

# TRIGGER WARNING

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FASTAVAL

2016



Hello and thank you for running my scenario, I'm sure it's going to be great. Your part, as gamemaster, is primarily to make the players feel safe and comfortable.

Before play, it's mostly about warming up to improvising and making up stories, as well as fostering a sense of connection as a group. After the larp it's about getting them back to the real world, safe and sound. Just focus on being nice to them and clear in your instructions.

The run consists of about half instruction and warmup and half runtime, but the warmup is both important and part of the fun.

Your preparations consist mainly of reading through the text, keeping track of the exercises and the order in which things happen. You also have a tiny bit of practical setup: Make sure the photographs are stacked in the right order and turned the right way in regards to where the characters are seated, with the name sheet on top, so the players can see where they should sit. Finally, you need to fold the character sheets so the secrets are kept, it's easy, just fold like this.



I'm sure it's going to be a great run at Fastaval, if you have any questions or confusions, please get in touch. You can email me at [rivoclavis@gmail.com](mailto:rivoclavis@gmail.com) or find me on facebook.

And again, thank you so much for running this scenario!

Love and oppression  
- Olive

# INTRODUCTION

This scenario is about feeling alone in a group. About feeling isolated and noone else is seeing it. How your thoughts have gone to a different and darker place, than the people you are with realize. About being broken on the inside, but keeping mum, so you don't ruin the good mood.

The story is about four old friends meeting up to look through a stack of photographs from their younger days. Each of them is hoping for a cozy night to distract them from something traumatic in their lives. Unfortunately for them, something will remind them of exactly the thing they're trying to escape. All of them will choose to keep it in, rather than having it take up the rest of the night's conversation.

The scenario starts with an introduction where you as gamemaster take your time and warm up the group and create a safe environment. Then play goes on as one continuous scene where you have one small, ongoing assignment. Finally you have the debrief, where you again take charge.

The thing driving play is a stack of photographs, that the players will be using as a basis for improvising stories and memories. The pictures have cues for each character, to help inspire and guide them in what they can talk about. Each player has one picture that just says "Trigger". When they see this, they're are to lean back, close their eyes and think of the thing their character has being trying to avoid, until the next picture comes up.

The four characters each consist of a short description of who they are and a longer description of the traumatic situation they find themselves in. The situation is not very specific, but rather a series of questions that they ask themselves about it. The idea is to fuel the imagination and fears of the players and let them do the work of making it terrible. The fear is exacerbated by the fact that the cues to the three remaining players mirror elements of the trauma.

Again, your primary job is to warm up the players and make them feel safe and comfortable with their part of the play. Once play is running, your job is to keep the pace by changing the picture. You do this by taking the topmost picture and loudly tearing it apart, then letting the players get started on the next picture. Focus on the pacing of the game and keeping the players engaged. Once play is over, you need to guide the players out and keep them in line for a short debrief. One word of warning: It might be frustrating during play, that nothing really happens and the players seem to be losing energy after the triggers, but that is actually to be expected. Just wait until the debrief!

# STRUCTURE

## 1. Introduction

The gamemaster introduces the scenario, the idea and principles behind it. Once you get started there will be no pee-breaks for about two hours. Warmup will take place away from the table, otherwise confusion will ensue. Tell the players how the game runs, ends and how the debrief will be conducted so there's no surprises.

## 2. Free association and improvisational warmup

“Yes, and...”-game: The gamemaster starts a story, saying the first line, the next participant will then say “Yes, and...” continuing the same story. Start the story out with describing a typical teenage party. Tell them it's okay if the story wanders and that they should just go with what seems like the obvious next line. Or just make up something that relates to the previous statement. Give them time to get started and praise them for being good at it.

## 3. Introduction of the mechanics.

The four players sit down on chairs in a circle and tell another story together. This time it's about visiting a theme park as small children. While they're telling their story, the gamemaster walks around and puts his hands heavily on their shoulders, one by one. When they feel the weight they should leave the storytelling and instead imagine how that same experience would be if they had become lost and couldn't find their parents. The other three players should just ignore them and keep telling the story, skipping the player who is out. Afterwards, tell them that they should do the same during play, when they see the word “TRIGGER” in front of them and not to open their eyes and return to the conversation, until they hear the sound of paper being torn apart.

## 4. Introduction of characters

Some of the characters have more severe traumas than the others. Distribute them based on how bad the players want it. Have them read only the visible part of the page. Check in with each player individually how they feel about the character and the trigger. If there's any hesitation, help them swap to another character. Once everyone is happy with their assigned character, have them read the introduction aloud, so the other players get a picture of who they'll be playing.

## 5. Character reading

Guide the players to their assigned seat at the table and let them read the rest of the character. Tell them that the secret trauma will not come out until the very end of play and is only there for them to focus on when they encounter the keyword “Trigger” during play. That there is a lot of questions

in the text, which aren't meant to be answered, but used as inspiration for the thought and worries of the character.

## 6. Hotseat

Read the scene setting text aloud to give the players the context of their characters, then start the hotseat round. Hotseat is a way to flesh out the characters, one player at a time answers questions fielded by the other players, as their character. You probably need to take part as the gamemaster as well, to get them started on the right foot. The only goal of the questioning is for the person providing the answers to get a better picture of their character, tell to just go with the first idea that pops up and not worry about consistency or getting anything right. It's also totally cool to not answer or answer what the other characters think the character is like, rather than the truth. Keep the questions in two areas: How the character was like in their youth and superficial lifestyle questions about how they are now. A good idea is to use this to give everyone nicknames.

## 7. Play

The play itself is one long scene, with no breaks. The narrative is guided by the stack of photos, each with quotes for inspiration to stories that the characters can tell. They can make whatever they want up, but should try and keep in the general vicinity of the themes in the quotes and what the other players bring up.

When a picture says "TRIGGER" it's a reminder for one of the characters, about their troubles and this player should close their eyes and back out of the conversation in their own pace. Instead of following the conversation, use it as input to start worrying about the trauma and questions filling their head. Think of running the character's inner monologue, but not saying it out loud.

The first two pictures are common positive experiences to get the players started on a good mood. Then comes the pictures that trigger the characters balanced out with some positive ones to keep the mood up. The final picture is a trigger for all the characters and ends the play.

Give the players time to talk for each picture, the ones who are triggered out need the time to change modes and get in to the other mindset. When you think each picture has had enough time, pick it off the pile and loudly tear it in half, the players then start in on the next picture. Make it loud, since the sound of tearing paper is what brings the players back from isolation.

## 8. Epilogue

When you reach the final image, which has “Trigger” for all the characters, give them a moment with their eyes closed, then go stand behind them one at a time, put your hands on their shoulders and ask them to speak up about their secret torment and the thoughts they’re having. It’s up to each of them, how much or how little they wish to share.

## 9. Debrief “Runda”

Get them all to open their eyes and thank them for playing. Each player then has two minutes to share what it was like playing the scenario and what it made them feel. The others are not allowed to comment or question or reply in any way. When everyone has had time to share, the formal stuff is over and the players can stick around and talk or run out of the room in a panic, whatever they feel like.

Introduction for the players, to be read aloud

*The four of you have been friends since grade school, at first pretty closely, then later it was more of an on/off thing as people moved away, started studying, got jobs, built families and so on.*

*You've stayed in touch, partied and had fun together, been on a lot of stupid adventures, but never really opened up to each other. The good thing is that your friendship is a place you can go to escape whatever is off or broken in your lives.*

*You have an unwritten rule not to become too personal when you're together, life is for the living and having fun! You can say anything here and not have it taken personally.*

*Tonight you're meeting to look over a bunch of old photographs that Susanne found, but haven't looked through yet. And a couple of bottles of nice wine that Thomas brought. It's going to be great reminiscing about the silly things you did together and laughing at all the old jokes.*

Thanks to Emma Greve for the photographs, editing and being enthusiastic about this scenario when I couldn't.

Thanks to Maja, Peter, Kamilla and Jakob for awesome playtesting, feedback and proof of concept. And Nis for testing it in the wild.

Thanks to Thais, Simon and Danny for awarding the Salmonviolator at the last Fastaval.

Thanks to Morten Jaeger for setting the mood with his live music during idea development.

Thanks to Tim Aunkilde for his Easter-dinners and the power of the unsaid.

Thanks to Troelsken and Oscilowski for patience with an author and his teenage feels about his scenario.

MARTIN.  
Age 26. Nurse.

I love to tell stories, especially the ones about fun stuff I did or experienced. I think it's a nice way to make people comfortable. It's a big hit with the patients, who often need the distraction. It's important that people feel good around me, I might take up a lot of space, but rather too much than being boring! As long as everyone is good.

Trigger Warning: Infidelity

The heart wants what it wants. According to Hollywood it's all easy. You find your true love and then it's happy ever after. Even if she's already seeing someone. Every romantic comedy has a villain she's dating to begin with.

But that's not reality. Sometimes it's your best friend. I know we're breaking up something beautiful, but what the hell do you do? She's as lost as I am. Or is she? I just know she wants me and I want her. Is that so wrong?

I don't know if it's the lying, or that I actually don't feel guilty, that's worst. That I am being an asshole towards someone who never did anything to me? I'm going to crush his dreams. How can I be anything except the bad guy here? My moral compass is spinning like crazy.

When do we tell him? How long can we keep it under wraps? Won't it just be worse if we keep it up? Am I just a distraction to her? A test? A revenge? Shit. I have no idea what she is up to. But I want her. I got her. Or do I?

Tonight is my chance to think about something else and hang out with friends. They'll make sure enough happens, that I won't have time to think too much. I really don't want to talk with them about this.

Luckily tonight is all about the good times of the past!

# THOMAS.

Age 27. Teamleader.

If I should say so myself, I'm the most adventurous of the group. I never regretted any of the stupid things we did together. I'll throw myself at anything I wanted, life will work out no matter what. I've never really felt the need to worry and now I have a nice job in a big corporation. And thus time and money to keep up my lifestyle.

Trigger Warning: Sexual Assault

The worst hangovers are the moral ones. There was no ill will. Just a good mood and everyone drunk and happy. The project launch had gone exceedingly well. We both flirted.

Where did it go wrong? Why am I feeling so guilty? She was so hot on the dancefloor. You don't dance with someone like that, without chemistry. Do you? Did she say no? Did she say yes? We were both so drunk. It's hard to remember.

I can't know what it was like for her. Was it what she wanted? Was she scared of me? I thought through it all, so many times, but I can't remember everything. Who was I that night?

Was it just regular awkwardness or something worse on monday morning? How can I find out? I can't bloody well ask her, what sort of person I am?

Tonight is my chance to think about something else and hang out with friends. They'll make sure enough happens, that I won't have time to think too much. I really don't want to talk with them about this.

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# SUSANNE

Age 27. Teacher.

There's nothing better than when everyone is playing along. Especially when I started the game. I love to make up fun ways of doing things. Trying out new things and seeing if others find them fun. I love my job, since the kids are so good at joining in the stuff I make up. The only difficulty is finding something everyone is into.

Trigger Warning: Paedophilia

You can't think of your students in that way, they're still kids in so many ways. He's just so damned cute.

Shit. Don't think about him. How do I get him out of my head? How do I stop feeling like this? It's sick. How can I work with young people, if I'm like this? Is something wrong with me?

No! That's not true. It's normal to develop feelings for others. But damnit, why does it have to be one of my students? Even if he is delightful and so much more grown up than his peers. I really need to keep a hold of myself on monday. What if someone finds out? That's grounds for termination. It's a crime! A clear violation of the law AND common decency.

I have to do something. I just have no idea what. How do you get rid of your emotions? CAN you actually do something about them? Should you stop listening to your heart or your senses?

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# CAMILLA

Age 26. Project manager.

I'm the cheerful one, the one that always made sure everyone was entertained and played along. I'm good with people and ideas, and I'm well underway in my career as project manager. Right now I'm working on an urban renewal project. I'm able to see the potential and fun in any situation or person, my optimism has turned many boring hours into something entertaining instead.

Trigger Warning: Suicide

Why? That is the question I'll never get an answer to. Why did you choose to end it all? What was so great a burden that you saw no way out? It drives me insane not being able to see how you saw yourself.

How could I make you smile, while you were getting ready to leave us all? Was death really your only recourse? I thought we made each other happy? I was happy everytime I saw you. You seemed happy when you saw me. We flirted at work. But was it a lie? The butterflies in my stomach turned to ice, when you jumped off the bridge.

I lie awake and try to find clues. I interrogate myself as a witness. And suspect. What did I do wrong? What didn't I see? Where was I supposed to act? How could I have stopped it? What is my part in this? Did I even play one? Where do I put the blame? Is it mine?

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*Thomas*

*"Your mother's temperamental car"*

*"First trip all on our own, so grown up!"*

*Camilla*

*"Roadtrip! Woo!"*

*"Towards the deep, dark countryside"*

*Martin*

*"The longest drive, that never ended"*

*"Carsick all the way, a miracle I didn't throw up"*

*Susanne*

*"We sang that pop-song so many times"*

*"I spy with my little eye...."*



*Thomas*

*"The Couch of Hangovers!"*

*"I've been sooo sick there"*

*Camilla*

*"The most dysfunctional living arrangements"*

*"A nice place to party though"*

*Martin*

*"The apartment we all used to hang out in"*

*"Didn't everyone manage to live there one time or another?"*

*Susanne*

*"So many bad horror films on the television"*

*"Who owned all those films?"*



*Thomas*

*"He used to flirt with everyone"*

*"No clue what he wanted"*

*Camilla*

*"The hottest guy in school"*

*"I had such a crush on him"*

*Martin*

*"He looks worried there"*

*"I wonder what was on his mind?"*

*Susanne*

*TRIGGER*



*Thomas*

*"I chucked my shoes up there too!"*

*"Had to walk barefoot back to the hostel"*

*Camilla*

*"That weird little coastal town"*

*"A wonderful summer trip"*

*Martin*

*"Such a cozy shopping street"*

*"So many little fun souvenir shops"*

*Susanne*

*"Did we ever find out why people did that?"*

*"People were so confused when we asked them"*



*Thomas*

*“The waves were crazy to swim against”  
“Wasn’t there something about undertow  
too?”*

*Camilla*

*“The North Sea!”  
“A classic trip, one of the best!”*

*Martin*

*“The huge pack of feral children on the beach”  
“I wonder where their parents were at”*

*Susanne*

*“My uncle’s boat”  
“It was a fun trip out on it”*



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*Thomas*

*"Jumping off that pier was dangerous fun"  
"I heard someone drowned there"*

*Camilla*

*TRIGGER*

*Martin*

*"I miss bathing with the gang"  
"And flirting with the girls"*

*Susanne*

*"The water could be so dark"  
"I was told never to swim alone"*



*Thomas*

*"Everything at the supermarket was so weird"  
"Hung over shopping is hard in a foreign country"*

*Camilla*

*"They had really good beer there"  
"I liked tasting the local foods"*

*Martin*

*"Thomas was the worst at shopping"  
"We had the strangest lunch"*

*Susanne*

*"We had to make up a lot of fun dishes on that trip"  
"And the frog that became our mascot"*



*Thomas*

*"They were married so young"  
"It seemed kind of impulsive"*

*Camilla*

*"It was so obviously those two"  
"Real love is clear to everyone"*

*Martin*

**TRIGGER**

*Susanne*

*"It's nice to see people happy"  
"I hope they're still together"*



*Thomas*

*"Absolutely nothing to do there"  
"I nearly froze to death going for a swim"*

*Camilla*

*"Worst vacation ever"  
"Whose idea was it to go to Norway during  
monsoon season?"*

*Martin*

*"The cabin was a disappointment, not at all as  
advertized"  
"It was supposed to be so beautiful"*

*Susanne*

*"Trapped in there for a week!"  
"Last time I played Monopoly, never again"*



**Trigger for all**

SUSANNE

THOMAS

MARTIN

CAMILLA

*"I spy with my little eye..."*

*"We sang that pop-song so many times"*



*"First trip all on our own, so grown up!"*

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*"The apartment we all used to hang out in"*

*"Didn't everyone manage to live there one time or another?"*

*"The most dysfunctional living arrangements"*

*"A nice place to party though"*

*"The Couch of Hangovers!"*

*"I've been sooo sick there"*

# TRIGGER



*"No clue what he wanted"*

*"He used to flirt with everyone"*

*"The hottest guy in school"*

*"I had such a crush on him"*

*"He looks worried there"*

*"I wonder what was on his mind?"*

*"People were so confused when we asked them"*

*"Did we ever find out why people did that?"*



*"Such a cozy shopping street"*

*"So many little fun souvenir shops"*

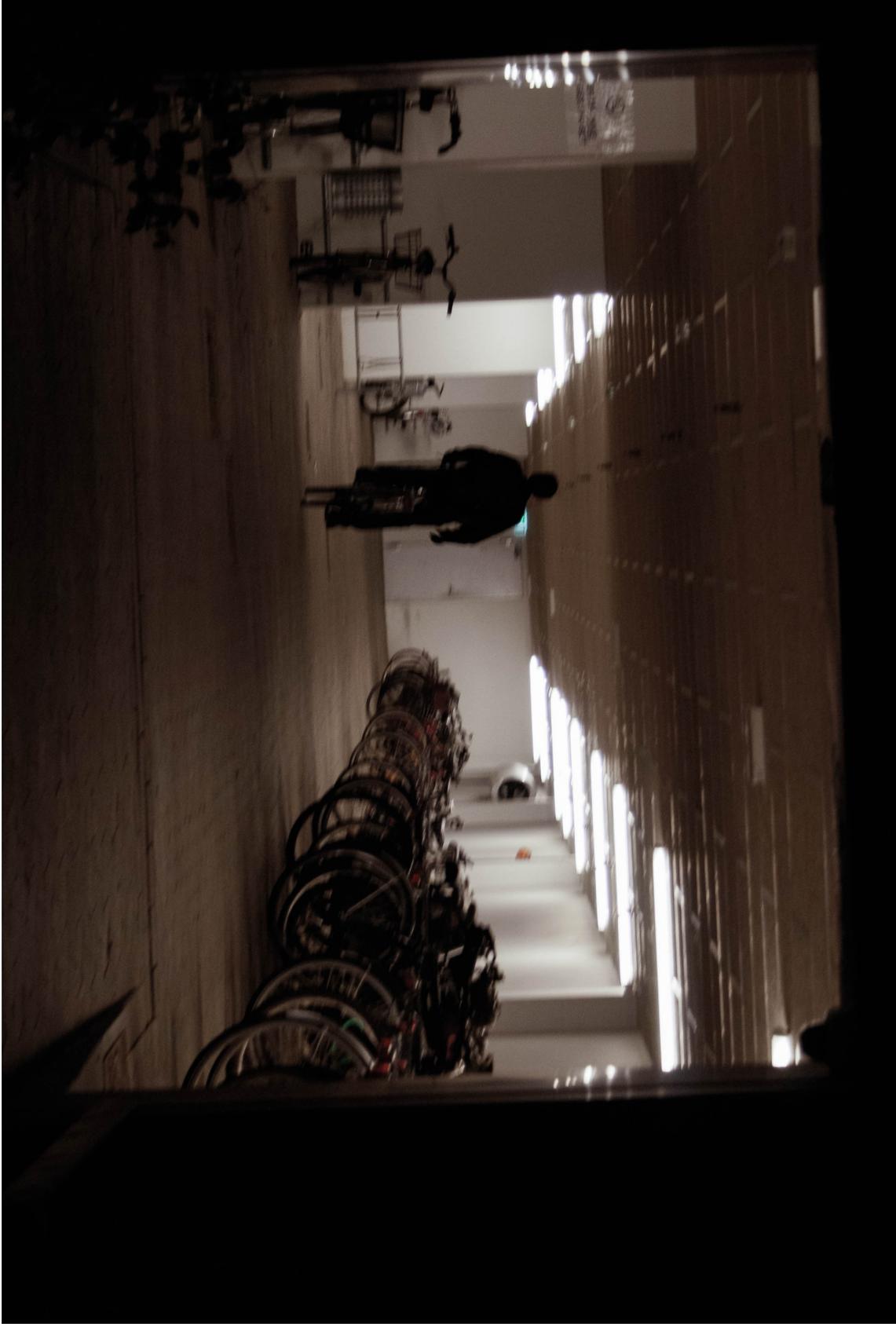
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*"Had to walk barefoot back to the hostel"*

*"That weird little coastal town"*

*"A wonderful summer trip"*

## TRIGGER



*“The creepy bicycle basement”*

*“So scary, I never felt safe there”*

*“I once found someone getting it on in the back”*

*“So obvious what was going on”*

*“I remember biking home drunk from there”*

*“No idea how dangerous it was”*

*"It was a fun trip out on it"*

*"My uncle's boat"*



*"The huge pack of feral children on the beach"*

*"I wonder where their parents were at"*

*"Wasn't there something about undertow too?"*

*"The waves were crazy to swim against"*

*"The North Sea!"*

*"A classic trip, one of the best!"*

*"I was told never to swim alone"*

*"The water could be so dark"*



*"Jumping off that pier was dangerous fun"*  
*"I heard someone drowned there"*

*"I miss bathing with the gang"*

*"And flirting with the girls"*

**TRIGGER**

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*"We had to make up a lot of fun dishes on that trip"*



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