

Josie

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A short storytelling game for 3 players

What will we be playing?

Together, you'll create a story about identity, racism and family. It is heavily inspired by the Neill Blomkamp's District 9 and Jonathan Safran Foer's Everything Is Illuminated. If you know any of them, draw on your experience from them, but otherwise just ignore it.

In 1982, an alien craft came to a hold over the city of Johannesburg in South Africa. When investigation teams enter the ship, they discover a population of sick and malnourished extraterrestrials, identified derogatorily as “prawns”. The South African government confines the aliens to District 9, a government camp that is located outside of Johannesburg.

This story is separated into two time-lines, one that is set in 1985 and another in 2045. The frame, the timeline you will actually be playing in, is 2045. However the story you primarily will be exploring is set in 1985 and forward, where you will follow the life of Josie, a young prawn trying to survive the harsh life in District 9. Josie will be defined as a character throughout the narration of the game, and her story is yet to be discovered by the players.

The structure of the game is there to help you explore both the specific story that is Josie's life as well as your own character's reflections about the major themes of this game. If you feel like there is a better way to do this, feel free to break the structure, momentarily or permanent.

This is a game partially about the issues of racism, or in this case speciesism. This does not mean you have to play out harassment scenes or play abusive characters, but simply that we follow the story of people who have been victims of racism and have lived in very oppressive context. It's okay to discuss this subject after the game have ended, if you feel the need to.

Major Themes: Family, Identity, Racism.

Who will we be playing?

Jovana is a young prawn searching for information about her grandmother, Josie
Jaafan is the guide hired to show the remnants of District 9. Ran with Josie's crew.
Jina is Jaafan's granddaughter, a teenager who doesn't understand her family.

One of you will play Jovana, a young prawn from the United States and the granddaughter of Josie. She is obsessed with the hidden story of her family and she is collecting as many artifacts from the past as she can find. Being a prawn means your identity and background is obscured, you are literally from another planet, a planet that Jovana don't know at all. Jovana has hired a guide to show her the remnants of District 9, and to help her find clues about her grandmother.

One of you will play Jaafan, an old (human) man from Nigeria who has lived in District 9 since his youth. He has terrible secrets and repressed memories from his youth, where he ran with Josie's crew back in the day. He is the guide for this journey, trying to help Jovana discover the past that he himself is running from.

One of you will play Jina, Jaafan's granddaughter, a teenage girl, who is on this journey to help him. She's from a harsh and conservative family, and is trying to find her own identity and break free from her own past. She hates Jaafan, most of the time, and does not understand him.

During the game you should have the following character-specific questions in mind, as you interact. You will have to answer them, in some way or another, when the game ends.

Jovana, do you feel closer to your family and background? Or more distanced?

Jaafan, has confronting your past changed how you feel about it? And in what way?

Jina, do you still feel like you wanna break free from every aspect of your family and your grandfather?

How will we be playing?

Josie follows a simple storytelling structure, where the players take turns telling parts of the shared narrative. The game is played in rounds, where the same routines are repeated. One of you will be asked to describe something or tell a certain story, while the two other players listen. However, listening also carries a responsibility, and you should ask questions to guide the storyteller in the direction you find most interesting.

Firstly Jina describes the area of District 9 that surrounds you. What kind of buildings are here? Who has lived here? Have anything interesting happened here? Are there any interesting objects to be found?

Secondly Jovana describes a certain object that is connected to Josie in some way, and tells the story connected to that object. What have Josie used it for? Why was it important to her? How did she acquire it? What has happened it since?

Thirdly Jaafan tells a story about his time with Josie in District 9. What did they do to survive? What did they do for fun? How did they react to a society that did not want them?

And lastly you all have an opportunity for open conversation for a few minutes, before you will end the day, and continue the search the next day repeating this structure. You end this scene by leaving it in the fiction, saying something like "I'll go to bed" or "Jina stands up and leaves". When 2 players have left the scene it ends.

Repeat this pattern 3 times. If you have very long scenes, or just the right ones maybe 2 is enough. If you have extremely short scenes you might need more than 3. Do whatever feels right for your group.

When you are ready, end the game by answering the questions:

Jina, do you still feel like you wanna break free from every aspect of you family and your grandfather?

Jaafan, have confronting you past changed how you feel about it? And in what way?

Jovana, do you feel closer to your family and background? Or more distanced?