Some of you have never known any different. Some of you remember what it was like before. All of you have witnessed the horrors of the totalitarian authority after they took power. So you resisted. Quietly and subtly at first; and then as you found each other you began to make bolder moves. Newsletters, stories, graffiti, memorials for the dead. You became a family.

You got caught.

In a prison cell together you were offered a deal. If one person confesses to being the leader of the resistance movement that person will die. The rest of you will go free. Back to your children. Back to your lives. Back to continue the fight. Only one person needs to die at dawn.

You have one hour to decide who.

This is a LARP about survival, duty and love.



### Here Comes a Candle

#### Introduction

- 1. Game setting
- 2. Mood and themes
- 3. Set up
- 4. The role of the facilitator

'Here comes a candle to light you to bed, And here comes a chopper to chop off your head.'

# Warm up exercises and safety techniques

- 1. Explaining the scenario
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- 1. Character sheets
- 2. Reasons to live
- 3. Personality traits
- 4. Reasons to die
- 5. Confession

#### Traditional children's rhyme

'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — forever.'

**George Orwell - Nineteen Eighty-Four** 

#### Written by: Laura Wood

With thanks to: Mo Holkar for help and support.

To Billy Wood for the soundtrack app. To Brian Lowe for royalty free use of the song used in the app.

To Karolina Soltys and Mo Holkar for attempting a playtest of this at **The Game Kitchen** design day where I first came up with the idea and started developing it on scraps of paper.

To Andrew, Helen, Eunice, Warren, Grant and Jamie for assisting with either playtesting or facilitating.

### Here Comes a Candle

A game for 4 players

# 1) Introduction

#### **Game Setting**

The players have input into the setting of the game but you are living in dark times. People are dying because the government or power or regime don't like them, probably because they're too smart or too inquisitive or too likely to fight. All the characters will have personally witnessed deaths, seen people 'disappear', and seen the after effect of the torture that the government has inflicted.

#### **Mood and Themes**

The mood is a dark one. The characters, members of the resistance, have been caught and put into a prison. They have one hour to decide who to put forward as their leader and if one person confesses at the end of the hour to being the leader then that person is executed alone. If more than one person confesses, or no-one confesses, the whole group die. The prison is inescapable. The guard(s) are watching. **There is no third option.** 

#### Set up

You will need

- Character sheets -print 2 sided (appendix 1)
- Reasons to live (appendix 2)
- Personality traits (appendix 3)
- Reasons to die (appendix 4)
- Leader's confession (appendix 5).
- Scissors
- Either sticky tape or blue tack
- 4 scarves or blindfolds

You will need a makeshift prison which can be set up with tables and chairs, lines of chalk drawn on the ground, banners tied to trees or whatever seems appropriate.

Inside the prison there should be a maximum of 2 chairs (none is completely acceptable) to encourage movement. There should be a 'door', an area that is easy for the guard but not the prisoners to enter and exit.

There is an audio app which goes with this game which is free to download from Google Play at <a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.laura.despotlarp">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.laura.despotlarp</a> To start the track slide the switch at the top of the screen. The app should be started after the game has started. Read the soundtrack section to see what to expect when using the app.

#### The role of the facilitator

The main role of the facilitator is to **ensure the physical and emotional safety of everyone in the room**. There are warm up exercises and a debrief but for the hour that the game is running, with the exception of the execution which takes place on the hour, the facilitator's role is mainly to watch and prevent anyone attempting to take another option (e.g. escaping).

The facilitator also has to set up people's expectations and ensure that new and inexperienced players are drawn into the narrative. This can be done by asking specific questions during character creation.

# 2) Warm up exercises and safety techniques

### **Explaining the scenario**

The first step is to explain the scenario to the group if they're not already aware of it

'All of you have witnessed the horrors of the totalitarian authority after they took power. You have seen pain and you all have personally witnessed deaths, seen people disappear and seen the after effect of the torture that the government has inflicted. Maybe some of you were tortured. Maybe you lost friends or loved ones. So you began to form a resistance group. Quietly and subtly at first; and then as you found each other you began to make bolder moves. Newsletters, stories, graffiti, memorials for the dead. You became like a family.

You got caught.

In a prison cell together you were offered a deal. If one person confesses to being the leader of the resistance movement, that person will die at dawn. The rest of you will go free. Back to your children. Back to your lives. Back to continue the fight. Only one person needs to die. If more than one person confesses, or if no-one confesses, you will all die. The prison cell is not bugged – it was not considered necessary. You have one hour to decide what to do.'

#### **Lines and Veils**

**Lines** are things that must not occur in your game and **veils** are things which can be alluded to but can't happen explicitly, for example you may 'fade to black' for that moment. If you are playing with a new group who don't know each other very well it might be preferable to give them a piece of paper and ask them to write down their lines and veils and pass them to you. For example, a line might be that no sexual violence occurs or is alluded to in game and a veil might be that any violent confrontations are described 'I punched him and kicked him when he fell to the floor', rather than role-played.

#### **Exercise to demonstrate brake and cut**

There are two purposes to this exercise. One is to demonstrate how brake and cut work and get players comfortable with using them if necessary. **Brake** is used when the player is happy with the intensity of a scene but doesn't want it to get any more intense. **Cut** is used to stop the scene until the issue is resolved. The other purpose is to assess the players' comfort with blindfolds as they will be used later on. Ask if the players are OK to be blindfolded, and if anyone says no, tell them they will be able to just close their eyes instead. The players should split into pairs and one should blindfold the other and lead them at a slowly increasing pace around the area. When the player is at a comfortable pace they say 'brake' and the person who is leading them doesn't go any faster. At some point, relatively shortly afterwards they say 'cut' and the players stop and swap with the previously leading player now blindfolded.

Once the exercise has ended bring everyone back in a circle. Ask each person to define one of 'line', 'veil' 'brake', 'cut' and what to do if someone says it. Also introduce an additional safety rule, 'the door is open'. Although the characters are trapped in a prison in the game, in actuality if they need to leave the game for any reason they can and it won't impact on anyone else's enjoyment.

# 3) Character Creation

#### **Beginning Character Creation**

Give out the character sheets (Appendix 1). The character sheets ask 4 questions that the players should now write an answer to - name, age, appearance and pronouns. They should be printed two-sided so players can make notes about the world and other characters on the back.

Spread out the reasons to live (Appendix 2) and the personality traits (Appendix 3) face up. First two players should each choose one reason to live, and tape or tack it onto their sheet in the appropriate place. The other two should then choose personality traits. When they choose personality traits they should choose one that represents something positive to them, one that represents something negative to them and the third can be either. Then the two pairs switch places, with the first pair now choosing personality traits, and then the other pair choosing reasons to live. They then return to their chairs.

#### Creating a shared world

The players should all contribute something about the regime they are opposing. The facilitator should encourage this not to be personal (that will come out in the game) but instead focus on the generalities. When did the regime take over? Do people remember what it was like before? How did they come into power? What do they stand for? What has happened to people who have opposed them?

### **Creating the resistance**

The 4 of you came together with a purpose but became something more. You feel like a family now, held together as much by love as by the fight. Go round the circle and each player should introduce their name, age, appearance, pronouns and reason to live. (They should not describe their personality traits or the questions under their reason to live card. These will come out during play.) After each player does this the other players should take it in turns narrating briefly in 3 or 4 lines a memory their character that makes them feel that they and the original character are bound together. The memory could be pre or post resistance. They don't know the other person's traits but they can use theirs. For example:

'He was whispering to me that he was angry but afraid. He was shaking with it. I tried to be comforting but we were all scared. There was a loud noise in front of us

and he pushed me away and jumped in front of me without even thinking about it.'

or less dramatically

'We were running through the rain and laughing because we'd got away with it. And I turned and glanced at her. And her eyes and expression mirrored mine, joy that for a few hours people would remember one more of the 'disappeared'; regret that they would forget, that the memory was too dangerous to hold onto.'

This can be negotiated with the other player, if someone narrates something that goes against their personality traits or doesn't feel right to them then they can suggest an alternate way it could've gone.

After each person has read out their character sheet and had three people give short memories, and given three short memories in turn they should fill out the section 'what bonds you to the other members of the resistance?' and share it with the group.

#### Soundtrack / time warnings

If you are using the app on a phone please keep the screen on. Tell the players that the following events will be happening at the specified times as the game progresses:

Time	Using the app	Without the app
60 minutes	Clock chime	Say 'You have one hour.'
45 minutes to go	2 clock chimes	Warn the characters that they have 45 minutes left.
30 minutes to go	3 clock chimes	Warn the characters that they have 30 minutes left.
15 minutes to go	4 clock chimes	Warn the characters that they have 15 minutes left.
5 minutes to go	Gong chime	Warn the characters they have 5 minutes to go.
1 minute to go	Song starts and	Warn the characters they

	continues playing	have 1 minute to go. If you have a suitable song you could play it. Otherwise a warning will suffice.
Time's up	There will be a loud clock chime and the song will continue playing. Enter the prison as the guard (see 'the end')	Enter the prison as the guard (see 'the end') If you have a song playing it can continue to play.

Do not inform the players that the facilitator will also be able to make the app play 1 or 4 gunshot sounds and the music will continue until it does. After the gunshots have been played the music will fade over 10 seconds. See 'the end' for more details.

#### The last choice

You didn't expect it to come to this, not really, so you didn't think about it. Or maybe you couldn't think about it. Or maybe you thought of it constantly but you assumed it would be quick and brutal. You never thought you would have to decide. Not between you and them.

The 'reason to die' cards (appendix 4) should be cut out and lying face-down on the table, floor or whatever surface you choose. Players go up one at a time, turn over and look at the cards, choose the card that they feel would be appropriate for their character and attach it to the character sheet, and turn the others back to face-down. They should not talk about the card they have chosen and it's attendant questions out of character.

Just before the players go into the cell and the game begins, remind them that anything they weren't supposed to discuss during character creation can and should be brought out in play. Things that they discussed during character creation should also be brought out during play when appropriate. Remind them for the last time that they are free to leave if they are overwhelmed, and it won't spoil the game for anyone else.

## 4) The Game

#### The beginning

You are now the guard. Usher your 4 prisoners into the makeshift prison and ensure that they enter. If you get any resistance threaten a character, preferably not the one who's resisting.

Once they are in the prison read the following speech.

'You have been caught committing acts of terrorism against our nation. The crime of terrorism carries a penalty of swift execution by firing squad. However, in a show of mercy the leader has decreed that if, at dawn, the instigator of your group confesses and reads a statement taking full responsibility for the actions that have taken place tonight then the rest of you will be spared and will be free to go from here. They alone will be executed. However, if more than one of you confess, or if no one confesses at dawn you will all be executed as the law dictates. The instigator has one hour to make peace with their conscience and ensure that the others accept their role.'

Reassure the prisoners that no one has bugged their cell and they are free to talk. Make sure they are convinced or it could restrict what they say.

Then start the app (if you are using it) so that a clock chimes, leave, and sit a bit away from the prisoners.

#### The middle

If you are using the app you won't really have much to do during this point except watch and make sure no one seems to be in any physical or emotional harm. Also check that no one is plotting to escape. Don't police them too tightly and only intervene if absolutely necessary. If you aren't using the app you will have to give manual countdown warnings using your watch or a clock. (see soundtrack / time warnings for when warnings should be given)

#### The end

The last chime has sounded or you have told them their time is up. There are two ways this could play out and the outcome will depend on whether one person confesses. If you are using the app music will be playing at this time; let it continue

to play.

Your first act will be to go in as the guard. 'Is the instigator of the act of terrorism ready to confess?'

#### Scenario 1 – one person confesses

Pull the person (gently) who confessed towards the door or beckon them towards you.

Say something like:

'Very well. Read the following speech - look into the camera as you do.'

Give them the confession (appendix 5). After they have read the confession blindfold them (unless they said they didn't want to be blindfolded in the warm up exercise, in which case tell them to shut their eyes) and lead them away. Around the area that you set up the prison find a tree, wall or suitable object to lean them against. Make sure that they are in view of the other prisoners.

Narrate their shooting loudly enough for the other prisoners to hear. Ask them whether they said anything in their last moments (a lover's name, a curse against the government, a regret, a goodbye) or whether they stood in silence. Narrate preparing to shoot. (If you have the app play the gunshot on your app. A gunshot will sound and the music will fade out over 10 seconds.) Narrate confirming their death.

#### Scenario 2 - No-one confesses or more than one person confesses

If this occurs tell them the leader dictates that this will mean they all have to die. If a second person raised their hand after a first, you can talk about how they have condemned the rest of their group who could have gone on to live happy lives. If any character in the group is younger than the others play on this.

Then blindfold them and walk them to somewhere near the prison. (If anyone said that they couldn't be blindfolded in the warm up exercise, go to them last. Tell them you've run out of blindfolds and they'll have to shut their eyes.) Narrate their shooting. Watch whether they join hands, whether they say goodbye or whether they stood in silence. Ask them if they're ready. (*If you have the app play the 4 gunshots. They will sound and the music will fade out over 10 seconds.*) Narrate confirming their deaths.

# 5) Debrief

#### As the game finishes

Help the character or characters who were executed to their feet if they fell and quietly check that they're OK. Bring them back to the others if they're not together. Quietly tell everyone that the game is over and that they should just take a minute, in silence, to let go of their characters and come back to themselves. Also take the time yourself to let go of the guard persona if necessary. After a minute, check in with everyone to see if there's anything that they need or if they're ready to start the debrief.

#### **Group Discussion**

In a group (it doesn't have to be in order but everyone should have a turn to speak) give people some time to talk generally about their thoughts about the game and how they are feeling now.

Once everyone has had a chance to do this ask some questions about moments that stood out. Ask players what the most emotional moment was for their character and if any specific moment would stay with them. Ask if there is anything they did in the game that they feel they want to apologise for. Ask them if there was anything that they found particularly difficult. Continue the discussion until everyone seems to have expressed all their feelings and are calm and present.

#### **Discussion of character sheets**

If this hasn't happened naturally it can be useful and interesting to discuss what questions people had, what reasons to die they had, what their personality traits were and how they brought them out. Keep the discussion going for as long as people seem to need it.

Confession is not betrayal. What you say or do doesn't matter: only feelings matter. If they could make me stop loving you—that would be the real betrayal." She thought it over. "They can't do that," she said finally. "It's the one thing they can't do. They can't make you believe it. They can't get inside you.""No," he said a little more hopefully, "no; that's quite true. They can't get inside you. If you can feel that staying human is worthwhile, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them."

**George Orwell - Nineteen Eighty-Four** 

# Appendix 1 Character Sheet

### Character sheet - Here Comes a Candle

	age is
Pronouns used	
My appearance	
is	
What bonds you to the other members o	of the resistance?
What bonds you to the other members of	of the resistance?
What bonds you to the other members of	of the resistance?
What bonds you to the other members of the other me	of the resistance?

Three character traits:

Notes about other players / the world.

# Appendix 2 Reasons to Live

#### Reasons to Live

I saw what they did to my partner. I saw them die. But my two daughters are at home. They are with my sister but she doesn't really care about them. They need a parent. Emily's 5 and Sarah's 7. I can't imagine them growing up without me. Is that selfish? If they grow up knowing the party killed both their parents who will they grow up hating. Us or them? I don't want them to grow up hating anyone.

#### Questions

- Why were you continuously risking your life when your children were depending on you?
- Why was the children's other parent killed?

#### Reasons to live

All my life I have felt a power, kind and gentle but beyond my comprehension. I always felt it there with me. It was gentle and kind and it gave me strength when I was afraid. It always told me, during missions that it wasn't my time to die and when it was it would be in glory. This isn't glory and God was still saying it isn't time. I still have work to do.

#### Questions

- Where is God now? Ever since I've been in this prison I can't feel His presence anymore.
- Would God want me to allow another to die when I can prevent it?
- How sure am I that standing back and watching someone lie to save us all is the right thing?

#### Reasons to Live

I know what I can do. People listen when I speak and read what I write. I have made people think. I have changed hearts and minds and I know this. I am the only one of the group who knows this for sure. I would die for the truth if necessary, but maybe the truth is better served by me living and devoting my whole life to it.

#### Questions

- Is the cause more important than my love for my friends?
- Anyone can write the truth. I can't know people won't listen to anyone else. What I have been saying will be just as true coming from anyone else. How do I know that my role in the group actually has to be done by me?

#### Reasons to Live

One day this nightmare will be over. The future that I've been fighting for will arrive. I will settle down and the past will have been like a bad dream. That was always the plan. But the running, the near misses and now this. Is it selfish or just honest to say that I believe that I have suffered enough?

#### Questions

- However hard I try to leave the group and stop fighting it keeps pulling me back. Why?
- Can I allow others to suffer as I have done?

#### Reasons to Live

When I felt it, him – I always knew it was a him, first stir inside me, when I knew for certain, I hated him. I have no idea who his father is. I did what I had to do to get by and to be able to eat that night and I got more money if I did it unsafely. I took herbs of course but we knew, we always knew there was a risk. I can't support myself let alone a child. And yet, being here - knowing my death will also kill him feels wrong. I could leave him on the doorstep of a wealthy couple, or at least in an orphanage. I could give him a chance. Or we could both die. I don't care about him more than saving the rest of the resistance.

#### Questions

- You suspect that the father of your child might not be one of your 'clients' but actually someone you care about. Why?
- Is a potential life you don't love more important than the life of people you do love and who have become family to you?

#### Reasons to Live

I am the best placed person to recruit young adults into our group and disseminate our texts. They look up to me and I can make them question things and find the right people. There are always those who want to join us, it's just a matter of seeing the signs. The bigger the group, the more damage it can do to the party.

#### Questions

- I am recruiting young people who maybe don't fully understand and taking their lives from them to give to the resistance group. When I tell them it's risky their eyes light up. They want to be heros. Am I doing the right thing?
- Am I just using these people who are practically children as an excuse to save myself?

#### Reasons to live

To die, knowing I've changed nothing? I can't bear it. I will die a meaningless death. There will be memorials maybe but people won't care. Not about me. I seem the terrorist type. If I lived I would fight to my last breath and give everything I could to the cause. If I die now I am a statistic, a foot note. I joined this group 9 weeks ago. If I had a year I could make a difference – I could topple this regime.

#### Questions

- Am I lying to myself, am I just scared?
- Do I know what I'm capable of really? Do I know what the others are capable of?

#### Reasons to Live

I was never brave. I was never like the others. I joined the group because someone asked me to. Because I wanted to be on the right side of history. I didn't think we were doing any harm. The odd train derailment, publications written. I agreed with every word. But I want to live. I have no skill or talent. There is nothing that I could offer the group that they don't already have. But I am scared of a dark nothingness. I am scared of waiting for the bullet. I am scared of fading away. I can't die. I have to live. I am so so afraid.

#### Questions

- You love the others in your group. How much? Enough to face your fear for them?
- How much do you care about the cause?
- Will your fear cause you to hurt and betray others or can you fight that instinct? Is it hard to fight?

# **Appendix 3 Personality Traits**

Martyr complex	Ignorant	Strong for others
Over protective	Perceptive	Anxious
Spirited	Lost and hurt	Traumatised
Empowered	Kind	Faithful
Won't accept bad situations	Depressed	Addict
Kind	Needs human contact	Angry
Contemplative	Courageous	Cowardly
Creative	Earnest	Dramatic
Immature	Rational	Realistic
Unrealistic	Intense	Conservative
Sarcastic	Skeptical	Stubborn

Strict	Dishonest	Indecisive
Regretful	Unkind	Weak-willed
Modest	Competitive	Aggressive
Loving	Honest	Strong for themselves

# Appendix 4 Reasons to Die

#### Reasons to die

The group were caught because I couldn't run fast enough. I wasn't fully trained. Maybe that's an excuse. It sounds like an excuse doesn't it? When I felt the armed police getting closer I panicked and shouted for help. I alerted the police that I wasn't alone. If I hadn't panicked they would've thought that I was alone and shot me and we wouldn't be in this mess. My friends came back to help me. They shouldn't have.

#### Questions

- I hadn't been fully trained. I think that's why I was caught? Why was I on the mission? Did I insist I went? Or did they insist I came?
- Did I feel coerced to join the group?

#### Reasons to die

I felt that I couldn't stand against the government alone. In order to be effective I had to recruit others. I recruited the first 2 members of the group and formed us into an organisation. I started the group because I wanted to matter. But I was a graffiti artist. I wanted to fight them. I wanted to fight them with pictures and words. And I don't want the people who are here because of me to die.

#### Questions

- Was I careful to approach only people who were already acting against the party on their own? Or did I cause them to join the fight?
- Can the group continue to be effective without me?

#### Reasons to die

I was alone. They had taken everything. Within the group I found a family. I can't go on without the only people who have ever cared about me. If any of them confess and die I will have lost a member of my family. How can we go on after this? How can I go on after this?

#### Questions

- Is this selfish to care about myself more than the cause?
- I have unique skills that I bring to the group. What are they? Can the group continue without them?

#### Reasons to die

I am secretly in love with (one of) the people who are most vocal about volunteering to die. I can't live without them. I won't live without them. Without them there is no reason to fight, no person to keep the world safe for. I must die in their place.

#### **Questions**

- Is love, even a love as strong as mine really more important than the people dying under this regime?
- Why can't I accept that the person I love is an adult who can make their own decisions? What do I need to do to overcome that? Should I overcome that?

#### Reasons to die

If I choose to live will I ever truly be free, really? The others are talking about continuing the fight if we live. Do they really believe that we won't be watched? If they follow us I will inevitably eventually lead them to my same sex lover, even if I try to stay away my lover will look for me, and they will execute us both for perversion of the natural order.

#### Questions

- OK, they didn't sign up for this. But so many innocent have died. If I am useful enough to the cause to go on living, and if I am willing to lay down my own life how far am I willing to go? Is love really more important than the fight?
- Do I love him / her / them more than I love my friends?

#### Reasons to die

I am the sort of person the party supports. I sing acoustic and folk songs about the glory of life as it is now, maybe with some strongly veiled sarcasm. When I am singing I can forget about the words and focus on the music and feel truly free. I have built a large number of fans. I look young and innocent and I embody the regime's ideal. The others will make sure that I am remembered, that my name and face become a symbol. I will be their martyr.

#### Questions

- Am I happy being a martyr knowing that I will die and be remembered as the sex I was born as rather than the gender I am?
- Is my only role in the group to die to support the cause?

#### Reasons to die

There is something dark within me and it's getting darker. Melodramatic right? But I don't just want to go after empty buildings or to derail trains any more. The guards and the soldiers signed up to murder and obey their orders unthinkingly. Maybe we should show them the cost of that? I am so angry but I don't want to kill, I don't want to become like them. I just find it hard to fight the feeling that I should.

#### Questions

- I am the expert in explosives, I am unique in that I managed to learn from someone who passed their knowledge on to me. The group is unlikely to find another person with my skills. Does that justify my life?
- Can I keep this anger inside me at bay?
   Should I?

#### Reasons to die

The group listen when I talk. If I decide a mission is too dangerous it doesn't happen. If I decide it goes ahead then we plan it. I decide who our best fighters are and who we need. I decided who was on the mission that night. They were all there because of me. They are all here because of me.

#### Questions

- What will my death mean for the group?
- I knew the risks when I joined the group but now I'm afraid. Afraid of death but more afraid of living with someone else's death on my conscience. Is that a logical reason to die? For the sake of the cause should I live?

# Appendix 5 Confession

I (full name) confess that I have committed acts of terrorism against the state and it's inhabitants. I incited a group of people to commit these acts with me. I am beyond rehabilitation. As I die I will reflect on the wrongs that I have committed against the party.

In my last moments I choose freely and voluntarily to ask for forgiveness for the terrorism that I have committed. May it be granted as the leader sees fit.