

Until We Find Him

Idea, text and layout: Anders and Rasmus Troelsen

We would like to thank the following:

Nis Haller Baggesen, Peter Fallesen, Kristoffer Thurøe, Mikkel Bækgaard, Simon Steen Hansen and Anders Frost Bertelsen for helping us test the game.

Martin Kleszez Henriksen and Anders Frost Bertelsen for feedback on the scenario text.

Marianne Zinckernagel and Louise Christiansen for proofreading the English Character descriptions and the Letters 1-8.

A special thanks to Lise Havbæk Troelsen for ideas and feedback through the whole process.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| The Story | 6 |
| Overview of the Characters | 7 |
| The Father | 7 |
| Scenario Structure and Game Mechanics | 8 |
| Scenes and Types of Scenes | 10 |
| Scenes – Day One | 12 |
| Scenes – Day Two | 15 |
| Scenes – Day Three | 17 |
| Scenes – Day Four | 19 |

Original teaser for Fastaval 2016

March 17th, 1981

"I stopped trying to keep afloat. I can't play at being a family any longer. I'll just let myself sink now.

I need to get away. But my dearest, please understand that I do this in order to be able to return one day. I will return. I hope that you will be there when I do."

While sorting through their late mother's belongings, a brother and a sister find a pile of letters from their father. He left the family when the children were still young 35 years ago and has not been seen since.

Vulnerable and floundering, they decide to follow the tracks of their father. Reluctant words about then and now, a welcome bout of laughter, knowing smiles, angry snaps, muted recriminations, and the awkward silences of strangers fill the car as we follow the siblings through the endless pine forests of the North. The confused words of the father impress themselves on them as the moldy, old envelopes are opened.

Phone calls from the brother's wife, the sister's whispered diary, and the people they meet on their way, all combine to nudge the siblings to think of their father, of each other, and of each their place in life.

Until we find him is the story of two people sharing a past, but who have drifted apart. Armed with questions and their father's letters, they try to make sense of it all. Maybe they will find him. Maybe they will give up. Maybe they will find each other. Maybe things won't get better than they are.

FACTS

Duration: 3-4 hours.

No. of players: 3 players and 1 game master.

Tags: Scandinavian road movie, family drama, the power of the past over the present.

Player type: You enjoy taking part in the narration and imagining of the story, you have no problem with reasonably long character descriptions, and you feel like exploring two people whose facades are about to crack.

GM type: You set and cut the scenes while supplying some of that raw and cold October feel. You help the players make the story flow and read out the letters from the father.

About the authors: Rasmus and Anders are brothers. They have, however, always known their father. Rasmus is a Fastaval debutante. Anders was co-author of Fifteen Men and Mass Effect 2157. For a time, he has shelved the kapow-action scenarios and has re-imagined himself as feely-feely. Rasmus has always been so.

Introduction

Dear game master

Thank you for wanting to run "Until we find him." We greatly appreciate this.

In this text you will find a general description of the scenario's narrative, the characters, the structure and game mechanics, as well as a short description of the pre-planned scenes. In addition to this text the scenario includes a number of supplements to be used in the playthrough of the scenario. They can be found at the end of this document.

The supplements are as follows:

- The Characters (Michael, Kirsten and Supporting Player)
- Letters 1-8
- Scene Summary (Day 1-4)
- Conversation Cards
- "Starting the Game"

We suggest you read this text first, and then browse through the various supplements afterwards.

There is obviously a lot of information in the scenario text, but all the instructions the players need before you start the game are summarized in the supplement **Starting the Game**, which you can go through together with the players when you gather for the game.

You will probably also find that once the game is in progress, your role as game master will be relatively retracted much of the time.

PRACTICALITIES

At Stockholm Scenario Festival we will bring all the supplements, so if you just bring the scenario text (pages 1-21) that will be fine.

You are most welcome to play music during the playthrough, if you'd like. Whether you choose to play Swedish radio pop, the playlist in Michael's car, instrumental background music or something else we leave up to you.

Enjoy the read.

The Story

“Until we find him” is the story of a brother and a sister, who in October 2015 go on a road trip through the Nordic countries to follow their father’s journey many years ago. The father left the family 34 years ago and has not shown himself since then.

The scenario follows the two siblings from Copenhagen, by car through Sweden to the city of Umeå north of Stockholm, on to Mo i Rana in Norway, back to Umeå, by ferry across the Gulf of Bothnia to the end point outside the small village of Koskø in Finland. It is up to the two travellers whether they will continue all the way to Finland, or whether they will stop and turn around somewhere along the way. This means that the story might reach its end before they get to Finland.

The immediate cause of their sudden trip is the discovery of a pile of letters in their late mother’s apartment. The letters are from their father, and have been sent from different places in Scandinavia. Only about half of the envelopes have been opened.

Why they actually decide go on this trip is not a fixed truth, but is up to the players to interpret. Maybe it's the two siblings attempt to come to terms with having lived without a father and thus try to close some of the chapters of their past. Perhaps they hope to regain a meaningful relationship with each other, after having drifted apart. Perhaps the journey is seen as an opportunity for both of them to put their own world back into place.

The story will span over four days – or less if they choose to stop before reaching Finland. They have made a deal, where they wait with reading each letter, until they reach the location from where it was sent. This deal can be broken along the way, should any of the two want to.

On the journey they will encounter two people who have been a central part of the father's life after his departure from Copenhagen. In Umeå they meet the father's former colleague and flatmate, in Mo i Rana they meet their father’s old flame. Neither colleague nor ex-girlfriend has contact with the father anymore, but they can share their memories of him with the two protagonists.

MOOD, GENRE AND THEMES

The scenario is a journey through cold Scandinavian October landscapes with what this brings of rain, decay, warm autumn colours and bleak sunshine. It's freeways, endless pine forests, dreary cafeterias and cold motels.

Genre-wise, this is a Scandinavian road movie, a muted family drama, and a kind of person-oriented investigation story with the players as co-creators (*who was our father really?*). In essence the game is an invitation to explore a number of universal human themes: Responsibility, loss, forgiveness, intimacy, loneliness and the power of the past over the present.

Despite the rather melancholic-leaning material we would like to emphasize that smiles and laughs along the way are absolutely welcome. The differences between brother and sister quite possible will give rise to some comical situations and dialogues, which may give a hearty and much needed contrast to the somewhat melancholic narrative.

Overview of the Characters

Michael is one of the two protagonists in the story. He is the older brother of Kirsten and lives a family life in Næstved 150 km south of Copenhagen with Lene and their two daughters Sidsel and Dagmar. He is a calm, responsible and resourceful man, who hides away his own emotions. Lately he has come to doubt whether his marriage with Lene in some way is false. His thoughts about his father are filled with anger.

Kirsten is the other protagonist. She is the chaotic little sister, who finds it difficult to live up to the expectations of adult life. She finds meaning in extreme actions, and was the one who thought up the idea of following the father in his footsteps, perhaps mostly to get some time together with Michael. She is curious, enterprising, and wild at heart, though perhaps about to fall apart.

The third player (Called the Supporting Player) plays **the four supporting characters**:

- **The Diary** is Kirsten's companion who will provoke, comfort, and challenge Kirsten. No one but Kirsten perceives that she is having conversations with her diary.
- **Lene** is Michael's wife. She is a good listener and a caring wife who can get Michael to open up. Michael and Lene's marriage is challenged by the routines of everyday life.
- **Johan** is the father's former workmate and flatmate. He lives in Umeå in Sweden, where Michael and Kirsten meets him, probably on the third day of the trip. He can tell them important things about the father's past.
- **Klaudia** is the father's ex-girlfriend. She lives in Mo i Rana in Norway. Michael and Kirsten will also meet her on the third day of the trip. She, like Johan, can give the two siblings yet another story about their father.

The Father

Michael and Kirsten's father "Ole" is the focal point of the story. His life and thoughts is told in the eight letters and through the two supporting characters Klaudia and Johan. Until the fourth day in Finland there will be no scenes where the father is directly participating. The only scene where the father might come into play is if the two siblings approach him when they see him in Koskõ. In this case you play the role of the father. This is described further in the final scene (p20-21).

Through the letters we get the impression of a man who roams about in Scandinavia, struggling with his emotions and with a series of life crises. In the beginning he blames himself and asks for time and space to get a grip of his life again. Later, the tone of the letters changes to accusations and reproach against the mother of Michael and Kirsten. Finally, the letters just become expressions of a lonely man's frustrations and regrets.

Kirsten and Michael will get to know the father through the letters and in their meetings with the two supporting characters. There is no single truth about who the father is or was beyond what the protagonists will have access to via the letters and through Johan and Klaudia's stories about him. If they meet him in Finland he will probably not be able to give them any answers that they have not already realised.

In short, the father is what you jointly make him be.

Scenario Structure and Game Mechanics

On the next four pages the framework of the scenario is described. Most of this should be communicated to the players before the story begins. For this purpose you can use the supplement **Starting the Game**, which tells you what to tell them.

The story takes place across four October days - with a few flashbacks to past events.

Day 1: From Copenhagen to Jönköping, Sweden.

Day 2: From Jönköping to Umeå, Sweden.

Day 3: From Umeå to Mo i Rana, Norway.

Day 4: From Mo i Rana to Koskø, Finland.

How much playing time each day will take will vary from game to game, but we have given an estimate in the scene descriptions later in this text.

Add a 15-minute break between either the first and second day, or between the second and third day. This allows the supporting player the opportunity to read about the characters *Johan* and *Klaudia*, who comes into play on the third day.

LENGTH AND ENDING

The scenario is expected to run for about four hours if Michael and Kirsten continue all the way to Finland. Kirsten and Michael's players may choose to finish the game earlier if they wish. For example, the two siblings may agree to stop the journey and drive home, or one of them may at some point insist that the journey must stop. If the other can't convince his brother / sister to continue, the story ends. Lene and the Diary can also try to influence that decision if they get the chance. If the players decide to stop, skip forward to *End Scenes*, p20.

In the first playtest the game stopped in Mo i Rana, after Kirsten and Michael agreed that "*they didn't want to follow the trail of that idiot any longer.*" In the second run they went all the way to Koskø and confronted their father.

THE LETTERS

Over the years the father has sent eight letters home. The first is sent from somewhere on Amager in 1981, the year he left them. The last is sent from Koskø in Finland in 2000 (Supplement: **Letters 1-8**).

Before the journey Michael and Kirsten have made a deal to wait with opening the envelopes until they reach the approximate location from where the letter was sent. This is an in-game deal between the characters, and it can be broken along the way if one of the characters decides to do so. They can basically choose to read all the letters before they leave Amager, but it would go against the spirit of the scenario. However, it is completely ok if they choose to open all the letters long before they reach Finland.

In the first playtest Kirsten and Michael opened the last two letters in Mo i Rana in Norway. This was very befitting for that specific playthrough, as the two siblings breaking their own agreement and ripping up the envelopes helped the story reach a dramatic climax.

In the scene descriptions (p13-20) you will find highlighted suggestions for when each letter could be opened. These suggestions are not always consistent with the specific sender addresses on the letters. If Michael and Kirsten wants to open the letters at the sender address - or anywhere else – go ahead and let them do just that.

When a letter is opened, let Michael or Kirsten read the letter aloud. If the players don't feel comfortable reading aloud, you could also offer to read the letters.

The players get handed the stack of envelopes when the story begins. The letters are physical objects within the fiction. They can be opened, ripped apart and thrown away by Michael and Kirsten. It is up to the two siblings to treat the letters as they wish. (See Michael and Kirsten's character descriptions for an explanation to why they have made the agreement and see the supplement **Scene Summary** to get an overview of where the letters might be opened)

CONVERSATION CARDS

Since large parts of this scenario centres on the running conversation between brother and sister, it is important that the characters continue to have something meaningful to talk about. As game master you have a stack of Conversation Cards at your disposal that you can choose from and place on the table to present new subjects for the players to talk about along the way. Example card texts read: *"If you met him now, would you call him dad?"* or *"Do you ever think you'll have any children?"* (See supplement: **Conversation Cards**).

The cards serve as an inspiration for the players, as they can choose to use the questions as part of their conversations. The cards also serve as your opportunity to point the conversation in a particular direction.

The players are never obligated to use the questions on the cards. They can choose to ignore them. If you – along the way – assess that players do not need cards or that the cards distract more than they benefit, then feel free to stop using them.

Unlike the letters, the Conversation Cards are not an integrated part of the fiction: Michael and Kirsten cannot "see" the Conversation Cards. They are just tools to be used by the players.

Scenes and Types of Scenes

On the following pages you will find descriptions of the scenes that make up the core narrative structure of the scenario. For every day there is also a handout showing the expected scenes of the day (see Supplement: **Scene Summary**). These scene summaries are handed to the players at the beginning of each day of the journey. This allows the players to see what can expect of a given day.

Besides **the planned scenes**, which are listed in the scene summary, there will be scenes where Michael and Lene have **telephone and SMS conversations** and where Kirsten **talks with her diary**. These are not planned to take place at a specific time, but can be set continuously by all three players when appropriate. Scenes with the Diary can be understood as conversations taking place in Kirsten's head. Kirsten may end these conversations whenever she wants. In return, the Diary has the right to introduce stuff that Kirsten at one time or another have written down. So the Diary actually has some control over her past thoughts.

Furthermore, you and the players are most welcome to **set extra scenes**, usually when they make a stop on the road. This could be at gas stations, rest areas, viewpoints, etc.

Finally, Michael and Lene's players may introduce **flashbacks** to events in their relationship: quarrels, worries, joyous moments, key memories, etc. You may also introduce flashbacks if you want to, but we advice against using them in relation to other things than Lene and Michael's shared past. The childhood of Kirsten and Michael should not be played out in flashbacks. In turn, it's perfectly fine for the two siblings to talk about their childhood, while they sit in the car in 2015.

In addition to the various scenes, the supporting player may also choose to pause the current scene and **describe glimpses** of Michael and Kirsten's childhood. It could be an event, a conversation or a photograph, which are briefly described by the supporting player with the goal of making the siblings' past and their shared memories come alive. These descriptions take place outside the fiction and are therefore not scenes as such, but can form the basis of future dialogue between the characters while on the journey.

SETTING SCENES

As game master, you are responsible for setting the scenes. With a few sentences you frame the given scene, and then let the players play out the scene.

In the scene descriptions below you will find inspiration for each scene, but feel free to expand with more words to make the Nordic landscapes come alive, to anchor the characters' dialogue in a specific location, and to further the feel of a road movie.

The diary scenes can be a little tricky for the players to get acquainted to, so take your time explaining them before you start the story (Supplement: **Starting the Game**).

If the players take a detour from the pre-made list of scenes or the expected route, feel free to improvise. Most of the time it is not important, whether they end in the exact location we have described in this text.

PURPOSE OF THE SCENES AND PLAYER INITIATIVE

The players typically decide for themselves what the specific aims and contents of each scene should be: What do their character want to talk about while sitting in the car, or after having opened a given letter?

For each scene we have also formulated some overall purposes, which you as game master can take a glance at, if the players find it difficult to take the initiative. In that case, you could consider posing the players some direct questions: *What is Kirsten thinking of what they just talked about? What is Michael going to do now that he is alone?* We suggest that you wait with such direct intervention in the game until you have decided that the players actually need it. Often it will not be necessary.

If you have trouble getting the players to play out their roles, a cleverly picked Conversation Card might also do the trick, and that in a way where you as game master don't have to interfere with the fiction.

ENDING SCENES AND PACING THE STORY

You will usually be the one cutting the scenes, when you consider it appropriate. Instead of saying "cut" or similar, we suggest that you just describe, how the journey continues: *"Raindrops starts hitting the windshield, as the car drives north"*. This way you signal the players that the scene is about to end, which give them an opportunity to keep talking if they have any more agendas with the scene. If not, you just talk the story on to the next scene.

A central part of the scenario is the silence and hesitant conversation between the two siblings. Make room for slowness in some of the scenes involving Kirsten and Michael, rather than cutting all the scenes in a hurry.

To keep the pace at the right level, the players playing Michael and Kirsten may also decide to end some of the scenes by signalling: *Michael turns up the radio. "Please make a stop at that rest area." Kirsten lets the seat back in order to take a nap. "We need gasoline. Drive off the highway up ahead." "Have you eaten up? Then let's go."*

At this point the other player can try to maintain the scene if there is something interesting between the two characters that the player want to address: *"No, switch off the radio. What did you mean by what you said?"* In that case, continue the scene until you or one of the players force it to an end.

If the players are unsure of how to use these mechanics, then spend some time practicing it before starting the story (supplement: **Starting the Game**).

We suggest that you read the characters, the letters and the other supplements next, before going on to reading the scene descriptions below.

Scenes – DAY ONE

Length of route: 350 km from Copenhagen to Jönköping via Västersjön.

Length of playing time: 60-75 minutes

KIRSTEN'S APARTMENT

Purpose: To get the players warmed up. To begin the journey in an awkward way.

It's Saturday before noon. A pale October sun shines into the city. Michael sits in his car, looking out on the busy street.

[Let Michael's player describe the car].

He steps out of the car and goes to entrance door to the flat where Kirsten lives. There is no one answering when he pushes the button. He calls Kirsten's phone. Kirsten wakes up when her phone rings. She was at a party yesterday.

Michael is let into the building. [Ask Kirsten's player to describe the apartment, as Michael enters]. Kirsten hasn't packed yet.

End the scene when appropriate.

THE CEMETERY [1st Letter]

Purpose: To emphasize the autumn surrounding them and to give them a chance to reflect on their mother's passing.
The 1st Letter will probably be opened.

They drive through Copenhagen. The sun has disappeared behind gray clouds. Michael parks the car at Sundby Cemetery. In the distance, one can see Amager Hospital. It was there she passed away. There is no one else at the cemetery. The gardener has laid fresh flowers on the grave:

"Regitze Jørgensen. 1954 - 2015. Beloved."

When appropriate: **Let the supporting player describe the mother's apartment** when the two siblings cleaned it two weeks ago. How did their childhood home look? What items did they find while cleaning up?

If they want to go to the sender address before they open the letter, describe how there is nothing at the spot but a construction site behind a wooden fence, with piles of gravel, digging machines, and cabins for the workers. KUA (Copenhagen University) is close by. Kirsten knows the area.

End the scene when **the 1st Letter** has been opened and possibly discussed.

**FLASHBACK:
LEAVING NÆSTVED**

Purpose: To introduce Michael and Lene's marriage

It's Saturday morning. The girls are watching TV. [Let Michael's player and the Supporting Player describe the home in Næstved.]

Michael and Lene are in the kitchen. Michael has to go in a little while. Lene sighs.

End the scene when Michael leaves.

**CROSSING THE
ØRESUND BRIDGE**

Purpose: To mark the beginning of the trip and to give the two siblings an opportunity to talk together.

They drive up on the bridge. There is heavy Saturday traffic. The blue-green waters between Denmark and Sweden appears on the sides of the bridge. The sun breaks through and flashes of light reflects on the waves beneath. They see the Swedish coastline in the distance.

Add the first Conversation Card. From now on, place them from time to time, as you see fit.

End the scene when appropriate.

**VÄSTERSJÖN
[2nd Letter]**

Purpose: To set the scene for **the 2nd Letter**.

They find their way to Västersjön Camping and park the car. The place is closed for the winter. They pass the closed barrier and goes down to the lake. Large birch trees encircle the lake. The water is calm. Autumn leaves colour the surroundings in amber and red.

End the scene when they have had the opportunity to read the letter and discuss it.

A MOTEL IN JÖNSKÖPING

Purpose: An opportunity to spend some time apart, to make phone calls, to write and read in the Diary, or to get drunk.

It is dark when they arrive in Jönköping. They find a motel near the highway.

The room is cold and brown. As part of the motel there is a combined restaurant, bar and dance floor. A noisy company sits in the restaurant.

Ask the players how they imagine Michael and Kirsten will spend the evening. If they go to the restaurant, be sure to let the waiter ask the two siblings whether they want something to drink.

End the scene when appropriate.

Scenes – DAY TWO

Length of route: 950 km from Jönköping to Umeå

Length of playing time: 30-45 minutes

DRIVING FROM JÖNSKÖPING [3rd Letter]

Purpose: To set the scene for **3rd Letter**, wherein the father's frustrations with his past life become clearer.

Sunday morning. They drive along the edge of Lake Vättern, a huge blue-gray mirror for the sky. To the right they see nothing but trees. There are only a few cars on the road.

If they want to stop the car in Röttle (just north of Jönköping), the town from where Letter 3 is sent, then describe the highway exit, the sign marking the city limit, the colored wooden houses, the parking lot, a bench in front of the kiosk. Lake Vättern can be seen behind the houses.

End the scene when appropriate.

A CAFETERIA ON E4

Purpose: To give brother and sister a new setting to continue their conversation in.

They have passed Stockholm. The rain falls heavily when they drive off the road to take a lunch break on the E4 just north of Uppsala.

Michael turns off the engine. The wipers stops midway through their motion. One can hear the constant hiss from the wet highway.

The cafeteria is well visited. A few families with children, a group of loud teenagers, some older couples. On the wall hang old pictures of burgers, hot dogs and the usual cafeteria dishes. Sounds of the cash register, cutlery against plates and the busy kitchen fills the room.

Feel free to give the players space to describe individual actions (going to the kiosk, the toilet, doing refueling etc.), if there is time.

End the scene when appropriate.

**UMEÅ IN THE
EVENING
(4th Letter)**

Purpose: To set the scene for 4th Letter, plus another opportunity for either a little time apart, for making phone calls, reading and writing in the Diary, for a fun or awkward night out and / or for getting drunk.

The car passes a hilltop, and in front of them is Umeå. It is evening, and the city lights shine through the darkness. One can see the sea, a black canvas on the right. The ferry on the way to Finland can be glimpsed in the dark. The same can the university buildings and the Volvo factory on the other side of town.

The wind has died down, but the rain continues. Yellowish street lamps. People hiding their face from the rain while walking the pavements. Cold autumn and sharp lights from passing cars.

They drive to Svea Motel.

Ask the players how they imagine that brother and sister spend the evening. Do they go out, or are they staying at the motel?

End the scene when appropriate.

Scenes – DAY THREE

Length of route: 480 km from Umeå to Mo i Rana

Length of playing time: 60-90 minutes

BREAKFAST AT SVEA MOTEL [5th Letter]

Purpose: To set the scene for the 5th Letter.

A hot bath and a cup of coffee. A sharp October sun that shines through the bright curtains at the breakfast buffet at Svea Motel. People in the streets. Families going shopping.

If the players want to drive to the sender address (Tranbärvegen) before they open the letter, go ahead and let them.

The scene ends after the letter is read, and they have reacted to it. Cut when they are ready to visit Johan.

VISITING JOHAN

Purpose: To get a firsthand account about the father.

They arrive at Tranbärvegen 15, a block from the 1960s, located opposite the Volvo factory. The colourful signs from a grill bar are the only thing that breaks the monotony of concrete and asphalt.

[Let the supporting character describe Johan's home as they enter.]

End the scene when appropriate. This could be when they leave Johans apartment.

E12 FROM SWEDEN TO NORWAY

Purpose: Time for reflection after talking to Johan.

The pinewoods give way for heather and scrub as they drive north, with the unending blue sky above them. A lonely highway meanders through the nothingness.

End the scene when appropriate.

**ARRIVAL IN
MO I RANA
[6th Letter]**

Purpose: To set the scene for **the 6th Letter** (the father as a happy family man) and to play out Michael and Kirsten's reaction to this letter.

They pass peaks and mountain lakes and crosses the border to Norway. The snow is falling in Mo i Rana as they arrive in the city. The smokestacks from the iron mill and the harbor cranes are lit up and gives the town an unmistakable industrial feel.

If the players want to wait with opening the letter until they reach the sender's address (Brannklokkeveien), then let them.

End the scene when they drive to Klaudia's home.

**AT KLAUDIA ON
BRANNKLOKKEVEIEN**

Purpose: To get another firsthand account of his father.

Brannklokkeveien is in a nice neighborhood. Small and neat wooden villas with candles in the windows. A thick and soft layer of snow covers the cars, rooftops and road.

[Let the supporting player describe Klaudia's home when they enter it]

End the scene when appropriate. Perhaps Kirsten and Michael would like to talk about Klaudia's story of the car.

Scenes – DAY FOUR

Length of route: 580 km from Mo i Rana to Koskø in Finland via Umeå and ferry.

Length of playing time: 30-45 minutes

E12 FROM NORWAY TO SVERIGE

Purpose: To give the characters time for reflection after the meeting with Klaudia. To emphasize the enormous distances of the journey.

Hundreds of kilometers of road are passed once again as they head back to Umeå. Has the weather and nature changed?

This scene (and the next two scenes) can probably be ended relatively quickly, thereby accelerating the pace slightly, giving the players an idea of the story progressing toward its end.

UMEÅ FERRY PORT [7th Letter]

Purpose: To emphasise the dilemma: *How far do we want to go?* To set the scene for **the 7th Letter**.

It's past noon. The wind whips up the water. The waves break against the gray boulders surrounding the ferry port. Salty droplets of water hit the windscreens of the waiting cars. The wind bites the cheeks and blows in the hair of those how exit their car. The ferry reaches the port.

The scene can be ended relatively quickly, unless the players have a lot they want to play out.

ON THE FERRY

Purpose: To give the players the sensation of a long journey, and to give Michael and Kirsten a last opportunity to talk things through before meeting their father.

The ferry bounces on top of the waves in the Gulf of Bothnia, white peaks of breaking waves encircling it. The ferry restaurant serves potato salad, sausages, schnapps and beer. As they cross the gulf, Finland appears on the horizon. The clouds are beginning to dissolve.

The scene can be ended relatively quickly unless the two siblings have something significant they need to play out.

KOSKÖ AT DUSK [8th Letter]

Purpose: To introduce the last letter, to finish the two siblings' shared story and to maybe see a glimpse of the father.

They drive off the ferry and pass through Vaasa. Along small forest roads they come to Koskō a little to the north, a village of colored wooden houses and paned windows. The sun has broken through and paints the sky red in the west.

Give Michael and Kirsten time to read the last letter, and let them consider whether they will try to find the father.

If they make contact with the locals, some local men will confirm that "Ole" from Denmark still lives here. They tell that he lives by the lake, and give them the directions. Along a small dirt road cutting through the forest, they reach an opening. The lake appears in front of them. A hundred meters to the right stands a lone house, or rather a shed. An old walkway extends from the shed and out into the lake.

A figure appears from the shed and trudges out of the walkway. It's an old man in a knitted hat with an untidy beard and a cardigan. His shoulders are stooping, his rubber boots worn. He doesn't notice the car, but walks over to a beer crate, sits on it and takes up a fishing rod.

Kirsten and Michael can contact the father, or they can leave without addressing him, now that they've seen him. If they contact him, you play the role of their father (see box on next page).

If the players start a conversation with the father, and don't end the scene by themselves, consider letting their father ask them, possibly beg them to leave. Feel free to finish the scene in whatever fashion you like.

END SCENES

Purpose: No matter whether the siblings approached their father or not, there might be need for some finishing scenes in order to end the story in a satisfying way.

Let the players decide what scenes they want to play, but it could be:

- Michael dropping off Kirsten at her home in Copenhagen.
- Michael and Lene lying in the darkness of their bedroom.
- Kirsten writing her diary.

Playing the father

It's up to you to decide how you will play the father. Do it in accordance with what you think will give the story its best ending, and in a fashion you feel comfortable playing.

The scene should have some weight, but it can quickly become too artificial, bombastic or sentimental, and it may be difficult to finish. Here are some suggestions:

One strategy is to let the father be uncertain, subdued and hesitant in his words. He has hardly many more truths left, that he hasn't already written in his letters. Let the two siblings say what they need to say and play him as a frail, shy man with a low voice and shaking hands.

You can also try to primarily portray him through descriptions rather than via words: *The deep furrows in the forehead, the drooping eyes, the unkempt beard, the quivering lips.*

Maybe his eyes get watery when he sees them. Maybe he turns his eyes down when they talk to him. Perhaps he is trying to maintain their gaze. Perhaps he begins to cry or sob. Maybe he shakes his head and remains silent when they ask him about stuff. Maybe his only answer is a whispered *"I'm sorry"*.

The Characters

Michael

Dear player

On the following pages you will read some of Michael's thoughts. It's not important whether you remember the text in detail. Read it as an inspiration to play Michael. On the last page you will find a summary of the most important points.

Mom died three weeks ago. We were prepared – well, as prepared as you can get for something like that. She died of stomach cancer.

She was buried in Sundby Cemetery facing Amager Hospital. There was no tombstone next to hers, no one who waited for her in the ground, and no husband to say goodbye to his wife. My father left 34 years ago, shortly after Kirsten was born. My mother has been alone since. And now she is also alone in the grave.

Kirsten and I emptied the apartment two weeks ago. It was the weekend after the funeral. Lene had offered to help, but I declined, as we then wouldn't have to find someone to look after the girls. And it was actually okay not to have her there with her well-meaning comments and careful questions about what things we wanted to keep. Instead, my sister and I could get it done.

I had to take the initiative, but once Kirsten got started she was actually quite effective in packing things together. That's how she is. She just needs a little push, and well, you get a sour reply and a teenage-like reaction, but that's just part of the game. And then she gets going and takes on whatever task ahead. And well, you'll have to give her a little push again every now and then. Otherwise she'll stop once more.

I guess I stopped giving Kirsten these small pushes when I left home. And Mom couldn't do it. Mom mostly just said "darling" and "little friend" and "I'm sure that you do your best" and "there should always be room for a break every now and then." Mother was always patient and understanding, but actually, she didn't really understand that much about it all. Maybe that's a mean thing to say, but it's true.

It was while we were cleaning up that Kirsten found the letters. She showed them to me. A pile of envelopes sent to our mother from Sweden, Norway and Finland. There was the sender's name and address on them. They were from our father. The first was from 1981 - the year when he disappeared. The last was from 2000. Up to 1986, the envelopes were opened. The ones after that time remained unopened.

The first letter was sent from somewhere on Amager, not far from Mom's apartment. I took it out and began to read. A few lines in and I could see that he was preparing the ground for an apology. Kirsten took the letter out of my hand. "Stop," she said. "Maybe we should wait until tonight?" I nodded, and we went back to work.

It was while eating pizza and drinking Mom's last bottles of wine that Kirsten came with the proposal to take the car and drive in our father's footsteps. First of all she insisted that we shouldn't read all the letters in one go but instead give each letter due time – a few hours, at least – to let it sink in. And then she suggested that we could do it together. And then we might as well do something at the same time. And why not drive to Sweden – and beyond – a road trip? It might take four or five days. I thought it made more and more sense as the wine flowed in. So I agreed to her idea and swore that I wouldn't change my mind.

And here I am, sitting in the car on my way to Copenhagen to pick up Kirsten, about to spend three of my vacation days. Lene tried to be understanding when I told her about the plan, but she

was still annoyed when I left this morning. We told Sidsel and Dagmar that I was going on trip with my work. That was easier.

I am on the highway, heading for Copenhagen. I'm on my way to pick up Kirsten and drive to Sweden to find out who our father is ... or was.

Maybe he's dead?

When I sometimes think of him, I think of a coward. And then I get annoyed at the word coward. It is too mild a word for him. A coward is one who let's his fears control him. But we're all afraid. He has to be something worse. A selfish man. A man without consideration for others. Without empathy. Sick in the head. But no, if I call him sick, then it won't be his own responsibility anymore. I won't let him get off that easily – I won't let him get off with a diagnosis.

And here I am, getting all worked up here in the car. Why should we follow his tracks? Why should we make an effort? What if we end up understanding him? I do not know if I even bother to understand him. That asshole of a man, he has not earned it.

Why the hell did he have to leave?

And it isn't even right for me to be angry. How can you be angry with a man, you have never known? We didn't lack anything. And I had a mother and a sister. I wasn't alone.

Mom was alone. And she did it all by herself. The work, the worries. And she did what she could – but she had a hard time figuring out how to do it all, and she couldn't handle all that much. He should have been there for her. He put Mom off course - he made Mom become one of those persons who praised too much, for fear that her children would otherwise feel unloved.

He should have been there for Kirsten too. She needed a father, but oh no, he couldn't be bothered. He should have been there to tell her that she should always make an effort, but also that she was fine just the way she was.

Kirsten got anxiety attacks while she was in high school. It was the school that got her to seek help. I'd just left home, so it was the school that helped her, and discovered that she was ill.

She was given medication and got better, although Mom was miserable about her daughter not being well. Kirsten made quite an effort taking the medicine on a regular basis and to put up a smile and a brave face while she lived at home. She would not want to make Mom sad.

The anxiety attacks stopped and Kirsten stopped taking pills. But the experience had made her weird. After she had moved out and got her own place, she had trouble sleeping. She would come and visit me in my apartment in the middle of the night with a bag of chips, six beers or two litres of Coca Cola. And we would chat until daybreak or until she fell asleep. That's how she is. Chaotic. I do not think her studies helped in any way. Greek. Japanese... Linguistics? I can hardly remember it anymore. She keeps on trying new ones.

At one point while we were in our 20s, she stopped her night visits. And we no longer saw each other regularly. It was probably around the time when Lene moved in. And then we bought the house in Næstved and had Sidsel.

When we occasionally meet, I sense that she is struggling. I wish I could help her. And I wish that I could allow myself to be disappointed when she doesn't come to the girls' birthdays, or

ask her to be strong once in a while. But I'm afraid she can't handle harsh words. Maybe she is just a very small push from breaking. I do not know.

And now my thoughts drift back to our father. Even when he is not here, he still leaves his imprints. Despite his absence - he has shaped us and played a role in making us who we are. I get angry at the thought, so angry my lips tighten and my gaze becomes hard. What gives him the right to influence our lives, even while being absent? And all that anger does that mean that I am not happy with myself and my life as it is? When I get there, I try to stop my thoughts from going any further. But at that point it is always a bit too late. The idea is conceived.

Once, when Sidsel was unhappy about something with one of her friends, Lene told her that it is useless to have too many regrets in life. A sensible thing to teach your children, but easy to say for a person like Lene, who almost without exceptions has made reasonable choices.

I have also made reasonable choices. Always reasonable choices. Went to a business college and then internship in a store. Now I work in the administration in Næstved Shopping Mall. The local shops are closing. Everyone has a car and want their shopping made easy. They want to shop in a place where it is convenient to bring children. I hire the Santa Claus, all the clowns, the x-factor winners and magicians who entertain and stuff. I'm also responsible for the ads in the local newspaper. And that's fine. I do not know what else to do.

The girls thrive. We have a nice house in a nice neighbourhood. The housing market isn't doing well in this area, but I think we made a sound choice when we bought ours. I play a little football and I'm part of a brewers' guild. I have nothing to complain about. I've done fine.

Lene and I have been married for twelve years now. We met through a mutual friend. She was a good listener. She makes me talk about things that I have never said to others. She kisses me goodbye in the morning, and she puts her legs up on mine when we watch TV.

There is this ugly thought, which I can't get out of my head: I'm not sure that I love Lene. Maybe I just got infatuated with the way she made me open up to her back then. The way she could listen and say the right things. Maybe we're just together because I was a mess when I was younger, and she seemed right for me back then.

I hate the thought. I used to be able to say everything to her. I feel that I'm starting to lie, or that I am being careful with my words. And she can feel it.

She's such a fine being, and I want to see her happy. Is that not love?

About Michael

Michael is 37 (born 1978), married to **Lene**, who is the same age. He is the father of Sidsel, 11, and Dagmar, 7. He lives in Næstved, and works in the administration of Næstved Shopping Mall. Lene works in the bookshop in the same mall.

Michael's sister's name is **Kirsten**. Kirsten is 34, lives in Vesterbro, Copenhagen. She works at a café and is enrolled in the University of Copenhagen.

The father of Michael and Kirsten (Ole) left just a few months after Kirsten's birth. Their mother (Regitze) has been alone ever since. She died three weeks ago.

You must make Michael your own. Look at the following points and questions and find the answers you think are most interesting to play out.

Michael takes responsibility, does his part, makes things happen, provides for others.
- *Will he continue to do so?*

Michael sees his sister Kirsten as fragile, self-absorbed, confused.
- *Why did Michael need to take care of his sister?*

Michael thinks that his mother had a hard life.
- *What was his relationship with her like?*
- *What does he think about Kirsten's relationship with his mother?*

Michael sees his father as a selfish coward. Michael does not want to understand.
- *Are there any cracks in Michael's image of his father?*

Michael has become afraid that his marriage with Lene in some way is false.
- *Are his fears unfounded?*

If you get other ideas, feel free to introduce more aspects about Michael's thoughts.

About Lene: Lene comes into play when she and Michael are calling each other on the phone or sending text messages. In addition, both you and Lene's player may introduce flashback scenes about past events or conversations between Michael and Lene. Try to keep these scenes short, and let them show something important about Michael or about the relationship.

Kirsten

Dear player

On the following pages you will read some of Kirsten's thoughts. It's not important whether you remember the text in detail. Read it as an inspiration to play Kirsten. On the last page you will find a summary of the most important points.

Mom died three weeks ago. We knew it would happen. It's probably the only positive thing you can say about stomach cancer.

She was buried in Sundby Cemetery facing Amager Hospital. I am 34 years old, and I felt totally useless before the funeral. In the process I caught myself thinking that I wished an adult would come and tell me what to do. We have never known our father. He left us just after I was born.

Usually you bluff your way. You evade too much responsibility. But then your mother dies, and you have to step into character. And you fall right through.

It was Michael who took care of it all. Arranged the funeral in his practical and slightly annoying step-by-step manner. He did not even ask me for help. He didn't need me. I am not needed.

Following the funeral I was able to think again. We emptied Mom's apartment two weeks ago. It was only Michael and I. His wife Lene stayed in Næstved with the girls. I've seen them a few times since mother was diagnosed with the disease four months ago. Dagmar has grown so big. She has just started in first grade. Her older sister Sidsel speaks with such reason. She sounds like an adult. I started to cry when, after the funeral, she said to me that grandmother has found her peace.

Well, we cleared the apartment. I was determined to make an effort. Michael stepped into his old role and sort of bossed me around. He treated me like a child who had to be gently put to work.

It was there I found the letters. A pile of envelopes sent to our mother from Sweden, Norway and Finland. There was the sender's name and address on them. They were from our father. I had never seen them before. The first was from 1981 - the year when dad disappeared. The last was from 2000. Up to 1986, the envelopes were opened. The ones after that time remained unopened. I showed them to Michael.

He immediately started to read one of them. I stopped him and asked if we might wait until later. It was a sudden impulse - half to show him that I could be focused as well. He nodded and we went back to work.

While I cleaned up, the plan started to take shape. We should not read them. Not now. We should take the letters with us and follow in our father's footsteps through Sweden and beyond. And then open them one by one and read them bit by bit, trying to find out who he was.

We ate pizza and drank Mom's last bottles of wine. That's when I suggested it to him – after the third glass. I argued passionately for my idea of a road trip to Sweden. It might take four or five days. I made him swear that he would not change his mind.

Why was I so insisting on that idea? I think I want the story of my father to be fixed. Set in place. Who the heck he was ... or is. Maybe he lives still?

But it also relates to Michael.

I hope that Michael will prove less of a square, if he's 'forced' off the beaten path. If we sit in a car somewhere up in Sweden, maybe he will lower his guard? We rarely talked about our father. It was always me who started the conversation back when we still lived with our mom. Dad wasn't there, so why not let the imagination flow? You know, guess a little? Michael would always try to stop me doing that. Maybe it was a big brother thing. If I insisted, he would get angry. Mom would get so terribly sad when Michael went angry. She went to great lengths not to make him angry. My dear little Mom. Michael was a very well behaved boy, but you could always tell when he was angry, though he kept it to himself. By the way he still is. Proper. And the anger is still there as well.

Of course, we were not the only children who were alone with our mother. But the other children had a reason. "He moved to Hedehusene". "He's in jail." "He works in Austria." Our father just left. I wrote about him in my diary - made lists of things he might have done and the places he might have been. Now I think I just want to know. I'm getting tired of guessing.

It is a strange thing with children's stories about their parents. And parents' stories about their children. And our stories about each other.

My facebook feed is flooding with baby pictures. My street is full of fathers with beards walking around pushing prams and drinking coffee. They're wearing sunglasses and laughing together. Their kids play in the playground down at the old shooting range. The whole world is on maternity leave.

I party a little too much. I work at a café with people ten years younger than me - they are all very competent and probably wonder why I still stay in such a grad student life. They are in transit through their 20s, with drinking binges, missed appointments, changing relationships and evenings in the park filled with sparkling laughter and young radiant eyes. And I lead them gently and safely through this phase, give them advice and consolation with a firm grown up voice, say their names at the beginning of a sentence and speak with authority. But I have no idea whether my advice works, and I know that I often contradict myself. I am a kind of quack-psychologist who gets paid with glimpses of attention, and my expertise only stems from the buckets of shit I had thrown at me through the years.

But they love me, because I side with them and dare to be indifferent. And they don't investigate the cracks in my facade. At least not to a degree that I cannot divert them. And I arrange pub-crawls with bottled beers, shots and darts. They watch in horror and amusement when I make out with garbage collectors and scaffolders with rumbling laughter and rough hands or when I say something vulgar or bold, like graphic details about the immense cock of the last one I brought home, or about the time I was fucking a married university professor with weird fantasies. And all my young friends stare and laugh with open mouths - and revel - half embarrassed, half joyfully - in all my stories.

They are mine for two or three or four years, but then they finish their studies, and they move on to steady jobs, steady relationships and real estate ownership. And it's always in the autumn, when they stop coming. And so I invite the next group into the accident that is my life.

Tomorrow morning Michael will come and pick me up, and then we drive to Sweden.

Chilly October surrounds me. I put the diary away and leave the apartment. I am visiting some friends from college. Through the corner of my eye I notice the two men sitting on the bench.

One man's plastic bag clinks as he pulls up another beer. Their faces are flushed. The men on the bench always make me sad. I have stopped looking at them now.

And then my mind wanders. I wonder where our father is now? Mom said that he liked to write. It was a comforting thought for many years - my father is a writer, this is what I told myself – and the others. As if it answered the question of why he was not there. It was certainly a shield against the idea that he was homeless - or an alcoholic. Or just a loser.

But back when I studied Greek – I was 22 years old and suddenly dead serious about wanting to be an academic - I sometimes went to the Copenhagen Main Library, fourth floor. That's where I found out that author types could be losers as well. You were never in doubt when you looked at them.

There was the one with greasy glasses who talked to himself. There was that overweight guy who waddled over to his place and regularly coughed and hawked so intensely that everyone could hear how much mucus he had on his throat and on his lungs. Then there was the one with the huge beard, he smelled so foul that when he came in and sat down to read the newspaper, some of the ambitious little college princesses felt it necessary to pack up their things and leave the place, the utmost disgust painted in their faces.

I lingered, just sat there and gazed at them. Unkempt, filthy looking men in wrinkled and dirty rags. I looked for recognizable features. And then I thought about how far from or how close to I was from becoming one of them.

Back when I was in high school I suddenly started to have anxiety attacks. I went to therapy and got medicated. Mom was beside herself. She did not know what to do about it all. Just like I didn't know what to do, or who to be, at her funeral. She probably also missed having an adult nearby. But her parents had died, and she had no brothers or sisters. She directed even more attention towards me and became even more unsure of herself. She treated me like I was made of crystal glass. I did my best taking the pills on a regular basis and put up a brave face. But she could not figure out how to say no, how to be a firm parent, so apart from showing her a happy face I did whatever suited me.

Michael left home after he had finished high school. I could sense that he felt guilty about not being there, holding the fort. But his thoughts were elsewhere. Michael is like Atlas. A man who keeps the world afloat – in his own square way. He probably doesn't know who Atlas is. He never thought much of my studies. Well, I dropped out of Greek studies. Tried Japanese. And then Rhetoric. I am still enrolled at the university.

The anxiety attacks went away again, so I stopped taking pills. And then I left home. I sometimes had difficulty sleeping. So I left the dormitory and walked around the city. Sometimes I went to Michael's apartment in the middle of the night with a can of Pringles. And then we would talk all night. But then he found Lene and it was a little inappropriate that I showed up. I could feel it. And then they moved to Næstved, and that's almost a two hour train trip away.

I might be as fragile as crystal glass. But I have my routines that help me. Small rituals, which give me peace. But now my mother has died of cancer. It's kind of like a test. If I can get through my mother's cancer and funeral without collapsing, I'm normal. Or... fuck normal, then I'm certainly not made of crystal glass.

I have also become better at meditating. I take my diary out and write down a little entry in it every day. That's my meditation. And the diary does me good. It keeps me focused. It

challenges me. It will not accept any bullshit. I can lie to the diary, but sooner or later, it will catch me in my lies.

It was kind of the same thing with the professor - I attended his class in college. He was twice my age when we began to meet. And he had a family. And it lasted a little too long. And the wife found out about it. And she kept him anyway. And we met several times after he had promised her to be faithful again - it was I who seduced him. And now, when I talk to people about it, they all expect that I shake my head and say that "it was a mess, yes it was." Well, they know where they can stick all their expectations.

He was honest. He said what he wanted. He didn't sugar-coat anything. I only got a 'D' at my exam, which actually was okay - I didn't really understand the subject. I wasn't prostituting myself.

And I could be honest with him. Honest in that sarcastic we-laugh-about-the-idiocy-of-the-world-and-of-ourselves way. We were merciless. I told him about my compulsive behaviour, and about complacency, being lazy-horny and about my strangulation fantasies. I commented on my belly fat and my pale skin, and on the hair on my upper lip – my lady moustache. Told him about my completely irrational fear of AIDS. He laughed passionately and told me about his own numerous mental and physical defects. And we speared each other, and I loved it.

But I never said to him that I didn't have a father.

I'm on my way to a party. Some of the people I know with nice stable lives have found babysitters for their kids and have invited us for a night of drinks and dancing. It can go both ways. Either all the parents get tired at eleven, or they party crazy drunk all night.

Michael will pick me up tomorrow before noon, and then we'll drive to Sweden. And maybe we will have a nice talk together. Maybe we can even laugh together. Maybe at some point he will tell me something important about his life and show me a crack in his facade. Or maybe he'll give me a good hug and tell me that he has really missed me.

About Kirsten

Kirsten is 34 (born 1981), and lives alone in an apartment in downtown Copenhagen. She works in a café, and is formally enrolled at Rhetoric Studies.

Kirsten has a brother, **Michael**, who is 37, married to **Lene** and has two children, Sidsel, 11, and Dagmar, 7. They live in Næstved. He is employed at the Shopping Mall down there.

Michael and Kirsten's father (Ole) went away a few months after Kirsten's birth. Their mother (Regitze) has been alone since then. She died three weeks ago.

You must make Kirsten your own character. Look at the following points and questions and find the answers you think are the most interesting to play out.

Kirsten sometimes feels that the facade is about to crack.

- *Is she about to break?*
- *How miserable is she?*

Michael is grown up, intractable, angry.

- *What does Kirsten want for him?*
- *What does Kirsten want from him?*

Their mother had a tough life.

- *Does she blame her mother for anything?*

She sometimes wonders about what her father has become.

- *Why is it important for her to have a story about him?*

If you get other ideas, feel free to introduce more aspects about Kirsten's thoughts.

The Diary: Kirsten reads and writes in her diary on a daily basis. It has become a ritual for her. In this game it plays out in scenes where she talks with her diary (played by the supporting player). None of the other characters in the story conceive that there is a conversation going on. They just see Kirsten read and write in her diary.

The diary knows Kirsten's mind, and it can remind her of past events and past thoughts she might have forgotten. Kirsten exposes herself to the diary, sometimes telling it dangerous and forbidden thoughts, revealing secrets about herself. Other times she tells it things that aren't true, make up advanced lies that are fun or horrible to be reminded of a few years later.

The diary can take stock of the situation. It can tell her whether she is a loser. Perhaps it has to be forced or cajoled a little before giving her an answer. It always welcomes new secrets... that is, if she has more secrets.

Factual things the diary knows about Kirsten

1987-1998: 1st to 10th class at Gerbrandsskolen, Copenhagen.
1998-2001: Tårnby Gymnasium.
1999-2003: Anxiety attacks.
Therapy and medication.
2003-2006: Enrolled in Greek Studies, University of Copenhagen.
2008-2010: Enrolled in Japanese Studies, University of Copenhagen.
2012-today: Enrolled in Rhetoric studies. Does not attend classes.
2010-today: Works at a café in Vesterbro, Copenhagen.

The Supporting Player

Dear player

You have four roles in the scenario: *Kirsten's diary*, *Michaels wife Lene*, *the father's friend Johan* and *the father's ex-girlfriend Klaudia*. All of your roles will in various ways affect Michael and Kirsten's journey through Scandinavia. Before reading your roles, here are just a few points about brother and sister and their parents:

Michael (37):

- is a person who helps, carries burdens, takes responsibility. He takes care of his family and his surroundings. He tries to keep his thoughts and feelings private.
- his strength is his ability to take care of others. His weakness is his lack of willingness to deal with his own fears.

Kirsten (34):

- is a person who struggles to meet the expectations that comes with being an adult. She knows that she is fickle and has difficulty making decisions, and she knows that her head is a mess, and that she is unhappy. She sees and understands other people's frailty.
- her strength is that she knows herself well. Her weakness is that she knows herself well.

Their parents

Michaels and Kirsten's father (Ole) left the family a few months after Kirsten's birth. Their mother (Regitze) has been alone since then. She died three weeks ago.

Besides your roles, you have two unique tools that you can use to shape the story:

- You can set flashback scenes from Michael and Lene's marriage. Try to keep these scenes short, and let them show something important about Michael or the relationship.
- You can **describe glimpses** of Michael and Kirsten's childhood home. When you think it's appropriate, pause the current scene and briefly describe an event, an object, a photograph or a conversation from their childhood apartment on Amager. Afterwards the journey through Scandinavia continues, but now the two siblings can refer to this memory in their dialogue.

On the following pages you can read about your roles. Read the diary and Lene immediately. We recommend you do not read about Johan and Klaudia until the game come to a pause. Not because there are any secrets you shouldn't know, but because there is a lot of extra information that can wait until later.

The last page provides an overview of your four roles.

The Diary

The diary knows Kirsten. She has written most of her life in the book. Kirsten has an unconventional mind, and she might not remember everything. But the diary remembers it all, so feel free to improvise something she has written down and present it when it fits the story.

October 5th, 2015

"I am 34 years old, and I felt totally useless before the funeral. I thought several times that I wished an adult would come and tell me what to do. Usually you bluff your way. You evade too much responsibility. But then your mother dies, and you have to step into character. And you fall right through."

The diary is a character that only Kirsten can talk to. In the scenario this will play out as scenes where Kirsten opens the diary and they talk, or as comments or quick questions from diary to Kirsten. No one else near Kirsten recognize this as conversations. They just see Kirsten sit and read or write in her diary.

Depending on the diary and Kirsten's mood the diary may choose to challenge Kirsten, play up to her, comfort or interrogate her. The diary can list how many of Kirsten's days were good days and what mood she was in. It knows if Kirsten is a loser.

October 22nd, 2015

"I hope that Michael will be less of a square, if he is 'forced' off the beaten path. If we sit in a car somewhere up in Sweden, maybe he will lower his guard?"

Kirsten gets big and beautiful ideas, takes in people and lets them feel her light shine on them, but she has been known to throw them off again when they begin to bore her. And Michael is basically a little boring.

January 4th, 2014

"We rarely talked about our father. It was always me who started the conversation back when we still lived with our mom. Dad wasn't there, so why not let the imagination flow? You know, guess a little? Michael would always try to stop me doing that. Maybe it was a big brother thing. If I insisted, he would get angry."

Kirsten knew very well that she often provoked Michael. Why did she do it even though she knew it would make their mother unhappy?

August 23rd, 2014

"I party a little too much. I work at a café with people ten years younger than me - they are all very competent and probably wonder why I still stay in such a grad student life. They are in transit through the 20s with drinking binges, missed appointments, changing relationships and evenings in the park filled with sparkling laughter and young radiant eyes. And I lead them gently and safely through this phase, give them advice and consolation with a firm grown up voice, say their name at the beginning of a sentence and speak with authority."

Factual things the diary knows about Kirsten

1987-1998: 1st to 10th class at Gerbrandsskolen, Copenhagen.
1998-2001: Tårnby Gymnasium (High School).
1999-2003: Anxiety attacks. Therapy and medication.
2003-2006: Enrolled in Greek Studies, University of Copenhagen.
2008-2010: Enrolled in Japanese Studies, University of Copenhagen.
2012-today: Enrolled in Rhetoric studies. Does not attend classes.
2010-today: Works at a café in Vesterbro, Copenhagen.

October 14th, 2014

"I have no idea whether my advice works, and I know that I often contradict myself. I am a kind of quack-psychologist who gets paid with glimpses of attention, and I have only my expertise

from the buckets of shit I had thrown at me through the years. They are mine for two or three or four years, but then they finish their studies, and they move on to steady work, steady relationships and real estate ownership. And it's always in the autumn, when they stop coming. And so I invite the next group into the accident that is my life."

The diary has discovered how Kirsten creates stories about herself and others. Right now she writes her life as the tragic tale of being a girl in a woman's body, who helps others while being trapped in immaturity. Back when she studied Greek it was the story of the girl who confronted and overcame the chaos within herself, and became a real university student. Which shortly after became another tale, this time of collapse – getting chewed up and spat out of university.

April 11th, 2005

"The professor – I attend his class. He is twice my age. He has a family. He is fucking hot."

June 24th, 2005

"I did my exam yesterday. The moron, he only gave me a D. We fucked all night anyway. I haven't slept. He's fucking wild."

November 29th, 2005

It has been going on a little too long. His wife knows. And now, when I talk to people about it, they all expect that I shake my head and say that 'it was a mess, yes it was.' Well, they know where they can stick their expectations.

Kirsten does extreme things. In the diary she has written a hundred different explanations why, but the explanations always change with her mood. The diary knows all the explanations and can remind her of them.

August 2nd, 2003

"No more anxiety attacks. Finally."

Perhaps Kirsten is falling apart. It has been many years since she had any anxiety attacks, but when one reads her scribbles today, one senses a person standing on the edge. Perhaps a solution would be for her to live her life in a more extreme way? The diary gives whatever advice it fancies.

The diary's function is flexible. You can use it to provoke Kirsten to shout out, if the story is otherwise a bit too low key, or you can use it to detect Kirsten's lies, boost her confidence or create a new dynamic between the two siblings.

Hint: When the diary starts talking to Kirsten, you can choose to refer back to a specific date:

"September 14th, 1999. You were in high school. Michael was home for a visit, and you thought he was being a total idiot – harassing poor mom. Do you remember that?"

Lene

Lene is 37 years old and married to Michael. They have two daughters: Sidsel, 11, and Dagmar, 7. The family lives in Næstved. Lene works in the bookstore in Næstved Shopping Mall. Michael works in the administration at the mall. Lene spends her free time on the family. Michael plays a little football and is part of a brewers' guild.

Lene and Michael met through a mutual friend. Lene fell in love with his firm voice, his calmness and his concern for her. She still loves these things about him. And that he is a good father for the girls.

Lene helped Michael open up. Got him to talk about frustrations in relation to his work and his chaotic family. Lene is a good listener, and Michael needed someone to confide in.

They still have a strong emotional intimacy. One evening, not long after his mother's funeral, he told Lene in the darkness of their bedroom, that he regretted not visiting his mother more this past year. She was just this little lonely lady, and he hadn't been there for her. Lene took his hand and told him how loving and caring he was and reminded him of how much he managed to do for his mother before she died. Lene could see that he was smiling at her in the darkness.

But Lene has become afraid that her relationship with Michael is in trouble. She senses that Michael is hiding something from her. That he cannot speak freely to her anymore. And she can feel that she gets unhappy and angry when he doesn't share his worries with her.

What's wrong? Maybe their marriage has become routine? Or maybe it's the fear of not getting enough out of life? Perhaps she has become too old and boring? She is not sure that she dare ask him. Once things are said aloud, they cannot be taken back. But what if they are really losing each other?

Now he will go to Sweden for several days with his sister. It was Kirsten's idea, and Michael could not figure out how to say no.

Lene finds it difficult to accept Michael's sister. Everything in Kirsten's world is about Kirsten. She can't even manage to come visit them in Næstved when they celebrate the girls' birthdays. And she's never stepped out of the role of the little sister. Kirsten tires and wears on her surroundings. She is going to wear Michael down.

Lene's function in the scenario is to get Michael to show more of himself - his thoughts and feelings about the journey, Kirsten, his father - than he would immediately tell on his own initiative. Furthermore, she represents a marriage that may be about to fall apart.

Lene comes in to play when she and Michael call each other on the phone, sends text messages, and in connection with **flashback scenes** from Michael og Lene's marriage.

Wait with reading about Johan and Claudia, until there is a break in the playthrough. Flip to the last page, where you'll find a list of your four roles.

Johan – a former friend

Johan is 63 years old, in early retirement, and has a prosthetic leg and a cane. When he's not sitting in the apartment on Tranbärvegen with his coffee and looking over at the Volvo factory or watching TV, he is down at Olle's grill bar to have a chat and a hot dog.

Johan comes into play when Kirsten and Michael visit his apartment in Umeå. When they explain the reason for their visit, he invites them in and has a talk with them. Let him enquire a bit as to why they have taken this journey now.

Here is one way Johan's story about the father could be told:

"I met Ole, your father, at the Volvo factory. He needed a place to stay and I had a room. For several years we lived here. At times your father found a kind of peace here, but at other times he regretted that he had gone away. When I asked him, he always ended up saying that it was probably best for everyone that he stayed away.

The winter of 1986 changed everything for your father... the weather, the darkness, the snow... the loneliness. That Christmas was very difficult for him. And at that point he realized that he had made a stupid choice. He sat there, cursing himself, while writing to your mother on Christmas Day. We agreed that I should take him to Stockholm after New Years Eve. The next days, he was happy. He seemed relieved.

The accident happened when I drove him to the train. The road was slippery, and I lost control of the car. We drove off a cliff. When I woke up, I was stuck. My leg was crushed. Your father kept the bleeding in check and tried to calm me. I was in a state of shock. He was quite calm.

He helped me through it all. Was with me in the hospital. There he met a Norwegian nurse - Klaudia. They got together, and he moved to Norway in the summer. I guess they still live in Mo i Rana. I have not seen him since."

Don't give the next piece of information until Johan has seen their responses to the above.

"I almost think he had more need of help than I, while I was in the hospital. It destroyed him completely when your mother cursed him over the phone and said he should never reappear. I wish I had been there to talk with him.

He was just a confused wretch. That's how people are. You should not expect too much of them. And a man shouldn't blame himself for failing other people. Hmm... 'To fail someone'. That is such an unfair phrase. We all make mistakes."

The text above is just a suggestion. Adjust as you please, as long as the overall points are intact. Johan's way of seeing things need not be the only truth.

Johan's function in the scenario is to provide a portrait of the father, which varies with the two protagonists' perceptions. And, if Kirsten and Michael condemn their father, to defend him and tell some other stories about him (Was he funny, helpful, charming, a clown with a faded smile, dutiful, repentant, warm and caring?)

Klaudia – an old flame

Klaudia is 52 years old and lives in Mo i Rana in northern Norway. Klaudia lived with the father from 1987 to 1997 in that same city, after meeting him in January 1987 in Umeå, Sweden, where she lived and worked. She has two girls, Solveig and Nora, from a previous relationship. Now the girls have left home and Klaudia is alone in the house. She still works as a nurse. When she has days off, she drives to Bergen to see her grandchildren.

Klaudia comes into play when Kirsten and Michael gets to Mo i Rana. She may be reluctant to invite them in, but eventually does so.

Here is a possible way Klaudia's story about the father could be told:

"Ole and I - It's a strange story. Suddenly it was just over. He just wouldn't stay with me anymore.

You know – we were happy. He was good and generous with his smiles and his love. And we whispered together about things only we understood. We were partners-in-crime. And the girls loved him. He took them into his heart, and did everything possible for them. And he breathed freely. He often said that to me. We had some wonderful years.

Sure, we quarrelled, and we were unfair towards one other sometimes. But we always found each other again. And we apologized and held each other tight. And felt an immense joy in forgiving and being forgiven. And then we were happy again.

But then he slipped away from me. Disappeared into his own mind. He ceased to have any opinions, to stand up for anything. He just did what was expected. And when I finally grabbed him and asked him, forcing him to answer, he just said that he wanted to end our relationship. No proper explanation. He would not say why - just something to the effect that he could not be in this thing anymore. Just like that. The end.

I missed him terribly for a really long time. And he never gave me any answers. He just left us. And the girls didn't understand anything. They were totally confused, and very unhappy.

And now you come here and want answers ... "

The text above is just a suggestion. Adjust as you please, as long as the overall points are intact. Klaudia's way of seeing things need not be the only truth.

Klaudia's function in the scenario is to give yet another portrait of the father - how good he was when he was at his best, how strange his farewell was, and how he hurt people.

It's up to you to decide how Klaudia's state of mind is today, and what she thinks about getting a visit from the two main characters: Will she be angry, sad, mournful when talking about him? Is she annoyed about them coming and asking questions, is she indifferent, or does she try to comfort them?

Overview

The Diary:

Can say exactly what it wants to Kirsten, even if it provokes. It knows everything you would like it to know, and can ask her about whatever it wants to.

The diary's function is flexible. You can use it to provoke Kirsten to shout out, if the story is otherwise a bit too low key, or you can use it to detect Kirsten's lies, boost her confidence or create a new dynamic between the two siblings.

Lene:

Has the daughters Sidsel (11) and Dagmar (7) with Michael. They live in Næstved.

Lene's function in the scenario is to get Michael to show more of himself - his thoughts and feelings about their marriage, the journey, Kirsten and his father - than he would immediately tell on his own initiative. Furthermore, she represents a marriage that may be about to fall apart.

Johan (colleague and flatmate of the father from 1981 til 1987)

Johan lives alone in Umeå. He has lost a leg. He can tell the story of their father wanting to go home, but with the car accident getting in the way.

Johan's function in the scenario is to provide a portrait of the father, which varies from the two protagonists' perceptions, and if they condemn their father, he might want to defend him.

Klaudia (The father's girlfriend from 1987 to 1997)

Klaudia lives alone in Mo i Rana. Her two girls, Solveig and Nora, have left home. She can tell stories about happiness and loss relating to the father.

Klaudia's function in the scenario is to give yet another portrait of the father - how good he was when he was at his best, how strange his farewell was, and how he hurt people.

Your other tools:

- You can initiate **flashback scenes** relating to Michael og Lene's marriage.
- You can **describe glimpses** (events, objects, conversations, photos) of Michael and Kirsten's childhood home.

Letters 1-8

Amagerfælledvej 42, Apartment 2, fourth floor. March 17, 1981

My Beloved

I know we've talked about it for the last several days and weeks, almost months.

But I cannot bear it anymore. I'm tired. I know it's not fair to say that I am tired. It is not I who gave birth or is kept awake at night, or feeds Kirsten and comforts Michael when he misses the attention. I don't even have a job. I'm just around.

I've stopped treading water. I cannot play pretend any longer. Now I'm just sinking. Kirsten's screams, Michael's weeping and your harsh words about my inadequacy... none of these things can reach me in the abyss. They are only distant sounds from the surface.

I do not know who I am anymore. I have been an echo for too long, answering when called upon, nothing more.

I cannot and will not utter one more word in our little charade. I can't breathe anymore. I need to find a way back to the surface and find my own voice; I need to stop treading water and start swimming again.

When I find out, I know that I will be able to hear your beautiful voice again and be a father for our children without sinking into the darkness. And when I come back, we'll all swim together.

I know that you don't care about my excuses, they don't make sense, I know. However, I have no other way of explaining it. I need to get away.

But my love, know that I'll make it, that I'll come home. I promise that I'll come home to you again.

I hope you will be there when I do.

Love and kisses to you, my beloved Regitze
Ole

[1st Letter]

Västersjön, Ängelsholm, Skåne, August 14, 1981

Dear Regitze, Michael and Kirsten

The summer is almost over.

I am still in Sweden. I haven't been calling as often as I should. Every time I call and hear your voices, I get a lump in my throat and become completely speechless.

But it has helped being on my own. With distance and perspective, it's easier to find the meaning of everything. I miss you, but time here at Västersjön has given me room to think and the ability to smile again.

Sleeping beneath the open sky, looking upon the stars. Talking, laughing, tasting their schnapps, telling stories with the other anglers and campers. Preparing for next day's fly fishing while the summer rain drums on the tent canvas, watching raindrops hit the surface of the lake. Midnight crayfishing. Talking and singing myself hoarse to a harvest festival... Summer here in Sweden has done me good.

I feel that every day I live this way, I become a better person or at least a man who understands himself better. The time I spend alone now will benefit us all when I get home. I will come home at some point. It's not about you. I wish I could be with you, but I need get a grip and a way of handling life. Whatever that is. But I'm not there yet.

I'm gonna come home. I just don't know when.

Give Michael and Kirsten a kiss and a hug from me.

Yours sincerely
Ole

PS. I hope the envelope with the money arrived - it's not much, but I hope it can help you and the children a bit.

[2nd Letter]

Röttle, North of Jönköping, March 12, 1982

Dear Regitze

I've hitched a ride going north. A guy named Åke picked me up near Jönköping. He's driving up the E4 past Stockholm, Uppsala and from there further north. Maybe I should go with him all the way - I guess that life on the Swedish roads can only be fully obtained from the passenger seat of a Volvo truck.

I met Åke yesterday. He transports timber to a Swedish sawmill. From there it is sent to a Swedish furniture factory where it will be made into dressers, slats, stools - a cradle maybe ... and it'll eventually end up in some IKEA.

IKEA... Do you remember when we went to buy the cradle? They had just opened. You were getting quite big, a few months and we would be a family of four.

Unemployed, too young, no money, a half-empty apartment - but we insisted on having a cradle bought on credit from IKEA.

Why did you have to get pregnant? We couldn't even afford to have one kid. If you had just gone to the clinic and terminated it... why the hell did we get two children, when one was more than enough! And why didn't you notice that I was completely distraught at the prospect of another child?

Although I have only spoken a few sentences with Åke and he determines the route, I have the feeling that with him I can ask about where we are going and why, without being a complete asshole.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry I don't live up to your expectations.

Love Ole

[3rd Letter]

[**Postcard:** A summer picture at Umeå]

Umeå, August 27, 1984

Dear Regitze

I know it's a long time since you've heard from me. I just wanted to write you and tell you that I'm well and all is okay. I hope that Michael had a good first day of school. I hope that he could use the school bag that I sent you. I am sorry that I haven't called. I guess I should have-

I know things aren't as you had hoped for. But this is what I can manage at the moment. I need to solve this for myself, it's not on you. This is my problem and I'll find a way through it.

Love
Ole

[4th Letter]

Tranbärvegen 15A, Umeå, December 25, 1986

Dear Regitze, Michael and Kirsten

Forgive me my darling, I've been so stupid.

Yesterday was Christmas Eve. The other years it has also been strange at Christmas, but yesterday was different. I was not feeling well. I came to think of you, how you must have had it at home, alone with two children.

I feel like I just woke up after five years of sleep. I have been longing to write this letter. But every time I sit down at my desk, my hand has failed me. I have had a hard time expressing my feelings in words, and every time I have written them down, told them or thought about them, the words have distorted to anger. Anger towards the choices we've made and didn't make, anger about my own cowardly escape from Denmark and across the Sound.

I've always wanted to have children and when we met, it was obvious that you were the one... But it all happened too fast.

But I've had time now. I have spent so much time by myself when I should have spent it with you instead. But I'm sure that the time spent alone is what enables me to write this letter.

Time has passed and I've had time to think and be myself without having to account for others. Now I'm ready to take on the responsibility that I should have taken several years ago.

I live with Johan, a man from my crew at the Volvo factory. He will drive me to Stockholm, from there I'll take the train to Helsingborg and from there a ferry to Helsingør. I've called and booked a ticket, departure January 5th, 1.30 pm.

I'm coming home. I hope that I can come home and be with you again. I have missed you and I have missed to be more than a man on the run from responsibility and his own family. Forgive me my dear. I have been so stupid, but there was probably no other way.

I coming home, I'm ready for a new year and a new life together with you if you want me... I hope to see you at the port.

Love
Your husband and your father Ole

[5th Letter]

Brannklokkeveien 7, Mo i Rana, Norway, December 1991

For Regitze

I know that the last thing you said on the phone was that I should not contact you again. I hope that you have found someone in your life. Now that it couldn't be me.

I remember that you ended the phone conversation by wishing me well. I just want to tell you that everything is better now. I have for some years been with Klaudia. She even has two girls so I've become somewhat of a father to them. They are a little younger than Michael and Kirsten. I am working at the steel mill. We play Bridge on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and on weekends the girls go to dancing lessons nearby. I guess Kirsten might also go to dancing lessons...

They are so fine in their little pink dresses and how they can get the boys to follow every wink. I certainly have a hard time saying no to them when they smile and wink at me. It's just fantastic.

I told Klaudia everything about my past, but she chooses to talk about the present and the future rather than dwell on the past. She says that it is of no use. She is so right about that.

I met Klaudia at the hospital in Umeå, she worked there as a nurse. She took care of Johan after the accident. It is just staggering that a terrible accident still can bring something good with it.

After some time, she found work at the clinic here in Mo i Rana and I thought that I might as well should go with her, now that there was nothing for me in Denmark.

We have a small house in town. When I go home from work. I sometimes see the northern lights out over the fjord. And when I come home and see the Christmas star in the window and enter the door where my three girls meet me at the door... Then I know I have found my home.

I really hope that you have found someone you can be with. It's not good to be alone for too long at a time. But then, you have the children, so you'll never be alone. I can feel my life is right now. Especially when we take a trip up the mountain, although the girls always complain about having to go hiking. But when we get to the top and look down over the fjord, then all of us treasure our family life.

I hope you're all doing well.

Yours sincerely

Ole

[6th Letter]

Svea Motel, Umeå, November 4, 1997

Dear Regitze

It's over between me and Klaudia. I left her a few months ago, and I'm back in Umeå. Tomorrow morning I'm taking the ferry to Vaasa and Finland.

Once again I've lived a life that was not my own. The father figure who comes home from work, embraces the family, sits down at the table, listens interested to the dinner table stories. Helping with homework, cheering at dance competitions, being there at the monthly mountain hikes, being there.... I was physically present, but nothing more.

She said she could sense it. She said that something had changed. But it's a lie, nothing changed, it's always been like that. It appears that I am just good at pretending, producing the right explanations and excuses.

She said that I was just one big excuse... Everything was a lie, the happy family never existed. It was all in our imagination. It was only words. She called me a selfish monster and said she was unable to understand how I could live like that. But it wasn't just me, she was as big as a part of it.

She said she loved me, and I hugged her even tighter...

It was she who asked if we were going to try to have a baby together... So I held her and answered with a kiss on the forehead...

When she said she was so happy that we had met, I held her and weaved my fingers together with hers...

When she said that she needed me to tell her about my feelings ... I answered by saying that my feelings for her were too great to be put into words, and then she hugged me even more...

She did not want to see the truth... It's not only my fault!

Now I'm taking the ferry away. Again.

I cannot be anything to anyone ... I'm just words.

Words in unopened letters.

[7th Letter]

Koskø, Finland, July 2000

To Regitze, Michael and Kirsten.

I have found myself a little cabin at a lake just north of Vaasa.

When I sit in my chair and look out at the lake, I can't understand why I couldn't be with you.

I wish that you had answered some of my letters, or that you had understood the accident at Umeå, and why I did not come home.

I have not been reasonable or fair to you or anyone else, not even myself, though you may think of me as selfish. But I did not know how to do anything else.

Letters with stories, tales, lies and half-truths ... it'll stop now.

I'm okay, I am content, and no one to disappoint or to answer to ... There is only the lake and me.

I'll not write any more letters, at least not any I'll send. I have made up my mind.

So now it's goodbye ... You've said goodbye to me many years ago, but now I'll try to let you go.

I wish you were here, seeing the lake right now with me ... and if I could explain If I could only explain, but I lack the right words ...

Goodbye Kirsten
Goodbye Michael
Goodbye Regitze

[8th Letter]

Scene Summary

Day 1-4

DAY 1 (Saturday, October 24th, 2015)

From Amager to Västersjön and then Jönköping – 350km

SCENES:

Kirsten's Apartment
Cemetery [1st Letter]
Flashback: Leaving Næstved
Crossing the Øresund Bridge
Västersjön [2nd Letter]
A motel in Jönköping



DAY 2 (Sunday, October 25th, 2015)

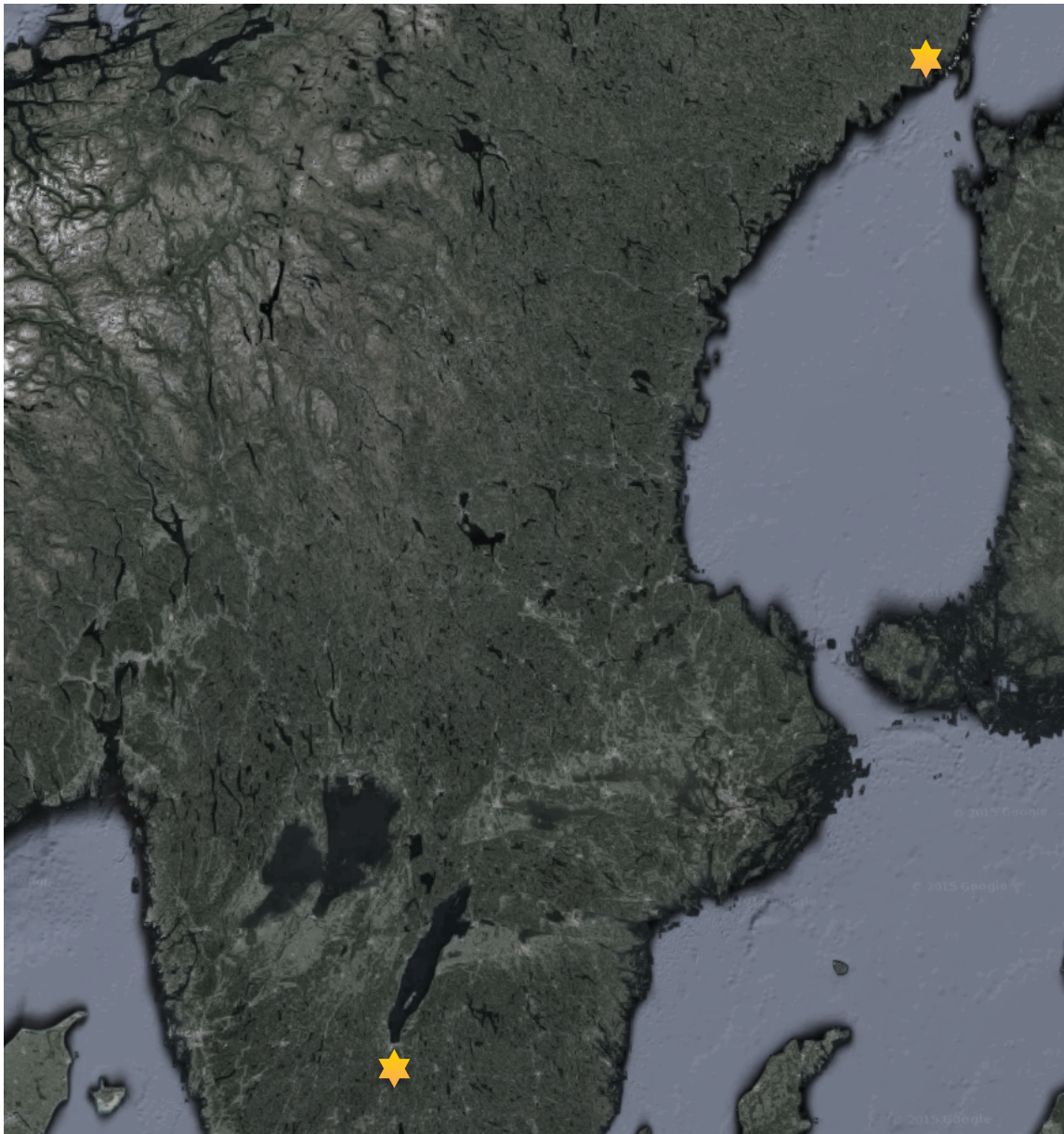
From Jönköping to Umeå – 950km

SCENES:

Driving from Jönköping [3rd Letter]

A cafeteria on E4

Umeå in the evening [4th Letter]



DAY 3 (Monday, October 26th, 2015)

From Umeå to Mo i Rana – 480km

SCENES:

Breakfast at Svea Motel [5th Letter]

Visiting Johan

E12 from Sweden to Norway

Arrival in Mo i Rana [6th Letter]

At Klaudia on Brannklokkeveien



DAY 4 (Tuesday, October 27th, 2015)

From Mo I Rana to Umeå, ferry to Vasaa and a short drive to Koskö – 480km

SCENES:

E12 from Norway to Sweden

Umeå ferry port [7th Letter]

On the ferry

Koskö at dusk [8th Letter]



Conversation Cards

*"How do you know that Lene loves
you?"*

*"What would you say to him, if we
met him right now?"*

*"Why did Mom never tell us about
the letters?"*

*"At what time did you most miss
not having a father?"*

*"Why did Mom never talk about
him?"*

*"Do you think that he ever really
loved Mom?"*

*"If you met him now, would you
call him Dad?"*

*"How can anybody love such a
man?"*

*"Why don't you come visit us more
often?"*

*"What would have to happen for
you to leave your children?"*

*"Do you ever think that you'll have
children?"*

*"At what time did you have the best
childhood?"*

"What is it that you work with?"

*"Haha, do you remember that one
time...?"*

*"Do you think he would have
stayed with Mom, if they only had
one child?"*

Starting the Game

Dear Gamemaster. Go through the following briefing to the players before beginning the game.

1. Genre, setting and themes:

Setting: Cold Scandinavian October landscapes. Rain, decay, warm autumn colors and a bleak sun. Motorways, endless pine forests, dreary cafeterias and cold motels.

Genre: A Scandinavian road movie, a muted family drama, a person-oriented investigation with the players as co-creators (*who was our father really?*).

Themes: Responsibility, loss, forgiveness, intimacy, loneliness and the power of the past over the present.

Expectations: An often *slow* scenario where hesitation and silence play a key role. Smiles, laughs and small comical events along the way are very welcome as a contrast to the melancholia.

Game length: About four hours (depending on the characters' actions).

2. Characters

Present the characters and let the players talk about what kind of role they each prefer. Alternatively, you can deal out the characters without consulting the players.

- **Michael**, one of the main characters. The responsible and strong older brother and family man. A man that have a hard time expressing his feelings. A man who tries to keep his anger and his doubts about life in check.
- **Kirsten** is the other main character. The chaotic little sister and urban single. Has a hard time living up to the expectation of adulthood. The mask she is hiding behind is maybe about to crack.
- **The Supporting Player** will support Michael and Kirsten's story through a supporting cast: Kirsten's Diary, Michael's wife Lene and the people the siblings encounter on their trip.

The main characters are ideal for players who enjoy exploring their characters' emotional life. The supporting player is a player who likes to focus on the overall narrative, and / or who likes to sit and experience other people's roleplay (The supporting player can play a more or less important / dominant part depending on the player's temperament).

If players are reluctant, try to give Michael a player who can dominate the room, Kirsten to a player who is good at playing emotionally and the supporting player to an experienced player.

Then give the players some time to read through their characters.

3. Stories

The scenario has some different storylines that can be explored more or less. It is up to the players to focus on the stories that they think are most interesting:

- **Michael and Kirsten's separate stories:** The two siblings have their own challenges in life, which can be brought to light or kept in the background.
- **Their father.** During the game, the letters and the people Kirsten and Michael meet provides clues about who the father was, why he disappeared and why he never came back.
- **Their late mother** is a relatively vaguely described person. The players have the right to create whatever memory of her they like, even though they might disagree on certain things.
- **The two siblings shared story:** Kirsten and Michael have drifted apart, but they share a past with ups and downs.

4. Structure and Game Mechanics

- **The story** takes place for a period of four days in late October 2015 where we follow Michael and Kirsten while they travel through Scandinavia.
 - **The game may end before all days are played**, if one of the two siblings don't want to travel anymore, and cannot be persuaded by the other to continue. In this case, the scenario ends.
- **The letters.** The two siblings have the letters with them on the trip (give them the **Letters 1-8**).
 - The agreement between Michael and Kirsten is that they open the letters in chronological order, and that they first open a letter when they are near the place from where it is sent. **This agreement can be broken along the way.** Either jointly or by one of the two siblings.
 - The letters are part of the fiction. They may, for example, tear the letters apart.
 - Michael and Kirsten read the letters aloud when they are opened.
- **Conversation Cards.** During the scenario, the game master will introduce some cards with questions written on them.
 - These cards should be seen as an inspiration to the ongoing conversation between the characters.
 - The players are not required to use the cards. They can choose to ignore them.
 - The Conversation Cards are not a part of the fiction. Michael and Kirsten cannot see the cards.
- **Describe glimpses**
 - The supporting player can pause an ongoing scene and tell something about Michael and Kirsten's childhood home. It could be an event, a photo, a conversation or an object from their home, and thus bring up small glimpses of the past.
 - Kirsten and Michael's players can then include these in the two siblings' conversation if they want to.

5. Scenes and types of scenes

There are some different types of scenes in the scenario. (Present the scene summary for **DAY 1**)

- **Planned scenes**, typically with Kirsten and Michael in the center. These are described in the Scene summaries for Day 1-4.
- **Conversations with the Diary**. These scenes can be started by the Diary or by Kirsten when it makes sense. For example, in the car or in a motel room. Kirsten can always reject the diary if she doesn't want to talk to it. No one else sees it as conversations; they just see Kirsten with her diary.
 - The scenes with the *Diary* are a bit special, discuss format with the players. They must be aware that the diary can determine what Kirsten previously have felt, and thus have a say in her inner life.
- **Telephone calls and SMS conversations** between Lene and Michael. These can be played whenever appropriate.
- **Flashback scenes** between Lene and Michael, showing aspects of their relationships or important aspects about Michael. The first is planned (**Flashback: Leaving Næstved**). If they want more, both Lene and Michael's players can suggest them during the scenario.

Game pace and how to end scenes

A significant part of the scenario is about silence and the hesitant conversations between the two siblings. Allow for a slow pace in the scenes.

- It is principally the game master who cut the scenes.
- If the players want, they can also try to finish / cut a scene through their players' actions or comments: *"Have you finished your meal? Then let's go."*
- The other player can then try to maintain the scene by continuing the conversation: *"Why are you in a hurry. What did you mean by what you said earlier?"*

6. Warm-up

If you believe that the players could use a warm-up or become more familiar with some of the game mechanics, then let them play the following scene:

Kirsten is sitting in Michael's car. She is 24, he is 27. She has been visiting their new house in Næstved. He has offered to drive her home to Copenhagen. She has opened her diary, and is sitting and talking with it about her brother who now lives in Næstved.

At one point, Michael says something to Kirsten (he does not perceive that her writing is actually a conversation with the Diary). Does she continue her conversation with the Diary while Michael talks to her?

The scene ends when one of the main characters – through words or actions – ends it.

Have a short talk afterwards about some of the following aspects:

- *How the other player could have kept the scene going.*
- *How a flashback to a scene between Lene and Michael could have been made.*
- *How the supporting player could have introduced a glimpse of their childhood in the scene.*
- *How the supporting player could have affected the scene by sending a text message from Lene.*
- *The pace in the scene. Is it appropriate? How the pace can be accelerated or slowed down.*
- *How the Diary can be used.*