



VILLAGE, SHELTER, COMFORT

Escape from Comfort Larp

THEME

This is a larp about feelings of comfort and safety pitched against the necessity to leave the source of these emotions behind. Dealing with the question of leaving the familiar or staying behind, the larp moves from the fantastic to the everyday in three scenarios, a remote pseudo-medieval village facing a plague, a post-apocalyptic shelter running out of resources, and a single room, in which the different mental and emotional faculties of a single person are faced with suddenly diminishing comfort. How would you choose? The known threat or the unknown salvation?

FACTS

Genre: Abstract to absurd realism

Duration: 5.5 hours

Actual play time: 3.5 hours

Number of participants (min-max): 3-7 (always an odd number)

Number of organisers: 2

Workload: Medium

Possible locations: Black box, gallery, classroom, conference room

Equipment: Some small items (chains, pins, sashes) to differentiate players; a laptop

Playing style: Realistic, but with plenty of improvisation

Food and drink: Some snacks and water

LARPWRIGHT

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Material available at www.b-ok.de



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PARAMETERS OF THE LARP

1. General Overview
2. Tendencies regarding setting, transparency, style etc. in accordance with the [Faders](#) of the Mixing Desk of Larp.
3. The [structure](#) and timeline of the larp.
4. [General rules](#) governing the whole larp.
5. The [practical setup](#) before the larp.

General Overview

This larp is not about making the correct decision, gaining a level or winning. It is about collaboratively creating a story and experiencing a given dilemma.

The dilemma is that of being caught in a decision for which neither choice is desirable: Staying where one fears diminishing comforts if not a threat to one's life, or leaving this familiar, if not loved space and set out into an unknown, frightening world. This larp was designed to make the lifeworlds of *hikikomori*, people who have withdrawn from society for a prolonged time, experienceable to others, at least to some degree. Thus, the debriefing after the play is an important, if not the most important part of this larp.

The play is divided into three "parallel" scenarios, in which the basic dilemma is the same but the details differ. The [characters](#) in each scenario "speak to" the characters in the others, which means that players have a chance to experience the dilemma through each scenario from a slightly different perspective.

Scenario 1: The players are the elders of a small, remote village. Envision a medieval town, located in Europe or maybe rural Asia. Their ancestors have built the village at this far-away place to get away from the immoral and dangerous larger settlements. Sometimes travellers or merchants pass through but rarely. Through hard work the villagers have created a petite paradise on Earth for themselves and they enjoy the fruit of their labour happily.

Suddenly, they must decide how to deal with a threat to this perfect community. Should they stay or leave everything they and their forefathers have worked for? While they seek a solution, the danger becomes more and more serious.

This scenario pitches the characters against an immediate threat to their lives. While the other elders can influence the Mayor, he or she is blessed by the villager's faith or has some deity's mandate so that they usually defer to her or his judgment.

Scenario 2: The players are members of an elected council that governs the supposedly last group of surviving humans in an underground shelter. This is a post-apocalyptic world, after a great war involving nuclear weapons or a planet-wide catastrophe. The shelter provides security, air, food and some comforts but is a harsh realm. Its legal code knows only capital punishment, regardless of how insignificant a crime may seem. As the shelter's space is limited, the council continues to enforce a one-child-policy. During their council sessions the members have to judge two inhabitants charged with a crime.

There is no immediate danger but an issue arises that will affect the long-term survival of the human race. Will they stay and deal with the problem however they must or do they seek a solution outside the shelter?

The council makes decision on a majority basis with the chairperson as a tie-breaker.

Scenario 3: The players are the various mental and emotional faculties of a single person, living in absolute bliss within the four walls of their single room. These personae spend their – or better forget – time by playing games or surfing the internet, chatting with friends online. Supported by the parents, this lifestyle has continued for a while, with infrequent interruptions of an online order being delivered or a social worker dropping by.

One day, the person in this room, however, faces with suddenly diminishing comfort. Will the individual go out into the unknown world beyond in the hope of finding comfort there or stay in a space known that might continuously lose its appeal?

Only the dominant persona can interact with the surroundings during a scene, the others are “just” voices in the head.

The third scenario includes a seventh, final scene and offers two play options. Further, it might need the most improvisation on the organiser's part in the end.

Each scenario begins and ends “softly,” meaning there will be a slow countdown and not an abrupt start. Between scenarios players receive some

break time, pick characters for the next scenario and plan its basic aspects (e.g., name and size of the village, age of the single person in the room).

Debriefing: The debriefing should begin with a short round of immediate reactions and then include a longer discussion about the experiences.

The Faders

See the “Mixing Desk of Larp.”¹

1. Openness (Transparency vs. secrecy)

The general course of events during the larp – what is going to happen and what will be the main issue – will be disclosed to all participants. All players should have the same amount of information as grounds for their improvisation.

That this is a “*hikikomori* larp” or that this is in the background of the game, however, should not feature so much in the beginning but might be discussed during the debrief.

2. Scenography (360-degree illusion vs. minimalism)

The larp can be played in a black box with only minimal props (listed under each scenario overview). If so desired, much more sophisticated decorations and costumes can be used to (possibly) intensify immersion.

3. Character Creation Responsibility (Organizer vs. player)

The organiser sets the basic parameter of each character but players flesh them out during the pre-workshop and during the larp.

4. Runtime Game Mastering (Active vs. passive)

The organisers announce the change of scenes and describe what each scene is about but the players are mostly free in handling what happens during a scene. Some scenes involve NPCs.

5. Story Engine (Collaborativity vs. competitiveness)

¹ https://nordiclarp.org/wiki/The_Mixing_Desk_of_Larp

The players have to find a shared solution to the problems they are faced with but until a compromise is reached, the discussion and interaction may be quite competitive.

6. Loyalty to Setting (Playability vs. plausibility)

The basic tone of the larp is abstract or absurd realism. That is, it asks for a realistic portrayal of characters, motives and emotions in slightly abstract, fantastic or otherworldly situations.

7. Bleed-in (Close to home vs. differentiation)

The larp will begin in a setting that is rather fantastic or otherworldly but will come closer to the player's everyday with each scenario.

8. Communication Style (Physical vs. verbal)

This is open to the players and should be decided before play commences: Are they all comfortable with physical interaction, such as touching or even caressing? Especially, the last scenario encourages physical closeness. However, the larp can be played in a mostly verbal manner.

9. Representation of Theme (Abstraction vs. simulation)

The larp tends towards abstract representations of atmosphere and mood and less towards realism.

10. Meta-techniques (Intrusive vs. discrete)

The larp uses a flashback scene in one scenario and employs the technique of "bowing out" if a player feels their comfort zone is challenged. The whole third scenario could be seen as a meta-technique as the players play different mental faculties of one person, in essence playing out the inner monologue of this person.

11. Player Pressure (Hardcore vs. pretence)

There will be no physical exhaustion or torture but the discussions can become quite heated and emotional.

Structure and Timeline

1. Workshop

- Larp presentation and scenario information
- Explain rules, methods, and techniques
- Character distribution

(45-60 min)

2. Playing the Larp

- Play each scenario (3 x 45-60 min)
- Have 10 min breaks between each scenario

3. Debriefing

- Talk about the experience (30-45 min)

General Rules, Methods, and Techniques

Cut and brake. These are the fundamental rules of any larp that deals with heavy themes and involves physical play. Any player can at any time say “cut!” if they feel that their physical or mental boundaries have been crossed. All play around them should stop and the person should be made comfortable. Do not start to play again before that player says it is OK or has left the play area. Do not ask why they cut, as this may be very personal.

If a player does not feel that their boundaries have been crossed yet, but they are afraid that they will, they can say “brake!” The players around them should then back off a little and give the player a chance to play themselves out of the situation (cited from *Larps from the Factory*).

For more info on emotional safety, see Fatland, Eirik. 2013. ‘Notes on Kutt, Brems and Emotional Safety’. *The Larpwright*.
<http://larpwright.efatland.com/?p=339>.

Bow-out. Instead of using “cut” or “brake” to stop or change the play if a player’s comfort zone is threatened, players may exit a scene by “bowing out.” The player holds a hand in front of his or her face, bows the head a little, tries to ensure that the other players have seen her or him so doing, and leaves. This signals the other players that one “has seen enough” as a player but does not want to interrupt their flow and concurrently makes sure that it is the player leaving and not the character.

For more on this meta-technique, see Koljonen, Johanna. 2016. ‘Toolkit: Let’s Name This Baby! (Bow-Out Mechanics)’. *Safety in Larp*.
<https://participationsafety.wordpress.com/2016/05/30/toolkit-lets-name-this-baby-bow-out-mechanics>.

What you say happened, happened. During the game players will have to improvise, for example, relation statuses to other characters, past

experiences, what a law says, or the like. If a scene description mentions unnamed persons, such as “two villagers,” it is up to the players to come up with names and relations to those persons. If a character thus names such a person or brings up a past experience, for example, the other players have to accept this and engage with what has been said – they may nuance, however, what another character told. Take the persona “[Memory](#)” from the scenario *The Room*: If “Memory” reminds “[Psyche](#),” that they have been horribly bullied during high school, then this is true. The person in *The Room* has had this past experience. However, “Psyche” – or any other persona – may build on and/or amend such statements (“Yes, I was bullied but in hindsight, I also did some things that probably seemed strange to other kids”).

Be nice to and tolerant of other people’s improvisation. This is very important to emphasise, so the players feel comfortable with improvising facts and stories about their own or other characters. It is not important whether characters tell the same story about their relationship, the important thing is that a story is told.

Practical Setup

The following setup presumes that the larp is played in its most “simple,” that is the black box version, where everything happens in a single room and most elements are representational, such as props. For a more realistic setup, build on these basic recommendations.

Many tools (e.g., a map, representations of produce and food, sound effects) are available at www.b-ok.de or with direct links listed in the [Appendix](#)).

Scenario 1: The Village

- a single room with one or several tables, chairs or sofas, arranged like a tavern or parlour
- some cups and water to represent “drinks”
- some (electrical) candle lights for lighting
- insignia, such as mayoral collars or brooches, for the village elders
- a generic map of the village

Scenario 2: The Shelter

- a single room with a table and chairs, arranged like a meeting room
- if possible, arrange in u-form (so that the “criminals” can face the whole council)
- name table-tags or function table-tags (“Chairperson”)

- pins or brooches of office for the council
- a brooch, hat or other item to designate the officer NPC
- a book or pad of law
- handcuffs for the thief and the accused parent
- either real produce or a representation for the market

Scenario 3: The Room

- a single room with many (floor) cushions
- a laptop (incl. some prepared websites)
- colourful sashes for the mental faculties
- a token for the dominant persona
- a tray, some snacks
- either real food recourses or a representation

All Scenarios

- some music or sound effect to be used for scene transitions and scene conclusions

WORKSHOP

1. Larp Presentation and Scenario Information

Brief overview of the larp and its three scenarios.

2. Rules, Methods, and Techniques

Explain the basic rules and techniques used during this larp, first and foremost “cut” and “brake.”

Ask the players if they understood your explanation.

3. Character Distribution

Hand out the characters for each scenario, one at a time. Let the players suggest, which characters they want to play.

Give them time to come up with names and let them think about how to play their character of choice.

4. Pre-start Exercise

...some play to get into character before the first scenario.

PRE-EXERCISE

Self-Intro Walk

Let the players walk around the room as if they were on a stroll. Whenever they encounter another player, they should introduce themselves and make a statement about the relationship with that character (this can be connected to the “Relationship Spark” given on the character sheet but must not necessarily relate to it).

For example, the Mayor could say:

“Greetings, I am Jean Doe, the Mayor of this village. My niece Jane is married to you and I enjoy the shared family dinners once in a while.”

The other player then has to repeat this statement from their perspective:

“Greetings, you are Jean Doe, the Mayor. I am married to your niece Jane and you enjoy our shared dinners once in a while.”

To continue with their self-introduction:

“I am Mai Muster, a Farmer. We often have arguments about how to run this village.”

Finally, the first player reseats this statement, too:

“You are Mai Muster, a Farmer, with whom I often have arguments about the villages’s affairs.”

Now both say heir goodbyes and move on to the next conversation.

All players should encounter each other in this way before the first scenario starts.

Note: Scene 2-2 works in a similar way but is less structured.

SCENARIO TAKE-OFF AND LANDING

Read the following countdown before (“take-off”) and after (“landing”) each scenario. Use only the appropriate word in the square bracket [], for example, “village” when you guide the players into the first scenario, “shelter,” when into the second.

Soft Take-Off

You will now listen to my voice.

My voice will help you and guide you still deeper into [the village/the shelter/the room].

Every time you hear my voice, with every word and every number, you will enter a still deeper layer, open, relaxed and receptive.

I shall now count from one to ten.

On the count of ten, you will be in [the village/the shelter/the room].

I say one.

And as you focus your attention entirely on my voice, you will slowly begin to relax.

Two.

Your hands and your fingers are getting warmer and heavier.

Three.

The warmth is spreading through your arms to your shoulders and your neck.

Four.

Your feet and your legs get heavier.

Five.

The warmth is spreading to the whole of your body.

On six I want you to go deeper.

I say six.

And the whole of your relaxed body is slowly beginning to sink.

Seven.

You go deeper and deeper and deeper.

Eight.

On every breath you take you go deeper.

Nine.

You are floating.

On the mental count of ten you will be in [the village/the shelter/the room].

Be there at ten.

I say ten.

Soft Landing

You will again listen to my voice.

My voice will guide you out of [the village/the shelter/the room].

Every time you hear my voice, with every word and every number, you will enter a still higher layer, awake, and energised.

I shall now count from one to ten.

On the count of ten, you will be out of [the village/the shelter/the room].

I say one.

And as you focus entirely on my voice, you will slowly begin to become more awake.

Two.

Your hands and your fingers are getting energised and become lighter.

Three.

The energy is spreading through your arms to your shoulders and your neck.

Four.

Your feet and your legs get lighter.

Five.

The energy is spreading to the whole of your body.

On six I want you to go higher.

I say six.

And the whole of your relaxed body is slowly beginning to rise.

Seven.

You go higher and higher and higher.

Eight.

On every breath you take you go higher.

Nine.

You are soaring.

On the mental count of ten you will be out of [the village/the shelter/the room].

Be out at ten.

I say ten.

Scene Start and Change

Each scenario and scene provide you, the organizer, with a general overview, mood, scene and character goals and other information that should help you run them. You do not have to stick to them, see them as guidelines and helpful tools. If the players do things that make scene obsolete, just improvise the same way they do.

Before each scene read the “Description” to the players and let them play out the scene until the condition given under “Scene End” is met or the specified time is coming to an end. Adjust the “Description” to what has happened before (e.g. if the players improvised in scenario 1 that only a certain livestock was infected, add “the disease has spread also to other animals” to either scene 1-4 or 1-5; if the players ignore the laptop and the router in scenario 3, either read the alternative description or improvise one matching their play).

Approx. 2 minutes before you end the scene, play the “scene end sound” appropriate for the scenario (available at www.b-ok.de). Then, play the sound again once the time is up and dim the lights (if possible). Read the next “Description.” If it was the last scene of that scenario, play the “scenario end sound” (a heartbeat) instead, and close with the “Soft Landing.”

SCENARIO 1: THE VILLAGE

Overview and Setting

The elders of a small, isolated village have to decide how they deal with a threat to their community. Should they stay or leave everything they and their forefathers have worked for? While they seek a solution, the danger becomes more and more serious.

Mood: The players should feel immediate threat and fear for their lives.

Scenario Timeline

Enjoying the pleasant life in their village, preparing for the harvest festival, the community is shocked by the outbreak of a deadly plague. The village elders come together to debate how they should respond to the threat in several meetings, when suddenly not only livestock but also humans are affected. The destruction of the village appears imminent and so the elders have to decide quickly what to do.

The scenario encompasses six scenes, each of which may take 5-10 minutes. The scenes switch between meetings of the elders and conversations with other villagers.

Minimal Props

Symbols of office for each elder (brooches, chains or the like), some cups for drinks for the meetings, a map of the village.

Scenario Preparation

Ask the participants to co-design their village: What is its name? How large is it (geographically, demographically)? What is their religion/faith/customs? Remind them that the mayor may be elected but has the blessing of their faith and thus is relatively powerful (the other elders may question the mayor and voice their options but defer to the mayor's decisions in the end).

Scene 1-1: A Pleasant Life

Overview

The characters sit in a tavern or outside on a porch and talk about their village.

Description

“After a day’s work you have gathered in the village’s tavern to relax with a few pints and enjoy the fruits of your labour. You talk about how great everything is in your village and also discuss a little the upcoming harvest festival.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene works as an exposition, introducing the characters to the “audience” (=each other), establishing how they relate to each other, and establishes how perfect the village life is.

Scene End

The players should receive about 10 minutes to get to know their characters and settle in. Once you think they feel “at home,” end the scene by leading into the next scene through the arrival of the NPC.

Scene 1-2: A Threat

Overview

The characters learn of a severe threat to their village and everything they have worked for.

Description

“The tranquility of your evening conversation is suddenly disturbed when another villager rushes towards you. First, you doubt what you are presented with.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene sets the stage for the main conflict: The characters learn of the first signs of a strange disease killing livestock, which might become a severe threat to their village. The other villager seeks to convince the elders of the severity and urges them to action.

NPC Interaction

Villager: Directly after the scene begins, rush towards the elders and exclaim: “Elders, a terrible disease has stricken our village!” Try to convince at least two elders to follow you to the dead animals.
You may use the map to show the elders where the animals are.

Character Goals

The characters first want to deny that anything bad could have happened.

Scene End

The scene ends once at least two players decide to follow the NPC to see for themselves.

Scene 1-3: Evaluation

Overview

The characters saw with their own eyes the effect of the disease and have to evaluate the threat to the village.

Description

“You have now seen the effects of the disease with your own eyes and grudgingly accepted that it poses a threat to the village. As the elders it is now your task to evaluate the situation and find ways to contain the problem.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene works as a short reprieve, a break before the storm hits. The characters should feel a certain degree of control, that they can manage the threat. This should ease their tension and give the next scene, when the threat escalates, more impact.

Character Goals

The characters want to face the threat quickly and seek to contain it.

Scene End

The scene ends once the players have decided on a course of action.

Scene 1-4: Escalation

Overview

The villagers have worked hard to isolate and contain the threat and it seemed that they succeeded. Soon, however, the situation worsened extremely.

Description

“You and the whole village have laboured hard to isolate the disease. A few days have passed and the threat seemed contained. This morning, however, you woke to cries of alarm: More livestock, far away from the previous contamination and in large number, was found succumbing to the disease.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene builds the groundwork for the catastrophic climax. Faced with this escalation, the characters are forced to realise that they might not be able to manage the problem. They should still have hope. One or two other villagers might suggest solutions.

Character Goals

Despite the odds the characters still seek a way to rescue the village.

Scene End

The scene ends, once the players have decided on what to do next.

Scene 1-5: The Catastrophe

Overview

After working hard to keep the threat contained, the village must learn that also humans are affected by the disease.

Description

“You have sweated and worked hard isolating sick or dead livestock, killing and burning many animals. Exhausted beyond your limits, the next blow hits you harder than you could have imagined: Three villagers are found dead, four more show signs of the disease.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should hammer in the inevitability of the situation: The village is lost and the characters should suffer all the emotions that come with this realisation.

Scene End

The scene ends after 5-10 minutes when the players have played the horror of their situation. Then lead over to the next one.

Scene 1-6: A Resolution?

Overview

The last scene is the space for the Mayor's decision about the future of the village and its inhabitants.

Description

"Other villagers approach you asking to be allowed to leave the village for good, while another wishes to seek outside help but remain in the village. As all eyes are upon you, the elders, the Mayor has to decide what is going to happen next."

Scene Goals or Function

This scene leads to the final decision. The characters face two options, represented by those villagers who want to leave and those who still keep the hope alive that this can be overcome.

Character Goals

The characters want a final call on the question if they should stay or abandon the village.

NPC Interaction

Villager 1 & 2: One will ask the elders to stay in the village and face the threat (maybe get help from outside), while the other implores them to leave immediately and flee. After about 5 minutes the NPCs seek to push the elders and the Mayor to a decision.

Scene End

The scene ends, once the Mayor has decided what shall be done or after a maximum of 10 minutes (marked by playing the "scene ends" sound after which the players have another minute to conclude). The players won't learn if their choice had positive or negative results.

SCENARIO 2: THE SHELTER

Overview and Setting

The council of the supposedly last surviving group of humans learns of a threat to their underground shelter. There is no immediate danger but this issue will affect the long-term survival of the human race. Will they stay and deal with the problem however they must or do they seek a solution outside the shelter?

Mood: Less immediate danger, this scenario deals with the moral issue of remaining in the shelter.

Scenario Timeline

This scenario starts right with the conflict, that food production will not suffice in the near future, to be followed by a flashback to a time when all was well. Over the course of six scenes (5-10 mins each), the council meets several times to discuss the issue, meet with other people, to in the end decide if they stay or send a group of people outside.

Minimal Props

Brooches for each council member symbolising their status, cuffs for the two accused inhabitants, a book of law.

Scenario Preparation

Ask the participants to co-design their shelter: What was the catastrophe that led humanity to flee the surface? How large is the shelter (how many people live there)?

Remind them that the council is democratically elected and equally makes decisions based on the majority of votes of council members. The chairperson, though, can break ties if necessary.

Scene 2-1: The Conflict

Overview

During a council meeting an officer suddenly hauls in a shelter inhabitant who has stolen food.

Description

“You are sitting in council, discussing the smaller or larger issues of the shelter community, when abruptly the tedious boredom of this task is interrupted. An officer delivers a supposed thief to you who has hidden large amounts of food. What shall be done with him?”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene exposes the characters directly to the conflict of their shelter, that food supply is no longer secure – it might be enough for some more years but not indefinitely. The scene establishes the precariousness of their situation.

NPC Interaction

Officer: Directly after the scene begins, enter with the thief. “Esteemed council, during a routine maintenance workers just discovered a huge amount of food hidden away under this thief’s room flooring. S/he says s/he just saved from her rations but there is just too much. What shall be done with him/her?”

Thief: Hauled before the council, defend yourself. “They are exaggerating! I just did not eat all my rations.” “Calculations by the bursar clearly show that in a few years food will not be enough for all of us. I just took precautions!”

Scene End

The scene ends after max. 10 min when the officer excuses him-/herself as s/he has to return to the crime scene.

Scene 2-2: The Community

Overview

This is a flashback: The characters mingle in an open area and enjoy the produce showcased in the market of their community.

Description

“This is a flashback: You are frolicking in the market cave of your community, exchanging greetings, some of you also looking for groceries, others just taking a stroll.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene works as getting-to-know space where the characters may tell a little bit about themselves and enjoy the plenty of their community.

NPC Interaction

Vendor: Interact a little with the council and offer them your produce.

Scene End

The players should receive about 10 minutes to get to know their characters and settle into their relationship with the others. Once they seem to enjoy their community, cut the scene suddenly and lead over to the next.

Scene 2-3: The Council

Overview

The council meeting continues and its members have to decide not only what to do with the thief but how to address the larger issue.

Description

“You relinquish your memories of your strolls through the shelter and the community you felt there. Back in the present, you face the task of dealing with the particular criminal but also with the question if there are others and the prognosis of your food supply.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene opens the discussion among the council members. They should see this as a minor problem, something with which they have dealt before, but also feel that there might loom a larger problem in the background.

Scene End

The scene ends once the players have decided on a course of action, or once 10 minutes have passed. If they did not come to a decision, lead into the next scene directly through the request by the officer. If they came to a decision, introduce the next scene with “Several days later.”

Scene 2-4: The Rumour

Overview

The characters are confronted with rumours about insufficient food supply.

Description

“You thought to have dealt with the problem of food hoarders. The investigations were sloppy apparently and people started to talk about issues of supply and unrest is spreading.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should put pressure on the characters. It should still appear like a manageable interruption of routine and not yet as an existential threat.

Character Goals

A bit more restless themselves, the characters seek to be done with this issue as soon as possible.

NPC Interaction

Officer: Deliver news of unrest amongst the populace. “Somehow people learned of the thief’s case and now rumours abound that we are soon out of food. I will return to the force and try to keep things calm. But I ask you to address this problem.” Leaves directly afterwards.

Scene End

The scene ends after max. 10 min when the officer hauls in another criminal.

Scene 2-5: The Revelation

Overview

As a result of their search for others hiding food another revelation unsettles the council.

Description

“You are called together for another meeting of criminal justice: An inhabitant has been found guilty of having a second child, threatening the foundations of population control.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should make visible on which precarious grounds the shelter’s community is built and that in the long run its inhabitants have to leave. The characters should suffer the burden of deciding the future of their world.

NPC Interaction

Officer: Directly after the scene begins, enter with the accused parent.

“Esteemed council, during our search for more people hiding food, we encountered this inhabitant. S/he already has a child but is having another one. What shall be done with her/him?”

Accused Parent: Hauled before the council, defend yourself. “I have not done anything wrong. This is a child who will be born out of love. Does the council criminalise love?”

Scene End

The scene ends after max. 10 min when the officer excuses him-/herself as s/he has to return to his/her duties.

Scene 2-6: The Vote

Overview

In this last scene, the council has to vote on the future of their sheltered community.

Description

“After word spread of the newest case, you have been pressured to come to a decision concerning the strategic plans for the community. You have convened to discuss the future and vote on the shelter’s path.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene leads to the final decision. The characters face several options, either to conservatively uphold their laws and hoping for the best or to seek out new possibilities by leaving the shelter.

Character Goals

The characters want a final call on the question if they should continue as always or if they should abandon their rules and find new ways.

NPC Interaction

Officer: Enter after about five minutes and ask the council for a decision because the people outside are becoming more and more restless. If the council has questions, make up appropriate answers.

Scene End

The scene ends, once the council has voted on what shall be done or after a maximum of 10 minutes (marked by playing the “scene ends” sound after which the players have another minute to conclude). The players won’t learn if their choice had positive or negative results.

SCENARIO 3: THE ROOM

Overview and Setting

Living in absolute bliss within the four walls of their room, the different mental and emotional faculties of a single person are faced with suddenly diminishing comfort. Will the individual go out into the unknown world beyond in the hope of finding comfort there or stay in a space known that might continuously lose its appeal?

Mood: Increasing unease about the situation, doubt, but no immediate harm.

Scenario Timeline

In the beginning, everything is well, even though the personas are briefly reminded of their reason to withdraw. The person receives food and support from outside but over the course of seven scenes (5-10 mins each), these comforts are one by one stripped away. In the end, the mind has to decide if it wants to live with this diminished comfort or leave.

Play Variants

This scenario may be played differently to the previous two. Variant A) matches the set-up of the other scenarios in that sense that the decision power rests solely with Consciousness throughout play. In Variant B) this power rotates between the persona and a different faculty is dominant in each scene.

A) Consciousness is the only dominant persona that can interact with the outside world (talk to NPCs, engage the laptop, open doors etc.). The other persona interact with Consciousness and each other to persuade the rest of taking — or not taking — a certain action.

B) In each scene another persona is dominant, reflecting the person's changing moods and feelings. The first three scenes are assigned to a particular persona. After this initial play, the current dominant persona decides who is dominant in the next scene by passing on the token to a persona of their choosing. Each persona has to be dominant at least once before the cycle can begin anew and a persona may be dominant again.

Variant B) in particular makes it hard to predict what kind of path the person in the room will follow. Thus, the last scenes are open for different directions and may need complete improvisation on the organiser's part. Still, when it becomes clear that the person has made a decision (to stay or to leave, to open the door just a little etc.) end the scenario at this point.

Minimal Props

Sashes in different colours for each persona (cf. [colour wheel](#)), a laptop, a tray for imagined or real food.

Scenario Preparation

Ask the participants to envision the person whose inner monologue they will be playing: How old is the person? What is their name and gender? How is their relationship to the parent(s)? What is the name of and the relationship with the social worker? Leave the reason for the withdrawal to be played in the first scene.

Remind the participants that only the dominant persona can interact with the surroundings during a scene, the others are “just” voices in the head.

Scene 3-1: Reflections

Overview

The person stumbles upon something that jolts them into remembering why they went into the room.

Dominant Persona: Memory.

Description

“You were searching for something – a picture, a snack, or a cheat sheet for an old game you wanted to play again – and by chance opened an old folder or inadvertently clicked on an old file which contained something that forces you to remember why you went and stayed in your room.”

Scene Goals or Function

This exposition should create the foundation for the motivation and direction of the following scenes.

Scene End

The scene ends after max. 10 min when the personas had time to (re-) create the reason for them being in the room.

Scene 3-2: Bliss

Overview

Everything is just perfect within the four walls of the room. The personas may enjoy this bliss.

Dominant Persona: Consciousness.

Description

“You are living in the perfect room, stuffed with everything you need. Your high speed internet connection gives you access to the world, friends, and online delivery - right to your doorstep.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should create a sense of harmony, that everything is alright as it is and that this bliss will continue indefinitely.

NPC Interaction

Parent: During the scene, a parent delivers food. “I put the tray with your dinner right outside the door, pick it up while it is still warm, okay? Oh, and your Amazon package has arrived, I will bring it up later when I come to collect the tray.”

Chat Buddies: Throughout all scenes, interact with the person, ask or answer questions.

Scene End

The scene ends after max. 10 min when the personas had time to mingle, to eat dinner, and relax.

Scene 3-3: Something Amiss

Overview

After some time, the personas realise that the parent never came back.

Dominant Persona: Curiosity.

Description

“Time has passed. You do not know how much, but you suddenly realise that your parent never came back to collect the tray. And did not bring the package as was promised. How do you deal with their absence?”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene introduces the first crack in the perfect world that is the Room.

Character Goals

The personas will interact with the situation as is their function within the character, seeking to avoid the question of looking what has happened outside.

Scene End

The scene ends once the personas had time to exchange their ideas and concerns (up to 10 min).

Scene 3-4: Realisations

Overview

Faced with this unusual situation, the personas check what resources they have left, only to realise that their favourites are missing.

Description

“You felt the sudden urge to check your rations of water, drinks, food, and snacks. Going through your stash you realise that you have enough foodstuffs for the next days but that all your favourites have been consumed already. Their replacements were in the online delivery that was never brought to your Room.”

Scene Goals or Function

The scene should create some degree of security but also imply the necessity that the personas might have to leave their abode at some point in the future.

Character Goals

Increasingly worried, the character seeks assurances that they can remain in their Room.

Scene End

The scene ends once the personas appear to have reached an understanding, whether to remain or leave the Room. Either way, they are interrupted by a knock at the door and the next scene.

Scene 3-5: Social Worker

Overview

A “rental sister” or another social worker interrupts the personas’ contemplations but is reluctant to stay.

Description

“Suddenly someone knocks at your door.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should give the character a sense that really something strange is going on.

Character Goals

The character may not really want to let the social worker in but would like to learn from him/her what is going on outside.

NPC Interaction

Social Worker: “Hey. It’s me. I just wanted to check if you are ok.”
Any questions concerning the parents will be deflected. S/he vehemently refuses to enter the room. After a while s/he will become agitated and leaves.

Scene End

The scene ends a few minutes after the social worker has left.

Scene 3-6: Break Down

Overview

First, the internet connection will become slow. Soon it breaks down completely.

Description

“You want to check the news if something is going on outside only to be confronted with extremely slow downstream speeds.”

Scene Goals or Function

This scene should deal the ultimate blow: Now even the Internet has abandoned the character, especially once the connection breaks down completely.

Character Goals

The character seeks to reestablish the Internet connection and thus, a reason to stay in the room.

NPC Interaction

The provided laptop comes with some links to locally hosted sites, such as the router webadmin, where the character may try to restart the router. If necessary, let the chat buddies suggest a restart directly.

See the [Appendix](#) for details.

Scene End

The scene ends when the character has restarted the router. If the players ignore the laptop or the router problem, let the scene end after a few minutes.

Scene 3-7: Reversal

Overview

In this last scene, the dominant persona listens to the other faculties and weighs their arguments for staying or leaving.

Description

Read the appropriate description depending on the previous play:

“The re-established Internet connection lifts your mood to some degree but you cannot be sure that this won’t happen again. Something is going on on the outside and you have to decide if you stay within the security of your Room or explore the unfamiliar world beyond its door.”

“Unsure if you can trust your senses, you become aware of your parents talking somewhere else in the house. This realisation lifts your mood to some degree but you cannot be sure that they won’t disappear again. You have to decide if you stay within the security of your Room or explore the unfamiliar world beyond its door.

Scene Goals or Function

This final scene is the space for the character to decide about its future in the Room.

Character Goals

The character wants to settle the question if remaining in the room is a working solution.

Scene End

The scene ends the moment the character has made a decision to stay in the room or go outside, or after a maximum of 10 minutes (marked by playing the “scene ends” sound after which the players have another minute to conclude).

DEBRIEFING

1. Immediate Reactions

Do a round in which all players get to say something very short about the experience and their immediate reactions.

2. Discussion

Then transition to letting people talk freely. Look around for the people who obviously have something to say, but won't scream to get heard. Make sure everybody gets to express themselves.

3. After-Party (optional)

If you have a possibility to continue afterwards, it is our experience that people use this to have a good time and continue reflecting about the experience.

CHARACTERS

These are brief outlines for possible characters in each scenario.

Characters marked with an asterisk * are the three basic roles needed for a scenario, all the others are optional and should be added in accordance with the number of players participating.

The genders of all characters are undetermined. Thus, “they/them” is used as a pronoun in the following descriptions.

The characters “speak to each other” across scenarios, that is, a character from the first scenario will share some attributes, aspects or functions with a character from each of the other two scenarios. This means they are not equivalent or can be reduced to a singular archetype. Still, playing these related characters may result in quite similar experiences. For example, the Mayor, the Chairperson, and Consciousness, all can more or less directly decide in the end what should be done (in scenario 3, this depends on the chosen play variant). The Farmer, the Doctor, and Curiosity, all share a tendency to explore. For players to gain different experiences and perspectives, we suggest to rotate these related characters (so that not always the same player must make the final judgment call, for example).

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
The Mayor*	The Chairperson*	Consciousness*
The Priest*	The Survivor*	Memory*
The Farmer*	The Doctor*	Curiosity*
The Smith	The Commissioner	Reason
The Potter	The Youngster	Hope
The Watchman	The Bursar	Intuition
The Weaver	The Architect	Apprehension

Besides the decision-making roles in Scenarios 1 and 2, the other characters come in oppositional pairs in the sense that one of each pair tends to support leaving, while the other tends to vote for staying. This tendency may, of course, change during the game. These pairs can be switched, keeping these tendencies in mind (so, the Youngster can be paired with the Bursar instead of the Commissioner if there are five players, but pairing them with the Architect should be avoided). The oppositions are introduced as an element of conflict for the larp.

In Scenario 3, the oppositions are not so much based on the tendency to leave or stay but on outlook and perspective. Reason, for example, will favour leaving if it is provided with facts that support this direction, staying if they do not. Intuition on the other hand will go with its gut feeling no matter the facts. Still, the right column persona probably tend more to staying then leaving, while especially Curiosity and Hope may give the world outside a chance more easily then the other persona would.

Oppositional Pairs

The Farmer	The Priest
The Potter	The Smith
The Weaver	The Watchman
The Doctor	The Survivor
The Youngster	The Commissioner
The Architect	The Bursar
Curiosity	Memory
Intuition	Reason
Hope	Apprehension

Relationship Sparks

Each character of Scenario 1 and 2 have a “Relationship Spark,” a suggestion for a relationship with one other character. These sparks are just that, small suggestions. Players may follow them, build on them, or ignore them as they see fit.

Note

You may print the characters as they are given here. For easy printing, find the character sheets also online here:

www.b-ok.de/download/VSC_Larp_Characters_print_en.pdf

The Mayor*

The Village

Character Name

Description

You are the mayor of the village and head of a family that originally founded the settlement. You may listen to what other elders of the village may have to say but in the end, you have the blessing of the village's faith and thus you are granted the position to decide what is best for the community.

Personality and Goals

Conservative, old fashioned, a little arrogant. Likes to keep things as they are.

Relationship Spark

Pick one of the other elders: Your niece or nephew is married to this character (decide if you like this or not to define the relationship).

The Priest*

The Village

Character Name

Description

You are the priest of the village and an outspoken defender of the community's isolation. The outside world is ruled by infidels and a dangerous place. Your ancestors knew why they moved to this remote location.

Personality and Goals

Stern and unforgiving, you teach your faith and the merits of staying in the village.

Relationship Spark

On the one hand, you know the Farmer to be a pillar of the community, liked by many and producing most of the crops. On the other hand, you believe them to be a dangerous anarchist with no regard for tradition.

The Farmer*

The Village

Character Name

Description

You own one of the biggest farmlands of the village. Your family joined the village after it was founded so you have always found yourself in a position of semi-outsider, of an upstart, even though your farm produces most of the crops for the community.

Personality and Goals

Hard-working, you seek to become the next mayor because you think the old one is holding the village back. You have heard of new farming technologies outside the village and are curious to learn more.

Relationship Spark

You do not agree with the Priest on many things, you find their religious zeal disconcerting and cannot help but speak your mind at times. Still, you will need their support to become mayor one day.

The Smith

The Village

Character Name

Description

You also work the land like everyone else but have inherited your family's expertise in metalworking, thus, creating tools and shoeing horses. Most other villagers rely on your work and thus treat you with great respect.

Personality and Goals

You like to help others but tend to hold grudges if people do not appreciate you as much as you think they should. Through meticulous planning and strategising you have built a network of favours granted, and thus seek to preserve the status quo.

Relationship Spark

The Potter owes you a large favour – you made tools for them, for example, and you are still waiting for them to deliver pots in payment. If the Potter is not present, it is the Weaver who owes you.

The Potter

The Village

Character Name

Description

You also work the land like everyone else but you have an almost artistic expertise in pottery, creating many if not most containers of the village. You see great potential in selling your wares on markets instead of exchanging them for food or other services.

Personality and Goals

You know from the rare contact with travellers or merchants that your wares would sell well outside the village but the impossibility of doing so has made you grow bitter and short-tempered.

Relationship Spark

You owe the Smith a large favour – for example, for tools they made for you – and you still have not payed them back with wares of your making. If the Smith is not present, the Watchman for some reason pays too much attention to you, if you were asked.

The Watchman

The Village

Character Name

Description

You and your family do farm the land but mostly for the bare minimum because taking over the village defence has gained you access to the whole village's shared resources. You live off the good will of the other villagers in exchange for you keeping order and security.

Personality and Goals

Inheriting the role of the village defender and realising that there is actually not much to do, you seek to live the best life with the least work and always follow your guts in this regard.

Relationship Spark

You cannot explain it but you are suspicious of the Weaver hiding something, if they are present; if not, your attention is on the Potter.

The Weaver

The Village

Character Name

Description

You also work the land like everyone else but do not grow much food or keep animals. You produce flax to weave clothes from its fibers and also hunt for felt if the time permits. Most people take you and your work for granted, demanding more than they pay back.

Personality and Goals

Somehow you ended up with the shortest straw, relying too much on other people's food by specialising on clothes. You would run but are too frightened of what might happen to you if you just left and were caught.

Relationship Spark

You believe the Watchman is on to you and your desire to leave, if they are present; if not, you owe the Smith a favour for tools they made.

A Villager (1)

The Village

Character Name

Description

You are a villager who found the first signs of the threat and later wants to push the elders in a certain direction.

NPC Task

Directly after Scene 1-2 begins, rush towards the elders and exclaim:

“Elders, a terrible disease has stricken our village!”

Try to convince at least two elders to follow you to the dead animals.

You may use the map to show the elders where the animals are.

In Scene 1-6, take the opposite position of Villager (2). One will ask the elders to stay in the village and face the threat (maybe get help from outside), while the other implores them to leave immediately and flee.

After about 5 minutes, both of you should push the elders and the Mayor to a decision.

A Villager (2)

The Village

Character Name

Description

You are another villager who seeks to push the elders in a certain direction.

NPC Task

In Scene 1-6, take the opposite position of Villager (1). One will ask the elders to stay in the village and face the threat (maybe get help from outside), while the other implores them to leave immediately and flee.

After about 5 minutes, both of you should push the elders and the Mayor to a decision.

The Chairperson*

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You are the elected head of the council, not so much a ruler than a steward, guiding the path of the people in the shelter.

Personality and Goals

You are a charming smooth-talker who loves to inspire optimism but does not care so much about actual policies. You seek general equilibrium, harmony, and admiration by others.

Relationship Spark

Pick one member of the council: You were close friends once (if age permits, you may have grown up together) but have drifted apart – until you both found yourselves on the council.

The Survivor*

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You are the oldest member of the council and still remember – if dimly – a time before the shelter, a time of hunger, fear, and desperation. For you, the shelter is the source of everything that is good and you will protect it as best as you can.

Personality and Goals

You are solemn and a bit taciturn, already beyond the prime of your time. Only when it comes to the past or criticism of the shelter society, you will defend the latter loud and clearly. You seek to protect the shelter as much as it protected you.

Relationship Spark

You are in a mild form of love-hate relationship with the Doctor, relying on medical expertise due to your old age but also opposing the quest for knowledge beyond the shelter.

The Doctor*

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You do not like politics but as the leading medical practitioner were elected to serve on the council. You have a keen curiosity, however, when it comes to the question if the world outside the shelter maybe habitable again.

Personality and Goals

You are proud of your scientific rationality and love to spend hours upon hours solving medical and biological issues. You would like nothing more than study the effects of the catastrophe on wildlife and humans alike.

Relationship Spark

You are in a mild form of love-hate relationship with the Survivor, seeking out knowledge about the past but also questioning the confinement of the shelter.

The Youngster

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You were born in the shelter but found it always too constraining, too limited. Once you became an adult through some (unlucky?) fortune you were elected council member – too much responsibility many believe.

Personality and Goals

Opportunistic but also caring a lot about what others think of you, especially your elders, you have long been pushing for an extension of the shelter, more room, if not an exploration of the outside world.

Relationship Spark

You see the Commissioner for the scheming plotter they are, hating and admiring their information resources. If they are not present, you like to doubt the Bursar and their boring statistics.

The Commissioner

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You are the head of the defence forces of the shelter, in part military, in part police, in part secret service. You know more or less any- and everything that is going on and act more like an advisor to the chairman than like an actual council member.

Personality and Goals

You are confident and resourceful. You like to stay in the background and “advise” the other council members, always casting your comments in the form of informed facts not as an opinion. You see yourself as the most powerful and would like to keep it that way.

Relationship Spark

You perceive the Youngster as a minor threat as they are not yet accustomed to how you “run” things. You like to remind them of how much they still have to learn. If they are not present, you seek to undermine the Architect’s quest for a more egalitarian society.

The Bursar

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You have control over a specific resource of the shelter, be it food or water, so supervising the limited forms of agriculture possible, for example, or owning a facility to clean water. Holding a vital position such as yours, you managed to also gain enough support to be elected council member.

Personality and Goals

By luck and intuition, you have carved yourself a spot of power out of the ground of the shelter – and you want to keep it. You seek to appear charitable and helping but you also do not want to relinquish the control you have. Comfortable where you are, you dislike change.

Relationship Spark As you believe in the proverb that everyone forges their own destiny, you dislike the “socialist attitude” (you have heard that somewhere) of the Architect who seeks to uplift the common workers too much. If the Architect is not present, you like to question that the Youngster is mature enough to be on the council.

The Architect

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You have the knowledge and expertise to keep the physical infrastructure of the shelter intact. Recently, this means not only to keep paths secure and air conditioning working but mostly has turned into constant worries about waste disposal. You often speak out for those hard working in the tunnels and caves, which gained you a seat on the council.

Personality and Goals

You see the plight of the common man – and you see the limited availability of space for waste disposal. Fearing for the future, you seek to cautiously widen the shelter, explore its outskirts and find a way to reduce the danger that at some point the shelter will be stuffed with garbage.

Relationship Spark

You see the Bursar as the symbol of what is wrong in society: Sitting on their resources instead of sharing them. If the Bursar is not present, you believe the Commissioner to secretly undermining your efforts by infiltrating the common workers and pushing them to act irresponsibly.

The Thief

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You have stolen food and stashed it away but were found.

NPC Task

First, try to deny that you stole the food:

“They are exaggerating! I just did not eat all my rations.”

When the council does not believe you, point out that the food will not be enough in the near future, try to deflect from your crime by pointing to the larger issue of the shelter.

“Calculations by the bursar clearly show that in a few years food will not be enough for all of us. I just took precautions!”

The Vendor

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You are a vendor selling vegetables or other produce.

NPC Task

Interact a little with the council and offer them your produce.

The Accused Parent

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

Despite already having a child, you disregarded community law and became pregnant again or fathered a second child.

NPC Task

You seek to convince the council of the error to limit the number of children to just one. You are pleading not only for the life of your unborn child but your own because what you did is punishable by death.

“I have not done anything wrong. This is a child who will be born out of love. Does the council criminalise love?”

The Officer

The Shelter

Character Name

Description

You are the one delivering the criminals to the council's attention.

NPC Task

Deliver the thief and later the accused parent to the council and take them away afterwards.

Scene 2-1: "Esteemed council, during a routine maintenance, workers just discovered a huge amount of food hidden away under this thief's room flooring. S/he says s/he just saved from her rations but there is just too much. What shall be done with him/her?"

Scene 2-4: "Somehow people learned of the thief's case and now rumours abound that we are soon out of food. I will return to the force and try to keep things calm. But I ask you to address this problem."

Scene 2-5: "Esteemed council, during our search for more people hiding food, we encountered this inhabitant. S/he already has a child but is having another one. What shall be done with her/him?"

Scene 2-6: Enter after about five minutes and ask the council for a decision because the people outside are becoming more and more restless. If the council has questions, make up appropriate answers.

Note

If there are only two NPC players present, they can switch roles, e.g. Player A is the Officer and Player B the Thief in the first scene, Player A is the Accused Parent and Player B is the Officer in the fifth scene.

Consciousness*

The Room

Description

You are the person's self-awareness and subjectivity. As the self's core, you negotiate between the other faculties and may be the final arbiter in any decision.

Personality and Goals

You have created for yourself the perfect place to be and thus are reluctant to leave. There is nothing familiar outside your room.

Memory*

The Room

Description

You are the memory faculty of the self, indulging in the past.

Personality and Goals

You are defined by your past and see everything in its light. You dimly remember unpleasantness outside the room, so you are extremely hesitant to leave.

Curiosity*

The Room

Description

You are the curious part of the self, seeking new experiences and information.

Personality and Goals

You just care about new input, new experiences, new knowledge. You want to go where you have not been before.

Reason

The Room

Description

You are the intellectual capacity of the self, seeking facts and premises and establishing conclusions and judgments based on these facts.

Personality and Goals

You judge only based on facts, you are as dry as bone and without imagination. You have no facts about the world outside the room.

Intuition

The Room

Description

You are the self's gut feeling, recognising and realising "truth" without any reasoning process.

Personality and Goals

You are spontaneous, act in the spur of the moment. If you feel something to be right, you do it, even if it might go against rational judgment.

Apprehension

The Room

Description

You are the self's cautious, if not fearful aspect, perceiving possible dangers and seeking to avoid them.

Personality and Goals

You might not be in constant fear but tend to be a little paranoid. The unknown is a place you do not want to be because you cannot induce its dangers.

Hope

The Room

Description

You are the courageous and optimistic aspects of the self, seeing only what is good and not minding risks.

Personality and Goals

You are full of hope, that everything will turn out well for you. If this means stepping over an unknown threshold, so be it.

The Parent

The Room

Character Name

Description

You are either the mother or the father of the person in the room.

NPC Task

Deliver food and leave after a short exchange (do not enter the room):

“I put the tray with your dinner right outside the door, pick it up while it is still warm, okay? Oh, and your Amazon package has arrived, I will bring it up later when I come to collect the tray.”

Chat Buddies

The Room

Description

You are one of the friends or contacts the person chats with.

NPC Task

As either “MrMister” or “Joey76” you interact with the person via the chat program “Super Chat.” Reply to their inquiries or ask questions yourself. During the scene with slow internet speeds, suggest to restart the router.

See the [Appendix](#) for more on the chat program and the router.

The Social Worker

The Room

Character Name

Description

You are a social worker who has been coming and going.

NPC Task

After a brief exchange you suddenly leave.

“Hey. It’s me. I just wanted to check if you are ok.”

Any questions concerning the parents should be deflected.

Uncharacteristically, vehemently refuse to enter the room. After a while become agitated and leave.

