



Golden Cobra Challenge 2015

Voices

By Melina Cunelius

4 players, 5 acts

Introduction

Voices is a larp about people starting to hear voices in their head. Those people are just everyday people in one point or other in their life. Everything is normal, but hearing voices may change that, as they first appear occasionally, then more frequently and finally the Voice is there, responding and discussing, whatever they feel like doing.

Simple things, like hearing someone call your name when you're out shopping, or feeling your phone vibrate in your pocket, are extremely common, so most have some experience on this. It's relatable, but it becomes a problem for around 3-10% of general population. Not all voices are related to schizophrenia or psychosis, but also otherwise healthy individuals may hear them. Voices range from hostile to very neutral and sometimes encouraging, though negative voices are more common. They can be confusing and frightening, but some, like authors may find inspiration in them.

This larp is based on creators own experiences with schizophrenia, to help people understand what it is like to live with voices in their head and how frightening, as well as sudden, the start of a mental illness may be. Rather than presenting one level of intensity and frequency of voices, the larp gets more intense in every act and the Voice becomes a character of their own in the end, being part of the human character at first and while shaping the mind and thoughts of their owner.

The LARP

Characters

Both Hosts and Voices have players. The Hosts are friends with each other, sharing their life and thoughts. They may speak to each other about the Voices, but they must ask themselves if their character would, as hearing voices still carries a huge stigma socially.

There are two Hosts, Anna/Anders and Liz/Leonard, and their Voices. The Voice reads their human's character to know what kind of person has them.



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This larp also needs an organiser to direct action.

Hosts

This information is to all. Both host players know each others character as they are friends and Voices know who they accompany. In the start, neither of them has heard voices in their head. If there is something players want to change in their character, they may do that to make the character more playable for them.

Anna/Anders

You are a 40 something doctor working in _____ (current city). You studied in Edinburgh in the 80's and moved to _____ (current country) with your wife after you graduated. You have been together ever since and have two lovely daughters. Lately you have been feeling blue since the last child was stillborn. It was very hard for both but especially to you. Your mind tried to help you through it with manic period, which has made you more talkative and hyper, working more but also spending more money while going drinking with friends. Recently you have been given a higher position and the stress has grown with the power. Your manic period has ended and sadness is clouding your mind. Your wife has been worrying about you and suggested you to take some time off from work, but as you fear for your position, you've just brushed it off.

Liz/Leonard

You've had a great career as a model, but have moved on to acting. Of course people have been very skeptical, how could a person who has gone all the time with their looks know more than that? Thankfully, you have proved everyone wrong. You are very talented artist and actor, but also have basic training in singing, which has impressed people around you. You are a delightful person to be around, but have also suffered of creeps and maniacs (aka obsessed fans) following you. It is scary, but your friends have helped you with dealing with those disturbed people. Lately you've been very self-conscious about the critique you have got. Nothing excessive has been said, but you could always be a little bit better, don't you think?



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The Voices

This information is only for the voices. The players decide between them who accompanies whom.

Anna/Anders' Voice embodies self-loath and anxiety.

Liz/Leonard 's Voice embodies vanity and paranoia.

The Voices prey on and encourage the negative feelings and thoughts of Hosts. They may introduce new ideas and go on creating delusions and hallucinations. They may introduce these ideas slyly, like "Have you seen how he looks at you?" and then, after some time maybe, continue "Maybe you are annoying him and he can't stand you, but then smiles and agrees with you, because no one else could ever be with you". Give them time to react and think about what you say.

Voice should start slowly in the first act and then up their negativity and how often they speak. In 4th act they are free to discuss with their haver and in last act they can appear as a person to them.

The Setting

An open room with a table, bowls and glasses. Also chairs for the hosts at least. There should also be paper and pencils for the characters to use. At least few coloured pencils should be available, including red and black.

Workshops

Let the Hosts sit face-to-face, one asking questions for 1 minute, then swith. The Voices just listen.

Then sit the Voice with their host and let them ask questions about the character. The host is there to answer. These questions should deepen the character and the relationship of the Voice to the host. You should give this about 2 minutes.

The Acts

The description of the act should be read before the act and the act should end with the organiser saying it aloud. The hosts should be made aware they may interact with each other in all but the 1st act. For clarity, L and A are refered to as characters in description of the acts. Please note, the time is just a suggestion. If the action seems to benefit the experience, the act may continue a bit more.



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1st Act – Lazy Day

10min

Characters are enjoying a lazy Sunday. One is writing and the other one is drawing.

[They should be provided with paper and pencils. One should be given the coloured pencils with all colours. They can go where they feel comfortable sitting and doing their art.]

Suddenly, you hear a voice, faint voice in the distance. It grows. Is it your inner voice? Is it god or goddess? The devil? The devil inside you? It grows. You try to talk to it, but it doesn't act like "just an imaginary friend".

2nd Act – Work

5 - 10min

Both meet in A's workplace, a hospital, where L comes to complain about sore throat (or something else if they wish to). You may also discuss the plans for L's birthday, which is just around the corner.

The voice appears to not leave you alone and tries to stick with you even when you don't listen to it. Just try to go with it. It's just a voice in your head. Work is more important than a sound in your head.

3rd act - Friendly dinner

5 – 10 min

The friends gather to celebrate L's birthday. You have plans for a nice dinner and and share a drink. The soup is served. The voice screams and laughs.

The soup of symptoms. You can take a spoonful, which taste like nothing. You can take another spoonful, but the soup doesn't seem to go anywhere. The plate is still full. But if you want to, you can see into yourself. Take one spoonful and look at it, taste it and you can uncover a new part of your mind. The symptoms stick with you to the end.

4th Act - Final Straw

10 – 15 min

Decent to madness. The voice is strong, it's there, just behind you, next to you, in front of you, but you don't see it. There's nothing to see. The symptoms you discovered last evening just keep with you too. You can't just sit there, you need to find a safe place. Is there a safe place? Or are you just in a place you don't know, with nowhere to go? The voice is still there with you. Come and face it.



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5th Act - In the Ward

~ 10 min

You are doing the same thing you were doing at the first act. Somewhat different feeling than in the last place you were at. The voice is still there with you, you know it, but it seems different. So you just do what you like this time. But the voice comes back, and makes it hard for you to concentrate and move your hand like you want to. And then you notice: You are not at home.

[The players are given the same things as in the first act, but writer should be given the list of inspirational words and drawer only black and red coloured pencils. If the players play confused and demand to know where they are, you may take the part of the nurse and try to calm them down and say they are safe.]

Soup of Symptoms

These should be printed, cut out (some include description of the terms, those should be included), and folded, then put to a bowl. The bowl should be served as a soup in the 3rd act.

Debrief

This discussion should be done after game. The players may have thoughts and feelings they want to share. They should be asked how they feel and if they want, say what is on their mind and if the game was how they expected. This kind of discussion should be encouraged and players should be given space and time to talk about their experience.



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List of symptoms to be included in the Soup of Symptoms:

difficulty concentrating

suspiciousness

ongoing unusual thoughts and beliefs

Erotomaniac delusions

- Someone with this type of delusional disorder believes that another person, often someone important or famous, is in love with him or her. The person might attempt to contact the object of the delusion, and stalking behavior is not uncommon.

•Grandiose delusions

- A person with this type of delusional disorder has an over-inflated sense of worth, power, knowledge, or identity. The person might believe he or she has a great talent or has made an important discovery.

•Jealous delusions

- A person with this type of delusional disorder believes that his or her spouse or sexual partner is unfaithful.

•Persecutory delusions

- People with this type of delusional disorder believe that they (or someone close to them) are being mistreated, or that someone is spying on them or planning to harm them. It is not uncommon for people with this type of delusional disorder to make repeated complaints to legal authorities.

•Somatic delusions

- A person with this type of delusional disorder believes that he or she has a physical defect or medical problem

depression

anxiety

suicidal thoughts or actions

difficulty functioning

Changes in feeling and mood

Hallucination

•sight

- someone with psychosis may see colours and shapes, or people or animals that aren't there

Hallucination

•sounds



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Hallucination

touch

- a common psychotic hallucination is that you are being touched when there is no-one there

Hallucination

•smell

- usually a strange or unpleasant odour

Hallucination

•taste

- like unpleasant taste in mouth

random speech

- for example, they may switch from one topic to another mid-sentence

a sudden loss in train of thought (resulting in an abrupt pause in conversation or activity)

Catatonia (stupor)

- motionless, apathetic state in which one is oblivious or does not react to external stimuli.

depersonalization

- feeling of watching oneself act, while having no control over a situation, feel like they have changed, and the world has become vague, dreamlike.

Derealization

- external world seems unreal