

## The Touch of Your Voice

*The game was created at the Larp Exchange Academy by Yauheni Karachun ( Belarus), Andreas Handal Dørum (Norway), Thom Kiraly ( Sweden), Eva Charvátová (Czech Republic), Aida Khaled Saifi ( Palestine), Basel Irshaid ( Palestine).*

About the game: the main part of the game is centered around character interactions.

For the players: explore blindness

For the characters: to develop relationships and conflicts

The larp is set at a service home for the blind wherein players play a diverse cast of characters living at the home. During the game, players explore the blindness of the characters as well as the relationships and conflicts between them. The game is centered around the themes of love, trust, and dignity. The game presupposes active game-mastering and at least 2 GM.

NB! Players will be asked to use physical contact as a complement to speech as a way to communicate.

The larp is for 7 players; characters have a preset sex, but it can be changed through changing names.

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### **PRE-GAME (1,5h)**

Penguins & Flamingoes - ice-breaking exercise. (5 min)

Greeting game - use voice to communicate emotion (the players are walking around the room and greet each other when they meet. The emotions to be tried: happiness, love, frustration, etc) (5 min)

Trucker hugger (the players work in pairs + one of the GM helps) – One of the players stays in front and he/she closes the eyes, the other, who stands behind, controls the front one. Touching on both shoulders – moving forward, on the right shoulder- turning to the right, touching on the left shoulder- turning to the left, touching on the head – hugging whatever is in front. After several minutes the players switch roles. (10 min)

Falling game – trust building exercise. The players stand in a close circle. One of them stands in the middle and relaxes, keeping the feet to ground, thus falling to sides. The players in the circle must not let him/her fall. NB: GMs are also supposed to take part in the exercise as the players have to trust them as well. (10 min)

Running blindfolded - Building trust and teaching Cut, Brake. Working in pairs. One of the players is blindfolded while the other one is not. Running starts slowly from walking and then speeds up. The blind person controls the speed. During this exercise GMs introduce the Cut and Brake rule. (10 min)

INTRODUCE THE CHARACTERS 5 min + 35 min

The characters are introduced in a short way – just a name and an occupation. And the players are welcome to choose a character.

After choosing characters the players are handed out character descriptions.

### **The characters:**

Felix, 42 yrs, Former Pilot, Born sighted

- Stuck in the past
- Often takes charge
- Contemplating suicide by jumping/flying
- The model is flirting with you.

You often say: "That reminds me of when I..."

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Alex, 31 yrs, Musician, Born blind

- Married to Sam, has an affair with Edgar
- Sam never listens anymore
- You're a world-class pianist

Catchphrase: "Hear me out."

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Edgar, 42 yrs, Rich bachelor, Born blind

- Bitter and angry.
- The professor seems to love blindness, what's wrong with her?
- Alex is the only one who treats you with respect.

Catchphrase: "You don't know what you're talking about"

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Charlotte Donaldson, 68 yrs, Professor, Born blind

- Good friends with Felix, the Pilot
- Fights for blind rights and equality
- Recently hit a student

Catchphrase: "Let me tell you something"

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Sam, 33 yrs, Live-interpreter, Born sighted

- Going deaf, has only told the professor.
- You know that Alex, the love of your life, is cheating, but not with whom.
- Wants to move away from the care home.

Catchphrase: Could you please repeat that?

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Helen, 49 yrs, Ex-caretaker, Born sighted

- You took care of Alex when you worked at this care home.
- You now realize how fucking irritating caretakers are.
- You seek redemption by helping Emma, the model.

Catchphrase:

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Emma, 21 yrs, Ex-model, Born sighted

- You're used to relying on your looks.
- Your vanity keeps you from trusting people who say you look fine after the accident.
- You are attracted to Felix, the pilot.

Catchphrase: "Are you sure?"

The hot seat – players explain the character for a minute than they are blindfolded( only when in the hot seat). Players and GMs are all welcome to ask questions, but there are a number of preset questions which have to be asked.

Felix, former pilot - Hot seat questions:

What does the model actually want from you? How do you feel about it?

How did you become blind?

What is the last thing you remember seeing clearly?

Who's your best friend here?

Alex, musician, Hot seat questions:

How did you and Sam meet?

Why are you sleeping with Edgar?

How do you read the sheet music?

Edgar, Rich bachelor, Hot seat questions:

Where did you get your money?

How did your family treat you?

What do you feel about Alex's husband, Sam?

Charlotte Donaldson, Professor, Hot seat questions:

Why did you hit the student?

What is your academic field?

How did your husband die? Was it a long time ago?

Sam, Live-interpreter, Hot seat questions:

How do you feel about going deaf?

Why is Alex cheating on you?

Why haven't you told Alex about your deafness?

What about Alex makes you smile?

Helen, ex-caretaker, Hot seat questions:

What's your biggest regret from your time as a caretaker?

What would you do differently?

What about Edgar is attractive? His voice? His hands?

Emma, Ex-model, Hot seat questions:

What do you do to keep your good looks?

What do you feel about not being able to look in a mirror?

How do you pick what clothes to put on?

**Game Structure** ( the game starts with a ritual countdown and a song and the game ends with a song (1<sup>st</sup>) and a ritual count-up.

The game has three acts which represent different parts of day. Each act is introduced by GMs walking players to the table.

A countdown ritual to put the players into the game.

"To enter the game together, we will now do a countdown. Please stand in a circle"

10. Look at me.

9. Look at each other. (It's OK to smile)

8. Close your eyes

7. Focus on the sound of my voice

6. You are going to play a game together.

5. Get ready to put on your blindfold.

4. We will be here if you need us

3. Focus on your character's name

2. Get ready to enter the game.

1. Welcome to the game.

The players are still stand in the circle and a song is played. The choice of the song can be on GMs. – ( the songs played at test runs: Mumford and Sons- Dust Bowl Dance; Peter Gabriel – My Body is a Cage.

The game starts after the song – GMs ( as care-takers) take the players to a table.

Act 1 - Having coffee

Guide the players, one by one, to the table.

This scene is an opportunity to let the players get to know the characters better.

During this act the players should be served water- it is for them to choose whether to pour it into cups themselves or to ask care-takers to do it.

At the end of the act GMs walk the players around the room and seat back at the table.

## Act 2 - A slow day

The characters are in the common area of the house.

Free play. The players can request "private" scenes in the black box. ( raise a hand and ask care-takers to take them, for example, to their room or somewhere else. And then ask for the character they want to talk to.)

In this act, the players push for conflict, develop relationships and talk about their characters' dilemmas. It is also an opportunity for players and characters to have private conversations. All characters must have been part of at least one private scene for this act to end.

NB: GMs have to state as clearly as possible that all the players are to have a private scene./ As the players are blindfolded, blackbox can be anything – from a separate room to a corner in the same room. It is also a good idea to have 2 or 3 blackboxes as the players tend to ask for private scenes together.

## Act 3 - Sunday night dinner

This act is the climax of the game. This is where players bring the characters' conflicts and dilemmas up in public.

The game masters decide when the game ends.

The game masters end the game by announcing, in a fashion proportionate to how riled up the characters are, that "it's probably time for bed". They then guide the characters back to the way they stood during the countdown ritual. A song is played and when the song ends, the game ends.

## **Debrief**

The players remain blindfolded. We do a count-up.

1. The game will soon be over.
2. Relax your shoulders, arms and hands.
3. Think about who you have been, what you have done
4. Put all of these things into your blindfold
5. Remove your blindfolds, but keep your eyes closed.
6. When you open your eyes, you'll be back
7. Open your eyes
8. Look at each other
9. Look at me.
10. Welcome back. Thank you for playing our game. We will now do a debrief with all of you. Please sit down.

Give them coffee and tea.

Make a round of how they feel and a round for feedback.

Info and rules

Don't take off the blindfolds. If you are really uncomfortable, raise your hand and ask for help.

Player <---> GM (trust is needed)

Character <---> Caretaker (trust is not obligatory)

## -----FEEDBACK-----

- Players need to get used to blindfolds. They were too rushed, maybe due to town.
- The playing of the music should have been primed better.
- Getting to walk with the caretaker was good.
- It's very hard to keep track of time.
- Felix had a hard time knowing where to start. More to go on from the get go.
- Content-light, but it's ok because of the blindness. A bit more content wouldn't do any harm. More love triangles?
- Should the characters be gender-flexible?
- Add the option to add or subtract characters.
- Due to the workshops, the abuse from the staff wasn't horrible and can be implemented.
- The physical connection was interesting. Work more on it? More hand-holding.
- Remember to tell about the cut and brake rules.
- Make sure to explain how the game ends before we start the game.
- The physical connection enhanced the vocal communication.
- When leading a blind person, lead by taking the arm. Put into workshops?
- Pouring the water, using the finger to control the amount of liquid. Put into workshop or let the players decide for themselves?
- Close friendships should have been more developed. What have they done together? What do they usually do? Define the closest friend?
- Being at the table was too loud. Everyone talking at the same time, cups moving around was overwhelming.
- Have scenes lead up. Introduce characters one by one?
- Move some of the hot seat into smaller groups or pairs?
- Let the affair come out mid-game?
- Underline that the hot seat is the opportunity to make connections. More focused hot seat on relationship-building.
- You didn't discuss physical contact. How do you invite it? How do you do it?
- Workshop about expressing emotions through physical contact?
- Add an epilogue? "A week later". Monologues?
- Don't add more mechanics. The blindness and black box is enough! [put into do and don't list], But it also depends on the game. GMs have to remember that the game is always more interesting than it looks but they may introduce several things. Like breaking something and shouting at each other...
- A song played at the start and the end of the game sets the mood of it. GMs may use their own song.