

SCREWING THE CREW

A SHORT LARP ABOUT
OPEN RELATIONSHIPS,
MONOGAMY AND
A GROUP OF GOOD OLD FRIENDS

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PREFACE

This larp came about from the merging of two ideas: a larp investigating the background of a close-knit social scene, and a larp about dynamics and intrigues in a social circle where open relationships are common.

Initially we created this game for fun, because it is socially interesting, and to explore the use and combination of different methods. But it does have a clear political aspect to it as well, especially outside the liberal Nordic countries.

The larp was originally produced as a co-production between Laivfabrikken Trondheim and Laivfabrikken Oslo and played in both cities in the late summer of 2010. It was also submitted to the Nordic Larpwriter Challenge 2010 and made it to the finals.

Anyone may freely use this manuscript and make a non-commercial run of the larp. If you decide to do it, we would really like to know. Both that you are planning it, and especially how it went. You can e-mail us at frk_elin@yahoo.com or trine.l.lindahl@gmail.com.

Have fun!

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WHAT THE LARP IS ABOUT

A is together with B and is making out with C who is in love with D who has an affair with E who rejected F who's hitting on everybody. A lot of people live like that. Sometimes everybody's happy, and other times it doesn't really work out that well. What emotions, conflicts and weird situations may arise in a group of friends with somewhat loose sexual relations crisscrossing the social sphere? And how did it turn out that way?

Screwing the Crew is a short larp where you can explore **questions** about monogamy, open relationships and sexual relations in a tight-knit group of friends. You can explore their **history** and how it has affected the relations they have today. The **characters** are around 30 years old, all of them are to some degree bisexual and most of them have known each other for at least ten years.

The larp's **setting** is a dinner party held by the most established couple in the group, in a city close to you. It is played in a realistic playing style with some meta techniques to enhance inner thoughts and emotions in the characters and strengthen the focus on the subject of the game. It can be played in a seminar room or in a normal home. We find that a normal home gives a more realistic setting, and thus a better dynamic to the game.

Time: Total time is about six hours, broken down to 30 minutes introduction and reading of characters, 2 hour workshop, 3 hour playing time and 30 minutes debrief.

People: The game can be played with between 7 and 15 players including two gamemasters. The gamemasters should participate in the game, playing characters just like the other players. They lead the process before and after the game, and initiate the act change.

Preparations: All preparations are done through the workshop. If you want you can make the characters available for the players to read before they arrive.

WALK-THROUGH

INTRODUCTION (30 MIN)

As the players arrive, let them **read all the characters** and start thinking of two or three they would like to play.

Present the **timeline** for the event. (2 min.)

Playing style (5 min.)

Realistic, not comedy. (But reality is quite funny sometimes...)

Transparency.

Play to lose. The goal is to make interesting play for each other.

Be nice. Since few things are defined, help each other to improvise.

PREPARATIONS (~2 HOURS)

1. Distribute the characters. Let the players define where they know each other from (Scouts? Theatre group? Same class in high school?) (10 min)

2. Define the relationships. Each couple talks together. The jokers talk to each other. (10 min)

3. Presentation round. All couples tell a little bit about themselves, and repeats the relationships that are in the written characters. (10-15 min)

4. The ball of yarn. (30-40 min)

Cigarette/ peeing brake ;) (5-10 min)

RULES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

1. Cut and brake (2 min).

2. Ars amandi. Quick guide to how to have sex. (5 min)

Everybody quickly holds hands and look into eyes with anybody they have had sex with in the past.

3. Meta techniques (10 min)

Ping the glass

Blow out the candle

Test play some scenes if you have the time.

Liquor on the table

End song

Practical (5 min)

Food - how many drinks for each etc.

First aid - who knows it?

PLAYING THE GAME (3 HOURS)

1. Start with most of the characters arriving as guests.
2. Ca. 45 minutes before the game ends, introduce the liquor and change playlist.
3. End the game by blowing out the candle and play for instance Bjørk's "Come to me".

DEBRIEF (30 MIN)

1. Let everybody share immediate impressions shortly.
2. Let people talk freely.

Continue the party out of character.

THE HOW AND WHY

This is a description for the gamemasters of each point in the workshop, game and debrief with instructions on how to do it, and why we think it is a good idea.

INTRODUCTION

As the players arrive, let them **read all the characters** and start thinking of two or three they would like to play. Let them talk and greet and get acquainted.

When they are all there or at the time you have set, you can start by welcoming them and set the frame for the event by telling them the timeline for the event and introduce them to the playing style. After that you go into the preparations.

TIMELINE FOR THE EVENT

We recommend that you use two hours for the workshop, three hours for the game and half an hour for debriefing. It is also good to have half an hour before the workshop for the players to get a little acquainted and read through the characters.

If you follow our workshop walk-through, your time schedule is going to be pretty tight. You need to make this clear for the players, and you need to be quite strict. Players tend to want to play “Ball of yarn” all evening, so you have to keep the pace.

The more players you have, the longer time everything takes, so you might want to adjust the time used on the workshop if you have 15 players.

PLAYING STYLE

We want a **realistic** playing style with exploration through meta techniques. Screwing the Crew is not comedy or farce, but as we like to say, reality is sometimes quite funny. A realistic playing style can be many things, we like to think of it as portraying someone ordinary that you might know, like your neighbor or colleague or a friend of yours or even yourself. What would and would you not do at a dinner party with friends?

Transparency. We want all the players to have the same information as a ground for improvisation. We try to gain that through everybody reading all the characters and everybody participating in the building of relationships. In this sort of game, where the focus is on exploring the history and relationships of these people, we find that transparency helps the players concentrate their play on what creates cool playing situations. The players need to separate things that are secrets between the characters, even if the

players know them. This goes hand in hand with the next point.

In this sort of game, the most interesting things can happen when players decide to let their characters out in all their insecurities, silliness and nastiness. We call it “**Playing to lose**” when you realistically do all the stupid, unproductive stuff people do, instead of playing your character as a perfect person that always makes the right choices. But beware that you do not overdo this and end up in tragicomedy.

Be nice and tolerant to other people’s improvisation. This is very important to emphasize, so the players feel comfortable with improvising facts and stories about their own or other characters. It is not important whether a couple tells the same story about how they met, the important thing is that a story is being told.

PREPARATIONS

1. Distribute the characters by letting the players suggest what characters they want to play. They should have read all the characters before you start the workshop and have some preferences about this.

Let the players decide the **names** of the characters with the letter of their character as the first letter in the name. For instance the character A takes the name Anna or Andrej or something, according to the player’s gender.

Write the names of the characters and the players playing them on a sheet of paper as you go along. This gives an urgency and decisiveness to the process.

In this process the players also need to **decide how the characters know each other**. The premise is that at least the core of the group should have known each other for about ten years or more. Make them decide together, but give them hints like high school class, handball team, young pioneers or a rock band or something.

There are some things to be considered when distributing the characters. This way of doing things awards the players with the most **initiative**. The players with the least initiative may end up with the less attractive characters and co-players. This might not be favorable for your game, so you should take some control over the situation. For instance we have experienced that if the gender balance dictates that there should be some homosexual couples, it might be a good idea to cast those first. Even if all the characters are bisexual (Yes, this is a rule), it is a good thing to have players that are actually motivated for it, to play the same-sex couples.

You might also have some people with **real life issues**, that make it important not to cast those as a couple or with some of the predefined relations. Make sure you have read the characters well yourself, so you can help them steer clear of those without them really noticing. If you do not know your players that well, you just have to trust them to make sure of that themselves.

2. Define the relationships. Let the couples decide how long they have been together, how established they are, do they have children, do they live together etc. What do they see as being unfaithful? Have they discussed the limitations of their relationship or is this a potential for conflict?

The Jokers talk together about whether they want to be in a relationship or not, and how they would like that relationship to be.

3. Presentation round. All couples and jokers tell a little bit about themselves, and repeat the relationships that are in the written characters. Help them remember the relationships they forget. Make sure that people use the character names as much as possible, so that they eventually learn all the names.

It might also be a point here to stress that the character A is not very attractive, regardless of how attractive the player is. Explain that the conflict between A and B won't work if A hits it off with one or more people.

4. The ball of yarn. This is a method for making relations quickly, easily and transparently. It works like this: One player starts with a ball of yarn, let's call her Emma. Emma holds on to the end of the yarn and passes the ball on to Peter, while she makes some sort of relationship, like "I'm Peter's cousin". The Peter-player can then make a new relation to another character, for instance "Peter once tried to hit on Martha, but it didn't really work out that well", and then send the ball of yarn to her while holding on to the yarn that now forms a line from Emma to Peter and then on to Martha. The Martha-player now has three choices. She can either make a new relation, like the ones above. Or she can extend the relation "Well, that was because I was dating Paul at the time" and pass the ball of yarn on to Paul. Or she can develop the relation, "It felt kind of weird because Peter was and still is my best friend", and then make a new relation to someone else. The players cannot say no to a relation, but they can nuance it if they don't really like it ("Yes, that's correct, but it was really because...")

The reason for doing this with a ball of yarn is that it gets obvious who has and who needs more relations. Make sure everybody has a relation before

you go on to the next round. You can keep going with this for about 30 minutes and then round off. If you feel you need a little bit more time, use it. This is the point in the preparations where the players really start getting the feel of the story they are going to play out in the larp.

Cigarette / peeing brake. Let the players know they have to be quick ;)

RULES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

1. Cut and brake. These are the most important rules for any larp. Anybody can at any time say Cut! if the player feels that their physical or mental boundaries have been crossed. All play around them should stop and the person made comfortable. Do not start to play again before that player says it is OK. Do not ask why they cut, as this might be very personal.

If you do not feel that your boundaries have been crossed yet, but you are afraid they will, you can say Brake!. The players around you should then back off a little and give you a chance to play yourself out of the situation.

2. Tell them how to have sex. We really don't think any of the characters actually will have sex during the game. As we have asked the players rhetorically "How often do you really have sex at a dinner party with friends?" But, it is important to have a technique for doing it because this reduces the stress for the players.

We have chosen to do this through the Ars amandi method, where you only touch each other's arms and use breath, sound and most importantly eye contact to simulate sex. If you want to use a different method, that's just fine, as long as you communicate it clearly to the players. If you stick to the Ars amandi method, demonstrate it briefly and then let the players do a very quick version by just holding hands and looking into the eyes of the different characters they have had sex with at some time during the years.

3. Meta techniques. A meta technique is a technique you use to express something that communicates to the other players, but not their characters. We like to use this, because we feel it gives possibilities for deeper and more realistic play. We use the following methods:

Ping the glass. You can prompt a monologue from another player by giving their glass a ping. That player then has to say whatever is going through their character's mind at the time. If you want to give a monologue yourself, you just ping your own glass. You finish the monologue by taking a sip of the glass. Make sure you use clear body language when doing this.

Blow out the candle. This is a method used for reliving things from the past

or a dream or the future or a jealous fantasy or something. Anyone can at any given time rise up, blow out the burning candle and say “I blow out the candle because I want to play the scene where D and G broke up” or “... where H tells B that she is pregnant” or “ ...where the band (that is the basis of the group) got their first gig” or something.

The one that blows out the candle can choose whether it is a scene that they play in, or prompt somebody else to play out a scene they are curious about. They can choose how much they want to direct what is happening in the scene or if they just want to set the stage like in the examples mentioned above.

When the candles are blown out everybody else goes out of character and observes the scene being played out. When the scene comes to a natural end you light the candles again and the play resumes where it was interrupted. If you do not remember where that was, it doesn't really matter. Just start playing where you are. And remember to light the candles ;)

If you have the time for it, it is good to test play a couple of scenes in the workshop.

The liquor on the table. About 45 minutes before the game ends, you should introduce a bottle of liquor. This symbolizes that everybody is getting more drunk and that it is time to take out whatever conflicts have been building up during the evening. When you present this technique it is good to say that the players should let the conflicts simmer in the first part of the game and not take them out until the liquor is on the table.

End song. We end the game by blowing out the candles and instructing the players to listen to the song being played. When the song is finished, the larp is finished.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Food and drink. We think you should have something to eat and drink at this larp. If you are playing it at a seminar room, it can be just some snacks, but if you are playing it in somebody's home, you can opt for a dinner and some wine or beer or something. We find that the right amount of drinks lubricates the game in a positive way, but not too much.

Tell the players how much beer/wine is planned for each player and remind them not to drink so much they do not play well.

First aid. Make anybody that knows first aid raise their hands. Most likely you won't need it, but it is good to know if something should happen.

PLAYING THE GAME

1. Start with most of the characters arriving as guests.
2. Ca. 45 minutes before the game ends, introduce the liquor and change playlist.
3. End the game by blowing out the candle and play for instance Björk's "Come to me".

Letting the players **enter one at a time or in small groups** gives a more realistic start to the game. It also gives the players the chance to work their way into character a little bit by taking a walk around the block or something. Last minute details can be settled between the couples or friends, and they have a chance to play for a few moments before they are thrown in with everybody. It also establishes who actually lives there.

We have written about the liquor on the table further up. We suggest that you **change playlist** as well when you are doing this. Music can be a powerful tool in creating the right atmosphere. As we want the degree of conflict to increase towards the end of the larp, what we ourselves have done is to create two different playlists. One for the first part, and one to start at the moment when the hosts present the liquor, the latter being a bit harder, rougher and heavier than the first. People won't necessarily be listening to the music, but we tried to handpick songs that in some way or another have something to do with the theme or the set of themes of the game, like jealousy, love, attraction, broken hearts, friendship. etc.

We **ended the game** with the Björk song 'Come to Me', because the text is quite fitting for the story. If you know of a song that you think will fit even better, use it!

DEBRIEF

Do a round where all players get to say something very short about the experience and immediate reactions. Then go over to letting people talk freely. Look around for the people that obviously has something to say, but don't scream to get heard. make sure everybody gets to express themselves. If you have a possibility to continue the party afterwards, it is our experience that people use this to have a good time and continue reflecting about the experience.

CHARACTERS

COUPLE 1 - THE UNBALANCED:

A has wanted an open relationship for a while, mostly because C has made it sound attractive. B has been sceptical, but when B finally gave in, it's (s)he who gets laid and not A. A might not have had too much sex during the years which is why (s)he wanted the open relationship, but is shy and insecure and doesn't really know how to score. It's no secret that X is B's lover.

A: *"I'm just more picky, that's all!"*

B: *"It's not my fault (s)he doesn't get laid. It was his/her idea."*

COUPLE 2 - THE PERFECT MATCH

C and D have had an open relationship from the very beginning, and are happy and comfortable with that. C is the missionary type and often claims to anybody who cares to listen that this is the only sort of relationship that can last. D is more provocative by action, and is a big flirt. A has probably been inspired by these two. C is having an affair with L. K's jealousy can sometimes be frustrating, but (s)he's just going to have to cope with it. D has at some point had sex with E, but didn't put much into it.

C: *"People who believe that they are born monogamous are so insecure of their partner that they are fooling themselves."*

D: *"You don't know what you are missing. The grass is actually quite green on the other side as well."*

COUPLE 3 - THE QUITE MESSED UP

E and F agree that they do NOT have an open relationship. At a party E ended up in bed with D. This is a nasty secret. F would secretly like an open relationship, and might be attracted to another character, but has not dared to say anything in fright of hurting E.

E: *"(S)he must never know what happened that night!"*

F: *"But what if (s)he thinks I'm not satisfied?"*

COUPLE 4 - THE INSECURE

G and H are doing well, but their sexlife has been going down lately. G kind of thinks an open relationship sounds like a good idea, but is afraid of hurting H by suggesting this. H, on the other hand, is thinking the exact same thing, but is afraid of hurting G.

G/H: *"I love him/her so much, but the magic is kind of gone..."*

COUPLE 5 - THE PEER PRESSURED

I and J are quite happy in their monogamous relationship. They do not see the need to look any further than to their partners, and J quite frankly thinks the friends are childish. It's like, so hip with open relationships, but you can see that people are struggling with that as well. I doesn't object to the thought of open relationships, but still doesn't feel the need to give it a try.

I: *"Well, there might be something to it, but..."*

J: *"Can't they just stop bragging? Sex is something private after all."*

COUPLE 6 - THE REALLY FUCKED UP

K insisted on having an open relationship, even if L really did not feel any need for it. K has had several partners, while L has had none. Lately, L has started having an affair with C, and K is very jealous.

K: *"A relationship can't be open in both ends. That creates a draft!"*

L: *"If it's not OK for me to do it as well, then everything is just bullocks!"*

JOKER 1 - THE PLAYER

X is the well known lover of B. X loves being single, and takes casual acquaintances and sexual relations quite lightly. But aren't the others starting to get a bit boring? Maybe X is a bit younger than the rest?

X: *"Have a beer and don't be so bloody serious!"*

JOKER 2 - THE UNHAPPY

Y has had sex with most of the friends at different times and in different constellations. Except from [the player chooses one of the other characters]. And that's the only one of importance. Y is very much unhappily in love, and would really like to be in a relationship.

Y: *"If only I could be with him/her, I'd gladly give up life as single."*

JOKER 3 - THE CURIOUS ONE

Z is a friend of A's. (S)he is new to the group. Knows everybody, but only A very well. Z finds what A has been relating about the open relationships and wild parties very exciting, and might have bigger expectations to what the night might bring than the rest.

Z: *"They probably have orgies and stuff."*

PRIORITY LIST

This is our recommendation as to which characters to include according to number of players. The list is made to ensure that the dynamics of the game are as interesting as possible.

PARTICIPANTS	CHARACTERS
7	Couples 1, 2 and 6 Joker 1
8	Couples 1, 2 and 6 Joker 1 and 2
9	Couples 1, 2, 3 and 6 Joker 1
10	Couples 1, 2, 3 and 6 Joker 1 and 2
11	Couples 1, 2, 3 and 6 Joker 1, 2 and 3
12	Couples 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 Joker 1 and 2
13	Couples 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 Joker 1, 2 and 3
14	Couples 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 Joker 1 and 2
15	All characters