

Erik, front side: Inspired, devoted lover

Erik is a cultured, fit, passionate man. All these traits spring from his years of painfully profound love for the woman of his life, Nanna. Erik used to be a vaguely frustrated and longing, and subtly but deeply inhibited engineer. He lived out his sad, conventional life with sad, conventional relationships interrupted by bouts of embarrassing, painful and trite thirsting for love. Meeting Nanna, a fierce and uncompromising erotic rebel, forced Erik to transform himself into an interesting man. That was the only way to prove himself worthy of the formidable woman who had picked him up, eaten him raw and then discarded him when his limited novelty value expired.

For a little while Nanna had looked at him as if he were exciting, or at least as if he had potential. After the brief fling he spent a year rebuilding himself – reading poetry and literary classics instead of technical manuals and superficial thrillers; getting his skinny body into better and more solid shape than guilt-ridden monthly use of an inexpensive fitness subscription had been able to manage; discarding the formulas from a pick-up artist's manual as dispassionate as any manual on electrical engineering and replacing them with real human words. He felt very lucky when she picked him up again and took him with her. Actually, he can still hardly believe it, and still strives determinedly to be a man worthy of such a brilliant, hot-blooded and formidable woman.

The two of them have been together for six years, and it's still an amazing and disquieting adventure that forces Erik to challenge all his ingrained notions about being a nice couple; notions that certainly couldn't include open relationships, partner swapping, role swapping and a great many other things. Nonetheless, Erik and Nanna are still partners. He is the solid rock that she returns to no matter where she strays. She is his burning inspiration, ever forcing him to open up new reserves of courage and poetry in a soul he once thought dry and prematurely aged – a sad truth hidden behind a smiling lie.

Now they're both going on forty years of age. Who knows, perhaps their love can turn into a quiet and lasting flame that will warm them through the decades? If anyone has the strength to have children without being dragged down by boring conventionality, it would surely be Erik and Nanna together. Nanna isn't going for that just yet, and Erik doesn't want to risk too much and push the idea, because without Nanna, Erik would be just another sad man. With Nanna he is a beautiful person, because he has to be.

Now, Erik and Nanna have arranged a weekend of partner swapping and erotic experiments in a summer house free from networks and simulations for themselves and three others.

This is not a lie. It is also not the whole truth.

Erik, flip side: Dependent, conventional hypocrite

Even after six years, Erik can hardly believe that his life with Nanna is not a simulation that could be shut down at any time. That Nanna, beautiful and razor-sharp, furious and frustrated Nanna, really wants to live with him. He has endeavoured to live up to her expectations, to pretend that he possesses her free spirit and rebelliousness. He has struggled to pretend that he wants to tie her up and dominate her, to have sex in front of onlookers, to prove how free he is by having sex with men while she's enjoying a drink in the bar. He can do it – he does it all and more – out of desperate love, to hold on to her. Erik not only bends to Nanna's strong will, he does his best to anticipate her whims and arrange new adventures. But after six years he realizes that he will never come to enjoy these things as if it were his own need and not hers. His true kink is the tormented pleasure that he finds in playing roles that don't really suit him, at crossing his own lines and suppressing his own needs, all to satisfy Nanna. Erik's love is the perfect sacrifice. It's not healthy and he knows it, but he can't bear to give it up. He is trapped, dependent.

Erik has hope, though, a guilty, desperate hope that there exists a way out. When he with her as her witty, well-dressed, presentable boyfriend at a reception at her law firm, when he comforts her when she's sad, when he pours the morning coffee for her and they sit quietly together at the breakfast table, he dares hope that she will grow tired enough to reduce her rebellious life project to a hobby, to accept his understated, joking suggestions that they have children and settle down. Because she is tired!

The morning coffee represents the essence of happiness for Erik. The evening may be dedicated to pleasures that he might enjoy or merely endure in the name of love. The reward is in the quiet moments when Erik and Nanna sit at ease, growing old together. The morning coffee is the true reward for his exertions, and the sight of a bit of grey in her dark hair, revealed by the morning sun, fills him with a savage, possessive joy.

This weekend, Erik will once again prove his devotion by playing Nanna's game. As ever, he does his best to anticipate her wishes and co-designs of his own trials.

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Erik in bullets

- 38 years old, engineer, makes Virtual Reality solutions for a hospital, boyfriend to Nanna (40, lawyer). Interested in literature and poetry. Dances with Nanna. Fit and well dressed.
- Introverted, empathetic, charming, pleaser, dignified.
- Mostly heterosexual by inclination, but quite capable of functioning sexually with men.
- Erik has been in touch with Omar online, and has invited Omar and Caroline after running discreet background checks on them (Omar has a couple of minor, nonviolent offenses on his record, Caroline is pure as the driven snow). Omar seems OK behind his tough front.
- Erik has a book of ancient erotic poetry. It is a handout, and you can use it to bring poems into the fiction.

Principles of the game

This is conceived as understated psychological and erotic drama. Dramatic, life-altering events are not the name of the game, and violence and abuse are forbidden. The goal of play is exploration and interpretation of the relationships between the characters, so by the end of the game you will get to know them as people, in and out of bed. Understate your heart out!

Interpreting Erik

Erik is your character. Do not make a lie of what is written, but it is up to you to prioritize it and add more as needed. Move in and make yourself at home. You are free to improvise details about Erik's life elsewhere, but remember that those details are not important.

Safety instructions

If your personal lines are crossed in an unpleasant way, there's a number of mechanisms for signalling this to the other players. Use them if you feel the need, and do pick up on it if the other players use them. It's OK if play feels a little difficult sometimes, but use the tools if it starts to hurt.

- If you would like the other player in a sex scene to turn it down a notch, you can pull back from the physical touch. The scene goes on.
- If you would like to break off a scene, but not play, you can say the key phrase "I'd like to share a poem with you." The scene ends. Then read out the poem on the back of this sheet. If you need more poems, the game master has more. The poem will see use later in any case.
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Erik's poem:

Your older warrior loves sensibly and wisely,
suffers much that the beginner won't endure:
he won't break the door down, burn it with cruel fire,
attack his mistress's tender cheeks with his nails,
or rip apart his clothing or his girl's,
nor will torn hair be a cause of tears.
That suits hot boys, the time of strong desire:
but he'll bear cruel wounds with calm mind.
He burns, alas, with slow fires, like wet straw,
like new-cut timber on the mountain height.
This love's more sure: that's brief and more prolific:
snatch the swift fruits, that fly, in your hand.

Nanna, front side: Generous, uncompromising erotic rebel

Nanna looks like a proper lady. Don't be fooled, though! She is a fierce rebel against the conventional respectability that drowns any attempt at passion and longing in prudishness and sentimentality. Her rebellion is not made up of fine speeches and elaborate theoretical arguments; it is a very immediate and personal project of liberation. Literature rather than lifestyle magazines. Poetry rather than reality shows. Good food and active living rather than vitamin enhanced fries and plastic surgery. Sex with real live people and not just virtual porn games online. The first items on the list are safe enough, but the latter is increasingly reserved for weirdoes and lower-class people who can't afford the right equipment. Nanna can afford the equipment just fine.

Nanna works as a lawyer, mostly with immigration law, something that is on her mind because of her background as a Korean adoptee. On the one hand it gives her opportunities to influence cases that actually matter, but on the other hand the legal world sets quite narrow standards of acceptable behaviour and appearance. If you don't observe the standards, you are excluded from influence. The suit, with all that it entails, makes Nanna feel like she can't breathe properly, even after nearly two decades in the uniform. She survives by furiously and joyously subverting propriety in her private life. She has lots of lovers: Regular and one-off, young and old. Men, women, and people who don't fit the categories so neatly. In fanciful simulations and in the sweating, shivering flesh. Nanna accepts no limits on her love, which is both generous and demanding.

Love and freedom can make people better, help them transcend banal convention. Nanna's boyfriend Erik is a fine example of just that. When the two first met seven years ago he was a sad and inhibited man (an engineer, for crying out loud!) who needed the help of a pick-up artist's manual to muster the courage to beg for some sex, and maybe even a little tenderness. After Nanna picked him up and soon enough discarded him, he remade himself as a real, whole person to try to get her back. He exchanged the manual for poems and novels, learned to dance, straightened his back like someone worth desiring, and got Nanna in his life again. They've been together for six years now, and he has fought bravely to be free, and to accept that having Nanna in your bed doesn't mean that you own her. He has learned to appreciate the joy of sex, not just with his special lady but in playful meetings with strangers. And in the flesh, too. In her heart, Nanna is proud of her work. When she walks into a reception with the handsome, well-dressed man at her side, her smile is not faked.

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Nanna, flip side: Angry, manipulative prisoner of her own project

Nanna is tired. Not so you can see it, not really. Her mind is razor sharp and uncompromising, and her middle-aged body is carved in wood from dancing, running and climbing. There's practically nothing soft about her, but in the long run it's getting to be hard for her too. However, there's really no way out that doesn't involve discarding two decades of pain and effort, professionally and personally. Her smile is still roguish and hungrily charming, but now, with increasing aggression, she throws her smiling crow's feet in the botox-blank faces of women her own age. With ever-firmer principles, she refuses to use age filters online. Her attraction toward happy young women mingles with ever more annoyance at their naïve blindness to the harsh realities of life, and with envy at their innocence and youth.

Nanna's comfort and support is Erik, her finest work and proof of the transformative power of rebellious love. When she's grumpy and sad he can make her smile. When her anger at the bullshit of the world (it's not easy being a lawyer with a conscience!) explodes in tears of frustration on rare occasions, or when exhaustion rears its head and self-medication beckons, he's ready to hold and comfort her.

Erik is also the source of her greatest fear and shame. Shame, because he loves her with a frightening passion and self-effacing completeness that she can't aspire to. Nanna cares about Erik and values the support, human contact and stability he gives her, but she has a hard time facing that he's living out her project of love far more strongly and purely than she herself does. It provokes her, and she can't help but drive him to prove his love over and over again by taking part in transgressive sex games that she honestly enjoys, but he really just takes part in to make her happy. Sometimes Nanna thinks about leaving Erik because it pains her that she can't stop testing and tormenting him, but she knows that it would break him. And to break him because she feels bad about how she treats him is hypocrisy of an order that Nanna's uncompromising nature will not permit. And after all, she does care about him.

Erik dreams secretly but transparently of quiet, conventional family life, and occasionally makes joking remarks about having children. Nanna easily recognizes these jokes as true longing. Erik's happiest moments are the mornings, when the two of them sit quietly growing old together. She imagines that he stares greedily at the little wrinkles and grey hairs revealed by the morning sun, and she fears that one day she will give in and give up. For now she finds bittersweet joy in basking in his devotion while silently planning the next adventure and sipping coffee.

This weekend, Nanna will once again live out her dream of freedom and true human play, and once again Erik will pay the price for his love with a smile.

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Nanna in bullets

- 40 years old, lawyer specializing in immigration, girlfriend of Erik (38, engineer). Adopted Korean. Interested in literature, poetry, dance and sexual experiments. Runs and climbs. Fit and well dressed.
- Angry, in control of herself, practical, charming, demanding, generous.
- Fully bisexual. Likes being dominated sexually, not necessarily with latex and leather, preferably by Erik. She's also capable of dominating, and of leaving out dominance and submission if it doesn't fit in the situation.
- Nanna has invited her frustrated cousin Kirsten, 32, the widow of a lukewarm marriage.
- Nanna has made a list with a schedule and rules for the weekend. Available for use as a handout.
- When Nanna sees Omar, he seems familiar. Probably from a fetish party about a year ago, where she saw him with an elderly gentleman. But it would be inappropriate and indiscrete to bring it up in front of third parties.

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Interpreting Nanna

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Nanna's poem:

I'll shove your shit and fuck your face--
Aurelius, you cocksucker; Furius, you little bitch--
since you think that my little poems
have gone soft and I must not be too upright!
It's true; the devoted poet should stand erect
in his values, but not necessarily in his little
poems, which are truly witty and charming
when they're a little soft, and not too stiff,
but can still cause a little tingling--
I don't just mean for youth, but for hairy men
who can't make their own loins stand upright!
You! You read about my "many kisses"
and doubt I'm fully a man?
I'll shove your shit and fuck your face!

Caroline, front side: Lover and rebel against alienation

Caroline is in the middle of the adventure of her life. Moments stand glittering and crystal clear, and she can feel them settling in her mind, imperishable. It is love, limitless love. Omar shows the way.

Caroline was a quiet girl, an intelligent, hard-working high school student on the track towards Literature Studies at University – healthy and pretty, but completely anonymous and uninteresting; her most remarkable feature was a couple of pounds of stubborn chubbiness. She took part in social life in the normal, standardized fashion. Thought that boy from class 3C had a nice ass, wondered if that was being in love. In due course she let herself be talked into taking her clothes off and sucking cock. Virtually and respectably, of course. The healthy and natural experiments of teenagers, right on time. Inside, she felt like screaming, but it only came out as a vague smile.

She met Omar at a party he crashed on a bet. His scoundrel charm instantly fascinated her – it seemed so much more authentic than the posing of the high school boys. They talked outside in the dark garden and Caroline was both repelled and attracted by his sardonic but fierce rage against the system that put her life on tracks and sidetracked his. Impulsively, as the first brave thing she had done since she broke her arm when she was eleven, she kissed him under the apple tree, and sparks flew.

Caroline is transformed. Getting straight As in all subjects seems less essential, being nice and normal and not standing out has gone from all-important to meaningless. She no longer has to fake her smile, despite the worries of her friends and family. She is eighteen years old and doesn't need to ask permission. Omar shows the way, through parties and concerts for "losers," bets in dingy back room pool halls, adventure! And sex that follows her lust, sex between real people that actually touch each other, sweat so you can smell that we're animals. It is so beautiful. And she can see that she's changing him. His friends' remarks about "shagging and dumping rich bitches," clearly a sport in that crowd, now make him uncomfortable. She loves him both for his whispered, shamefaced confession of having been with boys and for his surprised joy at her complete acceptance. For showing her where, in the shadows, the poor boys met and kissed, so full of shame and unlike the healthy, normal, boring virtual teenagers. For sharing a surprised boy with her. But most of all she loves Omar because his rage now mingles with hope, and before Caroline, it didn't.

They come from different worlds. Their relationship is doomed, says cold reason. Caroline doesn't care; she swims in limitless, reckless love. She is happy, right here and now, because she loves him.

This weekend, Caroline and Omar will visit a summer house along with three other people to swap partners and experiment. In the flesh! No simulations! No pretty-filters!

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Caroline, flip side: Anguished thrill seeker

Caroline is in the middle of the adventure of her life, and she can hardly bear that it won't last. In the back of her mind she's well aware that a sheltered upper-class girl, a lower-class guy with criminal connections, and a spiral of ever bolder transgressions aren't the ingredients of a story that ends with "happily ever after." Or rather, she can handle the fact that it won't last, because in some ways she's grown up really fast in the last couple of months. The unbearable thing is that Omar will be unmasked as a sad bastard who has tricked and exploited her, rather than an uncompromising, roguishly smiling rebel against a twisted and inhuman system.

They have been to lurid parties with hungrily staring people. Omar has shown her people who touched each other, who had sex in front of strangers. Omar and Caroline have touched each other. They have made love (with fluids! touch! no Virtual Reality!), and done many other things together. The most instructive was a simple card game, played with nervous boys in a dirty back room. First they played for toothpicks, and it was harmless entertainment, but when they started playing for real stakes the game changed, and winning or losing, Caroline was electrified. The lesson is simple: Real adventure requires risking stakes that you fear losing, and it requires crossing a line. It ignites a painful, anxious thrill in Caroline every time she crosses a line. She doesn't throw herself blindly into it; she stops every time to see if this is going too far, but when Omar is standing on the other side of the line with a crooked smile and a hand reached out to her, it isn't hard.

Omar basks in Caroline's love and admiration, and she's really quite sure that in his way he loves her. But there's no way this is going to end well. She suspects that he has shown her almost all of the wild experiences he draws on, and now he's improvising to keep on outdoing himself. She's pressing him to deliver more and better, daring him to get out of his depth, to confirm the illusion of love and adventure. She's trying to press him into failing, to end the uncertainty. But so far he's managing it with style. It will go well today, and next week, but after that, who knows?

Caroline clings to the beautiful dream that she's trying to shatter. She can hardly bear that it won't last, and she can hardly bear that it continues. She can't bear to think of what will become of Omar. And she can't bear that when it's all over, mommy and daddy will come and pick her up and take her back into the smothering embrace of respectable, healthy society.

Now once again Omar is taking Caroline on an adventure to prove his worth, and they'll play with other desperate weirdoes. This time it'll go well. This time. And what of the next?

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Caroline in bullets

- 18 years old, high school student, girlfriend of Omar, 22. Daughter of well-to-do parents. Interested in literature, and lately also in social studies. A bit chubby but quite pretty.
- Curious, fearful, thoughtful, adventurous, in love.
- Caroline is conscious of her lines, and transgresses them carefully.
- Caroline needs Omar to prove how free and rebellious he is.
- Mainly heterosexual by inclination, but quite capable of getting it on with women. Omar's bisexuality makes it seem good and admirable to Caroline.

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Interpreting Caroline

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Caroline's poem:

Lesbia, let us live, and let us love
and if we valued old men's tales aright
a price of just one penny we'd approve!

The sun will set, and rising, send its light
to us just once before it fails, before
we're made to sleep the never-ending night.

Give me a thousand kisses, a hundred more,
Another thousand, and a hundred new,
And yet another thousand, and fivescore.

And after many thousands, I and you
we'll mix them up in glorious confusion
so no-one can be bad or jealous who
can count our kisses in their wild profusion.

Omar, front side: Cool, devil-may-care and in love

In social worker-speak, Omar was "a bright young man from a socially disadvantaged background", and he had made his way to high school. One day it dawned on him that most of what he was supposed to learn was useless crap. It was crap meant to manipulate him, crap that was supposed to prepare him for "adult" life, during which he should use it to nod and smile and say some socially acceptable but meaningless crap. So Omar partied hard. Telling off smug idiots satisfied him and made some memorable trouble. Afterward he split. Finally he could breathe freely. No more being smothered in hypocritical nonsense.

In the four years since Omar dropped out of high school, he has made do and had fun. Lived life on the edge. Won the respect of some serious people without taking too many drugs or getting involved in really nasty violence. Omar has won a lot of respect, and amused a lot of tough boys, by seducing little, arrogant, spoiled, rich girls. They were crazy for a little adventure that wasn't virtual crap, so he coaxed lots of money out of them, shagged them and dumped them back with daddy dearest and the therapeutic industry. All without doing anything actually illegal. Amazing how far you can get with a crooked smile and smooth bad boy charm.

"That'll teach them!" Omar thought, before he met Caroline. Caroline started as yet another naïve rich girl, but she swept Omar off his feet, even though he's really more into boys, and mostly did the girls for money and respect. She isn't blind. Where the other girls jumped blithely into fun with bad boys as if it was virtual entertainment, she sees reality. She's scared but brave enough to not run, and she sees all that bullshit for what it is. Her anger and desperation is a mirror for his own. The one thing she doesn't see through is Omar, and that has transformed him. In him she sees the young hero, the uncompromising rebel and free-thinker that he wishes he were.

She sees him and she sees a hero - someone worth being. It sets him on sweet fire, because when they're together, it's true. He is the smart, hard, handsome man of the world; the rebel, who shows her the way to new adventures, beyond the borders of hypocritical, conventional niceness. That feeling is precious. He has never felt like that before, and dares not hope that he ever will again. Every moment is magical.

This weekend, Omar is taking Caroline to a summer house with three other people to swap partners and experiment, face to face and body to body. She's so excited!

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Omar, flip side: Con artist out of his depth

Omar has always known that he is mortal. Now, he feels it. A couple of months ago, he had no problem with the idea that everything ends; now he carries a caustic certainty that the one beautiful thing in his life, his relationship with Caroline, will die within the next few months. However he twists and turns, the inevitable stares him in the face. She will eventually see him for the fraud that he is, and with a broken heart go back to her cold luxury prison of an upper class life.

Omar fights furiously against the inevitable. He struggles to keep the beautiful illusion, so much better than any simulation, from breaking just yet. They haven't reached the edge yet, but he's beginning to have to lie as he never has before. So far he's shown her parties, shows, and the debauchery that he knows from living a double life for four years, as a smart, seductive hustler who is also a secretive, shameful homo (OK, bi, but that's not much better) on a scene where that kind of thing is considered *low*. Now he has shown her as much of both lives as he can bear to share. He halfheartedly hoped that this revelation would scare her away, but it only made her fall even more in love. So now he has to improvise, to come up with adventures that he hasn't actually tried before. After all, kinky sex with rich people is rather innocent compared to what he still has left to hide.

The money is running out. Recently he hasn't been able to bring himself to get on with his business as boy toy for rich old pervs, and lately he hasn't been in touch with the really bad people that he moves drugs for. Caroline sees him as a hero, and heroes don't do those sorts of things! But in the depths of her heart, she has to suspect. She is dazzled, not stupid, and she has begun daring him to go further, show her more and wilder. It cuts his heart, but he smiles and makes it up. He won't be found out this week, maybe not even this month. For a while yet he can live as her hero and bask in their love, before the romantic rebel Omar dies and leaves behind a sad, lonely liar with a broken heart. In his mind, Omar rages against the inevitable.

Now once again Omar is taking Caroline on an adventure to prove his worth, and they'll be playing with other desperate weirdoes. This time it'll go well. This time. And maybe the next?

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Omar in bullets

- 22 years old, dropped out of senior year four years ago, boyfriend of the high school student Caroline, 18. From a lower-class family that he hasn't seen for a couple of years. Interested in music, gambling and applied psychology. A somewhat skinny, intense young man.
- Confident, charming, cynical, angry, in love. Not violent. Omar is dangerous charm incarnate – think James Dean.
- Fully functioning bisexual. A bit more into men than women, but in love with Caroline and willing to do whatever he thinks will amuse, please or impress her.
- Omar speaks without noticeable accent!
- Omar has been in touch with Erik online. For a kinky middle-aged man with money, Erik seems thoughtful and genuine.

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Interpreting Omar

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Omar's poem:

Honeyed Juventius, while you were playing I stole from you
a sweeter kiss than sweet ambrosia.

Yes, but I didn't get it scot-free, for I remember
being stuck for more than an hour on a cross
while I made my excuses to you but could not move
your cruelty one bit with all my tears.

For hardly was it done before you drenched your lips
with water-drops and wiped them with soft knuckles,
lest anything infectious from my mouth remain,
as though it were some pissed-on whore's foul spittle.

Besides you were not slow to hand wretched me over
to angry Love and crucify me every way,
so that for me that kiss was now turned from ambrosia
to a bitterer thing than a bitter herb.

Since you propose this penalty for a wretched lover,
Henceforth I'll never steal a kiss again.

Kirsten, front side: Mother and grieving widow on her way back to life

Kirsten is on her way back to life. Nine months ago, Kirsten's husband Jesper was killed in a traffic accident. Kirsten has grieved, but now it's time to move on. Not because there's anything wrong with grieving over your mate of eight years, but their son Janus needs a mother. Janus turned five two months ago.

Jesper and Kirsten made good partners. They had built a life together and had a lovely son. They shared many interests and supported each other in their work as school teachers. They were friends, and you don't have to look around much to realize it is far from a given that married couples achieve this. Granted, their sex life hadn't been anything to write home about for a couple of years, but things do change when you have children, and their financial concerns extended beyond the latest Virtual Reality equipment for sex. They acquired a good, used model, and were in couples' therapy when the accident happened. They were working it out, together.

Jesper's death under the wheels of a truck turning right hit Kirsten hard. Though she had been restless in their relationship for some time, his death confronted her with how much she had relied on Jesper in everyday life, and how much she had taken him for granted. Subsequently, Kirsten received counselling to help cope with the loss and sought support from good friends. Now that she's dealt with his death, she's trying to get on with her life. She's not yet ready for a committed relationship, because she's not sure what she needs. Kirsten feels an enormous, frustratingly undirected sexual longing, a longing that she thought she had grown out of many years ago.

Kirsten needs something - something new, something special, something precious. Not a substitute for Jesper, not now, if ever. But something to give her a spring in her step that she hasn't had since she was a little girl. She dreams about it, but it's just out of reach. She can feel that it's there for her to grasp, if she dares jump into the deep water. If she can find what she's missing, she can build herself up and start over, and be a good mother to Janus.

Kirsten has been invited to a net-free erotic weekend in a summer house with perfect strangers, by her somewhat scandalous, eight years older cousin Nanna. Nanna is pretty liberated, and at a family party, Kirsten drunkenly proclaimed her frustration to Nanna. Now Kirsten really hopes that free, brave people can help her figure out what she needs. She has hope, and the hope is exhilarating in itself.

This is not a lie. It is also not the whole truth.

Kirsten, flip side: Cold, frustrated and hungry

Kirsten feels guilty. When Jesper died, her immediate feeling was relief. Then followed shock at her reaction, with grief for her husband's death coming in a rather distant third. Even though the two of them had built a life together and had lots to talk about, Kirsten felt trapped. Frozen.

They hadn't been madly in love. Actually, Kirsten has never really been head over heels for anyone. But as her sex life with Jesper – never more than moderately exciting – dried out, she began to dream disquieting, never quite remembered dreams filled with a painful, desperate need. She woke drenched in cold sweat, on the edge of tears and shaking with lust, without knowing over what. She tried explaining it in couples' therapy, but Jesper's uncomprehending and hurt expression and the therapist's slightly cocky remarks made Kirsten pack away those dreams in her own heart. It's tempting to place the blame for her lack of sexual happiness on Jesper, but Kirsten has never experienced any great sexual highs, not even before she met Jesper. It's not that she hasn't had orgasms; it's that they never quite sated her hunger.

Kirsten has searched for the object of her confused desire. Starting with Jesper's left-behind porn links, she's had some virtual sex online, but authorized kinky sex with flawless avatars left her cold as the marriage bed. She's pretty sure that without real, sweaty, nervous, imperfect people, it's no good. Awkward kissing with a concerned friend was less bad, but not good. It was virtual too, but at least his nervousness gave it a human touch. Kirsten remembers when proper simulations became affordable for ordinary people and she and Jesper stopped touching each other sexually. At the time, it seemed like a good idea, but perhaps the old-fashioned rubbing of skin and mucous membranes is the way to go? Touch it is then, real saliva and real sweat. Kirsten has seriously considered whether she might be lesbian, and virtually it worked as well as anything, which is to say a joyless, technology assisted working orgasm, followed by an empty, clammy feeling.

It is weird to play the rock of comfort and safety for little Janus of five, when mommy's calm smile hides a restless urge to go hunting for things that the boy would neither be able to understand nor handle. Kirsten has faked so many of her smiles for so long that it's become easy, but she wonders if he can't somehow tell that mommy's heart is elsewhere?

This weekend Kirsten ventures onto thin ice to hunt for satisfaction and peace of mind amongst desperate weirdoes who insist on touching each other.

This is not a lie. It is also not the whole truth.

Kirsten in bullets

- 32 years old, nine months a widow of Jesper, mother to Janus, 5. School teacher. Interested in handicrafts and literature. Beautiful in a curvy, motherly sort of way, but she's not very confident about her appearance.
- Introverted, wistful, determined seeker, kind.
- Unsure of her sexual preferences, but functionally bisexual.
- Kirsten's journey of discovery is the backbone of the game. Go explore the other characters' sexuality and relationships, in and out of bed.
- DO NOT make Kirsten's problems and longing be about abuse!
- Kirsten was invited by her kind but slightly scary cousin Nanna, 40.

Principles of the game

This is conceived as understated psychological and erotic drama. Dramatic, life-altering events are not the name of the game, and violence and abuse are forbidden. The goal of play is exploration and interpretation of the relationships between the characters, so by the end of the game you will get to know them as people, in and out of bed. Understate your heart out!

Interpreting Kirsten

Kirsten is your character. Do not make a lie of what is written, but it is up to you to prioritize it and add more as needed. Move in and make yourself at home. You are free to improvise details about Kirsten's life elsewhere, but remember that those details are not important.

Safety instructions

If your personal lines are crossed in an unpleasant way, there's a number of mechanisms for signalling this to the other players. Use them if you feel the need, and do pick up on it if the other players use them. It's OK if play feels a little difficult sometimes, but use the tools if it starts to hurt.

- If you would like the other player in a sex scene to turn it down a notch, you can pull back from the physical touch. The scene goes on.
- If you would like to break off a scene, but not play, you can say the key phrase "I'd like to share a poem with you." The scene ends. Then read out the poem at the back of this sheet. If you need more poems, the game master has more. The poem will see use later in any case.
- If you want to break off play for now because something seems very wrong to you, say "Stop!" and hold up a hand palm out. Then discuss what can be done.

Kirsten's poem:

He's equal with the Gods, that man
who sits across from you,
face to face, close enough,
to sip Your voice's sweetness,

And what excites my mind,
your laughter, glittering. So,
when I see you, for a moment,
my voice goes,

My tongue freezes. Fire,
delicate fire, in the flesh.
Blind, stunned, the sound
of thunder, in my ears.

Shivering with sweat, cold
tremors over the skin,
I turn the colour of dead grass,
and I'm an inch from dying.

Nanna's notes

No online contact. We've closed down all connection to the internet (but can of course make contact if absolutely necessary). No porn and no virtual playmates. You can always play with those at home, and it's not what we're here for.

Food. Food has been procured, and it's pretty much ready to go on the table. We eat together; eating together is a beautiful little ritual.

Drink. We have brought some bottles of wine and half a bottle of cognac. A little buzz is fine, but we're not here to get drunk.

Health. Everyone has had a health check recently, and the men are on prevention. Disease and pregnancy aren't problems.

Toys. This is not an equipment extravaganza. We have cream, wet wipes and other basic supplies. Aside from that we will have to use what we can find in the house, and most of all our own imaginations and bodies.

Partner choice. We are here to test ourselves with new people, but everyone doesn't have to sleep with everyone. We have no program, but I'd be happy to break the ice and set people up (or ask for what I want).

Consent. Of course, no sex without consent, and no restraints, slaps or blows, on-lookers or surprise penetration without consent. Having said yes to sex doesn't mean having said yes to anything and everything.

Places to sleep. There's a bedroom with a double bed, a bedroom with two single beds, and the pull-out sofa in the living room.

The summer house. We have borrowed it from friends, and we'd like to stay friends with them.

Schedule: Free play when nothing else is specified.

- I and Erik arrive at 11 am and make everything ready
- The others arrive at the summer house and lunch Saturday at 12
- Introduction of rules and principles at lunch
- Dinner Saturday at about 7 pm
- Breakfast Sunday as people get up, but before 11 am
- Lunch Sunday at about 1 pm
- Cleanup at about 3 pm
- Departure at about 4 pm