

## **ACIS: Adventurer Caregivers In Support (of Adventurer Caregivers)**

By: Kate Hill

Players: 4-6 (including facilitator, who also plays a character).

Length: 3 hours OR 3 sessions of 1 to 1 ½ hours each.

Content Warning: Messy and potentially toxic caregiver/ward relationships, trauma reactions, violence (off screen).

Requirements: A real time video software program like Zoom or Google Meet, email addresses or mailing addresses of all your players, a shared online document for keeping track of notes, paper and other letter writing equipment, characters from a tabletop game that players want to revisit.

**Introduction:** Being the parent or caregiver of an adventurer is stressful. Be they prophesied for greatness, runaway royals, or even following in the family's footsteps, you never know when they will get injured, cursed, or resurrected as a dire boar. In this game, each player will both play a former character of theirs from a tabletop game and the caregiver of another adventurer. Scenes take place during an ACIS peer support group that is happening via magical viewing devices and are interspersed with letter writing about your former character's adventures to their caregiver. These magical devices are represented as a video conferencing platform, and the game is played entirely online. Will you be able to learn to cope with your fears? Will you find the support you need? And how will your relationship with your ward change?

### **Choosing the Style of Play:**

Choose the preferred gameplay time format that works best for all players:

- **One Shot:** The game is played over one period of 3 hours. Scenes are shorter, only running around 30 minutes, and letters are written and then sent electronically over a period of 15 minutes. This game is played completely online via video chat and email/photographs of handwritten letters (player choice).
- **Three Sessions:** The game is played in three sessions that can be spaced out over as long a period as players need. The first session contains the workshops, character creation, and the first scene and should take about two hours. Letters are then written and physically mailed to the intended caregiver. Once letters are physically received, the second session takes place, which consists of the second scene, about an hour to hour and a half of play. The letter writing is repeated, and once letters are received the last session, consisting of the final scene and debrief, takes place.

### **Safety:**

The facilitator should introduce these safety rules at the beginning of the game:

- The Door is Always Open
- Cut
- Largo

More information about these rules can be viewed here:

[https://www.bigbadcon.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Safety\\_Cards\\_082318.pdf](https://www.bigbadcon.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Safety_Cards_082318.pdf)

Once safety is discussed, ask players to raise any content / topics that they do not want to see discussed in this game. Players can either state these topics out loud or write them privately to the facilitator who will then compile a list on a shared document.

### **Character Creation:**

Choose a character from a tabletop roleplaying game (or larp) that you have played before in the past. This game works best if you choose a character from a game that is from a low tech/fantasy setting

(Dungeon and Dragons, for example). This character may end up having new things added to their story or changes to their backstory. Choose a character you are comfortable having some alternate universe fanfiction told about. This is an adventurer to be featured in the game.

Tell the other players who the ward is. Answer these questions:

- Why did they go adventuring?
- What are their key personality traits?
- What are two dangerous things they did early in their adventuring career?

Facilitators should write down these answers on a shared online document so the information is available to everyone.

Now it is time to make your caregiver. In this game, a caregiver means anyone who played a significant part in raising an adventurer. This could be a parent, relative, teacher of a trade, mentor, fairy guardian, etc. Each player should choose a character who is not their own whose caregiver they will play.

Caregivers can come from a variety of worlds and cities, but each caregiver's ward will have a relationship to the adventurer that the caregiver's player created. Keep that in mind as you answer the following questions.

If you have time, it is best to answer these questions one at a time so that creation is done collaboratively

- What is your stat block? (age, class, race and alignment if your world uses that kind of thing)
- What do you do for a living?
- Who did you raise your ward with, if anyone? Where are they now?
- Who were you raised by? What is your current relationship with your own caregivers?
- What is something positive that you share with your ward that binds you together?
- What is something that you disagree with your ward on (besides their choice to go adventuring?)
- Why do you have trouble with your ward's decision to be an adventurer?
- How did you find out about this support group?.

### **Building Relationships:**

Once you have answered these questions, each player, in turn, takes one minute to chat with the player who chose the adventurer/player character that player described at the beginning of character creation. Your ward and their character's ward should travel in the same circles and know each other on a first name basis. This relationship can be either positive or negative. If it makes sense, choose more serious and intense relationships over more casual ones--those bring characters together and bring drama!

The facilitator should then pair up players who do not yet have a relationship. Each player should have about 30 seconds to come up with what fear that they have in common about their wardren. Do this one pair at a time and does not require going into separate breakout rooms.

### **Overview of Game Play:**

Game play takes place in three scenes and two intermediate letter writing segments. Each scene takes place a month apart in game time, at a support group for caregivers of adventurers. ACIS has no official leader, and is not led by any kind of specialist. Someone usually volunteers to be a facilitator and come up with discussion topics. In this game, the facilitator should take this role. While the facilitator plays a character, they also introduce discussion questions and topics and pay attention to who is speaking and who isn't in order to make sure that everyone has a chance to share and put the spotlight on their character.

## **Outline of Play:**

### *First Scene (30 minutes-1 hour):*

The first meeting of this ACIS support group. Characters should introduce themselves, establish their relationship to their ward, and begin to discuss their fears.

At the beginning of the scene, the peer facilitator should, in character, introduce ground rules for the support group, which are:

- Everything said in the group is confidential and does not leave the group.
- When someone is speaking all others should be actively listening to them and not interrupting.
- When a person is done sharing, offer support in the way they ask for it, focusing on validation, reassurance, and gentle questioning.
- Help people solve problems when they ask for help and be sure to listen to ways they suggest help would be useful.

The main questions for this session are:

- What do you want out of this group? What would you like this group to do for you?
- What kind of a relationship do you want with your ward?

Goals of the scene:

- Develop the mission of the group and personal goals for each character
- Discover the connections that exist between each other's wards.

### *Interlude:: Letter writing (15 minutes or up to a week)*

Each player now writes a letter from the ward (their past character) to their caregiver. The letter should answer the questions of:

- What has the ward been up to in the last month?
- What did they think of the last gift their caregiver sent to help?
- What potentially extremely (even for them) dangerous thing will they embark on in the next month?

### *Scene Two (thirty minutes-1 hour)*

In this scene, caregivers will just have received the letters from their wardren. This scene should discuss the content of those letters and focus on the caregiver's reactions.

Questions that can be used by the facilitator to help discussion:

- How do you handle the fears about your ward in your life?
- How does your ward's reaction to your help make you feel?
- What is something you wish your ward would listen to you on?

Goals of the scene:

- Caregivers discuss their own fears and find others who may share those fears.
- Caregivers decide how they want to help their ward more (or if they do)
- Caregivers open up more about their wishes for their wardren.

*Interlude: Letter Writing(15 minutes or up to a week)*

Use the same format discussed previously. In this letter, players should focus on:

- How that really dangerous adventure went
- How they reacted to their parent's attempt to "help" (if they did get help)
- One thing, from the heart, that they want their parents to understand about their life and choices.

*Scene Three (30 minutes or 1 hour)*

This is the last scene of the game. The support group may continue after, but this should be an inflection point, a point where a new understanding, relationship or perhaps new goal is created.

At the end of this scene, the facilitator should thank everyone for coming. They should ask each character one new action they will do after this session and one thing they will change about how they will interact with their ward going forward.

Questions that can be used by the facilitator to help discussion:

- How did your ward going through with the really dangerous adventure make you feel? How are you coping?
- What would you say in response to what your ward told you about their life?
- How do you feel you can move forward with your life? What can you let go?

Goals of the scene:

- Caregivers grow in some way in regards to their relationship to their ward
- Caregivers have an experience of finding support from another character
- Caregivers re-evaluate their initial goal. Did they meet it?

### **Debrief:**

After play is concluded, have players get up from their chairs, stretch, and change their nicknames (if possible) in whatever video conferencing software you are using. Then gather players back together to do a small debrief. This is a time to shake off the character and appreciate each other's play.

Have players each introduce themselves and say one boring thing about themselves. Then ask the following questions:

- Where do you think your character eventually ended up in their relationship to their ward? Did they complete their goals or change them? What is their epilogue?
- What is something you want to take away from this game?
- What is something that another player did that made your game better?

Thank everyone for playing and let people stay around as long as they want (and you have time!) to chat.

## Credits:

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