

# Among sodomites and hermaphrodites

A larp about deviants in the Swedish army in the early 1700s

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## Pitch

A queer history larp about forbidden love and secret identities, set in the Swedish army in the early 1700s. All the characters break the norms of their time regarding gender and sexuality in different ways. We follow them during a year of love, war and relationship conflict, until they return home and have to decide how to live their lives.

## Practical:

Time: 5-7 minutes per scene (apart from the epilogue which takes around 4 minutes), makes the runtime 2 hours and 24 minutes.

Workshop: about one hour and 25 minutes, including a 10 minute break.

Number of players: around 20 (the larp is primarily played in core groups of three or four people).

## Preparations:

Print one copy of the entire larp, and as many copies of the player pamphlet, on pages 26-29 as you expect there to be players. Print several copies of the character sheets and relationship information, one per core group. If you expect more than four core groups, print several copies of **Handout, scene 16**. Cut the handout to make one copy per affected player. Also cut the character sheets to give each character their own page, and sort them so each group get their own set of characters once you've reached that part of the workshop. Both the briefing and the larp will work best if the room has loudspeakers and some way to show a Power Point presentation.

Find the Power Point presentation here:

 English PP\_Among sodomites and hermaphrodites

The larp's playlist can be found here, instructions on what music to play and when can be found in Scenes - the game master version:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7MKaHPLmYq8STXDTlqpW4Q?si=da24c9bd8e9f4541>

Props: To get the feeling of a uniform, some sort of accessory all players can wear is recommended, for example tricorns or matching sashes. In some scenes the game master can play the role of a soldier, to give the players a feeling of risk of getting caught. It is advisable for the GM to have some sort of visual marker (for example a hat) to put on to make it clear for the players when the GM is playing a soldier they should react to ingame.

You also need tape for the different home zones and markers to make nametags.

Game mastering: As a game master for this game, you guide the players through the larp, read the short scene description to the players before each scene, facilitate the workshop and debrief, keep track of time so the scenes don't run too long and in a couple of scenes play the role of a random soldier.

## Vision

This is a larp about people who might have been called deviants. About people we today would understand as bisexual, transgender, pansexual, gay, genderfluid and queer, but who do not yet have those words to describe their experiences. The characters in the larp are based on the stories real historical people have told about their lives and experiences. I wanted to show real examples and contextualise the times in which these people lived. This is a larp about love and attraction, but also about risk-taking and vulnerability. Even though the larp may not end in utter misery, any ending that has the characters live happily ever after will come with great sacrifices. In order to understand these people, I believe we need to understand in what ways they could think about themselves, and we will approach them not from the perspective of how we understand them with our modern concepts, but from the perspective of how they could understand themselves. This is made clear in the historical background briefing as well as in how the characters are written.

## Game master instructions

**Start by gathering all the players in the room.**

Instruction to players:

First I'm going to read you a bit about the vision for the larp, then I'll talk about the historical background. After that we'll talk a bit more about how the larp is going to go, and separate into the smaller groups you'll spend most of the larp in. Then we'll do some small group workshops, and you'll get your characters and relationships to build on and talk about. Some of the exercises we're going to do might feel awkward. That's perfectly OK. If there's any exercise you don't want to do, it's absolutely fine to just watch that exercise. During the larp, if you want to stop a scene or need to communicate something offgame, just say "offgame" - as in "offgame, you're standing on my foot". If you don't want to continue playing a scene you're in, for any reason, it's completely fine to say "offgame, I'm leaving this scene" and then sit down on the sidelines.

**Then read the vision text from the previous page. After that, go through the historical background below, with the Power Point presentation.**

Briefing 1. [Power Point image 2] Historical background: We are in the early 1700s, no specified year. Sweden is a great power that spends a lot of time at war, and now is one of those times. We're not defining which war we're fighting, and what happens to this particular platoon is completely tailored to suit the story arc of the larp. Sweden has a king, his name might be Karl XII but that's not important either. The war is just a backdrop for the story we're going to tell. Who we're fighting against isn't important either. There is *an enemy*. We're not defining who attacked who first either, but we are currently outside Sweden's borders. War comes with great suffering and distress, maybe most of all for the civilians who become victims of pillaging and abuse wherever the armies come through.

We will not be playing on or talking about sexual violence during the larp, even though that was something that happened then and still happens in war. And while war is a central theme of the larp and although this is a time period that sometimes is idealised in some political groups, this is not a larp for nostalgia for the days when Sweden was a great power.

[Power Point image 3] A bit about what your characters' lives and their world has been like: Sweden is an agrarian society, and your characters will probably have been farmers before. Sweden is Christian Lutheran and your characters to at least some extent believe in God. Sweden has a volunteer army, where a village or a few farms are responsible for supporting one or more volunteer soldiers during peacetime. Soldiers are given a small cottage to live in

during peacetime. The fact that Sweden is constantly at war has led to a shortage of men in civilian society. A relatively large amount of people can read and write, so you can write letters to your families.

The place where you're born tends to be where you stay in civilian society. People don't tend to move around much, but soldiers are some of the few people that actually get to move around a lot. If you want to enter a city, you need papers to show who you are and why you're travelling, and when you go to a place where you're not known, everyone will wonder who you are and why you've come here. If you can't show that you belong or have a reason for travelling, people will be extremely suspicious of you. This means that during this time, being in the army is one of few ways to see the world, travel around, and maybe most of all, one of few ways to assume a new identity and find yourself among new people without being met with suspicion.

[Power Point image 4] About relationships and identities:

In 1608, same-sex sexual activities were first addressed in national Swedish law. The text more or less came directly from the Bible "you shall not lie with a man as you lie with a woman, for it is an abomination, and both shall be put to death". This law still stands in the early 1700s. We can find some ten to twenty cases where men have been convicted under this law during the 1600s and 1700s, but almost all the cases refer to sexual assault and relationships with a great power imbalance, often adults exploiting children. There is also at least one case where two women were sent to court for allegedly having sex with each other, but they were not found guilty. It's also important to remember that adultery, that is having sex with someone outside of your marriage, was punishable by death. Many more people were sentenced to death for adultery than for same-sex activities. One explanation for there being so few prosecuted cases of same-sex activity may have been a silent acceptance for the practices, as long as people were discreet about it. Also, it's not something that can result in pregnancy, and the law was mainly concerned with finding and preventing unlawful heterosexual contact.

[Power Point image 5] The word that is used to describe same-sex relations is sodomy. Sodomy is not the same thing as homosexuality; *sodomy* is an action, and a *sodomite* is a repeat offender. Things that counted as sodomy were oral sex and anal sex, even between a man and a woman, and also sex between two women "if they use objects" as well as sex with animals. Everyone is a potential sodomite, especially men. The general view is not that there's a particular type of person who commits these acts, but it could be whoever, maybe in a similar way to how we think of people who pay for sex in Sweden today. A word used specifically for women who had sex with women was *tribade*.

The term that was available for talking about transgender expressions or identities was hermaphroditism. This could refer to what someone's body looks like, i.e. that someone has

what we today call an intersex variant. But we can also see it being used about people who are seen as “mixing male and female natures” and not quite living in accordance with their gender role, so some of the people who were historically called hermaphrodites might have identified as trans if they were alive today, and some might just have seen themselves as masculine women or feminine men.

[PowerPoint image 6] People were sometimes convicted for dressing in clothes meant for the other gender, primarily people who were assigned female at birth but then started living as men. An example of this is Eleonora Stålhammar, who took the male name Wilhelm Ekstedt, became a soldier and married a woman. They were prosecuted, but there wasn't any clear legal provision to use, so the court referred to a Bible quote: “A woman shall not wear a man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is utterly repulsive to the Lord your God”. They were then sentenced to two weeks in prison, a relatively short sentence. Another example is of a person called Karl or Karin who was prosecuted, and the judge asked them “do people know this? What do the people in your village call you?”. They answered that they call me Karl sometimes and Karin at other times, whatever seems to fit. It's possible to entertain the thought that in a society with such a large shortage of men, people may have learned to be somewhat flexible; if there's a person who is able and willing to work, we can't be particular about this sort of thing.

[PowerPoint image 7] Having said all that, same-sex sexual connections still came with a lot of vulnerability and risk, as did living as a gender different from what you were assigned at birth. If you make enemies or encounter people who wish you ill, those things may well be used against you. But in most of the cases where people have been prosecuted, there are indications that the real issue that someone has a problem with isn't the same-sex relationship or gender boundaries, but rather some other unrelated conflict.

[PowerPoint image 8] The male gender role

You will all be playing characters who, at least for the moment, are living as men. The norms that your characters need to deal with go something like this.

As a man in the 1700s, you're supposed to be brave, valiant and honourable. Going to war is cool and manly.

The male gender role also contains a lot of violence, and that's connected to honour. If someone insults you - calls you a coward, for example - you practically have to retaliate with violence, because if you don't, you accept what they say as true. Fighting is brave too, not being afraid of violence. Having said that, the 1700s male gender role allows more emotional expression than you might think. It's seen as manly to cry, or to be very angry, to feel offended and want revenge or to be very passionately in love with your wife. Big feelings are fine. What you should not do as a man, however, is be afraid or cowardly, or vain and care about your looks. Those are the norms your characters have to relate to, but they might not



always live up to them.

[PowerPoint image 9: End of first part of the briefing. **Open for questions, then switch to image 10 and let the power point rest while you do the next part]**

**Then, start talking about the structure of the larp:**

In the larp we're about to play, you will all play characters who break the norms of their time around gender and sexuality in different ways. These are characters who we today would understand as queer or LGBTQ. However, that's not how they would have thought of themselves, and their identities or practices might not be easily or clearly translated to queer identities as we know them today. Again: they are based on real historical people, on the basis of how they were able to understand themselves.

This larp will primarily be played in small groups, which will be your core groups of three or four people. Your characters in these groups will have romantic and sexual relationships with each other. There are also scenes with the entire group, where you will be a sort of backdrop to each others' larps. So, you have your internal play in your little core group, where you play out your forbidden relationships, you all know your secrets and the ways in which you don't live up to the norm. And then you play scenes where your characters are together with all the other soldiers and have to hide your relationships and hang out with all the others who are completely normal and would never do anything forbidden and have no worries whatsoever. The scenes in the larp are relatively short, and playing actual sex scenes may not be the best use of your time. But it can absolutely be relevant to play on kissing and making out. How you want to play those things, and how physical or not you want to play them, you can calibrate in your core groups in a while.

You are of course free to opt out of the larp at any point, but right now after this briefing is a good time to do so if you feel that this isn't your thing after all. I won't be sad or offended if you do.

**Creating groups: Check if there are people who have already talked about playing together. Divide everyone into groups of three or four people.**

Group exercise 1 (2 minutes):

This is an exercise for the core groups.

Instruction to players: Stand in a circle. Preferably so close that you are in physical contact. Close your eyes. And try to synchronize your breathing. Listen to each other. Find a rhythm together. Thank you!

[PowerPoint image 11] Casting: **Now let the players choose their characters from the short**

descriptions on the power point slide (3 minutes). Explain the abbreviations amab and afab, assigned male at birth and assigned female at birth. When the groups have chosen, have them come and collect a set of characters to read their entire characters. Also give each group a copy of the relationships for the group. Tell the players that they get to choose a name for their character, starting with the initial given.

Introduce your characters (max 4 minutes, in core groups)

Give the players four minutes to introduce their characters to each other.

Relationships (3 minutes, in core groups)

Give the players three minutes to read up on their characters' relationship with each other.

[PowerPoint image 12] Exercise 3 (5 minutes, in core groups): Background

You will now develop the relationships between your characters by answering a few questions. Keep it short.

How long have you been together? What attracted you to one another?

You also come from different parts of the country. If you want, you can specify which parts of Sweden you're from. Otherwise, just keep in mind that you come from places that are far apart from each other.

Calibrate boundaries for physical larping

Instruction to players: Take a few minutes for yourself and think about how you would like to play intimacy. Would you like to use a specific meta technique for making out, for example touching each other's faces, would you like to symbolise it through holding hands in a special way, or something completely different. Also consider how you feel about hugging, holding hands, lying on someone's shoulder and so on. Where are your boundaries today and in this specific context?

After two minutes: now calibrate with each other how you want to play on intimacy and physicality. Be considerate and listen to each other, and remember: you are the only one who knows where your boundaries are, and you are responsible for communicating them. **(Give the players around five minutes. Adjust the time according to how much the larger groups of four people need.)**

[PowerPoint image 13] Feel your characters, part one, 8 minutes. Talk about how your characters act with each other when you're alone together. Do they caress each others' hair? Play fight? Hold hands? What do they talk about when they're alone together? When you are done talking, try it out in practice. Try also whichever meta technique you've agreed on for kissing/making out. **After 3 minutes, tell the players that it's time to start to physically try out what they have been talking about if they haven't started already, after that give**

**the exercise five more minutes.**

[PowerPoint image 14] Feel your characters, part 2 (3 minutes).

Now see what happens with your characters when they have to hide their feelings and can't talk and act the way they do when they're alone. What sort of distance do they keep? Is it easy to hide their feelings for each other or is it really hard? Do they communicate only through looks from a distance, or can they punch each other's shoulders?

[PowerPoint image 15] Building your home zone (in core groups)

Instruction to players: Use tape to mark out a zone where your core group plays their alone scenes. When all the characters are together, we'll be using the whole room. Write your character names, either on the back of your name tag or on a piece of tape on your clothing.

**If you as a gamemaster brought hats or other costume pieces, now is a good time to distribute them. Turn off the Power Point.**

Exercise 5: Speed dating (5 minutes, entire player group together)

Instruction to players: Find one or two people who are not in your core group. You have a fun thing together that you always do at parties. What is it?

Instruction: Find one or two new people. You don't like each other. Why?

Exercise 6: Fighting (10 minutes, entire player group together)

Instruction to players: Fighting is started by players picking a quarrel with each other. If you feel like turning it into a fight, you lay your hand on the other person's shoulder. The first person to lay a hand on a shoulder is the one who will lose the fight. If someone lays a hand on your shoulder and you feel like playing out a fight scene, you lay your hand on the other person's shoulder. If you offgame don't feel like fighting, just take a step back. Note that this is the player opting out of a fight scene, so don't make anything out of it in game.

To play the fight scene, both players get down on their knees and play a light wrestling match. The person who took the initiative is responsible for losing the fight by lying down first, don't use offgame force to throw someone over. You can also simulate hitting someone who's down by hitting the floor.

Other types of fighting can be more playful, if your character would do that at a party for instance. Then, you might ask "Wanna fight?" or similar ingame. Feel free to play up the fighting by forming a circle around the fighters and cheering them on.

Separate into pairs to try the technique.

Exercise 7 (entire player group together): Build a character together.

**Have everyone gather in a circle and be ready to pass around the picture of Sven** (see below).

Instruction to players: This will give your platoon some more in common. This is Sven. He's

a person in your platoon. In the scenes with the entire group, you can talk about him; he just doesn't happen to be around at this exact moment. He's generally well liked. Now we're going to flesh out Sven as a character, so we'll pass this image around. When you have the image, say something short about Sven, such as "he's good at playing the fiddle", "he always wins in arm wrestling" or "once when I was wounded he helped me get back to the camp".



Briefing 2: The act structure. **Hand out the player pamphlets and explain the structure of the larp.**

Instruction for players: The larp consists of four acts with different themes. Each act consists of four scenes which are between five and ten minutes long, apart from a few exceptions which we will talk about when we get to them. Each scene will start with me reading a short description of the scene and saying "go ahead". When we have about a minute left of the scene, I will clink a mug with a spoon, so you know it's time to get to whatever you want to make sure to have said. Then, the scene ends with me saying "thank you". Each act has at least one scene that contains the entire platoon, and at least two with only your core group. If you feel like you want some direction for your story, you can think of the act themes while you play. You can also check ahead what the next scene will be about, if you want to steer towards for example an upcoming conflict by playing on friction building up. The larp is not 100 percent transparent - there are some scenes where you don't have all the information in your pamphlets. If the scene information states that you will get more info, it means that there will be more background and a calibration right before the scene is played.

Regarding play style:

- We don't have that much time for each scene, so in general, start in the middle of something. If it's a party scene, you've already had two beers when the scene starts. If it's a patrol scene, you've already had some small talk and the scene starts when the conversation gets interesting.
- Don't play on actual abuse in your core group. If you have a conflict that is equal and you really want to fight, that's fine, but don't play on one-sided abuse towards your partner/s.
- Do not come out to anyone outside your core group. In the scenes with the whole player group, help each other feel like minorities by reinforcing the norms. Talk about how much you miss your wife or what a pity it is that there aren't more women around here. Maybe this is something your character actually feels, but maybe it's something they say in order to keep their facade up. Regardless, it will contribute to the others' feelings of being in the minority.
- In order to enhance the feeling of there being a real risk of being discovered, I will also play a soldier now and then. If you're playing in your tent, I might put on [this visual marker] and stumble around outside, just to enhance the feeling that you have to be discreet.

**Leave space for questions here. Then, give the players a ten minute break to go to the bathroom and drink water, and prepare the room for starting the first scene. Look at the suggested music for some of the scenes. During the party scenes, the music will be**

diegetic, which means it exists ingame.

Start the larp by reading the description of the first scene. Then play “We marched together” by Mary Read band. When the song ends, the larp starts.

## **Scenes - Game master version**

### **Act 1, Summer**

**Themes: Celebrating and falling in love**

#### **Scene 1. Nightwatch, core groups (music to start the larp: We marched together by Mary Read band)**

It's your turn to be on watch. The risk of someone attacking is low, but it's there. Even though you can't just fall into each other's arms, this is a chance to talk about what you want, about dreams, hopes, desires and fears.

#### **Scene 2. In the tent, core groups [In this scene the GM can play another soldier stumbling around outside the tents]**

After a long day, you're finally alone in your tent. There are some people moving around the camp and others sleeping in their tents just beside you. You can touch each other and be as physical as you want, but you need to either be completely quiet or whisper the words you're not allowed to say. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 3. Midsummer, everyone together (diegetic music: folk music, Slängpolska efter Byss-Kalle, Polska efter Hjort-Anders, Rättvikarnas gånglåt)**

The beer supplies are being emptied, some people have brought out instruments, it's finally time to celebrate Midsummer by partying and fighting. You have to keep your distance to your closest ones so that nobody notices anything, and you will be loud and vocal about agreeing with the other soldiers that there are way too few women around. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 4. Alone at last, core groups (diegetic music: Morrison's Jig, The cuckold comes out of the Amery, Wildflower jigs, Goodbye girls I'm going to Boston)**

The same Midsummer's party. While the other soldiers are competing for attention from the camp followers or other women, you have snuck away to have some time for yourselves. You're in a happy, celebratory mood and just want to steal a few moments of closeness together before you have to get back to the others and pretend again.

### **Act 2, Autumn**

**Themes: Violence and conflict**

#### **Scene 5. Wounded, core groups**

To calibrate beforehand: In this scene, either M or E has been wounded. Make a quick decision as to who.



You have laid siege to a fortress in order to be able to rest for the winter in a safe place. You succeeded in besieging the place, but one of you was wounded. It's not a life-threatening wound, but it's not the battlefield but the infections afterwards that kills most people, you are all painfully aware of that. But you have a more urgent problem to deal with: the surgeon is on his way, and the wound can't be treated without revealing some biological realities that you don't want revealed. There is a risk that the wounded person might be sent home, or even worse, prosecuted. You now have a very short time to come up with a way to convince the surgeon to do his job and keep his mouth shut afterwards.

#### **Scene 6. Healthcare, core groups [In this scene the GM can play another soldier moving around]**

A few days have gone by since you laid siege to the fortress. The wound doesn't seem to have become infected. But it's not healed yet, and a lot can happen. You're waiting in the part of the fortress that has been allocated for the wounded, waiting for the surgeon to check on the wound again. In the meantime, you can pray, be close and try to comfort each other. People are milling about around you, so you can't talk openly. But there are a lot of wounded people around you who also have their close ones around them, so you can be more physical with each other than usual out in the open.

#### **Scene 7. The conflict, core groups**

Maybe you're quarrelling because of how the situation with the surgeon was handled. Perhaps he's blackmailing you to keep quiet, perhaps one of you threatened him in order for that not to happen. Maybe if you're the wounded one, you can't keep civil when the pain flares up, and you finally lose your temper. Either way, you have a conflict in the group, and for once you are outside of the fortress and can quarrel in peace.

#### **Scene 8. Simmering discontent, all**

Discontent is rising in the fortress. An important food delivery was attacked by local militia, and you now have to ration the remaining food harshly. You're living in very close quarters with everyone, and you're being driven mad by the idiocy of the other soldiers, their lack of understanding, and the fact that you have to be so careful to ensure that nobody notices the relationships that mean the most to you. It's evening, and you're waiting to be served what will probably be a very meager dinner. Everyone is irritable, and a fight could happen at any time.

**-Note to game master: around 1 hour and eight minutes of play time left.**

### **Act 3, Winter**

**Themes: Grief and homesickness**

### **Scene 9. On watch, core groups**

Winter is here. You're waiting for an attack on the fortress, and it's your turn to keep watch up in the watchtower. You've huddled close against the cold. The closeness between you and the distance to the others makes it possible to talk openly, but you need to keep your voices down and your eyes open in case something happens.

### **Scene 10. Home sweet home, core groups**

Flashback. Every character has one short scene (around three minutes) set in their old home, before they became soldiers. **GM signals when to start the scene and when to wrap it up as usual, remember to give the players a moment before the first flashback to read their scene and to calibrate who is playing what.** Players take turns playing each others' near and dear. The groups of four need to play at least two of the scenes in parallel. In the groups of three, one person at a time has a break.

M: It's August, and you have just spent a night with your sweetheart in the hayloft. The first rays of sunshine are breaking through the cracks between the boards in the walls, and soon you have to get up and go out and pretend like nothing happened. But for a little while longer, you can lie here and pretend you're the only two people in the whole world.

E: You and your mother have worked hard getting the harvest in, and it's looking like this winter might be a good one. Finally, you can take a breath and have some time together just for the two of you. You're proud of what you've managed, of how you help each other, and of the fact that you always have each other no matter what.

A: You're with your favourite sister who is going to teach you how to churn butter. You both know this isn't men's work at all, but you really want to learn, and she doesn't want to deny you something you want. You're laughing and being silly together just like always.

J: You have temporarily escaped the uncomfortable atmosphere at the farm by having dinner at your brother's. Once the rest of his family have left you alone, you can have a serious talk for once. You talk about family, about how you're not feeling comfortable in your marriage, and you feel so close to him and safe with him. Family is family, after all.

### **Scene 11. The funeral, all**

You managed to fight off the attack on the fortress, but during the battle, Sven was wounded. He kept saying it was nothing, even after you made him see the surgeon. Even when he caught such a fever that he wasn't able to get out of bed. Even up until the moment he closed his eyes for the last time a few nights ago. You have just buried him and have gathered to finish off the last of your beer, remember him and raise a glass to him. You don't dare comfort your close ones as openly and tenderly as you would have wanted. You can't

let anyone notice anything.

**Scene 12. Comfort, core groups [In this scene the GM can play another soldier moving around. This scene usually benefits from being a little shorter than the others]**

You manage to sneak away and steal a moment together. You're standing in a narrow passage in the fortress, and you can't let anyone notice that you're here. Finally, you can be close and touch each other as much as you want, but you can't talk for fear of revealing that you're here. Maybe most of all, what you need is comfort and togetherness, if only for a short few minutes.

## **Act 4, Spring**

**Themes: Dreams and returning home**

**Scene 13. Dreams, core groups**

Two weeks ago, you left the fortress to start marching again, and finally you have alone time together in your tent. You had your first real battle after the winter a few days ago. You were victorious and suffered few casualties. Sweden stands a good chance of winning the war! Everyone's packing up camp now before marching onwards, and many are away getting provisions in the closest town. You have some time to be on your own in a meadow outside of town. You can feel that it's getting warmer, summer is coming. And you allow yourselves to dream. Fantasize of a future where you can be together. Where you don't have to face any tough decisions and you can have everything just the way you want it. What does that life look like?

**Scene 14. Victory party, all (music: Polska i moll, Hundrårspolskan)**

Sweden has won the war. Everyone else is happy, wanting to get drunk, dreaming of seeing their loved ones again, getting married, being celebrated as heroes. You play along and pretend to be feeling the same. But you and your closest ones have difficult decisions to face. Are you going to part and return each to your own villages? Will one or more of you never move back home again so you can stay together? Can you try to disappear off the map and settle in a new place, build a new life together in a different part of Sweden? Are you going to go back to living the way you did before the war, or will you keep living the identities you've found here? No matter what you choose, you'll miss someone. No matter what you choose, some doors will suddenly close. You can't let anyone notice anything.

**Scene 15. Homeward bound, core groups**

The march homeward starts tomorrow. Today is the last day before you decamp. What will happen now? The war has given you a chance to disappear, find a new place in Sweden to settle with new names, let those at home think you died. Maybe you could get a soldier's cottage and have local farmers provide you with what you need while waiting for the next war. But can you really leave everyone you know behind? Can you part with each other,

with the new relationships you have found in the war? What does the way back look like? You are in a besieged town far from home, and you have broken into a house and temporarily scared the inhabitants away in order to have a place to speak freely.

### **Scene 16. The threat at home, core groups**

**Ask each player group to choose one person who has overheard something in town and tell those players to come to you to get a copy each of Handout, scene 16.**

You're back on Swedish ground. You're in the southernmost barracks in Sweden, and in a few days you'll resume your march. Not long now until you're discharged and free.

For the chosen player: You didn't mean to overhear. You had just been out on the town with some of the others, and you heard something from the building where the courts are. You crept closer, and you realised that this was a trial of two soldiers, accused of having committed the crime of sodomy together. The wife of one of the soldiers had convinced him to give himself up and admit his guilt. Both of the soldiers are sentenced to exile. Have they started looking for people like you? What would your families say if they found out what you've been doing? Can you really keep on doing this and risk being sent out of the country now that you've made it home? What would your fellow soldiers do if they found you out?

### **Epilogue, core groups**

Instruction for players: The epilogue will be your characters' inner monologues held in parallel with each other. This scene will be a little shorter than the others. Don't talk to each other, but feel free to mention things you hear others say in your own monologue. With that said, your monologues do not have to relate to each other at all. We're not aiming for a coherent agreement on what happens after the larp, we're just highlighting some of the possible outcomes.

Sit down in a circle. Close your eyes. When the moment of decision comes, what do you do? Do you part and go back to your families? Back to life as it used to be? Do you stay together and build a new future somewhere else? When you feel like you have an answer to these questions, open your eyes and start your monologue. When you feel like you've finished, just sit in silence.

### **Debrief**

Debrief in core groups (5 minutes). Instruction for players: stay sitting in your groups. You will now take turns speaking, and saying the following: your real name, if there's anything you need right now, and something very offgamey about yourself, such as your favourite

series or your favourite snack food. When you're done with that, we'll have a debrief talk for the whole group with some more background and historical context.

**Gather the players in a large circle to go through the historical background.**

Background: I'm now going to give you some more history around the real people who have inspired these characters. This isn't meant to correct you or any choices you have made playing them - the characters are your own.

J and A were inspired by the real people Jurgen Weiss and Anders Ros, who were in a relationship. Jurgen was married to a woman, who got him to go and give himself up to the law as a sodomite. Jurgen tried to defend himself by claiming that he had thought that Anders was a woman who dressed as a man. Whether Jurgen had cheated on his wife with more people is unclear. Anders was examined by a surgeon who established that Anders was indeed a man. But there turned out to have been rumours circulating about Anders actually being a woman, and Anders seemed to have encouraged these rumours - actively taking on female-coded chores and avoiding showing themselves naked in front of other soldiers. Anders does not, however, seem to have used the word hermaphrodite about himself.

M was inspired by the real person Magnus Johansson or Maria Johansdotter, who was never in the army, but started dressing in trousers and playing the keyed fiddle when living on the Åland Islands where they were born. They then moved to Stockholm and started living as a man full time. They became close with a maid and the two wanted to marry, but the maid's family did not like Magnus, and eventually the truth came out about them having changed their name, and their transition was used against them. They then said "well, I am both menfolk and womenfolk, and even more on the men's side".

E does not have quite such a clear individual inspiration, but one of the bases for E is Eleonora Stålhammar, who took the name Wilhelm Ekstedt and joined the army. This was not a completely uncommon thing to do at the time, although Wilhelm or Eleonora may not have lived quite as vulnerable a life as E did in the larp. Wilhelm or Eleonora also married a woman, and they lived together for several years before Wilhelm had to leave the army, probably for health reasons. They received quite a lot of support from people around them, and Wilhelm spoke to his relatives about wanting to go back to living as a woman. It's clear that Wilhelm and their wife had a pretty good support network, even though Wilhelm was sentenced to a couple of weeks or so in prison.

## Characters

J, amab.

It's difficult for you to abstain from going after something you want. You're driven by desire and often throw yourself wholeheartedly into whatever you want, be it drinking, fighting or sex, but you're a lot worse at actually talking about what you feel and what you want. You're married, but you've never felt happy in your marriage. You only had to get married because you recklessly followed a rush of passion and got caught. Neither of you had really thought of, or wanted, any kind of long-lasting companionship with each other. But this kind of situation is typical of what keeps happening when you can't say no to any of your impulses.

The secret closeness you found with farmhands and other country boys, both before and after your wedding, has always made you feel happier and more whole. You know they call it sodomy, that people like you are called sodomites and worse. Some around you may have put two and two together, but not wished you ill and therefore not made anything of it. You don't think your wife has understood what you've been doing, and when the army needed men, you were quick to enlist in order to get away from the uncomfortable silence at home. You miss your parents and siblings a lot. But it's hard to beat the freedom and joy you experience together with your closest comrades in the field, especially when you're on your own.

A, amab.

When you were a child, you were never quite like the other boys. You were always more caring and interested in domestic things, preferring to play with the girls. That wasn't really a big thing, the village had room for people to be a little different. When there was yet another war on the horizon you enlisted, because it was a good idea to find your own way of supporting yourself when you had a lot of older siblings. It was difficult to leave the family, though.

When you ended up among people who had not known you since you were little, rumours started circulating about you. They said you had to be a woman disguised as a man. You realised that you weren't bothered by the rumours. Quite the opposite, actually. You deliberately started choosing chores that women usually do, like mending clothes. You also avoid showing yourself naked in front of the other soldiers, and take your baths alone, in order to not prove the suspicions false. You've heard some murmurs about hermaphroditism, and there might be something in it. You really don't know. You're just doing what feels good and right to you.

You never thought love was something you would find, nobody ever saw you as a catch. But now, in the field, you have felt attractive and desired for the first time. And it feels like for the first time, you might just be understanding what love really is.

**M**, afab.

You have always been extroverted and adventurous. Always searching for new kicks. At home in the village you learned to play the fiddle and started dressing in trousers. Sure, people found it strange in the beginning, but nobody complained when you came to the barn dances and started playing. When the war came, you saw another chance at adventure and seeing the world. But even more so, an opportunity to take a new name and start living as a man. For you are in fact both menfolk and womenfolk, but even more on the men's side.

Sure you slept with a few maids back home, like the one on the next farm over with the long dark hair, and sure you've found others here to be close to. Some would call it sinning, but you're not really ashamed of your desires, or of acting on them. Your life has mostly been relatively easy, and you don't do a lot of serious conversations or taking time to pause and reflect on feelings. Your closest people in the field have become yet another source of love and adventure. But there are those in the village back home that you miss immensely. Perhaps most of all the maid with the long dark hair.

**E**, afab.

You're used to having to grit your teeth and struggle to put food on the table and make life bearable. You're often controlled, used to having your guard up, and find it hard to talk about feelings. Your father lost his life in the war so long ago you don't even remember him, and you and your mother have had a tough life. You're used to pitching in and doing whatever work is needed, regardless of whether it's seen to be suitable for men or for women.

When you were old enough and yet another war came along, you saw your chance to not have to worry about food and be able to scrape together money to send home, although leaving your mother was hard. Earlier, you had played with the idea of living as a man, spending a lot of time secretly watching the men in the village, noting and copying their body language and behaviour. Something you never expected was army life giving you the chance to explore love and intimacy. There was never any time for that at home, and the village boys never really impressed you. But here, you've found a closeness you don't want to leave behind. The feeling of being able to rest in someone's arms, finally able to let go of having to be strong all the time, is practically intoxicating.

## **Relationships**

### **Four players**

This group consists of two couples. J and A are in a romantic, sexual relationship, and E and M are in one. The two couples are very close friends. They share a tent as well as secrets, thoughts and feelings, and they have gotten used to expressing love and tenderness in front of each other.

J and A recognised each other as norm breakers. A is the one who can get J to open up emotionally, and J is the one who can persuade A into coming on adventures and escapades. This can sometimes mean that their different wishes and priorities clash, leading to conflict. E and M found they had a lot in common in how they live their lives, and after a time, they realised that their connection was more than friendship. They are very different, E more controlled and M more outgoing. Sometimes they balance each other out, sometimes there's friction and quarrels.



### Three players

If you're playing A, J and M:

A and J got together first, and later J was attracted to M and couldn't resist them. A was skeptical at first, but after some time A and M found each other as well, and they are now in a three-person relationship. Sometimes conflict arises around J's inability to give up anything they want, M's risk-taking behaviour, and A not being at all worried about the rumours that they're really a woman.

If you're playing A, E and J:

A and E found each other in not being quite like the other soldiers. J stumbled into what they had, and despite their differences they found love and attraction between all three. However, A can get irritated with how E and J can never talk about feelings, and J and A get frustrated with E's need for control and inability to let loose.

If you're playing A, M and E:

At first M courted A, but then E caught their eye as well, and after a while they started a three-person relationship. A has managed to make E a bit more comfortable with talking about feelings and not needing to be or seem strong all the time, and their trinity is mostly harmonious. Although E can get frustrated with M's carefree attitude and lack of worrying, and perhaps also envious of it. A gets tired of how difficult it is for E to let the others in, and M gets fed up with A's pestering about needing to talk about feelings.

If you're playing E, J and M:

M and E started a relationship first, then M and J found each other. Despite E being skeptical initially, they are now in a three-person relationship. M and J are both tossed between the joy in having found such amazing relationships and the vertigo of how serious it all feels, and how do you even handle that? E revels in feeling loved and wanted and not having to be strong, but also worries that J or M can get too reckless.

## Handout scene 16

You didn't mean to overhear. You had just been out on the town with some of the others, and you heard something from the building where the courts are. You crept closer, and you realised that this was a trial of two soldiers, accused of having committed the crime of sodomy together. The wife of one of the soldiers had convinced him to give himself up and admit his guilt. Both of the soldiers are sentenced to exile. Have they started looking for people like you? What would your families say if they found out what you've been doing? Can you really keep on doing this and risk being sent out of the country now that you've made it home? What would your fellow soldiers do if they found you out?

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## **Scenes - player version**

### **Act 1, Summer**

**Themes: Celebrating and falling in love**

#### **Scene 1. Nightwatch, core groups**

It's your turn to be on watch. The risk of someone attacking is low, but it's there. Even though you can't just fall into each other's arms, this is a chance to talk about what you want, about dreams, hopes, desires and fears.

#### **Scene 2. In the tent, core groups**

After a long day, you're finally alone in your tent. There are some people moving around the camp and others sleeping in their tents just beside you. You can touch each other and be as physical as you want, but you need to either be completely quiet or whisper the words you're not allowed to say. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 3. Midsummer, everyone together**

The beer supplies are being emptied, some people have brought out instruments, it's finally time to celebrate Midsummer by partying and fighting. You have to keep your distance to your closest ones so that nobody notices anything, and you will be loud and vocal about agreeing with the other soldiers that there are way too few women around. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 4. Alone at last, core groups**

The Midsummer's party continues. While the other soldiers are competing for attention from the camp followers or other women, you have snuck away to have some time for yourselves. You're in a happy, celebratory mood and just want to steal a few moments of closeness together before you have to get back to the others and pretend again.

### **Act 2, Autumn**

**Themes: violence and conflict**

#### **Scene 5. Wounded, core groups (more information will be given right before the scene)**

You have laid siege to a fortress in order to be able to rest for the winter in a safe place. You succeeded in besieging the place, but one of you was wounded. It's not a life-threatening wound, but it's the infections after more than the battlefield that kills most people, you are all painfully aware of that. But you have a more urgent problem to deal with: the surgeon is on his way, and the wound can't be treated without revealing some biological realities that you don't want revealed. There is a risk that the wounded person might be sent home, or

even worse, prosecuted. You now have a very short time to come up with a way to convince the surgeon to do his job and keep his mouth shut afterwards.

### **Scene 6. Healthcare, core groups**

A few days have gone by since you laid siege to the fortress. The wound doesn't seem to have become infected. But it's not healed yet, and a lot can happen. You're waiting in the part of the fortress that has been allocated for the wounded, waiting for the surgeon to check on the wound again. In the meantime, you can pray, be close and try to comfort each other. People are milling about around you, so you can't talk openly. But there are a lot of wounded people around you who also have their close ones around them, so you can be more physical with each other than usual out in the open.

### **Scene 7. The conflict, core groups**

Maybe you're quarrelling because of how the situation with the surgeon was handled. Perhaps he's blackmailing you to keep quiet, perhaps one of you threatened him in order for that not to happen. Maybe if you're the wounded one, you can't keep civil when the pain flares up, and you finally lose your temper. Either way, you have a conflict in the group, and for once you are outside of the fortress and can quarrell in peace.

### **Scene 8. Simmering discontent, all**

Discontent is rising in the fortress. An important food delivery was attacked by local militia, and you now have to ration the remaining food harshly. You're living in very close quarters with everyone, and you're being driven mad by the stupidity of the other soldiers, their lack of understanding, and the fact that you have to be so careful to ensure that nobody notices the relationships that mean the most to you. It's evening, and you're waiting to be served what will probably be a very meager dinner. Everyone is irritable, and a fight could happen at any time.

## **Act 3, Winter**

### **Themes: Grief and homesickness**

### **Scene 9. On watch, core groups**

Winter is here. You're waiting for an attack on the fortress, and it's your turn to keep watch up in the watchtower. You've huddled close against the cold. The closeness between you and the distance to the others makes it possible to talk openly, but you need to keep your voices down and your eyes open in case something happens.

### **Scene 10. Home sweet home, core groups**

Flashback. Every character has one short scene (around three minutes) set in their old home. Players take turns playing each others' near and dear. The groups of four need to play at

least two of the scenes in parallel. In the groups of three, one person at a time has a break.

M: It's August, and you have just spent a night with your sweetheart in the hayloft. The first rays of sunshine are breaking through the cracks between the boards in the walls, and soon you have to get up and go out and pretend like nothing happened. But for a little while more, you can lie here and pretend you're the only two people in the whole world.

E: You and your mother have worked hard getting the harvest in, and it's looking like this winter might be a good one. Finally, you can take a breath and have some time together just for the two of you. You're proud of what you've managed, of how you help each other, and of the fact that you always have each other no matter what.

A: You're with your favourite sister who is going to teach you how to churn butter. You both know this isn't men's work at all, but you really want to learn, and she doesn't want to deny you something you want. You're laughing and being silly together just like always.

J: You have temporarily escaped the uncomfortable atmosphere at the farm by having dinner at your brother's. Once the rest of his family have left you alone, you can have a serious talk for once. You talk about family, about how you're not feeling comfortable in your marriage, and you feel so close to him and safe with him. Family is family, after all.

#### **Scen 11. The funeral, all (more information will be given right before the scene)**

You have just had a funeral and have gathered to finish off the last of your beer, share memories and raise a glass. You don't dare comfort your close ones as openly and tenderly as you would have wanted. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 12. Comfort, core groups**

You've managed to sneak away and steal a moment together. You're standing in a narrow passage in the fortress, and you can't let anyone notice that you're here. Finally, you can be close and touch each other as much as you want, but you can't talk for fear of revealing that you're here. Maybe most of all, what you need is comfort and togetherness, if only for a short few minutes.

### **Act 4, Spring**

#### **Themes: Dreams and returning home**

#### **Scene 13. Dreams, core groups**

Two weeks ago, you left the fortress to start marching again, and finally you have alone time together in your tent. You had your first real battle after the winter a few days ago. You were victorious and suffered few casualties. Sweden stands a good chance of winning the war! They're packing up camp now before marching onwards, and many are away getting

provisions in the closest town. You have some time to be on your own in a meadow outside of town. You can feel that it's getting warmer, summer is coming. And you allow yourselves to dream. Dream of a future where you can be together. Where you don't have to face any tough decisions and you can have everything just the way you want it. What does that life look like?

#### **Scene 14. Victory party, all**

Sweden has won the war. Everyone else is happy, wanting to get drunk, dreaming of seeing their loved ones again, getting married and being celebrated as heroes. You play along and pretend to be feeling the same. But you and your closest ones have difficult decisions to face. Are you going to part and return each to your own villages? Will one or more of you never move back home again so you can stay together? Can you try to disappear off the map and settle in a new place, build a new life together in a different part of Sweden? Are you going to go back to living the way you did before the war, or will you stay living the identities you've found here? No matter what you choose, you'll miss someone. No matter what you choose, some doors will suddenly close. You can't let anyone notice anything.

#### **Scene 15. Homeward bound, core groups**

The march homeward starts tomorrow. Today is the last day before you decamp. What will happen now? The war has given you a chance to disappear, find a new place in Sweden to settle with new names, let those at home think you died. Maybe you could get a soldier's cottage and have local farmers provide you with what you need while waiting for the next war. But can you really leave everyone you know behind? Can you part with each other, with the new relationships you have found in the war? What does the way back look like? You are in a besieged town far from home, and you have broken into a house and temporarily scared the inhabitants away in order to have a place to speak freely.

#### **Scene 16. The threat at home, core groups (more information will be given right before the scene)**

You're back on Swedish ground. You're in the southernmost barracks in Sweden, and in a few days you'll resume your march. Not long now until you're discharged and free.

#### **Epilogue, core groups**

Inner monologue. Sit down in a circle. Close your eyes. When the moment of decision comes, what do you do? Do you part and go back to your families? Back to life as it used to be? Do you stay together and build a new future somewhere else? When you feel like you have an answer to these questions, open your eyes and start your monologue. When you feel like you've finished, just sit in silence.