

## QUEER SLEEPOVER WITCHING HOUR

A not quite nanolarp for six players

by Jess Rowan Marcotte (@jekagames)

3+ Hours

There are those moments at a sleepover, just before everyone drifts off to sleep, when one's filters are at their most permissive and those last, weird, sincere conversations of the night begin, where almost anything is fair-game. Who can even remember what was said the next day?

I wrote this larp with the LGBTQIA+ community in mind. When I was young, I remember these moments before sleep as deeply intimate experiences that brought me closer to the people around me, but I never talked about my queer identity or gender as a part of these moments. I want to recapture this moment of intimacy as a queer adult with other queer adults and chat about all the things that we didn't necessarily feel comfortable saying when we were kids, if we even took part in these kinds of sleepover parties to begin with. Non-QUILT BAG (Queer, Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual, Asexual, Gay) players are welcome, but your character will have a queer identity of some kind built into their backstory.

While this game has no official gamemaster for during play, you will need a host to provide space for the play, as well as someone to cast the larp (if you are not casting as a group), and someone to facilitate discussion before and after play. Everyone is allowed to read the rules -- there are no secrets or surprise reveals.

In this game, you are young adults -- some of you are still in school, most of you work at least part-time if not full, and one of you, the Host, decided to host a queer sleepover party. You all have lots of opinions and are having a lot of new experiences in your early adulthood. Conversations like the ones you'll have during Queer Sleepover Witching Hour are ways of testing the water and talking with others about those experiences.

As always, play respectfully!

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- \*A television with the means to play a movie
- \*Clean floor space for a six-person nest
- \*Comfy clothes (pyjamas preferred)
- \*Blankets, pillows, cushions, sleeping bags, stuffed animals
- \*[Optional] Beanbag chairs, couches
- \*[Optional] Pot luck food or junk food.

### BASIC RULES FOR LARPING

A general version of these rules is available here, but I have tailored a specific version for this larp:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EJDAGcOGcwj7wvhMkIm6hMxJ2sc-gyiSPbhM\\_\\_qRgvU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EJDAGcOGcwj7wvhMkIm6hMxJ2sc-gyiSPbhM__qRgvU/edit?usp=sharing)

No identity should be played for laughs! Sincerity & vulnerability are the names of the game!

#### DEFINITIONS

-Bleed-: This larp term refers to when experiences that a player has in-game "bleed over" or affect them in their day to day life. This can be due to a life-changing experience, or can simply be a residual feeling left over from play, or another aspect of the larp that has stayed with you. Bleed is pretty common, but it can also be uncomfortable. When dealing with heavy subject matter, the Host or Gamemaster should try and provide resources for players who might experience bleed, along with a debrief at the end of the game so that players can discuss their experiences.

#### METATECHNIQUES

##### [Player Safe Words]

If a player is uncomfortable, needs play to change direction, or to stop entirely, for any reason, they may use a safe word which all players must respect:

"-Brake- is an indication that play is on or near someone's limits. Play can continue without openly stepping out of character, but should not get more intense, should progress slowly or move in a different direction. For example, if used in an interrogation scene, the interrogator might switch to a different approach, or decide to let the prisoner dwell on their situation."

"-Cut- is an indication to immediately break character and resolve the situation. Play might be restarted once the situation has been resolved."

(<https://nordiclarp.org/2015/04/15/safe-words-and-how-to-use-them/>)

##### [Combat]

There is no combat in this larp.

##### [Intimacy]

Consent is paramount! Hugs and physical support can be negotiated by asking the other player whether they would like to be hugged in that moment. Beyond friendly touching, there is unlikely to be any romantic or sexual intimacy involved in this larp. Nevertheless, depending on player negotiations at the beginning of the game, the group can decide on one of two methods for this kind of play:

-Ars Amandi-, hands and arm version (<http://www.ars-amandi.se/resources/the-ars-amandi-method/>)

Or

-Fade to Black-

(<http://keepontheheathlands.com/2017/02/03/x-card-fade-black-mechanics/>)

<https://nordiclarp.org/2017/02/03/matter-trust-larp-consent-culture/>

<http://leavingmundania.com/2011/11/09/intro-to-ars-amandi/>)

#### BEFORE THE DAY

\*Players should plan to bring their comfiest clothes or pyjamas, as many pillows, cushions, bean bag chairs, blankets, sleeping bags, and other comfy nest-building materials as they are able to. Stuffed animals are greatly encouraged. Players may also bring inflatable mattresses and futon mats if they like.

\*Players should read over the rules.

\*Players are provided with their character packets, assigned by the host, or chosen through group discussion. Players can feel free to dress as their characters or not.

\*Players should vote on a movie or two with queer content (or a movie that is beloved in queer circles) to play in the background throughout the game. No movie is perfect, and we all have problematic faves, but anyone is allowed to veto any movie for any reason. As this film will be playing in the background and you'll be tuning in and out, you ideally want something that most players have already seen before, or something that you'd expect to see playing at a teenage sleepover. (Here are a few suggestions to get you started: The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Hedwig & the Angry Inch, But I'm a Cheerleader, The History Boys, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Cabaret, The Birdcage, GBF, Geography Club, RENT, C.R.A.Z.Y, Velvet Goldmine, and many, many others.)

\*[OPTIONAL] Make it a potluck.

\*[OPTIONAL] Bring on the junk food and the pizza.

#### ON THE DAY (PRIOR TO PLAY)

Negotiation and discussion of consent, personal boundaries, and absolute limits occurs. The Host should facilitate these discussions. Make sure that everyone has the chance to speak up, and remind yourselves that setting limits on the types of play and subject matter included in the larp will help everyone play more freely, knowing that they will not be harming another player by their words or actions.

These boundaries may be renegotiated using the Cut safe word (desc

ribed below) to interrupt play. Players should remind themselves of the rules for Safe words. Players should also be reminded of the rules for the Witching Hour.

Turn on the movie that you plan to play in the background -- this is to add that authentic sleepover atmosphere.

#### BUILD YOUR NEST (GETTING INTO CHARACTER)

In-character, the players build a soft, comfy space together that has room for every person to lounge but also brings you in as close proximity as you are all comfortable with. You can and should share your building materials, but if you want to reserve your own sleeping bag, futon or other sleeping pad for your own use, that is totally okay. Same goes for your favourite stuffed animal! The important aspects of this nest are that everyone be close enough to hear each other speak softly and whisper, and that everyone is comfy. That includes everyone having as much personal space as they need.

If there are couches available in your play space, feel free to push them together, steal their seat cushions, and build a fort.

The group gets cookies if you're able to build a blanket fort or tent of some kind.

#### SETTLE IN

If you've made the event a potluck or decided to order food, you can now settle into your nest, eat food, and relax together. When the movie playing in the background finishes, it is time for the Witching Hour.

#### IT IS THE WITCHING HOUR

To prepare for the witching hour, turn the lights off in the room. You can leave on a small nightlight if needed.

1. Everyone settles down in their part of the nest.
2. The witching hour opens in one of three ways:
  - \* Everyone tells a one-word-at-a-time story together.
  - \* One person tells a joke.
  - \* Someone tells a story or anecdote about their character's day.
3. From there, let the conversation segue into whatever direction it seems to be taking. Try to stay in-character.
4. The Witching Hour ends when all players "fall asleep" (either for real or by choosing to do so in-game).

#### WITCHING HOUR ETIQUETTE

\* There is no gamemaster, so observing the rules of etiquette is everyone's responsibility.

- \* Speak softly during the Witching Hour, unless another person asks you to speak up because they cannot hear you.
- \* The Cone of Silence: The Cone of Silence means that what is said during the Witching Hour is a secret and should not be repeated to anyone who is not present at the Witching Hour. Anything said during the witching hour is subject to the cone of silence unless otherwise stated by the person who said it.
- \* Address other players only by their in-game character names. You may only break this rule if they are not responding & appear to have forgotten their character's name, or during a "Cut".
- \* Do not wake players who "fall asleep."
- \* It is okay not to speak up if you would rather just listen.
- \* If you notice that someone is very quiet, check in with them, but do not try to force them to speak. Ask them if they're feeling all right, if they're asleep (if they are, do not wake them), if they have anything to add, etc.
- \* Be aware of how much space and time you are taking up. If you are talking the majority of the time, make more space for others to speak up. Try to be mindful of this balance. If you notice that someone is taking up a lot of space, gently remind them of this etiquette.
- \* Do not interrupt someone in the middle of a sentence. Assenting, supportive, and commiserating noises and words are allowed. If you notice that you have interrupted someone, stop, apologize, and invite them to continue speaking.
- \* Allow yourself to be as vulnerable and sincere as you are comfortable with, and be kind to others who are doing the same.
- \* If you have had a similar experience to something that another person brings up, feel free to say, "me, too" or share part of your own experience.
- \* If you wish, you may thank other players for what they have shared with you.
- \* Take care of each other and of yourselves. Care for others where possible, but not at the expense of your own mental/physical health.

#### DEBRIEF

Like the other steps of the game that require leadership, the Host is responsible for facilitating this part of the game.

The debrief is a step that happens after the game is finished, and helps players to process the experience that they have just been through. In games with a facilitator or where the creator of the larp is present, it's a good chance to get feedback.

The goal with this particular debrief is to help players process their feelings about the Witching Hour through discussion, and to help players transition back out into the cold, cold outside world beyond the nest. The suggestions here are taken from a variety of sources on debriefs, with a fair bit of that information coming from "Leaving Mundania" and "NordicLarp.Org." Ultimately, try to make sure that everyone feels heard and respected.

-Debriefing-

\* The more intense the larp, the longer the debrief.

\* Players should make use of the third-person principle when talking about in-game events -- this means that rather than using "I" and "you", they should use the third person and talk about what the characters did and said to each other.

From the Nordic Larp Wiki: "The Third Person Principle is sometimes an explicit rule, sometimes an unspoken norm, governing player behaviour after a larp:

"When talking about things that happened at the larp, the first and second person pronouns ('I', 'You') are avoided. Instead, events and emotions are talked about as having occurred between characters. Not 'You did that to me' but 'Your character did that to my character'.

"This principle is meant to help players untangle tangled emotions, and avoid bringing intra-character relationships into the real world. It is both a matter of psychological security and of good sportsmanship - 'I crushed you like a bug' carries connotations of gloating, while 'Grimzak crushed Tugrak like a bug' is a story about a shared experience."

\* Each player starts off by talking about something memorable from the game, positive or negative, and this can lead to other areas of discussion. The Host should ask the group, "What is something memorable that happened in the game?"

\* Here are some other follow-up questions to help continue the discussion:

"What is something unexpected that happened during the game?"

"What is something comforting that happened during the game?"

"What is something that you will take with you from this game?"

What is something that you will leave behind?"

\* Ultimately, it is up to the group to decide when they have finished their discussion, but try to be mindful of each other's time, and practice the same rules as during the Witching Hour with respect to making and taking space. When the debrief is over, the Host should thank the players for coming.

#### THE CHARACTERS

Feel free to rename, gender-swap or otherwise alter characters if there is an aspect about them that makes you uncomfortable. Discomfort is not necessarily bad so long as you still feel safe, respected, and able to play, but do not place the play above your own well-being. Having characters at all is meant to help you feel more comfortable and better able to express yourself, but if this does not work for you and your group, feel free to nix them entirely (but you still have to wear your comfiest clothes). Also, sorry if I chose your name for a character.

If there are terms that players in the group don't understand in the character bios, and you are deciding character roles as group, be sure to google those words & talk about their meaning before choosing characters.

---

Name: Sloan

Pronouns: They/them

Gender Identity: Nonbinary (Genderfluid)

Sexuality: Pansexual

What Was Their Day Like Today: Was traveling & someone helpfully told them that they were in the wrong bathroom. Sloan told this person that they think they know which bathroom they ought to be using better than a stranger.

Social Bonds: Friends with Ava and Quinn, co-worker to Egan.

---

Name: Ava

Pronouns: She/her

Gender Identity: Trans Woman

Sexuality: Heterosexual

What Was Her Day Like Today: Today was kind of rough -- she had a particularly painful laser hair removal session and is trying to figure out when she'll be able to take time off of work for top surgery.

Social Bonds: Friends with Sloan and Laila.

---

Name: Egan

Pronouns: He/him or They/them

Gender Identity: Cis Man

Sexuality: Omnisexual

What Was His Day Like Today: Couldn't tell if the cutie at the bank was flirting, or if they were just socialized to be nice to strangers. Either way, they talked about the Marvel Comics' Univer

se and Wakanda and it was awesome.

Social Bonds: Co-worker to Sloan, friends with Reina and Quinn.

---

Name: Laila

Pronouns: She/her or They/them

Gender Identity: Cis Woman

Sexuality: Lesbian

What Was Her Day Like Today: Failed her driving test this morning and treated herself to lunch at her favourite restaurant. Was tempted to skip class at the local college, but didn't.

Social Bonds: Friends with Ava and Reina.

---

Name: Quinn

Pronouns: He/him

Gender Identity: Trans Man

Sexuality: Gay

What Was His Day Like Today: Had a call with an elderly relative who deadnamed him and used the wrong pronouns, but he didn't have the spoons to explain or correct. Respecting his elders was always drummed into him, but what about respect for him from his elders?

Social Bonds: Friends with Sloan, Egan and Reina.

---

Name: Reina

Pronouns: She/her

Gender Identity: Trans Woman

Sexuality: Asexual (Grey Panromantic)

(<http://wiki.asexuality.org/Gray-romantic>)

What Was Her Day Like Today: She ran all the errands that were on her list and didn't get misgendered once, and managed to squeeze a workout in. It was a way better day than yesterday, when she had trouble getting out of bed.

Social Bonds: Friends with Laila, Egan and Quinn.