

The Reach

This is written as a sequel to Karolina Soltys' The Glimpse, using a streamlined version of that game's fiction and setting its action a decade after The Glimpse's. Those who've played The Glimpse can bring their knowledge from that game into this one, but The Reach is also playable standalone (though naturally The Glimpse is highly recommended regardless of whether you want to play The Reach - it's an incredible game).

Content warning

Both playable characters in *The Reach* have experienced the unexpected death of a close family member (their mother or their aunt); whilst this event was over two decades ago, it is likely to come up in play as it is the point at which the characters' realities diverged.

What is *The Reach*?

This is a text-based slow larp, designed for two players to play over the course of 60 days, on online notepads that will disappear once the duration of the game has elapsed. The tech involved is freely available online (no subscriptions, accounts, etc needed).

Who you're playing

Both players take on the role of Robin, the same person in two different realities (Robin's gender is down to player choice). Both Robins are only children, born to the same parents (Harper and Cory) when their parents were 18. Their lives diverged when, at age 6, Robin's mother and aunt (Harper's twin sister Leslie) had an argument in which one of them was killed after running out into the road. In one reality, Harper died. In another, Leslie died.

If you have played The Glimpse before The Reach, you can use that game's more detailed information about the two families and the varying repercussions of the deaths to play a direct continuity between both games.

Both Robins went on to study engineering at university. Whilst at university, they were participants on a video call where, following a 'system update', their realities both had access to the same call. The Robins were able to talk to their deceased mother/aunt, alternate versions of their father, and each other.

What's happening now

Whilst experience of being on a trans-reality video call was deeply significant at the time, it is now a decade later. The call is a 45-minute patch of memory from years ago that feels hazy and unreliable. Both families rarely spoke explicitly about it afterwards. The only proof is Robin's memory of it, and the seemingly impossible nature of events has discouraged them from sharing it with people outside their family. The event has fallen into something that feels more like fable than fact.

Both Robins have, however, tried to replicate this universe-spanning-software phenomena over the last decade. Play begins at the moment they succeed, having created a single editable text document which they can both access, that will be stable for 60 days. Both

Robins know that, after these 60 days, the connection will be lost (and it would require the same time, effort and luck all over again to recreate this link).

Set up: calibration and expectations

The following set up stages can be done via whatever method is most comfortable and accessible for the players. If possible, it's recommended to do all set-up on the same day you begin playing, so any notes can be written directly into your out-of-character (OOC) notepad (which must be created the same day as the in-character (IC) notepad, as it will also expire after 60 days; notes on this part of set-up are below).

Firstly, go over any lines and veils you currently have, keeping notes of these in the OOC notepad if apt (these can be updated during play if ever needed).

Next, discuss how often you expect to be able to play, and whether you're likely to usually be on the pads simultaneously or at different times. Whilst it's understandable that this will change over the game's long duration, it's really good to set shared expectations for the level and style of engagement you can offer each other.

Lastly, discuss any expectations or hopes for the tone of the game. *The Reach* is largely intended as a game about self-determination, relationships that can only be understood from the inside, and the impact that someone we'll never meet again can have on our lives. However, there's nothing to stop that sliding into *Primer*-esque tragic drama, or shifting more to *Synecdoche*, *New York*-like magical realism - the tone is shaped by the players and play itself.

Set up: character building

Firstly, decide who will play which Robin (the core difference being whether they lost their mother or aunt). Then, discuss and answer the following questions, establishing where your Robins are alike or different. Beyond the context given above, the degree to which your Robins' lives, personalities and goals overlap or diverge is down to you; remember that here is where you can flesh out interesting possible tensions, resentments, **confidences** and so on that could emerge between your characters over the coming weeks.

- How happy are you with your life since university? What does that life look like?
- What do you like most about yourself? What do you like least about yourself?
- What is your relationship with your father like? And your mother/aunt?
- How do you feel about how the events of the video call have been largely ignored by your family?
- How serious have your attempts to recreate the phenomena been? Is this the culmination of dogged, isolating effort, or a stumbled-upon discovery?
- Why have you been trying to recreate the phenomena? What problems do you think (consciously or unconsciously) connecting with the other Robin will solve?
- How much did you actually think this attempt to create a link would succeed?
- You have, these past 10 years, built up an imagined picture of how the other Robin is doing and what they're like. What have you pictured?
- What about your life makes you angry, what about it makes you sad, and what about it makes you hopeful?

Set up: internal deadlines

Privately, each decide upon 3-4 important dates for your character that will fall during play. These can be anniversaries, deadlines, events - what's important is they mean something to your character, and they involve an action to be taken, decision to be made or threshold to be crossed. They are, essentially, things you can't help but mentally keep time by. For example:

- Meeting their niece/nephew/nibling for the first time
- Their first ever international trip
- 6 months since starting on testosterone or estrogen
- The anniversary of their divorce
- When they'll realise a lifelong dream of owning a pet
- When they're due a raise at work (or will quit, if they don't get one)
- The deadline for deciding if they're going to join their partner in moving to a new city
- The date they'll receive important medical results
- A funeral, birthday, wedding or christening

How much these explicitly come into play is down to the players; they function both as role-playing prompts and internal structure for the game's long runtime.

Set up: online platforms

An important note about technical set-up for the game: as the notepads expire 60 days after being made, keep this end date in mind when setting up. If you want the chance to write frantic, last-minute messages right down to the wire, make sure the expiry date is one where you'll be free to do so!

The Reach requires two online notepads (for IC and OOC comms). To begin, go to <https://pad.riseup.net> and make your two pads. You can name your notepad anything, but you need to give it a unique name: **OOC-thereach-[DATE AND TIME OF STARTING PLAY]** is a recommended format, swapping out OOC for IC for your second notepad. Leave both pads' duration at 60 days, which should be the default on the site.

Your IC notepad is for any messages your characters are leaving each other, as well as any live back-and-forth typing between them.

Your OOC notepad is for any logistical, practical and safety discussions you might need to have during the game's runtime (check-ins regarding possible new game content; updates about how often you'll be able to play in the near future; agreements of any times you'll both be on the notepad simultaneously) and any extra character context you want to add, that isn't something your characters say directly to each other but might be useful to play off of (recent 'off-screen' events for a character; a secret they're trying to build up to share; how much something the other character said is privately needling them).

At the top of the OOC notepad, write the date that the pads will both expire, 60 days from creation. At the top of the IC notepad, write a note to check the OOC notepad before playing (this is the only OOC content to be written into the IC notepad; the OOC notepad should always be read when revisiting the pads, to make sure you see any new information you might need to take into account while playing).

Try to add any new information to the OOC and IC notepad **underneath** these two notes, so they're always front-and-centre.

Making the most of long-term online play

Below are some notes on how to approach possible challenges that might come up as a result of this larp's format:

Technical difficulties. There's always a chance the riseup website might have brief outages, and be inaccessible for an hour or two. Treat this however your character would: note down what you want to say for later; read it as fate telling you that you shouldn't have that conversation now; think about contingency plans for future outages.

Asking to talk OOC. It might not always be possible to have the OOC notepad and IC notepad visible at the same time (eg if you're playing on a phone). Therefore, if you are typing live with the other player, but need to discuss something OOC, type [... **reconnecting...**] as a signal to move to the other notepad for an OOC chat.

Player dropout. The long duration of this game means that it's possible one player isn't able to maintain their participation throughout. If this happens, there are two options:

Treat the game as a solo game from now on. Your Robin doesn't know if the other can read or will answer their messages, or what's happened to them, but all they can do is try to contact them until the time runs out.

Invite a new player to join, as a third Robin switched out with the missing player as a result of glitch in the system. All of the content generated between the first two Robins remain, but a new relationship is forged for the remaining time. This third Robin's divergence is up to the players (eg, they might not have lost any relatives, or they experienced the same loss as the remaining Robin and the divergence is something else entirely).

Permission not to post. There is no assumption or expectation that players will post daily or keep to some strict schedule. Simply keep the other player updated if there's going to be changes in the frequency of your posts or your ability to play; just like you, your characters have lives and it's reasonable to have chunks of time away from the game.

Permission not to post #2. The above cuts both ways - there may be periods where you're able to write more than the other player. You can of course check-in to make sure they're still enjoying playing and able to play; however, whilst they don't have the capacity you currently do for messaging, simply use the dynamic in your role-play. Is your Robin worried about absences given the ticking clock, or seeing this as a reminder to not forget their actual life in this reality?

Permission not to post #3. It might be necessary during play to mutually agree not to post for a bit, if at least one player needs to disconnect for a bit and if knowing that more content is potentially being posted makes that really hard for them. Such a long one-on-one game needs a level of negotiation between players, so be aware of this from the start.

Feeling out of step. Feeling like you're not quite in the same rhythm as other players or the game as a whole can easily happen during a larp, and much more so in one that's

spread over so much time. If this happens, take a break from playing if needed, talk to the other player, and don't be hard on yourself.

Give it time. Whilst it should of course always be enjoyable to play no matter how far into the game you are, a slow larp like this obviously rewards patience whilst playing. Rather than getting the pay-off to a moment maybe an hour or a day later, as with some larps, here it may well come a few weeks later. Allow for slow builds, gentle unearthing of characters, long-running conversations and generally shifting the pace of play to fill the time available to you during the game.

To start

One player leaves a message in the in-character notepad as a message for the possible other Robin, but does not know for certain they will receive a response; they think they've cracked it but can't be sure. The other player should leave a response in the first day; from here pace is largely dictated by the players, and the looming deadline.

To finish

Once the notepads have expired, make time for a debrief conversation. You'll have been playing this game for around two months, and setting aside time to properly step back is important. The role-playing finishes when the notepads have expired, but the players can share reflections on the game, their experiences, moments in play they'd like closure on, and suchlike. If stepping away from your character is difficult after such a long period, having a conversation where you're talking really clearly about your experience vs your character's experience can be really helpful.

Ultimate mode

Play the game every ten years, picking up with the same Robins ten years later, after they decided - despite the time, effort and luck involved - to recreate the link.