



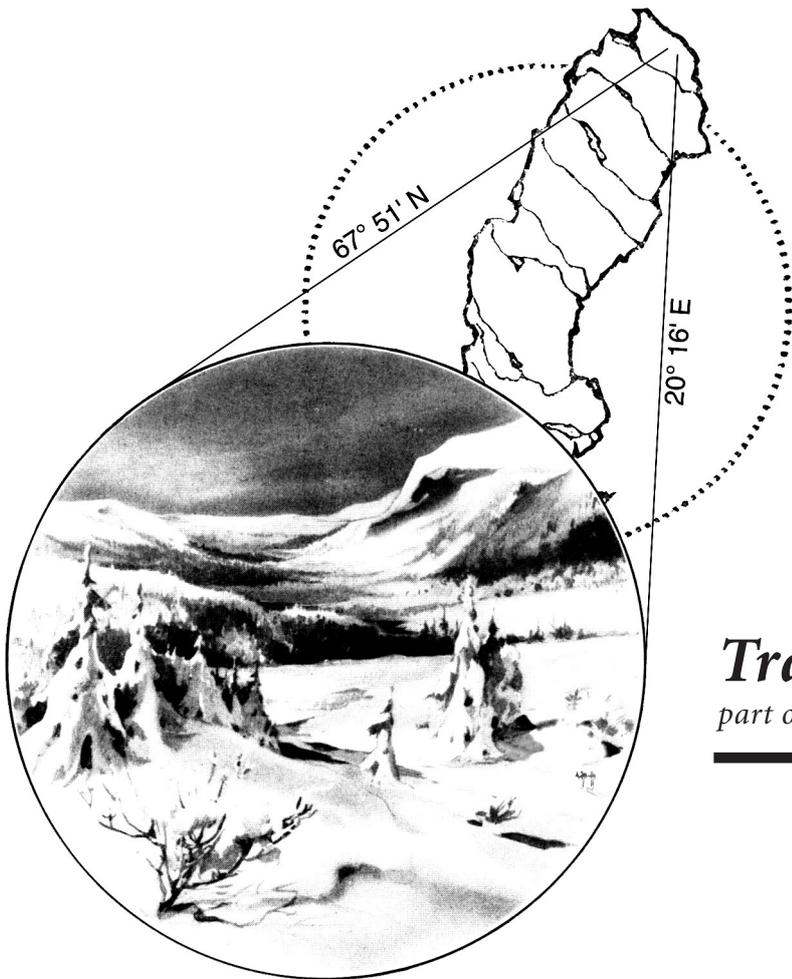
A simple, short scenario
by

STUDIO FETT

GROWNUP GAMES

We go by Jeep

Pearls before Swine
p.r.o.d.u.c.t.i.o.n



Travellers

part one, version 3.0





Travellers

part one, version 3.0

1998–2006 by Tobias Wrigstad

— Vi åker jeep —

Testing and ideas: Anders Nygren, Emma Björnehed, Filip Bohlin, Joachim Bengtsson, Linus Gabrielsson, Martin Brodén, Olle Jonsson, William Fetty and Oskar XL Söderström (and many, many others)

Introduction

Travellers is a road movie set in northern Sweden, “Norrland” (literally: North land), the land of the midnight sun, somewhere in the late 80’s. It is dark, snowing and well below 10 degrees cold and falling rapidly. Notably, there are no mobile phones. If you know nothing about northern Sweden, the film “Fargo” by the Coen brothers might be a good, available source of inspiration. A better but less available alternative is a 50’s flick called “Terror in the midnight sun.” The setting for this game could easily be changed for something else with the appropriate properties.

This booklet contains a description of the intended story and how it is meant to be played (which isn’t necessarily the same way you will play it). The scenario is written for 3 players, preferably one woman and two men (or vice versa) and two game masters, although one game master works fine in most cases depending on experience and how you play the game. When I run it, it generally takes about 2–5 hours depending on the willingness of the players to act as their respective characters. For me, three hours is pretty perfect.

A Few Words About Travellers

The story in Travellers is allegoric. For the players, it will probably come across as non-sensible and lacking a statement. This is alright, it will all change in the end. I like the story—I find it quite nicely put together, inter-

esting but most of all highly enjoyable as a short role-playing exercise. Having played Travellers quite a few times with different groups of players, I think the story is rather flexible, without losing its key points. This will be discussed later, once you too know the story.

When Travellers was written in September 1998, I was dead tired of scenarios composed of disjoint scenes where the entire story was chopped up into small bits introduced piecemeal. I wanted Travellers to have a story not really using scenes and where the different parts of the story was seamlessly integrated. In this, I feel, I was successful only in part, and the play line is broken in a few places (opposed to constantly in many of the scene-based scenarios of the time, including my own). At the time, I simply didn’t know how to get my story in there without taking control over the players like that. Although this is a revised edition, I have only made minor changes and tried to stay true to the original.

The Story—A Road Movie

Travellers is much like a classic road movie. The players cannot change the direction of the story nor save the main character from dying in the end. *This does not stem from a will to control the outcome of the story and is not something that the players should feel trapped or limited by.* If the story was a quest, controlling the development and outcome as I do now would probably be the wrong approach. But Travellers is not a quest. The story is fixed, and the players should know this, or feel this early on. *The idea is for the players to focus instead on what is completely open—the relationships between their characters and the role-play: how their characters react when placed in these situations.*

In other words: Travellers is probably not a game for power gamers (except as therapy). The players live in the story, their characters act within its frames. There is no pot of gold at the end of the highway, nor is there a way of winning or losing. There is no quest other than the meta-quest to try to make an interesting/realistic/fun/what-have-you interpretation of the characters’ reactions during the play. The scenario is meant to be played along these lines—the goal of the players should be to create as good a story as possible just acting as their characters.



About the Players' Power

The players may not have the power to change the course of the story. However, they have full freedom within its frames. They may add stuff to the game without asking the game master as long as they don't mess up the story. For example, you may not use lists of equipment, etc.—all characters carry around what might suddenly become necessary to improve the story. If at some point in the game, Ulrika's player decides that the story would be better if there was a can opener in Ulrika's backpack—then there is of course a can opener there. Conversely, if the story is improved by the non-existence of the can opener—there is none. You get the point, and the players will too.

Players not used to this “technique” often react by never using it. The game master do good by helping them out: “Haven't you got a can opener in your backpack, Ulrika?” Other players might go power crazy in a way that may be damaging to the story: If a player decides that his or her character has a gun in a situation where the characters are supposed to feel threatened by a man with a knife, or a flashlight and a cell phone in a situation where the characters are supposed to feel alone in the dark, the entire story may be destroyed unless the game master acts swiftly. As long as you talk to the players before the game about what is reasonable and why they have this freedom (because it facilitates the telling of the story) there are usually no problems. If necessary, a resourceful game master can almost always rescue the story by improvising. If the players feel uncomfortable, they may of course ask the game master before introducing something in the game, but this breaks the flow. So don't do it!

In the same spirit, the players have full freedom to add to their characters as long as it is not contradicting anything explicitly stated in the text. If one player thinks that it would enrich the game if his/her character went to a public school in Kalmar in 1971 together with another character's brother—that's perfectly alright, almost anything goes. And it is never a bad idea to flesh out your character.

One of the virtues of a short scenario like *Travellers* as opposed to a long campaign is that it matters less if a player's character is killed or something equally drastic.

Travellers is story-driven, not character-driven. Let this guide you in your game.

Last, I want to state that it is not the purpose of this rather lengthy introduction to give the impression that this style of play is complex to master. It is not. Actually almost nothing in role-playing is (and I failed to come up with a good example of something that was hard).

Avoiding Out-of-Character Conversation

Freeform generally uses a style of play that is a lot like larp. Players try to avoid any conversation that does not fit into one of the following categories: conversation between characters; the game master speaking as the narrator, or; the game master speaking as the subconsciousness of a character. Instead of sitting around a table and declaring “I get out of the car”, you actually construct a car (or play in one, as long as the game and not the setting is in focus). A car can trivially be constructed by placing four chairs together as the seats and you get out of the car as you would exit a real one—turning an imaginary door handle, etc. This makes the game more agile and allow several things to go on at the same time which is harder when you have to pause the game to synchronise meta-information about the game world between all players.

When you exit the symbolic car, everyone will no doubt understand what you are doing. In more subtle situations, a good trick is to employ a theatre or film style of speaking your thoughts out loud, “Hey, there is a can opener over here!” Indicating to the other players that the pen in you hand is actually a can opener. Given time, you and your regulars will master playing any kind of situation without resorting to out-of-character conversations.

If the players should be like actors on stage, the gamemasters should be narrators, doing most of their input as voice-overs in classic film noir style, preferably from the point of view of some character. (Which one need not be stated.) Game masters should climb inside the head of the characters, sometimes acting as their subconsciousness or “inner voices”: crouch behind the player playing Rolf and whisper, loud enough for all other players to hear, but soft enough not to interrupt the game or any conversation, “Isn't she gorgeous?”



pointing at Ulrika. Another way is to act as Rolf's inner voice, instead saying something like "She's really gorgeous, if I was only brave enough to reach out and just touch her shoulder, or her hair..." If you want it obvious that it is Rolf's thoughts, you can easily signal this by standing behind or beside Rolf etc. What symbols or actions you choose to signal things will evolve over time. There is generally no need to talk about it beforehand.

When you give input such as this, it is important that the other players can overhear you so that they too can act on the new information. If Ulrika's player knows that Rolf is in love with her character before Ulrika realises this (if ever), she can actively put Ulrika in situations where that may give rise to some real good role-play. The keyword here is of course cooperation.

A Word on Voice-Overs

The original Travellers had written voice-overs. I like to write, and I used to like written voice-overs. Today, I don't agree. In this edition, I have replaced the written voice-overs with notes of what should be stated at a certain point. Experiment with tone of voice, and how to deliver voice-overs in a good way. You know what voice-overs should sound like.

Mains and Extras

In Travellers, each player will play one main character (Ulrika, Rolf and Fredrik) and one or more minor characters each. Each player's character booklet consists of a description of the major character plus an unsorted collection of notes and facts for the player herself to connect to the appropriate part of the story. There is one or more notes for every minor character in the story to be played by the player, but there is nothing to tell the player when he should be playing the character, exactly which notes correspond to what event/character. Also, there are notes to the major character to reflect the character's reaction to certain situations. Again, there is nothing to tell the player what corresponds to what. This gives the players a higher degree of freedom to disregard from certain information. It is also intended to force the player into using her imagination to create something of these loosely connected pieces. To improvise from this material.

Your most important task with regard to the character booklets is to help the players understand when they change character, and introduce the character for them in such a way that they could go back to the notes in the booklet and proceed from there. Also, help the players to use the booklet! If a player seems to have missed important information it is your job to point her to it in a nice way. Usually, just a few words will be enough.

The Story, Step by Step

The three main characters in Travellers are The Environmental Activist (Ulrika), The Philosophy Student (Rolf) and The Adult Movie Script Writer (Fredrik). One game master—this is largely why there should be two—will play the Man With The Gun (Rickard) at the beginning and end of the story. The minor characters contain policemen, a criminal, doctors, nurses, parents, etc.

Part 0—The Motel

The characters meet and get to know each other. Ulrika has hitch-hiked with Rickard for a couple of hours. They have had a rather nice time, but now all subjects for conversation are used up. They stop at the Motel to fill up gas and then Rolf and Fredrik, independently of each other, ask for a ride. Rickard gives them both a lift, and now, his grey old Volvo is full. When I game master, I narrate this part to set the voice-over standard and introduce my voice as the non-objective story teller. When I am done, the characters are all in the car which just taxes out on the highway and drives into the forest. The motel vanishes in the rear-mirror, and it begins to snow.

Part 1—Highway 118 to Eternity

They have never met before, but they are stuck with each other in the same car for the next six or seven hours. The silence gets awkward pretty fast.

The immediate goal is for the players to get a feel for their own characters and for Rickard, the driver, played by the game master, to appear as a stand-up guy—positive and happy. You should play him so that everyone likes him, so that when everything fucks up, the contrast should be maximal.



There are no dark secrets to be revealed in this part of the game. The characters are constructed (hopefully) to give enough material for a nice discussion. Lacking other avenues of conversation there is a dogmatic political perspective in Ulrika and heady stories from the porn industry from Fredrik. Rolf serves as a damper so everything doesn't turn into a screaming-and-waving-your-arms session. Rolf becomes enamoured with (or is turned on by) Ulrika and immediately perceives the worldly Fredrik as a rival; Fredrik thinks that Rolf is a sissy, and likes to upset Ulrika with his views on the world which don't match hers; Ulrika thinks Fredrik is an idiot and probably doesn't notice Rolf at all.

Everything Fucks Up

After a two hour ride with snow chains on on Highway 118, the car will somehow be immobilised and the contents of Rickard's bag be revealed. This can happen in any number of ways. In my standard way of playing, Rickard has a epileptic seizure while driving and the car crashes into the ditch and gets stuck and/or breaks. Rickard's bag in the rear window flies through the air, smashes up the front window and its contents are spread all over the car. Another way of doing it is to have the car run out of gas (the fuel tank is leaking, or something else in the car breaks down) and postpone the epileptic seizure until after this fact has been established. Or any combination. The purpose of the seizure (or other suitable solution) is to put Rickard out of play and to get the characters to search his belongings (in this case for medicine). Yet another way of getting the car to stop is to have the car colliding with an elk, killing the animal, Rickard's head hits the steering wheel and he loses consciousness. As long as the players find the stuff in his bag, and Rickard is unconscious, anything goes.

The contents of Rickard's bag

- * *A bloody shirt*
- * *A pistol with silencer*
- * *A huge sum of money in large bills*
- * *Medicine for epileptics or equivalent (pills, emphasise the max 2 times/day dose so they will be afraid of drugging him up!)*

- * *6 photographs of a red haired woman; at the back of one photo, where the woman looks like she is sleeping, is written with a red pen: thirty one thousand.*
- * *Whatever else that seems fit*

The text on the photograph is a dirty trick, possible in role-playing games since the players don't get to see the backside of the photo. With just one exception all (Swedish) players have heard "thirty one thousand" and instinctively associated it with money, and most go on to think hit man and blood money or ransom. In fact, the real text on the back of the photograph is probably "3/1 0:00" which is a date (January 3rd) and time (0:00) Swedish style of writing. This should probably be modified to your country's way of writing dates, and the sum altered accordingly, if possible. I will return to this in a while.

The accident, or however you played it, places the players are at the mercy of the wilderness. It is really cold and getting colder, and to top that, it begins to snow heavily. They are not dressed for survival in the wilderness and Rickard (I keep calling him Rickard, but hereafter, you should always refer to him as "the man with the gun", to reflect the fact that the characters know nothing about him, and anything they thought they know they have probably ceased to believe) needs medical care. They cannot stay in the car and the snow is too wet or too loose to dig a bivouac. They should come to the conclusion that the only way is the way of the highway—either they continue in the same direction as they were driving, i.e., north, or they go back. There is at least 100 kilometres to the nearest town or whatever in that direction. No cars have passed by for the entire duration of the trip; things certainly doesn't look good. If they don't carry Rickard with them, he will die and they too (too in relation to what they probably think of Rickard) will become killers and they don't want that to happen.

If they do leave Rickard, the game can continue anyway with a little improvisation from you.

Generally, one player will steal some money from Rickard's bag, but don't push for it.



Part 2—The cabin

Regardless of in which direction they decide to walk, they will eventually find a small cabin on top of a small hill, overlooking part of the forest (though only snow-covered trees and a small part of the highway are visible from the outlook). The distance from the highway to the cabin are 500 meters through debris and wet snow. The cabin is of course locked, but they can break a window (or equivalent) or search for a hidden key in obvious places and get in. If they open the cabin by force, wind and snow will find its way into the cabin. The characters should be irritated and tired at this point, and the game master should fuel the irritation or whatever the characters feel. It is not uncommon for players to leave someone behind with Rickard while the other two starts walking and eventually finds the cabin. If this is the case, they must of course go back and fetch whoever is waiting and carry Rickard to the cabin. Let a few hours pass here to really make the characters tired and irritated.

The cabin is obviously mainly used by hunters during hunting season. There is no phone, no electricity, no running water. Instead there is an old-fashioned stove and enough dry wood to last for a day. The chimney is full of junk and smoke will fill the cabin when the characters try to get the heat up. But it is of course by far better than staying out in the cold.

The furniture is old, there is one bunk-bed with two beds, a small sofa, a small table, pin-chairs, empty rifle cabinets and can food. All food cans contains meat except one can containing peach halves that were “best before” a long time ago. Ulrika is a vegetarian. Importantly there are two big plastic crates of moonshine and a board-game called Truth or Dare.

The objective of the characters’ stay in the cabin is for them to start to tell stories to each other. An obvious way of doing that is by using the Truth or Dare board game. Show the players that there is a pre-made such a game, and they will setup the scene so that it nicely slides into a game of Truth and Dare. Probably a good thing is for them to make a nice fire in the stove, heat up some of the canned food in the cans and drink moonshine to get the heat up.

Try to get them to really talk. This is the situation where the Truth or Dare scenes are meant to be played,

regardless of whether they play Truth of Dare or not. Getting the characters moderately drunk is a good way of getting them to deviate from the endless discussion of how they may save themselves and into other topics.

Telling Stories/Playing Truth or Dare

The Truth or Dare game consists of a game board, dice, tokens and two stacks of cards. A sheet with the printed rules is also included. Certain questions are intended to lead to certain stories according to the descriptions in the character booklets. The cards contain ordinary truth or dare questions and the players will play their characters playing Truth or Dare, which is in itself a quite interesting and enjoyable experience.

The character booklets contain outlines for stories that should be played instead of told. They add to the allegory and I like them to be played out, but if your players are reluctant, don’t force them to.

If you like, place an empty card at the top of one card stack and when the players draw the empty card, play the role of the game master that has made a mistake, and throw the empty card on the floor (or somewhere else where it may be picked up later). After playing for a while (as long as it feels good and adds to the game), you may fast-forward the game. The characters are probably very drunk, someone might pass out and someone might feel the need to throw up outside in the snow etc. But try to get the stories told.

When you are done, simply cut to the next day. Start by describing the tranquillity, the smell of alcohol and sleep, etc. The players will catch on.

About the Truth or Dare Game

The Truth or Dare game have truth cards with questions and dare cards with dares. Some of the cards are meant to initiate new scenes,

It can well be argued that it is preposterous that these stories would actually be told in the Truth or Dare game. Well, it is in layers upon layers of dreams and so on, but if you get allergic reactions because things are too artificially convenient, you can play them as stories that they hold back and avoid.



or flashbacks if you will. In this version of Travellers, I have chosen to be quite true to my original version and let the scenes be played as regular freeform role-play: the character starts to tell a story, the narrator takes over, creates a scene from the story, assigns characters to players more or less by pointing at them while saying “Ulrika’s mother, Monika” etc. Very simple.

I’m hoping for several scenes to start off here. I’ve scripted for two: *Loved* and *AIDS 1986*. They interact actively with the mythos, name space and essence of the story. But please don’t let that stop you or the players from starting other scenes and try to connect these to the allegory if you can, being careful not to totally go overboard with it. You can play “spin-off” scenes from Truth or Dare for as long as you like, but remember that the game is more tight if most stories, at least the elaborate ones, are connected to the allegory and the layers of dreams. Also, as Rolf and Frederik will soon be killed off, their players’ efforts to flesh out their characters etc. will have been to some extent in vane, which may make some players feel bad. Just think about what you are doing and things will be great.

Now follows is a short description of the scenes and how these are supposed to be played.

One sensible interpretation of the allegoric story is that Rolf and Fredrik are perhaps just two prominent sides of Ulrika’s character. As game master you might want to try to direct Rolf and Fredrik accordingly.

Loved

Some people think that this is a rather strong scene. It involves incest, but avoids the strongest and ugliest parts (at least in my opinion). This is usually the scene players

tend to pass on, which is absolutely okay under any circumstances. If the players do not wish to play this scene (in my experience a less than five percent possibility, higher in 1998 than in 2002), simply narrate the scene and listen to the players saying, “was it only that—we should have played it through”. The purpose of this scene is to establish the relation between Ulrika and her father (Rickard), and in Martin’s version, to show by whom Ulrika was infected with aids.

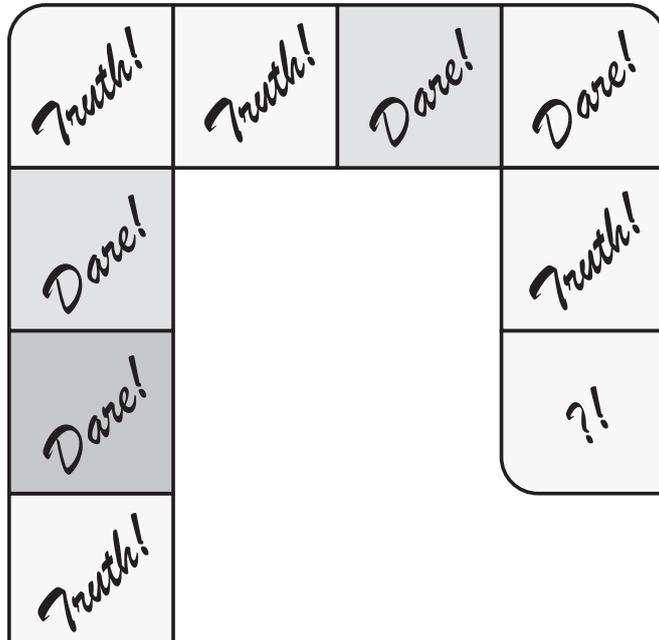
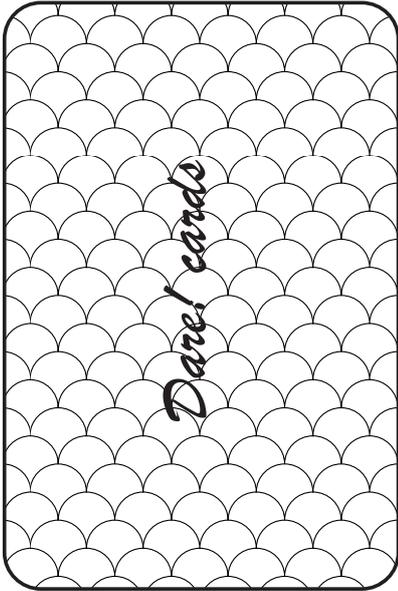
This scene takes place at Ulrika’s home when Ulrika is about to become a teenager. For some reason that Ulrika cannot understand, her father behaves very different when her mother is not home. Yesterday, her mother left for a teaching conference, the annual kick-off after the summer holiday, and Ulrika’s father has been circling around her ever since. Now he is sitting just behind her on her bed as she leans over her maths assignment. She is trying really hard not to feel his presence, but he keeps interrupting her, even though she has repeatedly told him not to. His hands are rubbing her shoulders, loosens her pony tail and touches her hair. He will speak to her about becoming a woman, it is hard for him to disguise the fact that he is quite turned on by that. Then he begins playing the game they have been playing, going further and further each time, for the last two years. He will say, “you are becoming a woman, doll”. She will protest, but to no good. “Yes you are, let’s see how big you have become.” He will take her t-shirt off and then cover one of her breasts with his hand. “You are becoming a woman. You just keep on growing. Soon, they will not fit in my palms anymore.” Around this point, unless you and the players want to keep on playing and escalating, Ulrika’s mother will come in

Fact about this scene: Nowadays, I don’t think Swedish players would think twice about playing a scene like this, but back in 1998, when this game was originally written, having such a scene was not entirely uncontroversial. The idea of the scene is not first and foremost to play it, because we all know that that isn’t going to be so scary when your young daughter will be played by a

fat, bearded man. Rather, the idea of the scene is to build up a fear of “shit we have to play this scene”. That’s also why I removed most of what the players are afraid of playing and replaced it with the in my mind more interesting stuff about the mother. It is all about anticipation and imagination—as game master you should of course warn for the presence of strong scenes, talk about

previous teams that had to quit and all that. Naturally, as a side-effect this is also tension-building for this scene. I’ve had players say: “I would not have skipped this scene unless you had warned me about it”, meaning I would not have been so afraid of it. Warnings work both ways

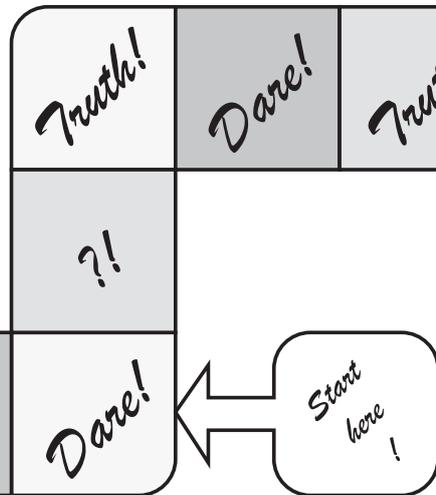
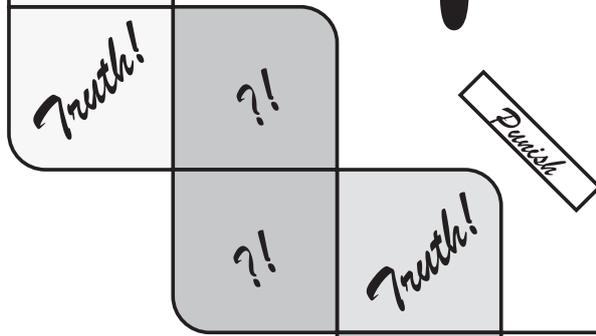
Contents: 1 dice, 1 game board, 30 Truth! cards, 25 Dare! cards, 1 token



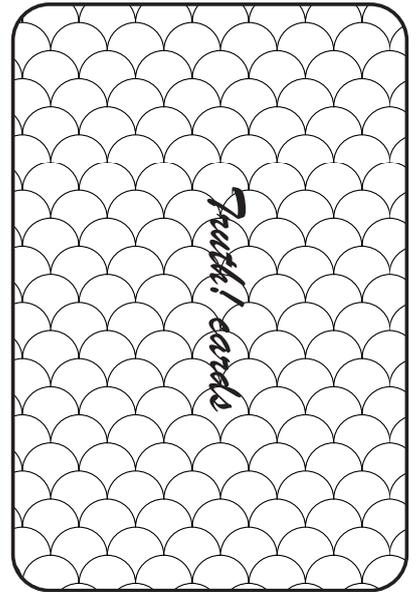
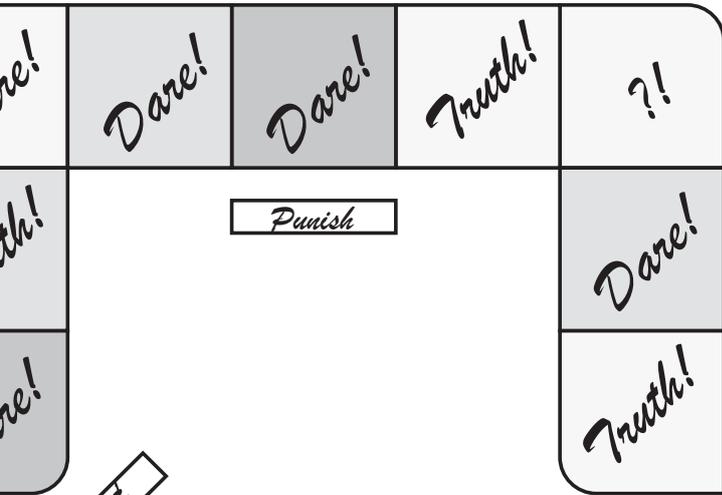
Punish
Punish



Truth or dare



Punish Punish



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Dare?

RULES

- Dare!* Answer a Dare! card
- Truth!* Answer a Truth! card
- ?!* Ask any truth or dare question to any player
- Punish Suffer the agreed upon punishment (e.g., shot)





through the door having skipped the last session of the conference to get time to help Ulrika with her maths.

Ulrika's mother is terrified by what she sees. She is upset, angry and cries at the same time. Ulrika can react in many ways, either try to be saved by her mother, or try to take the blame, or try to explain everything away etc. It is not really important. Just make sure you connect to her behaviour when she reappears later, if applicable.

Ulrika's father will be devastated. He will say things like, "I know I can't expect you to forgive this, but we..." etc. The we is imperative here, off course.

Regardless of their efforts, Ulrika's mother will react as if everything is Ulrika's fault—"Ulrika, how could you do this to me?" She makes herself the victim, and Ulrika and her father tries to comfort her while she crushes them (esp. Ulrika) casting all the blame on Ulrika. The objective is really to make all the players feel sad for Ulrika, and dislike her parents. These feelings become important at the end at the hospital.

In my narrative to start this scene, I generally describe the events up till the point where Ulrika's mother is about to burst in. Then, I'll let the players play for at most one minute, before giving a nod to the player playing Ulrika's mother to make her enter the stage. This way, the players' disgust for Ulrika's father will not depend on how far they want to go. Another reason for describing how the scene should be played is to relieve the players of the burden of trying to think like Ulrika's father. From my experience many players feel ashamed of having to come up with ideas to what can happen, rather than just follow a script, or taking the scene too far.

AIDS 1986

This scene deals with Rolf's experience with AIDS in its early days. Its purpose is to introduce the disease into the story (for use later in the hospital scene) along with some minor characters, Dr. Haglund and Patricia, Darlene's sister. It also serves as a rather subtle way of showing the reactions of Ulrika's friends and family when it was discovered that she was sick with AIDS. If you want, in the end of this side-track, Monika can be seen as the mother, rejecting Ulrika, partly because of the story in

"Loved", but also because Ulrika may have transferred the disease to her (via her husband). If you want, that is. Nevertheless, it is an interesting scene.

The story in short: Rolf was a friend of Samuel, one of the first victims of AIDS in Sweden in the mid 80's.

This is that story, with Samuel as the main character, and Rolf as his only true companion. Since Samuel was one of the first in Sweden to die of AIDS, media kept a close watch and Rolf became an involuntarily celebrity, rumoured to be Samuel's secret gay lover. No one wanted anything to do with him at the University etc. You get the picture.

The story begins in Dr. Haglund's office where Samuel expects to get the results of some blood tests carried out two weeks ago. Rolf keeps him company. The doctor puts on a very serious face, telling him to take a seat. After half a minute of small talk, the doctor breaks the news—Samuel has AIDS. No one at this time really knows what AIDS is and the doctor (who only possesses a very limited knowledge of the disease) is forced to explain what will happen with Samuel and how the disease will evolve. He explains that AIDS is common among gay men (hinting at Samuel's male company), etc. The goal is to make Samuel feel uncomfortable. The time is up, and the doctor has another appointment. He avoids to shake hands with Samuel.

Directly after this incident, Samuel tries to call the woman he has been fooling around with, Darlene, behind the back of his girlfriend Monika. They were lovers when Samuel worked briefly in the states about a nine months ago. He phones her up and when someone answers he immediately begins yelling and cursing.

The woman on the other end of the line is not Darlene, but her sister Patricia. Darlene was diagnosed with AIDS three months ago, but there was no way of getting in contact with Samuel, since he only gave her a fake number and false address. Darlene became really depressed, and about a month ago, she shot herself in the head. In Patricia's world Samuel was the one infecting Darlene and starts yelling at him and calls him bad names. After a short period of time, one of them hangs up the phone.

We jump ahead a couple of months in time, to a situation where Samuel's friends are trying to convince



Samuel's girlfriend Monika (the one he cheated on while in the US) to visit him at the hospital, where he is currently isolated for additional tests, but she refuses, saying that the only reason for her ever to turn up there is to pull the plug on him. This scene is really the end of this group of friends, one of the guys is in love with Monika and supports her instead of helping the others.

Here, the written narrative tells the story of how Samuel dies and how his funeral is attended by almost none of his friends. It also tells how this story affected Rolf. This is the reason for Rolf to leave, this is why he makes the journey that ends him up in the car with Ulrika. (Which is true in the sense that Rolf is Ulrika in the same way that one to some extent is all people in one's dreams and that it is because of the disease that Ulrika is dreaming the story.)

The Next Day: The Man with the Gun Awakens

Most of what has happened in the cabin and that was played before was just a dream. Rickard's dream to be precise. Importantly, the Truth or Dare scene, or the telling of stories, did not take place and the characters will find the thought of them sharing such secret things with each other preposterous (you must communicate this to them nicely). Ulrika awakens, sleeping in Rolf's arms. The players should not be surprised by the turning of the story, only accept it, as if this was a dream (but in fact it is not). When Ulrika is out of the bed, Rickard awakens with a terrible headache and is very nervous. Fredrik and Rolf wakes up, Ulrika and Rolf acts as they have just fallen in love with each other. Rickard will tell them about his dream (which is mostly everything that has happened since their arrival at the cabin) and the characters will think that it is silly. Replace the Truth or Dare board with Ludo or equivalent. There never was such a game.

Rickard needs his bag to get to the medicine; if someone keeps his medicine separate from the bag, he will need the bag anyway. Rickard's wants to know what has happened, how long he has been unconscious etc.

Rickard will now kill Rolf and Fredrik. This can happen in a number of ways. In my original version, Rickard gets his bag with the gun (if the gun is not

there, he might carry a knife and threaten someone to give him his gun back or use the knife or some concealed back-up gun, or the rifle cabinets of the cabin are not empty any more, but were only empty in the dream, etc.), and realises some or all of his money is missing or that they have been going through his bag. Suddenly he finds the empty board-game card (Dare) on the ground, picks it up reads it and then shoots Fredrik and Rolf. Another way involves a discussion about who Rickard really is and Rickard is really stressed by the fact that the characters know who he is (in the minds of the players, most likely a hit man). The players will probably promise not to go to the police etc. Escalate the situation to the point where everybody is screaming while Rickard holds them at gun point. He curses and is really mad about how the situation has evolved. Eventually he realises that there is only one thing to do—kill them and so kills Rolf and Fredrik. This part may be played in any number of way, mostly depending on what the game master believes will suit the players. Personally, I prefer some variant of the last alternative.

Many players throw Rickard's gun away or gives the gun back minus the clip. All such variants are easily solved by a resourceful game master. Since this is all a dream anyway (see later) you may even resort to using some dream logic in which case anything is possible, as long as no one understands that this is a dream. In the allegoric story, Rickard is death, and death can work in mysterious ways.

When Rolf and Fredrik are dead, Rickard ties Ulrika to a chair. If he hasn't already questioned the players about where the car is, etc., he will question Ulrika now. It is important that there is some interaction between them and that he, in his rage, will hit Ulrika with the gun or equivalent, so hard that she passes out. Thus, the next scene is Ulrika's dream when she is unconscious.

Enter: The Police

Ulrika is dreaming. The dream takes place in a large five door police car on the highway. In the back seat of the car sits a handcuffed criminal (played by Ulrika's player) and in the front seat, Johansson and Palmgren, rough policemen, armed and in uniform (played by Rolf and Fredrik's players).



Try to make this change of scene as nice as possible. If Ulrika is tied to a chair, let her remain unconscious and silently instruct the other players to construct the chair car around her, so that when she comes to, she will be Robert, the criminal, still tied up (or handcuffed, rather). A narrative introduces the new situation ending in Palmgren shaking Robert and yelling “Wake up Robert! This is no pleasure trip—just look at him, Johansson!”. This should make it clear who is who.

The policemen are rough and will not go entirely by the book. Robert is wanted for killing a former colleague of the policemen and they are having a hard time deciding whether they should report to the station that they have captured Robert, or if they should just stop the car somewhere and beat the living hell out of him. Read the information in the players’ character booklets regarding these characters.

Robert will annoy the policemen to the point where they decide to let him vanish on the way to the station, or at least beat him up while trying to escape. Robert has noticed that Johansson’s key ring with the keys to the cuffs have fallen out of Johansson’s pocket and is sliding down in the crack between the seat and the back. He can’t get to the keys while Johansson is sitting there.

Suddenly, the car drives past Rickard’s car (in the ditch, or however it was abandoned), partly covered by snow, but clearly visible. Johansson stops the car and gets out to investigate. When the policemen have left the car and are on a safe distance, Robert may reach for the keys and unlock himself. He knows that his confiscated gun is still in the trunk.

When the policemen are investigating the car, a confused Rickard suddenly comes out from the forest and panics when he realises that the police have found him. He opens fire on the policemen but misses and is shot by Palmgren. Still weak after his seizure, the shot instantly kills him. The policemen advances up to the body, fuming with warm blood.

Meanwhile, Robert has uncuffed himself and got hold of the gun. In the event of a gun fight, he will kill the policemen. Otherwise, he will force Palmgren (who is roughly of the same size) to undress first so that he can get his clean set of clothes. Then he kills them both. He puts on Palmgren’s clothes, hides the bodies in

the snow and drives off. This is a reference to another scenario of mine, River Sleep (Floden Sover, Stockholms Spelkonvent 1998) and explains a mystery event from that game. With players who haven’t played this game, what Robert does is insignificant, as long as Palmgren and Johansson are not in a position to save Ulrika when this scene comes to an end.

As the scene ends, it is important to stress the fact that no one returns to untie Ulrika who will slowly starve to death, tied to a chair in the cottage with Fredrik and Rolf slowly decomposing on the wooden floor. Very unpleasant. Months will go by before anyone discovers them. Take a breath as if the game was finally over, before continuing.

An Unlikely Rescue

As stated earlier, the scene with the policemen is only a dream. But not entirely. What has really happened is that the police car, though without Robert, has found Rickard’s car, only minutes after Rickard has searched the wreck and returned for the cottage, leaving fresh tracks for the policemen to follow.

Ulrika wakes up, Rickard stands in front of her. Now it is her turn to die. He boasts about being merciful enough not to just leave her there to starve, and that she should thank him for this gesture of goodwill. His erect penis just a couple of centimetres from her head should give a clue to what he means.

The objective of this scene is to get Rickard (you) in a situation where you have a gun to Ulrika’s head. In my original setting Rickard tries to force Ulrika in to giving him oral sex, but all other forms of close, physical play will do. I would say that it is important that the play here is very close, and intimate, but not nice. If not oral sex, Rickard can be very sleazy and very sad to the fact that he must kill her since he killed Fredrik and Rolf with her as a witness. He even might burst into tears and be very angry with Ulrika since everything is her fault. Touch her hair, her face (especially if you go for the oral sex version). Ulrika should feel very threatened but *will not* give him oral sex. (The narrator might very well point out that Robert, after getting what he wanted off Palmgren, killed him.)

Ulrika now has a gun to her forehead, and Rickard is



really stressed, however you chose to play the previous scene. The trick is to get Ulrika's player into believing that Ulrika is killed when the narrator yells "A shot..." (or preferably fire a toy gun). But it is not Ulrika that is dead, even if she, and her player, will be fooled into believing so. Instead it is Rickard that is killed by Johansson and Palmgren, having followed his tracks back to the cottage and watching through the window before deciding to intervene. The gunshot is exactly the same as the one killing Rickard in Ulrika's dream just before and Rickard is killed instantly.

The policemen untie Ulrika who is, of course, shocked, and leads her away from the scene back to the highway, that is much closer than what the players have been lead to believe before, and the warm car.

The policemen will report back to their station and then receive the order to drive her to the hospital. They give her coffee and cheese sandwiches (same as Rickard gave her before) and a blanket. They mildly try to interrogate her while they drive. Exactly what has happened here? They want to know.

Ulrika will probably comply to their wishes and tell them, but will be confused (as is generally Ulrika's player at this point). Thus, the story is likely to be mostly gibberish, especially if Ulrika includes the part where Johansson and Palmgren are actually killed in her dream. Let the questioning continue for as long as it gives you something. Palmgren will probably be doing most of the interrogation. One game master should make sure Johansson's player reads his new character—Rickard, Ulrika's father. When the scene is finished, you will turn to Ulrika as Dr. Haglund and say "And you really believe all that?" Johansson and Palmgren vanishes from the set.

Part 3—At the Hospital

Now, hopefully Ulrika's player becomes as surprised as Ulrika. She is not in the back-seat of a police car. Nor, is she talking to two policemen. Instead, she is tied up in a hospital bed (for her own good, the doctor will tell her if she protests, "You will only hurt herself again") and feels a constant incredible pain that drives her crazy. (There is no such information for Ulrika's player other than what you communicate to her.) The doctor, accompanied

by Nurse Patricia, played by the second game master if there is one, will nurse and feed Ulrika and prepare her for the meeting with her parents who are coming for a short visit.

Ulrika has AIDS, really developed and almost no immune system at all. Her body is the host of a vast number of diseases including a vicious cancer. (If Martin Brodén may decide, she was infected with AIDS by her father, which is why the "Loved" scene was included in the Truth or Dare scenes, see later.) Her head is not shaved, rather the cancer treatment has caused all her hair to fall off. It is not a piercing in her tongue, but a thermometer in her mouth. The tattoos are all bruises and blemishes, etc. Everything that has hitherto happened were different layers in a recurring dream caused by fever, medication and what have you. This is the real truth—there are no more dreams.

What will happen is the following. Ulrika's parents, played by you and Palmgren, will arrive to sign the papers that gives the hospital the right to shut off her life supporting system. The reason for this is that there is no way of curing her and that every hour is a living hell of fever and pain. Of course, employees of the hospital cannot perform such an action—it must be carried out by her parents, Rickard and Monika. Rickard is of course Rickard from her dreams, and hopefully, Ulrika will feel very uncomfortable by having him there. Regardless of whether her dreams are true (if she has realised that those were only dreams)—her feelings towards Rickard should not be pleasant. Rickard and Monika hesitates for a while, confronts Ulrika about their decision, and the players are totally in control of what happens and the mood of this meeting. Try to preserve the mood of the "Loved" story from Truth or Dare to help Ulrika's mother to find her place in the scene, jealously watching over the interaction between her daughter and her husband, making sure he does not hug or kiss her.

Dr. Haglund returns with the syringe and the necessary papers to be signed. He instructs them on how to administer the drug to make Ulrika fall into the eternal sleep. After additional hesitation, the parents inject Ulrika with the drug in the syringe.

Ulrika falls asleep immediately. Her heart beat slows



down, and her body temperature drops. She is gradually dying. The doctor ensures that she cannot feel a thing. Ulrika starts to dream, and it is of course our recurring dream that seizes her again.

Now, we will replay the first scene, from where Rolf and Fredrik gets into the car. The big difference is that there is no Rickard. Instead, Ulrika is driving the car, and it has always been her car. Exaggerate everything, make the players play the scene as if the characters somehow are aware that they will all soon be dead, and that they should make the most of every minute left on this earth. Let the players be in control, let them do everything that they were planning on doing but did not get around to before the car crashed earlier. Repetition is always good, but alter the details and make everything more extreme than before. Since you are not playing Rickard, you are free to assist the players in this version of the first scene. Perhaps give the scene a feel of Ulrika driving to her escape—the empty road and full tank of gas as a symbol of freedom (unless you choke on the in-your-face symbolics, I know I do). In a sense, this is really Highway 118 to Eternity. The scene ends with Ulrika having a seizure, the car crashes again, and Ulrika is back in the hospital bed, drawing her last breath. In some versions, I go all crazy here and the road starts to boil and eventually lead down into the throat of a huge Ulrika in the horizon. Do whatever you like. Dream logic high on fever in the mind of a dying woman. You cannot go wrong.

The End

Ulrika dies, and it is time for the last narrative. But just before, Rickard shows a busy Dr. Haglund some photographs of Ulrika. “Look at her, how beautiful she used to be!” “Is she really dead? It looks like she is sleeping. Just like this photo.” (Showing the photo of the sleeping Ulrika from the car crash scene earlier.) “What time is it, doctor?” The doctor replies that it is exactly midnight (this is in the beginning of the written narrative), and Rickard repeats to himself “3/1 0:00” (31 000:- from the photo earlier) and jots that down on the backside of the picture of the sleeping Ulrika. Ulrika’s soul leaves her body and exits the room via an ajar window. It raises up to the night sky, and from a distance, the lights from the

hospital looks exactly like two, increasingly distant, red rear lights.

Discussion

As you will undoubtedly have understood by now, all scenes except the last scene at the hospital are dreams or dreams within dreams. To motivate this, I believe it is important to identify things that can recur in many of the dreams, build subtle bridges and connections. There are of course many kinds of dream logic, famous ones being accepting whatever happens, being able to modify the course of the dream, drastic changes to the laws of nature etc. To my opinion none of these should apply in Travellers. In each dream, the characters exist in a reality that works and feels exactly like our own. The players should not realise that everything is a dream.

Important things, recurring or tying the scenario together, are:

- * *The photo of the sleeping Ulrika in Rickard’s bag with 3/1 0:00 written on its backside that recurs in the hospital scene and the other photos;*
- * *Rickard (the driver, the burden, the killer, what have you, really being the father);*
- * *Monika in AIDS 1986 is of course Ulrika’s mom (alter the name if you think it is too much in-your-face) saying that the only reason for her to visit Samuel is to pull the plug on him;*
- * *The doctor in AIDS 1986 really being the doctor treating Ulrika at the hospital;*
- * *Darlene’s sister Patricia being the nurse (in Swedish, nurse and sister even are the same word) at the hospital;*
- * *Ulrika has not shaved her head, her hair has fallen off because of the treatment;*
- * *Ulrika is not pierced in her tongue, it is a thermometer;*
- * *Ulrika not being tattooed, it is bruises and blemishes from being weak and/or hurting herself, the reason why she is tied up;*
- * *Darlene shooting herself in the head in the same way as Rickard is going to shoot Ulrika in the cabin (if you wish, pretend that Ulrika gave him her phone number, and he says he is assuming it is phony);*



- * *Rolf and Fredrik really being two sides of Ulrika's person (Probably with Fredrik representing things she like but are ashamed of liking, and Rolf representing her misfortunes and her way of never finishing anything properly, the same way Rolf keeps failing courses and moving on to another subject without ever graduating. Decide for yourself how things really should be connected—this is not very important for the story, but may make it more interesting especially when you have game mastered Travellers dozens of times.);*
- * *In Martin Brodén's version the incest scene explains how Ulrika was infected with AIDS;*
- * *Ulrika alternating in wanting to kill the doctor and nurse (being Robert) and feeling like she is being saved by them (in the cabin); and*
- * *much, much more, if you want to—interpret these allegories whichever way you want.*

Notes

If I don't feel up to it, I tend not to think much of all this underlying stuff (except for the most important one, in my opinion the photo) when I play Travellers and instead focus on getting each situation to be as interesting as possible, and the transitions between the different situations as smooth as possible. About half of the best games I have game mastered excluded one of the scenes from Truth or Dare and sometimes the replaying of the first scene without Rickard.

I think you should consider Travellers as being good raw material for a one-evening scenario, see the sometimes high level of detail as means of inspiration instead of something you must necessarily squeeze in at the right place and moment.

The rest of this booklet contains the characters. You should read everything through a second time having read the character material since the characters are really integral to everything.

Try to have as much fun as you can with this, and feel free to drop me a line and tell me about your session, problems or weak spots, or if you have any questions.

Who Plays What When?

So far, I have deliberately left out who plays what in the description to keep the focus on the story. Below is a list of who plays what character at what point in time. There are no character descriptions for the game

Game master one

- * *Rickard*
- * *Dr. Haglund (In At the Hospital)*

Game master two

- * *Patricia (In AIDS 1986)*
- * *Patricia (In At the Hospital)*

Rolf's player

- * *Rolf*
- * *Rickard (in Loved)*
- * *Younger Rolf (In AIDS 1986)*
- * *Johansson (In Enter: The Police)*
- * *Rickard as Ulrika's father (In At the Hospital)*

Fredrik's player

- * *Fredrik*
- * *Monika (In Loved)*
- * *Dr. Haglund (In AIDS 1986)*
- * *Monika (In AIDS 1986)*
- * *Palmgren (In Enter: The Police)*
- * *Monika (In At the Hospital)*

Ulrika's player

- * *Ulrika*
- * *Young Ulrika (in Loved)*
- * *Samuel (In AIDS 1986)*
- * *Robert (In Enter: The Police)*
- * *Sick Ulrika (In At The Hospital)*



masters as the characters are just supportive cast and should be played to support the game in the situation in point. Descriptions of all player characters are found in the players' character booklets. Note that the names of the characters there are slightly different—I chose an alternate naming in this text to make it clearer. *Also note when someone does not have a character, either because it is already introduced, or because there is no need for one. In these cases, it is additionally important that you help players understand who is playing who.* Notably, there is no character for Samuel in AIDS 1986.

Of course, if there is no second game master, these characters can easily be played by the first game master as well. If the last appearance of Patricia complicates the last scene too much for a single game master, she can easily be stricken and just referred to by Dr. Haglund.

Either let the players read all characters through and piece together which one fits what scene, or pause for a minute and read characters during the game. Careful timing suggests less than one minute of reading for most characters so the disruption should be minimal. The booklet is printed so that it is not possible to read ahead by mistake.

How to Game Master Truth or Dare Scenes

Game mastering truth or dare scenes is pretty straightforward. The only real difference is that the character telling the story is also a sort of game master with power over where the story goes. Look at the players' information about the scenes to be played, and make some notes as to how you should add to that information to make the scenes go smoothly.

Loved is pretty straight-forward: just introduce the mother at the correct time. AIDS 1986 is harder, I usually deal with it using a strong narrative that carries the story forward: "But things got worse. When Samuel had finally gotten his act together enough to walk and talk like a normal human being, he called Darlene, the woman he had been fooling around with in the states, the woman he was sure had given him the disease..." In some cases, Rolf's player manages to do this beautifully, but there is very little information in Rolf's character as I wanted to keep the character down to a minimum not to damage the flow of the game.

Remember: you are the storyteller. You are not objective or impartial. Your voice-overs are your own. The story is you.

Good luck and enjoy!

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No Dice in Truth or Dare!

When playing Truth or Dare, you will not use any dice. This is not a freeform statement, but a feature. Let the players decide what would be a good roll. This will also make it easier for Fredrik to ask the right questions to Rolf and Ulrika.

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I'm very happy for any feedback, tales of actual play, questions and corrections. Reach me at tobias@jeepen.org