

Queer Messes

A Disastrous LARP by Jay Dragon

What's Needed

- A lot of red yarn or red thread.
- A lot of blue yarn or blue thread.
- A knife, pair of scissors, or other implement of cutting.
- Between 5 and 8 people.
- A bedroom, or living room, or other space where people won't bother you.
- 1-2 hours.

Starting the Game

Everyone sits in a circle. Place the scissors in the center of the circle.

You're all queer, in any permutation or way. You can be in the closet, out and proud, or still conflicted. You can have multiple identities. You're all in the same age range. Establish that. Choose a name your parents gave you, and a name you either would like to be used or that people do use (this can be a nickname, and it doesn't mean you're trans necessarily). Tell people the name that they would call you. Write that name down on a namecard in front of you.

You're all messes. You've got complicated relationships with one another. You're full of unrealized emotion and tension, and you're not sure what your feelings are. Many of you are leaving soon - for college, for new jobs, for new lives. Many of you are staying behind. Don't tell anyone before game begins which you're doing.

Talk together about discomforts in game. Explain if there's anything you don't want brought up. Remember there will be no acting out of things, only discussion. If at any point, you want something to stop being discussed in game, hold up your index card. This indicates that the conversation should wrap up and move on as quickly as possible.

Take a moment to use the bathroom. It's hard to leave this game for a bathroom break.

The person with the shortest hair begins, turning to the person on their left. They establish with each other a profound bond, a connection no one else can understand. During this time, they both make up a fact about each other. It's up to them whether this happens in secret. You then tie a blue string, from one person's wrist to the other. Then, that person turns to the person on their left, and around the circle you go, until everyone has two connections and two blue strings around their wrists.

Then, you begin again with the person to the right of the person with the shortest hair. That person turns to the person one over to their right, and the two of them establish a secret way they don't enjoy each other's presence. Something about each other annoys them, and frustrates them, but they haven't talked about it at all. You don't have to tell each other what this annoyance is, but you're welcome to make up a fact about the other person and reveal it to the group. You then tie a red string from one person's wrist to the other's. You continue around the circle this way, until everyone has two red strings around their wrists. This should create a star.

If you have 6 players, then the person with the shortest hair will reach across the circle to the only person they don't have a connection with, and establish either a red or blue string relationship. This doesn't have to be as meaningful as the main relationships. Then, the other two pairs of people who don't have connections do the same. The connections cannot all be positive or negative.

If you have 7 players, the person to the left of the person with the shortest hair looks at the person two to their left, and the two of them establish a blue string relationship. It's okay if this isn't as meaningful as the main two strings, but it should be something noteworthy. Then, that person looks two to their right, and establishes a red string relationship. You keep going this way, alternating, until everyone has two additional strings. One person will end up with two blue strings - that's okay. They're especially lovable, and must carry the burden of people's love - and the expectations that involves. If you want to have a more negative game, you may start the process with a red string relationship, and then the person starting will be especially reviled. If one person wants to be especially loved or hated, they can choose to be the one to start the pattern.

If you have 8 players, you go around the same as you did for 7 people, but you won't end up with someone especially loved or hated.

Give everyone a big smile, squeeze your hands, and then count down into game.

Playing the Game

Before you begin playing Hot Seat, you play a beginning round of Never Have I Ever. Starting with whoever wants to, a character asks a question in the format of "Never have I ever..." followed by something that character has never done. Each character who has done the same thing claps, and then raises one finger. Once you have five fingers raised, you're removed from the game of Never Have I Ever. Whoever is the last person starts the game of Hot Seat.

That person begins on the Hot Seat. This isn't a physical seat, this is just an expression. Each other person starting with the person immediately to the left of the Hot Seat and going clockwise around the circle must ask the original person a question that their character wants to know.

These should be deep questions, and the answers should be involved. You're welcome to make up anything about anyone else in the circle, as long as it doesn't conflict with something already established. That person is also welcome to decide that you lied about the story you made up.

Players can ask follow up questions, but should be respectful of the time.

You cannot pass questions, but you can lie. If you lie, you hold up one hand with fingers crossed, and everyone can tell you just lied.

Once everyone else has asked the Hot Seat a question, then the person to the left is in the Hot Seat. You proceed around the circle this way until everyone has gone. Then, the first person gets to go again, as it's generally known that you always get the worst questions when you go first.

If two people are connected by a blue string, and either one feels any kind of resentment or anger towards the other one, they may grab the scissors and cut the blue string. If the resentment or anger is expressed openly, they *must* cut the blue string.

If two people are connected by a red string, and either one feels any kind of love or appreciation, or gains a new insight into how that person is that makes them appreciate that person, they may grab the scissors and cut the red string. If this appreciation is vocalized, they *must* cut the red string.

If you're connected to someone with a blue string, and they cut a red string with someone you also have a red string with, you must cut that blue string. Forgiveness breeds resentment.

Whenever you cut a string like this, you must vocalize it or indicate it somehow within the fiction.

Once the first person in the Hot Seat has gone again, the game is over. Have any final moments you'd like, and then start making excuses for why you have to leave.

Finishing the Game

If no strings have been cut this game, you've left the space exactly as how you've entered it. You leave, just as much of a queer mess as you were originally, and nothing has been gained or lost.

If there are more red strings than blue strings, then your group of friends is growing weak. You'll eventually splinter apart from one another, and go your separate ways in life.

If you have an equal number of red strings and blue strings, then you're still queer messes, but at least you've worked through some things. It was a productive evening, and your friendships will continue.

If there's more blue strings than red strings, then things improve in your lives. Things are better, and things stay strong. Perhaps you can play some more games now, like Truth or Dare, without these strings holding you down.

Talk about your epilogue together - what do you all say to each other after tonight? How do things resolve? Use this time to also process your feelings about what happened during this game.