her voice was good, she never managed to get noticed by the right people. Diego also yearned to get somewhere in life, but not being anything but an average achiever in school, an academic career was out of the question. Something in entertainment, then?

He was ecstatic when his mother finally told him who his father was: the disco star Leon. She had been too proud to contact him again after he became a star, but she finally decided that Diego had the right to know. The first meeting was awkward and Diego found him haughty and rude. But Leon kept inviting him to come over, and he understood after a time that his father hadn't known about him either. After a couple of months he was invited to come live in Leon's penthouse apartment, and Diego didn't look back once. The last months he has been getting more and more jobs as a model. It was his father who suggested it, after hearing his son sing and deciding that he hadn't inherited that part of his father's talents. He put Diego in contact with the right people, but now he is getting jobs on his own. The money isn't big yet, so it's good that he can live for free in his father's apartment.

Personal Issue: Often becomes the passive part in both friendships and love relationships, letting other people define things. If he feels unhappy about something, instead of facing a confrontation, he floats off to play with someone else for a while.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

HOPEFUL
AMBIVALENT
VAGUE
AMBITIOUS
NAIVE

CORE GROUP

Studio 54 Crew is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Leon: It's great to have a father that is famous, but it can be difficult sometimes as well. He is mostly nice to you but he can be erratic and bitchy sometimes. At first it was also a bit weird that your dad is gay, but maybe that explains why you are (at least mostly) gay as well. Others might react to you having become part of his drug-taking circle of friends at Studio 54, but you just count yourself lucky that you have a father with so many cool friends. OK,

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it was kind of bad that time you brought this guy home and he ended up in Leon's bedroom instead.

Enrique: Your second cousin, good friend, and the first person you had sex with. You don't understand how he copes with studying, working, and partying all at the same time. You see yourself as being more lazy but you admire him for his energy. He provides chemical substances for everyone and has hinted that you could sell something on the side among the models you work with, but it sounds a bit dangerous so you haven't said yes yet.

Sorrento: He's fun and a bit scary at the same time. Sorrento organises all these fun and crazy things at Studio 54 and lets you into the back room for exclusive parties sometimes. You've had sex with him a couple of times (and you suspect so has Leon, which does feel creepy) but you don't remember so much about it as you were both high when it happened.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Studio 54

Studio 54 is the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it's known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING
TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: Self-confident and entertaining to be around. You met him just recently at the clubs, but immediately accepted his invitation to join the summer party at his house upstate that the other guys had talked so much about. Are you a little bit in love with him? Maybe, but love is such a difficult thing to define.

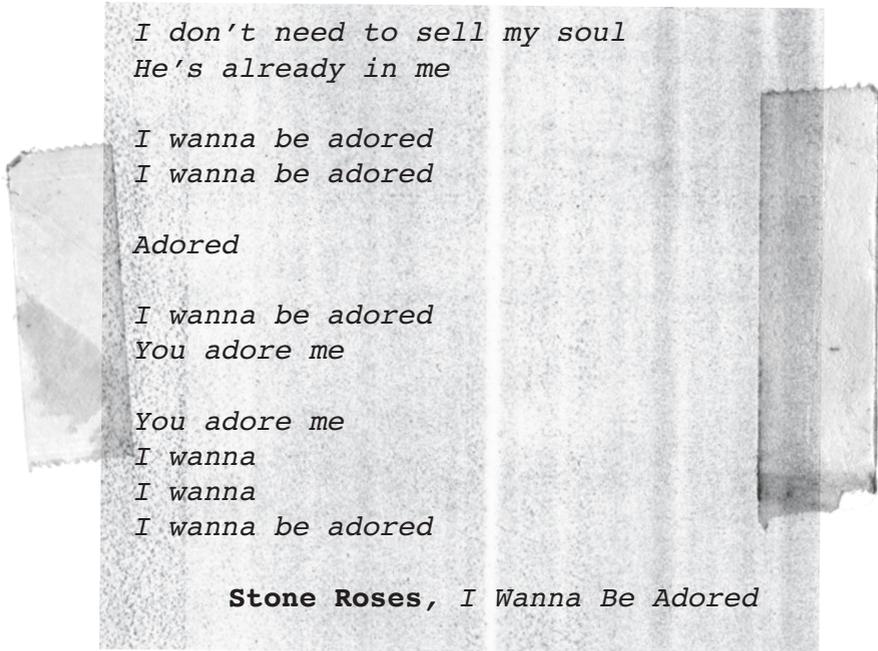
Kim: A forceful and fun businesswoman who picked you up one night at Studio 54. You're usually more interested in men, but she isn't as passive and boring as most other women. You've been on dates with her a couple of times since then. You are a bit nervous about your gay friends finding out. Will they still view you as one of them?

Kimberly: Photographer who you often do jobs for, both fashion and ad campaigns. Very flirtatious for a lesbian.

Rain: This kind young musician brought you home one night when you had taken way too much stuff. His hands were gentle like an angel. You wanted him to stay, but he just kissed you goodnight and left. You think you have a small crush on him.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- You have quite a few different concurrent romantic/sexual relationships so there is great potential for awkward scenes. Make great plans for how to juggle this and then mess things up.
- Do an improvised photoshoot with Kimberly and maybe some of her other models just for fun.



AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Androgynous man who wants to be loved (most people probably presume that Skye is gay, but he can be attracted to both men and women – the most important thing for him is their love for Skye)

PROFESSION: Singer in the band Urban Renaissance

TAROT: Four of Cups

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LIFE SO FAR

Reach for the sky – his hippie parents were right about that when they named him. Skye grew up in an unstable environment not fit for children, or so the social worker claimed in her report. A dangerous world it is, but not for the one who is loved. When he is in control he can let all the love flow towards him. Keep them guessing, ever changing, ever loved, ever lonely. Skye's earliest memory is of being out in a field alone. He was maybe six years old. He couldn't find his way back to the trailer his family was living in. He was certain that they had all driven off and left him there – his mother had been really cranky that morning so he was sure they had all just decided to get rid of him. He cried for what felt like hours. His brother found him and brought him back to the trailer, even if he was so angry that he threw rocks at him to make him go away.

But Skye actually loves his parents very much, at least most of the time. He feels lucky that he didn't grow up in a boring suburban family. Freedom was there in abundance, but with the ever-changing locations and cast of characters and adults often high or drunk, home wasn't always a very secure place. The first person he had sex with was a friend of his parents that lived in the trailer for a couple of weeks. Skye was 13 at the time and she was probably three times his age. Nowadays when he retells the story it changes: what his reactions were, and what his feelings are now, vary with every retelling. He is very keen on making it big with the band. He cares about the music, but probably even more about the possibility of becoming famous, someone loved by the masses. Someone to remember. The band Urban Renaissance was started a bit over a year ago, inspired by the New Romantics movement emerging from Britain. They have played quite a few live gigs and have recently been signed by an independent label to release a first single. Whether this will result in an actual album is still unclear.

Personal Issue: Self-absorbed. Gets his sense of self-worth from the attention and adoration of others.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

UNIQUE
INSATIABLE
EFFEMINATE
UNTRUSTWORTHY
SOCIAL ANIMAL

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Studio 54

Studio 54 is the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it's known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING
TONY

CORE GROUP

The boys in the Band is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Rain: Older brother who has always taken care of you. He can be quite exasperated and strict with you at times, but you are also quite good at manipulating his emotions. Despite this dynamic, there is no one else in the world you care about more.

Simon: Fellow band member and your brother's best friend and big love. You need his love too, not just random drunken sex behind the tour bus. Maybe you should feel bad about doing that, but Rain and Simon have decided now not to be a couple, so why shouldn't you be allowed to get some love from him then? Simon's an exciting guy to hang out with, the band would be boring without him.

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: Rich advertising guy with a huge network. He chatted you up recently at Studio 54. Getting an invitation to this party seemed both like fun and a good opportunity to connect to people who are interesting in one way or another. As the host, you want him to like you, and be one of the people he notices and talks about.

Sorrento: The event manager at Studio 54. He's crazy and great fun and he has introduced you to a lot of hip people. You're some kind of friends now? At least you have had sex with him on a couple of occasions, when that's where the party ended up.

Chantelle: You don't really know her, but you have seen her a couple of times at Studio 54, and know that she is an emerging HI-NRG artist. Would probably be fun to get to know her now that you are both here.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- If you become bored and feel a bit ignored, try to change the topic of the conversation so that it becomes more about you.
- Try to say interesting and surprising things, working on your "mysterious and unique person act". Make fun of people if they say boring things like "what do you do for work?"

Rain

IN BOYS IN THE BAND

We've been running around in circles
all year
Doing this and that and getting nowhere
This will be the last time
I think I said that last time
What can I say
I don't want to play anymore
What can I say
I'm heading for the door
I can't stand this emotional violence

Leave in silence.

Depeche Mode, *Leave in Silence*

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Guitarist, composer, and lyricist in the band Urban Renaissance

TAROT: Ace of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

Maybe his hippie parents did have a point when they named their children – Rain is a serious young man prone to melancholy, but not to self-indulgence. He doesn't want to end up like his failed musician father. He is not going to let too much drugs, or intellectual laziness, stop him from creating something important. He flirts and makes out with both sexes but he is also an old fashioned romantic who believes in committing to that one special man. He has a complicated but very close relationship to his younger brother Skye. When they were children the family lived in a trailer, and they moved frequently. Their parents weren't the most dependable and stable family growing up. At an early age Rain became a very responsible young man that sometimes ended up being the adult in the house, towards both his parents and younger brother. He kept his own insecurities and fears buried inside; trying to take charge and act instead.

One thing he shared with his parents and many of their friends was a love of music, and he started playing any kind of instrument that he could get hold of. He has developed strong opinions on what is good music and what is not. The band Urban Renaissance was started a bit over a year ago, inspired by the New Romantics movement emerging from Britain. They have played a number of live gigs and have recently been signed by an independent label to release a first single. Whether this will result in an album is still unclear. He wants the band to succeed, but it's important to him that they don't become sell-outs.

Personal Issue: His melancholic personality can make him overly pessimistic in many circumstances. Being a serious young man who doesn't think life is a joke, he can have problems relating to, and easily gets provoked by, people who are carefree and too flippant and joke about serious things.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SERIOUS
YEARNING
RESPONSIBLE
INTUITIVE
MOODY

CORE GROUP

The boys in the Band is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Skye: Younger brother and life-long responsibility. Even though you are just one year older than Skye, you've always felt a strong sense of responsibility, of having to be there for your brother. He can be such a selfish little twat sometimes, but you would be plagued with guilt if you were ever to abandon him.

Simon: Your best friend and love interest. You have been attracted to him since you met, two years ago. First you became friends who met each other every day, sharing a passion for the new alternative bands emerging from Britain. Then you started Urban Renaissance, and only then you discovered that your feelings for each other were mutual. Both of you, becoming a bit emotionally overwhelmed, have however agreed, sort of, to stop this romance – these kinds of emotional entanglements in the band itself will just lead to broken hearts and a broken band.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and *The Literary salon*

The Literary Salon is a series of private regular gatherings in the home of the famous poet Abner and his boyfriend Eli. Attendance at these gatherings is by invitation only, and Rain is the newest member. Among this crowd it's not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD
SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Eli: You met Eli for the first time last week. You were at a cafe in Greenwich Village waiting for your brother, who had forgotten all about your appointment. So when he didn't show you ended up having a very good conversation with this PhD student in literature who happened to be sitting at the table next to you. You discovered a shared passion for the poems of Arthur Rimbaud.

Diego: You noticed this young model partying hard one night at Studio 54. As you were leaving you found him half naked and high on cocaine in the street outside. You helped him home. He called you his saviour and wanted you to stay the night, but even though he lived in this really swanky penthouse apartment, the drug den look of it was a turn off for you. The glass and steel interior design did not stop you from being reminded of what your parents trailer sometimes looked like. Getting to know what he's like when not spaced out on drugs might be nice though.

Tony: Since arriving in New York you have been a regular visitor to Tony's record store in Greenwich Village. One thing that's good about hanging out with Tony is that he understands that it's sometimes easier to communicate stuff to someone by playing a song rather than trying (and failing) to find the right words.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Try to find a prospective boyfriend for Simon, and get jealous if he seems interested in the person you select.
- Have a row with Skye, don't speak with him for a while, then reconcile with him later that night.

Simon

IN BOYS IN THE BAND

*Take me out tonight
where there's music and there's people
who are young and alive
driving in your car
I never never want to go home
because I haven't got one anymore*

*The Smiths, There is a Light that Never
Goes Out*

AGE: Early 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Synth player, composer, and lyricist in the band Urban Renaissance

TAROT: Strength

LIFE SO FAR

A young and tender hooligan. Simon's always been the rebel, but that was never a conscious decision really. Authority irks him, crawls up his back and just pushes him forward into some socially unacceptable (but often humorous) act of rebellion. Never afraid, but emotions are confusing and difficult things. Anger, happiness, horniness, inspiration – all incredibly strong and very

fleeting things in life. He grew up across the river in Jersey City, the son of a retired military officer and his much younger stay-at-home wife. He has three older brothers, but despite having a strict father, the young Simon was never good at accepting meaningless rules, whether at home or at school. Since there was always a lot of yelling at home, when he became a teenager he stayed away as much as possible. At school the only teacher he didn't end up in constant fights with was his music teacher. But he soon graduated from the school jazz band to a quickly revolving series of garage bands, usually being the youngest member in the band. In this phase, post-punk with political lyrics was his thing to begin with, but then he and Rain found each other in a mutual fascination of the combination of post-punk and new electronic music, as explored by British New Romantics bands. And of course the style and image of these bands was more fun and sexy than all those tired torn jeans.

In his old bands he had, on a number of occasions, ended up unsuccessfully hitting on one of his bandmates, who regrettably were almost all completely heterosexual. Never the timid type, if a guy was hot enough he would often just make a direct pass at the guy, even if it did mean risking getting punched in the face by someone handsome but oh so straight. Being in a band with two other non-straight guys is great for a change. He hasn't seen his family for almost two years now. When his father discovered him fucking a travelling salesman one afternoon, on the couch in the living room, he threw him out of the house. As he left the house in Jersey City for the last time, he punched his father straight in the face, breaking his nose, then ran down the street chased by his brothers.

Personal Issue: Simon fears letting go and not being the one who is in control. If he feels he's in the passenger seat, he tends to grab the wheel.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

TEMPERAMENTAL
IMPULSIVE
RUDE
PRANKSTER
COURAGEOUS

CORE GROUP

The boys in the Band is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Rain: Your best friend and love interest, also the guitarist in Urban Renaissance. You agreed, sort of, to stop the romance – everyone knows that that will just lead to broken hearts and a broken band. Although you two boys have very

different temperaments, you are synced on many issues about life and music.

Skye: Vocalist in Urban Renaissance and Rain's little brother. You quarrel with him all the time, joke with him all the time, fuck him – well only occasionally, when you are both drunk. You vacillate between feeling guilty about that, and dismissing it as just fun and really no big deal.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Cruisers Club

Simon has very recently started to visit *Cruisers Club*, a gay leather and fetish club. It's more run like a voluntary organisation or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into leather, bondage, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (like lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members spend most of their time hanging out in the bar socialising with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Marcus: You've spoken to him many times when out in the bars on Christopher Street. He's really into the gay lib thing, and is trying to convince you to participate in the political actions they organise. He also teases you a bit, saying you're probably afraid of being seen as gay now that you have a prospective career in music. What really bugs you is that he might be right about that.

Enrique: Bartender at Studio 54. He's been selling you drugs that you take when you party, when Rain isn't looking. Enrique is a fun guy and knowing him has given you access to some of the back room parties at Studio 54. He

can be quite hectic though. Once you were about to have sex with him in a broom closet behind the bar, but before you had really time to do anything, he had to run off because something was about to happen onstage that he had to help prepare. You really dislike it when passions remain unfulfilled, and he's like an itch at the back of your head now.

Chain: You met at Studio 54. He's a wild guy living off rich men and working as a porn model. He introduced you to Cruisers Club and you egg each other on for new adventures there, or out on the town in bars and nightclubs.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Try to find a prospective boyfriend for Rain, but then start to flirt with this person yourself – then after a while feel a bit guilty and shower attention on Rain again.
- You've just heard some theatre people talking about "hidden theatre", and think that sounds like just the game for this party. Find two persons you think have a sense of humour and agree with them to act out a scene that would be provocative in this crowd (for example, a gay man and a lesbian woman announcing that they are now getting married and retiring from the scene).

Artie (Arthur)

IN FLOW TO THE BEAT

*Give me comrades and lovers by the thousand!
Let me see new ones every day!
Let me hold new ones by the hand every day!
Give me such show
give me the streets of Manhattan!*

Walt Whitman, Give me the Splendid, Silent Sun

AGE: Early 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Radio talk show host

TAROT: Six of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

Arthur (or Artie as his friends have always called him) and his older sister Katherine grew up with their grandmother in an exquisite apartment overlooking Central Park. Their parents died in a boating accident when Artie was only five years old. Their grandmother Georgina is the widow of a wealthy New York banker. When they were small she seemed somewhat distant and a bit scary. Katherine and Artie were raised more by a succession of nannies than by their grandmother. As they grew older and became “persons old enough to actually carry a conversation”, as Georgina would say it, they

both grew more attached to her and started appreciating her wry remarks. Also as an old veteran of the movers and shakers in Manhattan she also introduced them to a number of important persons and families. Almost every Sunday Katherine and Artie still come to dinner at her grand apartment, with an ever-revolving cast of interesting and important guests.

After he graduated from high school Artie went to study liberal arts at Harvard. There he joined the college radio station and soon became one of the most recognised voices on campus. He also became a hub in the informal gay social scene at Harvard, juggling a large network of friends and lovers. And with a few exceptions, he kept present and past relationships mostly drama-free. But compared to New York, even the large campus of Harvard felt small, and he yearned to get back to the streets of Manhattan. He sent recordings of some of his best moments on the college radio to all the radio stations in New York. When WABC, the leading Top 40 station in New York, responded and wanted to give him a chance at spinning records and hosting broadcasts, he didn't hesitate a minute about discontinuing his Ivy League education. This year the station is introducing more talk shows in the programming, and Artie's new programme "City Beat with Artie" is already making him a household name in the city.

Personal Issue: Artie is a person who feels himself to be blessed. He is a person who people like. He is able to connect with almost everybody. Through his radio show and through his conversations as a volunteer counselor, he feels that he is able to make a difference in people's lives. Everything can be turned around by looking at it from a fresh perspective and putting effort to fixing it. The thought that misfortune could hit him or those he cares about – and that he wouldn't be able to fix it – isn't something that he considers a possibility at all. The memory of his parents dying when he was five doesn't change this. That memory is stored in a separate locked away box.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS :

ADORABLE
WITTY
GENEROUS
SELF-CONFIDENT
PLAYFUL

CORE GROUP

Flow to the Beat is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Tony and **Francis** are your best friends apart from your sister Katherine. Last

year Francis convinced both you and Tony to start volunteering as counselors at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, for people who are struggling with all kinds of issues. You often debrief with each other when you have had a challenging case.

Tony: You met Tony during your last year of high school. He was a few years older than you and he helped you get into cool underground clubs and private parties hosted by musicians and artists. For a while you tried to be boyfriends, but after some months you both realised that you should be friends and not lovers. Once during a party game you were asked whom of your friends you would call to help you get out of a really embarrassing situation. The obvious answer to that was Tony. He would help you and be totally cool about it afterwards.

Francis: You met Francis a little after you became friends with Tony, at the clubs that you and Tony frequented together. You admire him for having made the life he wants, from a much more difficult start in life than your own privileged, wealthy background. He is the friend you share the most candid information about your sexual experiences with. It's fun to talk in an honest and carefree manner about those things, and Francis often has a good tip or two to offer in the area as well.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Katherine: Your older sister by two years, and the hard-working, ambitious editor of the city section of *The New York Times*. Together you are the dynamic duo of Manhattan in predicting (and helping along) the latest cultural trends. Often you don't agree on what will be hot and what will be forgotten almost before the opening night is over. But it is still undetermined which one of you has the keenest instincts. Growing up together without your parents has given you a close connection. And as you are both gay, you expect that you will be each other's family. She will be the one that you can depend on being there, longer than any other relationships that might prove fleeting and temporary.

Bruce: Self-confident and abrasive, Bruce doesn't offer any excuses for taking what he wants from the world. He is a friend you have fun hanging out with, and you appreciate his edge. You tend to tease him that his cynicism is just an act, and that deep down he has a warm, beating heart. And it's not just a joke either. You're sure he cares more about his friends than he would ever admit to anyone's face.

Sinclair Everett: The son of a senator from an old Democrat family, he's running for Congress this fall. You have developed a warm friendship and he lets down the politician's facade with you so that you can talk about real stuff in life without pretending. One time when you both shared stories about your first (and hopeless) crushes as teenagers, he suddenly kissed you. He said that in that moment you reminded him so much of that one boy in high school and you both just laughed about it afterwards.

Dutch: An easy-going backpacker type whom you met when visiting the lesbian bar The Cubby Hole. Apparently he hangs out there all the time with his many lesbian friends. You found that you liked his attitude to life, and have gone out for drinks with him a few times after that. Actually you quite fancy him, but your gaydar isn't really ringing its bells. Well, maybe he is one of those straight guys that are a bit flexible, when they are feeling adventurous and the situation is right? If not, that's OK too.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Make people feel special when you talk with them by being friendly and inquisitive about their lives.
- Invite someone particularly interesting to be a guest on your radio show in the near future. Discuss with them what the interview will be about.



Give them face
Give them body
Walk in beat
Strike a pose

David Ian Xtravaganza, *Elements of Vogue*

AGE: 20s or early 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Dancer

TAROT: Three of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

When speaking about his childhood, Francis likes to crack the joke that he didn't just get a starting block a little bit behind the other runners in the race of life – his was placed outside the stadium altogether. His mother was a drug addict, and he never knew his father. He and his older sister Jasmine lived with their mother when she was in one of her better periods, and they lived with their grandmother in a cramped apartment in Hell's Kitchen when she wasn't.

When his mother died two years ago, the grief hit him hard, but after some time it also felt like a relief, giving him a sense of being able to finally close the door on those difficult childhood years.

Francis has enjoyed dancing for as long as he can remember. As a young teenager he discovered the magical world of drag balls in Harlem. Being young, talented, and cute, some of the regulars wanted to recruit him to be in their group of performers, while others wanted to seduce him. He dived into that world, not wanting to miss any part of the experience. Before long he was walking at the balls, doing his best to bring home those trophies. He walked in drag a few times, but it was in the categories that emphasised dance moves and poses where he excelled. Like many of his friends in the drag ball scene, Francis dreamt of making success in the mainstream world beyond the underground scene of the drag balls. His journey towards reaching that goal started when he successfully auditioned to get into the high school of performing arts. The school was a lot of hard work, but he didn't abandon the drag ball scene, making occasional appearances in the competitions throughout the years, while at the same time he was on his way to establish himself as a professional dancer. To most people Francis gives the impression of being a happy, easy-going type floating through life. But only hard work and dedication would have gotten him from where he started to the life he has now. Only his closest friends sometimes notice the iron will and drive that fuels Francis' direction in life.

Personal Issue: Moving from a hard start in life to where he is now has given Francis a sense of invulnerability. Beneath his easy optimism and joy of life there are old wounds that might reopen if his peace of mind is shattered.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS :

EXPLORER
HONEST
AWARE AND COMFORTABLE IN HIS OWN BODY
COMFORTER
EFFORTLESS FLIRT

CORE GROUP

Flow to the Beat is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Tony is your boyfriend and **Artie** has become one of your best friends. A couple of years ago you started volunteering as a counselor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre to help people who are struggling with all kinds of issues. You feel you have something to offer and you must admit that it is also a bit

fascinating to see all the different ways people sabotage themselves. Last year you convinced both Tony and Artie to start volunteering as counselors there as well. You often debrief with each other when you have had a challenging case.

Tony: You first met Tony at a club where you used to hang out. He is a record store owner, DJ, and a total music nerd. He caught your interest and you had sex a few times after getting to know each other. But at the time you were both busy with other doomed romantic relationships so you became “just friends”. Some months ago you both got out of short-lived relationships at the same time, and ended up in bed together. You realised the next morning that you would probably fit very well together and suggested to Tony that you try being serious about it. He agreed right away. You have an open relationship in the sense that it’s OK for both of you to have sex with others, as long as you tell the other one before or after. You are probably more busy than he is in that area, and sometimes you flirt with some guy on behalf of both of you.

Artie: Artie was already Tony’s friend when you met him at the clubs, and you became friends with him as well. He is surprisingly empathic for having grown up on Fifth Avenue, without ever lacking for anything. He is quick-witted and playful, and his radio host career is now taking off. He is a friend with whom you feel you can talk about practically everything.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T’s Party (Gay scene) and Club Diamond

Club Diamond is a drag show club owned and managed by Nate. It’s primarily a gay venue for those who like to dress up in drag, and the men who fancy them. Straight people who enjoy drag shows come here too, in particular women on a girls’ night out. In addition to the in-house professional performers, Club Diamond hosts regular amateur nights. **(At the larp itself Nate will host an open stage, so think about whether your character would like to participate.** Remember you don’t have to sing; drag queens generally lip sync to popular “diva” numbers.)

These characters have Club Diamond as their primary social circle:

NATE - OWNER
DANIEL (LADY VERONA) - DRAG PERFORMER
FERNANDO - BARTENDER
REGINALD
TREVOR
MARCUS
DIANE
FRANCIS

RELATIONSHIPS

Dawn: You got to know this young butch woman when you danced in a play that ran for a while at the off-Broadway theatre where she works at as a stagehand. You started hanging out sometimes, and you like her personality. It's obvious that she also had a pretty rough start in life and hasn't really dealt with it yet, preferring to get drunk if she gets too many dark thoughts.

Daniel: You and Tony recently moved into a spare studio apartment right next to Daniel's apartment in Soho. He's a friend of Tony's from way back, and you know him as one of the most talented drag performers at Club Diamond. You know that he has a tendency to play with people's emotions, but it's nothing you feel threatened by.

Reginald: Fellow dancer who is in the beginning of his career, and who lives in Daniel's apartment next door. Earlier this year you performed together in a short-lived piece off-Broadway. You find him quite cute, and even though he has a boyfriend and is the monogamous type, you often flirt with him when you meet.

Trevor: Another one of Daniel's friends who lives with him in the apartment next door. He is an aspiring actor, but seems to have a problem with controlling his intake of booze and drugs. It is quite obvious that he fancies you, but you haven't acted on it yet. Maybe you will, maybe you won't.

Mickey: A young art student who visited you for counselling at the gay and lesbian community centre. He had a lover who had recently died and he suspects it was of the supposed "gay cancer" that some newspapers have written about recently. Sadly, you didn't have any more facts for him other than the same rumours that he himself had heard, and when you asked him if he wanted to talk about how he was feeling, he responded "maybe later" and left.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Flow from group to group, from person to person – talking, dancing, flirting.
- Take the lead in hitting on someone together with Tony as a tag team.

Tony

IN FLOW TO THE BEAT

The music is weaving
Haunting notes, pizzicato strings
The rhythm is calling
Alone in the night as the daylight brings
A cool empty silence
The warmth of your hand and a cold gray sky
It fades to the distance

Ultravox, Vienna

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

PROFESSION: Record store owner and DJ

TAROT: Six of Swords

LIFE SO FAR

Tony has always liked music. He was the type in high school who taped the best songs from radio shows, and made cassette compilations to give to his friends. But he remembers the exact moment when he realised that he was truly passionate about music, and that was when first he got hold of and listened to the album *Tago Mago* by the experimental German band Can. *Tago Mago* expressed things that were not possible to express with words, and he could

spend hours just listening to it on repeat. Tony is a social guy who likes to talk with people, but sometimes he feels that it's more fitting to put on a song to express something than to try to express it with words. Sometimes people catch that that is what he is doing, sometimes they don't.

Tony grew up in Greenwich Village, not many blocks actually from where he manages his small but well stocked record store. He often visits his upper-middle-class parents on those Sundays when he hasn't been partying too hard. They are liberal, educated people and didn't throw a fit when they found out that Tony was gay. Luckily his sister Janice had her first-born earlier this year, so maybe he won't catch his mother with that slightly pained look in her eyes anymore. In these last few months, Tony has felt that for the first time he has a real boyfriend that might last for the long haul. He's known Francis for years, and feels grateful that they finally realised they should give this a chance. Unlike the other times he tried being with someone, he doesn't feel trapped. *Hand in glove. The sun shines out of our behinds. No it's not like any other love. This one's different because it's us! Hand in glove. We can go wherever we please.*

Personal Issue: Tony's easy-going, cool attitude masks a tendency to not be very good at expressing his own needs and desires. He sometimes pretends that everything is OK, even when it is obvious to those around him that it is not.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

COOL CAT
MELANCHOLIC
INTROSPECTIVE
GETS THE PARTY GOING
CONFIDANT

CORE GROUP

Flow to the Beat is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Francis is your boyfriend and **Artie** has become one of your best friends. Last year Francis convinced both you and Tony to start volunteering as counselors at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre for people who are struggling with all kinds of issues. You often debrief with each other when you have had a challenging case.

Artie: When you met Artie he was a few years younger than you and still in high school. You introduced him to a world of cool underground clubs and private parties hosted by musicians and artists – a world that you had only

started getting access to the year before. For a while you tried to be boyfriends, but after some months you both realised that you should be friends and not lovers. You can talk frankly with Artie about things that you find hard to talk about with other people, and you have each other's backs.

Francis: You first met Francis a little after you and Artie had become friends, at the clubs that you and Artie frequented together. He had gotten himself out of a poor and difficult childhood and moved to New York to make a career as a dancer. You had a crush on him right from the start and had sex with him a few times right after getting to know each other. But you were both busy with other doomed romantic relationships, so you became "just friends". Some months ago you were both done with short-lived relationships at the same time, and ended up in bed together. When Francis suggested that you try being serious about it, you thought that was an amazingly good idea. You have an open relationship in the sense that it's OK for both of you to have sex with others – as long as you tell the other before or after. Francis is more busy in that area than you usually, and he sometimes flirts with someone on behalf of both of you.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Gay scene) and Studio 54

Studio 54 is the most prestigious discotheque in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A favourite hangout of many of New York's celebrities, it's known for its strict and erratic doormen. The club is frequented by straights, gays, and drag queens alike and is notorious for its hedonism; the balconies are known places for sexual encounters, and the sale and use of drugs takes place quite openly.

Tony is a regular guest DJ at Studio 54. Other nights he's there as a guest partying with friends and strangers.

These characters have Studio 54 as their primary social circle:

SORRENTO - EVENT MANAGER
ENRIQUE - BARTENDER
LEON
DIEGO
SKYE
KIM
CHANTELLE
STERLING
TONY

RELATIONSHIPS

Sorrento: The eccentric and chaotic event manager at Studio 54, and the one who has given you gigs there. One time after the club had closed, you had sex with him right in the DJ booth. When he crashed into and broke some of your rare maxi singles you remember getting quite upset. Sorrento claims that the rest of the night you kept muttering that music was a higher form of pleasure than sex. You were so high that you are unsure if he is telling the truth, or if he just made that up to tease you.

Daniel: You and Francis recently moved into a spare studio apartment right next to Daniel's apartment in Soho. He's a friend from way back, though you had a falling out during his relationship with an awful boyfriend called Larry. You never liked him and tried to get Daniel to drop Larry. But Daniel dropped you as a friend instead. But now a couple of years later, it seems that he understood that you were just talking sense back then, and you recently patched up the friendship. So when you had to move out of your old apartment that was being converted into offices, Daniel tipped you off about an available studio apartment right next to his.

Reginald: This young dancer shares a flat with Daniel and so lives right next to you and Francis now. He seems really friendly and is good at talking with people from many different backgrounds. Maybe you could convince him to join Francis, Artie and you as a volunteer counselor?

Trevor: Another friend of Daniel's who lives with him in the apartment next door. He is an aspiring actor but seems to have a problem with controlling his intake of booze and drugs. But he's young; who are you to moralise about that?

Eli: He is a regular customer in your record store. For a while you dated him a bit on the side. But you decided that his relationship with the notorious poet Abner made it feel too messy, so you broke it off. You've remained friends though.

Rain: This young musician from the band Urban Renaissance has been a regular visitor to your record store lately, and you like hanging out with him. He reminds you a bit of yourself when you were the same age.

Specific function in the game:

Play music as the DJ at the party. This function makes the character work well as someone played by an organiser. But the character also works well for a player who wants to take on the task of DJing at the disco at night. An important part of the task of the in-game DJ is to try to play music that supports the roleplaying happening in the disco, strengthening and affecting the mood.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Play a song specifically for someone. Tell the person that this song is for them, but don't explain why you chose that particular song.
- Flirt with someone together with Francis, as a tag-team of two.



500/



/501

502/

Santiago

IN FOUR WOMEN AMONG
THE BOYS

Roots? Trees have roots. People have feet and hands.

AGE: 30s or 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Visual artist

TAROT: Art (Temperance)

LIFE SO FAR

She was born Maria Santiago and grew up in a wealthy family in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her cosmopolitan family with partly Spanish roots made their fortune in Operation Bootstrap, which industrialised the island in the 1960s. Her father is the CEO of a pharmaceutical manufacturing company, and the family has shares in many other industries on the island. She got to know New York City at an early age, as the family visited the city regularly. Being a girl, no one protested when Santiago wanted to study art, as her two brothers were set to take over the family business. The life as an art school student in New York was liberating in many ways. She discovered once and for all that only women held any sexual or romantic interest to her, and she also became determined not to have art merely as a hobby while she lived off

money created by someone else, whether that'd be her father or a husband. After graduating she moved back to San Juan for a couple of years, wanting to make a mark in the local art scene.

She exasperated her family when she refused to move back into the mansion and preferred to stay in a cheap dingy flat downtown. Her father and brothers could be irritatingly overbearing about her art career, but it was with her mother that things really fell apart. When her sister married a man from another wealthy family, Santiago refused to go to the wedding after her sister cried her eyes out the night before and confessed that she wasn't really in love with this guy, but was only marrying him because he was a "proper" match. When a few days later her mother started yelling at her for letting down her sister and the family, even though she told her mother what her sister had told her, Santiago just exploded and vowed that she wouldn't speak to her mother again until she apologise for asking her to celebrate a marriage built upon a lie. Not long after that, she packed her things and moved back to New York City, yearning to expand from the rather small art scene in San Juan. She even took to calling herself just Santiago out of spite for her mother, whom she knew was the one who had given her the name Maria. Her father still sends her a stipend, and she talks with him on the phone occasionally, but she feels quite ashamed of still depending on his money, so she hasn't even told Pen how it is that she can afford to rent both the apartment and the art studio on just her art sales.

Personal Issue: A fierce need for independence that can damage relationships with people close to her. Totally relaxed about having heated arguments about issues, but can't stand people trying to advise her on how she should live her life.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

PRINCIPLED
ARGUMENTATIVE
INNER DRIVE
UNSENTIMENTAL
EXPERIMENTER

CORE GROUP

Four Women among the Boys is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Katherine: This New York hot-shot is a good friend and on-and-off lover. She helped kickstart your art career by bringing your work to the attention

of the right people. You both have agreed that it would be a terrible idea to be anything more than friends with benefits. Hence, you hide any doubts you might have about that shared agreement. However, this is now all in the past, since you are currently in a relationship with Pen. But is that something that will last? You find it amusing that you haven't told Katherine about your own family and the fact that you come from a very wealthy background. She probably has an image of you growing up in some small shack in San Juan.

Kimberly: An absolute blast to hang out with – when she isn't irritating the life out of you, that is. Irresistibly fun, as long as you don't have to see her every day.

Charlotte: A co-worker of Pen's, Katherine's best friend, and Kimberly's latest girlfriend. She seemed rather boring to you at first, but you have now realised that there is more to Charlotte than her composed manner initially reveals. Maybe you should warn her that this plan about her and Kimberly getting a child might very well lead to Charlotte being stuck as a single mom?

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Literary Salon

The Literary salon is a series of private regular gatherings in the home of the famous poet Abner and his boyfriend Eli. Attendance at these gatherings is by invitation only. Among this crowd it's not an ideal to soften your arguments, and discussions can get loud. Usually at the gatherings someone reads an excerpt from a literary work and it is to be expected that the work in question is both praised to the heavens and trashed as oppressive and mediocre. Controversial literature and queer *auteurs* are often selected.

These characters have The Literary Salon as their primary social circle:

ABNER
ELI
JERROD
SANTIAGO
NICK
RAIN

RELATIONSHIPS

Pen: You met her at the opening of one of your exhibitions, and you both seemed to have decided, almost before even exchanging pleasantries, that the other was an interesting woman. Who knows how long it will last. It might be over next week, or it could last 10 years or more.

Abner: A nihilistic Jewish poet who has become a good friend and someone you exchange barbs with on a regular basis. You find his literary circle a stimulating place to discuss ideas.

Enrique: You shared an apartment with this fellow Puerto Rican when you moved back to New York after the row with your family. You've become good friends and you keep in touch even after you moved into your own place. He's a man of many talents, but you are worried that he's getting too deep into this drug shit through his part-time job at Studio 54.

Wallace: The owner of a gallery in Brooklyn. You have only met him a couple of times, but you have an exhibition scheduled in his gallery in the early autumn.

Sam: Temperamental tattoo artist and your girlfriend for a couple of months a year ago. You wanted your relationship to become more defined. She just packed her stuff and disappeared one day. You haven't seen her since then.

Harriet: A waitress in Peggy's/Pepper's diner – you might not remember her name, but she was the crazy performance artist who spilled red paint all over herself at an exhibition, and drops of it splattered onto one of your artworks. You got really mad at the carelessness and lack of respect, but you haven't tried to repair your artwork. Now you consider the drops of red paint an interesting part of the story of the piece.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Get into a heated discussion with someone, and be cheerful and joking with that person afterward.
- Try to find out how deeply Enrique has gotten into the drug business by talking with people and pretending to be all relaxed and have zero problems with all kinds of drugs.

Katherine

IN FOUR WOMEN AMONG
THE BOYS

The true New Yorker secretly believes that people living anywhere else have to be, in some sense, kidding.

John Updike

AGE : 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING : Lesbian woman

PROFESSION : Editor of the City section in *The New York Times*

TAROT : The Empress

LIFE SO FAR

Katherine and Arthur (or Artie as his friends have always called him), her younger brother by two years, grew up with their grandmother in an exquisite apartment overlooking Central Park. Their parents died in a boating accident when Katherine was only seven years old. Their grandmother Georgina is the widow of a wealthy New York banker. When they were small she seemed somewhat distant and a bit scary. Katherine and Artie were raised more by a succession of nannies than by their grandmother. As they grew older and became “persons old enough to actually carry a conversation”, as Georgina would put it, they both grew more attached to her, and appreciated her wry remarks. As an old veteran of the movers and shakers in Manhattan, Georgina has also helped introduce them to a number of important persons and families.

Almost every Sunday, Katherine and Artie still come to dinner at her grand apartment, with a revolving cast of interesting guests.

When Katherine was in her late teens she understood that men were much less interesting than women. She decided at once when she had applied the term lesbian to herself that she would not allow that to limit her prospects. She is not exactly in the closet, but neither is she very upfront about it to those that don't need to know. Katherine has always felt more comfortable helping others pour their hearts out in public than doing so herself.

Personal Issue: *If you can make it here, you'll make it anywhere.* A cliché that makes Katherine wonder what she should aspire to next. She now has the job she put at the top of her list of places where she wanted to work while in college, so she has started to assume that if she puts her mind to it, she can succeed with any plan. How will she deal with failure, or the fact that there are things in life that cannot be solved by making a five step plan or collecting favours from the right contacts?

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

UNAFRAID
EXTRAVAGANT
PHYSICAL
HECTIC
OBSESSIVE

COUR GROUP

Four Women among the Boys is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Santiago: This Puerto Rican artist is a good friend and on-and-off lover. You helped kickstart her art career by bringing her expressive and complex works to the attention of the right people. You both agreed that it would be a terrible idea for you to be anything more than friends with benefits, and you hide any doubts you might have about that shared agreement. However, this hardly matters now since Santiago is now in a relationship with Pen. But is that something that will last?

Charlotte: Mr. T's lawyer and your best friend and confidant. You are both good at managing how you appear to other people, and Charlotte tells things to you that she wouldn't tell anyone else (including her wacky photographer girlfriend Kimberly).

Kimberly: You've seen through her of course. A lot of things she presents to the world are not strictly true. But as the good friend you are, you both pretend that you haven't. But then again, you see truth and lies more as a sliding scale than as absolutes. And you recognise a lot of the same attitude towards life in Kimberly as in yourself: the desire to control how you make your mark upon the world. No one you know reminds you more of Holly Golightly from *Breakfast at Tiffany's* than Kimberly, and you saying that about someone definitely counts for something. Maybe you ought to warn Charlotte to not become too heavily invested in Kimberly, but then again, you hate being "the concerned friend".

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and Pink Dollars

Pink Dollars isn't a formally organised group or club, just a network of some of the gay people in New York with money and influence. They invite each other to parties and social happenings, and help each other with connections and favours. It's all very discreet of course, except for the opulent spending and the lavish consumption of champagne.

These characters have Pink Dollars as their primary social circle:

MR. T.
BRUCE
SINCLAIR
KATHERINE
RUBEN
IKE (AS RUBEN'S BOYFRIEND)
ARTIE (ARTHUR)

RELATIONSHIPS

Artie (Arthur): Your younger brother and the whiz kid of New York's radio stations, with his very own talk show. Together you are the dynamic duo of Manhattan in predicting (and helping along) the latest cultural trends. You often don't agree on what will be hot and what will be forgotten almost before opening night. It is still undetermined which one of you has the keenest instincts. Growing up without your parents has given you a close connection. And as you are both gay, you expect that you will be each other's family. You can depend on Artie being there for longer than any other relationships; those only last until the next breakup.

Sinclair: You are invited to all the important functions of this young congressional candidate and his wife Mary. His trust in you being discreet about his crazy gay nights at Club Diamond is well placed. You actually don't mind lying right to his sweet wife's face to help protect Sinclair. Does that make you a bad person?

Pen: Why is this brilliant woman still working as a secretary for Mr. T? You know he pays her better than most secretaries could dream of, but still, a woman needs to get rid of that terribly limiting word "secretary" if she wants to make something of herself in this city. You two like to spar with words. You like each other, you really do, but there is a game of competition in the way you relate to each other.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Get to know all the musical talents present at the party (Chantelle, Mary Lou, and Urban Renaissance: Skye, Rain, and Simon) and argue with your brother about which of them is the most promising new act.
- A girl like you can't be at a party like this without deciding on someone to flirt with and maybe hit on for the night. Who will it be? Somebody you know well, or some interesting woman you have yet to get to know?

Charlotte

IN FOUR WOMEN AMONG
THE BOYS

"The one who is in control of herself is the one who will make the choice."

AGE: 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Lawyer at T-Buzz advertising agency

TAROT: Lovers

LIFE SO FAR

More quiet and composed than most people at the party, not even Charlotte's closest friends know everything about her. The daughter of a brilliant lawyer, Charlotte knew what she would become from an early age. She was a Daddy's girl, and her father is still her big hero. She discovered when she was very young that boys held little interest for her, other than as competitors. She hasn't really told her parents yet that she's a lesbian, although they know that she shares an apartment with Kimberly. It's not that she fears they'll disown

her or anything like that, it is just that Charlotte is a very private person, and telling something to her parents that has something to do with her sexual preferences feels very awkward.

Her girlfriend Kimberly is very different from herself: loud, creative, and all over the place. But Charlotte isn't deterred by that. When things matter to Charlotte, her composed and analytical mind usually lets her steer the conversation towards a place where she can get her way. Working for Mr. T puts her in contact with a lot of fun and out-of-control people, with whom she enjoys hanging out. The best part is when she's able to help them out of some of the ridiculous troubles they manage to get themselves into. A couple of months ago she decided that she really wants to have a child. There is no point in waiting until you get too old. She managed to convince Kimberly that this was a good idea, and through Pen's help she now has Mr. T's blessing in finding an eligible sperm donor for her and Kimberly's future child among the guests at the party.

Personal Issue: It's not that Charlotte hasn't had to work to get where she is, but she is so used to things succeeding with enough effort that she has developed a feeling of invulnerability.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

COMPOSED
SECRETIVE
PERSUASIVE
COMPETITIVE
CRAVES OTHERS BEING DEPENDENT ON HER

CORE GROUP

Four Women among the Boys is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Kimberly: Not exactly a paragon of sobriety and fidelity, but she is the girlfriend you want, and you really love that slightly crazy woman. And you do believe that this relationship has long-term prospects, even if you did have to blackmail this one woman that Kimberly was seeing to clear the field (the woman was a wealthy socialite, and her generous husband would not have been very happy finding out about his wife's lesbian adventures). Now you just have to get Kimberly to agree with you on who would be the best donor for your future child.

Katherine: The editor of the City section of *The New York Times* and your best friend and confidant. You are both good at managing how you appear to other people, and you tell her things that you wouldn't tell anyone else (including Kimberly). It's an extra bonus to have a friend so influential among the who's who of the city; she gets you into premieres and other cool events.

Santiago: You don't know Pen's new girlfriend very well yet. But you know that Katherine has been involved with her as well in the past. She seems like an interesting person, if maybe a bit intimidating. You do want to be more savvy when it comes to the world of contemporary art, so you would like to pick up a few things from her on that topic – without seeming totally clueless when doing so.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. T: Your boss. An inspiring and occasionally intimidating person. You are very happy to be invited to his party through Pen.

Pen: A co-worker with a very influential position in the company as Mr. T's secretary. The fact that she was Kimberly's ex bothered you at first, but you've

now become good friends. You two have a secret ritual every Friday at work: smoking a bit of heroin to wind down after a hectic week. That other people get addicted and lose control to this stuff just adds an extra little edge to it.

Rosemary: You dated this young woman for some time a while back. She was really sweet, but you had some problems taking all her talk about alternative spirituality seriously, even though you really tried. You even went to some women's-only meditation classes. In the end you two probably weren't such a good match. You guess she got cold feet when you started talking about how your wish for the future was to raise a child together with your life partner.

Sorrento: One of the coolest cats in town as the event manager at Studio 54, and you thoroughly relished that Mr. T asked you to help get him out on bail and offer legal advice so that he could get those possession charges dropped. He just got out on bail, and you have to coach him on how to present himself and his case when appearing before the court in the near future.

Walter: It's not that you suffer from, like, any serious mental problems. But you have your neurotic tendencies like everyone else in this city. Although you were very tense and guarded at first, now you've really started opening up in your regular therapy sessions with him.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- “Interview” prospective sperm donors without telling them what your agenda really is.
- Try to get people Kimberly flirts with to confide in you. The information can always become useful later.

Kimberly

IN FOUR WOMEN AMONG
THE BOYS

"She views the world through a lens. Fascinated by the beauty. Wanting to own it - if just for a moment."

AGE: Late 20s or early 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Publicly a lesbian woman, but privately bisexual

PROFESSION: Photographer

TAROT: Ten of Disks

LIFE SO FAR

Kimberly is an uncompromising, individualistic feminist making her own rules for how life should be. Her British accent is as constructed as a lot of other things in Kimberly's life. Growing up in a trailer park in the outskirts of Houston, Texas, there was little beauty in young Kimberly's life. The glossy magazines brought home by her older sister showed her another world, though; a world she wanted to be part of when she got older. Kimberly has always been hard-working, but she has also never had problems with bending the truth a little. She is really good at getting people to notice her, convincing them to give her a chance. That's how she got her first job at a print shop

when she moved to New York City a decade ago, and her first photoshoot jobs some years later. A self-taught photographer, she is a natural talent, and good at doing everything from commercials and fashion to porn – mostly gay porn, though. T-Buzz is one of the many companies she works freelance for these days.

She is attracted to both men and women, but she only has long-term relationships with women, as she refuses to let men control her. She's not very good at being sexually faithful, so many of her past relationships have ended in drama. Her current girlfriend Charlotte is very different from Kimberly, composed and a bit reserved, but Kimberly really wants to try to get this to work. She is now looking for a donor for her and Charlotte's child. It was Charlotte's idea originally, but now Kimberly is also sold on the plan. She wants a beautiful child though, so it's very important for her to find a sperm donor that she finds attractive both in body and spirit.

Personal Issue: Compulsive liar – sometimes even in situations where it would have worked a lot better to come clean right away, Kimberly just can't resist elaborating on or bending the truth.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

INDOMITABLE
AESTHETE
IMPATIENT
GENEROUS
LIES EASILY

CORE GROUP

Four Women among the Boys is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Charlotte: You really like Charlotte's stiff upper lip persona and controlled demeanor. And you like that she is so different from you. You think that maybe in the past, you dated too many women who were too similar to yourself – only resulting in full-scale drama. You want this to work. Now you two just have to agree on who would be the best donor for your child.

Katherine: Charlotte's best friend and an ex of Santiago's. She is one of the most influential trendsetters in the city, so she is someone very useful to have as a friend. You feel that you have a good connection. You share the same desire to control how you make your mark upon the world. Katherine has probably been more successful than you so far in achieving it, but then, she started her life in a posh apartment overlooking Central Park. Of course you have not told her the truth about your own trailer park childhood. At times you

have caught yourself letting your eyes linger on her, but it really wouldn't do to mess around with Charlotte's best friend. At least you'll try your very best to avoid doing something stupid.

Santiago: Pen's new girlfriend. Pen obviously has good taste; an intellectual and very direct person, but also a bit intimidating. You are a bit nervous of appearing stupid and not intellectual enough around her.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Pen: Your former girlfriend, who kicked you out of the house when she found you in bed with one of your models. Not exactly a screaming queen, Pen was quite perfunctory and business-like about it. The vibe between you two was strained for a while after that, but now you are good friends again. She got you and Charlotte invited to the party this year.

Chain: One of your porn models. Fun guy, reminds you a little of yourself when younger, with added self-destructive tendencies though.

Diego: A beautiful young man who already has some success as a fashion model. You like working with him; in fact, you like it very much.

Reginald: A sweet, talented young dancer who has done some advertising photoshoots with you. He's very good at getting people to open up. That was probably the reason you tried to kiss him last time you worked together – stupid thing to do really, but oh well, water under the bridge.

Daniel (Lady Verona): One of the best drag artists in the city, who has modeled for you whenever his looks would give the right aesthetics. A bit difficult to work with, but so what – personalities without edges are boring.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Do one or more photoshoots just for fun with established or prospective models.
- Start some party games where your secret agenda is to test who you would like to ask to be a sperm donor for your and Charlotte's child.

Morgan

IN FRESHWOMYN AND THE
DUTCH BOYS

*Only by learning to live in harmony with your
contradictions can you keep it all afloat.*

Audre Lorde

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Criminology student

TAROT: Seven of Swords

LIFE SO FAR

She's part of a tight-knit group of friends that found each other as fellow outcasts in high school and have stayed together since. They moved into New York City from a small town, and are trying their utmost to make their mark on the scene. Morgan is the radical young feminist intellectual who is good at creating drama among friends and lovers. She has a certain type of magnetism that keeps others fascinated, even when they're furious with her. Her mother committed suicide when Morgan was 10 years old. Is that an old wound that has never gone away, or something that doesn't matter so much anymore?

Morgan isn't sure. It's hard to remember what her mother looked like, since Morgan burned all the photo albums in anger of what her mother had done. It left her alone with a father that let her do whatever she wanted. Sometimes he was completely in his own world, and at other times he'd lavish attention on Morgan, and say that they could only ever depend on each other.

Amongst her friends she became the leader, the one who defined what was cool and why all those people that talked behind their backs were really losers. When she wasn't with her friends, the town library was her refuge. Quoting Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan to her conservative and lazy teachers was also a kind of pledge to herself: she would one day write books that other people would quote. Morgan was the first of her friends to realise that she was a lesbian. It felt like such a relief. She would never become that type of woman who would moan pathetically: "can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em". Now she has to admit that women aren't much easier to live with than men, but she takes a certain perverse pride in being the one people complain about, not the one doing the complaining.

Personal Issue: Morgan needs to have the upper hand, particularly when it comes to emotions. It is better to leave first, before someone else has the time to dump her. And cracking a joke and having the right sarcastic comment is better than letting it show that she herself might be hurt.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IRRESPONSIBLE
FULL OF LIFE
SELF-CONFIDENT
DISHONEST IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
GOOD AT PLAYING A BAD HAND WELL

CORE GROUP

Freshwomyn and the Dutch Boy is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Rosemary: You know that Rosemary has been in love with you on and off. At times you have responded to this, but mostly you just see her as one of your best friends, one that you can depend on. At times she can get angry with you, but you are confident that she will always come around in the end and would never abandon you as a friend. She is really into alternative spirituality, and when you are in the mood, you might join in the latest strange ritual she has discovered. You don't mock all this spiritual stuff, but you don't take it anywhere nearly as seriously as Rosemary.

Dawn: You remember how exciting it was in high school with Dawn being trapped in that fundamentalist family. A shame, really, that your plan to seduce Dawn's older sister and "undermine the family from within" never succeeded. At times you find Dawn attractive as hell, with her no-nonsense, party-hard personality, but other times you can grow tired of her and need a bit of distance. Right now she's fascinating you yet again, and you have started to talk with her in a more flirtatious tone than you have for a while.

Dutch: Dutch is the only guy in your group of friends. His laid-back attitude and adventurous personality generally makes him a good balancing factor in your circle. At times when you are bored, you try to send straight women that you have no chance of getting in his direction.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Steven: Your teacher in Criminology at New York University. As he is one of the more interesting persons at the university, you have made sure that you've gotten to know him outside of the classroom. You've gotten him to spill some

info about Cruisers Club, the gay leather club that he's the president of. There really should be something similar in the lesbian scene.

Sam: One of the most magnetic women in the lesbian scene. But her temper often gets the better of her. When you visited her in jail a month ago, you felt bad about that time when you tricked Sam into getting into a fight with an ex-girlfriend of yours who had refused to return all your books that were still in her apartment.

Pen: One of the first people in the lesbian scene that you got to know when you moved to New York. Through her you quickly got to know most of the interesting people. You've often flirted, but nothing in particular has happened. Now that she has a steady girlfriend (Santiago), it's of course suddenly a bit more interesting to pursue that flirt.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Convince Steven and Mr. T that there should be a dedicated Dyke Hour in the dark room (in-game, not in act breaks). Spread the word among all the current and prospective lesbians you meet at the party to come to Dyke Hour.
- Try to get the upper hand in an argument with Abner the poet, maybe making a scene out of it without becoming really angry. All just in good sport.

Dawn

IN FRESHWOMYN AND THE
DUTCH BOYS

*Confusion in her eyes that says it all.
She's lost control.
And she's clinging to the nearest passer-by,
She's lost control.
And she gave away the secrets of her past,
And said I've lost control again*

Joy Division, *She's Lost Control*

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian butch woman

PROFESSION: Stagehand in an Off-Broadway theatre

TAROT: Six of Disks

LIFE SO FAR

Part of a tight knit group of friends that found each other as fellow outcasts in high school and have stayed together since. They moved into New York City from a small town and are trying their utmost to make their mark on the scene. Dawn is a young butch woman who escaped the religious fundamentalist family she grew up in. When she was a child, for many years she had few friends apart from her four siblings; three brothers and a sister. Spending time playing with children of sinners who were "Slaves to Mammon," as her father

used to say, was not encouraged. Dawn found most of her girl classmates silly and giggly anyway, even though she also often yearned to be friends with them. As she grew older the restrictions at home became more and more suffocating: her father droning on about the sinful world, and her mother criticising her for how she talked, moved her body, frowned too much or laughed too loudly. Her brothers who had been her friends when she was younger also became more and more insufferable.

In high school she finally got her own group of friends that became her refuge. Without Dutch, Morgan, and Rosemary she thinks she wouldn't have gotten the courage to just leave, and break all ties with her family. When they arrived in New York together she both fell in love with The City and felt a bit overwhelmed by it at the same time. Never having been a girly girl, it was a relief to never have to wear a Sunday dress again, and to be able to do things that would be horrible in the eyes of her family. Like working a man's job hauling heavy equipment as a stagehand, or getting stupidly drunk in a cheap bar with her friends, or getting hit on by other women and learning how to do the same herself when she saw a woman she liked down at the Cubby Hole. Right now Dawn feels a bit stuck in her life. She's been working in the same theatre, in the same job, for a long time now, and she doesn't understand why all her relationships never end up lasting for very long. But if things were to change in her life, would it be for better or for worse?

Personal Issue: Represses the personal traumas she suffered from her troubled childhood in an oppressive family environment. Instead of talking about her past, or seeking help, she gets drunk or tries to divert her thoughts by getting some action into her life – taking unnecessary risks or diving into the next relationship without pausing to think.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

LASHES OUT IF FEELING TRAPPED
LIVES HARD
SUPPRESSES THE PAST AND DREAMS OF TOMORROW
PRACTICAL / HANDY
RESILIENT

CORE GROUP

Freshwomyn and the Dutch Boy is your CORE GROUP, and where your story begins:

Dutch: You're happy that Dutch is part of your group of friends. Sometimes it's just much easier and relaxing to talk to a man rather than other women.

Actually, not having to talk about stuff all the time is great. Just be together, and play pool or go hiking or something. He's also your favourite drinking buddy. Mostly it's you drinking him under the table.

Rosemary: She was the “demonic influence” your parents warned you about. You spent many lunch breaks together during high school, talking about what you could do with your extremely conservative Christian family. In the end there was little to do. The day you left home for good and she was helping you with the luggage, you ended up punching your brother when he started screaming at her for corrupting his sister. You two still have each other's backs like that.

Morgan: Everyone you know has probably been in love with Morgan at some point. Probably because of and not despite the fact that she's such bad news. Lately she has started flirting with you again. You know it's not a good idea to get caught in her web again, but hey – you only live once, and there just isn't anyone quite like Morgan. It is purely impossible to not be drawn in by her devil-may-care self-confidence.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

RELATIONSHIPS

Sam: The times you have talked with her at the Cubby Hole, she easily made you lose interest in any other women in the room. Everyone says she's bad news. Well, you are in real need of some strong news right now, whether good or bad.

Barbara: You dated this breast cancer activist for a while, a little more than two years ago. She was really nice to you, but you were not quite ready for a real relationship then, so you behaved really shittily towards her. You've seen her sometimes at the Cubby Hole, but haven't really talked much with her. Lately you have been thinking that maybe you should try to apologise to her?

Francis: You got to know this dancer when he was part of a play that ran for a while at the theatre you work at. You started hanging out sometimes and his flamboyant ways cheered you up. He's a really nice person, being a volunteer counselor and all, but if he starts suggesting you should try going to counseling, you always change the subject as that sounds even more scary than going to the dentist.

Priest: She is one of the staff at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner, and at the summer party you will recognise her as a very hot one-night stand from the Cubby Hole not too long ago. You do not know her name, but remember her for shouting *Thanks, Jesus!* when she came. But she left before dawn.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Try to hit up Sam, or be around her so that she has plenty of opportunity to hit on you. Maybe a drinking game with her (and others to not seem so obvious) could be a good tactic?
- Try to apologise to Barabara when you meet her. Succeed or fail badly in this attempt at reconciliation.

Rosemary

IN FRESHWOMYN AND THE
DUTCH BOYS

*Cause every time it rains
You're here in my head
Like the sun coming out
Ooh, I just know that something good is gonna happen
I don't know when
But just saying it could even make it happen*

Kate Bush, Cloudbusting

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

PROFESSION: Anthropology student

TAROT: Nine of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Rosemary is part of a tight-knit group of friends that found each other as fellow outcasts in high school and have stayed together since. They moved to New York City from a small town and are trying their utmost to make their mark on the scene. Rosemary has always been convinced that there is more to reality than what regular people in our modern society are able to sense. Ever

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since she was a teenager she's been interested in exploring different types of alternative spirituality, to get in touch with that meaningful reality she knew existed out there. In the town library she read all the books she could get hold of that dealt with the supernatural or the occult. It was at the library she first became friends with Morgan, who was also hunting for books there, although of a different kind. It might have been Morgan's influence that led her to become more aware of how male-dominated spiritual traditions often were, and to start searching for more feminist angles in her spiritual quest. One reason she liked Morgan so much was that she could be herself around her.

Her parents often expressed their frustration with the way Rosemary's mind drifted, and how she wasn't paying attention when they spoke to her. It wasn't on purpose, and she still can't help it. Sometimes she just zones out into her own world when she is in the middle of a conversation with someone. It might be because the topic doesn't engage her, but it may also just as well be because she makes an association based on something the other person said, and off her mind goes, somewhere else. Coming to New York was great, but Rosemary is very happy that she has her old friends with her here in the City. She is afraid she would feel quite lost without them. She is a regular part of the lesbian scene now, but she is often frustrated at the image she thinks other people have of her. Many women in the scene are quite anti-religious and scoff at anything alternative, while others will start a conversation with her asking if she can read palms. But life is a journey, and Rosemary tries not to get bogged down with small frustrations. She is on her way to somewhere wonderful and every experience on the road can teach her something.

Personal Issue: It's not that Rosemary has a hard time getting to know new people. She is a spontaneous person. But when talking to people she doesn't know very well, she has a tendency to second guess herself and to start worrying whether what she just said was inappropriate or incomprehensible. Sometimes she needs to ask the other person for confirmation that this is not the case before being comfortable with continuing the conversation.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

DAYDREAMER
LOYAL
SELF-CONSCIOUS
EXPLORER
SEES THE BEAUTY IN THE WORLD

CORE GROUP

Freshwomyn and the Dutch Boy is your CORE GROUP and where your story begins:

“Dutch” (Douglas): The most easygoing person in this group of friends. At times you see each other almost every day. He is an adventurer, and it has never been difficult for you to convince him to partake in your latest spiritual experiment. And now you both study anthropology at the university. Before you realised that you were a lesbian, Dutch and you were each other’s first sexual partners. It wasn’t all that successful, but you know that he still had a crush on you for a while before you drifted back to being just friends.

Morgan: You have really lost count of how many times your infatuation with Morgan has been rekindled. She seems to be blessed and cursed by the Goddess at the same time. You know that you shouldn’t believe a word of the excuses she makes, or stories she tells, but it is purely impossible to not be drawn in by her devil-may-care self-confidence.

Dawn: You were the “demonic influence” her parents warned her about. You spent many lunch breaks together during high school, talking about what she could do with her extremely conservative religious family. In the end there was little to do. The day she left home for good and you were helping her with the luggage, she ended up punching her brother when he started screaming at you for corrupting his sister. You two still have each other’s backs like that.

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T’s Party (Pen’s Guests) and Spirituals

Alternative spiritualities have existed for a long time in the USA, but the late 60s and 70s is when they truly start to spread in popular culture, and amongst young people with the hippie movements. They’re often characterised by syncretism: mixing concepts and practices from different traditions, adapting them in a way that resonates in a modern and individualistic American setting. The 80s are characterised by bigger opportunities for making money and thus increasing commercialisation of various forms of alternative practices. This is also the time when self-help books gain popularity, sometimes mixed with or inspired by ideas from new age and alternative spiritualities. The characters in this group are all involved in finding their own spiritual path, either as teachers, gurus, or as someone joining one or more types of alternative workshops.

These characters have Spirituals as their primary social circle:

KOHANA
JOANI
TOMASZ
KATIE
HOLLY
WALLACE
ROSEMARY

RELATIONSHIPS

Charlotte: You dated this slightly posh lawyer sometime a while back. She was really smart and good company, but also a bit of a control freak, and she had trouble respecting your spiritual outlook on life. But at least she made an effort. It would probably have done her good to have continued with those women's-only meditation classes she went to for a while. But the thing that ended the relationship was that you got cold feet when she started talking about how her wish for the future was to raise a child together with her life partner. You like the idea in principle, but you have always been a bit awkward around children. What if the child ended up totally despising you?

Joani: You have been going to sessions led by this well established tantra guru on a number of occasions. She definitely has presence and knowledge, but is she starting to sell out and become too commercial?

Holly: You've met her a few times at Joani's tantra sessions. She lives with a bunch of other people in something they call the Indigo House. She is very open and friendly, so much so that you have been wondering if she is flirting with you.

Suggestions for three things the character can do in the first act:

- Getting people to try out a spiritual exercise (choose from whatever tradition you want or just make something up).
- Find that your infatuation with Morgan is rekindled again at the party and figure out what to do about that.
- Try to get to know Holly better and find out more about the people in the Indigo House. Are they your kind of crowd?

Dutch (Douglas)

IN FRESHWOMYN AND THE
DUTCH BOYS

Well the moon is on the highway, darkness fills the sky.
As long as I keep driving, I know that I won't die.
And I'm gone, gone, gone. Gone Ridin'.

Well I broke up with my baby, told myself I won't cry.
Broke up with my baby, told myself a lie.
And I'm gone, gone, gone. Gone Ridin'.
Get gone Cal.

Well the moon is on the highway, darkness fills the sky.
As long as I keep driving, I know that I won't die.
And I'm gone, gone, gone. Gone Ridin'. Gone Ridin'.

- Chris Isaak, *Gone Ridin'*

AGE: 20s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual man

PROFESSION: Anthropology student

TAROT: Nine of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

Dutch is part of a tight-knit group of friends that found each other as fellow outcasts in high school, and have stayed together since. They moved to New York City from a small town, and are trying their utmost to make their mark on the scene. Dutch is the “lesbro” straight boy hanging out with the lesbians. Like the rest of his group of friends, Douglas had a hard time fitting in with the regular crowd in high school. He never had an interest in getting on the football team. Instead, from his somewhat flipped-out uncle, he inherited a passionate relationship to prog rock albums by bands like Yes and Can. He wasn’t the type of bookish boy that hated physical activity, but preferred hiking in the woods or mountains to high school team sports. His dad took him fishing and hunting when he was a boy, but he liked it best when he was old enough to just go on his own, staying in a tent all alone for a week, not hunting anything, just taking pictures of things that caught his eye, or following a path to see what was on the other side of the ridge.

Growing up with four older sisters he never understood how so many boys seemed to view girls as creatures from another planet. He knows now that his mother was worried for a while that he was gay since he had mostly female friends at school, something he thinks is quite amusing. He has male friends as well now, but he feels like an outsider when he’s with groups of men who have that particular way of joking with each other that he has never managed to master or feel comfortable with. When he moved to New York, he began hanging out at The Cubby Hole with his three best friends. When his friends jokingly started to call him Dutch, he adopted the nickname as something most people call him now. Last year he took a half year break from university to go backpacking in Latin America. He loved that life, moving from place to place, connecting with people and then after a while continuing to new unknown experiences. He’s already planning the next trip, looking for a job on the side that could help him save up money for his next adventures.

Personal Issue: A restless soul always wondering if the grass is greener on the other side. Constantly hunting for new experiences, it can be difficult for him to relax in the situation he’s in. He hates making definite choices that close any doors to possible futures.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

IDEALIST
RESTLESS
DISORGANISED
OBLIVIOUS TO SIGNALS
EASY TO PLEASE

SOCIAL CIRCLES

Mr. T's Party (Pen's Guests) and The Cubby Hole

Even in a large city like New York there aren't many lesbian bars or clubs. This intimate bar in the Village is one of the staples of lesbian life in New York. It's a friendly place with a neighborhood pub feel, where the owners are well updated on the intricate love entanglements of their regular guests. Male friends are also allowed entrance as long as they behave and don't hit on the women. Some up-and-coming celebs such as Madonna have also recently begun to stop by on occasion, probably to catch a bit of that lesbian chic the *Village Voice* claims is the next trend.

These characters have The Cubby Hole as their primary social circle:

PEN
CHARLOTTE
KIMBERLY
MORGAN
DAWN
DUTCH
BARBARA
SAM

CORE GROUP

Freshwomyn and the Dutch Boy is your CORE GROUP and where your story begins:

Rosemary: A good friend whom you see almost every day. You both study anthropology at New York University. She is very much into alternative spirituality, and that has never been your main interest. But as you are always looking for new adventures, you seldom say no to partaking in her latest spiritual experiment. And now you study the same subject at university. Before Rosemary found out that she was a lesbian, you were each other's first sexual partners. It wasn't all that successful, but you had quite the crush on her before you drifted back to being just friends again. You still have a particular soft spot for her from that old connection.

Morgan: You had a huge crush on Morgan for a while in high school. But everyone goes through that phase with her. In general, if you are bored, you

can find drama surrounding Morgan. You are pretty sure that if she moved away from NY, the lesbian scene would become much more boring. What would they talk about if not the latest outrageous relationship twist and turns executed by Morgan?

Dawn: You are grateful that Dawn finally got away from that horrible fundamentalist family she grew up with. She has the same love of the outdoors as you, and is the most handy in your group of friends, so when you all go on hiking trips it is you and Dawn who organise the practical stuff. You also like to get drunk together. She can drink anyone under the table.

RELATIONSHIPS

Evelyn: You met this young doctor while backpacking in Latin America, and spent an intense week filled with fun and sex with her. That kind of connection happens all too rarely. You haven't seen her since, so it's pretty exciting to see her at the party with that other group, the cancer survivors.

Mary-Lou: You have become a bit of a fan of this up and coming singer-songwriter, having gone to several of her concerts. You've spoken to her several times after the concerts, and you think she likes you. And that is a good thing.

Artie: Hot-shot New York radio host that you got to know when he visited The Cubby Hole with his equally hot-shot sister, who is a *New York Times* City section editor. You hit it off and he obviously took a liking to you, so you've gone out for drinks a few times. You think he's a bit into you and maybe you feel a little guilty not telling him straight out that you will only be friends. But you like him, and having a celebrity friend like that is great, so you plan to not do anything that would ruin this friendship.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the first act:

- Avoid stating very clearly that you are straight when you meet new people at the party, and don't spell it out to someone who is flirting with you before it's too late for the situation not to become awkward.
- Try to impress one or several of the eligible women with stories from your backpacking adventures.

*Organizer
Characters*

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536/

Hank Gasparini

THE JANITOR

*Let no one who loves be called altogether unhappy.
Even love unreturned has its rainbow.*

J.M. Barrie

AGE: 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man (S&M Master, but rarely dares to live it out).

PROFESSION: Janitor

TAROT: The Hermit

LIFE SO FAR

The friendly, but lonely, janitor working at Saratoga Rehab Centre. He stayed behind in the town of Saratoga when the rehabilitation center closed, and he hasn't moved on with his life. Since his mother died three years ago, he just lives by himself in a small apartment at the Centre. He chats a bit with the neighbours when they meet outside the local grocery shop, and helps some old ladies with practical work, but no-one in the town knows he is gay. Hank has

strong arms, and low self-esteem, but tries to keep smiling and give everyone a helping hand. The "kids" he knew from the centre are back every summer and give joy to his uneventful life. When they are here it feels like he's in a circle of friends. Hank doesn't know many other gay men, and he has never had a boyfriend. But once in a while he tries to find some pleasure by taking the trip into NYC and the Cruisers Club. He always brings with him a huge bag of S&M equipment, and loves to show his newest whips, paddles, and restraints to anyone interested: but often he brings the toys home unused.

Personal Issue: He's longing for love and lust, but he has problems with impotence when he gets nervous in sexual situations (which he often does).

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

HELPFUL
INTROSPECTIVE
SEARCHING FOR LOVE AND MEANING
MATERIALISTIC
SOLITARY

SOCIAL CIRCLE

Saratoga friends and Cruisers Club.

Cruisers Club is a gay leather and fetish club. It's run more like a voluntary organization or MC club than a commercial bar or disco. Only members and guests who arrive with members are admitted. Also, only men are admitted into the club. The members are a mixture of gay men who are into dressing in leather, bondage enthusiasts, S&M, or "traditionally masculine" aesthetics in general (eg. lumberjacks). There are dedicated rooms in the club for sex, but a lot of the members probably spend more time hanging out in the bar socializing with old friends.

These characters have Cruisers Club as their primary social circle:

STEVEN - PRESIDENT
ANDREW
WALTER
CHAIN
JIMMY
SIMON
HANK

RELATIONSHIPS

Hank knows everyone from the Saratoga pact, but particularly:

Chantelle: She has a very special place in your heart, almost like a daughter. You can't count the number of times she has cried in your arms at Saratoga, or told you her secrets. You see the little girl behind the success, and would do anything for her.

Lizzie: A fun girl with strange plans, you often ended up helping her.

Lester: You have been deeply and hopelessly in love with him, since you ran into him and Max in the woods back then and spied on them, with Lester being the submissive one in their play.

People in Cruiser's Club:

Steven: He has sometimes talked with you at Cruiser's Club, and has helped you find submissive men at the club to play with. He has also tried to teach you a couple of tricks. Last year he asked you (on behalf of Mr. T) to build an temporary dark room / dungeon here at Saratoga, and you're pretty proud of it.

Jimmy: A young guy who has let you dominate him at Cruiser's. You were in shock when you saw him at the party last year. And more in shock when you got the chance to play with him in the dark room. You didn't end up having sex after the spanking session. You just wanked him off and disappeared.

Chain: Member of Cruiser's Club, and brother of Saratoga pact member Evelyn. You think Chain is amazing and very sexy. You would really like to have him as a good friend, but he feels way too cool for you.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Sell soft drinks and snacks from the kiosk, and try to chat and make everybody feel welcome, especially those who seem lonely.
- When the evening falls, the only thing you want to do is go down to the darkroom. Walk in as a Master of the place, but if someone wants to play with you, you may lose all self-esteem (and virility).

Peggy Pepper McHallow

This is the female version of this character. You can also choose to play a male version named Pepper. This character is a good choice to give to the person who will be in charge of the kitchen at the larp. The character is included here in the "Peggy" version. If playing the character as Pepper, just change name and pronouns. Everything else in the character stays the same.

She's making voodoo from the kitchen, saving souls and hearts.

AGE : 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING : Heterosexual woman

PROFESSION : Owner and manager of Peggy's Diner

TAROT : 3 of Cups

LIFE SO FAR

Peggy is an independent soul finding her own way in life without too much concern for other people's expectations. When one of her customers told her that she was a modern "good fairy godmother" she liked the comparison. She sure has many rare qualities, and an ability to give without asking for anything in return. Peggy sees the world in her own, peculiar way. She's the owner of Peggy's Diner in Christopher Street, where she wishes to serve love and compassion to everyone in need, along with their burgers. She involves herself

in the relationships and intrigues of her friends and guests, comforts desolate souls at nights, and hooks people up with each other at her diner when the bars have closed (giving rise to the expression “a Peggy-date”). Only the needy and lost get a job at her diner. A new employee is for her always a sign, and they arrive on her doorstep in almost magical ways. Every one of them turns out to have supernatural skills – at least, according to Peggy.

She broke contact with her rich family many years ago. She doesn't hate them or anything, but she cannot share their values. It just feels like she is made of another kind of material. She doesn't want to suit up and be a “proper McHallow”; and she refuses to get any financial help from her brother Ruben who inherited the family business (Transatlantic Technologies) when their parents died in a fire 16 years ago. Peggy did not want any of her inheritance, and gave the house away to a community health organization. She loves the vibe, day and night, in Christopher Street. A lot of people who don't know Peggy well thinks that she is is gay like so many of her customers at the diner. But she is in fact straight. She has never been traditionally feminine in her way of speaking and body language, and as she would say herself: “When the The Winter Witch spread the curse of homophobia over the world, she must have missed me.” What about her own love life? She appreciates a little fling here and there: but she is also convinced that there is that special man destined for her, who will come into her life one day.

Personal Issue: Very stubborn. If she has made up her mind about something, she rarely pays attention to any arguments that might point out other sides to the issue.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

NOURISHER
BLESSED
PASSIONATE
STUBBORN
APATHETIC

YOUR CREW IN THE DINER

Harriet and Howard: They are a lovely couple, and bring great energy for the Diner. They have special abilities, that your nightly customers need. They also have their own unique challenges. **Harriet** is a political artist, and your best worker – at least, when the planets are aligned correctly and she has her energy. When the planets align differently, that energy hibernates. (The doctors call her condition “bipolar”.) You found **Howard** sleeping on the steps of the diner when you came to open up one morning a few years back. You offered

him a job and a bed, and he has been working for you ever since. Howard is sensitive to the spirits. He is a Dreamer worth listening to. You know that he is truly blessed: but the doctors call him “schizophrenic”.

Priest: She is an angel, but can't see it herself. The methodist priest who left her family and congregation behind, to come out as a lesbian. Of course, you offered her a post at the diner. You have some concerns, though: because she has missed love for so long, she seems to lose her wits at times when she goes to the Cubby Hole. You usually get to hear all the details of what went well, and what crashed and burned.

RELATIONSHIPS

(You will know the faces of most of the people at Mr. T's party, as they have probably all been to your diner.)

Ruben: Your younger brother. You looked after him and played with him, when he was little. But when he was old enough to set up a table for a kiosk selling lemonade, you weren't interested in his kind of games anymore. He still is the generous little boy you remember, but now he always wants something in return. So you have rejected his financial help, even though the diner nearly always has serious financial challenges. You do not wish to be dependent on him.

Pen: Fierce woman! Convinced you to close up the diner for the 4th of July last year to serve at Mr T.'s party: you are doing the same this year. You and your crew got more eager for the job when Pen promised you that you could take part in the fabulous party after work was done.

Bret: A new boy in the Village, just arrived from Flint, Michigan. He is a relative of Andrew, one of Mr. T's best friends. You have promised him some shifts in the diner. Your gaydar is on, and so is Howard's, you have noticed. You recognized Bret's shining aura at once, a few days ago when he was drinking coffee at the diner: and you told him that you're convinced that he's able to see things other people can't.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Make the most of Pen's promise that Peggy's Diner could join the party. Demand access to all happenings that interest you, or anyone who works for you.
- Ruben is there: you do not wish to make him feel bad. Maybe you should offer him a surprise gift, so that it's not always him offering you something.

Howard

IN PEGGY'S DINER

*My Future is static
It's already had it
I could tuck you in
And we can talk about it
I had a dream
And it split the scene
But I got a hunch
It's coming back to me*

Sonic Youth: 'Schizophrenia'

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Public identity: Heterosexual man.
Private identity: A gay or bi man in the closet? But he loves Harriet.

PROFESSION: Employee at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner.

TAROT: Lovers

LIFE SO FAR

Howard is a self-confident young man who hasn't let his sometimes quite severe psychiatric problems dampen his lust for life. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was 17. He has kept his childhood Christian faith, first taught to him by his mother who became severely mentally ill when he was six. He grew up in different foster homes; he often ran away and the schooling he got was sporadic at best. But he is street-smart, and when he is not too far

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gone in the tricks his mind plays on him, then he is empathic and socially smart as well. He was sleeping on the street when he got the job at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner. Howard is not afraid of his mind's dark corners, but all the personas and voices in there totally wear him out when they are too insistent. Having sex with men is an outlet that he found at a young age. He doesn't consider himself gay, but he's had sex with many more men than he has with women.

But Harriet is his big love, and these days he doesn't fool around with other women at all. But if life's bad and she's not around, he needs something to cool him down. Then he finds a man in a bar or down by the pier. His dream is to become a writer. But he is almost illiterate. Sometimes he feels that books have faces looking his way. He tries to open them. But it's too much of a struggle getting anywhere with reading them, and his mind starts to wander. But his head is full of stories, and late at night he tells some of them to guests in the diner, or to anyone else who wants to listen. Maybe one day he will learn to read and write properly so that he could write some of them down?

Personal Issue: He wishes to be nice and considerate with everyone. But it's not always possible when voices are filling his head.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

INNOCENT
JOYFUL
TRUSTING
ANNOYING
DRIFTING

THE PEOPLE IN THE DINER

Peggy (or Pepper if the character is male in the run you are playing): Your employer for the last five years. They found you on the diner's steps one early morning. You hadn't slept for a week, walking the streets. The next day you were working in the diner, and now you even live in the loft above the kitchen. Peggy/Pepper sure is your good fairy godmother! But they also demand things from you. Like working at night, even when you're highly hallucinating. And they always want to hear about your voices and dreams, saying you are a "Dreamer" worth listening to.

Harriet: Harriet is in your dreams almost every night. Last night she was swimming with a turtle dripping with blood. The turtle burst open and from the shell you took a wedding gown in your hands. And when you asked her

(in the dream) to marry you, she said yes. In real life you have shared nearly everything in the last two years. She has extreme ups and downs, but despite this she tends to have a very calming effect on you. When she lays her hands on you, the voices and visions disappear. Your love for her is eternal, you would never let her down. That's why you can't tell her about your occasional nightly activities with men! Anyway, it mostly happens when she leaves you for "a project", when she is in a manic state. She can stay away for many days, and it tears at your soul. And, so far at least, the guys haven't mattered that much beyond the moment.

Priest: The kind but strange female Methodist priest who left her congregation and family behind to live her lesbian life. She now works at the diner as well. Your voices once attacked her, called her all sorts of things that you don't really remember now except they were angry and upset. The voices made her cry. And afterwards you cried with her too. She is a constant reminder of your own secret gay life.

RELATIONSHIPS

(You will know the faces of most of the people at Mr. T's party, as they have probably all been to the diner.)

Bret: The new guy who just arrived in the city. He has been given some short-term employment at the diner, and has obviously tagged along to the 4th of July party. Sweet-looking fellow. Wonder what kind of skills he has?

Ruben: Peggy's/Pepper's wealthy brother. You can't understand why they will not accept any help from him. You didn't know he was their brother, that night three years ago when he hit on you at the diner. You had a wonderful night together: he sure can make a man feel heaven (this was before you met Harriet).

Daniel: Interesting drag queen with a complicated personality. When he is all blasted, late at night, he calls you to his table and tells you all kinds of strange things about himself. Sometimes you wonder if it's all true, or if he hears voices as well?

Jimmy: A late-night fling a month ago. You met him at the diner and went to the Hudson river together. You think he is into some alternative spirituality stuff. Maybe it would be interesting to talk properly with him some time as well?

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Make the most out of Pen's promise of the diner staff joining the party. Demand access to every interesting happening, when you are not working.
- What did the dream mean? Should you propose to Harriet? Or maybe it was this great idea for a performance you could do together? Or maybe it was a metaphor about danger in the water of life? You and Harriet will together save someone from drowning in the bright lights of the big city?

Harriet

IN PEGGY'S DINER

What do you want a meaning for? Life is a desire, not a meaning.

Charlie Chaplin

The modern artist must live by craft and violence. Her gods are violent gods. Those artists, so called, whose work does not show this strife, are uninteresting.

Ezra Pound

AGE: 20s or 30s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heterosexual woman

PROFESSION: Employee at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner, and performance artist.

TAROT: 8 of Wands

LIFE SO FAR

Harriet is a determined young woman who scoffs at the bipolar diagnosis a doctor once gave her. They just want to keep her down; and she's not going to let them. She has signed up for some performance art courses, but she is

mostly self-taught as a conceptual artist. Although quite well-known in some circles, her art brings her no income. Her most referenced piece is “Death in a Box”, which made quite a scandal. And also the cycle of performances when she was dressed as a violent turtle, “The Samurai Turtle”. She enjoys working at the diner to make a living, at least most days. And in particular she enjoys working the nights when she shares the shift with her deeply-loved other half, Howard. He is good for her life, and her art as well.

But even if he feels like the great love of her life, she would always choose her art before him. She has left two other boyfriends because they were standing in her way. She wants to provoke and wake people, and to express herself: maybe sometimes dreaming of becoming famous, but never rich. Her mom and dad and two younger sisters live in Brooklyn, and she often visits them on Sundays. But it often ends in heated arguments, and with her leaving in anger. They don’t want her to bring Howard there anymore, and they argue hard for her to leave “this lunatic” as they hurtfully call him. When her bipolar condition brings her down to the bottom, she cannot even get up from bed. She can lock herself in her room for several days, unless Howard uses a lot of time and love to cheer her up. Likewise, her healing hands can cool Howard down when he’s agitated. Sometimes she calms down customers at the diner in this way as well.

Personal Issue: Her big bursting energy. It’s nearly impossible to keep it in balance: and when it flows out, she and the people around her can be swept away with it.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

STRAIGHTFORWARD
FAST-FORWARD
OPEN-HEARTED
EXPLODING
DESPAIR

THE PEOPLE IN THE DINER

Peggy (or **Pepper** if the character is male in the run you are playing): Your employer for two years, and a close friend you trust 100%. You did a performance at the diner, they loved it and employed you the same day: even when you explained that some days you’re incapable of working. You didn’t do it for the money, and you had never thought about working at a diner before. Now you are convinced that you felt Howard’s presence there right away, and that it was that feeling that called you to accept the offer.

Howard: You have a strong magnetic connection with your boyfriend of almost two years. He balances your energy. Sometimes you feel like God or the Universe is talking through him, to you, giving you divine inspiration for your art. You believe in fidelity and total truthfulness between partners. Sometimes you can get really jealous if someone else shows interest in him, even though you don't mean to be possessive. Other people have always tried to mold you and Howard into something you are not. Together you can be the people you really want to be.

Priest: A former methodist priest who everyone still just calls Priest, even though she has left the ministry to live as a lesbian in New York. She now works at the diner as well, and is good at talking to all the lost souls who end up at your tables late at night. It's great that she has taken a bold choice to live as her true self. You want to help her in that journey, by challenging her even more.

RELATIONSHIPS

(You will know the faces of most of the people at Mr. T's party, as they have probably all been to the diner.)

Bret: The new guy who just arrived in the city. He has been given some short-term employment at the diner, and has obviously tagged along to the 4th of July party. You're certain that he is gay, and you don't like the glances he makes at Howard. You have to tell him that Howard is straight and your boyfriend!

Santiago: You did your art performance "Death in a Box" at a gallery where this visual artist had an exhibition. With all the red paint you splashed around your naked body, some of it dripped on one of her paintings, and ruined it. That's how art should be: destruction and reconstruction! You hope she's not still mad about it, though.

Walter: Peggy/Pepper and many from the gay crowd at the diner are talking about this great therapist. He's non-traditional, and recommended by many. They think he would be a good therapist for you. You know he is coming to the party this year, and you are very sceptical. You're an artist, not insane! Most therapists will try to make you into somebody you are not. But if he is as non-traditional as they say, maybe you should try talking with him to find out what type of experience he actually has to offer? Or maybe you can turn the tables and help him instead?

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Sneak into the dark room which was so much talked about last year. Inspiration for an impulsive performance maybe?
- Find a way to nudge Howard to ask you to marry him, without your usual straightforwardness.

Priest

IN PEGGY'S DINER

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers

Proverbs 6:16–19

*Do you, do you hear it, do you hear the thunder
Deafen every living thing about
Can you, can you see it, can you
See the mountains darken yonder
Black sun rising, time is running out
Sacrifice to vice or die by the hand of the
Sinner! Sinner! Sinner! Sinner!*

Judas Priest: 'Sinner'

AGE: 40s

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Just out of the closet as lesbian, left husband and four children to live her new life. She has fallen in love with men before, for instance her husband; but now she wants to live fully as a lesbian.

PROFESSION: Former Methodist vicar and street-mission priest, now employed at Peggy's/Pepper's Diner.

TAROT: The Devil

LIFE SO FAR

Priest's real name, which no one uses, is Elisa Christine Loredawn. She feels like a devil, a dirty sinner, and a heartless crook; but she lives and loves like an angel. After she left her husband and children and abandoned her congregation, because of her overwhelming lesbian feelings, she has both been filled with joy and deeply depressed. It is a sad time to leave the church now, after the world's first female bishop was ordained in 1980. Elisa is, or was, a pioneer of female theology. The closest she now has to a family is the other workers at the diner, and especially Peggy/Pepper herself. It was, after all, at the diner that Priest for the first (and second and third) time found love with another woman. These days she has recently started to go to The Cubby Hole and other lesbian clubs, for endless one-night-flings (she is good at it, God help her!)

Long nights of mission work in the streets of Greenwich Village made her close to the gay and lesbian community, and she has supported and saved a lot of youngsters on the run from homophobic families. God loves all of them. But she doubts that God has mercy for a wife who was not honest with her husband and congregation, and who tricked them to believe she was heterosexual for so many years. She was even unfaithful before she broke out of the marriage. In some sunkissed moments, she feels extremely happy and free to live out all her love and lust with no boundaries, despite her lack of money or family. But other nights she feels like she must do penance for all the sorrow she has caused. She is one of the kindest and most caring persons you can find on a night on the streets of New York City. These days she prefers to be awake at night and sleep during daytime. When she can sleep... She has now developed insomnia, which she hopes someone can help her with.

Personal Issue: To get rid of her own inner homophobia; she tries to drown it in sex with more and more women.

5 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

SEEKS FREEDOM (IN EVERY MEANING)
SEEKS TRUTH (BENEATH THE SURFACE)
CARING
DEPRESSED
APPROACHES LIFE WITH HUNGER

THE PEOPLE IN THE DINER

Peggy (or **Pepper** if the character is male in the run you are playing): The person you trust with your life. They also seek to live truthfully and were the one who held up the mirror for you. And what you saw in it was a homosexual woman, not a priest. Peggy/Pepper has an aura of spirituality around them. You have deep religious conversations on occasion, even though their beliefs are rather unconventional. Maybe an unconventional approach is what's needed to point out a new path to God for you? When you have hooked up with a woman last night, you tell Peggy/Pepper every detail about what happened and how you feel about it.

Harriet: A strange and intense woman and artist who frightens you a bit with her radical approach to life. Mostly because she wants to drag you out from the kitchen and your comfort zone, and into her crazy art projects. You admire her and Howard's romantic relationship, and would love to be the one who married them.

Howard: When he's not in a schizophrenic episode, he's a good colleague to lean on and to have uncomplicated fun with. When he hears voices, you have many times unsuccessfully tried to calm him down. Often you like to mostly listen to him. You are not frightened by it. But one time his voices shouted directly to you, about all your devilish sins and shame: it made you start crying. When Howard calmed down, he cried with you. It was upsetting and hurtful: but you understand that what happened was more about his own demons than about yours.

RELATIONSHIPS

(You will know the faces of most of the people at Mr. T's party, as they have probably all been to the diner.)

Ruben: Peggy/Pepper's wealthy brother, you can very well understand why they will not accept any help from him. It is about following one's moral principles. Wealth is not important for living a happy life.

Mickey: A young artist whom you talked to one late night when his partner (and benefactor) had died from a mysterious disease. You listened to his sad story about how his partner had wasted away, and no-one knew what it was he was suffering from. You even took Mickey home for hot chocolate and a bed. He had a special magnetism to him, and for some moments you even considered going to bed with him. But off course you could not abuse his trust

in you, or your decision to now live fully as a lesbian.

Dawn: A sexy young butch from the Cubby Hole. At the summer party you will recognize her as a very hot one-night stand of yours, from the Cubby Hole not too long ago. But you left before Dawn, so you don't know what she thinks about you now. Maybe you should try to get to know her better this time?

Last year's party:

You were not there, but you have heard stories from it.

Suggestions for two things the character can do in the 1st act:

- Look for people in distress that you can help with kindness and maybe God's blessings.
- When the night darkens and your kitchen tasks are done – go on a lesbian hunt. Will Dawn be available, or are there some new faces and bodies to hook up with? Do you feel elated or depressed afterwards? Or both?.

Abby

IN CAFE NOIR

Director's assistant with big dreams and many half finished scripts in her drawer.

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: *Bisexual woman who struggles with finding a label for herself*

LIFE SO FAR

Abby comes from an upper class family who expected her to become a lawyer or at least marry a rich man. Instead she focused on art, and dropped out of business college to work as an director's assistant at a theater her parents never heard of.

Her parents supported her financially, figuring she would find her way back to the right path after a couple of years of having a bit of fun. But coming home with a girlfriend to Thanksgiving was too much for her parents, who stopped sending her money after that.

She really wants to fit into new situations, and Mr. T's party is a new and exciting setting for her. Here she hopes to meet both established and up-and-coming people in the arts and music scene.

Abby has always tried to get other people's approval, in the arms of a lover, and latest in the world of art. Starting as an assistant at a cool off-off-Broadway theater where her good friend David works feels like a great opportunity. As long as the focus is on others, Abby can be bubbly and open –sometimes even overconfident–, but she gets nervous if too much of the focus is on her. When she is forced to reflect upon her own feelings it can turn into random hookups or crying in the shower with a bottle of wine.

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

- Emotional
- Artistic confidence
- Hiding insecurities

RELATIONSHIPS

David: Backstage worker and roomie

Fiona: Little sister. Tickets sales and background actor

Paul: Theatre technician and roomie

Summer: Writer and PR person

Timmy: Stage builder

Tom: Art Photographer

David

IN CAFE NOIR

Stage assistant with dancer dreams

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Bisexual man

LIFE SO FAR

David was born and raised in Brooklyn in a conservative Jewish family. He hasn't been in contact with them for a couple of years, after accidentally coming out to them as bisexual. He hasn't tried to contact them, and when his mom calls he ignores the call.

After working backstage at Café Noir for two years now, David is yearning for a real breakthrough in his dancing career. That career is so far non-existent and hasn't gone beyond showing off with elaborate dances at parties. David can also start a party all by himself, and will dance all by himself at every rooftop party. That is also how he got to know Mr. T, and how their short and quite drunken conversation at 3 AM turned into an invitation for the whole backstage crew at Café Noir to come and work at Mr. T's 4th of July party.

In social situations David is often impulsive and direct. He will be the first person to tell you if you have food on your face, the wrong shirt or a cute butt. It is always meant in a good and helpful way, but it sometimes comes out a bit harsh and out of context.

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Experienced

Witty

Harsh but kind on the inside

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant and roomie

Fiona: Tickets sales and background actor

Paul: Theatre technician and roomie

Summer: Writer and PR person

Timmy: Stage builder

Tom: Art Photographer

Fiona

IN CAFE NOIR

Awkward actress trying to be more than a background extra

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heteroflexible woman

LIFE SO FAR

Fiona is Abby's little sister. They grew up in a safe upper class home - with traditional values and a mom and dad that have always been married. Fiona always wanted to be part of her big sister's life, so she also went to theatre school; without facing the same expectations and disappointments from her parents. As the younger one she got a lot more freedom. She guesses they didn't have very high expectations for her. Her father used to joke with that fact, that she spent all her luck on good looks and forgot about smarts.

Fiona has had a lot of jobs, but never really for more than a couple of months at the time. She has gone to countless auditions for even the smallest parts in many different plays, but the closest she got to getting a break was the part of a non-speaking townspeople in off-off-Broadway shows. Her mom has accepted, after a lot of begging, that Fiona can join Abby in Café Noir, but only to keep an eye on Abby. Here she works with ticket sales and cleaning, hoping for her break.

She is very immediate and positive, but also a bit awkward and tends to speak before she thinks. She doesn't have hidden agendas. She is very honest and likes to talk to everyone about all their problems – especially if that means that they can become her friends. She is super excited about working at Mr. T's party and meeting new and interesting people, for her it is really about making as good an impression as possible to get asked back next year.

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Awkward
Speaks before thinking
Positive

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant and big sister
David: Backstage worker
Paul: Theatre technician
Summer: Writer and PR person
Timmy: Stage builder
Tom: Art Photographer

Paul

IN CAFE NOIR

Theatrical technician and passionate amateur DJ

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

LIFE SO FAR

Paul grew up in a working class family in a small town in the Midwest. He moved to New York when he was young. Knowing from an early age that he was into boys - reading Playgirl in secret - he decided to separate his two lives as best as he could. He hasn't come out to his family.

Three years ago his father got sick with cancer, and he goes home more often than he used to take care of his mom, and sends her money when he can – so Paul is grateful for Abby and David letting him stay with them and getting him a job as a theatrical technician at Café Noir.

Paul is flirtatious, and is good at making others feel like they are the center of the world, for about half a night if you are lucky – often less if something or someone else seems more tempting.

Paul is a passionate amateur DJ, and has played at many bars and discos in the not so popular hours. Paul likes his job at the theatre but he really wants to get his big break as a DJ. He's really excited to get to work at Mr. T's party, and to meet Tony who will DJ at the party. Maybe he even will let Paul do a set?

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

A flirt

Trying to reinvent himself

Lives two lives

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant and roomie

David: Backstage worker and roomie

Fiona: Tickets sales and background actor

Summer: Writer and PR person

Timmy: Stage builder

Tom: Art Photographer

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Summer

IN CAFE NOIR

Aspiring writer working with PR for an off-off-Broadway theatre

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Lesbian woman

LIFE SO FAR

Summer is the youngest sibling of four. Growing up in a small suburban town, she always felt out of place and weird. She often got told she was too loud, too much or just not quite right.

As soon as she turned 16 she moved to New York City, to follow her dreams of becoming a writer. She wrote by day, submitted countless texts to publishers and magazines, and worked at a bar during the night. But still she wasn't in the right place, until Abby stumbled into the bar and suggested she started working at Café Noir.

Summer is willing to do anything to get a real writing gig. She has tried to get to write for TV shows, small theatre groups and even commercials, but with little luck yet. But the art director at Café Noir, has promised she gets to write for the stage, when the timing is right. She has been working there for a year now.

Summer is outgoing, energetic and even though she is young, she wants to seem strong and independent. But on extra tough days she just wants to be held and cared for, and sometimes she is tempted by the dream of the suburban life that her parents would have wanted for her. But then she reminds herself what a waste of talent that would be!

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Outgoing
Honest
Go-getter

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant
David: Backstage worker
Fiona: Tickets sales and background actor
Paul: Theatre technician
Timmy: Stage builder
Tom: Art Photographer

Timmy

IN CAFE NOIR

Stagehand who walked into a completely new world

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Heteroflexible man

LIFE SO FAR

Timmy has grown up in the suburbs in a traditional family of married parents and a younger brother. He has always been interested in building things for people, and takes after his dad who builds houses for a living. Growing up he had a couple of girlfriends, but he has never truly been in love. Maybe they just weren't that interesting or maybe it was too soon. The relationships always ended after some time.

Timmy knows everything about stage technique: from building and fixing the stage to creating a cool setting with virtually no budget. He has been working his way up through high school musicals to conferences, and has finally landed a job at a small theatre.

He loves sitting in the dark and still feeling like a part of it all, without actually being forced to be seen. He was never supposed to be part of the gay and queer community, but here he is. It is all very new and overwhelming for Timmy, who mostly likes to be prepared and know the plan – but it is also exciting. Timmy always felt a bit of an outsider, but in this theatre crew he actually feels more and more at home. But that also raises a lot of questions for him. Does that mean he is queer in some way as well?

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Passionate
Introvert
Nervously curious

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant
David: Backstage worker
Fiona: Tickets sales and background actor
Paul: Theatre technician
Summer: Writer and PR person
Tom: Art Photographer

Tom

IN CAFE NOIR

Art photographer trying to find a new angle – on everything

THAT GENDER AND SEX THING: Gay man

LIFE SO FAR

Tom's parents were hippies during the 60s and 70s, and he grew up in a collective in upstate New York, where the focus was on free love and sharing everything. This also means he often got taken care of by other people than his parents, and often talks about the whole collective as his family.

One thing that fascinated young Tom was fashion magazines. He dreamed of taking those pictures and creating those moments. This didn't go well with his non-materialistic parents and a voice in the back of his head still warns him not to become too materialistic and shallow.

Tom never does something halfway: it is all or nothing. He is not like the stereotypical photographer who hides behind the lense, instead he likes to get to know the people in his pictures. He also has a theory about most people: they just want to be remembered, and capturing them in a picture kind of makes them immortal.

He works as a freelancer and the independence is mixed with financial insecurity. It doesn't pay great but working with stage design and posters at Café Noir is a regular source of income for him now. He also loves to hang out at Abby's and David's flat and talk about when they get to be the one in charge – if that ever happens.

Going to Mr. T's party is a great opportunity to meet inspiring people within the gay community and could also be a great way to get good material for his next project, or to just have a nice adventure for the night.

3 DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

All in
Curious
Gets people to open up

RELATIONSHIPS

Abby: Director's assistant
David: Backstage worker and roomie
Fiona: Tickets sales and background actor
Paul: Theatre technician
Summer: Writer and PR person
Timmy: Stage builder



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Out of Our Hands

DESIGNING THE VISION

By Hanne Grasmø and Tor Kjetil Edland

Originally published in the 2013 Knutepunkt book "Crossing Theoretical Borders"

How do you ensure that all the participants get the experience they were promised when they signed up, and still enable strong participatory power? Dealing with this seemingly impossible contradiction turned out to be a key challenge when designing *Just a Little Lovin'* (JaLL), where we wanted to realize our vision while at the same time provide the players with the freedom to shape their own characters and stories.

All larp are about the co-creation of stories. Two runs of *Just a Little Lovin'* has shown us that it's possible to design a larp in a way that ensures a high probability that all participants in the larp experience the central themes as envisioned by the designers. This can be done without sacrificing the high standard of participatory agency expected by most larpers. In the two runs, many of the character interpretations and the way individual stories and relationships

unfolded, varied substantially. But no matter how different the individual stories and fates of the same characters became, all stories unfolded within, and reflected, the overall narrative of the larp.

THE NEED

FOR TIME TO PASS

The concept of the larp is a story about people in the gay community in the US in the 1980s, when the AIDS epidemic hit. Still, we wanted to make a game on issues and themes with contemporary relevance. AIDS, with its connotations of sex and death, has a strong potential for telling stories of universal themes that would genuinely touch the players; to further provide an experience from which our participants could reflect on questions of identity and "how I want to live before I die". Through the development of the characters and the on-site workshops, we sought to create a dialectic between desire (symbolized by gay culture and alternative lifestyles) and the fear of death (symbolized by HIV and cancer). These two were in turn balanced by strong and multifaceted

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friendships. We also promised to ensure that the participants could feel safe enough to step outside their comfort zone, both as larpers and as human beings.

In order to tell these stories, it was necessary for time to pass in the narrative. We compressed the timeline of the epidemic somewhat for our story, and decided to divide the larp into three acts, reflecting both the passage of time in the lives of the characters, and also the different stages of the early years of the epidemic; ignorance, paranoia and response. All the three acts took place at a 4th of July party, three years in a row. Before each act, we expressly told the players which themes each act should focus on, and left it up to them as a group to decide exactly how their characters would play out these themes. The breaks between the acts also facilitated that each participant individually, as well as the ensemble as a whole, got the chance to reflect on their own story so far, and what would be good to emphasize in the next act in relation to the three main themes.

DIRECTING THE THEMATIC FLOW

We wanted to let the characters become multidimensional beings and evolve beyond aesthetic clichés. Hence, we held workshops before the game started, and in the act breaks, where we worked together with the players to develop their template characters. While we were the main creators of the narrative outlines for the first act, most of the storylines were out of our hands after the first year had been played out.

Creating true stories of desire and friendship, touching the hearts and desires

of the participants, could not have been done without placing responsibilities for the continuous story in the hands of the players. One of the reasons for this is bleed. We don't believe that the strongest emotions are created when you stay in character 24/7, with as few distractions as possible to break the illusion. We see bleed as a better tool, and taking breaks from the fiction can enforce the story and your emotional experience of it.

But, how do we maintain the vision of the game when the players are free to create the narratives? Much of the solution lies in the use of metatechniques. How we focused, created and executed these techniques were one of the most important design decisions in realizing the larp we envisioned.

THE LOTTERY OF DEATH

In lots of larps there is plenty of death; mostly characters killing each other. We searched for a way of portraying death of characters that had the potential of tapping into our universal fear of the fact that one day life ends for all of us. We understood that this meant the players could not be given the power to decide whether their characters became infected with the HIV virus or not, or if, and when, their characters would die. Our "Eureka!" was to rediscover certain randomizer techniques, much from the childhood of larp and roleplay. We imagined that a lottery would serve to copy life itself.

Death arrived in a metascene, played out at the end of every act, 11 o'clock in the morning. Two characters played by the organizers, embodying "Bureaucratic

Angels”, arrived at breakfast to host the Lottery of Death. The instructions were as follows: “Write your name on the tickets, at least one, maximum five, and put them in the hat”. The number of tickets should be in accordance with how your character has put himself at risk of becoming infected. Every year, the funeral agents picked out approximately 10-15 people, randomly drawn from the tickets in the hat. This created some very strong reactions from their friends and lovers as they walked away.

But the lottery wasn’t conclusive. Chosen randomly, some of the 10 ended up in the coffin in the year between the acts, while others got grave news from their doctor.

THE PHALLUS METHOD

On both runs of *Just a Little Lovin’*, nearly every character had sexual encounters portraying a great variety of emotions and situations. We had a vision for a metatechnique for sexual play that would be visible, direct and which could easily portray gay sex and *anonymous* sex. The Phallus Method challenged our players, but at the same time made erotic play safe. Most importantly the metatechnique had a great impact on HOW the stories unfolded in an erotic way.

The scenes of sexual encounters were about much more than horniness. In the larp, we used sexuality as an engine for a wide range of emotions, relations and rationalizations. Most people experience powerful feelings while having, or trying to have, erotic interaction. There are perhaps negative emotions like rejection, suppression, shame or loss of control, but also positive ones like true connection, holiness, strong friendship,

and the feeling of being appreciated. If you dare to play out horniness, lust and desire, you gather courage to open your heart for other emotions as well.

The Phallus Method can shortly be described like this: Keep your clothes on (at least your underwear). Have a phallus ready. The phallus is gender-free, so everyone can use one; and it will simulate hetero and lesbian sex, as well as gay sex. For the first run we made soft leather-dildos, for the second run they were wooden with bright 80’s pink paint. To simulate sex, there must be physical contact between the phallus and both bodies: hands, hips, legs, face. It can be theatrically simulated between the legs, but only if the participant agrees to do so. We told the players that it was important to negotiate between them exactly how a scene should be played out, to achieve both a safe and intense experience. As this was a story about HIV, one of the reasons we needed phalluses was to make it possible for the participants to easily portray whether they chose to use condom or not. This is, after all, a story of a sexually transmitted disease.

A very important part of The Phallus Method was having a monologue to end the scene. Every participant should say out loud, one by one, the thoughts running through their head at the end of the sexual act: How does (s)he feel now, how was it, describing something that felt especially good or bad. When all monologues were done, one went out of the meta-moment, and back into the regular flow of the game.

We hope that the collection of tools we arrived at were the right ones, giving our participants maximum freedom within the inevitable frame of historical events in which we placed the characters. We arrived at the techniques mainly by considering which techniques would serve to portray

this period and our universal themes. So, the design of the game was specifically connected to the theme of the first years of the AIDS epidemic. So while the larp gave the players a lot of freedom to shape the

stories of their characters, some key parts of the story, which characters die and which survive, were removed from the hands of players and organizers both and left to chance.

It's about Time

By Eleanor Saitta

First published in States of Play: Nordic Larp Around the World (2012)

Just a Little Lovin', played for the first time in July, 2011 in Norway, explored the New York gay scene of the early 80's, and the impact the coming of AIDS had on people's lives. The game was played across three consecutive 4th of July parties. While one hesitates to use a phrase like "life-changing" lightly, I feel comfortable saying that Just a Little Lovin' will be, if not a tectonic shift then at least a marked inflection point for many players. The deployment of time in the game had a significant part in the emotional impact.

Just a Little Lovin' was designed as a mostly "high resolution", realistically represented game, but not exclusively so. A number of metatechniques were used throughout the game, to various ends. Although possibly not conceived of as

such explicitly, the way time was deployed in the game ended up being absolutely core to the game experience. Almost any other single technique could have been replaced or significantly altered leaving the fundamental impact intact, but a significantly different use of time would have completely redefined the game.

Lacking a time machine, there are only so many ways to interact with time as a player or designer. To work with time as a larp designer is to work with the mapping between events in the game and events as experienced by the player. To the extent that one can speak of the "natural" timing of events in the context of a more or less realistic narrative, we can consider that our reference measure of time.

We can picture the events of a game like knots tied in a piece of string. Each event consumes so much string, and is spaced so far apart. Being larp, there are at least as many strings as players, and even for one player or character, many events may be happening at once; likewise the edges of events are rarely so well defined. Still, the metaphor is useful.

When we think about creating play, either as a game designer or as co-creating players, we build this string. We think about how many knots there are, how they're tied, and how they're spaced-plot and pacing, in other words. Looking at the string as a string, instead of as a series of events, rhythm takes the place of pacing, and repetitive elements are highlighted. This "whole narrative" view of events, and rhythm and repetition specifically as features of it, will be useful as a tool as we dig deeper.

Critically, the strings perceived by the player and the character need not be the same. Broadly speaking, there are three distortions that can be introduced to the mapping between character and player experiences of time-compression, expansion, and periodicization, each of which changes the player perception of events. At the simplest level, distortions of the timeline are a matter of emphasis. We devote the most of our limited time ingame to those events that matter the most. This is a simplification, however, and there are many other interesting effects in play.

EXPANSION

Expansion during an emotional scene builds tension, but only up to a point. In *Just a Little Lovin'*, at the end of breakfast the morning after each night's party, a lottery was held. Every player had the opportunity to put in one or more tickets for their character, and then the Tower (every character had a tarot card), supervised by two undertakers, drew names from a top hat. As the names were called, characters stood and were eventually led away. The

first morning, eleven names were called, and we, the remaining players, didn't quite understand the process. Those called by fate were lead away, and, unbeknownst to us, a second lottery was held, closed in the blackbox space, and that lottery determined who actually died. We stood outside, waiting, held transfixed by Death's slow southern drawl. The wait was heart-wrenching.

That second lottery took a long, long time. Eventually, the wait was boring. No one talked, all-suspended in metatechnique dreamtime. We had no choice but to slow down and sit with our emotions. To get to know the contours of our grief, our fear.

On the second and third mornings, the lottery moved more quickly and we mostly knew what to expect, but there was still time then, motionless, standing in the sun with our hearts. Sufficient expansion of the time experienced by the player at the right moment gives room for the lyric, allows entirely other affects to arise.

COMPRESSION

Compression is more common than expansion. Even the curation we do when we decide which few days of a character's life we're interested in can be seen as compressing the rest of that life away to perhaps some few sentences in a character history, to an hour during workshops at most. Even long-running campaigns (reasonably) ignore most of their characters' lives. The games we play, no matter how immersive, how true to life, are almost always hyper-real, more eventful than any un-engineered

time period. As larp designers, we don't want our players to be bored. We don't want a game to end early, for lack of material. As players, we manufacture drama, fill in the white space.

Sometimes, this is necessary and good co-creation and sometimes it's excessive embroidery, not leaving room for emotional depth and reflection. The difference is often a matter of taste.

Frequently, we don't recognize what we're doing as compression - it's simply an eventful evening.

Compression isn't always just about fitting more in, though. In addition to the fear of death, *Just a Little Lovin'* was a game about desire. While specifically marked as not just a gay game, much of the sex and sociality ingame was gay, and specifically gay, not queer - in the period, narratives of bisexuality or androgyny would be (and were in the game) met generally with derision at best. Sex was played with a variety of techniques, negotiated between each couple or group. Scenes ranged from the entirely symbolic to the somewhat realistically simulated, while still leaving room for a ludic circle to pass between what was happening and anything that could be called player sex.

It was stated ahead of time that desire in play wasn't expected to only be character desire, that bleed into or from player emotion was entirely acceptable, within limits. While challenging for some players (but not, as far as I am aware, in a way which resulted in players being pushed beyond their own limits), overall this seems to have worked well; certainly it contributed a lot to the

emotional impact of the game.

In part because of this bleed, managing desire and managing sex scenes seems to have involved a lot of compression for most players. For instance, a sex act that might have taken ten minutes in the real world might be played through in a minute or two; an orgy that would last most of an evening might be 45 minutes or an hour.

While the previously mentioned interest in fitting in as much plot as possible was clearly at play (no slow, languorous love-making when you're a playboy with six other people and a command performance at the drag show to fit in), compression here also allowed players to limit the degree to which their own desires were exposed, acting as a second safety net.

The lottery periods acted in some ways as a form of temporal compression, fitting one facet of the actions of a year into an hour or so of real time. That said, the framing of these events within the metatechnique made them feel more like a separate continuum, largely unmoored from normal experience.

Each Act, each year, in *Just a Little Lovin'* had its own emergent feel, along with more explicitly declared and shaped themes. Sampling just one day from each year definitely encouraged plot compression and time compression, even with a heavily used blackbox and much offgame coordination of intervening events - there was just a lot of living to get through.

PERIODICITY

The intervals in play were absolutely critical to telling the story. The tragedy of AIDS, sudden as it was in some ways, didn't happen overnight, and the story needed years of character time to develop an appropriate weight of tragedy. The final theme of the game was friendship, and the gaps were as equally critical for giving definition to friendship as to tragedy.

Theorists of tradition speak of “pastness” as the property that leads us to take relatively arbitrary social constructs and rules seriously. Pastness isn't just the age of a tradition, as something can be old but irrelevant; it's closer to the extent of lived experience. Not just age, but age accounting for activity across time. Additionally, tradition requires presence, the accessibility of a past pattern to contemporary life, and what is called *traditio*, or the property of having been passed down person to person. Without both of these, a tradition is not alive. In larp, both presence and *traditio* are easily embedded within a fiction. Likewise, we may elect to imbue elements of our fiction a priori with pastness as part and parcel of the creation of characters who take those elements seriously within a created tradition. In doing so, we allude to the presences of some prior interval of nonlinear time, but in the interest of convenience, we often elide its performance.

The core of larp, what gives it much of its emotional punch, its flexibility, and its (sometime) subtlety and veracity of affect, is embodied performance. When we make explicit the pastness of our fiction, playing

it bodily, we engage a deeper emotional register and make that pastness firmer. Without explicit enactment, we have only the textual, not physical, notion of the reality of tradition.

Repetition is as important as embodiment for pastness. Even in the second Act, having once before enacted all the little pieces of the evening in *Just a Little Lovin'* made that Act much more real, both in the current iteration and in my then-memory of the previous iteration. Repetition combined with explicit enactment is very effective at building pastness, and the fact of repetition is consecrated in many areas of human behavior; the genesis of rites. We often think of repetition as a negative, a trigger for boredom, but pastness can't accumulate without it.

Repetition which happens as part of a linear temporal sequence carries relatively less weight, however, than when temporal gaps (in the fictive timeline) separate those repetitions. While not providing any more of an embodied trigger, separation permits the player to construct further repetition internally, provides room for the accretion of fictive pastness, and also gives an avenue for long-term change. As in this game, many narratives must play out over years for sufficient change to happen for either the characters or setting.

We can call repetition with gaps periodicity, a specific pattern in the manipulation of time that evokes the rhythms of everyday life, allows them to build, and then highlights how those rhythms change or break down. Rhythm implies memory, the visceral recall of earlier instances but also the heightened awareness of the distinction between occurrences, the shifts.

The relationship between Max and Steven in the first run of *Just a Little Lovin'*, was a great example of how periodicity can work. In the first Act, the two characters barely interacted; in the second, they hooked up. Their players decided that, over the course of the intervening year, they'd begun a serious relationship. The combination of the enacted past, the repetition of life pattern, and jumping ahead in time meant that in the third year, their relationship had a visceral emotional depth to a degree which proved difficult to dispel after the game.

For in-depth games where character pasts are defined before the body of the game begins, one can either write out a character or play out the details in workshops. Workshops require more organization and bias the game toward a certain kind of emergence which may be difficult for tightly plotted fictions. While the pastness developed in-game in *Just a Little Lovin'* worked very well, a number of players reported difficulty performing elements of their written backgrounds. Sometimes, this was because there was just too much material to remember, but it was also because they had no enacted anchor for the material. For tightly plotted games, thorough use of blackbox scenes during workshops may be a happy medium. That said, reports from the character development process in the game *Totem*, where all relationships were played out in sketch form, not pre-planned, suggest a preference for organic development.

The issue of available workshop time raises another note on time in *Just a Little Lovin'*, especially interesting to a relative outsider to the medium (despite some experience with tabletop and reenactment, *Just a Little Lovin'* was my first Scandinavian larp). The degree to which players were co-creators

was delightful and surprising, and one of the ways this was most obvious was in management of the rhythm of play. Time offgame between Acts was very short, and players worked hard to fit everything they needed to do in. Similarly, the timing of pre-planned events was adjusted between Acts, trying to ensure everyone could make it to what they needed to do. What on the first Act felt like bumpy, we were true. Time was under the control of the game organizers, who intercut past and future, without necessarily making it clear to the players, let alone the characters, which was which. In effect, this added a third viewpoint, sandwiching character time between player time and "real" time in the fiction, radically warped to the point of being almost divorced from both. Needless to say, this is a temporal frame only suitable for some fictions.

EVENT CITIES

I'd like to switch metaphors at this point, having exhausted the understanding of time as knots on a string at one level, and talk about the spaces we play in as temporal objects. Although the ludic circle within which we play is an embodying artifact in its own right, it must be situated within real space(s). Bernard Tschumi, in *Event City* and *Architecture and Disjunction*, discusses physical spaces, whether buildings, entire cities, or merely some marked place, as spaces of movement and events having a beginning, when they are first marked as a space, a following temporal narrative, as the space happens, and eventually an end, as the space is un-marked. Trivially, one experiences this entire trajectory every time one has a picnic in a park, creating a temporarily delimited space that, for all that

it's only a blanket and circle of friends, feels like an almost bounded, indoor room to the people inside it. This is socially defined, performed, event-space. Tschumi argues that all spaces are like this, regardless of how much concrete or steel may be used in the social performance. As we socially perform spaces, an understanding of those spaces as having a deep history, a before and an after, may be productive. From *Architecture and Disjunction*:

"Bodies not only move in space but generate spaces produced by and through their movements. Movements-of dance, sport, war-are the intrusion of events into architectural spaces."

"...architecture is inhabited: sequences of events, use, activities, incidents are always superimposed on those fixed spatial sequences. These are the programmatic sequences that suggest secret maps and impossible fictions, rambling collections of events all strung along a collection of spaces, frame after frame, room after room, episode after episode."

We overlay an additional event space every time we play, whether entirely figuratively (as in many jeep games), or more literally, in either a dressed pre-existing environment (like *Just a Little Lovin'*, which used a set of cabins near Vestby as a set), or even more obviously in a completely created environment, like the set of the game

Kapo. Spaces are always bound to what is enacted in them, and Tschumi examines various degrees of binding, an avenue which I will elide for space but which may be fruitful for the theory-inclined. This notion of the temporally performed space is clearly demonstrated, almost multiply so, in *Delirium*, with its transient, physically reconfigured but fictively static environment, a space literally becoming a simulacrum. Just as altering the structure and pastness of relationships in games provides for much deeper meanings, we can alter the performed structure and pastness of spaces.

Explicitly performing and reworking our relationships with the built environment points toward new frontiers which are architecturally interesting, if nothing else-shades of the work of architect Cedric Price, rebuilt into a temporally complex augmented reality game, made even more charged by the current (as of this writing) occupation movement, temporary autonomous zones writing themselves permanent in cities around the world by performing those spaces differently.

ATEMPORALITY

That the occupations around the world will almost certainly (for better or worse) mean something different as they become history brings us to our last time-construct. Atemporality, coined by William Gibson in a talk at *BookExpo America* in 2010 and expanded on by Bruce Sterling at *transmediale 10*, is the collapse of meaning in previously historically-marked aesthetics -and, for that matter, ethics. The now-current meaning of the occupations

will be equally accessible when this is read as the contemporary meaning is; likewise the fashions of the 40's, or indeed the 80's, are equally as available today as contemporary fashion is. In pre-atemporal times, seeing someone walking down the street in 40's fashion would bring to mind someone playing a historical role, would explicitly load that temporal frame. Now, we no longer load that frame; we see a contemporary person wearing contemporary clothes which are referencing one equivalent aesthetic scheme.

While walking to the train to *Just a Little Lovin'*, I noticed a bunch of people dressed oddly - a little more color than I'd expect to see in NYC, for instance, but still within bounds where they wouldn't get much more than a second look; I didn't read the clothes then as being 80's-specific at all. It turned out that these were other players, some already dressed in costume. Just after the game, again waiting for a train with other players, I noticed two people off in the distance and almost called out to them that the train was coming, as from within an 80's-era aesthetic viewpoint, their clothes were very strongly period-marked. Of course, they weren't players at all.

Finding evocative near-modern clothing is always somewhat difficult, especially when trying to avoid things which will be read as ironic within our modern, hipster-saturated fashion milieu. That said the mass appropriation of fashion from all periods, network-culture driven instant recall, makes reading temporal contexts much harder. The key in this case was reading back into a culture which was much less sophisticated in its use of image, was relatively naive to visual quotation, appropriation, and mash-up. When the two people I saw after the game got closer, it was just this fluid use of image that made them obviously not players.

While atemporality for image is both useful and complicated, it will be interesting to see how atemporality alters our understanding of the traditions, rituals, and fictions we create. If we can use our more fluid understanding of time to imbue an easy pastness and we become used to an assumption of all historical traditions having some degree of presence, we may find our worlds increasingly easy to invoke thanks to a more nuanced understanding of the temporal effects and affects at our disposal.

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Love, Sex, Death, and Liminality

RITUAL IN JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

By Sarah Lynne Bowman, Ph.D

First published at nordiclarp.org in 2015.

Just a Little Lovin' is commonly touted as one of the best Nordic larps ever designed by those who have played it. Originally written in 2011 by Tor Kjetil Edland and Hanne Grasmø, the larp explores the lives of people in alternative sexual and spiritual subcultures during the span of 1982-1984 in New York who attend the same 4th of July party each year. As the larp progresses, the AIDS crisis increasingly sweeps through their community, affecting each member directly or indirectly. The result is a cathartic explosion of emotions that leave a lasting impact on the majority of the players.

This article will discuss some of these rhetorical threads surrounding the design of *Just a Little Lovin'*. Then, I will emphasize the importance of the ritual spaces and structures within the larp, which work to enhance communal connection in- and out-of-game and help produce these strong moments of catharsis.

PLAYER DISCOURSE

*Oh no, not I! I will survive!
Oh, as long as I know how to
love, I know I'll stay alive!
I've got all my life to live.
I've got all my love to give.
And I'll survive! I will
survive!*

Gloria Gaynor

In play reports, participants mention several powerful elements of the design. The characters have realistic motivations and relationship dynamics. The intersecting themes of desire, love, friendship, and fear of death interweave beautifully throughout the larp to provide a roller coaster of emotions for the players. The mechanics for sex and death are thoughtfully implemented, providing a meaningful, relatively safe framework in which to experience these powerful moments. The larp is organized into three Acts, with careful workshopping and debriefing exercises framing each phase. These breaks allow players opportunities to co-create the experience with one another through negotiation and agreement. While the larp does deal with the tragedy of disease impacting a tightly

knit community of creative, experimental, open-minded people, the emphasis of the larp is not to dwell in tragedy, but rather to undergo a strengthening of that community through shared experience.

As UK larper Mo Holkar wrote regarding the fourth run of the larp in Denmark 2015: I have never had my mind opened more by a larp, nor felt more bonded to a group of co-players – including those who I didn't actually interact with during play. And, importantly, this is not because we came through a terrible experience together: it wasn't like that at all. It's because we came through an amazing and uplifting and life-affirming and worldview-changing experience together (Holkar, 2015). Similar accounts exist in articles by other former players:

Erik Winther Paisley: I've got this sense that I've stolen a true glimpse of the past, or at least a past that could have been. We've created something real, and beautiful, and momentous. I don't know how to handle that. It's immense pride and I already feel nostalgic for it. In the most literal sense – I'm starting to feel the pangs of loss that are nostalgia. It's exactly the right emotion I need to be feeling right now. Beauty, loss, sorrow, pride, admiration, longing, pining for something. (Paisley, 2015)

Eden Gallanter: Just a Little Lovin' was full of life and color. Death was real, but we needed to make the most of whatever time we had left, in order to be together. The very structure of the game was oriented towards living, and even suffering was just another way to interact with others, to deepen a character, and add even more meaning to his or her life. Death was not a beautiful release; it was just the end. (Gallanter, 2015)

Miki Habryn: Picture, if you will, a group of people discussing the death of one of their characters, which is directly brought about by the nature and behaviour of another in the scene, talking about what kind of impressions they want to construct in this scene. Then they play the scene, to spec, with screaming, tears, loathing, self-hatred, disgust, horror, everything. Then one raises their head and calmly says 'thank you,' and, with tear tracks still drying and breath still shaking, they dissect the emotions that each other's play brought about, praising the particular moves, words, and timing that brought the greatest effect in their character's response to the other characters. I still can't decide if its madness, emotional vampirism, or the most awesome thing I have ever

participated in. (Habryn, 2012)

Simon James Pettitt: JaLL is without a doubt the most intense and [thoroughly] designed game I have]ever played. I understand now why some call it the best larp in the world. There [are] other as well-designed games out there, but it's the mix of brilliant design with a theme and especially the handling of the theme that creates just a more intense experience. (Pettit, 2015)

For more accounts, the impressive documentation book from the 2013 Danish run is available, which includes play reports from many of the participants, as well as producer reflections (Gronemann, Raasted, 2013). Several other articles from past participants are also available on various web sites.¹

Ultimately, much of the discourse surrounding the larp focuses upon the intense connections the experience creates between participants, the en-hanced understanding of the struggles of countercultural movements during the period, and increased awareness about the AIDS crisis. From a design perspective, Just a Little Lovin' is also touted as successful due to its inclusion of metatechniques from the freeform and blackbox scenes and its careful framing with regard to workshops, negotiation, de-roleing, and debriefing.

My examination of Just a Little Lovin' will discuss this framing in more detail, emphasizing the multi-layered, ritualized nature of the larp design. The careful construction and use of ritual space facilitates progressively deeper and more intense levels of play. In this analysis, I will discuss ritual in terms of both a) atmospheric rituals within the larp transpiring in specifically established spaces, and b) the overarching game framework.

My intent in sharing these accounts is not to support the claim that this larp is the "best designed in the world," but rather to emphasize that careful inclusion of heavily ritualized processes in larp design can guide players to deeper levels of connection and catharsis.

ALL LARP IS RITUAL

Is everybody in? The ceremony is about to begin. The entertainment for this evening is not new. You've seen this entertainment through and through. You have seen your birth, your life, your death. You may recall all the rest. Did you have a good world when you died? Enough to base a movie on?
Jim Morrison

According to scholars Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner (Turner, 1969), ritual involves three stages: a departure from the mundane world with

¹ For examples, see reflections by Petter Karlsson (2012); Eleanor Saitta (2012); Annika Waern (2012).

thorough separation, an entrance into an in-between state called liminality, and a return to the mundane world with an incorporation of the liminal experiences.

A. Separation: During the separation stage, the group prepares to shed their everyday roles and enter into new ones for the purpose of the ritual. The separation phase can include practicing the ritual, costuming, makeup, masks, establishing ritual space, or other activities intended to facilitate the transition.

B. Liminality: Participants enter their temporary social roles and play parts in a performance of some sort, either actively or passively. They cross over a “threshold” – or limen – into another state of being, which often transpires in a physical location specifically demarcated for the ritual. All participants agree to take part in this temporary, “betwixt and between” state, collectively agreeing to these new terms of their social reality. Turner refers to the liminal state as a “moment in and out of time”: a paradoxical, transitional experience.²

C. Incorporation: Participants then return to their previous social roles, leaving the ritual space behind. However, they incorporate the liminal experiences into their own lives to greater and lesser degrees. For example, if a community holds a rite of passage to mark a marriage, the couple leaves the wedding with a new social status acknowledged by all present. After leisure ritual activities – called “liminoid” moments — the individual can

determine how the experience will impact their involvement in the community and their development of self (Turner, *ibid.*).

Turner believed that rituals create *communitas*: a greater feeling of communal connection between participants. Additionally, rituals are often guided by a shaman figure: some sort of guide or facilitator of the process who helps establish the atmosphere, tone, and components of the ritual.

Several scholars have emphasized the ritual nature of larp itself.³ While not religious as many rituals are, secular ritual rites do exist in society. Generally speaking, larp includes the shedding of social roles, donning of new identities, performance of these identities in a temporary space guided by a producer, and a return to the previous self, often with some sort of change individually and socially. Players often report a greater sense of community as the result of these experiences, as evidenced by several of the quotes above.

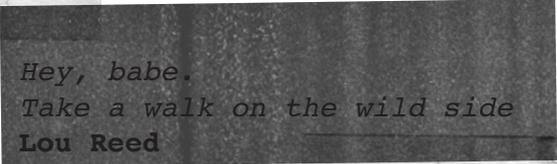
Therefore, *Just a Little Lovin'* is not unique in its ability to create these bonds, as all larp has the potential to do so. What I believe the larp excels at doing is creating well-timed, nearly continuous ritual activities that have the potential to personally transform both the player and the character. Due to the personal nature of the larp's content and its emphasis on sexuality, intimacy, vulnerability, and fear of death, the play offers participants the opportunity to reflect upon these aspects within themselves.

² Turner would distinguish play activities like larp as “liminoid” rather than “liminal” as they arise from leisure cultures, but this distinction is beyond the scope of this current discussion (Turner, 1974).

³ For a few examples, see Christopher I. Lehigh (2005); J. Tuomas Harviainen (2006); Sarah Lynne Bowman (2010); J. Tuomas Harviainen and Andreas Lieberoth (2011); Sarah Lynne Bowman (2014).

Each of the three Acts is framed by standard rituals common to the experience of most Americans to greater and lesser degrees: 1) the raising of the American flag while singing the National Anthem in the beginning and 2) a funeral at the end. Between these two poles of ritual experience, several smaller rituals are timed at regular intervals to offer potent, transformative experiences for characters and, by proxy, their players. On each side of these Acts, out-of-character ritual activities of workshopping, debriefing, and negotiating provide an even more structured frame. In this regard, *Just a Little Lovin'* can be seen as producing rituals within rituals within rituals for the players. Leaving mundane life to go to a camp for five days with a group of people is a shift in perspective in and of itself, which is then followed by larping, and then followed by ritual activities within the larp.

RITUAL SPACES AND SUBCULTURES



*Hey, babe,
Take a walk on the wild side*
Lou Reed

The structure of the character relations in *Just a Little Lovin'* involves each character belonging to one or more subcultures that were representative of the alternative scenes of the late '70s and early '80s in America. These subcultures include: rich gay men; the gay leather/fetish scene; drag performers; lesbian clubs; literary circles; the night club scene as exemplified by Studio 54; alternative spirituality seekers; tantra practitioners; members of a

polyfidelity commune; performance artists; swingers; peace activists; a group of cancer survivors; the Radical Faeries masculinity movement; and AIDS activists. Effectively, each character had multiple connections within some of these subcultures, including their core group of friends, their primary social circle, and their extended connections within their party scene.

These subcultures often had ritualized activities associated with them, as outlined in detail below. I played Joani, one of the leaders of the Spirituals, which meant that my ingame husband Kohana (Kevin Burns), best friend Kim (Caroline Christiane Kasten Koren), and I were responsible for running some of these rituals ourselves. Joani and Kohana ran the Saratoga Pact of friendship for the cancer survivors in a copse of trees in the woods; Kohana and Kim ran the Green Drink ritual of personal transformation around the bonfire at midnight; Joani ran tantra workshops in a special room complete with lava lamps, dark lighting, and pallets; and Kohana ran all-male drum circles, also around the bonfire. Other subcultures had similar ritual spaces, such as the stage, the dance floor, and the "dark room."

These spaces were established carefully as important parts of the scenography and were not in any way incidental to the setting. They offered Temporary Autonomous Zones for the Temporary Autonomous Identities of the characters: spaces where the rules of reality could function differently and where both characters and players could explore new facets of themselves (Pohjola, 2004).

This design created the possibility for overlap and exposure to new experiences. Rather than creating little pockets of exclusion, the social space was designed so that the environments occupied by members

of these groups were in close physical and social proximity to one another. For example, the tantra room where my character ran workshops was physically next to the “dark room,” where cruising, BDSM, and lesbian activities transpired. Sounds from that room emanated into our space and some participants wandered between both at various times.

This design encouraged “regular” attendees of each subcultural space to experiment with new ones, especially when all characters were expected to participate in group rituals such as the Green Drink ceremony, which might normally not interest some individuals. As an example, my character helped run the Saratoga Pact ritual, an annual ceremony in which cancer survivors renewed their vow to remain true to themselves, live life to its fullest, and always support one another. As the years went on, we inducted new members into the Saratoga Pact based upon their connections with previous survivors: lovers, close friends, family members, etc. Therefore, other characters were exposed to a small part of the survivor experience, just as many from the Pact were exposed to the new worlds of drag queens, BDSM, performance art, etc.

In another example, due to my offgame interest in drag and desire to help with the show, my character spent a good deal of time helping with makeup in the backstage area. This experience gave her access to a new subcultural realm and mode of artistic expression, as well as deeper connections with that social group in the game. The design of the physical and social space facilitated these sorts of crossovers.

RITUAL IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE LARP DESIGN

*You can dance, you can jive
Having the time of your life
See that girl, watch that scene
Digging the Dancing Queen*
ABBA

Just a Little Lovin’ takes place over the span of three Acts, each focusing upon a central theme: Act 1 is Desire, Act 2 is the Fear of Death, and Act 3 is Friendship. The total game time is approximately five days. 5pm until 12pm the next day is spent in-character during the Act, framed by workshoping before and debriefing after. Before each Act, players negotiate with their groups about how best to proceed, followed by 1-2 hours of downtime. The whole experience is followed by de-roleing and debriefing, with a much-needed afterparty in the evening after Act 3, where players can reconnect with their out-of-game selves, as well as process their experiences and connect with others.

Game time itself is heavily structured with back-to-back ingame rituals, which I detail below. Players are empowered to design and run many of these rituals themselves, with the exception of the National Anthem, the Lottery of Death, and the funerals, which are run by the producers. The 2015 run of the game had roughly the following structure, with some variation from Act to Act of non-essential rituals like tantra, BDSM, and drum circles:

- 1) **Song:** The producers play the “Just a Little Lovin’” song by Dusty Springfield while characters are frozen. This song ritually starts and ends the entire larp.
- 2) **Entrance to Mr. T’s party:** The party is itself a ritualized escape from the mundane world, as people can feel free to explore new identities. For example, a professor by day can engage in gay BDSM scenes at night.
- 3) **National Anthem:** The raising of the American flag on the porch, accompanied by the singing of the American National Anthem.
- 4) **Speeches:** T gives a welcome speech. Kohana gives a speech to honor the Saratoga Pact and summons members to that ceremony.
- 5) **Saratoga Pact:** Joani and Kohana run the Saratoga Pact ceremony for the cancer survivors in the woods away from the main party. When I ran this ritual, I had us recite the words of the pact in call-and-response format. Then, I asked each of those gathered to state their intentions for the year, evaluate past intentions, and induct new members. I hoped the intention part of the ritual would serve as a form of steering (Montola, Stenros, Saitta, 2014), where player-characters could focus their goals for each day of play in a directed manner.
- 6) **The Games (optional):** The Indigo House members organized some fun physical game activities in the field during Act 2.
- 7) **Dinner:** Ritual of eating together. Mr. T usually gave a speech during dinner.
- 8) **Tantra Workshops (optional):** In the tantra room, I ran workshops in Acts 1 and 3, primarily using techniques of guided mediation, eye gazing, and ars amandi.⁴
- 9) **Dark room (optional):** BDSM scenes, lesbian hour, and cruising pick-ups. The dark room was intended for characters willing to have semi-anonymous sexual encounters. Lesbian hour was part of the structure of the larp in order to establish liminal space for those characters as well.
- 10) **Drum circles (optional):** In Acts 2 and 3, Kohana/Kevin ran all-male drum circles for the Spirituals and Radical Faeries around the bonfire, with several other men attending as well.
- 11) **Blackbox scenes (optional):** Transpiring throughout the Acts, the blackbox was a liminal space within which players could negotiate and play out scenes from the past, the future, or fantasies. Two blackbox rooms were set aside for these purposes and did not “exist” in the normal game space. Our group used this space, for example, for Kohana to guide the Spirituals through a shamanic journey to meet their spirit animals — a scene that had transpired in the past.
- 12) **Drag/variety show:** Performance art, drag shows, singing, male stripping, poetry readings, anti-war protests, safe sex public service announcements, and rock band performances. Most of the characters attended or participated in this ritual during each Act.
- 13) **Dance party (optional):** Seduction on the dance floor, vogue-offs, circles where characters danced in the center, and general revelry transpired during this time.
- 14) **Hookah smoking (optional):** A “love nest” similar to a treehouse in the

⁴ Actual sex were forbidden at the larp, as was the consumption of real drugs or alcohol. The sex mechanics are described in the next section.

woods was set up with lights, pallets, and a hookah. Characters ritually smoked tobacco, laughed, and shared stories.

- 15) **Green Drink Ceremony at midnight:** Serves as an ingame ritual and a metatechnique. The characters consumed the Green Drink, which has unspecified contents ingame. This technique allowed players the chance to steer their characters toward explosions of building conflict or redirect them into new perspectives. Brilliant in replicating the transformative moments of hallucinogens that many people experience, while also offering the player an opportunity to take the reins of the character in their desired direction.
- 16) **Fireworks and paper balloon ceremony:** Each night after the green drink, fireworks were lit. In Act 2 and Act 3, paper balloons were lit in memory of those who passed that year. The balloons rose into the air, then the lights winked out just over the horizon.
- 17) **Aerobics (optional):** In at least one Act, the Amazons, a lesbian-run aerobics club, led a workout session for interested parties.
- 18) **Breakfast:** Ritual of eating together. During Act 3, two gay characters had an impromptu, “unlawful” wedding during breakfast to celebrate being alive and in love. Another ritual within a ritual. This moment later proved poignant for the players; Marriage Equality was finally ruled legal by the Supreme Court the next day in the U.S., over thirty years later in real time.
- 19) **Song Between Life and Death:** In the diner, a song was played to indicate the space between life and death, as well as the passage of time. All players were expected to remain quiet during

the song, though they could hold hands or hug.

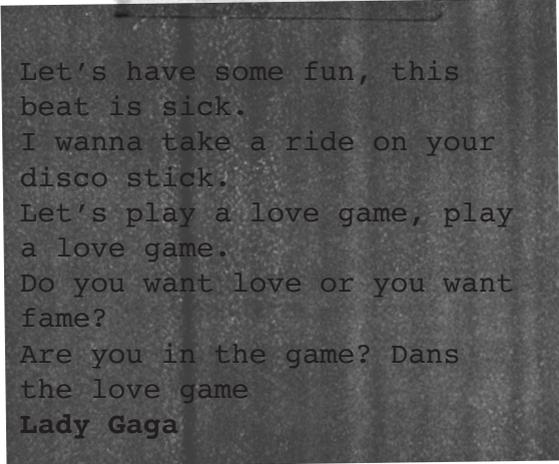
- 20) **The Lottery of Death:** Angels arrived to announce the Lottery of Death. Characters had to place the amount of lottery tickets in the hat equal to the risk level of their sexual activity in the last year. Names were drawn and those characters were called away.
- 21) **Death arrives personified as a woman:** Characters were led outside and instructed to collect flowers for the funeral. Chopin’s “Funeral March” was played in the background.
- 22) **Death marches the group to the funeral space:** Individuals who survived death that year were released to their loved ones.
- 23) **Funeral:** The group approached the coffins, where the characters who died lay. Death read the second chorus of the National Anthem like a eulogy, which framed the end of the Act.

Little downtime existed between the non-optional scheduled events, but characters had plenty of time for seduction, explosive arguments, breakups, drug overdoses, or laughing around the hookah. The tight schedule ensured that usually no more than 1-2 hours passed where no significant group event was transpiring. This structure afforded players consistent involvement with the larp on some level.

Additionally, these ingame spaces sometimes changed meaning or significance over the course of the larp. Spaces where casual sex once occurred such as the dark room were often eerily empty in later Acts as the fear of death became a palpable mood. Rituals also changed; the drag/variety show became much darker and sadder as the Acts progressed. Still, having the primary rituals and spaces remain intact added a sense of

consistency for a community plagued by fear and grief.

OFFGAME RITUALIZED



Let's have some fun, this
beat is sick.
I wanna take a ride on your
disco stick.
Let's play a love game, play
a love game.
Do you want love or you want
fame?
Are you in the game? Dans
the love game
Lady Gaga

STRUCTURES

Another important ritualized structure within the larp involved the sex mechanics. In everyday life, sexual encounters are sometimes considered liminal acts in their own right. In larps, sex scenes are approached in multiple ways: not pursued at all, played literally, or enacted using representational techniques such as back-rubs, ars amandi, rock-paper-scissors, or other “resolution” mechanics.

In *Just a Little Lovin'*, sex scenes also followed a ritual structure. One player would offer a pink feather to another, which represented an invitation to a sex scene. The other could choose to accept or deny the feather. Denying the feather did not represent an actual in-game rejection, but rather out-of-game consent to play a scene. Players would then go offgame and negotiate the boundaries of the scene, comfort with kissing/touching, and the events that would

occur. Groping of breasts or genitals was not permitted. Players had to remain clothed and use a wooden phallus as a representational object to indicate sexual touch regardless of whether the sex was gay, lesbian, queer, or heteronormative. When the negotiated scene was over, characters stood side-by-side and used the Monologue metatechnique, which allowed them to externalize their character's thoughts to the other player. Altogether, these metatechniques ritualized the beginning, middle, and end of each sex scene in a way that allowed for intensity, while maintaining a sense of safety and player distance.

Players could also call “cut” or “brake” in any scene. They could move their bodies to subtly indicate discomfort with kissing or touching in a non-verbal way that did not break the scene, a maneuver that was termed Deflection. Again, these safety mechanisms did not affect the fiction of the larp, but provided a greater sense of comfort for many of the participants engaging in intimate encounters.

Overall, extensive workshoping in large and small groups served as the separation phase for the main ritual of the larp, as did costuming. For the incorporation phase, the producers ran structured debriefs that lasted around 1-2 hours in groups of approximately ten people. After Act 3, we de-roled by placing a piece of our character's costuming in the center of a large circle, then wrote letters to our characters as ourselves. We were assigned a de-roleing buddy, to whom we read the letters. We were expected to exchange contact information and check in with our buddy in two weeks after the larp. These processes aided in both the return to the self and in reconciling the relationship between the self and the

character. The producers then invited guest speakers to discuss their experiences with HIV activism and with cancer, which served as a way to contextualize the themes we had just larped with real world experiences and facts.

As mentioned earlier, the afterparty was another crucial part of this larp, allowing players time to decompress, distance, and discuss events with other participants. Additionally, each year at the Nordic larp conference Knudepunkt, designers host an hour-long Just a Little Lovin' dance party, which many players attend in their costumes from the larp. Social media sites like Facebook also provide outlets for people to discuss their experiences, organize reunions, and share information about HIV and other relevant topics.

SUMMARY

The game content of Just a Little Lovin' on its own is powerful, exploring themes of sex, love, death, and friendship. Adding ritual elements to the larp works to draw players even deeper into the experience. For example, many participants can no longer hear the songs built into the larp design without a flood of memories and powerful emotions returning to them. Even if the character rejects the content of one

of the rituals ingame, thinking it “weird” or “uninteresting,” these events offer the opportunity for the character to react to ingame stimuli, which can draw them deeper into immersion. Additionally, the repetition of these ingame rituals in every Act with changes in the fiction each time can create new meaning: a sense of irony, feelings of grief, a sense of stability in an uncertain world.

All larps can include these ritualistic techniques and many larps have similar spaces set aside. Some fantasy and post-apocalyptic larps, for example, have elaborate religions built into the game, complete with rituals, sacred spaces, and mythology. Other Nordic larps such as KoiKoi and Totem have included extensive rituals as well, which are worth examining with regard to their impact on the larp experience.

In the case of Just a Little Lovin', however, the inclusion of vulnerability, sexuality, romantic intimacy, and death summons a particularly cathartic element for many of the players, especially since these elements become intertwined. Therefore, Just a Little Lovin' demonstrates how ritual elements in larp design combined with complex interweaving social connections and a strong theme can provoke intense emotional reactions and feelings of communal connection in the players.

Larp and Aesthetic Responsibility

WHEN JUST A LITTLE LOVIN' BECAME AN ART DEBATE

By Tova Gerge

This article was originally published in States of Play (2012), and republished in The Foundation Stone of Larp (2014).

I wrote a slightly longer version of this essay in 2012 in response to a Swedish newspaper debate from 2011 about whether or not larp is the right medium to treat the outbreak of HIV (as the larp Just a Little Lovin' did). Through recapitulating and analyzing the debate, I tried to map the then present positions of larp in the Swedish cultural infrastructure and discuss what kind of aesthetic responsibility could come with increased cultural power.

The larp was *Just a Little Lovin'*, a game with the tagline “1982: It was the summer AIDS came to New York City”. The debate – initiated by the art critic Philip Teir and continued by, among others, myself and the game’s designers, Hanne Grasmø and Tor Kjetil Edland – was about the specific characteristics of larp as an art form, as well as what constitutes artistic responsibility, and who has the right to retell which parts of the AIDS epidemic and in what way. Though the debate touched on highly explosive subjects, much more could have been said, and some of the in my opinion most important questions disappeared in the usual linguistic noise between larpers and non-larpers. Thus, I will now use this media event as a stepping stone for elaborating on questions about larp, responsibility and the privilege of interpretation.

Between March and May of 2011, something quite uncommon happened in one of Sweden’s biggest newspapers, Expressen: a relatively long-running debate about the artistic values of a larp.

CONTROVERSY

On the 30th of March 2011, Philip Teir writes in an article in the Swedish newspaper Expressen (“Lajv AIDS i tre dagar”), that

he is troubled by what he perceives as a sort of AIDS exoticism in the game *Just a Little Lovin'*. He asks if it is really up to anyone to play ill, and suspects that the urge to do so is mainly about basking in the soiled glory of an aestheticized tragedy in queer Greenwich Village. He also writes that what he appreciates about Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America* – one of the most famous contemporary accounts of the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in New York – is how it makes itself visible as a written construction all the time through constant references to philosophy and religious theory.

Teir seems to draw the conclusion that this is something a game cannot do, and that, because of this, no game can take responsibility for a narrative as sensitive as the AIDS epidemic. Furthermore, he makes reference to a theater performance that premiered at Teater Galeasen in Stockholm during the spring of 2011, *Bli en dår!* (Become a Loony!). This show used some interactive elements to explore the world of psychiatric care, and as Teir understands it, both the director and the dramaturg in such a set-up are replaced by the game designer. This seems to worry him.

Anxiety about the dissolution of a clear and stable authorship is for me a much less valid remark than the question about who owns the history of the AIDS epidemic – who can play ill – because I think this question should be asked more frequently not only by organizers, but also by players. Larpers are all about using histories that are not exactly their own, but we talk very little about what this means to both ourselves and others. In fact, I have hardly even approached the subject since one of my very first larp debates, maybe because it did not work out very well that time. It started with me making a blunt attack against a

group of girls who used to play prostitutes in medieval and fantasy larps. I wanted to know from what angle they explored the worlds of sexual abuse and human slavery that they were toying around with in their character descriptions, and I was concerned with the contrast between that reality and what I could only perceive as an enactment of “the happy whore” in a fantasy setting.

After some angry emails back and forth, the conversation ended with me asking for forgiveness for being so aggressive. I probably would not have been capable of taking it any further without putting my own position at risk – like everyone else I knew, I had written into character descriptions that my parents died in orc battles (or whatever), and no one ever had any remarks about that except that it was lacking in originality. What if, instead, they would have asked me what I knew about that sort of situation, having your parents killed in a war? Or why I used that image and how I thought it would affect me to play with that for a week? If this would have been the case, fantasy larps would have been something completely different than what they were, and maybe a lot of people would not have dared to attend. There can be a lot at stake when you larp, not least your social position, and to have it scrutinized before entering a game might be a major turn-off for many. Still, I think there is really something to gain in asking ourselves more seriously what kind of pleasure and what kind of politics we engage in when we larp. This not only because we live in a time when gamers become artists, artists become gamers, and where the concept of game is highly political, but also because it is so much easier for me as a fellow larper to hit the right spot if I know what to aim for.

None of this was in my response, published the 1st of April, to Teir's article. Being sheepishly loyal towards the larping movement whenever there is an attack from the "outside", I focused mainly on giving a different account of how aesthetic responsibility functions in a larp setting, defending the format of collective autonomous storytelling that seemed to frighten Teir. I stated that there is nothing inherently more defensible in staging Kushner's *Angels in America* or Strindberg's *Miss Julie* for the hundredth time than in making a three day game about AIDS or about the Swedish culture of honor. Additionally, I pointed out the fact that larpers often spend weeks doing research about their character and its historical context (if there is one). I proposed that this would make larpers less likely than, for example, theatergoers – who have just a few hours to grasp a complex story – to simply reproduce worn-out clichés. I thus argued that understanding how players invest personally and emotionally in a story – that is not made to be shown, interpreted or understood by someone outside the game – must be at the base if you want to formulate an accurate critique against a larp. I also took the occasion to briefly flunk *Bli en dåre!* both as a game and as a piece of theater, since I considered this performance an example par excellence of an aesthetic experience that did not take responsibility for the story that it used.

NEW PARTICIPANTS

Johan Wennstrom, a right-wing journalist with no specific qualifications within art or larp, entered the conversation on the 4th of April with the main concern that

contemporary culture is strangely fascinated with suffering and illness. For him, there is no difference between a subcultural event in Oslo and a theater performance in an established venue in Stockholm as long as they focus on the dark sides of being human. He also seems to have lost the capacity for doing an internet search, since he ends his article by asking where one can find art that shows "the best sides of life".

On the 7th of April, the designers of *Just a Little Lovin'*, Grasmo and Edland, responded to the two critical articles. Regarding Wennstrom, they argue that the romantic comedy is not under threat of extinction, and that the contemporary art scene needs something else than showing the best sides of life, otherwise it becomes too flat and creates too little friction. They thus implicitly establish a norm for art as a zone for examining conflicts, and they explicitly point out the first outbreak of the AIDS epidemic as an event that is interestingly charged because of how it touched the Western world's conception of death.

When it comes to Teir's initial remarks, Grasmo and Edland answer that although it is important to treat sensitive questions with respect, there is also a need for creating new fiction about AIDS; fiction that takes risks in both its form and content. They consider larp an art form, and as such particularly useful in how it incorporates the subjective experience, rather than prescribe or control how a media consumer should feel. At the same time, they address the fact that larp is a subculture where fantasy games represent the norm, and where a larp about AIDS is very much in the avant-garde of a scene that is undergoing drastic changes.

For me as a larper, Grasmo and Edland's attempt to contextualize *Just a Little Lovin'*

points towards other subcultural issues, such as what kind of statement it is to make a game with mainly male homosexual characters in a larping community where the vast majority of the fictions that players enter reproduce a heterosexual and often profoundly sexist world order. Of course, this choice does not merely have an aesthetic or story building value, but actually breaks with a long gaming tradition of aligning the character's gender and desires with what is perceived as the player's biological sex. A larp like *Just a Little Lovin'* not only shows how strong the heterosexual larp norm is by being an exception, it also forces those who don't fit into the category of "male homosexual" in everyday life to do what any gender wildcard has always been forced to do in mainstream scenarios: work to pass.

What a game or a performance does to the social field in which it is inscribed is for me as important a criteria for a "good" aesthetic experience as happy endings seem to be for Wennstrom. This leads me back to why I considered the theater performance *Bli en dâre!* irresponsible in how it approached its theme of institutional mental care. Not only did I think that this play tried to make things light and fun in a superficial way, not only was I provoked by how it reproduced all possible clichés around mental illness and hospitalization; most of all, I was upset with how clumsily it covered any visitor's own experiences of psychiatric care by inserting a vague element of "interaction" that allowed almost no freedom for visitors, but a lot of chances for actors to improvise generic craziness in between the long sections of set, badly written material.

In this sense, *Bli en dâre!* did not give its community of visitors the chance to take a critical passive position as spectators, nor an actively renegotiating position as players.

What the piece then did to its social fields was in my opinion not to open people's eyes to the potential of interactive elements in stage art, nor to seriously question norms in the mental care system, nor to open a platform for the audience to present their own histories. Rather, it consolidated common place prejudices about both interactive arts and about madness.

After visiting the show, I came to think of James MacDonald's article in *Playing Reality* (2009), "There You Are, There You Ain't – Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart" (2009), where he gives an account of how he experienced SIGNA's performance *The 11th Knife*. MacDonald revisits his initial confusion with a game that seemed to be ongoing between the performers, but obscure to the visitors, who were presented with neither characters nor rules. However, he gradually found a way into the game, discovering only when his friends dropped by to look at the performance that playing had slightly altered his persona and made it uncomfortable for him to interact with people who knew him as someone else.

I briefly asked myself if *Bli en dâre!* could have allowed for something similar, but in my experience, this was not the case. Despite the fact that all spectators got either a caretaker's or a patient's coat when they arrived, the actors of the piece were not primarily playing a game with the audience or each other – they were not interacting, they were acting. So, to enter their scene would not have been a question of grasping their rules, but breaking their rules.

Once during my three hour visit in the seventy-two hour scenario (seventy-two hours that were really more like a collection of shorter sets with certain episodes looped so that all audience members would see them, and with the chance to do one or two

ordinary sleepovers, without any theater during the night), an audience member interrupted a preset scene with a comment. This was tolerated but not actively acted upon – exactly what would happen in any theater setting where the fourth wall is not breached.

In my opinion, the most “interactive” parts of this performance occurred in the glitches between activities, when visitors were led from theater chairs to strictly framed but easygoing daycare activities or to contentless yes-or-no quizzes where the actors got perplexed if you answered something as elaborate as “maybe”. Walking from one room to another in the company of a person who had no other task than helping to find the way, gave the opportunity to connect in a new way and have a non-scripted interaction.

Apart from these – most likely unintended – breaks in the web of fiction, I had a hard time seeing how it was possible to make a serious emotional or political investment in this kind of hybrid. Certainly no investment could happen on the same terms as the actors, who followed a script that was not open for hacking or resistance. The artistic team in this sense established themselves as an authority in interpreting mental illness, something that certain critics accepted, while others, especially people with a personal experience of psychiatric care, strongly disapproved. One of the latter was the author Ann Heberlein in *Dagens Nyheter* 7th of March 2011 (a note from me in 2021: this was before she became a vocal right wing populist). She felt that the world of *Bli en dåre!* was disconnected from the reality of Swedish healthcare – something she had extensive personal experience with – and had more to do with washed-out remakes of stories from Hollywood productions.

GOOD OR BAD REFERENCES

I agree with Heberlein that whatever intimate experience the makers of *Bli en dåre!* might have had with different types of illness and care, they most certainly didn't use it very convincingly in their theater work. Larp on the other hand can hardly avoid exposing intimate experience: we cannot shut out our own histories, sorrows and desires from a game structure that takes both our minds and bodies in possession. In this sense, larp cannot totally control and flatten the nuances of a storyline the way theater can, and this is at the core of the defense of *Just a Little Lovin'* that both I, and Grasmø and Edland, laid out in our articles during the spring of 2011. Still, I think that the next person that entered the debate, the journalist and author Johan Hilton, did an accurate critique of the framing of the larp.

Just like when Heberlein detected Hollywood dramaturgy rather than serious research in *Bli en dåre!*, Hilton is skeptical of the number of pop cultural references made on the homepage of *Just a Little Lovin'*. He points out that the inspirational material from the organizers and the pictures that illustrate the texts seem to be mostly nostalgic kitsch from or about the Eighties, such as Grace Jones' music or the films *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988), *Longtime Companion* (1989), *Tootsie* (1982) and *54* (1998). If the game is indeed about having a subjective understanding of an era that passed, he wants to know where the documentary material is, or whether it was too repulsive and ugly to be fitted into this aestheticized disco world. Furthermore, he makes reference to Susan Sontag's text *Illness as Metaphor* (1978). In this text,

Sontag explores how tuberculosis, cancer and other illnesses have been used in fiction for expressing character, as if the illness resulted from a state of passion in someone's inner life, rather than just being what it is. Sontag argued that this may shame and discourage people with a real experience of illness from talking or writing about their lives outside the metaphorical frame.

As Hilton understands it, mainstream fiction has used AIDS as a metaphor very much in the sense that Sontag describes, for example in films like *The Hours* (2002), the musical *Rent* (1996) – inspired by Puccini's 1896 opera *La Bohème*, but with AIDS literally replacing tuberculosis – or the feel-good AIDS movie *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1997). In those, Hilton states, the subversive, artistic and marginalized become marked by death as a consequence of their way of life. As far as Hilton can see, *Just a Little Lovin'* takes no distance from such a logic in the presentation of the game. In his opinion, it is hard not to read in an exoticism and an apocalyptic romanticism in the imagery of young beautiful gay men partying while death knocks at the door. He therefore asks whether this narrative could supply anyone with a subjective understanding of what the AIDS epidemic was and is. Furthermore, he doubts that the organizers of the larp would be interested in examining the tragedy of demographic extinction if they also had to leave the glamorous scenery behind and work with something less aestheticized, like the starvation disaster in Ethiopia, a Tsunami or the Srebrenica massacre.

I think that Hilton might be wrong in this last assumption – not only because I know that Grasmo and Edland discussed working with questions about AIDS in Africa before they settled on the plot for *Just a Little Lovin'*, but also because larpers in

general tend to do scenarios about all kinds of things, including historical and contemporary events that are potentially very sensitive. This does not necessarily mean that this is done in a thoughtful manner, which is actually just another reason to take Hilton's remarks about reproduction of clichés seriously. However, in the specific case of *Just a Little Lovin'*, Hilton's critique is interesting both because it shows how much the initial presentation of the game was dependent on reproducing images from other fiction, and because it shows how unthinkable it was for Hilton to assume that someone involved with this larp could actually have a personal relation to the AIDS epidemic. The latter is of course a mistake, even if one can understand how he draws this conclusion from the presentation that he has access to. Nevertheless, I dare state that many of the players in *Just a Little Lovin'* had at least one foot in some kind of queer community and were born in the Eighties or earlier. This implies that many of those players are likely to have friends who lost someone dear to them before the antiretroviral medicines became more efficient, likely to have been involved with AIDS activism and likely to have dealt with the added stigmatization of non-heterosexual life that the AIDS epidemic caused. For me personally, it would have taken that kind of formulation to feel motivated to play *Just a Little Lovin'*. I would have to consider it some kind of memory work, a way of grasping what friends of mine have been through, in order to not feel that I could just as well have played Cluedo.

I don't mean this arrogantly. I am sure there are many ways to play this game with political insight into the sensitive position of AIDS and HIV in contemporary society. However, I will not try to list other examples, since I never had any longer

conversations with players and organizers about how the preparations for the game and the game frames as such encouraged reflective and nuanced ways of examining illness, love and loss. I did not participate as a player and can thus only trust people to tell the truth when they say that *Just a Little Lovin'* was an important experience for them.

In Grasmó and Edland's answer to Hilton the 5th of May, they claim that what Hilton is doing is equal to reviewing a theater poster. It would possibly be a better analogy to say that it is equal to reviewing a theater program written and edited by the directors. This is not exactly a common critical practice, but in some cases it would be useful. How something is promoted is definitely a part of what it becomes as a whole, and even if one does not see the whole picture, seeing a part of something is also an aesthetic experience that can make you think and feel. In the case of Teir and Hilton, this homepage obviously made them react strongly enough to write invested articles outside critical conventions, addressing a subculture and an aesthetic practice that they don't know anything about.

In this sense, the argument "don't judge a book by its cover" is weak. However, Grasmó and Edland also defend their choice to flirt with apocalyptic romanticism, making reference to Juhana Pettersson's notion *The Necessary Zombie*. Pettersson's idea is that larpers in general, because of how larp has developed, fear things that connote "art" or "experimental" in relation to larp. Organizers thus need something easily grasped, such as a familiar genre element (zombies), to lure their players in. *The Necessary Zombie* is about making players feel that they know what they are expected to do, so that they

become cooperative, open and emotionally invested. For Grasmó and Edland, Grace Jones and the iconography of the Eighties serve that purpose.

However, they also assure the readers that the process and the game will be about developing characters away from the initial clichés into complex human beings. They return to the idea of how larp engages the whole body in a system of interaction that is not entirely controllable, and thus will always break down simplistic models of the world. Furthermore, they point out that they are not interested in making a correct interpretation of an historical era, but that the larp is about the life of the players and the Western world's avoidance of death. They state that their scenario is primarily about examining the dialectics between desire and death anxiety through the intermediate of strong friendship. What this piece of work results in, they argue, cannot be decided before the game and the documentation thereof has been concluded. Finally, they express a hope that the debate will contribute to better criteria for judging the artistic value of larps.

Hilton's short reply, also the last word in the debate, repeats the concerns with the choice to enhance every cliché there is about AIDS. Hilton is also skeptical of the argument that bodily participation changes the approach to the clichés no matter the initial context. He quotes his experience of doing improvisational theater sessions that reminded him of larp in the sense that they were situation-based and long in duration. In his final line, he sardonically states that this indeed did not make those sessions into art.

ART

I agree that context makes all the difference, but in a slightly different way than Hilton intends it. What was actually missing in order for Hilton's improvisations to become art was not a certain level of concentration or dedication – even if it is tempting to point out that larp is often quite different from improvisational theater in its pace, its presentation of self/character, its game logic and its set-up.

No, what was missing is the same thing that larp generally has never had: contexts that frame it as art. In their last arguments, both Grasmø, Edland and Hilton have chosen to ignore the fact that what gets to be called “art” is not what holds a certain “objective quality”, but what is invited or invites itself to the venues, social circles and economic fields that define art. The iconic event of Marcel Duchamp signing an urinal and exhibiting it under the name *Fountain* (1917), Howard S. Becker's book *Art Worlds* (1982) giving an account of how processes of recognition can happen in the art field, and many other artists and theorists, can serve as examples of how difficult it is to set up stable criteria for quality in art.

That both the organizers of *Just a Little Lovin'* and its critics still make reference to such a thing might be a sign that larp

as a subculture has started to knock on the doors of the artistic establishment, and that some elements that are central to larp have become more interesting to established artistic fields. If this means that in the future, larpers will be expected to take greater responsibility – also on a more official media scene – for how their games affect the practitioners and the surrounding society, I think this is something we should embrace.

Not because I necessarily believe that larp should be considered art or consider itself as such, but because this movement has nothing to lose from becoming more aware of its weaknesses and potentials. When art critics fail in having substantial things to say about our work, we should be capable of doing it better. Aesthetic responsibility has nothing to do with being accepted by journalists, artists or theorists. Rather the opposite: it is about being ready to enter in conversation about the politics of your desire with people who might not be in power over how their history is written.

So let us talk, not about abstract notions like quality, but about what larps do to us and our perception of the world, no matter if we are in it for the fun, the violence, the sex or the theory. If we manage to take into consideration what stories we are using and why – if we manage to accept the fact that we are not underdogs just because we have a slightly marginal hobby – then we will also be in a position where we may learn more than we ever imagined about which rules of reality can be altered and how.

Play the Gay Away

CONFESSIONS OF A QUEER LARPER LARPING WHILE QUEER

By Erik Winther Paisley

*First published in *Larp Politics – Systems, Theory, and Gender in Action* (2016)*

WHO'S A QUEER

I guess everybody knows I'm gay, but I don't think everybody knows I'm a queer, too. I like to incorporate gay culture into my speech and slang, and even used to flaunt my gayness, but I haven't been able to come to grips with being queer.

Being queer is to approach life from an oblique angle, to step into the world somehow askance, as an outsider, which is decidedly more difficult (Ahmed 2006, *passim*). Being left-handed must feel similar. There are all these scissors and tools and techniques out there that

everybody can just grab and use, but for you, there's something amiss. You can't get a proper hold even if you know perfectly how people go about it. They just pick up the scissors and don't give any thoughts to the fact that they're custom-built to suit their take on the world.

It's the same for queers as it is for lefties. You find the world wasn't designed with you in mind. Straight love stories feel like wrong-handed scissors to me. I understand perfectly well – intellectually – what they're about, but they aren't immediately accessible to me. I can pick them up and use them, but only awkwardly. Their straightness is foregrounded. I guess stories that happen in queer settings must feel the same for straight people. Guess that's why they always call them gay love stories. *Brokeback Mountain* isn't about cowboys in love; it's about gay cowboys in something that looks an awful lot like love (except without the emotional impact.)

Until I played *Just a Little Lovin'* this summer (2015), I never understood why straight people were interested in playing love stories. It was abstract and I couldn't relate to it.

THE GAY AGENDA

Once at the tender age of 16, a female player tried to involve me in a love plot at a Danish fantasy larp; I went along with the midnight moonlit walk in the woods, but felt alienated from the situation – somewhat worried that this would come across as offgame dating.

Since then love plots were only a source of potential awkwardness for me – either the awkwardness of feigning heterosexuality ingame, feigning interest in heterosexual love stories for fear of seeming unable to immerse, or – above all – the awkwardness I would risk if it looked as though I were steering my game in a romantic direction.

Imposing my queer agenda on the game for personal gratification seemed like the perfect way to become an outsider. When I was growing up in the Danish fantasy larp scene (c. 2000–2005), the games we played tended not to be accessible to players as queer people because they rarely or never incorporated queer themes directly.

It is not that people were homophobes; I just do not think it occurred to them that the king could be a big queen, that fierce lady orcs could love each other, or that gender transitioning could be a rite of passage for druids. Orcs were fine, but fairies stretch the imagination.

The only even remotely queer thing that comes to mind from that time are the cracks about homoelvere (gay elves). I was one, of course. I once received a letter in the post addressed to “Erik, the gayest boy in the world.” Bless the sender, who knows who

he is, and bless my parents for not asking questions.

Any bona-fide queerness in the larp fiction would be something that I would have to introduce out of my own initiative. Maybe not at my own peril, but try telling that to a giddy kid who is only out of the closet when he is at larps. And does not want to fuck things up. What would it say about me if I could not even play a silly game without queerhacking it to accommodate my particular proclivities? When you go to a larp that is not designed for queerness, and you bring up the issue and pursue queer themes, it can feel as if you are imposing your queer agenda on the game. There are not many good reasons for a person to do such a strange thing. Either you are doing it for sexual kinks or you are trying to make a point of it. Other players might not have given any thought to whether there are queer characters in the game or even in the game world. It sounds like reasonable accommodation, but it feels a lot like rocking the boat.

QUEENS AND WIZARDS

Two larps challenged that feeling. The first was close to home – the *College of Wizardry* (2015, 3rd run), a Harry Potter-esque game about the students and staff at a wizarding school that has been making the headlines for the last couple of years.

I was not intending it to be, but *College of Wizardry* became queer larp bootcamp for me before I had to go full queer later in the year. It was the first larp I had been to where the producers had specifically written the existence of queer relationships into the

fiction – they dedicated a whole page of the design document (Rollespilsfabrikken 2015) to telling us it’s OK to play gay. I guess they provided an affordance that I have not been used to having. If they had not made that design decision, I probably would not have asked. I mean, there are kids there. Can’t I just get on with the game?

Luckily, that’s exactly what I got to do. Seeing as I am a larper and love to cry, I wanted to play a mournful widower whose husband had been “scraped off the wall and buried with honors” during the Wizarding Wars. Playing it straight would have been a distraction, would have made it less real. *College of Wizardry* was a place where the queerness of being gay could be left in the background, and I could just be an angry widower instead.

Nevertheless, my character was studiously asexual and churlish. Three co-players conspired to tame the shrew and get me out into the world again. I am sorry to say that they succeeded. Once again, I would not have done that on my own. A simple design choice from the producers reminded me that queer stories were possible topics of play. I did still have to come out of the closet during the game, but that was because my character was an unregistered badger Animagus, not a gay widower.

And then there was *Just a Little Lovin’*, which has gotta be the gayest larp ever played. It is almost mythically so – leather men, drag queens, dark rooms, dykes, closet cases, AIDS, Abba, sequins, brotherhood, fisting. The aesthetics are camp and the theme is dead serious. Players portray a social circuit in New York in the 1980s as it is ravaged by AIDS during the years of 1982, 1983 and 1984. The stories that the larp produces are magnificent run after run after run, but for me and from what I know,

the transformative part of the game is how it transplants players into a world where gay is the new normal. It was the best game I have ever played and I think that is true for a lot of other people, especially all the other queers.

PLAYING OUT THE CLOSET

You would think going to *Just a Little Lovin’*, the gayest game ever, would be a chance to let my queerness fade into the background. For one, it was my first experience of being in a gay male world outside “the scene” – where I had never felt at home, anyway. I think I am too square for it. Everybody always thinks I am somebody’s awkward straight friend. It sounds poetic, “being a stranger among my own kind”, but when you’re in the situation it just makes you feel even queerer. Finally, my gayness would not set me apart – just my queerness.

In daily life, it is hard to trace all of the sources of my queerness. As a geek, I am queered once talk goes to mainstream topics I cannot identify with, which I imagine a lot of larpers have experienced. As a perpetual foreigner, as someone who wanders into the deep end of conversations, I am queer for a lot of reasons. I might as well be left-handed.

After *Just a Little Lovin’*, I even felt some resentment toward straight players. They get to read and play love stories without all the mental adjustments, caveats, and hypotheticals that gay people need to make in order to relate to them. They get to cringe at and enjoy Hollywood sex scenes

for what they are. They get to have their stories served up straight. The rest of us do not have that. It is like we are listening for love songs, but through heavy white noise. Straight people have got it coming in loud and clear.

In the context of *Just a Little Lovin'*, it was safe to assume that everyone was either gay or gay-friendly, and the straight characters were an amusing backdrop.

On the other hand, I was still a very queer character – older, a drag queen, mother, always donning an alter-ego that I could use as a shield. I could be aloof and statuesque if I wanted to, and every time anything became too real, I could escape into a world of my own making. My character, gay guy Nate, could become the Queen of Diamonds. He even escaped death (for a time).

While *Just a Little Lovin'* did offer relief from a single source of my queerness, my orientation toward other men, it could not dispel my inclination. I did not go into the dark room nor participate in orgies. I only had three sex scenes, all of which involved straight players, and I still feel guilty about one of them and awkward about finding them all a bit arousing. Even in a gay larp, there are ways to feel like a big old queer.

My character's story once again became a story about being drawn into the world and forced to unqueer myself – but I struggled to fully engage until I was literally grabbed by the hair in a sex scene and brought into the story, incidentally by a straight player, who I imagine has more experience being in the normal world and thus being more accustomed to love stories and play. I was a larp love virgin. For some players, queer had become so normal that they had trouble readjusting to the fact that most

people in the world are not. That was not my experience – but I did get to forget my gayness and play around with being queer, and boy did I ever.

QUEER SHAME

Years before I played *Just a Little Lovin'*, I attended a workshop at Solmukohta 2012 where the sex simulation technique used at the game was demonstrated. Other people have described it better than I can:

Sexual scenes started with offering another player a pink feather. If they took the feather then they said yes to playing a sex scene ... If you did agree, you took the feather and you walked off a bit from the other players, talked out of character about what sort of scene you wanted to do, agreed on how you were comfortable playing it and then you played the sex scene. When you played sex you could touch the other player, as long as you kept your clothes on, and as long as you didn't touch genital areas and the breasts. ... Penetrative sex and any other type of sex that might transmit the virus was played out by touching and stroking and playing with a phallic prop. Phallic prop. (*Dalstål, 2012*)

It is hands-on. And it is a great technique, but it is also terrifying – which is why the designers of *Just a Little Lovin'* go to such

efforts to couch it in narrative meaning, with a symbolic way of accepting or declining an invitation to have a sex scene, a detailed negotiation beforehand, monologues afterwards, and so on. It is not like you just whip it out and start larp-screwing people.

The workshop facilitator tried to explain all of this and made an honest effort to make people – me – feel safe about trying the technique, but it did not work. Through the combined efforts of somebody's toddler being present, casual onlookers passing through the workshop space, and general feeling of exposure, I was doused with buckets of sexual shame in a way that I had not experienced since my Dad once forgot to knock. That is only context, though. What was the proximate cause of my shame? The exposure was bad enough. Worst was the fact that one of the mini-scenes was nice. I ended up snuggling up with a tall, dark and handsome French larper – though somebody older and different than the kind of guy I would usually go for – and stroking a candle. The candle did not do it for me, but the snuggling sort of did. Once again, the fear of exploiting the game situation for sexual gratification. Alongside a platinum wig and hooker shoes, that's some of the luggage I packed for *Just a Little Lovin'*.

A QUEER BEAUTY

My character at *Just a Little Lovin'* was something of an alien. A one-time loner, drag queen, a man with a million pasts, who had swept into town six months before like Dionysus arriving from the east. In the game world, he had screwed his way through half of New York before setting up his nightclub. Par for the course.

For my own part, I could not see my character as very sexual. Being a gay man, appreciation of women's beauty and desirability is abstract for me. I know what physical beauty looks like and what bodies are, so to say, attractive, but they do not actually do it for me. I can recognize attractiveness, but it does not arouse me. And although I love drag, I am not particularly attracted to men in drag. I like masculine guys, even though they can be intimidating.

I also like to think of myself as quite masculine and I dress to maximize that appearance. Even when I wear something more feminine, like a t-shirt with a low neckline, I do it to show off my male strength. The feminine has a strange allure, if only because we grow in a world where men are supposed to be attracted by femininity. It does not matter that you are gay, or that you are a man. Growing up in a culture where the masculine is drawn to the feminine, playing around with femininity feels like playing with fire. On the one hand, there is an excitement to it and some plain relief from not having to perform traditional masculinity; on the other, there is a shame from feminization and a fear of losing your attractiveness as a man, demeaning yourself by being a nancy boy.

The effeminate is a no-man's land that you don't venture into lightly. Even gay men can be bitches toward fems. I mean, nobody wants to be a sissy, right?

I had not been in drag since I did a rendition of Geri Spice at a school show in the 6th grade. Sassy is fine; sissy is not. The prospect of playing a drag queen was quite intimidating. And the physical sensation of dragging was strange and foreign, but did not come close to the experience of seeing myself full-figure in the mirror and hardly

recognizing the visage looking back at me. Queer almost does not cover it. As I wrote a few days later:

Experiencing [Nate's story] and creating it as a player gave me a taste of being beautiful and admired in a way I have never been before. It's a foreign and different and dreamlike kind of beauty you feel as a drag queen of his time and age. It's made me look at myself, literally, in a different light. (...) I got to stand as a statue and lie half-undressed, makeup smeared, and look at myself in that big, gorgeous mirror in the dressing room. It was bizarre and I don't know how to square that image of myself with what I otherwise am. Nate might be someone I might have been, had I been born when he was. I don't know how I feel about that. It feels dangerous and horrifying, but the appeal of his life and his aesthetic is still there. (*Paisley, 2015*)

For a straight player, reorienting themselves sexually and socially toward the same sex might have been a powerful source of personal queerness. For me, it was through drag.

I do not think your personal sexual desire toward a gender can be changed through a game, but I do think your orientation can be. For someone who is oriented toward men, whether sexually, romantically or socially, you read a room in a different way than someone who is "into" women (Ahmed 2006). If you coax yourself into

looking toward, cruising for, play-lusting for the other gender, even if you are looking for narrative satisfaction rather than carnal, you can have a reorientation. At least until the curtain drops. When you leave the game, some of the angles of approach you had just begun to become accustomed to suddenly become unavailable. When that happens, the world gets a bit queerer.

My reorientation toward others came from being perched on heels, wrapped in foam and sequins and painted up like a glamorous old broad. With myself as the main audience, I tested out a new kind of queer.

The dressing room scenes were especially powerful, not just for the banter, but the undressing, too. You show a lot of yourself when you drag, even as you hide it. You wonder if you look alright – as a player who wants to have a good costume that isn't silly, and as a person who is vain and does not want to look stupid in a dress. My co-players helped dress me up and down, put on my lashes, and beat my face. I started each show by looking myself over critically in the mirror. The Queen would never ask, but I had to ask if I looked alright. Then I could parade proudly onto the stage to oo's and ah's.

It took a lot of convincing to play that kind of queer for real, not just for laughs. If anything I even distanced myself personally at first in the game. I could become a statue when I wanted to. Majestic mourning is a very safe, insulated place to be. Thankfully it did not last.

PLAY IT STRAIGHT

Before the second night of the game began, I mentioned in the intermezzo that I did not think of my character as someone who was particularly attractive. I had been channeling an old queen from *Paris Is Burning* (1991). I felt... sassy, impressive perhaps, but sexually attractive? Somebody disagreed. Shit. That somebody was Mr T – “a perfect embodiment of a successful gay man played by a strikingly handsome Swedish player” as I described him a few days later – who found my character attractive. Maybe he thought I, the player, was attractive, and maybe that was bleeding into how he saw me.

Even my newfound beauty became a source of awkwardness for me, because I did not know how to handle the foreignness of my character and how to comport myself in this world. I can play gay – well, hell no, but I can try – but being the object of desire in a feminine persona was unrelatable for me, so I retreated into my aloof position as Queen.

Luckily, Mr T was there to help me shimmy out of my comfort zone. After flirting in the silly, normal ways people do on the dance floor, we took to the dressing room (in exactly the same way as you leave a party to go kiss! In a game!) where he proceeded to help me get undressed. Wig off, then shoes, then half the dress, then most of the persona. We ended up lying next to each other on the floor, looking into the ceiling, and laughing about hooking up for old time's sake.

It was normal. Relatable. A scene that I get. Possibly the least queer thing that happened to me during the entire game, but it would not have been possible if the game had not been heavily rigged for queerness. In normal life, I can't just drop the mask and kiss. I have the option of going into the closet – being outwardly normal, camping out – being outwardly queer, or going on as I usually do – feeling normal, but only until the context re-queers me by reminding me of the ways in which I'm not.

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES

It is hard not to have a bit of estrangement and bitterness when, at least in aspects of your life, you are stuck on the outside looking in. Being made to feel queer is something that happens to everybody once in a while, but for those of us whose sexualities, gender identities, or personal orientations are queer, it is a position we can struggle to escape from.

So, playing an embittered gay badger wizard let me feel normal, while being a gay man among gay men did not. It did more for me – it let me play with an even more fundamental part of my identity, as a queer, in a way that would not have been remotely possible in a game where my gayness had been in the foreground. This let me dig into some deep, dangerous, challenging play.

I was given a powerful backdrop for the drama that took place later. It was the final night of the game, in 1984 when we all knew, and I had not seen Walter, my ingame lover, for hours, until he found me on the

dance floor. He had come to show me the letter from the clinic that said he was HIV positive. We had been living together for a year at the time.

We wept. We had sex. Just so it wouldn't matter. I had to have him grab my hair, push me down and drag me out of my isolation. My makeup was smeared and the dress crumpled. It was raw and visceral, and it was over almost before it started. Fittingly. Afterwards I left him and walked back on towering heels to the dressing room and collapsed onto the floor. I was tarnished, but I couldn't take my eyes off myself.

After a while my faghag, Diane, came, and she knew, and she helped me take my make-up off. Joani who did my eyes before the shows also knew, and she helped too. I sat still, and was undressed yet another time.

The scene tore my character out of the world I had spent the game trying to create; and I needed the game to give me a chance to feel something normal before I could let it make me feel such a queer kind of loss. Without Mr T, no Walter. No queer storylines, no universal loss.

This kind of play is personally rewarding, but it is not a personal achievement. It would not have been possible without the conscious effort of designers, producers, and co-players to make it so. If players with less experience of queerness want a chance to dig into these themes, I have got just the shoes for the occasion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would especially like to thank Simon "Walter" Svensson, Arvid "Mr. T" Björklund and my extended drag family for making this article possible.



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PLAYLISTS CREATED FOR JUST A LITTLE LOVIN'

Act 1, 1982. Tor Kjetil Edland.

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playlist/4r0RquVQM1cCE5j6QtNgLV?si=67fe06640ac648bc](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4r0RquVQM1cCE5j6QtNgLV?si=67fe06640ac648bc)

Act 2, 1983. Tor Kjetil Edland.

[https://open.spotify.com/
playlist/5Ujd75YzX9meOL4dj3ahMv?si=c1efe5640d2e4cb6](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Ujd75YzX9meOL4dj3ahMv?si=c1efe5640d2e4cb6)

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playlist/0ZnQzhtjUdW6HiSJsZWu7F?si=8b9fa8f5baf245da](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0ZnQzhtjUdW6HiSJsZWu7F?si=8b9fa8f5baf245da)

Dark Room. Tor Kjetil Edland.

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playlist/3mU9uMc7F0Dv1pnkOVnE4r?si=740ce4799cfb40ca](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3mU9uMc7F0Dv1pnkOVnE4r?si=740ce4799cfb40ca)

Dyke Hour. Tor Kjetil Edland.

[https://open.spotify.com/
playlist/6phK0Hndrr40n9QQsC1nhC?si=8b0e91b5172341a0](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6phK0Hndrr40n9QQsC1nhC?si=8b0e91b5172341a0)

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page 619: *JC Larpin*

Appendix

Feathers



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Phalloses



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Print Outs

Props you will need, some tools you will need and others are, in our experience, just helpful in running Just a Little Lovin'.

All pages are in black and white.

PRINT INSTRUCTION

1. Print pages: **620-697** (for all printouts)
2. Set colour to **grayscale**.
3. Print scaled: **fit to paper** (A4)
4. Do **not** print double sided.

↑
HOWEVER PAGES 622-
623 CAN BE - YOU'LL
SAVE A LOT OF PAPER

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In Loving Memory Of



TEST RESULTS

CLINIC 56-O NEW YORK

TEST	RESULT	FLAG REFERENCE INTERVAL - LAB
------	--------	-------------------------------

NAME OF PATIENT:

.....

Panel 16202		01
Patient 24C		01

HIV DNA, PCR/HIV Ab		02
HIV-DNA by PCR		02
HIV DNA RT by PCR		02

HIV 1/0/2 Abs-Index Value	<412	02
		02
Index Value: According to specimen		02

TEST RESULT	HIV POSITIVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	42
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	HIV NEGATIVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	37
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HIV-1 DNA TEST

If test is marked HIV POSITIVE the patient's specimen is POSITIVE for Human Immunodeficiency Virus Proviral DNA by the RT Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).

Cards of Illness

As part of the “Fear of Death” metascene you may use these cards for those who were not selected to lie down in the coffins (which means they either died or got HIV). When the rest have passed the coffins, they can randomly draw a card:

<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>You’ve got cancer.</i></p>	<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>You’ve got hepatitis.</i></p>
<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>You’ve got herpes, and you can’t be cured.</i></p>	<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>You are pregnant.</i></p>
<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>You’ve got gonorrhoea.</i></p>	<p>The Doctor said:</p> <p><i>There’s nothing wrong with your health.</i></p>

The Doctor said:

You have a disease, but we don't know which: come back if you don't feel better.

The Doctor said:

You have suffered a mental breakdown and need medication.

The Doctor said:

There's nothing wrong with your health.

The Doctor said:

There's something wrong with your immune system.

The Doctor said:

You have a disease, but we don't know which: come back if you don't feel better.

The Doctor said:

There's nothing wrong with your health.

Additional Cards

IF THEY DRAW THE CANCER CARD

<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Man: Testicle</i> <i>Woman: Uterus</i></p>	<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Breast</i></p>
<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Lung</i></p>	<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Leukemia</i></p>
<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Stomach</i></p>	<p>Cancer</p> <p><i>Skin</i></p>

The Star-Spangled Banner

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

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Workshop Cheat Sheet

PRE-LARP: TUESDAY

	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
19:30	Information	Smaller groups	Introduction tour Area knowledge	To give all the players an introduction to the different places at the location - both in and off game areas	
20:00	Information	Whole group	Welcome Practical information	Officially welcome all the players to the larp and present the organizer team, and also give practical information. Remember to add practical information that is site specific.	
20:15	Talk	Whole group	Structure of the larp Playing style	This is a short introduction to how to play the larp and the structures within the narrative - and how to play on AIDS and HIV. The focus is to create a common ground for the participants on how to play the larp together.	

Pre-larp: Tuesday	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
20.30 Nonverbal communication	Exercise	Whole group	Flirting Affection Physical contact	In JaLL desire and friendship are central themes of the larp. This exercise eases the participants into non-verbal communication of desire and affection. It ends with a cruising scene, where the players get to freely flirt to pick someone up and negative a mimicked blow job. This is a warm-up to the phallus meta-technique as well.	Music for the cruising scene.
20.45 Active Choice Line	Exercise	Whole group	Social status Character development	This exercise is to get the participants to reflect upon their character in relation to the rest of the group, and see with who they are the same, and who they are different. This is a start to develop their character - but can of course be changed by the participant later.	
21.00 Break	Break	Whole group	Break	Inform people before the break when and were to meet up.	
21.15 Core group workshop	Exercise	Smaller group	Building relations	The questions and exercises are to get the core groups to build relations and negotiate how to play together.	Core group handouts

Pre-larp: Tuesday		Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
21.45	Schedule for next day	Information	Whole group	Information about schedule	Schedule information and room for questioning and opportunity to talk to an organizer after the meeting.	
22.10	Free time	Break	Whole group	Break	People should be free to do what they need - not obligated to talk to co-players.	

PRE-LARP: WEDNESDAY

	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
9:00	Break	Whole group	Break	Players getting ready in their own pace for the workshop.	
10:00	Talk	Whole group	Theme song	Get to know the song that starts and end each act.	Music: Just a Little lovin'
10:03	Information	Whole group	Schedule information	Schedule information and room for questions.	
10:05	Talk	Whole group	Lottery of Death	Here players are instructed about the act end scene - Lottery of death - and how they should act and react in this meta-scene. It is important to only inform the following, so that the rest of the scene is unknown to the participants.	Show lottery tickets
10:10	Talk	Whole group	Group presentation AIDS knowledge 1982	Presentation of how we play the fiction of JaLL starting the larp in 1982. How to play on historical knowledge and which groups are represented in the larp.	

Pre-larp: Wednesday		Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
10:30	Walking into character	Exercise	Whole group	Getting into character Inner emotions	This exercise is to try to act as your character with focus on different emotions. It is an exercise where they don't react to each other, but focus on themselves.	Music for exercise.
10:45	Negotiations, communication off-game and safety	Talk	Whole group	Introduction to technique exercises	Introduction to next four exercises of the workshop focused on how to negotiate between players offgame, meta-techniques, and safety rules for the larp.	
11:15	Intro about Black Box and Green Drink	Talk	Whole group	Meta-technique Escalation	Introducing the function of doing scenes in the black box, and how to initiate that. Also, introducing the green drink as a way of escalating play at the end of the evening in each act.	Pink and black feathers.
11:30	Intro about sex rules and meta-technique	Talk and demonstration	Whole group	Sex rules Phallus meta-technique Safety	Introduction to the sex technique at JaLL called Phallus method, linked together with negotiation and safety measures. Also a thorough demonstration of different ways to use the Phallus Method.	Pink feathers Phalluses Other objects for phallus technique

Pre-larp: Wednesday		Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
12:00	Technique workshop - black box and sex scenes	Exercise	Smaller groups	Black box scenes Phallus Method	In smaller groups the players get to try out both black box and sex scenes, so they have tried both before the larp. This is also the debrief groups used between acts and after the larp.	Black and pink feathers Phalluses
12.50	Additional info on play on sex: Special rules for Dark room, and BDSM	Talk	Whole group	Dark room Sex technique	In the dark room at JaLL other rules applies than if you have sex other places. Here those rules are explained plus how to have BDSM sex scenes.	
13:00	Lunch in social circles	Talk	Smaller groups	Social circle Relations	Building and defining the social scenes in JaLL among the players.	Social circle signs Question handout
14:00	Playing Difference at JaLL	Talk and group discussion	Whole group	Now and then. Discrimination	This talk is to get some pointers on how to play on different subjects in regards of discrimination and phobia.	
14.30	Gathering in Saratoga pact, Mr. T's party, and Pen's friends	Exercise	Party groups	Party groups Character presentation	To establish the different parties, and for players to get a sense of who is part of the same party as them, and what has happened in the past within the party group.	

Pre-larp: Wednesday		Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
15.15	Practice act start and dance workshop	Exercise	Whole group	Act start Dance	First all the players practice what is going to happen at the start of each act - raising the american flag. Then a short dance workshop ends the pre-runtime workshop with pumped up players.	Music for dance
15.30	Break before game start	Break and preparation	Self-organised	Last preparations Getting into costumes	Time before the larp starts, where players can take care of themselves and get into costumes for the larp.	
17.30	Info about game start and act breaks	Information	Whole group	Act 1 introduction Practical information	Setting the mood for act 1 and practical information	
17.45	Game start	Game start	Whole group	Act 1 start	Starting scene for Act 1 for all players.	

ACT BREAK 1

	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
11.00	Info about act break workshop	Whole group	Workshop briefing Schedule informatio	Informing about the plan for the act break workshop and when and where to meet up for bebrief sessions - this after the end of act 1 at the funeral site.	
11:15	Debrief group session	Smaller groups	Derolling, Reflection	The debrief group session is to get out of character and reflect upon the act just played, in order to use it in the rest of the act break workshop.	
12.15	Creating new characters and downtime	Players with dead characters	Creating new characters Break before workshop	A facilitator helps players, who characters have died in the previous act with creating new ones for the next act. The rest of the players have a break between debrief and workshop.	Character sheets Creating new characters guide Pencils

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ACT BREAK 2

	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
11:00	Info about act break workshop	Whole group	Workshop briefing Schedule information	Informing about the plan for the act break workshop and when and where to meet up for debrief sessions - this after the end of act 2 at the funeral site.	
11:15	Debrief group session	Smaller groups	Derolling, Reflection	The debrief group session is to get out of character and reflect upon the act just played, in order to use it in the rest of the act break workshop.	
12:15	Creating new characters and downtime	Players with dead characters	Creating new characters Break before workshop	A facilitator helps players, who characters have died in the previous act with creating new ones for the next act. The rest of the players have a break between debrief and workshop.	Character sheets Creating new characters guide Pencils
13:00	Brief on the world 1984	Whole group	Fiction brief, inspirational material	The brief is a way to give an overview of how the life in New York is in regard to the gay community and the HIV and AIDS epidemic in 1984.	

Act break 2		Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
13:20	The trust game for 1984	Workshop	Whole group	Friendship, trust, Comfort	This exercise is to create a sense of trusting others to lead you the right way. It is to build the sense of friendship for the 3rd act.	
13.45	Lunch with a social circle	Interaction	Social circles	Relations, social groups	Players have to actively decide on which social circle to be part of in act 2. They can stay in the same or change to a new one.	Social circle signs New social circles signs Handouts
14.30	Core group exercise	Workshop	Core groups	Close relations, Character narratives	The core groups are a big part of the characters narrative, and this exercise is to consider if it is still relevant for the players to stay in the same core groups or change it.	Core group handouts
15.30	Break before game start	Break	Self-organised	Last preparations, Getting into costumes	Time before the larp starts, where players can take care of themselves and get into costumes for the larp.	
17.30	Act start	Game start	Whole group	Act 3 start	Starting scene for Act 3 for all players.	

OUT OF LARP DEBRIEF

	Type	Who	Keyword	Focus	Notes
11:10	Exercise	Whole group	Derolling Ritual	Getting to part with the character right after the larp, but physically removing a part of the costume that symbolises the character.	
11.30 - 12.30	Debrief	Smaller groups	Derolling, Reflection Ending the larp experience	The debrief group session is to get out of character and reflect upon both the act and larp just played, in order to reflect upon the whole experience. This is the only debrief session at the larp.	
13.30	Break	Whole group	Lunch break Off time	No schedule for an hour lunch where the players can also do things the need in regards to selfcare.	
14.30	Information on program Talk	Whole group	After larp program Aftercare Larp blues	Give all players practical information for the rest of the experience until they leave. Explain guidelines on how to respect each other's boundaries, and on selfcare and larp blues.	

Out of larp debrief	Type	Who	Keywords	Focus	Notes
14.45 Write a letter to your character	Information about exercise		Instruction on exercise Derolling	Give instructions on an exercise done individually, where the player reflects upon their experience and the narrative of the character they have played. It can be done throughout the post-larp time.	Set up place for letters Paper Pencils
16:30 Contextualization	Talk		Real life experiences Reflections	3 - 4 short talks from people who have experiences that relate to the larp's themes and narrative. This is to contextualize the players' larp experiences.	

SHORT INTRODUCTION

TO THE LARP WE WILL PLAY TOGETHER

Type: Talk

Keywords: Structure of the larp, Playing style

Focus: This is a short introduction to how to play the larp, and the structures within its narrative – and how to play on AIDS and HIV. The focus is to create a common ground for participants on how to play the larp together.

Ask everyone to find the other members of their core groups and sit next to them. Here is a script that can be read out loud, to give an introduction to the game:

Just a Little Lovin' is a story about a group of characters living through the early years of the AIDS epidemic. The story is set in the gay, lesbian, and alternative scenes in the US at the time. But it's also meant to be a universal story about friendship, desire, and fear of death. Some of you will know a lot about the time that we are going to portray – others will not. So don't worry too much about getting the historical details right. Focus on the story that you're telling together. And by the end, you will likely know more and feel a stronger connection to the era and community we are portraying.

The core group is the starting point for telling the story about your character. If this was a film, you three would be the main characters. If you enjoy the story that emerges, you can play on this with your core group through all three acts. But you can of course change direction. If you finish this particular story, or if you don't get what you wished for from your core group in this first act, do not despair. In the next two act breaks you can create other stories and new relations.

The social circles are the flavour and act as your backdrop. The meaning of them is to represent the gay and lesbian communities of New York, as well as an alternative counterculture

represented by the Saratoga friends. We couldn't build The Big Apple out here, but we have chosen some important groups we want to represent the urban US of the 80s. You can remain in your social circle throughout the game; or you can change it, to match the development of your character.

The character description is your personality. Don't be afraid to add to it and modify it. Use what works for you, and let your character develop organically throughout the story. Don't feel constrained by "the designers wanted this character this way," if that blocks game opportunities that you wish to explore. If in doubt, come and talk to us about things you are struggling with.

The three acts represent three important aspects of life, which we wish you to dive into. These themes are: desire, fear of death, and friendship. Each act has one of these as its main focus, but they will all be present in all three acts.

One thing we really want your help with, regarding characters and core groups, is story development. Pace yourself, and keep the interesting vibes or difficulties without trying to make a full-blown conflict. Don't burn all your bridges. Build up a conflict, and then have a reconciliation, so you can repeat the cycle later. We believe in the power of repetition. It can give you more story, more immersion, and more real interactions. The game itself is built on repetition: the same 4th of July celebration three years in a row, with some of the same things happening every year – similar, but also changing a bit year by year.

We want to say something about the role of AIDS and cancer in the story. We chose AIDS to tell our story, because before COVID it was the only plague in modern time that had this frightening and pandemic effect on a large scale in our Western societies. AIDS represents

fear of death. It is connected to desire, and friendships are crucial when facing the devastation brought by the epidemic.

The Saratoga friends have a great importance in our story, as those who have already faced and survived death: and cancer is the other large and feared disease of our time. When the story begins, Saratogians are already survivors, while Mr. T's party is going to face death soon.

Finally, both for the workshops and for the larp, we encourage you to actively opt in and opt out of exercises and scenes. We call this "the rule of two feet". Everyone can leave an activity when they feel that this is not for them, and need a break from what is happening in the moment. But we know you are brave, and want to challenge yourself, or else you would not have signed up for this larp. So join us in creating "brave spaces" both for others and for yourself, so we can all dare to step deep into this story of fear and desire.

Type: Talk

Keywords: Lottery of Death

Focus: Here players are instructed about the Act End Scene – The Lottery of Death – and how they should act and react in this metascene. It is important to only give the following information, and no more – so that the rest of the scene is unknown to the participants.

Instructions for the end scene *The Lottery of Death*:

Script to be **read out loud**:

On each morning of the larp, breakfast is served from 9 to 10, and by 10 you need to be in the diner where the metascene will be held – even if you don't want to eat breakfast. Find a seat and stay there.¹

We will enter a metascene called The Lottery of Death. You are still your character, but we will play out the impact of the epidemic in the following year in a stylized manner. Play out your character's emotions: but you cannot interrupt what happens. Follow the instructions.

You will be asked to decide how much risk your character has been exposed to. High risk is having unprotected penetrative sex with multiple partners: and being the passive partner in a sex act has a higher risk than being the active partner.

Some characters will die of the disease every year. It will be decided randomly, as a part of this scene. You will be instructed how it will work. After this scene has ended, we will have an act break: the act break begins after the 'Just a Little Lovin'' song has been played, as that will mark the end of the act. Those of you whose characters died will workshop new characters with us.

¹ Although, one run of JaLL chose to move everyone into the disco after breakfast instead, because their diner was a chain of small rooms rather than one big one.

1982 FICTION BRIEF

Type: Talk

Keywords: Group presentation, AIDS knowledge 1982

Focus: Presentation of how we play the fiction of JaLL at the start of the larp in 1982. How to play on historical knowledge, and which groups are represented in the larp.

This brief, and the other fiction briefs in the act break workshops, can be read out loud as written here; or the facilitator can create their own talk around the content:

This is a larp set in the USA in the early 1980s. Use what you know, but remember that relationships, drama, and emotions are more important in this game than historical accuracy.

Most people had a binary view of sexuality: homosexual or heterosexual. This is before 'queer'.

The New York gay scene is situated around Christopher Street and Greenwich Village. This is the time of the discos and bathhouses. Most gay and bisexual people are in the closet at work, and to most people that aren't close friends. The lesbian scene is much smaller, with just a handful of lesbian bars, like the Cubby Hole – which is open to male friends as well.

Alternative New York is represented in JaLL by the Saratoga friends. New Age spirituality has arrived in the 80s, often with sex-positive gurus. Some are "Lifestylers" – that's what swingers were called at the time. One reason why you find many of the Saratoga friends in this alternative scene is because they as teenagers swore a pact, here at Saratoga rehab center: "To live life to the fullest".

What was known about AIDS in 1982?

- A mysterious illness has hit some gay men, primarily in San Francisco and New York.
- The term AIDS is not yet invented – it

- is called GRID or gay cancer.
- The theme of Act 1 is Desire. Don't let any rumours about a disease they haven't even found yet dissuade you from partying and having sex.

The mainstream media, including the *New York Times*, has barely covered the epidemic. The gay bi-weekly newspaper the *New York Native* is the only publication in the city writing anything about it. Most of the Saratoga people have probably not heard about it at all.

The notorious author of *Faggots*, Larry Kramer, and a few others are trying to raise the alarm, and are telling people that going to the bathhouses is probably a risky thing to do. But many gays are deeply suspicious of Kramer's agenda after he harshly criticized what, according to him, was the superficial promiscuity of the gay scene. Many people think that he is probably using this disease as an opportunity to moralize again.¹

So what most of you will do in the first act is to possibly talk a bit about it, but shrug it off. There isn't any proof yet about how people are getting this thing: and it's probably people who live wilder than you who are at risk.

Ask if anyone has questions about the above presentation.

¹ A typical quote from the *New York Native* debate by writer Robert Chesley: [...] *the concealed meaning of Kramer's emotionalism is the triumph of guilt: that gay men deserve to die for their promiscuity. Read anything by Kramer closely. I think you'll find that the subtext is always: the wages of gay sin is death. I am not downplaying the seriousness of Kaposi's sarcoma. But something else is happening here, which is also serious: gay homophobia and anti-eroticism.*

1983 FICTION BRIEF

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Fiction brief, Inspirational material*

Focus: *The brief is a way to give an overview of how life is in New York in regard to the gay community and the HIV and AIDS epidemic in 1983.*

This should be more or less read out as written, and is a briefing for Act 2, which takes place in 1983:

1982 July 27, the term AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is proposed at a meeting in Washington of gay community leaders, federal bureaucrats, and the CDC.

A number of AIDS-specific voluntary organisations have been set up in the USA. The writer Larry Kramer was one of the founders of the organisation Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). They organise fundraisers in the gay community and try to spread awareness of the disease. They are not successful in getting the attention of the city government in doing more to help seriously ill AIDS patients, whom the New York hospitals are ill equipped to handle. Unlike in San Francisco, a separate AIDS ward in one hospital is not established in New York. Some health personnel refuse to work with AIDS patients, and it is common that they are treated in full protective gear.

The Mayor of New York, Ed Koch, avoids the issue; and very few resources are allocated to dealing with the steadily increasing crisis. President Ronald Reagan does not even mention the word AIDS.

In December a 20-month old child who had received multiple transfusions of blood and blood products dies from infections related to AIDS. Also in December, the CDC report the first cases of possible mother-to-child transmission of AIDS. By the end of 1982, many more people are taking notice of this new disease, as it is

clearer that a much wider group of people are going to be affected.

In May 1983, doctors at the Institut Pasteur in France report that they have isolated a new virus, which they suggest might be the cause of AIDS. Little notice is taken of this announcement at the time, but a sample of the virus is sent to the CDC.

It is clear that HIV is spread through sex, but how contagious the disease is is uncertain. In May 1983 the pamphlet "How to have sex in an Epidemic: One Approach" is self-published by Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen. The first printing is quickly sold out, and demand is high in a community hungry for advice and information. But many distrust the information or choose to ignore it.

At this point, you know more people who have died of AIDS. And there are those who you suspect or know are sick. The ones who are most neglected are those from the most marginalized populations: trans people, sex workers, and people of color. There is also a "straight epidemic" among people of Haitian descent and their sex partners in the New York area. A few health professionals working in affected communities have tried to raise the alarm about this aspect of the epidemic, but little or no attention is being paid to this.

In this act you should play on the fear of being infected. Those characters who consider themselves straight should be wary of gay and other queer people possibly being infectious. And characters can shift between being paranoid and reckless; possibly on the same night.

1984 FICTION BRIEF

Type: *Talk*

Keywords: *Fiction brief, Inspirational material*

Focus: *The brief is a way to give an overview of how life in New York is in regard to the gay community and the HIV and AIDS epidemic in 1984.*

This should be more or less read out as written, and is a briefing for the 3rd act, which takes place in 1984:

In the summer of 1983, the People Living with AIDS movement is born out of organizers of support groups in New York and California meeting at a conference in Denver and establishing the Denver principles:

We condemn attempts to label us as 'victims,' a term that implies defeat; and we are only occasionally 'patients,' a term that implies passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others. We are 'People With AIDS'.

'People With AIDS' recommendations for all people:

Support us in our struggle against those who would fire us from our jobs, evict us from our homes, refuse to touch us, or separate us from our loved ones, our community or our peers; since available evidence does not support the view that AIDS can be spread by casual, social contact.

In San Francisco, all the gay bathhouses and private sex clubs were closed. That didn't happen in New York, but several of them closed anyway due to a drop in the number of visitors.

There was an increase in homophobic violence across the country, caused by gays being blamed for spreading AIDS. These attacks were mostly only covered by the gay magazines and not mainstream media.

On April 23rd 1984, the United States Health Secretary Margaret Heckler announced that there

would soon be a commercially available test able to detect the HIV virus with "essentially 100 percent certainty". The first version of the test had a higher degree of false positives and negatives than later versions: and both The New York Native and many activists warned people against the test, as there was widespread worry about government and insurance companies getting access to lists of people infected.

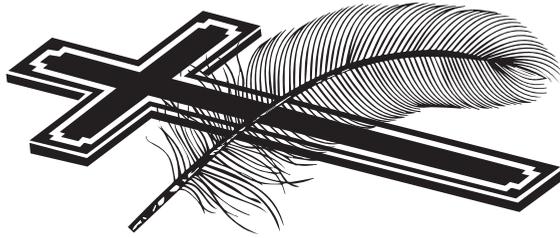
Researchers did a study of antibodies in high-risk populations, and estimated that 65% of sexually-active gay men in San Francisco were infected. The number in New York at the same time is likely to be of the same magnitude.

Some politicians and religious leaders called for mass sackings of gay people from health care jobs, or internment of those infected fueling the resistance to the test. Some clinics however met this by offering anonymous tests to give patients confidential information on their status.

The test would become available in 1985, but in our story, we have moved that forward: so, when we meet for the 4th of July party in 1984, the test has been generally available for some months already. So you as a character can choose if you have taken the test or not, in a meta-scene that we will be doing in the beginning of the next act.

More and more AIDS patients are seriously ill at home, and volunteer buddy programmes are started to help and comfort sufferers. Many health care institutions refuse to take AIDS patients. Funeral homes refuse to take care of the bodies of people who have died of AIDS.

HIV prevention campaigns become much more visible in the gay community, and the guidance given is more specific and given with greater certainty. With penetrative sex, use condom and lubricant. Do not swallow semen. Kissing and non-penetrative forms of sex carry little risk of infection.



DEATH'S FUNERAL SPEECH

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country, should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Manuscript

LOTTERY OF DEATH

Angel 1: A1

Angel 2: A2

Directions are written in italics.

YEAR 1:

ANGEL 1

So this is New York City, United States of America, year 1982?

ANGEL 2

Yes, that is correct. Our duty here is to host the Lottery of Death. Pen, lottery tickets, hat. OK.

ANGEL 1

Then we can start.

They start to give out tickets and pens

ANGEL 1

We must pick ten people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

So many? But most of these people are still young?

ANGEL 1

There is a new disease in the City. It spreads through blood and sex... but they don't know that yet.

ANGEL 2

That's a shame. But anyways: Everyone must write their name on lottery tickets, 1 if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

ANGEL 1

Come on, write your names on one, two, three, four or five tickets! And when you're done, put the tickets in the hat.

Repeat this, or keep silent until everyone has put their tickets in.

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in.

ANGEL 2

Hank, can you please come forward?

ANGEL 1

Hank, your duty is now to spin the wheel of Fortune. You must draw ten names from the hat.

ANGEL 2

If your name is heard, please stand up and wait.

Hank draws names, reads out loud. Put the names in a pile. If the same name is drawn a second time, lay aside without reading. When ten people are standing, they bring the ten lottery tickets to the Angels.

ANGEL 1

You who are now standing, follow us.

YEAR 2:

The Angels are stressed and in a hurry.

ANGEL 1

New York City, again, United States of America, year 1983!

ANGEL 2

Yes, correct. Our duty's still to host the (fucking) Lottery of Death.

(sigh)

Pen, lottery tickets, hat. OK.

ANGEL 1

Then we can start

They start to give out tickets and pens.

ANGEL 1

We must pick fifteen people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

It's too many! Too many! Most of these people are still young!

ANGEL 1

AIDS has arrived in the City, you know, it spreads through blood and sex, but they still haven't figured that out... So now they fear almost everything...

ANGEL 2

That's a shame. But anyways: Everyone must write their name on lottery tickets, 1, if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

(Hesitates in passing out tickets.)

ANGEL 1

(To the other Angel)

Come on, we don't have all day! Hurry up!

(To the people gathered in the cafeteria)

Write your names on one, two, three or five tickets! And when you're done, tickets in hat.

(Repeats this, or keeps silent until everyone has put in their tickets.)

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in,

ANGEL 2

Hank, come forward!... Please...

ANGEL 1

Hank, you know your duty is to spin the wheel of Fortune. You must draw fifteen names from the hat.

ANGEL 2

If your name is heard, please stand up and wait.

Hank draws names, reads out loud. Put the names in a pile. If the same name is drawn a second time, lay aside without reading. When fifteen people are standing, they bring the fifteen lottery tickets to the Angels.

ANGEL 1

You who are now standing, follow us.

YEAR 3:

The Angels are worn out, tired, messy.

ANGEL 1

(Tired/slow)

New York City, city of dreams, United States of America, year 1984.

ANGEL 2

Yes.... Our duty's still to host the Lottery of Death.

(sigh)

Pen, lottery tickets, hat.

ANGEL 1

Start all over;

They start to give out tickets and pens.

ANGEL 1

We must pick more people to follow us.

ANGEL 2

It's so many already, so many. And most of them - still young.

ANGEL 1

AIDS has arrived in the city. Everyone knows it spreads through blood and sex... but fear and desire make them forget.

ANGEL 2

That's a shame... But anyways:

(mechanically)

Everyone write names on lottery tickets, 1 if you are at low risk, or up to five tickets for the highest risk.

ANGEL 1

Come on, please...

(mechanically)

Write your names on one, two, three, four or five tickets! And when you're done, tickets in hat.

(Repeats this, or keeps silent until everyone has put in their tickets)

The two Angels stand in front with the hat when everyone has put their tickets in.

ANGEL 2

Wait, all of you. And when Death arrives, follow them.

The two Angels leave without anyone.

HIV-Test Result

ORGANIZER TOOL

Example values
High
Medium
Low
None
POS
NEG

NAME	RATING	RESULT
Abner		
Allison		
Andrew		
Artie		
Barbara		
Beatrice		
Beverly		
Bret		
Bruce		
Chain		
Chantelle		
Charlotte		
Claire		
Daniel		
Dawn		
Dennis		
Diane		
Diego		

Dutch (Douglas)		
Eli		
Enrique		
Evelyn		
Fernando		
Francis		
Gwen		
Harvey		
Holly		
Ike		
Jerrod		
Jimmy		
Joani		
Katherine		
Katie		
Kim		
Kimberly		
Kohana		
Lawrence		
Leon		
Lester		
Lizzie		
Marcus		
Mary Lou		
Max		
Mickey		
Morgan		
Mr T (Terrence)		
Nate		
Nick		
Pen		
Rain		
Reginald		
Rosemary		
Ruben		
Sam		
Santiago		

Simon		
Sinclair		
Skye		
Sorrento		
Sterling		
Steven		
Tomasz		
Tony		
Trevor		
Wallace		
Walter		
[new character]		

WORKSHOP + DEBRIEF GROUPS

Mention that this is also their debrief group, and that they will be meeting up in the same group in the same room in each act break and also after the larp. Then a short introduction round:

- ☉ Say your name, your character name and one thing you have in common with your character.

Group 1 (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

The Writers (Abner, Eli, Jerrod)
The Shared Flat in SoHo (Daniel, Reginald, Trevor)
Flow to the Beat (Francis, Artie, Tony)
Love is Just a Four Letter Word (Mary Lou, Lawrence, Max)

Group 2: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

A Star is Torn (Chantelle, Beatrice, Sterling)
The Boys in the Band (Skye, Rain, Simon)
Heart of Saratoga (Kim, Kohana, Joani)
Amazons (Barbara, Sam, Claire)

Group 3: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

Four Women among the Boys (Katherine, Kimberly, Charlotte, Santiago)
Studio 54 Dope Crew (Sorrento, Enrique, Leon, Diego)
Nate and His Men of Ambition (Nate, Bruce, Sinclair)

Group 4: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

Mr. T's Inner Circle (Mr. T, Pen, Andrew)
Veterans of the Scene and New Boy in Town (Steven, Diane, Bret)
Family of Friends (Fernando, Nick, Jimmy, Marcus)

Group 5: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

Indigo house (Harvey, Katie, Holly, Allison, Wallace, Beverly, Dennis)
Let's Play Master and Servant (Lester, Gwen, Mickey)
Pepper's Diner (Pepper, Howard, Harriet, Priest)

Group 6: (Facilitator: _____, Location: _____)

Freshwomen and the Dutch Boy (Morgan, Dutch, Rosemary, Dawn)
Displaced Passions (Chain, Evelyn, Lizzie, Tomasz)
In Therapy (Walter, Ike, Ruben)

Pink Dollars

Cruisers Club

Studio 54

Club Diamond

The Brooklyn Book Cafe

The Cubby

Hole

The Literary Circle

The L Club

Spirituals

LIST OF NEW CHARACTERS

Allan / Allie

The airline steward

Possible social circles: Studio 54, Club Diamond, Cubby Hole

Keywords: Outgoing, crave confirmation, party the trouble away, flirtatious

Connor / Connie

The nurse working with AIDS patients

Possible social circles: The Brooklyn Book Café, Studio 54, The Cubby Hole

Keywords: outspoken, coping with death, brutally honest, confrontational

Donald / Dorothy

The owner of a small flower store with many of the party guests as regular customers

Possible social circles: Cruisers Club, Spirituals, The L Club

Keywords: Quirky, open, flirt the pain away, hopeful

Eric / Erica

The scandalised soap opera actor entering a new phase in life

Possible social circles: Pink Dollars, Club Diamond, The Brooklyn Book Café

Keywords: passionate, rising from the ashes, emotionally connecting

Gregor / Grace

The new employee at Peggy's Diner

Possible social circles: Peggy's Diner, The L Club, Spirituals, Studio 54

Keywords: curious, talkative, imaginative, dependent on others

Scott / Sally

The journalist with war zone experience searching for interesting people from the scene to portray in a feature article

Possible social circles: The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café, Pink Dollars

Keywords: fearless, opinionated, physical, needy

Victor / Victoria

A nurse who worked here at the Saratoga Centre for Hope and Healing 10 years ago

Possible social circles: Spirituals, The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café

Keywords: survivor, optimist, people pleaser, social

Only for the Act 3 (1984):

Jacob / Janice

The HIV-positive smuggler of AIDS medications

Possible social circles: The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club, The Literary Salon

Keywords: impulsive, provocative, frustrated, judgemental

Allan/Allie
THE AIRLINE STEWARD

Possible social circles: *Studio 54, Club Diamond, Cubby Hole*

Keywords: *outgoing, crave confirmation, party the trouble away, flirtatious*

Description:

- ☪ You are a modern-day nomad establishing relationships in cities around the world.
- ☪ You are fun-loving, flirtatious, and not afraid to try things for the first time.
- ☪ You are afraid of being lonely and seek positive confirmation from other people.
- ☪ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get over it by partying hard.
- ☪ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get their mind off it by trying to get them to smile, by doing something nice for them.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Connor/Connie
THE NURSE WORKING
WITH AIDS PATIENTS

Possible social circles: *The Brooklyn Book Café, Studio 54, The Cubby Hole*

Keywords: *outspoken coping with death, brutally honest, confrontational*

Description:

- ☪ You are an outspoken and direct person, establishing relationships with others by being genuine and honest.
- ☪ You love to share truth and secrets at parties, when everybody is a bit drunk.
- ☪ You are afraid of not being able to cope anymore with the stream of suffering and dying that surrounds you.
- ☪ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to hear some of your favourite songs being played LOUD!
- ☪ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to tell them what they need to hear, not what they want to hear.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Donald/Dorothy
THE OWNER OF A SMALL
FLOWER STORE WHERE MANY OF
THE PARTY GUESTS ARE REGULAR
CUSTOMERS

Possible social circles: *Cruisers Club, Spirituals, The L Club (Lifestylers)*

Keywords: *quirky, open, flirt the pain away, hopeful*

Description:

- ☉ You have a quirky personality. You like telling strange little stories which are not very clear to whoever is listening.
- ☉ You like to talk with everyone. You don't always need to talk so much yourself. You are a good listener.
- ☉ You are afraid of never finding true love.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to shift the mood by finding someone charming or interesting to flirt with.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to listen to them to find something you can help them with, even if it's just a little thing.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Eriel/Erica
THE SCANDAL-HIT SOAP-OPERA
ACTOR ENTERING A NEW
PHASE IN LIFE

Possible social circles: *Pink Dollars, Studio 54, The Brooklyn Book Café*

Keywords: *passionate, rising from the ashes, emotional connecting*

Description:

- ☉ You are passionate to the point of obsession about the things in life you currently care the most about.
- ☉ At parties you enjoy taking the spotlight for a moment and then passing it on.
- ☉ You have recently been exposed to a public scandal that has damaged your career as an actor. You are afraid of becoming a story of failure.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to tell someone what is going on with you.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to find things in yourself that let you connect to their problem.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Gregor Grace

THE NEW EMPLOYEE
IN THE DINER

Possible social circles: *Peggy's/ Pepper's Diner, The L Club, Spirituals, Studio 54*

Keywords: *curious, talkative, imaginative, dependent on others*

Description:

- ☞ You are a bubbly, curious, and talkative person who smiles a lot.
- ☞ At parties you enjoy sharing your own and other people's personal stories. You don't need to be absolutely sure about something before sharing it.
- ☞ You are afraid of dying alone.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to get other people's input on those feelings, and input on what decisions you should make.
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you give them advice – even when it is not asked for.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Jacobi Janice
THE HIV-POSITIVE SMUGGLER
OF AIDS MEDICINES

Possible social circles: *The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club, The Literary Salon*

Keywords: *idealist, impulsive, listener, frustrated*

Description:

- ☞ You are an impulsive person, aware that you probably have a limited time left to live: and you try to make sure that you make use of that time to the fullest.
- ☞ At parties you enjoy getting people to share stories and secrets with you.
- ☞ You are afraid of dying without your life having been significant to others.
- ☞ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to find someone willing to listen to you rant about the injustice of the world.
- ☞ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you are supportive if you feel their struggle is real. If you feel they are just feeling sorry for themselves without good reason, you try to help them get a real perspective on things.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Luke/Lucy

THE PIONEER IN THE
RADICAL FAERIES MOVEMENT

Possible social circles: *Spirituals, The Brooklyn Book Café, Cruisers Club*

Keywords: *experimental, creative, serious, guiding*

Description:

- ☉ You are a person who follows your passions and who is not afraid of experimentation to achieve insights and experiences.
- ☉ At parties you enjoy establishing spaces where people can be creative, challenge themselves, and their wild selves.
- ☉ You are afraid of not being taken seriously by other people.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to shake it out of your body by doing something physical.
- ☉ You are good at bringing out issues people are struggling with, that they are afraid to deal with head-on.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Scott/Sally
THE JOURNALIST WITH WARZONE
EXPERIENCE, SEARCHING FOR
INTERESTING PEOPLE FROM
THE SCENE TO PORTRAY IN A
FEATURE ARTICLE

Possible social circles: *The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café, Pink Dollars*

Keywords: *fearless, opinionated, physical, needy*

Description:

- ☉ You are a fearless person, with many opinions, who likes a good discussion.
- ☉ At parties you like to get to know new people by dancing with them.
- ☉ You are afraid of being trapped and losing your freedom.
- ☉ When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to feel connected to other people; mentally or physically.
- ☉ When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, if it's a friend you buy them a drink: if it's a source for a story, you interview them as gently as possible while still getting the story.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

Victori Victoria

A NURSE WHO TEN YEARS AGO
WORKED HERE AT THE SARATOGA
CENTRE FOR HOPE AND HEALING

Possible social circles: *Spirituals, The L Club, The Brooklyn Book Café*

Keywords: *survivor, optimist, people pleaser, social*

Description:

- 🕒 You are a person who has faced and overcome several serious life crises without losing your optimism and warm personality.
- 🕒 At parties you like to organize a surprise, or special small event, that will make the evening more special.
- 🕒 You are afraid of other people disliking and judging you.
- 🕒 When you are feeling down or struggling with something, you need to get out and have fun with friends you care about.
- 🕒 When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something, you try to get their friends to become aware of the situation and to relate to that person in a good way.

1. PERSONALITY *Talk through the short character description and make adjustments and/or corrections.*

2. CHARACTER SHEET *Use the sheet, and an organizer, to guide you.*

CHARACTER SHEET

NAME : _____

PROFESSION : _____

GENDER : _____

SEXUAL ORIENTATION : _____

QUESTIONS FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

These questions are meant to help you develop your character. Talk about them with an organizer before filling in notes. Remember, it is always okay to change/develop things as you talk to your new social circle and core group.

PERSONALITY :

General personality trait:

You are afraid of...:

You long for... :

When you are feeling down or struggling with something...:

When someone else is feeling down or struggling with something...:

The one thing everybody loves about you:

CORE GROUP : _____

SOCIAL CIRCLE : _____

SCENE : Mr. T's party - Pen's friends - Saratoga Friends

One relationship which is a close friendship:

One relationship which is a romantic/sexual relationship of some duration:

One antagonistic relationship with potential for reconciliation (optional):

Character Overview

SARATOGA FRIENDS

THE HEART OF SARATOGA

CORE GROUP

Joani

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga and Spirituals one of the leading tantric gurus in America. Wife of Kohana.

Kohana

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga and Spirituals husband of Joani. Masculinity guru who strives to both fully embrace his masculinity and to break with the destructive patriarchy.

Kim

One of the informal leaders of Saratoga. She is the spirit of the 80s personified. Project manager for hire, life and career planning advisor. Studio 54

SOCIAL CIRCLE

A STAR IS TORN

Chantelle

An energetic, fun, and self-centered woman with ambitions to become the next great pop star with her new HI-NRG single. Studio 54

Beatrice

Last year she had to return to chemo again. Is the cancer finally gone now? Writing a self-help book. Empatic but also tends to know what's best for other people. Finds an outlet for her frustrations at the swingers club The L Club. The L Club

Sterling

Chantelle's producer and husband. Socially a bit reserved with a strong passion for music and a recent interest in alternative spirituality. Studio 54

SARATOGA FRIENDS

LOVE IS JUST A FOUR LETTER WORD

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Mary Lou** Up-and-coming singer-songwriter with a complicated relationship to Max and Lawrence, the fathers of her two sons. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Lawrence** Calls his life “a pleasurable chaos”. Has some problems keeping appointments, jobs, and girlfriends. Owner and manager of The L Club. The L Club
- Max** Some guys just got it. It doesn’t have to be elegant, it doesn’t have to be refined. If you got it you get sex with women whenever you want. Max is this kind of guy, without being a slick player or having the looks of a heartthrob. The L Club

THE AMAZONS

- Barbara** Founder of the Amazons, a feminist health movement. A natural networker and well-known pillar of New York’s lesbian scene. The Cubby Hole
- Claire** Former model turned organiser for labour unions and the Democratic party. Barbara’s girlfriend. Claire isn’t one of the original Saratoga group, but is also a survivor of breast cancer. The Brooklyn Book Café
- Sam** The irresistible bad butch girl you can’t help fall in love with. Notorious in the gay scene (and amongst Pen’s guests in particular) for her highly public rows and jealousy dramas. The Cubby Hole

SARATOGA FRIENDS

THE INDIGO HOUSE

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Holly** Member of the Indigo house co-housing Spirituals family. A modern-day priestess of Dionysus, in her home there is enough for everyone: sex wine, food, passion, and drama.
- Katie** Member of the Indigo house co-housing Spirituals family. The ideologist of the co-housing movement and their particular agreement on polyfidelity. Worships the Goddess.
- Wallace** Member of the Indigo house co-housing Spirituals family. Owns an art gallery, and in general is a difficult person to ignore. This past year the entire Indigo house has been involved in the quest for Wallace's potency which mysteriously seems to have disappeared.
- Beverly** Member of the Indigo house co-housing The Brooklyn family. Has a passion for photo journalism, Book Café which she wants to develop. She longs for pleasure but she has problems really finding it in her life.
- Harvey** Member of the Indigo house co-housing The L Club family. A somewhat neurotic culture journalist seeking to live out his bisexuality.
- Allison** Member of the Indigo house co-housing The Brooklyn family, working in Wallace's art gallery. Book Café Wants everyone to be friends, and to do what she wants when she wants it. Doesn't identify as lesbian but primarily interested in women.
- Dennis** Possible new member of the Indigo house The Brooklyn co-housing family. Not one of the original Book Café Saratoga group. A former Vietnam veteran turned peace activist.

SARATOGA FRIENDS

LET'S PLAY MASTER AND SERVANT

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Lester** Stock broker and "the sensitive yuppie". The L Club
Married to Gwen and an active practitioner of
S&M (submissive).
- Gwen** She's not one of the original Saratoga cancer The L Club
survivors, but has been part of their group for
many years through her marriage to Lester.
Active practitioner of S&M (submissive). Talks
freely about sensitive subjects.
- Mickey** Art student and bisexual S&M Master. The L Club
Recently moved in with married couple Lester
and Gwen.

DISPLACED PASSIONS

- Evelyn** A burning idealist and cynic at the same The L Club
time, Evelyn is a medical doctor working on
projects in Africa. A disciplined worker who
thinks the best way to wind down is sex with
no attachments.
- Tomasz** Everyone's friend, slacker, and jack of all Spirituals
trades, who according to others should soon
find out what he wants to do with his life.
Currently in a (probably doomed) relationship
with the strange girl Lizzie.
- Lizzie** Lizzie hates it when she feels shy, and goes The Brooklyn
over the top to overcompensate for it. Her Book Café
social timing is often off. Hopelessly in love
with her boyfriend's (gay) best friend.
- Chain** Chain wants to become rich, find true love, Cruisers Club
and fuck all the rich and beautiful men in New
York, all at the same time. Go-go dancer and
porn model.

MR. T'S PARTY (GAY SCENE)

MR. T'S INNER CIRCLE

CORE GROUP

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Mr. T** The charismatic, rich, fun-loving and Pink Dollars
Terrence shameless host of the party. Owner of the
Thurlow T-Buzz advertising agency.
- Pen** Mr. T's secretary and friend. Cool-headed Cubby Hole
power dresser. Loves life on full speed and
being in control at the wheel. She has invited
some of her own friends to the party.
- Andrew** The emotional core of Mr. T's inner circle Cruisers Club
and of the Cruisers Club. Tends to become
everyone's trusted friend.

VETERANS OF THE SCENE AND NEW BOY IN TOWN

- Steven** The leader of Cruisers Club. An emotionally Cruisers Club
mature left-wing university lecturer with a
working-class background.
- Diane** A self-declared fag hag, Diane has taken it upon Club Diamond
herself not to be outdone in outrageousness by
any of the many drag queens she knows and
loves.
- Bret** The new boy in town who has just come to Not part of any
New York. Eager to experience life, today - social scene at
right now! the beginning
of act 1

MR. T'S PARTY

NATE AND HIS MEN OF AMBITION

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Nate** *The Queen of Manhattan* Owner of Club Diamond. He's used to having his life break apart and having to build something new from the ashes. Performs as drag queen each night of the game. Club Diamond
- Sinclair Everett** Son of a senator from an old Democrat family, now running for congress and living a secret double life. Has a passion for drag shows and musicals. Pink Dollars
- Bruce** Yuppie, this is your age. He is the rags to riches story. High on testosterone, money, and the high life of the city. Pink Dollars

THE WRITERS

- Abner Finkel** Nihilistic poet whose favourite word is "Dionysian". Motto: "Deconstruct literature, deconstruct life, deconstruct relationships". The Literary Circle
- Eli** Intellectual hot-shot who loves the envy he gets from being the youngest PhD student at the faculty. Balances sarcasm with wit and tenderness. The Literary Circle
- Jerrod** An aspiring author who met his true love at last year's party. A bit torn between the influence of his idealistic boyfriend Reginald, and the iconoclastic intellectual guru Abner. The Literary Circle

MR. T'S PARTY

THE SHARED FLAT IN SOHO

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Reginald** A dancer who met his true love Jerrod at Club Diamond last year's party. Both attention-seeking and genuinely empathic with other people, Jerrod is the type that has meaningful conversations with strangers on the street.
- Daniel**
Lady Verona The star of Club Diamond. He moves around Club Diamond the scene, becoming the most important person in people's lives. But then one day he's gone – maybe he'll come back, maybe he won't. Performs as drag queen each night of the game.
- Trevor** Struggling young actor vacillating between Club Diamond euphoria and despair. Throws himself hard at the city and its people - losing control of his own actions and the situations he ends up in.

FAMILY OF FRIENDS

- Fernando** Bartender at Club Diamond. Not straight Club Diamond acting – never could do it, and never wanted to try. One of the most visible gay activists in the city. Confrontational and passionate.
- Nick** A man of trans experience, and the editor of a The Literary small independent gay magazine. Nick is an Circle intellectual who was born in the Soviet Union.
- Marcus** A temperamental political activist who has Club Diamond broken with his conservative Christian family, and happens to be a passionate amateur drag performer.
- Jimmy** Former addict turned apostle for alternative Cruisers Club healthy living. Lives and loves with a close knit group of friends.

MR. T'S PARTY

IN THERAPY

SOCIAL CIRCLE

- Walter** Psychologist recovering from an emotional breakdown of his own. Cruisers Club
- Ruben** The heir of a technology company moving into the new area of cellular phones. Generous with his friends, but has a tendency of wanting to own those close to him. Pink Dollars
- Ike** Ike struggles with being both a bit shy and having a strong need for finding his own independent place in the world. Lives with his wealthy boyfriend Ruben. Pink Dollars

STUDIO 54 CREW

- Sorrento** The notorious party fixer at Studio 54. He is eccentric, chaotic, and extroverted. Studio 54
- Leon** One of the biggest disco stars of the 70s, now with a now struggling career. Studio 54
- Enrique** This young bartender/medical student tries to do and be everything at once. It's not a question whether things will crash, it's just a question of when and how. Studio 54
- Diego** Leon's son, who gets a kick out of being an object of desire to many, and already being a regular at the hottest clubs in town. Ambitious, ambivalent, and naive. Studio 54

MR. T'S PARTY

THE BOYS IN THE BAND

- Skye** The narcissistic singer in the New Romantics-style band Urban Renaissance. He keeps them guessing, ever changing, ever loved, ever lonely. Studio 54
- Rain** Guitarist for Urban Renaissance; the serious, melancholic, and elder brother of the band's singer, Skye. A recent invitee to the Literary Salon. The Literary Circle
- Simon** Synth player in Urban Renaissance, with an instinctive need to rebel against authority. Never afraid, but his own emotions confuse him. New member of Cruiser's Club. Cruisers Club

FLOW TO THE BEAT

- Artie** Katherine's younger brother and the whiz kid of New York radio, with his very own talk show. Also a volunteer counsellor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre. Pink Dollars
- Francis** An established dancer and choreographer on Broadway. Also a volunteer counsellor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre. In a relationship with Tony, the record store owner. Club Diamond
- Tony** *This character is well suited as an organiser character but can also be given to a player.* Studio 54
The owner of the small but well-stocked Tony's records in Greenwich Village. He has been asked to play music for the party. He's also a volunteer counselor at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, and in a relationship with the dancer Francis. He is the DJ of the party each night of the larp.

MR. T'S PARTY (PEN'S GUESTS)

FOUR WOMEN AMONG THE BOYS

CORE GROUP

Santiago

Visual artist originally from a prominent family in Puerto Rico. She is well read, with strong opinions on politics and most other aspects of life. Motto: "Consistency is overrated". Pen's girlfriend.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

The Literary Circle

Katherine

Editor of The City section in *The New York Times*. For Katherine there are few things in life so far that can't be solved by making a five-step plan, or collecting favours from the right contacts.

Pink Dollars

Charlotte

Mr. T's lawyer. More quiet and composed than most people at the party. But when things matter to her, her composed and analytical mind usually lets her steer the conversation towards a place where she can get her way.

The Cubby Hole

Kimberly

Photographer, uncompromising extrovert, individualist, and feminist making her own rules for how life should be. Charlotte's girlfriend.

The Cubby Hole

MR. T'S PARTY
(PEN'S GUESTS)

FRESHWOMYN AND THE DUTCH BOY

Morgan	Morgan is the radical young feminist intellectual who is good at creating drama amongst friends and lovers. She has a certain type of magnetism that keeps others fascinated, even when they are angry with her.	The Cubby Hole
Dawn	Dawn is the young butch who escaped from the religious sect where she grew up. Works as a stage hand at an off-Broadway theatre.	The Cubby Hole
Rosemary	Rosemary is an anthropology student who is into alterantive spirituality and is a wannabe feminist occultist.	Spirituals
Dutch Douglas	Dutch is the “lesbro” straight boy hanging out with the lesbians. Occasional backpacker and aspiring adventurer.	The Cubby Hole

ORGANIZER AND CREW CHARACTERS

HANK

The friendly (but lonely) janitor working at Cruisers Club Saratoga. Hank stayed behind in the town of Saratoga when the rehabilitation center closed, and hasn't moved on with his life since. He's got strong arms and low self esteem; he tries to keep smiling and give everyone a helping hand. The "kids" he knew from the centre come back every summer and give joy to his miserable life; with them he feels like he's in a circle of friends. Hank doesn't know many other gay men and has never had a boyfriend, but once in a while he takes the trip to NYC to find some pleasure in the city and the Cruisers Club.

CAFÉ NOIR

**Abby, David,
Fiona, Paul,
Summer,
Timmy, Tom**

A selection of 7 characters for organisers to use.

Crew hired by Mr. T to make his fourth of July party run smoothly and with great fabulousness. They are all working at an off-off-Broadway theatre as stage-hands and technicians.

ORGANIZER AND CERW

PEGGY'S DINER / PEPPER'S DINER

- Peggy/Pepper** This character may be played as female or male. As the owner of Peggy's/Pepper's Diner on Christopher Street, they involve themselves in the relations and intrigues of friends and guests, comforting desolate souls at night and hooking people up with each other at the diner after the bars have closed (giving name to the expression a "Peggy/Pepper -date"). Only the needy and lost get a job at their diner. They have broken contact with their rich family, refusing any financial help from them.
- Howard** An self-confident young man who hasn't let his sometimes quite severe psychiatric problems dampen his lust for life. Diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was 17, he was sleeping on the streets when he got the job at the diner. Howard has found his big love in Harriet, and doesn't fool around with other women. Men, however, can be an "uncomplicated outlet".
- Harriet** A determined young woman and artist who scoffs at the bipolar diagnosis a doctor once gave her. They just want to keep her down and she's not going to let them. Although quite known in some circles, her art bring her no income, but at least on most days she enjoys working at the diner to make a living.
- Priest** Former Methodist Vicar and Street mission priest who now works at the Diner.

LUNCH IN SOCIAL CIRCLES - PRE LARP

- 🕒 Everyone presents their characters. Which of the other characters are you closest to?
- 🕒 Decide on at least one thing that your social circle will do together during the first Act.
- 🕒 Think of one secret story that only the members of the social circle will know.

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LUNCH IN SOCIAL CIRCLE -ACT BREAK 1

- 🕒 Individually decide if you want to change social circles and or stay.
- 🕒 Then go and sit with that social circle.
- 🕒 It is your responsibility to include new characters.
- 🕒 Find an in for the new character(s) – establish which people have become that character’s connections in the social circle.

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LUNCH IN A SOCIAL CIRCLE - ACT BREAK 2

- Ⓞ The players should first decide if they want to change social circles and or stay with the same.
- Ⓞ Then go and sit with that social circle.
- Ⓞ It is the responsibility of the old crowd that the new characters are included in the crowd.
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Core group introduction questions 15 MIN

- 🕒 Character and relation presentations (5 min)
- 🕒 What happened just before the first act starts? (5 min)
- 🕒 How would you like to play with each other? (style, things I would like to happen, etc.) (5 min)

Core groups – exercise 10 MIN

Every core group should discuss “What is our story about?”, meaning what is the common narrative that they will explore together. (‘Frozen picture’ is an activity that asks the groups to create a visual representation of the relationship between the characters using their own bodies.)

Make pictures that represent the core group’s story with:

- 🕒 A frozen picture;
- 🕒 Moving in a loop, like an animated GIF.

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Just a Little Lovin' is a larp about the summer when the AIDS epidemic hit the gay communities in New York City. The larp follows the stories of two circles of friends celebrating 4th of July in 1982, 1983, and 1984. It is a larp about fear of death, sexual desire, and deep friendships.

This book is the larp script you need to run *Just a Little Lovin'*. It is based on the original design from 2011, and developed and refined during multiple runs over the last decade. This monograph allows you to explore a Nordic larp, as an example of the custom-made design typical of this interactive artform.



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