LARP MANUSCRIPT

THE GAME MASTER MANUAL

Main Document
Version: 1.0.0

INDEX

Main document
This contains:
- The index: Which you are now reading
- User Agreement: How you can use the material for Last Will.
- Introduction: The vision and themes of the larp as well as some general notes on what you will need to consider when being the organizer for Last Will.
- Practical info on running the game: Listing what you need to consider before, during and after the game, such as location, props, schedule and workshops, as well as tips and hacks.
- Bio: Who are we, the original game designers of Last Will.
- Love and misery: Many thanks to all these people who made Last Will possible.

Folder with home-page texts
This contains:
- About: A short text describing the content of this folder.
- Vision: Describing the vision and themes of the larp
- Participation contract: Describing what we expected from the participants, and what they could expect from the organizers
- Background: Describing Jericho and the world in which it exists
- Practical info: Sign-up information, dates, costs, what to bring etc.
- Roles of the gladiator stable: Describing the different professions in Jericho
- Visual vision: A text aiming to convey how we wanted the larp to look and how this should be reflected in the players' costumes and personal equipment
- IRL examples: A text with examples from our reality of modern slavery and democracy
- Sign-up form: The form we used for letting players sign up to the game

Folder with info to participants
This contains:
- One document with the three emails we sent to our participants, to be used for cut and paste or as a checklist.
- A list of questions we sent out to encourage the different groups to begin preparing before the game.

Folder with workshops
This contains:
- About: A short text describing the contents of the folder
- Pre-game workshops: Descriptions of the workshops on meta-techniques for sex and fighting, on establishing the life inside and outside Jericho and on working on relationships, along with our schedule for the workshops.
- Workshop on dehumanization: Handouts for this workshop
- Post-game debrief and workshop: Description of the debrief aiming to ease the par-

ticipants from Jericho to our world and allow them to discuss the reality of modern slavery, along with our schedule for this.

Folder with characters

This contains:
- About character introduction: A text on how we have written the characters and our thoughts on casting.
- Character casting keys: A list relating the keywords from signup to each character
- Characters: By team
- General info to participants: Texts we sent out to the players together with the characters on how to read the characters, on Jericho, on their professions, on the upcoming election and questions to use to develop the characters.

Folder with in-game documents

This contains:
- About: How to use the in-game tasks
- The rules of Jericho
- Schedule for the superintendent with fights, food and darktime
- In-game tasks sorted by time point
- Template: So you can write more tasks
- Logos: Jericho and Alda logo
- A poll card prop
- A lifer contract prop - also needed for the dehumanization workshop
- A folder with the audio files for the radio broadcasting of the fights

Folder with visual material

This contains:
- About: A short text describing the contents of the folder and how you may use it
- Promotion photographs
- Logo
- Poster

Appendix on schedule

The game schedule as we used it for our run of Last Will.

Appendix on props

A list of both general props and stuff for the different professions in Jericho.

Appendix on post-larp questionnaires

One general, anonymous, questionnaire and one specified to the character.

USER AGREEMENT

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- Credit the original photographers, you find the photographer's name in the file name.
- Inform your players of these terms, if they use a photo in their personal blog or such.

Special terms regarding workshops:
- You may use the workshops developed for Last Will as inspiration or as they are for another larp. Do, however, credit the original authors.

INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING
LAST WILL

"Make us your slaves, but feed us." - Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"

Last Will is designed as a 23 hour game for 44 players, depicting a gladiator stable in a dark near-future. The game centers around the upcoming fights and the election that is to be held "tomorrow". However, the main focus of the game is not the fights, but the everyday life of the people in Jericho, their faltering hopes and crushed dreams and limited freedom. The game features tough choices and the characters will be faced with challenging situations, relationships of both positive and negative natures, and a constant battle around hierarchies and money in a violent and harsh world.

This larp manuscript aims to give you the material needed to produce Last Will. It is based on what we, the original game designers, used for the two runs of Last Will in Stockholm 2014 and 2015. You are naturally free to adapt the material as you feel fit, we trust you to stay true to the vision and themes of the game. For more on how you are allowed to use this material, see the User Agreement document.

Vision

Last Will is a larp about the fading human dignity in a world run by money and consumption in which people can be bought and sold as commodities. The larp is set in a future where debt and poverty breed slavery and slavery perpetuates poverty. Last Will revolves around hope in a hopeless situation where the desire to create a future battle with constant fighting against fear and hunger. In a time when freedom every day is weighed against security and survival, the question echoes – What is my value? The larp Last Will deals with issues concerning human dignity, capitalism, slavery, human rights, democracy, vulnerability, hope and despair.

This is however not a game that will realistically depict modern slavery in e.g. a sweatshop in China. Last Will is set in a dystopian future, where debt and poverty have made some people into slaves. We want to use our story, inspired by a multitude of different tales of modern slavery, to shed light on the questions on how poverty affects people. Even though the scenario is set in the future, the themes and questions in the setting have accompanied humankind for centuries and are painful realities for millions of people in different parts of the world even today.

Another important theme is democracy, or rather the lack of it in oppressing milieus, and how poverty leads to loss of agency. There are two reasons for this theme. The first reason is to make a clear difference between lifers and workers, where workers are allowed to sign up to vote in the upcoming election but lifers are not. This distinction might otherwise get fuzzy, since their rights are more or less the same in other respects; i.e. nonexistent. The other reason is tied to the political statement we want to make

with the larp. We want to reflect the situation in the real world, where if you are in a situation where you are fighting to stay alive, you don't have the time or energy to stand up for a change that may never come. Thus, you might not get very much game play on the election in your larp, but we feel it is important and interesting to highlight the theme nonetheless.

Get the focus right

This is a larp about some quite heavy themes; slavery, oppression, despair and losing humanity. Yet it is something the participants do voluntarily, for enjoyment, for personal growth and in order to have a thrilling experience. When organizing the larp Last Will, it is important to balance the depth of the themes with the joy of playing together. See to it that the in-game hierarchy and oppression doesn't bleed over into the interaction between players and the relationship between organizers and players. Make sure all off-game interaction, like workshops and especially debrief, are held in an atmosphere of professionalism, kindness and trust, but try not let the meetups get too giddy and playful, because that will make it harder to then switch to the heavy themes of the in-game world.

This is not a larp about the wow-factor of the gladiator fights, it is about the many individual stories of despair and loss. Make sure the participants are clear on the game's focus being drama, relationships and stories, not the fighting or the outcome of any fights. Do your best to ensure that the game is played not in a gameistic but rather in a play-to-lose mindset, i.e not to improve the in-game position of the character but quite the opposite if it gives the more interesting overall story. The fights are in the game for flavour, the injuries and blood set the stage of the cruel life these people live, but this should never be the main focus.

This game is written in the Nordic Larp tradition. Nordic larp is a somewhat diffuse term, but here is a good piece on it: http://leavingmundania.com/2012/08/08/nordic-larp-for-noobs/. In general, Nordic-style larp is about creating an exciting and emotionally affecting story together, not measuring your strength against the other players' strength. Nordic games emphasize collaboration over competition. There is no winning, and many players intentionally let their characters fail in their objectives in order to create more interesting stories. Many Nordic games are intended as more than entertainment – they make artistic or even political statements. The goal in these games is to have a long-term impact on the players, to perhaps change the way they see themselves or how they act in society. In this sense, Last Will is a Nordic Larp.

Being the organizer

We have developed and run this larp with three organizers. How you choose to set up your organizer team is naturally entirely up to you, but we recommend being more than two in the core group. This is because from time to time one of you will need to focus on other things - life happens - and then it is good to have at least two people still running the larp preparations. Closer to the game, we engaged two helping hands for each run to do all sorts of practical stuff.

In this larp, you will need to see not only to all practical needs, such as food and location, but also to emotional needs for your players. You will expose them to a harsh environment and hopefully make them do horrible things to each other. It is therefore important to make a safe off-game space where they can take a break from the game, have some food and a good cry if need be. Make sure they know ahead of the game that they will be welcome at any time to your off-game area, and try to be welcoming during the game, even if they come when you have your hands full and they don't appear to need anything urgently. Perhaps they just had to get away from the game floor for a while, perhaps they need to be asked if they are OK before they can tell you what they really need.

For more about the mental and physical safety of your players, we recommend this talk by Johanna Koljonen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YASuW5aDNlo

As organizer or helper for this larp, do not expect to get any quality in-character game experience for yourself; you will have a lot of off-game duties. During the game, you will mostly be concerned with feeding your players, preparing the fights and the fighters, preparing handouts etc. And comforting tired, hungry and crying participants. You will not be on the game floor except if something needs to be fixed, but do sneak around discreetly to get a look at your creation.

You also have to look to your practical needs of food and sleep before and during the game. Tired and hungry organizers are unfortunately not good organizers. Schedule sleep time for yourselves too. You might also need to see to your own emotional needs. It can be hard to realize that you are the persons who have put your friends in this hell-hole, you are the ones who made them do all this. Plan for a post-game organizer debrief.

Player-to-player trust

There are lengthy essays written about this subject (some are listed below) and it is too big a subject to really sum up here, but it is very important so we will at least touch upon it.

For players to really dare to be as mean and cruel to each other as we want them to be, to allow their characters to break down, lose hope, give up - to basically allow their characters to be oppressed, by each other and the system - they will need to trust each other. This is tricky, but it is one of the most important task you have as an organizer, and also one of the main aims of the pre-game workshops. Often, it is harder to play the oppressor than the one being oppressed, hard to trust that the other player does indeed want this and is OK with what is happening. You will probably need to stress, again and again, that they all signed up for a game where one of the main themes is oppression, and not only oppression from guards and admin but abuse from anyone and everyone. And for this to happen, they are the ones who need to dare to oppress and abuse. In personal relationships, from admin towards the teams, within the teams and administrative work-teams, between members of the same profession. Control and oppression could and should be on every level. The safe-words are a very important mechanism for creating this trust. But only if the players use them, and they will only use them if they have practiced them. Which is hard. Feel free to come up with a better workshop for using safe-words. Going off-game to negotiate, or just talk about, a difficult scene is another mechanism. A black-box can be used for this, but it can essentially be done discreetly anywhere during the game. Foster a culture where it is encouraged to go off-game and plan and talk about scenes. You will also need both you and your players to work on methods of doing this without taking away the agency of the player playing the oppressed role (see the Oppression workshop in the pre-game workshop-document). The abuse should be creating game-play, not hindering it.

For further, extracurricular, reading on the subject, you can look at this paper by Waern and Stenros : "Trust and Intimate Interaction in Nordic Larp." or Saitta's article "On Ethics" in the 2014 Knutpunkt book "The Cutting Edge of Nordic Larp" and Järvelä's article "The golden rule of larp" in the 2012 Knutepunkt book "States of Play".

Larping "everyday life" and not revolution

Last Will is not about starting a revolution or breaking the system. There are plenty of larps on that theme for those who like that kind of play better. But in reality, the system that keeps people as slaves is often so brutal and deeply rooted that there is no escape, and the crushing weight of that hopelessness is what we want to portray in this larp. Be clear with the larpers before the game that this is not about breaking free, but about everyday life in a place that grinds people down to nothing but basic survival instincts.

Paint a picture of everyday life in Jericho so that the participants know what to expect, what is normality versus what calls for concern, outrage or fear. Also, make sure they know that rules or laws in Jericho can be broken (to create interesting game-play) but

only to a certain limit. If too many rules are broken, the dynamic of the groups and the balance of terror will capsize and the larp will be difficult to play out.

Be sure to weigh the power structure in Jericho carefully, especially if you change characters or groups from the original setup. There should not be anyone with absolute power, all must bow to others somehow. The superintendent, for example, should have a lot of influence, but is still a lifer, and therefore the security guards can harass the superintendent to some degree. And the security guards know that if there should be a riot they will be the first to die, horribly, and thus cannot be all to harsh. In many profession, there should be a certain degree of control amongst colleagues, just as it is in the teams. And so on. This secures that there is a status quo in the hierarchy of the stable but still leaves room for oppression on all levels of the hierarchy.

The characters

Much of the design for Last Will is actually in the pre-written characters. These contain both individual stories and the mood of the whole larp. There is a balance between oppressors and oppressed and between love, hate and fear. Read through all the characters, maybe make a mind-map to get an overview of who is connected to whom, this will give you a good idea of what your participants will get to experience during the larp.

The pre-written descriptions are the bare bones of the characters and are intended to incite the players to fill out the rest themselves. Some participants, especially first-time/new larpers, may need guidance and help to do this, and some will manage on their own.

More on the characters, on casting and on why the characters don't have an assigned gender in the About: Character Introduction

HOW TO RUN LAST WILL:
PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Before the game

Information

The participants will need a lot of information before the larp. It's best to portion it out, not giving them all the information at once. The first level of information concerns practicalities (dates, cost, sign-up etc.), the vision for the larp, a bit of background and information about the roles. This should be found on the webpage, along with pictures to show the visual vision for the larp, so that people can determine if they can and want to participate. We suggest you also have a participation contract, in order to make it clear to everyone what kind of larp this is, what they will get and what is expected from them. There is a separate folder with the texts we used for the web page which you can use straight off or be inspired by. We hope you find it useful.

The second level of information contains more background on the game world and on the reality of modern world slavery, in-depth information about practical stuff in and around the game: props/clothes, techniques, schedules etc. This is information that is needed for playing but not for determining whether to sign up or not. Some of this info was available on our web page, most was sent in emails after sign-up. Emails are good for organizer-to-player contact. Facebook, or a forum, can be used for player-to-player contact, but we also provided all participants with contact information to all other players in a shared Google document. Inform the participants early on how they should prepare for the larp, by talking to other players and thinking about how they can all work together. Google documents were also used for sharing other information, such as the rules of Jericho and the prop list. There is a folder with all the information that was sent out in emails before the second run of Last Will - use it as a checklist to make sure you have sent out all the information the players need, or cut and paste the text into your own emails.

Sign-up

We used two different systems for sign-up to the two runs of Last Will. The first run was first come, first served. For the second run we used a lottery, where the sign-up was open for 48 hours and we drew lots from those who signed up to fill the spots. The first version is a straightforward and low-effort design, if your technical systems can withstand any sign-up pressure (our's didn't). The second system allows your participants to fill in the sign-up form in their own time and thus give more relevant information, but you will need to put in more work into allocating the spots. We would recommend drawing lots, but it is naturally up to you. We also drew lots for a reserve list of 14 people. This so that those high up on that list would know that they had fairly good chances of getting a spot, and if you were low on the list or not on it at all, your chances were

fairly slim and you could plan something else for that weekend.

In the sign-up form, you will of course want to collect information on practical stuff such as contact information, allergies and ICE (in case of emergency) contacts. Furthermore, let the potential participants rank the different role types and state their preferences as to what type of play they would like. You can then use that information to cast all participants in suitable roles. We also asked about the gender of the would-be participants, as we wanted to have an equal gender-balance in the game as a whole as well as among the different professions. Read more about our thoughts on casting and gender in the Character Introduction text.

Practical preparations

Venue

There are few absolute must-haves regarding a venue for running Last Will, but there are some factors that will increase the right feel of the larp.

Since the participants will spend at least 24 hours in the venue (more if you intend to have pre-larp workshops and debrief in the same venue) you need to make sure there are proper toilets, water for drinking and good heating and ventilation. You will also want a room to set up a black-box, you can read more about the black-box under Meta techniques below. Showers are a nice bonus. You also need to have a off-game area that is secluded from the larp area but within easy reach from the in-game area. This is for the organizers to hang out in, prepare meals, prepare handouts, receive fighters and put makeup on them, and, maybe most importantly, for participants to retreat to when play gets too intense. Make sure you have an extra bed for exhausted participants and extra food for hungry ones. And tissues.

It is a big bonus if the venue is more or less underground. If there are windows, you'll need to cover them properly so that no light comes through. If you need to move in or out through the door of the locale during the game, make sure there is a way to do this without light spilling in.

We used a dojo for the larp, since it had mats for sleeping on and equipment for training. If you choose another type of venue you can ask the participants to bring something to sleep on and their own training equipment.

If the venue doesn't have several smaller rooms for the teams, create some kind of makeshift areas with dividers of metal, cloth or plastic, just to give the six teams each a "home base" where they can play on the dramaturgics of being a group. The doctors and psychiatrists also need some type of offices, which should preferably be semi-secluded. The administration needs its own area too, preferably somewhat separate from the teams but not too isolated since that may hinder play between the teams and the administration. We had this in one end of the large room, overlooking the teams' living and training areas. It is probably better to make your environment too open rather

than too divided, in order to create a
feeling of never being alone, always being
seen by someone.

Helping hands

We ran Last Will with three organizers
and two helping hands for each run. This
worked excellently. The key to handling
helping hands is choosing the right
people and communicating clearly with
them. You need people with the right bal-
ance of initiative and listening skills who
can handle being told what to do while
also being able to solve problems on their
own. Then you need to tell them clearly what you will need from them, and how you
will reward them in return. During your work together, you need to show that you love
and respect your helping hands, and that you are working at least as hard as they are.
Feed them love and chocolate and make sure your players cheer for them after the
game.

You need your helping hands to help you prepare props and food some days before the
game, and to set up the location just before the game while you host the workshops.
During the game, they will work alongside you to prepare food and everything else
that needs to be done. It is a very good idea to send at least one but preferably two
people, organizers or helping hands, home to sleep properly during the larp. These
persons will then be responsible for the post-game activities, such as keeping to the
schedule and organizing the clean-up of the venue.

Food

The food during the larp can influence the feel of the larp a lot. Dull-colored food with
an industrial look and no proper texture can really induce the feeling of misery and
scarcity of food. In the world of Last Will, you eat what you get. But make sure the food
is still nourishing and filling, or else the participants won't have the energy to play. And
try to make the food actually taste good, or at least OK, since it is actually quite hard to
eat proper amounts of food if it tastes disgusting. The color and the texture will carry
enough misery, you don't need it to taste bad too. We made all food mostly vegan or at
least vegetarian, and excluded foodstuffs that any participant was allergic to, so that
everybody could eat the same food without worrying. You can cook stews with root
vegetables, beans and spices and then just mash it all up to a puree to make it look ter-
rible, but still taste good. Tea and coffee available at the game floor was much needed,
and plenty of drinking water.

We used the sous vide method for cooking and serving some of the meals. The advan-
tage is that you can cook the meals in advance, seal them up, freeze them and then just

heat them up in hot water before serving. The participants get a individually pre-packed meal that they can eat directly from the bag if they want.

As the in-game food was bland and awful, make sure there is extra food, such as sandwiches, in the off game area. We also served a luxurious breakfast after the game had ended, as part of the debrief. This was much appreciated.

Props and things

You can ask your players to bring almost all the props for the larp, just post a list of what you need and let participants sign up for what they can bring. If you choose to fix the props yourself you have more freedom to alter them, and if they break or disappear you don't owe any player for the item, but it costs money to buy props and takes a lot of work, so choose wisely. In the appendix, there is a list on props needed for Last Will. For our runs, we provided some of the props while others were brought by players. The ones listed below were organized by us.

Radio transmissions

The fights will not be played out but happen "off-site" and are broadcast to the participants via a sound system. Two of the fights are between two Jericho fighters, two are between Jericho fighters and fighters from another stable. There are radio recordings of all the fights, and you can find the files in the In-game documents folder. Each fight contains two sound files; one where A wins and one where B wins. When the fighters come to the off-game area you can discuss and decide together what outcome is the most interesting and then just play that sound file. Focus on what result will give the better game-play, not on what would be the most probable result according to in-game logic or which player wants to win the most. Remember that the purpose of the fights is to create good drama. Try to listen to to the fights beforehand and make a short summary, both so you can tell the fighters what they have been through and so you know which injuries to provide them with using makeup and fake blood.

If you like and have the time, you can also record an interview with "the famous reporter Dei-Dei" (see the in-game document called 03:12 Interviews). Record the interview on a phone or other device while the fighters are having their makeup done, and then just play it after the sound files of the fight.

It might be tempting to have the fights played out in the venue, for the show-factor, but having them happen offstage makes it easier to focus on the drama that surrounds the fights, which is what it is really all about. Also, the players' imagination will make the fights gorier and more violent than anything you can ever stage. We have collected video clips so that you and your participants can get a feeling for what VTX looks like. It´s bloodier and more dangerous than anything we can see today, but this gives you an idea: http://vimeo.com/103184081

Bracelets and collars

For the larp we designed collars for the lifers and bracelets for the workers. They are in the same style but of different length and with different colours for the different teams. These have several purposes; to easily identify workers from lifers and, at a distance, recognise what team a character belongs to. They are marked with the ID code of Jericho (e.g. JT1F for Jericho team 1 fighter). The collars also have an in-game function of control; there is a system in the collar that the security personnel can control by blowing one, two or three times in a whistle (one time is a warning, two times sends out small electric shocks to any collar above knee level and three times sends out a knockout drug to any collar above knee level).

Key cards

The characters in the administration also had a simple type of "key card" on a string around their neck, to signify their slightly higher status. This key card had the character's name and code.

Name tags

To make it easier for the players to recollect what character others were playing, we also had a simple name tag for each player to wear. The name tag had the colour of the team and spelled out the character's name and code, like the collars/bracelets/keycards but easier to read at a distance. The name tags don't have to be fancy, but if they are covered in plastic they will survive longer. We also used them during the workshop day. Print the code larger than the name, it is after all more important in Jericho.

Drugs

We used different kinds of candy to represent drugs. White candy represented all kinds of regular medicines, yellow made people horny, green were "happy pills" and red made them aggressive and fearless. Make sure that the candy doesn't contain anything any player might be allergic to, and don't allow players to bring their own, so that all

participants know that they can eat whatever is offered to them in-game. We stated that one pill has effect for one scene, and exactly how long that is is up to the players to decide. You can put a time limit on it instead, but mostly it is clear when the effect of the drug has created the desired drama. For example, if a character takes drugs trying to commit suicide, the effect will subside after the attempt has been detected and the person sent to the doctor for treatment. That might take half an hour. If a character is fooled into taking happy pills to perform better in front of the owners of the stable, then the effect might recede after just a couple of minutes when the performance is over. Make sure there is a very small amount of drugs among the characters in the beginning of the larp, so that there is a demand for it and the security guards and fixers gets a bigger incentive to smuggle in drugs.

Alcohol

We used vinegar in water to represent alcohol. The purpose is that you can easily smell and taste that it is not water, but it shouldn't be tasty; alcohol in the world of Last Will is not a nice merlot, it is just something to dull the senses.

Money

We printed in-game currency, in the denominations of 10 and 50 ss bills. Most workers might receive 10-20 ss per day after all deductions for food and lodgings have been made. Some extra food might cost 10 ss, drugs 50-70 ss, clothes 50-100 ss. Lifers don't get paid but might get bonuses when a fighter is successful. All in all - most people in Jericho don't have a lot of money in their pocket. This is not intended to be a lifelike simulation of an economic system. The money is a prop to use in playing on the angst of poverty, make sure it is scarce. Encourage your participants to use other methods of payment, such as goods or favours.

Logo etc.

We designed simple logos for the Jericho stable and for Alda, the company owning the stable. You can find these in the In-game documents folder. Both can be used on in-game paperwork and easily printed on adhesive labels to be put on props. We also printed nonsense labels in Chinese and Japanese to put on medicine jars etc.

Orders from the owners

We prepared a number of orders from the owners of Jericho. In-game, these are orders from the executive parts of the company that runs Jericho that the people in the stable need to follow. Off-game, these orders are designed to create gameplay on oppression, turn characters against each other and force them to make hard choices. Find these as well as more information on how to use them in the in-game document folder.

Running the game

Meta techniques

Last Will used some meta techniques in order to enhance the game, to enable the players to act out e.g. sex and violence, and to increase the feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. They are described in more detail in the pre-game workshop document, but here is some brief information about them.

Sex and violence

For sex, we used the Ars amandi technique, and for fighting the Ars marte. If you want to use them as well, make sure to go through these techniques during the pre-larp workshops. You can read up on them here: http://www.ars-amandi.se/resources/

If some of the players know each other well fighting-wise and are confident enough to spar using other techniques, they can be allowed do so. However, if someone enters the fight who was not part of the initial agreement, everyone must immediately stop the fighting. For different forms of physical punishment and torture, players should make an agreement how to play it out, either before the larp or taking a short discreet planning break during the game.

Safewords:

Last Will is an heavy game with some sensitive themes of abuse and violence. There is a need for "safewords" that players can use if play gets too rough. The game should be interesting and intense but not harmful to the players in any way, the safewords give the players a possibility to easily ease up or stop the game. The safewords are also used to stop the game in cases of physical injury, fire or other practical reasons to stop playing. You can read some more about safe words at the Nordic Larp Wiki: http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Safewords

The players use safewords to indicate that a scene needs to be toned down or stopped, or to check if everything is OK. It is essential to go through and practise them on the pre-game workshop.

Green= OK. Can also be used as a question: "Green?" "Green."

Yellow = Back off a bit, take it down a notch.

Red = Immediately stop all gaming, check what happened, ask what is needed (space, talk, talk with someone else, chocolate, hospital...).

Black = Increase (Please note that you don't have to comply with this request if you are not comfortable with it.)

Blackbox

Provide a room for blackbox scenes and meta talk. They players can go to this room during the larp with one or several other players to play scenes that don't fit into the here-and-now of the larp. They can play out memories of the characters, flash-for-wards of some hypothetical future, or anything they feel might give the characters and the story new depth. We asked the players to limit scenes and talks here to not much more than 15 minutes, to not be away from the game too long and also give others access to the room. The Nordic Larp wiki has a general text on the concept of black-box: http://nordiclarp.org/wiki/Black_Box

Time

Time ran 1 to 1, which means one hour in the larp is one hour of the character's life. However, in order to increase the disconnection from the world outside, at the start of the larp we set the in-game clocks to another hour than CET and asked our players to avoid using clocks running on CET. If they needed one, e.g. for medication reasons, they were asked to be discreet.

Sleep schedule

A design choice we have made is to mess with the players' sleep, to make the short time of the larp feel longer. They will be getting eight hours of sleep, but split into two blocks. The first one is a two hour resting period - they should sleep if possible, be quiet and don't disturb other players - and the second a six hour sleep period. Encourage your players to actually get some sleep during these dark-times, so they don't crash due to fatigue towards the end of the larp. For the first run of the larp we had two blocks of four hours but it didn't really work, since a lot of time goes to unwind before the play-

ers can actually go to sleep. One period of six hours gives better sleep than two periods of four hours. It sounds strange but it worked much better.

Meta talk time

In the beginning of each dark-time, encourage the players to gather in their teams and have a short, 10-15 minutes, off-game chat about how the larp is going. Tbis is an opportunity for them to discuss how they feel, what they need for the game to go in the direction they want etc. Tell them to be quiet and discreet as others might be trying to sleep.

Pre-game Workshops

The pre-game workshops and the intro to the game can be found in a separate document named LW pre-game workshops.

The purpose of these workshops is to create a feeling of security between the participants that allows them to play the hard oppressive game that they signed up for. The workshops go through meta techniques for sex and fighting, establish the reality inside and outside Jericho and let the players work on relationships. We had one long day, with almost seven hours of workshops, the day before the larp, and some hours of workshops right before the start of the game. You can of course make a schedule that suits your needs.

Larp Schedule

The larp is originally designed to run for 23 hours (pre-larp workshops and post-larp debrief not included). This can be shifted to be longer or shorter, but too short means the players won't have time to play out all the themes of the larp and too long will be hard on the players since the setting is quite trying.

Having two shorter periods of sleep is a design choice that helps the participants lose track of time and make the 23 hours of runtime feel longer. Having in-game time be different from outside time also contributes to the same effect, a simple psychological way of disconnecting the participants from real life happening outside.

With 23 hours runtime, you can begin the larp at 01:00 in-game time. Tell the players that the rutines of Jericho is not like anything on the outside, that being up all night preparing for fights at four in the morning is normal. Inform the participants that the larp will end "at midnight" according to in-game time. That way the participants can plan their play to finish all drama in time. The intro and the outro of the game is described in the appendixes LW pre-game workshop and LW post-game debrief and workshops, respectively.

The full schedule from our run of the larps can be found in the LW larp schedule appendix. Here is a simplified schedule:

	Off-game time	In-game time
Larp starts	11:00	01:00
Food	12:00	02:00
Fight 1: Sol	14:00	04:00
Fight 2: Mitsuki vs. Kari	16:00	06:00
Food	17:00	07:00
Fight 3: Eli and Milo	18:00	08:00
Dark-time 1	19:30-21:30	09:30-11:30
Snack	21:30	11:30
Fight 4: Sidney vs. Ataru	22:30	12:30
Owners' visit	23:30	13:30
Dark-time 2	01:00-07:00	15:00-21:00
Snack	07:00	21:00
Larp ends	10:00	00:00

You need to somehow warn the players half an hour before a fight and before dark-time. This gives them time to play on the preparation and nervousness before a fight and gives them a chance to collect sleeping gear before the lights go out at dark-time. We used a simple countdown clock and instructed the person playing the superintendent to start it at the given time and inform everyone about what was happening in 30 minutes.

Post-game workshops

The ending scene (called outro) of the game and the post-game workshops can be found in a separate document named LW post-game debrief and workshops.

The purpose of the post-game workshop is to ease your participants from the harsh reality of Jericho into the reality of our world, such as it is. It also gives them time to talk about their experiences with each other, and you the opportunity to connect their experience during the larp to the reality of modern slavery. And you finally get to serve food that tastes and looks appetizing and hear what they have been up to. All this is much appreciated. The workshops we used take two hours. You can of course adapt this schedule to your needs, but don't cut it too much.

After the larp

Feedback

Experience have taught us that organizers shouldn't take in feedback right after the game has ended. The participants are too close to the experience to give proper feedback, and the organizers are often too tired to process the feedback in any constructive way. Preferably use the "week of stories", i.e. inform the players that after the larp they are encouraged to share stories about what happened during the larp, but wait one week before they give any other feedback on the larp. The exception of course being if something bad happened that they need to talk about and clear up.

After one week, make sure you send some form of feedback questionnaire to the participants. Ask what they liked and what they didn't like and what they would like to have been done differently. This will make sure the participants get the opportunity to tell you what they experienced, it is important for them and it is of course a possibility for the organizers to learn and grow in their roles as producers. We used one general questionnaire which could be filled in anonymously and one character-specific one which was not anonymous, for natural reasons. Both are in the appendix: Questionnaires.

Tips and hacks

Scaling

The larp is designed for 44 players in 5 teams and 3 administrative work teams. You can naturally scale the game to fewer players, if your economy allows for fewer paying players. If so, one possibility is to merge the fixer and physiotherapist professions and the coach with the analyst. You could also scale down from four to two security guards, but our experience is that the guards have a lot of work-related play and might need to be four to have time for their own game. Our reasons for having two medical doctors and two psychiatrists is to allow them to complement and conflict with each other

within the professions. It is of course possible to have one of each and tie the characters more closely together. Generally, if you scale down, make sure to re-work all relationships so that all characters have at least three which are not strictly professional. Preferably, some should be positive and some negative.

If you scale down the number of characters, make sure you don't give them too much "in-game work" to do during the larp. The larpers need time to play on their relations outside the teams, and if they have too much work with their professional tasks the focus will easily be shifted to much to the team and other professional relations.

This and that

The players have a lot to play on, and it can get quite intense and downright stressful for them to resolve everything towards the end of the game. It is therefore important to clearly announce well ahead, 30 minutes to an hour beforehand, when people are to be sold and to be sacked and when the game is about to end. This will allow the players to pace their game.

One character committed suicide in both of our runs of Last Will. If this happens in your game as well, for this character or any other, and if they come to you to organize it, it can be good to arrange for it to happen in a secluded area and speak to one or a few other players who can discover "the body" and clearly announce to everyone what has happened and where, so that players who do not wish to look at a suicide scene can choose not to.

Everything technical needs a plan B and preferably also a plan C. You never know when a computer might just not start or a file is nowhere to be found or a sound system is missing a crucial cable... Some things you can fix on the spot but some you might not be able to, hence the backup plans.

Make sure you also plan for the hours after the larp has ended. Debrief and mingling but also taking photos and cleaning the venue. By then the organizers might be quite tired, so a well thought out plan, clearly written down and easy to follow, is a big help. Also think about where to throw all the garbage and what you will do with all the props and other things that you don't need anymore but might not want to throw away.

Stuff that went wrong

Clearly communicate the sleeping schedule well before the game, even before sign-up, as people can get upset otherwise.

Don't schedule your pre-larp workshops to end late the night before the larp. Both organizers and participants need a good night's sleep to be physically and mentally equipped for the larp.

Make sure your ventilation and plumbing is able to handle the number of players you

have in your location. It is not fun to have to bring a plumber through a dojo full of sleeping larpers because the showers are overflowing.

Make sure the superintendent and their assistant understand the system for handing out tasks, otherwise it will be unnecessarily stressful for the players.

For our first run we had gotten a huge following and interest for the larp, so much so that when we opened the signup, our technical solutions for limiting the amount of signups and payments broke down under the pressure. For the second run, we drew lots. This meant a lot less stress for us, and also for the players when filling in the sig-nup form. A win-win solution, basically.

LAST WILL
BIO OF THE GAME-DESIGNERS

The original designers behind this larp are Frida Gamero, Sofia Stenler and Annica Strand. We are also part of, and supported by, the non-profit organisation Ursula (www.foreningenursula.se). All three of us are passionate about feminism, geek culture and politics but also fairy tales, cats and tea.

We wanted to make a game about the horrors of the modern day slave trade, but without it being a flat moral story. More of a heartfelt drama than a lecture. In order to let the players get a feel for the isolated world of a serf without using the situation of real people in what is just a game, we set the scene in the future. That way we could also bring the slave system geographically closer; the story of the original runs was set in Stockholm, not some distant place the players might have a problem relating to. The blood and gore of the fighting was always secondary, but it shone a very distinct and visual spotlight on both the vulnerability and the viciousness of humans in that situation.

To get in touch with us, with questions on the game or to tell us all about how your run went, please send us an email to: foreningenursula(at)gmail.com

Frida Gamero – studying Theology at Uppsala University and works part-time as a personal assistant. She also organizes clubs and leads pilgrimages. Frida has many years of experience in the larp hobby and has produced several larps over the years in different genres and on different scales, some in one of Sweden's oldest larp campaigns and some at her own initiative.

Annica Strand – works as a mobile game producer at the mobile game studio Rovio. Before she started there she studied digital media at Hyper Island in Stockholm and went on from there to work as a production manager at Acne Play. She has been active in the larp hobby since 1999, and has organized a number of major and minor events since. She is the treasurer of the association Ursula and one of three organisers of the another one of Ursula's projects; UnderStockholm, that received funding from the Stockholm City Council in 2012.

Sofia Stenler – Master of Science from Uppsala University who now holds as a Ph.D. from Karolinska Institute. She has been involved in a project to get young people interested in research and is a black belt Ju-Jutsuka. Sofia has many years of larp experience, also as a producer, as a part of one of the oldest larp-associations in Sweden; Gyllene Hjorten. Sofia is the president of the association Ursula, where she organised UnderStockholm – a project that examines alienation.

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