



TRULY MADLY DEEPLY

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1. Introduction

This larp is about divorce. How it changes one of the most important relationships of our lives into something else. Divorce is an event that changes the past, retroactively creating its own causes; reshaping the rules of what is possible.

We do not believe divorce to be inherently evil, for a lot of people it is breaking free of something destructive, or the beginning of a more fulfilling life. Divorce, just as love, is only violent in a strictly formal sense, in that it disrupts reality. This does make divorce extraordinary, but it does not necessarily make it bad.

Most people go through divorce and move on. With or without any lasting connection to their former partner. Some remain friends, some not. Some become enemies, some not.

Usually, however, divorce is the end.

This larp is not about that.

This larp is about what happens when a messy breakup turns even worse, and conflict engulfs every part of the new relationship that emerges when two persons formerly in love pass through divorce.

What happens when there is no choice whether to sever the connection to your former partner, though you do not wish for anything else? What happens when you cannot wait to have them out of your life, but your lives are forever connected through parenthood?

Truly Madly Deeply are about two parents going through a divorce backwards. We start at the end, when there is nothing good left in the relationship, and finish before the conflicts even started: still in love.

The larp consists of three acts and six monologues (three monologues per player). The larp starts with each player sitting in their lawyer's office explaining why the other player is unfit to be a parent. From that point we go backwards in time.

Act 1 depicts the last stage of the divorce when the players are intertwined in a deep and bloody conflict with each other.

Act 2 is about the stage after divorce when the players' characters are trying to cope with the separation and loss of the former relationship.

Act 3 takes place long before the divorce when the players are still in love.

The larp ends in a monologue where the players get to describe why they think that the other parent would be a good parent, and why they've chosen to bring a child into the world with them.

2. Structure

The larp consists of a workshop that is around an hour and fifteen minutes, including a break before the larp starts.

When the larp starts there will be no pauses and the players will play an high intensity game for a little less than 2 hours. We've found that it is good to remind the players of this before the game starts.

The larp consist of three acts and three monologues, the first act has six scenes and act two and three has four scenes each.

There is one monologue in the very beginning of the larp, one between act two and three, as well as one monologue in the end. There is no monologue in between act one and act two.

The scenes and the monologues are timed, the game master will keep track of time and warn the players when the scene are beginning to come to its end, either by using lights and sound (see below) or by simply using their words.

Basic structure

1. Monologue – at the lawyers office.
2. Act 1 – The end. (6 scenes)
3. Act 2 The after (4 scenes)
4. Monologue – the divorce.
5. Act 3 The before (4 scenes)
6. Monologue – I choose you.

3. Directing scenes

Preferably the scenes are cued by sound/light.

Each scene is four minutes long, and if played without any access to light and sound the game master can simply tell the players the time.

(Once when one minute has passed, once when there is 30 seconds left of the scene, and of course: when the scene ends.)

When played with sounds and lighting we have used the following technique to help the players keep the pace of the scene:

- When the scene starts there is a crisp white spotlight centered on the scene and the music is quiet.
- After one minute has passed the music starts playing, this is to show the players that the scene has started and that they need to get into the fighting if they haven't already. The time for warming up is over.
- When there is around 20 seconds left, the music will start to get louder and the light starts to gradually change color, until there is around 8 seconds left and the light have turned an intense color and the music is so loud that it is impossible to speak over it.
- When there is 0 seconds left the room goes pitch black and the music continues for a couple of seconds before it fades away.
- While the room is still dark the game master reads the instructions for the next scene.
- The light comes on and the scene starts.

If you do not have access to stage light, we strongly recommend that you use whatever light you have accessible to make the room go dark when the scenes end (and to turn on the light when they start)

Under any circumstance we strongly recommend the use of sound to direct the scenes: if you do so you can use the music of your choice: or the official playlist:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1OCVOoUmWRXf0cAT9l1uuH?si=b4e62c7791b44e09>

(the songs in the playlist is ordered in the same order as the scene that they correspond to.)

4. Workshop

This workshop is focused on running the larp at festivals and such, where there will be more than one couple playing. We have found that you can game master up to four couples if you have enough space and access to lights and sound. If you are playing with just one couple this workshop can be shortened.

If you have more than two players present, we recommend that you have the workshop together with everyone before you go off into separate couples. This workshop is written for eight people, if you are more participants than that we recommend that you split the group in two to save time during group discussions or make time for a longer workshop.

a. Instructions for the players

You as a gamemaster will lead the players through the game. And every scene is pre-written with clear settings, goals, and prompts. Make sure that the players know this. They do not need to remember the structure of the larp as you will keep track of everything.

Premise

Explain the basic premise of the larp for the players. Either in your own words or by reading the introduction section of this document.

One-liner: Divorce played backwards.

Make sure that you have read the instructions well enough so that you can answer any questions from the players.

Structure

Read or explain the structure section of this document and make sure that the players understand this. Remind them that they do not need to remember all of this as you will direct them in between every scene that you will remind them of the structure during the game.

Ask the players if they have understood the structure.

Timed scenes

Scenes are played over a certain period of time. It is ok to sit quiet in your emotions. You have to keep playing for the full time, there is no escape. If you feel lost, try to escalate the conflict or find new ways to keep it alive. Take some time and regroup and attack on a different front.

(Did they close the door on you? - Shout insults through the mailbox.)

We will get a chance to experience how lights and sounds are being used during the workshop.

Close to home

The characters are not important before the larp starts. The players can develop them if they wish during the larp or the conflict will develop them for them. The players will each get a name from the game master, or if you are playing with one gamemaster per couple they can choose their own names.

What is important is the conflict. There will be no character creation process during the workshop. The larp is best played close to home, i.e. that you draw from own experiences and you own person.

Violence and sexual violence

This larp is not about domestic violence or sexual violence. And physical violence of any sort will not be played out during the larp.

If both the players are comfortable using these themes during the conflicts of act 1 and act 2, it will be in the form of accusation which might never be validated by the other character/player.

- Are you going to hit me again?

- I did'nt hit you! Stop telling every one we know that I have..

b. Meta techniques

There are a few rules during the scenes, these rules will be repeated throughout the game by the game master when leaving instructions inbetween scenes and acts. Except for those rules there are only two simple meta techniques used in this game

Off larp/off game

If any player feels like they need to break the game for any reason they say “off game” or “Off larp” and the game stops. If the player needs to step outside, talk to the game master or their partner is entirely up to them. Off game/off larp means that you stop playing immediately.

Kissing

During the larp there will be a kiss between the characters. This is portrayed by the players putting both of their hands on their partner's cheeks while looking deep into their eyes without breaking eye contact.

(If uncomfortable with face-touching you can just hold hands and look into each other's eyes, or negotiate some other technique that you both feel comfortable with)

The game master will go through this technique again when that scene comes so the players does not need to worry if they forget about it during the game. This is however the best time to ask any questions concerning this meta technique

c. Group warmup

Discussion

Make a (short!) round in the full group of players if more than one pair (otherwise discuss with your partner.)

Every player get to, uninterrupted, answer the following questions:

- How do you act when you are really pissed off?
- How do you solve personal conflicts?
- If you wish you might tell the other player(s) about a hard breakup of your own or that you might have seen from up close?

Hugs!

Have the group stand up and walk around the room, you can play music if you like, we suggest the first song in the official playlist, when the music stops or when the gamemaster yells: “hug!” you will hug the person that is nearest to you and hold on for one minute. The game master will keep track of the time. Have the players walk around and stop about 3 times.

(Alternative without touching: keep eye contact for one minute with or without holding each others hands)

Yes and No

Have the players pair up randomly (this does not determine your couples for the larp). Each pair will have a discussion with each other, however one person in each pair can only say “yes” and the other person can only say “no”. Take turns denying each other.

Try to use as much emotion as possible in lieu of words. Have the players try this for one minute and then have them change pairs a couple of times. Make sure that everyone gets the chance to say both yes and no.

Subtle emotions

Keep the players randomly pairing up with each other but this time. The players should look each other in their eyes and try to with the least amount of facial expression express emotions to their partner.

The game master instructs the players which emotions to use. Both players use the same emotion.

Have them change pairs in between every emotion that they use. And try out about three emotions.

d. Couple warmup

The former section concludes the group part of the workshop and the players should now pair up with whom ever they would like to play the larp with. We suggest that the players get to choose their partners on their own.

If at a festival setting ask any of the players if they have signed up for the larp with the intention to play together and have the rest of the players pick their partners on their own.

Negotiate Intimacy and intensity

Take a few minutes in each pair and talk through your levels of comfort with physical touch and verbal conflict/violence.

Make sure that you discuss if it is ok to use accusations of violence and sexual violence in the heat of the conflict.

This larp is not meant to portray physical violence and there are no meta techniques for this purpose. However if the players feel comfortable shoving or grabbing each other they should of course feel free to do so as long as it is done with consent and without any risk of physical harm.

Direction during warmup

The warm up scenes are two minutes long and during them we try out the light and sound effects.

Remind the players how the light and sound effects are used.

- When the music starts you need to get into the scene.
- When the volume goes up the scene is ending.
- When the light goes out the scene is over and you should go quiet.

(For the warmup scenes let the sound start after 30 seconds and then raise the volume when there is 20 seconds left.)

Scenes

When the larp starts the conflict between the characters is already at its height. This means that there will be no time to build up the conflict after the larp has started.

Therefore we will play 2 – 3 warmup scenes to try to get into that arguing mode.

Have the players stand up and remind them that this is not a discussion, this is a FIGHT. You should abandon all your instincts to try to solve the conflict, rather you NEED to win. And to make the other person feel and look bad.

You do not have to agree about anything. - Nothing they say is true if you do not want it to be!

It is totally fine to *gaslight* the other character to get your way or to use *master suppression techniques*. Remember that you hate the other person.

Tell the players that they will never get the chance to play out the events leading up to the divorce, or the divorce itself. This is not about finding out what actually happened and the players might never get to know why their characters split up: this is not only fine but encouraged. Feel safe to assume that your point of view is the only relevant.

The scenes in the larp will usually portray the players fighting over issues where they have completely different feelings or views, to try this out the warm-up scenes consists of the players fighting with each other over issues that are not (or less) connected to each other:

(if there is not enough time, choose scene 1 and 3)

Scene 1

Player one: Your partner's hair is clogging the drain in the shower, this has to stop!

Player two: Your partner never buys groceries, why is this always up to you?

Scene 2

Player one: Your partner has to stop buying all these expensive things with our mutual credit card

Player two: Your partner is breathing so loudly when you are trying to sleep.

Scene 3:

Player one: Your partner are always so busy with work

Player two: Your partner never helps out at home.

Choose your character's name:

The characters names are Alexis and Billie, we suggest you keep those names to make the game run as smoothly as possible, if you are playing with more than one pair it is important to keep the scripted names so that the game master can give instructions to several couples at the same time.

The characters are written without any specific gender in mind. In one scene however it might make sense for the characters to be gendered, i.e. if you portray a heterosexual couple, if so it makes sense to let Alexis be the female. If you are not playing a heterosexual male and female it does not matter which character name you choose.

Name your child

The characters have one child together. Before we begin you need to name that child.

Toilet break

Take a short break before the larp starts. Remind the players that we will be playing for almost two hours straight without any pauses or intermissions, this is the only time you can use the bathroom or fill you water bottle.

Then it begins...

5. The Larp begins!

a. Monologue 1

The players are instructed to put two chairs facing each other

Two Identical scenes, one for each player.

Each player will get 3 minutes to hold an uninterrupted monologue: at the lawyers office explaining why the other players character is unfit to have part of the custody of their child.

What qualities makes them unfit to be a parent.

When you are not speaking you will sit as closely to the other player as you are both comfortable with, looking at them and listening actively to them.

b. Act 1. – The end

- *You where the greatest mistake of my life?*

This is the height of the conflict. You hate each other at this point. The only connection you have is your child and the shared custody of them. The other parent is not fit to see your child. What they have done to you makes them so. As your child is the only connection between you they are also the only area of conflict that you have, as well as the strongest weapon against each other.

You have been sharing your life with a evil person, through and through. You have been co-dependent in the living patterns of a narcissistic creature.

Not one hair on their body is good. You have been blind and stupid.

Rules

In between scenes: the players are not allowed to talk, touch or look at each other.

Your characters will never make up, you are lost in this conflict.

In act 1 we stand up.

Scene 1 - They do not want to go with you

One parent picks up the child, the other parent says the child does not want to go, the child is in the apartment/another room.

Alexis: you know the child wants to come, you were talking on the phone this morning and they said so.

Billie: Your child doesn't want to be with that idiot and you cant blame them

The child sees and hears everything that is said in the scene.

Scene 2 – the subway

The parents meet in the subway, there is more than four minutes to the next station.

Alexis: This is great! We really need to talk about so many things about the child now that the're not with us.

Billie: Ohno, I hope they haven't seen me yet! How do I get out of here?

The subway is half full. If you raise your voice several passengers will stare.

Scene 3 - Leisure activity,

The parents meet in the context of a leisure activity that the child has, they have different ideas about who should be there.

Alexis: You have a huge interest in this, you can help better and the child finds it more fun when you are here. Why is the other parent even here?

Billie: This is my time, why should the other parent always interfere and take away from my and the child's time together.

The child is trying to participate in the activity but cannot help but notice the parents arguing.

Scene 4 - the birthday.

It's the child's birthday. EVERYONE is invited, family and friends on both sides, except Billie. However: Billie has realized that there is a party and shows up uninvited.

Alexis: You have invited everyone, it is your week, doesn't Billie plan their own birthday party? You would never demand for them to invite you to a birthday party, if they would be capable of arrange such an event.

Billie: How could they arrange a birthday party without inviting you? Even relatives on your side of the family is invited. Alexis is truly a scheming psycho.

The child will notice the parents arguing on their birthday, even if they try to hide it or goes into a separate room.

Scene 5 - the handover.

(Let the players know that is the second to last scene of act 1)

The parents meet in a parking lot to hand over the child. Alexis needs to switch days to do a thing with work, Billie doesn't want to. During this scene one or both parents start filming with their phone(s).

Alexis: You just need to change one day. ONE DAY, why is that a problem? Billie really does everything to make your life terrible.

Billie: Why would you change anything for Alexis, as if they would ever do such a thing for you.

The child is in the car, you are arguing just outside. Though you pretend it doesn't affect them, your child will think that neither of you want to spend time with them.

Scene 6 - Facebook

(Let the players know that this is the last scene of act 1)

One parent thinks they are in a closed facebook-group, they are, the problem is the other parent is there too. There is a war in the comments.

Alexis: I am co-parenting with a narcissist, have anyone else been in this situation?

Billie: What the fuck did you call me? The audacity

Potentially the whole world can see this, including your child.

c. Act 2 – the after

- *How could you if you were not someone else all along?*

You are not enemies yet, but strangers.

Or rather: your person has changed into someone strange.

Whatever happened must have had a reason. How could they if they were not someone else all along?

Were they a manipulative psycho that hid their true identity for all this time? You have never felt this stupid, how could you let yourself be fooled.

It feels as they are somebody else, that the person that you were together with is dead, and it is only this strange new being's fault.

It is not necessary to fight in this act, but you will probably end up fighting..

Rules

In between scenes: you are not allowed to touch each other or talk to each other, you are however free to look at each other.

You can sit down in act 2.

Scene 1 - If the world was ending you'd come over right?

Something has occurred, a small disaster of some kind. An earthquake, or a power outage. No one close to you are hurt. Your child is safe.

But who are you going to call when the first person that you calls is gone?

In their place stands another: the one who ruined your life.

In the beginning of the scene the characters are alone in their separate homes.

You can play this scene out loud, as a theatrical inner monologue, or quietly in your own heads.

If you call each other the phone call is going to evolve into a fight before the scene is over.

Alexis: I thought I knew them, why did it have to be like this. Is there still a chance?

Billie: I miss them, it hurts so fucking bad. Should I call them just to see if they're ok?

The child is somewhere around, in the background and might hear parts of the phone call.

Scene 2 - school Development interview

Billie has been informed about the child's school development review through conventional mail to their home address. They have not told Alexis who the child does not have its residency with. However, Alexis has received the information in some other way and now you are meeting in the cloakroom outside the child's classroom.

Alexis: Typical that they don't see you as an equal parent. Your child needs both of you. Don't they understand that they are hurting the child when you are shut out? You have a right to be here, and you should show both Billie and the school that you are equally important.

Billie: You've always taken care of these things, it's not like Alexis cares anyway, they just want to be seen because they know it hurts you. It is not healthy for your child that their parent is feeling bad, by being here Alexis is hurting them.

The child is in the coat room waiting, the child has an ipad with headphones but can hear the discussion if it gets too loud.

Scene 3 - Why did you do this to me, to us?

The parents meet in a public space to have the talk. Why did it end?

Alexis and Billie: I miss who I was with the other parent, and now it feels as if they're dead. It is only their fault that it has come to this.

The child is not present

Scene 4 - The practicalities

(Remind the players that this is the last scene in act 2)

A kitchen-table-discussion. How do we solve all the practicalities of our new reality? The first Christmas, easter, or other important family-holidays? How are we going to share time with our child during the weeks? Do we need to have a written agreement, where will our child be registered as a resident?

Alexis and Billie: the other parent looks at you as a second class parent. It is completely insane how they use our child just to hurt you!

The child is watching television in an adjoining room and hears every word.

d. Monologue 2

In this monologue the players get to tell their story concerning what happened during and leading up to the divorce.

The heartbreak, you did love this person. You remember when you fell in love. How this person made you feel and how you feel today.

How did it feel when you not only lost a partner, but the future you thought you would have.

Why did it have to end, or what situation made you realize that it had to?

What did they do, what did you do, how did it make you feel?

Each character will get 3 minutes to uninterrupted speak their mind to the other player.

The chairs are placed close to each other, facing each other, just as in the first monologue.

e. Act 3 – the before

This is what happens before the divorce, before anything was even bad.

Your child does not exist, yet..

The last scene is your first kiss and we will go through the meta technique (again) when we explain the scene.

Remind the players that everything in this act has already happened, what you have played out in act 1 and act 2 is *destined* to be. You cannot avoid that fate. But your characters are luckily unaware of this.

Rules:

Sit or stand as you like in act 3.

I between scenes: You can look at each other and touch, but you still cannot talk in between scenes.

Scene 1 - *The first date*

You are meeting, maybe for the first time all together, or at least for the first time in new roles: as two people dating. Maybe, you met online, or through mutual friends, maybe it is a blind date. How ever you came to find yourselves sitting across from each other on a first date, you do not regret it, as the date proceeds and it becomes more and more obvious that this person might actually be *the one*.

Alexis: You have butterflies all over, nervous and full of expectations. Billie are so good looking, smart and super funny. What will they think of you?

Billie: Finally you are going on a real date. You want this so much! Alexis seems so worldly and intelligent, and the two of you seems to be a perfect match!

Scene 2 - cooking

The characters are making dinner together, and will during this scene decide to move in together. You know each other well and have dated for some time. You are spending so much time together already, why not take this relationship to the next step?

Alexis: You miss Billie every time we are appartm even though we spend so myúch time together. There are no reason to not take this relationship further. They are all i need in my life. We are an unstoppable team!

Billie: You have been looking forward to this. The everyday life with Alexis are almost what you cherish most. You are so relaxed in their presence, almost as if you are the best version of yourself. Maybe it is time to take this relationship to the next level.

Scene 3 - We are having a baby!

The child is arriving. You both want this so much! Whether it is a surprise or not, either of you could not be more happy.

Alexis: You are bringing the good news. To night you will tell Billie that your greatest dream are coming true. This is the single most important thing that has ever happened to you and you can barely believe that it is true. It makes you so happy to be able to share this with the love of your life.

Billie: To night you are going to be told that you are becoming a parent. Some thing so big and wonderful that you almost havent been able to imagine it becoming a reality. But you have always hoped to one day become a parent, almost in secret as to not get to disappointed if you dream would not come true. Now you are beeing told that the greatest love of your life are going to become a parent together with you.

Scene 4 - the first kiss.

This is the first time that either of you have been invited to the other's home. Maybe it is the second date or the tenth, but it is the first time that you two kiss each other.

The scene ends with you kissing by putting both of your hands on your partner's cheeks and look into their eyes. After the "kiss" you will hold hands and continue to keep eye contact with each other until the scene is over.

Dont wait to long to kiss.

Try to kiss sooner rather than later, it is super fine to just look into each other's eyes for the full four minutes.

When the music starts playing you should try to start kissing as soon as possible.

(If you are not comfortable with touching each other's faces, it is totally fine to just hold hands and keep eye contact, or to just keep eye contact. In any of those cases you will keep eye contact from when you start kissing until the scene is over)

f. Monologue

Sit on the chairs again, facing each other.

Why do you want to have a child with this person in particular? What makes them into such a good parents.

If you like you can talk about the moment you realized you wanted to have a child with them, or which qualities that made you choose them.

When the second players monologue ends the larp is over.

6. Debrief.

Gather all the players in a group again, or if you are one pair per game master you can do the debrief in pairs.

Take a round and let everyone answer the questions:

- How do you feel right now?
- What do you need right now?

After the round try to start an open discussion. If the players do not feel the need to talk that is totally fine and the debriefing is not necessary if someone rather want to have a break.

Try to let everyone talk but do not push someone to speak who does not want to. Try to focus on the players feelings and experiences.

Most players are tired after this larp and have a need to talk a lot.

End the open discussion by having another round where everyone who wants to get a chance to speak uninterrupted and mention one thing that they would like to take with them from this experience and one thing that they would like to leave behind.

THANK YOU FOR PLAYING TRULY MADLY DEEPLY!

Appendix

- 1. Time Schedule for the larp*
- 2. Notes for the game master*
- 3. Basic structure of the larp*
- 4. Basic structure of the larp*

Time schedule for the larp (for the game master)

0. Workshop: 1 h 15 min (inkl. warm up och breaks etc.)

1. Prologue: 15 min (inkl. preparation, 3 minutes each to speak)

2. Act 1.

Intro: 5 minutes.

Scenes: 35 minutes.

3. Act 2.

Intro: 5 minutes.

Scenes: 30 minutes

4. Monologue: 10 min (inkl. preparation, 3 minutes each to speak)

5. Act 3.

Intro: 5 minutes

Scenes: 35 minutes.

6. Monologue: 10 min (inkl. preparation, 3 minutes each to speak)

7. Debriefing: 30 minuter

Notes for the game master:

The players do not need to look for the reason behind the divorce, the aim is to explore the characters/players emotions not to create a shared story. The goal of the scenes/acts is *not* to create common ground. Each character is trapped in their own subjective truth, and they do not have to agree about anything when it comes to their shared history.

The larp is completely transparent, you do not need to hide anything from each other, and the game master are not hiding anything either.

The game master will go through the basic mechanics and structure of the game before you start, but you do not need to remember every detail as the game master will give instructions and prompts in between every scene for the players to follow.

The scenes are timed, and all of them are four minutes long. The monologues are also timed and are three minutes per player.

Props for the game:

- Speaker that can play LOUD music
- Chairs (one per player)
- The ability to turn of the lights and make the stage/room go as dark as possibel

Basic structure

1. – Monologue 1 - at the lawyers office.

Why is the other parent unfit to have custody over your child?

2. Act 1 – The end.

Hate each other - make up a reason if you need to.

Techniques: In between scenes: the players are not allowed to talk, touch or look at each other.

Your characters will not make up, you are lost in the conflict.

In act 1 we stand up all the time as it makes us fight more and better.

3. Act 2 - The after

You are not yet enemies – but friction is building as you are taking the first uneasy steps after your divorce.

In between scenes: you are not allowed to touch each other or talk to each other, you are however free to look at each other.

You can Sit down in act 2.

4. Monologue 2 – the divorce

The characters will each get their chance to tell their version of why they had to get a divorce.

5. Act 3 - The before

This is during the relationship, before it even went bad. You are still very much in love.

In between scenes: The players are free to touch each other but you cannot talk.

In the last scene of act 3 the players will use the meta technique to kiss each other

6. Monologue 3 – why I choose you.

The characters will get three minutes each to explain why they wanted to have children together with the other parent.