

Joakim

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Translated into English by Niclas Hell

The framing plot of Joakim is a yearly class reunion with the 200X* graduates from Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts. A tight gang with strong fellowship that still meet up every year, and in some cases hang out in their spare time. Every year since their final performance they gather at a former classmate's place, eat lentil soup and drink cheap wine. For some of them, it's like a vacation, they can be themselves among a group of people who know them for who they are, not the well-known face from the Royal Theater or the child of the celebrity actor. For some, the yearly dinner means an aching lump in their stomach, an anxious laugh on the verge of tears.

In this story, the class did something really mean to one of their classmates at the latest reunion -- to Joakim, the punchbag and clown of the class. Before the larp, all participants have to agree on what the class did. This will act as a subtext throughout the whole larp, and something that noone really wants to bring up.

Chapter 1: Description of the larp, the story and its exercises before and after

Joakim is a larp about people in groups. It's about how we sometimes become something that we don't want to be in group constellations. How people in groups sometimes oppress each other under the impression that it's "fun". Joakim is about a group of people that are not actually evil. About people that would not recognize themselves as "bullies".

"Sometimes you are in a group that kinda finds a common language. A raw but hearty discourse where everyone can become be the butt of the joke. Where people are mean, but playfully. A kind of consensual bullying where noone gets hurt."

This larp is partly about Joakim. About that person who's just too much. About that person who doesn't manage to read the group mentality. About the person who's both the bullied and the clown. The one who laughs the loudest when the pennalism against him is at its worst. Who goes home with a lump in their stomach, but comes the next time anyhow. Because it's something, it's still some kind of attention. This larp is about Joakim, what happens when Joakim has had enough, and about the aftermath in the group.

The most important part is that Joakim is not present. He's the protagonist but he is not in the

setting. However, almost all play will comment, or involve Joakim. He's the elephant in the room.

In-game, you may well describe Joakim as a person that's pretty hard to handle. He's not just bullied, he's also rather annoying, and he can't really read the mood of the group. Some roles might think that Joakim deserves it all, that he reaps the harvest he himself has sown. Joakim is also to be described as a skilled actor, when he lets go of his manners and facades. One teacher described him as *one of our next great ones*.

The mood that the larp wants to accomplish is jargon based, with a lot of inside jokes and strong sense of communion. To reach this, some preparing exercises can be used.

This game can be played anywhere, but the best place is in someone's home, that also will act as the home as one of the characters. It have also been played in a backstage area of a theatre. The game is a 360-degree larp with costumes and realistic setting.

*200X is meant to give the players the opportunity to decide how many years that have passed since they graduated.

Exercises

Materials:

Large paper sheet

Black/white pictures of all participants (example below)

(The picture shows the role and not the player, this is Mimmi of game 3)

Markers

A "Character paper" (see annex "Character paper") to make notes on.

Slips with everyone's names (see annex "Character names", Joakim is present here).

Slips with relations (see annex "Relations")

One or several dice

Two bowls

Exercises:

The urn of fate

The urn of fate is a way to randomize relations between the characters. Every person draws two slips from the bowls, one from each.

One contains a name of one of the other roles (if you draw your own name, you draw a new

one).

The other one is a relation. There are four categories:

SEX, RELATIONSHIP/FRIENDSHIP, CONFLICT, COMPETITION

(se annex "Relations")

Everyone draws a relation slip as well.

The result may be, for instance, "Tommy -- Relationship". Ask everyone to read their relations aloud to the group.

If I play Mimmi and get Tommy -- Relationship, when it's my turn, I take a dice to roll about whether that relation is present or past. Present = Even number on the dice, Past (during the school years) = uneven. Then roll the die to decide whether the relation was/is good or bad.

Good = even, Bad = uneven.

The result may be: Mimmi and Tommy were in a relationship in school, and the relationship was bad.

Thereafter, the players playing Mimmi and Tommy quickly work out the details while the others listen.

Naturally, Joakim is one of the names that players can draw from the urn. Those players take notes of that on their paper to remember, and also discuss with the group how the relationship was seen in the group.

A good way of doing things is to go through the group twice with this exercise. Then the players redraw the slips if they get the same person or relation as in the first round. You should also encourage the participants to demand good and bad relations, and if a player prefers a "Relationship" instead of a "Conflict", it's ok to change.

Don't use the second dice roll on Conflict or Competition.

When everyone has at least two relations the exercise is done.

Ask whether everyone knows the names of the roles. Otherwise you may use a presentation round.

Note: This exercise is very fun to do, but try to keep it short and to the point. Don't do more than two rounds. The players won't have time to play on all the relations anyway.

Map of relations

Put the picture of Joakim in the middle. Write down all relations that were created during The Urn of Fate. Place the map in an off game area so that a player can refresh his/her memory.

NOTE that you'll hand the pictures back to the players after the larp, so use a retractable adhesive or tape.

Pictures of Joakim

This exercise is quite quick, but will give important memories of the time in school. Split the

group in four smaller groups. Instruct them to act out a still photo that was taken by one of them in school, or in some other common class hangout, it may be in school, at a party or whatever. The picture is supposed to be about Joakim, without him being present in the picture.

Example: Anabel, Fredrik and Viggo play the "Shots Game" with Joakim, where Joakim has to remove a piece of clothing for every shot he drinks.

When all are done -- it should take about 5-10 minutes to make this up -- every group shows their picture for the rest of the players.

What did we do to Joakim last year?

The group should agree on what they did that made Joakim decide not to come this year. Point out that the players know that Joakim won't be there, but that the roles don't (there have been players that thought that I had a player that would arrive as Joakim), and that it is ok to wonder where he is, and if you like even try to call or sms him (he won't answer).

Raise the hands

All players should now be familiar with each other and each others' roles. Time to make a recap. Read the following sentences, and feel free to add other if you as a game master feel need for more. If a player agrees that this fits in 100% with their role, they raise their hand. If it fits so-so, the player holds their arm horizontally over their chest, and if it doesn't fit at all, the player keeps the hands in their lap.

Sentences:

I had a high status during school.

I was someone who took schoolwork seriously.

I work with theater today.

I have a good career.

I was active/pushing in the Joakim incident.

I have a high status in the group right now.

The memories

You can choose for yourself when the memories are handed out. They are connected to the "Make a speech" meta-technique. Instruct the players to use the memories as inspiration for the role's relation to Joakim. If the memory is an event rather than an opinion, the event has taken place.

Extra

If you like a little more drama right from the start, the participants may give one of the roles a superpower, and one a super-fail-power.

One of the characters (decided by the participants) can always make you change your opinion, or make you agree with him or her, if that player turns directly to you.

Example:

Ulrica turns to Jussi at the dinner table and looks him in the eyes. "But, weren't you interested in that visiting lecturer for a while, too?"

Jussi: "Uhm... Yeah..."

Even if it's not true, the person will agree temporarily to what the person with the superpower says. He/she may deny it later, but right when it happens, it's true for that role.

Another role will then get the super-fail-power. It means that every time that person tries to say something sincere, it will be suppressed.

Example:

Anabel: "Guys, just stop it, I can't stand to listen to you raving on about Joakim like that any more."

Everyone: "Boo! So typically of you to kill the mood."

Meta-techniques

The larp has two meta-techniques to use and three specific instructions to the players. Tell them about this before the larp starts.

Make a speech

Every time someone clangs their glass and stands up to make a speech, what the person will say is the role's thoughts of Joakim. Either it's about the memory or it's an improvisation based on the role. The speech always ends by the person making the speech saying "CHEERS!"

What the roles will hear is something like "We're a really great bunch and I really love you, CHEERS!", while the players hear what the role is thinking, that he/she is not showing.

Inside jokes

When someone does something or says something that seems funny, one may conclude that it's an inside joke in the class. If a person thinks that something that someone does or says seems usable for this, he/she repeats it, or enhances and expands it. When someone picks up on a line or a gimmick, that is naturally something that the class has done for many years. Everyone helps out in generating inside jokes during play (this meta-technique is used to create a common sense of familiarity in the class, but it's also a great tool to create bullying).

Example:

Klas interrupts something that Mimmi says by yelling "HIGH FIVE!". The player playing Ylva-Sara picks up the phrase and throws herself over the table to give a high five to Klas. Everyone around the table cries HIGH FIVE and starts high fiving each other. Mimmi never gets to finish her sentence.

Instruction for the players 1: Turning point

The movie that Joakim has recorded will be a clear turning point in the game. You choose for yourself how open you will be about what will happen. Either you say that there will be a clear turning point, and at that point it's half an hour left of the game. Else, you tell the group that Joakim will send a video that everyone will watch (I've used the turning point-explanation, but that's simply my own preference, some players that played the game has expressed a wish to know beforehand, some didn't want to know. Do as you please and fit your vision of the game). Instruct the players that after the turning point, it's at most 30 minutes left and that they can use that time to escalate the drama if they like. After the turning point it's also allowed to openly discuss what happened last year. Before the turning point, that is something in the subtext, or something that the roles talk very quietly about, or rather do not want to think about.

Instruction for the players 2: Leave the larp

Instruct the players that even if their roles want to leave the larping area, the players must make them play themselves back to the larp. Either by other roles keeping the role from leaving, or that the role comes back to the larp (there were no cabs, I forgot my wallet, or something similar).

Instruction for the players 3: Realism

Instruct the players that they don't have to act realistically on things that happen. This is a short larp and reactions that may take several hours normally, could now play out in a few minutes. It's not possible, for example, to call the cops or an ambulance in-game, and therefore the player's won't have to focus on that kind of things (some game time has revolved around that, mainly the first times the game was played) that cannot be resolved anyway. If a player still wants to make a phone call, instruct them to go out of the set and make up what happens in the other end of the phone.

Example:

Jonas calls the newspapers to tip them off about Viggo's and Essie's relationship. Later, he brags to Karl that it will be on the headlines tomorrow.

Joakim props

About The Idiot:

The Idiot was a play that the class wrote and produced the second last year in school. The Idiot was based on a persona that Joakim used to play everywhere and whenever. It was both hysterically entertaining and really enervating. Finally, the class decided to make a play of it and let Joakim play the lead. What they didn't know was that The Idiot persona was based on Joakim's mentally retarded brother. Joakim told a few in confidence, and asked them to let him get out of it, but he was convinced to perform the role anyhow. Not everyone in the class knows this.

The fact that the class played a play they wrote themselves, called The Idiot must be known by everyone. They all know that The Idiot was a persona that Joakim made up and used. Spontaneous outbursts of The Idiot, or re-enacted scenes from the play are encouraged.

Joakim

Engage one person not participating in the larp to record the movie that Joakim sends his old classmates (the script is found below).

Joakim's neutral photo

Take a photo of the person lending his/her face to Joakim where he looks neutral and/or serious. That photo is to be put in the middle of the Relations Map, and to be printed in a larger version and put in a frame.

Joakims photo of The Idiot

This is used to design the poster for the play, that one of the participants has found at home. Example:

The Larp -- A basic schedule

This is how the larp is usually planned:

16.00-19.00 Preparations

19.00-Around 23.00 Larp

22.30 Turning point (the movie)

23.00-24.00 Post-larp discussion

The larp starts with all the participants leaving the room and getting into role by taking a stroll around the block. The person whose home they are visting is staying, and others may stay inside to start there, too.

The Turning Point starts at 22.30. On way of solving this is by letting the character you as a GM play get a text message from Joakim where it says "check your e-mail". Then tell everyone: Joakim made a movie, I have it here on my mail! It's usually welcomed by ovations.

Instruct them that when they hear the volume of the music rise above conversational volume, everyone is to be gathered in, for instance, the living room and await the end of the larp, ask them to do as you do meanwhile.

End of the Larp

30 minutes after the Turning Point, go fetch everyone's photos. Start the finishing song. I've used "Eclipse" by Robyn, but choose another song if you find it more fitting. Bring in Joakim's portrait in the frame and put it on a table, with a candle in front. Hand out every character's photo to the player in that role. At the end of the song, approach the photo of Joakim and put your own photo in front of his. Let the participants do the same. When the song ends, tell them that the larp is finished.

Post-larp discussion

Often, participants have lots to say after the larp (as after any larp). Ask them to have a drink, visit the bathroom, smoke, etc. and then ask them to sit in a circle. Take a round of comments where every participant gets to say something about how it feels right now, and what they are thinking about right now.

When everyone's had the chance to say something, you may open up the discussion, but it may be good to keep a list of speakers based on raised hands.

On all productions of Joakim, the players have expressed frustration over the lack of catharsis. By this, they usually mean that their character hasn't been punished for what it has done, or that they didn't reach the "end" of the story (that's hard to achieve with only three hours of playing). So far, I have always said that that is entirely intentional, and the only person that could be regarded as having a finished story is Joakim, and that I don't think that these people deserve catharsis. Of course, you don't have to say that, but be prepared that the question will be raised. The players generally feel unfinished. I think that it is a good feeling, but to each his own.

Food and alcohol

To make the larp as cheap as possible, lentil soup with garlic sour cream and small heated baguettes has been served. Make the soup the day before, so that you only have to heat it. This menu can be altered according to taste. In the fiction, I made it traditional that they always eat lentil soup when they meet.

I used two kinds of alcoholic beverages on the larp:

White wine with a low percentage of alcohol

Alcohol free beer

In-game, both these contain alcohol, but the players may choose if they want to drink real alcohol or not. I have also said that it's ok for the role to bring something else.

Chapter 2: All texts

This was used as an information e-mail to players, but can just as likely be used as an intro to the game on site:

One year ago...

... Something happened. Maybe, no-one noticed anything. Maybe, no-one thought that what happened was unusual. It had happened so many times before. He had endured so many things that were worse. Like that time when they smeared his face with his own vomit, or the time they stole his clothes and locked him out in the middle of the winter. There was nothing they hadn't done before. He had laughed with them, jested and joked about himself. He had been The Idiot. Their idiot. They loved him. It's not that they're evil. No, the tone had been raw but hearty. Esoteric. He always consented. One could say that he encouraged it, that he was the one taking it one step too far... Right?

One year ago...

... Something happened. Maybe, no-one noticed anything. Or possibly, everyone noticed that now, now we went too far? Is it just that no-one wants to talk about it? Did everyone suddenly understand? That everyone saw it break, but that it was easier to pretend as if things were in order?

One year ago...

... Something happened. And this year Joakim won't be here. A small shift in the dynamic makes the group insecure. Someone always has to be The Idiot. Someone has to take his place.

Beforehand information:

Hi!

This is an informational message for the larp Joakim at the [date]. The roles are intentionally vague. You get a name that you will build a role upon. It is meant to give you a feeling and a direction. At the set before the larp we will finalize relations and expand the roles. Of course, you may already decide if you want some relations with each other and make them as ambitious as you like. But the thought behind this larp is that one does not have to prepare too much before if one does not feel like it. If you feel like it -- DO IT!

Last date for paying:

Last date for getting the fee back:

Below is a schedule for the day, and payment information. When you have paid, send me a

mail so that I know. Last day to pay is [date] (also write your name).

The larp will last for three to four hours, with preparations before where we create relations between the roles and prepare the game.

16.00 Arrival, maybe change of clothes and photo session

16.30 Preparations

19.00 The larp starts

22.30-23.00 The larp ends

23.00 Post-larp discussion and afterparty.

We will be at [person]'s place and the address is [place].

Clothing: What you think your role would wear.

Food: Lentil soup and garlic bread (all vegetarian)

Drink: Wine and alcohol free beer.

If you need special food, tell me beforehand!

If the roles want to bring something of their own, like their own drinks or chocolate, that is totally fine.

Below is a list of the class and who plays whom.

The characters

The character genders are not decided, except for Joakim. Therefore, they have two names. Don't forget to change the memories accordingly!

Joakim - Youngest in the class. Played The Idiot (not at the larp, only in the movie)

Anabel / Andy – The turncoat/gossiper

John / Joanna – S/he who succeeded.

Mimi / Marcus – The genius that chose another path.

Sarah / Samuel – Reached the big stages but it turned to shit.
Essie / Eric – S/he who still dreams.
Tommy / Tammy – Was the king/queen of the class.
Viggo / Vigdir Skarsgård – Went to Hollywood.
Oscar/ Olivia – s/he who was dedicated to politics
Claus / Claudia – The dude/dudette.
Frieda/Fredric – S/he who became tv host and a media personality
Karl / Karla – The child to the b-list/hasbeen celebrity*
Thor /Tanja Hansson – S/he who made porn.
Ulrich / Una – S/he who became an acclaimed director.

Role memories:

Every role gets a memory of Joakim that they can use as inspiration for the monologues. All events in these memories are true.

"The first day when everyone presented themselves, Joakim stood up and proclaimed that he always knew he was going to be an actor, and that he saw this as the first step towards becoming as great as Ingmar Bergman. All class laughed, because they thought he was sarcastic. Afterwards, it turned out that he wasn't, and that he didn't know that Bergman was a director. We teased him relentlessly about that from then on."

- Mimi / Marcus

"Me and Joakim had a good relation when we were alone. We could have a good time and that kind of thing. But I just had a gnawing feeling in school. I suspected that if Joakim wasn't in the class, I would have been their Joakim. I'm incredibly ashamed about laughing behind his back all those times, just so that they wouldn't laugh at me."

- Karl / Karla

"I don't know why The Idiot was so funny. It was Joakim who started it and then it grew to enormous proportions. I was one of the classmates who opposed making it a play, especially since Joakim came to me and told me in confidence that he didn't want to play it. I understood later when I met his brother, but by then it was too late. Since then... I don't know, he didn't stop doing The Idiot afterwards, so I can't help but laugh at it. But I will never forget his father's facial expression after the premiere."

- Ulrich / Una

"Once after a party we slept with each other. I never told anybody, I might have been ashamed, I don't know. But it was kind of beautiful. Smooth and close. We never talked about it again. I think he wanted to, but I avoided him. Finally, he stopped trying to catch my eye."

- Essie / Eric

"It was like a thing we did, going at each other's premieres. Every time, we did something

during the performance. As a joke. Once, I stood up and did a slow clap when he played Oswald's death scene in 'Gengångare' at the City Theater. Maybe it wasn't that funny right then, but what the hell, it was just as a joke. We did lots of crazy things and this was just a funny stunt. A real shame that he quit the theater. He was good."

- Tommy / Tammy

"When you were alone with him he was very different. Not as restless, more listening. He really seemed to want to understand you. We had a coffee sometimes, just the two of us. And it was actually nice. What I had a hard time coping with, was his obvious gratitude afterwards."

- Thor / Tanja

"Sometimes you can see that he gets hurt, but it is hard to stop it anyway. The guy's just so fucking funny, right? No distance to himself whatsoever. Finally, you don't know whether you're laughing with him or at him. Probably more of the latter."

- John / Joanna

"Really, that fucking The Idiot. I don't know where it came from, but I can still laugh so much when I think about it. It was like he would never stop and could continue for ever. Sometimes, it was just in a look in his eyes and the whole class started laughing. The teacher's didn't get a thing of it. It could be really irritating as well. Joakim didn't know when to stop. As if he couldn't stop when he had started. Then the fun turned tragic."

- Fredric / Frieda

"He sent me an e-mail and wondered if he could visit me in L.A. when he was going there for some auditions. At that time I had so much to do that I didn't answer. So when he called, I was so bewildered that I couldn't make up an excuse. But really, I didn't want him to come. So a few days later, I called him back and said that I was filming in Canada at the time and that it didn't fit me at all. I was ashamed to lie, but what to do?"

- Viggo / Vigdir

"There were times when you had to ask yourself like 'is this guy for real?'. He didn't seem to grasp any social situations. Several class parties ended with Joakim being the last guest and people had to tell him to go home. He was a bad drunk as well. He became sensitive and sentimental. We teased him about that when he was sober."

- Anabel / Andy

"For a working-class guy like Joakim it was the greatest thing that could happen to him when he got in to the drama school. The others couldn't understand it, how it affected him not to fit in. I could see how hard he tried, how hard he still tries. I really want to be on his side, but he doesn't want to listen to me when I try to talk to him. He doesn't want to hear it, and sure, I wouldn't either. I am and will always be one of Them."

- Oscar / Olivia

"Yes, it's true that he likes me more than I like him. I know he calls me his best friend, but I pity him at the same time. I haven't had the heart to tell him that he's the last one I call, when I know that, at the same time, I'm the first one he contacts. I don't want to be an asshole, get it?"

- Claus / Claudia

"Joakim was probably the most talented of us all. Pity that he didn't see it himself. Some people are really good at ruining themselves. Everything they do turn to shit. Joakim was one of those. He waded in it."

- Sarah / Samuel

Joakim's texts: Role description + movie script

This needs to be recorded before the larp, by a person that doesn't attend the larp. Record with a common web cam.

Joakim's role description

Joakim was the youngest in the class. The only one who was accepted right after high school. They said he was talented. In the class a hearty but tough mood quickly emerged. Many of the jokes were about Joakim. Because he was the youngest. Because he took things seriously. Joakim was joking along. Laughed the loudest. It became a jargon. Is someone to be put in their place? Take Joakim. Everybody knows he just fucked his way into drama school. No talent, just because the high-ranking ladies wanted some fresh Finnish meat.

The funniest time were those when the class forced him to play The Idiot. At the start, it was a parody of Joakim's mentally retarded brother (even though no-one else knew that) but it became his signature move. It proceeded to the degree that the class convinced a teacher that they were going to produce a play called The Idiot where Joakim played the lead. The whole family of Joakim came to the premiere.

After school was over, Joakim got a job. A pretty good job. It became tradition that the rest of the class (those who could) went to the premiere. Joakim couldn't see them from the stage, but he knew they were there. Every time one of them did something unnessecary. Like when Tommy/Tammy stood up and did a slow clap in the middle of the death scene when Joakim played Oswald in "Gengångare" at the city theater. Joakim could feel their looks. Their hate. Whatever he accomplished, they didn't seem to cease regarding him as a nobody. And he wanted so badly to be recognized by them.

He lost his passion for drama. Became depressed. Unemployed. Started eating prescription pills. Started thinking about suicide.

And yet, every year, he came to the annual dinner. With the uneasiness in his stomach. But with a smile on his lips. With his loathed laugh when they mocked him. When they forced

him to play The Idiot.

Last year was no exception. But last year something else happened. Something that Joakim couldn't get past. Something that pushed him over the edge. Since then, he has waited. Waited for the moment to really make an impression. Being taken seriously for the first time. Now, he'll really show them.

(This text has been used as inspiration for the person who is recording Joakim's movie, but has also been read as an epilogue after the larp.)

The movie.

Recorded by a simple web cam.

Props: Bottle of "vodka". Some kind of pills.

A phone. Somewhere in the movie, Joakim removes the SIM card or turns the phone off so that they can't call him.

Joakim (is calm and decisive, not desperate and sad):

(written in bullets, this can be part of it, but it's ok to take things from the role description as well.)

HI everybody. I was thinking I should tell you why I didn't come today.

- You think you're so fucking funny -- have you reenacted my The Idiot performance yet?
- You have controlled my life for too long.
- I want you to know that this is your fault.
- All the times you laughed at me and I laughed with you -- didn't you notice I didn't think it was funny?
- My career was ruined. My life was ruined. I blame you for everything. You have slowly gnawed me down to nothingness. There is nothing left that you have not already taken. You must have known who the idiot was based on, I told some of you. Why did you force me to do this? My family is still not talking to me.
- What happened last year was the last straw. Since then, I have planned this. Thoroughly. Here are the pills. Vodka. The trick is not to take them all at once. One sip of vodka. Once pill. I want you to see this.

Cred:

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