

LIMBO

A larp by Tor Kjetil Edland

Introduction

Limbo is a larp for 6-12 players. The game takes place in the realm of Limbo, betwixt and between life and death. Beyond time. A waiting place to reflect on life as it has been so far before either returning to life once again or facing the unknown on the other side of death.

The characters are a group of people from our own time and society who are hovering between life and death who find themselves stranded in Limbo. In addition an organiser should play the character of the Host. The recommended timeframe for the game is approximately two hours. The organizers should also schedule some time for creating the characters and briefing the participants before the game starts and for debriefing and discussion after the end of the game.

In the following you will find a sections on preparations for the game, pre-game briefing and how to play the game. Lastly, you will find ready to print materials for the briefing phase of the game.

I wish you the best of luck with the game! Should you have feedback, questions, praise or criticism, I will be happy to hear from you at torkjetil@gmail.com

Preparations

The setting for this game is a place that is nowhere. Limbo can be understood as a concept, a fantasy or a state of mind. The scenography then should not be "realistic". A room with white or black walls and with no or few windows will probably work best. If the room has any windows the game should be held when it's dark outside. The windows should also be covered to close off any impressions of the outside world. For the duration of the game the characters cannot escape Limbo, so a boundary should be marked on the floor (in the original this boundary was done with rope lights). You should also plan what the rest of the scenography will look like. People have few conceptions about what Limbo "should" look like, so be creative! Music and sounds can also be part of the scenography. Eerie music and ambient soundscapes can greatly contribute to a feeling of displacement and the feeling of being somewhere else than ordinary reality.

You also need to decide whether you are going to provide costumes for the participants. In the original runs of the game the participant were told in advance that everyone would be dressed in their underwear during the game to symbolise the vulnerability of the characters in the situation they are in. The participants could then select underwear they would feel comfortable playing in. You can however decide on a completely different style of costumes that fits your game, but you need to clarify in advance if you will be responsible for providing it or if the participants should do this themselves. You also need to decide on a costume for the character of the Host that will be played by one of the organizers.

The only prop that is necessary to prepare are some "tickets" that the Host will hand out during the game. More about them in the section 'Playing the Game'.

Pre-game Briefing

At the end of this document you will find a four page v format folder to print out and hand to your players You will need to be familiar with the contents so that you can help sort out any misunderstandings The folder contains most of the information needed for the pre game briefing phase In it the players are given specific instructions to follow through a process of making a character and. When the game area is ready and the players have arrived you welcome them and hand out pens and folders Reading the folder the players will be instructed to fill out the questionnaire to reflect a bit about themselves and how the character they would like to play is similar and different from their everyday selves. Nobody should feel obliged to show their answers to anyone else. After this you should make sure everyone understands the rules of the game answering any questions that the participants might have. The game is then be ready to begin.

Playing the Game.

The participants should start the game laying down on the floor with their eyes closed. Play an introductory song. During this song the participants should mentally prepare to start the game. When the song ends the characters wake up and start interacting with each other.¹

After a while the Host should enter the game and introduce himself to the characters. The Host will explain where they are and that they have to stay in Limbo until they will either return to life or continue onto the afterlife. Be vague about how long they will have to stay. Then the Host should leave again.

¹ There should be a short break between this song and any any other «ambient» music played as part of the scenography to avoid any confusion about the start of the game.

The next time the Host enters he will have a ticket with him to a destination in the afterlife. Explain that tickets cannot be given back once received, but that the "visitors" in Limbo can exchange tickets between each other. Then describe the destination and ask who wants it. Give the ticket to the first person to say yes.

These were the destinations of the tickets used in the original runs of Limbo. There can be several tickets for the same destination:

- Return to life (the characters who end up with this ticket survive their near death experience)
- Reincarnation
- Oblivion
- Dreamlands
- Gates of Heaven
- Gates of Hell
- The Purification Institute (formerly known as Purgatory)
- One with Nature
- Ghost in the Machine

Apart from the return to life tickets - taking one of the other tickets indicates that the character doesn't survive and passes on to this particular version of the afterlife. The host should enter several times during the games with new tickets. The Host should not tell which tickets might or might not become available later. This will add to the tension when the characters decide whether to accept a ticket or not. Tickets can be exchanged between the characters but cannot be given back to the host. If a particular ticket isn't accepted by anyone, just remove it after waiting a little while to see if no-one really wants it. If someone never accepts a ticket that character will remain in Limbo while the others journey on.

When the game is about the end the host enters for a last time and tells the "guests" that it is time to depart Limbo for the destinations on their tickets. Ask everyone to lie down on the floor and close their eyes (if you want eyeshades or blindfolds can be handed out to everyone). When everyone has done so, play the final tune loudly. When the music stops the game is over.

Making yourself different

As an aid to developing your persona for the larp. *Limbo*, we would like you to consider the statements below and rate how well you feel they apply to your everyday self. Go through them one at a time, and put marks in the appropriate black boxes. Then do the same with the person you would like to be during the game. Put the marks in the appropriate grey boxes.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am happy with my life.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I am scared of death.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I freely express my emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I like being close to other people	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
There are things about me that I wish I could change	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I often experience ambivalence.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I am a loving and warm person.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
I don't trust other people	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
It's important to me that other people like me	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			

When the game starts you have just experienced a life threatening situation which has left you hovering between life and death. This could for instance be the result of a sudden accident or act of violence or the outcome of lengthy struggle against disease. Describe the situation and what led into it:

Welcome to Limbo

betwixt and between life and death. Beyond time. A waiting place to reflect on life as it has been so far before either returning to life once again or facing the unknown on the other side of death.

Your character

You will be playing an alternate version of yourself. The extent of the differences between your regular self and the larp version is largely up to you but there are certain rules:

- *You are now hovering between life and death. You remember what it is that has happened in your life that has put you close to death.*
- *You are not personally familiar with any of the other participants as you may be in real life.*
- *You have never even heard of larp.*
- *For the duration of the game it is impossible for your character to leave Limbo. If you go outside the designated boundary of Limbo, you go out of the game until you re-enter the area inside the boundary.*

Playing the game

You start lying on the floor listening to some music. Prepare yourself mentally for the game to start. When the tune ends you wake up and start interacting with the other characters. One of the organizers will play the character of the Host of Limbo. The Host can be interacted with but cannot be harmed or physically stopped in any way. The Host will indicate when the game is about to end. Lay down on the floor and close your eyes. When the music ends the game is over and you can open your eyes again.

Other rules

This larp employs the usually familiar rules **brake** and **cut**. Should you find yourself in a play situation you feel is headed in a direction you are not comfortable with you simply say "**brake**" clearly to those you are playing with. This tells them that play shouldn't be taken any further in that direction. If play for some reason has become so uncomfortable or offensive that you wish it to stop you can say "**cut**" loudly and clearly and walk away. If someone calls a **cut** everyone will stop playing at once - no exceptions.

Making yourself different

As an aid to developing your larp persona we would like you to consider the statements on the next page and rate how well you feel they apply to your everyday self. Go through them one at a time and put marks in the appropriate boxes for both yourself and the character you will be playing. Don't worry about anyone reading it afterwards. You don't have to show it to anyone. This is merely a tool for you to use in developing a persona and has no other purpose.