

Ghostlier

by Nadja Lipsyc

3-4 hours, 8-18 players (must be even number)

2 facilitators for the second workshops block



Briefing:

I have not found the title for this larp yet, but thank you for playing it. Perhaps you'll help me come up with something once we figure out together what it is about.

What I can tell you: the larp will be a series of small scenes, that you will play in pairs. A bit like speed-larping, or a tasting platter of situations. Those scenes are encounters between a ghost and a living - and most of the time, they do not know it.

The intentions for the livings and the ghosts are a bit different:

For the livings, it will be about seeking, sometimes restless and aimless, sometimes hopeful and giving.

For the ghosts, it will be about ruminating and perhaps trying to find a breakthrough.

We will start with two series of workshops. One in full group, then one separated between ghosts and livings. Both series last about one hour.

After the workshop, we will play the larp, which is a series of 5 encounters, following and day and night cycle. That should also last around one hour. There are little prompts for these encounters, and suggestions. You are welcome to dismiss them.

For triggers:

Death, depression and personal tragedies of players' choices will color this larp. The point however is not to make it the creepiest and darkest story your mind can fathom, but to keep the ghostliness as an aesthetic intention.

There will probably be some screaming, but nothing directly to anybody's face.

There will be a very short time to calibrate with the people you will play. Keep in mind the scenes are short, under 10 minutes, and there is no need to try to escalate to as much intensity as possible during that time, unless you specifically discuss it during the workshops.

Setup

4-9 separate small spaces (tape and paper) with 3 elements (props or paper), lit in different coloured lights. They should be as far from each other as possible, and leave room in the middle of the space (they should be forming a circle/oval)

A sound system (~6 different tracks for workshops and playtime)

Props

General setup

- Tape to draw spaces
- Name of spaces (either tape letters or taped paper)
- 3 paper sheets per space with 2 elements written and 1 left blank
- White double sheets: number of players/2 (one sheet should be able to partially cover two players)
- Spots of light above each space and a UV light for the night scenes (optional)
- UV face or bodypaint (optional)

Meta props

- Dance cards (printed) + strings to wrap them around the wrist x number of players
- Enveloppes x half the number of players
- Blank cards or squares of paper half the number of players x 5 (only for the livings)
- Things cards (to draw on)
- Pens x number of players

Spaces specific props (optional)

- 2 laptops, a table, 2 chairs (Home office)
- Glass/Bottle of fake alcohol (Home office)
- Pillows (2) (Temple)
- Covers (2) (Prison, Cuddle hotel)
- Mirror (Cuddle hotel)
- Slate+chalk (Prison)
- A building game (Legos/Mikado/Jenga) + strings (Hill)
- A karaoke machine

The workshops start with the spaces and their names, and envelopes scattered around the space.

The larp starts with the spaces, their names, props and elements, as well as the white sheets in the middle.

Spaces and associated ghost (taped)	Livings archetypes (on the envelopes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prison/Prisoner ● Hill/Child ● Karaoke/Loner ● Home office/Writer ● Battlefield/Soldier ● Dojo/Master ● Hospital/ Visitor or Patient (fluid) ● Temple/Devot ● Cuddle Hotel/Cuddler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On the run/refusing to mourn ● Scared of routine/collector ● Pilgrim/Seeker ● Ambitious/Activist ● Curious/Insatiable ● Romantic/Inspired ● Growing/Influenceable ● Rejected/Survivor ● Inadapted/Self reliant

1. Briefing/structure/safety

2. Full group workshops

- a) Discovering the space and the themes
- b) Picking a character
- c) Volume management
- d) Miming
- e) Dread & Life
- f) Filling up the Dance Card
- g) Explaining the trading, reminding the structure

3. Break

4. 2 groups workshops (2 spaces, 2 facilitators)

Ghosts	Livings
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pair discussion b) Questions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pair discussion b) Questions

c) Guided Meditation d) Screams e) Reminding the structure	c) Filling up the suitcase d) Going to sleep e) Reminding the structure
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5. Break

6. Larp (4-5 day/night cycles - special final night)

(only 4 cycles if there are 8 players or a tighter schedule)

Before the workshops:

- draw the 4-9 spaces with tape on the floor, and make sure their name is visible (either taped paper sheet or taped letters)
- put 5 blank cards/paper square in each envelope and scatter them on the floor

FULL GROUP WORKSHOPS

1. Feeling balance

Start the music and instruct players to move around. After 20 seconds tell them to stop walking.

Spread enough in space so that you can spread your arms.

Close your eyes.

Take the time to feel your own presence in this space. The temperature of the room touching your skin, the temperature inside your chest.

Move gently in order to feel comfort or at least, some comfort. Find the little shifts in position that make you feel good.

Let your feet sink in a bit heavier. Feel the roots pushing and growing from under your soles. Feel them spread far and wide.

Your roots are growing so big and heavy that you are just like an old oak tree.

You cannot lift your legs anymore. Try to walk using your upper body, and let your legs remain planted. Even if you agitate your arms, your roots have built a hidden prison.

Feel that prison. Feel your efforts to move be in vain.

Grab your left leg and lift it from the ground, forcefully tearing up your roots and freeing your movements. Now do the same with your other leg, and walk.

Feel all the movements needed to walk.

Walk wherever you want to walk. Feel freedom. Walk faster.

Change directions. Change again. Change again.

Feel restlessness. Keep walking, changing directions every four steps.

Feel aimlessness.

Progressively slow down your pace.

Sense that your soles have time to rest in between your steps.

Feel that it takes a bit more balance to walk slowly.

Feel balance.

2. Standing by a place or a suitcase.

We will pick characters a bit organically, but there are two spaces with constraints: the Dojo, which involves some physical leading and the Home Office that involves writing.

Knowing this, move until you are alone near a place or a suitcase which is represented by an envelope.

Take your suitcase, take your space.

Those with suitcases, move around.

Move as much as you can without touching a space.

The others, move in your space.

Move as much as you can without getting out of the limits.

Move as slowly as you can in that space of yours:

either a space without anything else,

or an anything else without a space.

We will play around the question of rumination, of being stuck, and the question of seeking purpose and safety.

Suitcases pair up with a space and sit together.

3. Volume management.

Whisper track:

This larp involves talking in pairs. We are in the same space and it will thus require a little bit of awareness of each other. We're going to test and refine that together.

- Ask each other about the last time you saw the sea. Try to make sure nobody else can hear you, but that you can hear each other.
- Ask each other about your future travel plans. Try to make sure other people can hear you and that you can hear other people.
- Ask each other about the most comfortable place you've ever been to. Try to make sure you can hear each other and sometimes, you get to hear someone else, and let someone else hear you.

Stand back up and move around in the space. Pair up with someone else.

4. Part of your expression palette are mimes.

We're now going to do a miming exercise of 4 short scenes in pairs.

Observe each other, copy what you like, change it a little towards what feels better to you.

Try not to use words.

- You are stuck somewhere and both bored. One of you suggests to play cards. You play a game. (prison/hill)

Get back up and move again.
Pair up with another person.

- One of you is a shooting instructor, the other one is holding a rifle for the first time. Practice shooting. (battlefield/dojo)

Get back up and move again.
Pair up with another person.

- You're going through your morning routine in front of the mirror, reflecting each other. You grab a brush, pretend it's a micro and start singing to your reflection (writer, karaoke)

Get back up and move again.
Pair up with another person.

- You are both waiting for your turn to confess to a priest. You are sitting anxiously playing with a bible and a crucifix. (devot, hospital)

5. Dread and Life

After the first encounter, Ghosts and Livings can express respectively Dread and Life.

To express Dread, a ghost can grab a livings' wrist and hold it firmly - no need to squeeze,

while making eye contact.

Try it.

As though you could not speak but really wanted to, use Dread on the other person to express that you are scared.

Swap players

As though you could not speak but really wanted to, use Dread on the other person to express that you want them to see you and hear you.

The other power is Life. Livings can grab the hand of a ghost and hold it somewhere on their upper body and face, excluding breasts, while making eye contact;

Try it.

As though you could not find words powerful enough, use Life on the other person to express that you feel their pain.

Swap players

As though you could not find words precise enough, use Life on the other person to express that you feel like you've always known them.

6. Filling up your dance card

We are now going to create your list of encounters. The livings will pick up a dance card and a pen and the ghosts will return to their spaces.

Livings, you can pick the situations you would like to see your character confronted to, following the mere inspiration of the space name. There will be a bit more context during the larp to prompt the play.

You can return to a place only once, but prioritize multiple encounters so everybody gets a diverse play experience.

As a reminder, the Home Office involves writing and the Dojo involves physical play.

Dance card template in the "To print" pages at the end of the document

7. Offering or Trading

Both ghosts and livings decide how much they will remember from their encounters. But in all cases, they will lose things and find others.

During the larp, the livings will leave things behind at every encounter.

From the 2nd encounter to the last, they can also take other things left behind.

During the night, they can trade their things with each other.

Those things will be manifested as a card with a word or an image. You can interact with them the way you want to, but you cannot definitely refuse them or destroy them.

8. Remind the structure

This is a series of encounters, structured by soundscapes.
Following your dance card, you will meet in pairs 4-5 times.

We start with music, during which the livings can revisit the space description that will be left at the entrance of each space.

When the music turns into whispers, livings enter the space and the scene starts. The livings can leave or trade “things”, which will be created in the next workshop at each encounter. When you hear the bells, it means we have reached the witching hour and are entering the realm of the spirits.

The livings go to bed under the sheets.

The music will then resume signifying the beginning of a new encounter. Livings get up and go to their next encounter, etc.

We alternate encounters and nights 4 times. After your last encounter, we move onto the last night. The last night lasts a bit longer, and by the end of the music, the ghosts can leave the world they’ve been stuck to by exiting the play area, and the livings can return to a place where they left something they cannot keep on going without.

BREAK

During the break, the GMs add the elements to the ghosts spaces: two defined ones and one blank page (except the Dojo that has 3 defined elements) The spaces can be propped or represented.

Karaoke “Karaoke machine” Lovers seats Free element	Prison Cell bed Chalk on the wall (on a slate) Free element	Temple The great stained glass Kneeling pillows Free element
Battlefield A fallen friend A river Free element	Home Office A difficult text A glass and a bottle Free element	Hill Animal grave Cabin Free element
Dojo Altar Seated position	Hospital Broken snacks machine Seats	Cuddle Hotel Cuddle bed and pillows Mirror

Standing position Free position	Free element	Free element
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TWO GROUPS WORKSHOPS

Ghosts	Livings
<p>1. Pair Discussion</p> <p>You are going to further define your character with the help of another player.</p> <p>Pair up. Describe your space. How did you end up there? Pick up your blank element page. Decide together what to add. You can take each other to your space and show them/decide from there.</p> <p>2. Mini Hot Seat for 2 <i>The facilitator asks questions and give one minute for both players to answer.</i></p> <p>What do you have too much of? What don't you have enough of? What landscapes bring you peace? What would you never want to give up on? How do you feel when someone interrupts your rumination? 1 question from the other player</p> <p>3. Meditation</p> <p>Look at your space Look at the walls Put your hands on those invisible walls and feel them. Feel them push you back in. Go to your 1st element, your 2nd element, your 3rd element. Go to your 1 thinking of what you would want to change about it Go to your 2 thinking of your 3 thinking of Move like this 10 times Look at the exit door. Imagine someone</p>	<p>1. Pair Discussion</p> <p>You are going to further define your character with the help of another player.</p> <p>Pair up. Compare your dance cards which represent your life journeys. Explain what happens to each other. Where, how, why did you cross paths with each other?</p> <p>2. Mini Hot seat for 2 <i>The facilitator asks questions and give one minute for both players to answer.</i></p> <p>What do you have too much of? What don't you have enough of? What landscapes bring you peace? What would you never want to give up on? 2 questions from the other player</p> <p>3. Filling the suitcase</p> <p>Pick up a stack of blank cards and a pen. Draw a landscape Write a desire Write a fear Find a deeply personal gesture. Represent it on a card.</p> <p>4. Going to sleep</p> <p>You will meet every night. You can try to trade something under the sheet. No matter what you hear from the outside, don't go out... although you might find the courage to sneak peak.</p> <p>It will last about 2 minutes.</p>

breaching. Interrupting.
Feel what it is like to be two in that small space.
They interrupt, and then they leave.
Feel what it is like to be alone in all that space.
Look at the walls again
Feel their force contain you, push them harder
with your hands.
Use force, push them loudly.
When you push so loudly that you have to
scream, they will break.
Break free and take all the space. Your voice is
your fuel, the more you scream the faster you
can get. Speak the words you have in mind,
speak your angst and worries, your sadness
and your anger. Move as fast and as free as
you want.

4. Scream exercise

Let's all gather in a circle.
We're going to practice screaming a little bit.
Let's all start with some silent screaming.
Open your mouth like you're trying to expel
something massive out of yourself.
Keep doing that but add a bit of air and the
vowel A.
We're all going to be progressively louder and
when I signal it by closing my fists, we'll go
back to silence.
Now let's all go progressively louder and
louder.
Now try to get as loud as comfortable,
immediately and go back to silence again when
I signal it.
We're going to do a few more short screams.

1. Scream of injustice
2. Scream of sadness
3. Scream, breaking free from repression

5. Structure reminder

After the break, you will return, silently and
calmly to your spaces.
A music will play, and when the track turns to
whisper, you will receive your first visit.
Remember how you felt about the idea of
interruption and keep interacting with your
space the way you want to: the newfound
presence does not have to immediately
redefine everything.

5. Structure reminder

After the break, you'll join the ghosts in the main
space. An initial music will play, during which,
you can move around and find your first stop.
There will be a little prompt to read, but you can
take the suggestions or leave them.
Once the music changes to whispers, you will
enter the space and start the scene.
Eventually, you'll hear the midnight bells and
leave to gather to the center of the room and
spend the night together under the sheets.
There, you can, only if it makes sense to you,
trade a card or leave a card, or just wait.

Being under the sheets is not an invitation to
touch players that you have not calibrated
anything with.

We will repeat these cycles 4-5 times. After the
last encounter, during the final night, you can
decide whether your character left something too
important somewhere and go back to haunt that
place as well.

BREAK

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RUNTIME

Repeat the following cycle 4 or 5 times depending on your preferred number of encounters.

Regular light/Starting music

Whisper track

UV Light/Night music: (if the ghosts don't remember, you can say "it's the witching hour, the spirits run free and wild")

Playlist:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5qxTKjmwX31tznPM9Cwzpk?si=a5f70ed90e064728>

Final night (longer track)

Epilogue:

Either read [Ithaka by Cavafy](#) or use [my version](#).

TO PRINT for each space

- Scenes Prompts for Livings (papers at the entrance of the space)
- Elements names to position in space (even if they are propped, keep the words written somewhere). Don't forget to add a blank page to each space.

KARAOKE

Prompt

You either came here alone or were stood up.

As you enter your privatized karaoke booth, you notice there is a technician trying to fix the machine and testing the setup.

Words: free to speak and sing

Movements: theatrical

Elements

A KARAOKE MACHINE

LOVERS SEATS

DOJO**Prompt**

You came here expecting to meet your regular Master, but there seems to be a replacement. Their practice seems quite different from the one you were taught.

Words: follow the ghosts's rhythm, can be none

Movements: Copy and mimic the ghost, perhaps seek to reverse the dynamic

ALTAR

POSITION 1 (low, towards the floor)

POSITION 2 (high, standing)

PRISON

Prompt

You were just convicted and brought to this cell. There is only one bed, which is already taken by another convict.

Words: free

Movements: expressive

Elements

CHALK ON THE WALL

A BED

CUDDLE HOTEL

Prompt

You are either a regular or a first timer. The person you see, however, seems new to the job. You seek a break from reality and societal performance - a space to be you, to be vulnerable.

Words: free, can be none

Movements: slow and progressive

Elements

CUDDLE BED

A MIRROR

BATTLEFIELD

Prompt

This battle has been going on for days, and, in between smoke clouds, you can only see one other person standing. You are worn out and heartbroken, but approach, unable to read which uniform that soldier is wearing. You realize once close that the last person standing is an enemy.

Words: free

Movements: erratic, tired, full of adrenaline

A FALLEN FRIEND

A RIVER

HOME OFFICE

Prompt

This is your home, your office, your desk, your glass of inspiration. You must manage to write this bloody book/paper/poem. As you keep drinking, you can't always recognize what you're writing and it seems like you can talk to yourself and get answers back.

(Note: the other player is your reflection in a mirror and you can either pretend as though you feel like what they write is part of your own writing or chat with them directly on the document)

Words: written

Movements: introverted

A DIFFICULT TEXT

A GLASS AND A BOTTLE

TEMPLE

Prompt

You found a tiny temple while on the road, in the middle of nowhere. It seems abandoned, but it might be a great hideout. Perhaps are you even looking for some spiritual relief? Unbelievably so, someone is there.

Words: very low

Movements: quiet, solemn

KNEELING PILLOWS

A GREAT STAINED GLASS

HOSPITAL

Prompt

You've been called in at the hospital after the accident of a close one. After a long wrestling trying to gather information here and there, you were led to the waiting room. Only one other person is there.

Words: scarce or plentiful, low or loud, always emotional

Movements: restless

A BROKEN SNACK MACHINE

SEATS

HILL

Prompt

You just moved to the region and are exploring the landscapes around your house. As you get up a hill, you see a child building a hut on their own. They seem to be needing some sort of help, but something feels difficult about the task.

Words: free, can be none

Movements: place yourselves to feel a difference in height

A HUT MADE OF STICKS

AN ANIMAL GRAVE

DANCE CARD TO PRINT (number of players/2)

Should be folded in two, pierced in the black circle and tied around the player's wrist.

Order of Dances

1. WELCOME
leave something
2. WALTZ
leave something, take something
3. TWO STEPS
take something, leave something
4. WALTZ
take more things
5. GRAND MARCH
leave more things

Engagements

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

