

## **Project: Memory**

An Emotional Digital Live Action Experience for 2-6 Players

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In this live action experience, characters live in a society of integrated technology, not unlike our own. Often against the advice of mental health professionals and neurologists, individuals and groups decide to delete all memories of specific people or incidents as an alternative to dealing with trauma or pain.

With this decision, they forget not only the sadness or pain they experienced, but the positive memories associated with that person. It may also result in other knowledge gaps; for example, if the individual received on-the-job training or was in school with the other person.

On the new year (January 1, or other applicable new year suiting characters' cultures and beliefs), each character receives an email or private message from “Relelhart Company” stating:

*Due to the result of the recent class action lawsuit against Relelhart Company,<sup>1</sup> we are required to release information acquired from you in a previous business transaction. To recover your funds and missing information, please visit this link.*

(The facilitator may send this in a text message or email to the players at the assigned time of the larp, with a link leading to the Google Hangout.) The premise is that these characters chose to have their memories erased, a lawsuit deemed the business unethical, and the characters are now invited to explore these memories. Emergent play or facts about the corporation or lawsuit beyond this are welcome, though the focus of this larp is on the character-to-character interactions.

This larp is meant to pick up and play in an accessible, low-costume genre. However, feel free to adapt this larp to other genres and eras. The computer and its text invitation could instead be a dream, and all players connecting could be in a group dream state; players can use their computers as magic mirrors, terminals in a sci-fi or cyberpunk world, magical books, or more. The only genre limits are the ones you choose to impose.

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<sup>1</sup> For further tie-in experiences with The Relelhart Company, please explore the CHARIOT continuity universe of The Geek Initiative Larps at <http://facebook.com/chariotlarp>

## Larp themes and information

- Time: Two hours
- Structure: Freeform with blackbox-inspired elements
- Players: 2-6 (Intimate)
- Play if you enjoy: Focus on meaningful bonds, flashbacks, and memories
- Tone: This is a serious, intense larp meant for exploration of trauma and empowerment. *This larp may be therapeutic, but it is not therapy. For deeper exploration of serious issues, please seek counseling from a licensed mental health professional.*
- While written as a digital larp, this larp also functions as an in-person experience if desired.

The time frame and digital nature of this larp are intended to provide an immersive, intense, feelings-focused, accessible experience from any location. Though originally designed as a standalone larp experience, this larp also works as an introspective development tool for characters in other larps or other media.

## The recommended runtime is as follows

- Introductions, safety brief, and content discussion: 20 minutes
- Relationship workshop: 20 minutes
- Gameplay: 1 hour
- Debrief: 20 minutes

## Required to play

- Computer or mobile device with an internet connection, microphone, and speakers (headset recommended)
- Google Hangouts or Zoom
- Flashlight (optional, one per participant)

**Facilitator:** One participant will take on the role of facilitator and timekeeper. Use the gentle phrase, “Our time will come to a close...” when giving time warnings in-game. The facilitator will also fully participate in the larp.

**Playing this larp:** Once the group has decided upon a facilitator, the facilitator should guide the group through safety mechanics, scenario selection, flashback mechanics, and the relationship development phase as described below.

**Introductions and pronouns:** Every player provides their names and pronouns, and a fact about themselves.

**Safety mechanics:** Participants' safety comes before any content in this larp and should follow The Geek Initiative's safety, consent, and inclusion policies.<sup>2</sup> Players may always opt out of scenarios, and prior to beginning, the facilitator should host a discussion to explore the themes participants are comfortable with addressing. This should be done during the character relationship development phase.

*Cut:* Say "cut" and make an "x" with your arms in view of your webcam (if you are able) to instantly stop a scene for physical or emotional safety reasons. You may also use this mechanic to veto any content topic during out of game discussions.

*Lookdown:* This digital larp uses a modified version of the lookdown mechanic common in freeform larps. To take a break from the larp for any reason (such as getting water, using the bathroom, or because you don't want to stop play but would like to opt out of current content), hold your hand over your eyes.

Please use the below flashback mechanics for consent during flashback scenes.

## Scenarios

- **The Breakup:** Former romantic partners face their choices to remove their memories concerning monogamous, polyamorous, or open romantic relationships.
- **Family I Forgot:** Former family members decide whether they wish to remember the horrible things they did to each other.
- **Trauma Dump:** After experiencing trauma together, a group decides collectively to erase the memory of the trauma they all experienced.
- **Custom Scenario:** Create another scenario of your choice.

Play one scenario at a time, but feel free to explore multiple scenarios.

The facilitator may ask the players to disclose any topics they do not wish to play, no questions asked. Players, including the facilitator, may use "cut" at any time to indicate no to content. Prior to play, the player should have a fair understanding of the subject matter of the scene, and the traumas they feel comfortable unfolding between the characters.

Flashback mechanic: "I have a memory."

At any time during the larp, any player may halt interaction by stating, "**I have a memory.**" They go on to propose the memory they wish to recover. This is a collaborative story creation

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<sup>2</sup> <https://geekinitiative.com/tgilarps/tgi-larp-safety-consent-inclusion-policies/>

technique. If the other player(s) involved offer consent, they act out the memory. This negotiation can take place in character, using the following format:

*Yes, please:*

Player one: "I have a memory. We got into a fight in the middle of a cafe. June was jealous of my close friendship with Alexandra."

Player two: "Yes, I remember that."

(The scene commences. When the scene is finished, any player says, "**and that's how I remember it.**" Real-time play continues.)

*Yes, but—players consent with amended subject matter:*

Player one: "I have a memory. I remember walking through the park with June. We were talking about having children."

Player two: "I remember that, but we were talking about moving in together, not having children."

(The scene commences. When the scene is finished, any player says, "**and that's how I remember it.**" Real-time play continues.)

*No, thank you:*

Player one: "I have a memory. We were talking about how much we wanted to kill our father."

Player two: "I don't recall that memory at all."

Player one: "Thank you."

(Real-time play continues.)

Memories should last 2-4 minutes each. When the memory is complete, the characters in the memory recall it and continue their real-time interactions. When a flashback begins, all players should switch off their main light and create ambient light using a flashlight. (This is not a requirement, especially if flashlights are not available, or if it creates an accessibility issue for any participant.) When the memory is complete, players should turn off the flashlight and turn on the main light again.

## Relationship development phase:

For each relationship represented in the larp, develop collaborative responses to these questions. Feel free to explore and discuss:

- How did we meet?
- What were our top three conflicts?
- How did this relationship end?
- What did you need from me?
- Why did you care about me?
- I erased memories instead of fixing things because...

**Playthrough:** Once the participants understand the mechanics and have gone through the relationship workshopping, it's time to begin play. Play as described above.

## Debrief phase

Because of the intimate nature of this larp, the debrief phase should focus on how the characters felt, and a separation between how the character felt and what did (or did not) bleed to the player. Bleed is the transference of emotion from character to player (or vice versa).<sup>3</sup>

During the debrief phase, it may be specifically helpful to look at:

- What you had in common with the character
- How you are unlike the character
- What about the character you'd like to take with you
- What about the character you'd like to leave behind

Debrief should be opt-in for all participants. The facilitator doesn't have to run the debrief, but should outline it.

*The content of this larp was inspired by the 2004 film "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and the 2001 film "Vanilla Sky." The flashback mechanic was inspired from diegetic blackbox techniques used at Learn Larp's 2019 "Imperial Magischola"<sup>4</sup> and resulting scenes.*

## Credits

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<sup>3</sup> <https://nordiclarp.org/2015/03/02/bleed-the-spillover-between-player-and-character/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://magischola.com/imperial/>