Conse|cution

by Jonas Richter

About

Conse|cution is a short, freeform game about persecution and some of its consequences. In Conse|cution, we play a short story about a family who hides from persecution and flees into exile with the aid of several helpers. We will focus on the strains endured and the small community forged.

The game is deliberately not committed to a fixed setting. There are many types of persecution, for instance ethnic, religious, or political, and they are not restricted to a particular era or part of the world. Decide together on the form of persecution and the era in which the story plays, e.g. contemporary ethnic persecution. Fill in details if you like, but you can also play with abstracts - an undefined ethnic background, and unnamed countries of origin and destination. No need to pick exotic names - most names are usually considered common in their own community, after all.

First we'll create the family and initial supporting characters as well as basic background information. Then we'll play the story. The story is divided in three phases: **Hiding**, **Traveling**, and **Arriving**. Each phase should have at least one scene, but of course you can decide together to add more scenes. Before the third phase starts, we will repeat a scene from the first and second phase.

Characters

At least half of the group will play family members, while the others will play supporters and potential allies. Let's call them **family** and **support**. Family players will stick to their role throughout the story, while support players will most likely take on different roles for each phase. Choose new roles as needed during the play.

Family: Pick generations and relations (e.g. parent, child, grandparent, aunt) and names for everyone. You may choose further details as you like (e.g. personality traits, behavior toward other family members). The characters you portray are the ones who leave home. Other members of your family may not be able or willing to leave, or have already left. You don't have to "fill empty spots" in the family when picking characters.
Questions that might help you explore your character: How do you cope? Your experiences change you, how do you react to that?
Support: Friends, acquaintances, more or less supportive strangers, humanitarian shelter personnel… Support can come in many shapes, perhaps even involuntarily. Go with characters that feel obvious and plain to you. Within each of the three phases, support characters will usually know each other, perhaps forming their own family.
Questions that might help you explore your character: What do you risk by helping the family? Why do you risk it?

Scenes

To help you have focused scenes, choose some details for each of the following categories: Needs, Locations, Questions, and Impressions. Support players decide where a scene takes place, and what need the family is primarily concerned with in this scene. Family players pick a question or impression that is on the mind of (some of) the family members. *While the need and location explicitly impact the scene (although you don't necessarily have to resolve how the need is satisfied), the family's question or impression only has to be stated before the scene starts. It may or may not be brought up expressly in the scene.*
A few examples are below:

Needs	Locations
Food Shelter Courage Medical care Money Documents Clothes Company ...	1. Hiding: a colleague's home, a neighbor's basement, a distant relative's house, … 2. Traveling: refugee camp, on a train, at a random house, some bureau/ administrative office, a shop, … 3. Arriving: on the street, some bureau/ administrative office, a train station, the new home, ...
Questions	Impressions
Are we willing to leave for good? How low are we willing to sink? Is it okay to steal from the rich? Are we willing to adapt? What will remain of our identity? ...	Being a stranger/lonely Feeling guilt/shame Being bitter/insecure Feeling separated/lost ...

Have clear idea of your character's impulse going into the scene, and show it to your fellow players. Work with and build on what the others bring into the story.

Humming

After character creation, form a circle and put your hands on the back of the persons to your left and right, and hum a chord together. It need not be a perfect major 7 or anything. Move your voice around a bit, humming higher and lower notes. Listen to each other, feel the vibrations with your hands and fingers, and hear how individual notes go together. Don't judge, just listen and experiment with your sound. You may want to stick your heads together for this, and if you feel comfortable, close your eyes. Take breath as you need.

Ready?

Hiding

The family members have gone into hiding. Someone has provided them with a place to stay that seems to be safe for the moment. You are struggling with the realization that you will leave your home for good, hoping that you don't have to.
The family players decide when to end this phase and move to the next.

Traveling

Scenes in this phase shine spotlights on the difficult journey. You are betwixt and between, uprooted, drifting. Looking after your needs is hard, and you have to rely on the help of strangers to get by.
Support and family players decide together when to end this phase and begin the interlude.

Interlude: Replay

At this point in our story, we take a moment to remember and reflect. To that end, we will play two scenes from phase 1 and 2 again. Play will be slightly modified, so don't worry about getting every detail right. We are not doing an exam, but sharing and exploring our memories from a new angle.

For each scene, pick one of the two following modes. You can replay both scenes in the same mode, or switch:

+ **sense-deprived**: All of you cover one or both ears (or use ear plugs); close one or both eyes; or don't touch anything nor anybody during the scene.
+ **wordless**: Don't speak. Instead, use only "ah" to express what you communicated in the first version of this scene. This can of course be a long, drawn aaaaaahhhhh with varying tones. Just do your best to express yourself with this restriction. Don't resort to pantomime.

Arriving

Although the toils and struggles of refugees in real life often continue, in the third phase of this game we will bring some of the loose ends to a satisfactory conclusion.

Humming

After your final scene, form a circle and hum a chord again, just like at the start.
Once you've finished humming, look into each others eyes and slowly break the circle.
That is the end of the game.

Quickstart: Characters

At least half of you should play family members. Below are some tools for quickly assembling a handful of characters. Pick a name, a role in the family, one detail about yourself, and one detail about your relationship with another family member.

Names: Sara, David, Casey, Alex, Chris, Sam, Danny, Terry, Mark, Alison, …

Family roles: parent, grandparent, child (may be a young adult, of course), sibling of a parent, daughter in law, … *(No need to go for balance. Create a group of a grandmother and four teenage grandsons, an all female family cast, or whatever strikes you as a good idea.)*

Support roles: long-time friend, acquaintance, another refugee, shop owner, social worker, ... *(It might be a good idea for second support roles in the same scene to fit with the first, e.g. spouse of the friend, colleague of the social worker etc., so that they naturally form a team.)*

Details about yourself: self-conscious, athletic, likes movies, great cook, conservative, assertive, rational, ...

Details about your relationship with another family member (not necessarily mutual): Your character... trusts X with anything, is tired of X's behavior, holds an (irrational?) grudge, admires X, quietly thinks she/he knows better than X, ...

Quickstart: Suggestions for a short game of six scenes:

Hiding:
a) Location: In a friends basement. Need: Shelter. Impression: Guilt.
b) Location: In a friends basement. Need: Money. Question: Are we willing to leave for good?
Traveling:
c) Location: Some administrative office. Need: Documents: Impression: Being lost.
d) Location: An apothecary. Need: Medical care. Impression: Bitterness
e) Location: A shop. Need: Money/ Food. Question: Are we turning into thieves?
Interlude: Replay – pick one scene from the first and another one from the second phase, e.g. scenes b and d, and play them again. For each replay, choose one of the two modes (sense-deprived or wordless).
Arriving:
f) Location: A small flat, your new home. Need: Jobs. Question: Who are we now?

Disclaimer
As somebody who has never experienced persecution and never had to relocate under cruel conditions, I obviously cannot speak with authority on these subjects. Humbled by the difficulties many humans have gone through, I at least want to acknowledge them,

marginalized as they often are. Conse|cution *builds on the very basic human experience of needing help and community. It aims to provide a safe space for collectively retracing and approaching parts of the experience of forced migration.*

Conse|cution *was written by Jonas Richter for the Golden Cobra challenge (freeform game design) in October 2014. Thanks to Emily Care Boss for helpful feedback on a first draft, and to Sara Williamson for proof-reading. All remaining deficiencies are of course entirely my own fault.*
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