

The Vision

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Themes

This larp is about four children who claim to have a vision of Mary, Mother of Jesus, in the 1990s in rural Ireland. It's about how this impacts their relationships with each other and the rest of their lives.

This larp is about the meaning of faith, the complexity of truth, the impact of childhood on adulthood, and family - biological and found.

Faith is an unavoidable theme of the larp, and people who find that content difficult may feel that this larp isn't for them. The family backstories involve neglectful and potentially abusive parents, although it is up to the players how much of this they bring into the larp. There are also scenes that relate to epilepsy, mental health difficulties, and strained relationships between siblings.

Workshop

Before the larp a short workshop should take place.

Introductions

Ask the players to introduce themselves, ask them why they signed up to this larp and what their expectations are / what kind of play they would enjoy.

Background

Explain the setting and background information to the players.

Setting

This larp is set in rural Ireland in the 1990s. Catholicism was common, and although there are some people who will have met the claims of the children with skepticism, others will meet them with belief or at least hope. As the apparition of Mary has been interrogated by a bishop, there is an indication that the Catholic church are taking the claims of the children seriously.

Although individuals will disbelieve the children, there should not be much play around widespread disbelief, particularly in the first act.

The troubles

During some of the time that this larp is set, an ethno-nationalist conflict was taking place in Northern Ireland. Although this will not impact act one, there is potential for the characters to move somewhere more central to the conflict if they leave their home town.

However, this is an important topic and as it is not the focus of the larp, and as players will have differing levels of knowledge, we will not be exploring it in this larp.

Temporal lobe epilepsy

(The GM may choose to explain this at this stage, or if this option is picked.)

There is the potential to play two scenes around temporal lobe epilepsy in the second stage of the larp. One where Imelda is diagnosed with this condition, and one where she stops taking medication for it.

This type of epilepsy takes many forms, but it can manifest in a particular way - the person experiencing it retains some awareness, may have strong feelings of joy, and may have visual or auditory hallucinations.

In this case it can be used to explore the idea that there is a medical cause to the visions that Imelda experienced. It should not be used to dismiss the visions on an objective level, but it can serve as an alternative explanation and gives the other characters a reason to cast doubt on the visions.

If you choose to play out Imelda's funeral then please be aware that this condition is generally not fatal on its own, although it may be a symptom of something fatal.

Safety

Explain the below safety information to the players

The rule of the larp is that the door is always open. Any player can leave at any time without needing to give a reason.

During the workshop phase, players should be given an opportunity to write any topics they want to keep out of the game on a piece of paper, and give it to the facilitator, who will announce them anonymously to the group. By default sexual violence will not feature in the larp.

Players can use 'off game' to calibrate during scenes (e.g. "off game - I'm happy with disagreeing, but please can we not shout at each other".)

Get players to choose roles

The characters are written as their younger selves, and the players should allow them to grow and develop throughout the larp:

Imelda: She is the leader of the group, and the most religious. Faith is a strong theme for her, and in many ways her belief in the visions will continue to drive the larp.

John: Imelda's younger brother. Much more rational than his sister, but loves her image of God.

Magella - A friend of John's and Imelda's, she has a vague belief in God, a desire to be a good person, and a desire to fit in.

Thomas - younger brother of Magella - a daydreamer, and slightly scared of the idea of God that he is presented with.

Talk about relationships

Give the players approximately 10 minutes for the pairs of siblings to discuss their relationships and their home life.

The 4 players should then discuss their relationships as their child selves for about 10 minutes. At this stage in their lives the other children should look up to Imelda as the leader of their group.

How to play

The Vision is played in a series of scenes over 3 acts. The players can select the scenes from each act, although in general they should progress - within each act they can play scenes in a non-linear fashion, but they should not move back to scenes from earlier acts, eg. going from young adult to childhood scenes.

Beginning the larp

The players should choose a starting scene to begin the larp. If they have difficulty choosing, then by default *Imelda tells the others that she saw a woman in the woods and persuades them to go back with her* is a good starting scene. You can choose whether to use music to cue the beginning of the larp. (Ave Maria, used for the end of the larp is here:

https://open.spotify.com/track/1lg9eqXNP7dwYot2fie2tK?si=8cUsT4uSRgexxsQvTS4mqg&utm_source=copy-link

Act one

The first act occurs from 1995 - 1997 when the characters are children. There are a series of scenes that they can choose to play out. Once they feel that a scene is complete, any player, or the GM can use 'cut' to end it. The people in the scene are in brackets underneath, and in some cases the GMs may opt to play NPCs.

The players can talk together about selecting a scene. Not all scenes have to be or are expected to be played, and players should select scenes that interest them. They can also choose to replay a scene e.g. if one of the characters wants to play that they experienced it differently.

An important metarule for this stage is none of the characters should claim that they were lying about seeing Mary at this stage; although they can show some uncertainty about events.

Act two

The second act takes place in 2005 - 2015 when the children are teenagers and young adults and discovering who they are. Again, scenes can be selected to be played and replayed, and scenes that don't interest the players can be avoided.

Act three

The third act takes place in 2025 -2035, when the children are adults and dealing with certainties about their own identities. All scenes can be played, replayed or ignored - although Imelda's funeral makes a good closing scene.

The larp should end after the last scene with Ave Maria being played. There is a version here:

https://open.spotify.com/track/1lg9eqXNP7dwYot2fie2tK?si=8cUsT4uSRgexxsQvTS4mqg&utm_source=copy-link

Epilogue

Characters can optionally narrate an epilogue about their life, or what happened regarding the miracle, following the closing scene and the music.

Other notes on play

At all stages players are also free to create new scenes (for example if a player decides their character might come out about an aspect of their sexuality or gender identity, or they want to play the funeral of a parent, or a scene of someone angry about their claims).

If the players need assistance, GMs should feel free to choose scenes for them: or if a character isn't getting much focus, suggest a scene which explores that character.

Debrief

The debrief for this larp is optional although encouraged. The facilitator should run it and ask the following questions:

- Is there anything you need right now? (Reassurance, a glass of water etc.)
- How are you different from your character?
- What was one scene you found emotional or difficult as a player or as your character, if any?
- What was one scene you found funny or positive as a player or character, if any?

Players should be encouraged to continue to talk in an unstructured way if they wish.

1995 - 1997

<p>A local bishop questions the children about what they've seen.</p> <p>(Any characters and a bishop npc).</p>	<p>Imelda tells the others that she saw a woman in the woods and persuades them to come back with her.</p> <p>(Imelda and John, Imelda and Magella, Thomas)</p>
<p>Magella tries to persuade her mother to let her leave school, after news of the visions become public.</p> <p>(Magella, mother npc, optionally Thomas)</p>	<p>John confides in Thomas that he fell asleep before he could pray the night before. Thomas is scared that John has doomed the world, but reluctantly promises not to tell. (Thomas and John)</p>
<p>Imelda talks to the others after a television appearance.</p> <p>(Imelda and one or more of the others)</p>	<p>Thomas returns home after running away.</p> <p>(Magella, optionally npc parent, Imelda, Thomas)</p>
<p>The children hear that a miracle healing has taken place in the clearing where they saw Mary.</p> <p>(two or more characters, potentially an npc delivering the news)</p>	<p>Thomas tries to reassure Magella after she has a nightmare.</p> <p>(Thomas, Magella)</p>

2005 - 2015

<p>Magalla's identity is discovered by people at her university. (Magalla, any of the others)</p>	<p>John confides in someone about losing his faith. (John, either one of the others or an npc)</p>
<p>Imelda is diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy. (Imelda and either doctor npc, or Imelda telling one or more of the others)</p>	<p>Magella and John spend a night together. (Magella, John)</p>
<p>Thomas accuses Imelda of being calculating and self-centred. (Imelda, Thomas)</p>	<p>Thomas ends up in hospital following worsening mental health issues and is visited. (Thomas, one or more of the others)</p>
<p>John threatens to recant the visions - someone begs him not to. (John, one of the others)</p>	<p>Magella tells one or more of the others that she's cutting ties with them, she can't go on like this. (Magella, one or more of the others)</p>
<p>Imelda leads the others in a prayer. (All characters)</p>	<p>A gathering becomes tense when Imelda announces she's stopped taking the medication for her epilepsy (Any characters)</p>
<p>John's wedding - lots of things left unsaid. (John, one or more of the others)</p>	<p>Some of the characters find out that people regularly visit the clearing to pray for healing (Any characters)</p>

2025 -2035

<p>Magella asks for help (support / money) from one of the others.</p> <p>(Magella, one of the others)</p>	<p>The aftermath of Thomas claiming publicly that they made up the visions - he admits he no longer knows what was true.</p> <p>(Thomas, any of the others)</p>
<p>One or more of the characters try praying and realize they find it difficult now.</p> <p>(Any characters)</p>	<p>Thomas talks about how parenting helps him understand his own childhood more.</p> <p>(Thomas, any of the others)</p>
<p>One of the characters is found unconscious or passed out in their home.</p> <p>(Any characters)</p>	<p>Imelda visits church to make a confession.</p> <p>(Imelda, NPC priest)</p>
<p>The child of one of the characters finds out about the visitations and starts asking questions.</p> <p>(npc child and one or more of the others)</p>	<p>One of the characters prepares to move abroad for good.</p> <p>(Any characters)</p>
<p>One of the characters renounces their faith.</p> <p>(Any characters)</p>	<p>Magella, Thomas and John gather at Imelda's funeral</p> <p>(Magella, Thomas and John)</p>

Epilogue - narrated (optional)

(Does your character find peace? What's the impact of their actions on the world around them? What impact does what they claimed to have seen have? How does it overshadow their life?)

Imelda O'Farrel (14)

Charismatic, determined, pious and passionate, but also an outsider. Second of four children born to a single mother, you became a second parent for a time to John.

Since you were young you loved the idea of a God watching over you, pleased with you as you helped your mother with household chores. You liked the idea of God seeing you as special, and of being chosen.

Throughout your life there were moments where the world would come into focus and become more real. You knew in those moments that God was trying to reach you.

The visions (this is what your character claims to have seen initially - the objective truth of this is up to you)

You were walking in the wood when suddenly everything around you changed and it felt like you were in a dream. You saw a woman standing in front of you, wearing a simple blue dress, with a white shawl covering her hair. She smiled at you lovingly and called you by name - telling you to bring John and Thomas and Magalla back to that spot the same time next week.

The next week she told the four of you that you must repent and pray to save the world. She told you that the task fell to you, and you had been chosen.

The four of you returned for four more weeks, and each week she prayed with you. She called herself the Mother of God, and the Lady of Peace and told you that if you followed her commandments, praying and saying the rosary everyday then the world would find peace in your lifetime.

The final week the woman told you that it was time to spread the word, and that she would be with you and turn doubt into faith.

John O'Farrel (10)

The youngest of four children born to a single mother, you were raised in part by your older sister Imelda. You listened with rapt attention when she told you bible stories at bedtime, and taught you to pray before falling asleep. You loved God the way she described him, as someone watching over you who wouldn't let you get hurt.

Sometimes she would claim that God was talking to her, but you were too rational to ever fully believe that. Still, you wouldn't contradict her, and you saw it as a type of game you played together sometimes, where she was the messenger of God, and you pretended that you could hear Him too.

The visions (this is what your character claims to have seen initially - the objective truth of this is up to you)

You first heard of the visions when Imelda came home bursting with joy. She told you that she had been chosen and that she would show you, if you had faith in God.

The next week she took you, Thomas and Magella to a clearing in the wood. At first you didn't see anything, but then a woman appeared in front of you. Imelda explained that you needed to pray and repent.

The next week you could hear the woman too and she told you that your repentance and prayer could save the world and that you needed to pray and repent every day.. You returned for three more weeks where she prayed with you, and then finally told you to go and spread the word.

Magella Daly (12)

Stubborn and idealistic, you want to believe in a better world than the one you live in. You forgive your father for his temper, and your mother for her weakness, and that forgiveness makes you feel good about yourself. You spend as much time out the house as possible with your neighbours Imelda and John. You always drag your brother Thomas with you, and insist that he's part of the game, even though he annoys you sometimes.

Your family is not particularly religious, but you and Thomas go to the local religious school, and so you grew up with a vague certainty in God that you didn't look too closely at.

The visions (this is what your character claims to have seen initially - the objective truth of this is up to you)

When Imelda led you, John and Thomas out into the woods you thought it was for another game. You were slightly nervous because you weren't allowed that far from home, and you thought that Thomas would say that and embarrass you.

Imelda knelt down and you waited, and felt a soft breeze. You looked up and a woman in a blue dress and with a white shawl looked at you and smiled and told you to pray and repent.

The next week the woman told you that your repentance and prayer could save the world, and that you needed to pray and repent every day. You returned for three more weeks where she prayed with you, and then finally told you to go and spread the word.

Thomas Daly (9)

You are a dreamer, and sometimes pretending things stops you feeling so frightened. You hate how your father and mother shout at each other and how your father sometimes gets angry with you and your sister Magella. You like that Magella lets you play on the street with her, Imelda and John, but sometimes you don't understand the game and you get it wrong or you start daydreaming instead of playing properly.

You know it annoys Magella so you try to be better and pretend that you understand the rules of the game, even when you don't.

You like the idea of God, but He scares you a bit. At your school they call him Our Father and you imagine him being like your father but more powerful and knowing more about the things you've done wrong.

The visions (this is what your character claims to have seen initially - the objective truth of this is up to you)

Imelda, John and Magella went out into the woods and you followed Magella, even though you knew that you weren't allowed out this far into the woods. But everytime and looked at Magella to ask her, she shook her head angrily at you so you didn't say anything.

Imelda knelt down and you waited, and standing next to her was a woman in a blue dress and with a white shawl looked at you and smiled and told you you must repent and pray every day to save the world.

You returned for three more weeks where she prayed with you, and then finally told you to go and spread the word.