

ANNA WESTERLING

ROBIN'S FRIENDS

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Number of players: 3

Game Master: 1

Time: 2 hours

Props: 2 flowers (preferably white)

This scenario is dedicated to

Trine Lise Lindahl and Elin Nilsen

For being my friends even when I make mistakes.

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INTRODUCTION

This scenario is about friendship, a crucial and easily forgotten part of our lives.

In a good friendship, you feel free to be yourself, secure in the knowledge that you are loved, even if you show your weaknesses, your dark secrets and the parts of you that you are not proud of. Friendship is about daring to expose everything and still knowing that it will be OK. In this scenario, the characters have forgotten that, and everything goes horribly wrong.

Friendship is also about seeing beyond your own problems, and being able to see others and be there for them. In this scenario, some of the characters have lost themselves in everyday life and in their own problems and they can't see beyond that, so everything goes horribly wrong.

Friendship is also about being part of a group, and in groups we usually have different roles. The roles have their upsides, but also their downsides, and they are hard to change. In this scenario we have a producer, a star, and a caretaker who fight to break out of their scripted roles. When they fail it goes horribly wrong.

Friendship is about compassion. That is why this story intends to be an emotional experience for the players, a touching, sad story about people who are all too human. In that way it is horribly right.

SYNOPSIS

The story is about three friends with different characteristics, goals, and values. They go to a summer house together for a great weekend. But quarrels between Alex and Kim tear the weekend apart. As the star, Alex wants attention and clashes with Kim, the producer who organizes everything. Luckily they also have their dear friend Robin, the caretaker, with them. Alex and Kim argue and then talk it out with Robin one at a time. After a horrible weekend, they all leave the house. But what Kim and Alex don't know is that Robin is sick and will die. Robin wanted a weekend where everything was normal, like back in the old days, so Robin didn't tell them. The next scene that is played is Robin's funeral.

But what if they could go back to the summer house and do it right? What you play next is a repeat of the summer house weekend based on that assumption. This time the three friends meet and talk about their insecurities and comfort each other. The same weekend is played, just in another fashion. After that weekend Robin's funeral is played out again.

But that is not how it happened, is it? The last scene is Alex and Kim after the horrible weekend and the funeral. Can they find each other?

CHARACTER SUMMARY

The characters met at a boarding theatre school they attended after high school graduation many years ago. They lived in the same room and had a great time. They felt safe and loved – it was like family. Since then, years have passed and they have all gotten additional educations, and work in the theatre business in different professions.

The producer - Kim

“I am only what I do - otherwise no one likes me”

Kim produced everything from school trips to big theatre productions. Kim is successful and works as a producer at the dramatic theatre in town, but is stressed tired of always organizing everything. Including this weekend at the parents’ summer house. Kim will end up fighting with Alex.

The Star - Alex

“I need to be seen - otherwise I’m nothing”

Alex is an actor who wants to be a star. There is always a lot of drama and new things happening for Alex, whether they are potential new great successes or great failures. Working as a freelance actor, Alex constantly hunts for the next job, and is messy both when it comes to planning ahead and having money for the future. Alex’s love life is much like the search for jobs – always seeking the next big unique thing. Alex will end up fighting with Kim at the summerhouse.

The caretaker - Robin

“I cannot talk about my real feelings - then no one will like me”

Robin is kind and sweet, listens to everyone, and takes care of people. Robin constantly puts others’ feelings before Robin’s own feelings. Robin is educated as pedagogue within theatre and is working as a children’s theatre teacher, and sometimes coaches child actors.

Robin is sick and will die during the scenario. Because of this Robin has gathered the friends in hopes of one last weekend like it was in the old days. Robin doesn’t want to spoil the weekend with the news, and won’t tell the others about the illness.

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

All the characters are written from the character's own point of view. It's up to the player to interpret them through the player's own life experience. The important thing is that none of the characters are intended to be evil; they are all very human.

While playing scenes, the players also have the freedom to interpret the characters and add things that fit the story and further it. In the play test, for example, Alex was a vegetarian during a scene when Kim had bought meat for dinner.

Gender

Gender is unimportant to this scenario. The characters are written as gender neutral and can be played as any sex. In order to make the scenario close to home, the gender of the character should match the gender of the player, but the scenario can be played in any way you'd prefer.

If you have a group of characters of mixed sexes and the players wonder whether and how their characters really were allowed to live in the same room at the boarding school, just tell them that it is not important to the scenario. Maybe it was a liberal school. The important thing is that the characters became great friends during their year at theatre school.

Age

The characters haven't been given any specific age. This is so that the players, if they wish, can set the ages of the characters at their own ages, and, in doing so, make the scenario closer to home. The core truth of the characters' situations is that they graduated from high school, and did a year together at the theatre school. Now, years later, they have received further education, and have enjoyed some experience in their field as professionals. They are not at the beginning of their career paths, but not are not yet mid-career professionals; it's still early in their professional lives. It's also very possible that they've done other things as well, for example, traveling, etc. This means they could be anywhere between 25-40 years. This is the intention, but let the players interpret this, and if it doesn't come up, it isn't really important. The characters don't have to be the same age either.

TOOLBOX

Up on the floor

This is a scenario where the players act out the events that happen. The players don't sit around a table and talk out the scenario, they get up and act the events out. For example if Alex hugs Robin the players actually hug Use whatever props happen to be at hand and change them into what is needed. For example, a book can represent that piece of meat Kim bought or a piece of paper can serve as Alex's new sweater.

If you play in a room where there is a table in the middle, remove it before the game begins. Use only chairs instead to make the players more movable.

Time jump

As a game master you can move the players in time and space. You just state the time and location of the next scene. For example: "Years earlier, at the theatre school, when you just preformed your first play together."

Most time jumps are scripted in the scenario, but if you feel it's beneficial for the scenario, at any time you wish you may take them back to the theatre school. Since the scenes at the theatre school always are positive this can be used to create contrast to the present mood or action.

Cross-cutting

Cross-cutting is cutting back and forth between two scenes, and letting the scenes influence each other. In this scenario this technique is used in the "talking with Robin" scenes. This is when the scene of Alex talking to Robin happens simultaneously with the scene Kim talking to Robin. Robin is in both scenes and turns around slightly to face the whoever is in the current scene. Cross-cutting also benefits from speed, so when the arguments get rough, the scenes can be cut faster to good effect.

Inner-monologue

An inner-monologue is a way to express what the character is thinking and feeling. At any time during the game, simply say "inner-monologue" to any character and they get to express what they feel. To make it clear for your players you can also combine it with a question, for example "What does Kim think about how Alex says she has no time?" This is what the character is thinking and feeling, and not necessarily something the characters would tell the others.

This scenario has several inner-monologues built into the scenes. For example, when the characters come home from the summer house they get to express their feeling about the weekend. But at anytime you feel it would add to the game, feel free to make a player do an inner-monologue.

In doing inner-monologues you can also experiment with speed. Sometimes it is good to let it take time, if the game is in a sensitive phase and someone needs to express something, but other times one or a few words is enough to get the message through. Then you can cut the monologue. For example if you ask Kim if Kim believes in Alex's new relationship, it's enough for Kim to monologue, "Ehm...well."

Close to home

To play "close to home" means playing your character close to yourself and issues that you face in real life. When players put their own emotions into the game the scenario is more likely to create a strong experience. Playing close to home is also practical -- to play the game with a familiar mindset is easier than putting on a foreign set of emotions.

This is a scenario about friendship among archetypal characters; players should be able to recognize themselves in the roles. That also means it can be interesting to play the game close to home; the hope is that the game will help players reflect on themselves and who they are in everyday life.

Kitchen sink drama

Kitchen sink drama is a term for everyday realism used in literature and theatre. It describes drama that is realistic and true in terms of setting -- the dirt in the corners of the room -- and in terms of character -- the flaws of the people that populate the narrative. This is a scenario about ordinary people, and the quarrels among them. Alex and Kim argue about who is doing the dishes, who will do the cooking, and that Alex was late. It will be those small things that ruin the weekend, not a big dramatic catastrophe.

The game-master

As a game-master of this scenario you should be active and take responsibility for the scenario as a whole and for the purpose of the story. You should be flexible and react to your groups of players and make the scenario great for them. The scenario has a set structure with scenes, and even some set scenes, but within it there is a lot of room for you and your players to create magic together. You have the tools presented above -- inner-monologues, cutting, and flashbacks, etc. Use them to make the story stronger.

Time management

Remember this is a two hour-long scenario, and two hours isn't that long. During the play test, we had no problem keeping to the time limits, and with only three players, each player gets quite a lot of time. The first scene in the summer house "as it was" also tended to take longer than the second part. But watch the clock; you don't want to rush the end.

SET UP THE GAME

Introduce the scenario

Welcome the players and introduce them briefly to the scenario. Tell them that this is a scenario about three friends who spend a weekend in a summer house, but it goes horribly wrong. Instead of having a great time, the weekend ends in quarrels. At this point that is all you have to say, you will introduce it more thoroughly later.

About Friendship

This is a scenario about friendship; therefore start up with an easy exercise to make your players think about their own friends and their relationships. Sit in a circle and ask the players to say some good things about friendship – ask them to talk about love, trust, etc. Go round in the circle a couple of times so everybody gets a chance to talk and bring up different issues.

If it feels right for the group, ask the players to tell a story from their own life about a friendship that had a conflict, but survived. It can be about how they quarreled with a friend and later made up, and it can be about when they thought they were the “good” or the “bad” guy. This should not be about love stories. The players are allowed to lie, but not to tell that they are lying.

Select characters

Lay out the characters face down on the table. The only thing that should be visible is the text you write on the backside of them: “the producer”, “the star” and “the caretaker”. From that let the players decide whom they want to play. You don’t need to tell them anything more because then they risk getting insecure about what kind of experience is the best, and what will happen in the scenario. Rather, just let them choose from this restrained information.

Encourage the players to choose characters “close to home,” that is, that are close to themselves. If they feel like any one of these stereotypes – they should pick it. If they want to discuss it together, let them. Letting players pick characters themselves also helps them figure out which archetype they fit in this particular group. If the method fails, feel free to typecast players according to how you see them and what you think will be most beneficial for the game.

The structure of the scenario

Explain the scenario more thoroughly. Explain the story (if you need use the synopsis) and give a short introduction to the characters (use the above section). Explain what scenes will be played and the whole structure with the cycles and the repetition. If you have a board or a big piece of paper around, draw it up so the players all can see it. This is a scenario without any secrets, so answer any questions the players might have.

Present the characters

Let the players present their characters briefly. Ask them to discuss the characters in their entirety, not just their professional sides. There are also no secrets.

Kim and Alex's quarrels

In order to take in what the players feel about their characters, ask them for suggestions for what Alex and Kim should argue about. Remember this is kitchen sink drama, so it should all be very realistic things, the dishes, who is cooking and what we are eating for diner. Also remember that it is good to do scenes that consciously overlook Robin's needs. List their suggestions so you have them later when the game has begun. If the players talk about what's on their character sheets while doing this, let them -- it is an advantage for other players to know what to push on later, in game.

Start the game

Scenario structure

1. The theatre school

2. As it was

The cycle

- Kim and Alex quarrel
- Talking with Robin
- Robin's monologue

Home

The funeral

3. As it could have been

The cycle

- Talking about it, resolving the conflicts

Home

The funeral

4. Left alone – Alex and Kim

THE SCENARIO

The theatre school

The first scene is set back at the theatre school in the friends' room. They are all sitting on the floor in a circle working on a project together and are having a great time. This scene should be all happiness, trust, and love. The purpose of the scene is to remind the players of the characters' origins, that they were once the greatest of friends.

This scene can be used anytime during the scenario to create contrast. If you feel it will make the arguments even harder and sadder, feel free to cut to it; the characters will suddenly return to when they were all happy. Then cut back to reality, without breaking the scene.

As it was

The characters are going to the summer house of Kim's family. This same cycle of scenes at the summer house will be played out several times, but each time the topic of the quarrel is different. The cycle consists of Alex and Kim quarreling, and then talking to Robin about the quarrel, followed by Robin's monologue about what Robin feels.

Cycle of scenes:

- Alex and Kim quarrel
- They talk with Robin
- Robin holds a monologue

Alex and Kim quarrel

Alex and Kim have a lot to quarrel about. They have made different choices about things like jobs, money, planning, working-out, and love-life. Kim is in control of everything has a good career and just started at a great job, but feels overwhelmed by the responsibility, and has the feeling of doing everything for everyone all the time. On the other hand, Alex wants to be the best, and always hopes that she'll make it big with her next job, and consequently gets a bit self-centered.

But at the cottage they do not argue about these things directly. Instead, they should quarrel about nothing, such as doing the dishes and what to eat, etc. This should be kitchen sink drama; they argue about the small petty things instead of what matters.

In this scene, Alex and Kim shouldn't see beyond their own needs. They should overlook the needs of each other, but especially the needs of Robin. Since all Robin wants is a loving weekend, the quarrels are, in themselves, contrary to Robin's needs. The theme of the quarrels can also push Robin's needs aside. Robin can take the initiative, suggesting that they play a game, write a play together or just sit outside together. Alex and Kim might find a way to disagree with these suggestions, making Robin feel that

taking the initiative made the situation even worse. If Kim and Alex quarrel about, for example, who should do the dishes, then perhaps Robin does them. To make sure that the character of Robin is overlooked, rather than the player of Robin, it is best to consciously overlook the character so that Robin can react.

Before the game begins, the players get to make a list of petty things to argue about that should be used as inspiration for later scene-setting. From there you can pick the scenes as you like. You do not have to play all the scenes – feel free to pick and choose according to what fits. Also make sure that, as the game-master, you have read the characters, since there is a lot of potential conflict in them.

During the argument scenes, the game-master may create scenes using player-input according to what he or she feels would benefit the game at any specific moment. If the players talk about something, follow their lead and make the next scene about that, rather than cutting and moving to something else. The scenes should flow, one after the other, without any breaks. If you start a scene and it doesn't work, start it again with new instructions or from a new perspective and let it play rather than getting involved in a long discussion about it. Talking can happen after the game, when the playing is done.

The scenes don't have to happen chronologically; you can play a scene about fixing dinner and then cut back to a scene about their argument over who should buy the food. If you want suggestions, there are a number of examples below. Don't use all of these, necessarily, but select a few that seem interesting to the players.

Remember to take notes on the arguments the characters have, so that you can revisit them when you play out "as it could have been." Then you will set the same scenes - the argument about what to eat, or who is doing the dishes, etc., but instead of arguing the players will find a way to solve the problem.

Suggested scenes

When to arrive

Alex arrives late, and Kim ends up waiting at the train station.

What to eat

Kim has bought food and Alex has become a vegetarian / has started a special diet. Kim's planning is destroyed. Alex may have brought food as well, so perhaps Kim has bought too much. Maybe all the food doesn't fit in the refrigerator, or maybe they need to plan on buying more food tomorrow.

When to eat

Before dinner, Alex takes one or two of the strawberries that Kim has saved for dessert. Kim gets annoyed, and Alex doesn't understand why she's making a big deal.

Where to sleep

Kim planned out the sleeping arrangements, but Alex doesn't want to sleep according to the plan – Alex needs to be able to get up and do yoga, or has a back pain due to too much yoga.

The dishes

Kim does the dishes after dinner. After breakfast, no one does the dishes. Kim gets irritated with Alex for not doing them. Alex gets irritated at Kim for not saying anything, and thinks they could have done the dishes later just as easily.

Waking up at night

Alex wakes up Kim in the middle of the night by typing on the computer and chatting with the potential partner who might just be the one. Kim gets annoyed and Alex gets annoyed because Kim doesn't understand how important this is.

Friendly talk about careers

Alex talks a lot about a potential new job. Robin asks Kim about Kim's current job. In order to shut Alex up, Kim talks about how fantastic it is, instead of saying how Kim really feels about it.

Sharing your love-life

Alex talks a lot about the potential partner. Kim says that this is how Alex talks about every new partner. Alex becomes annoyed because Kim is not supportive.

Not helping out with breakfast

Alex does yoga early in the morning instead of helping with breakfast. Kim is annoyed.

Not participating in the common activity

Robin wants to write a short theatre piece together like they used to. But Alex isn't focused and keeps texting a romantic partner, which annoys Kim. Likewise, Alex is frustrated by Kim's inability to understand how important this romance is to Alex. Kim finishes the scene by saying that we are too grown up for these childish dreams anyhow.

What to do

They talk about visiting a nearby café together, Alex remembers that Alex has no money and that it is not just possible. Kim is annoyed that Alex doesn't prioritize them, since apparently sending texts was OK, as was buying new clothes for last week's date. Alex hates that Kim doesn't understand how important the date was, or what it's like to live paycheck to unsteady paycheck. Kim is annoyed that the weekend seems more important to Kim than to Alex.

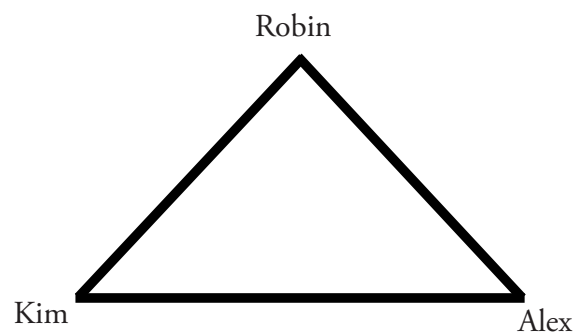
Talking with Robin

After Alex and Kim disagree, they each talk about it alone with Robin, defending their own positions. In a real summer house, they would probably sit in different rooms and talk with Robin while the other one is out. However, we will play it with Robin talking to both of them at the same time; cross-cut the scenes between them.

Put the players on chairs set in a triangle, with Robin at the apex, and the other two on each side. Alex or Kim begins by telling Robin about why they are right, and the other person is so wrong or so bad. At an appropriate moment, cut to the other one and let that person begin talking. In this way you are crosscutting between Alex and Kim whom are both talking with Robin simultaneously.

When explaining this to the players, make them understand that the players of Alex and Kim can bring up what the other character is saying in their conversation. For example if Alex says “But it’s not like we can’t do the dishes later,” Kim can say “Alex is that kind of person to whom there is always a later, it’s childish actually”. The two scenes should mirror each other and provide inspiration for one another.

With the cross-cutting you can also experiment with speed and timing. Sometimes you can do the cuts really quickly, so that all Robin hears is blur of “but I said”, “I feel”, “understand me” etc. But you can also slow them down to let the characters talk and develop their reasoning. This is dependent on the players and the mode in the game at the moment. But a general tip is to begin slower and speed up as you go along. In general, too fast is better than too slow.



Robin's monologue

At the end of each cycle, Robin holds an inner monologue about what Robin thinks and feels. Since Robin can't express him/herself to the others, Robin tells it this way. Don't rush the monologue, since this is a delicate subject and one of the few times Robin has to express feelings; let it be slow and quiet. This also contrasts with Kim's and Alex's arguments.

Home

After the weekend ended, the characters went home. One at a time, have them hold an inner monologue about the weekend. What did they think and how did they feel about it? Let Alex or Kim begin, and Robin finish.

The funeral

The friends didn't see each other for a few months after they returned from the summer house. Then, Alex and Kim receive a formal invitation to Robin's funeral.

Set the scene with Robin lying on the floor in the middle of the room. Give Alex and Kim a flower each. One at a time, they should walk up, leave the flower at Robin's coffin, and say a few words. When they both are done, cut the scene. Make sure to allow the scene to take the time it needs – the core of it lies in the silences, in what is not said.

The two flowers are props you should get before running the scenario. The variety doesn't matter; what's important is that the characters have something to hold in their hands and to leave with Robin. Of course flowers are preferable due to their association with funerals, but two branches or other bits of found nature will do. Otherwise, just use pencils. The important thing is that the players leave something with Robin.

Another chance

What if they got another chance to go back to the summer house and do it right? This time, they'll be able to meet, talk about the hard stuff, and understand each other. They will be the best of friends again.

The next part of the scenario is based on that assumption. You will play the same visit to the summer house again, but different this time.

Cycle of scenes

Use your scene notes from the previous act to set the same scenes. This time, they will end differently. Instead of ending up in an argument about who forgot to buy tomatoes, this time that cooking scene will end up in a better place. Therefore, you don't need the "talking with Robin"-scenes, or the inner-monologues. Just let the players play the scenes again and see what they do with them given a second chance.

Since the context is different, this time around, you may feel you need to add a scene – if the need arises, do so. You can still use the techniques of inner monologues and going back to the theatre school. But this time the conflicts should be out in the open and the characters should at least play the fight and talk about what is really important without anything holding them back.

Home

Play inner monologues about how the characters feel after the summer house weekend. Have them do it in the same order as before, with Robin last.

The funeral

Play the funeral exactly the same way as before. Robin lying in the middle, and flowers for Alex and Kim, who comes forward one at a time to say some final words. Again, let the scene take time.

The end

This wasn't how it happened. What happened was the first version; a terrible weekend of quarrels, with no one even noticing that Robin had any problems. The last scene will therefore be just Alex and Kim meeting after Robin's funeral.

Before this scene, ask Robin's player to sit behind you, or somewhere that is clearly not in the gaming area. In the game, Robin is now dead and shouldn't be a part of the story, so remove Robin physically from the play area. The others should feel the loss.

Then let Kim and Alex play the last scene, after the horrible weekend, and after Robin's funeral. Don't rush it, but if it wants to be a short scene, let it. In the play test, for example, they just hugged and cried and that was it.

AFTER THE GAME

Ask the players to sit in a circle and one by one, let them express their feelings about the game. Then say, "thank you," and the scenario is over.

THE END

THE STAR - ALEX

"I need to be seen - otherwise I'm nothing"

You have a busy job, ok? It isn't easy to be a freelance actor; do people have any idea how hard it is?

Ever since you were a kid you wanted to be an actor, singer, performer, or whatever on stage. You just knew. After studying at several acting schools, you've freelanced for some years. Sometimes it works out, but then sometimes it doesn't.

What kills you is that you can never plan for the future; you always have to say yes if there is a job because you don't know when the next will appear. You also get stuck in jobs that you're overqualified for. You don't want play "Barry – the berry" for kids in school all your life. You want to do art! To be honest, sometimes you get to -- you've had some good roles, and you do a lot of artsy stuff with your own theatre group. But most of the time, it just doesn't feel like that. You want it to go faster, you want your career to take off. Now.

Before arriving at the summerhouse you had (as always) been auditioning for a cool part, a role that could really be something for you. You'd get to act on a big stage, in the Queens Theatre, working with this new great gorgeous director. You tried out for a film, and for some smaller parts as well, but you don't think they will work out. You can just feel it. But for the part at the Queen's Theatre, you had a good vibe and you really hope it's correct. Maybe this time you'll be lucky; maybe this time it will happen for you. Otherwise you might as well question your whole career – will you ever make it as an actor, or should you just try something else? God, it's hard to be you.

You're single, and it's been that way for too long. Come on – shouldn't someone as awesome as you find a partner within 2 seconds? You don't get it. Anyhow, now you've met this new awesome potential partner, and you think you're in love. The potential partner just has to call. Goddammit, why can't this person just call? You called the last two times, now it is the other person's turn. You know you shouldn't think like that, but you do anyhow. You don't want to be too pushy. But you wonder, did you do anything wrong? Should you have been more forthcoming on the date, or less forthcoming maybe? But your fingers are crossed and you hope it will work out. That maybe this time, it will happen to you.

Thanks to your work, you can't plan, and you are always late to tell people that you are coming. To be honest, maybe you just aren't the greatest at planning ahead, but now – with your complicated job -- it's not really your fault anymore. Anyway, that's why you were the last one to agree to come this weekend. You know this irritates Kim, but Kim's got to understand. The job, or potentially this new partner (who might actually be something!) has to come first.

Generally, Kim's a bit stuck up about these things, but who is Kim to talk? Kim has this awesome permanent job at the Dramatic Theatre that pays a monthly salary. Kim has made it; you're still fighting for it to happen.

Your friendship with Kim and Robin began years ago, when you all went to a, well to be honest, quite crappy theatre school. Oh my god, that professor Ling, wore like this ugly hippie caftan and wanted you to do some strange African theatre. You don't mind physical theatre, in fact you think it's good that the body is involved and you have tried several times to do yoga every morning, but you usually forget on the second or third day. But officially, you are someone who does yoga every morning.

Anyway, you had just graduated from high school and applied to a lot of different theatre schools, when you got in here, to a boarding school in the middle of nowhere. The best part of school was sharing a room with Kim and Robin. The three of you complemented each other in ways you hadn't imagined. You got to be yourself and they loved you for it. Your quirky ideas were fun, and they applauded and supported you as an actor. You felt you could do anything. You felt you could talk to them about anything, about your insecurities about life, your career, and all the partners that were passing through your life at high speed. When your heart was broken Robin was sure to be there with some chocolate. They were like family.

THE PRODUCER - KIM

"I am only what I do - otherwise, no one likes me"

You are the producer type. Ever since you were a kid you have produced different things; plays, conferences, books etc. You were always the one who took charge and organized everything. Most of the stuff you've done is connected to the theatre, which you love. You are orderly and in control and not only do you know how to get things done, you've got the driving force to do them. No one was surprised that you ended up as a theatre producer. You take the initiative, rent the theatres, make people join, do PR and control the budget – and you do success. You don't do failure -- that's just not your style.

You produced a lot of different things while completing your four-year degree in theater production. Afterwards, you scored a job at the dramatic theatre in town. It's a good job, and you know it was the right move, but let's face it: you're the new assistant who needs to prove yourself to the team, so you work your ass off. You don't get to make as many decisions as you do when you do your own thing, but still, just getting a job at the dramatic theatre is great. This is what you tell yourself when your feet hurt after yet another long day, and your boss tells you need to work this Saturday as well. It's a great job. So of course all your friends are happy for you, and you're happy too, but it's a tiring job, trying to please everyone and know everything. Usually you come home late, bone-tired, and fall into bed. You eat some crappy food at night, and eat breakfast only occasionally. Sugar and the small kiosk on the corner is your trick for staying awake.

Contrary to what people might think about producers, you are also creative. You always loved theatre, books, movies, etc., and have ideas about how you might want things. You didn't consider yourself creative until after you went into producing. Until recently, you felt creativity was more for people like Alex. Despite this realization, you decided to stick with what you knew: producing. And in general, you've done well and love your job. But it makes you angry that people believe producing means doing all the shit work. Like the artists who come to you with their larger-than-life visions, wanting you to do all for them, without offering you anything other than the chance to work on something "unique." Producing is not just about getting an audience to look at what ever shitty vision the artist has; it is also about binding everything together into one concept, one story, that sells. It means doing the right PR, communicating the right thing to the financiers and recruiting the right actors and staff for the project and so on. Producing is creative work, it's just telling a story with different tools. Sometimes the spoiled artists don't see that and just want you to do everything. You get so tired; it's impossible to save the world for them every time. But of course the right manuscript and the right director would tempt you, but not right now, now you have too much work to do.

Anyhow, when Robin called you about going out to your family's old cabin you felt like, shit, again, do I have to organize this again? Why is it always me? Don't they see I have this very important job and I need to prioritize that? That I'm so tired, and probably close to hitting the wall? For example, why can't Alex organize something for a change? But then again, you know, it's easiest for everyone if you do it. And after all, it's a very small thing that you can manage on the side. It's best for all if you just do it, you are the best at these matters after all.

You talked to your family to make sure that weekend was OK, and then made sure the three of you all could make it. Because it had to be the three of you, that's just how it had to be. But of course, Alex, the egocentric bitch, answered late. OK, you love her, but sometimes, come on, doesn't Alex see the effort you put into things? As a freelancer, Alex is usually home, so why can't Alex help? You needed to spend a lot of extra time reminding her and worrying about it. It would be so easy if Alex just answered directly, since time is such a limited resource to you. You also had other stuff you needed to do that weekend, but you prioritized your friends instead. It would have been nice if Alex did that as well for a change, wouldn't it, instead of sitting around waiting for a better offer.

You met Alex and Robin long time ago when you all went to a theatre boarding school for a year. To be honest, the school was quite crappy -- no plans, no organization, and no discipline. You could probably have done a better job yourself. Your teacher, professor Ling, was a sweet-meaning, but totally incompetent hippie who talked a lot about processes and feelings. You are not into that mumbo-jumbo. You want to see results. This goes even for theatre.

But you shared room with Alex and Robin for a year, and that was great fun, and probably one of the best times of your life. You talked about so many things, and you were so close. In a way you think that even if the school itself was a waste of time, it was good for you to get away be with friends for a while, without needing to perform constantly. It was fun, it was like family, and you felt so safe and loved.

During school, the three of you began to do small theatre performances together, sometimes with material you had written yourselves, and other times with what others had written. It was great fun to perform together. When you returned to the city where you all live now, you continued for a while before it all ran out, like sand from an hourglass. You didn't have the energy to take the initiative; Alex got other things and so on. It was all so long ago.

That was a fun time, but you were all so young then. Now that you are older, things are more serious. You need to have a job, improve your career, and so on – to be grown up. To be honest, you know you stress a lot, and are probably one of those people who risks burning out at some point, but hey, as long as you keep yourself mere inches from fame, that's OK, right? You are just a person who wants a lot out of life.

THE CARETAKER - ROBIN

"I cannot talk about my real feelings - then no one will like me"

Contrary to the others, you never planned to end up working in theatre. But you did, mostly thanks to them, even if they don't know it.

You are the oldest of four brother and sisters. Your mother and father weren't bad, they were just... absent. Dad left your family when you were around ten. It was unclear what your mother did, but she wasn't really around. She had her problems with work, with finding a new man, etc. You listened and comforted her, and she often wondered aloud how she would have gotten along without you. This also meant that you often took care of your brothers and sisters; from a young age you practiced caring for others.

Others often describe you as a sweet person, as caring and nice. You see yourself as shy and would like to find more room to accomplish your goals. That's why you attended the theatre school where you met Alex and Kim. You had taken theatre classes in high school, and enjoyed them. You liked being someone else for a while, vacationing from your considerate self.

The theatre school was a boarding school, but since your mother had met a new man, and your brothers and sister were quite grown up, you felt you could go. And your brother told you to "get the hell out of the house" for a while, and to do something for yourself. He actually filled out the papers as well, if you are going to be honest. And then you passed the audition! You smile at the memory; it was so long ago.

In the boarding school you ended up in the same room as Alex and Kim. You immediately liked them. They were free, and had different visions and ideas about what to do with their lives. The three of you did small theatre pieces and talked a lot about everything. It felt like a good family, and you often miss that time.

For the theatre pieces all three of you talked about the idea, but you usually wrote it down. You liked that, writing. Sometimes you still do that, nothing big or fancy, just for fun. Of course you would never show your pieces to anyone, they are just for you. It was always better when the three of you wrote together, and you hope that you have time to write again this weekend in the summer house, like you used to.

After leaving the school, of course, the three of you couldn't be as tight anymore. You totally understand that. You continued doing some small theatre pieces together, but then other things took over. You started studying pedagogy and eventually ended up a theatre teacher. Sometimes you coach child actors that Kim and other send to you. You like that -- it's fun. Generally you like taking care of others, so working with kids suits you fine.

You've always been the person others confide in. You are a good listener and always want the best for others. You bought chocolate for Alex after the latest break-up, and you gave Kim a mix-tape to listen to while Kim was worried about being accepted in to

the theatre producer degree program. Which of course Kim was; of course, you knew she would be. Some people have this ability to succeed in what they want and Kim has that; it's something you admire Kim for. Of course you all still stay in touch, and both Kim and Alex call you often, especially if they need to talk about something.

About a year ago you started fainting, and feeling really tired. You couldn't explain it. You slept and you slept, and it wouldn't go away. Kim told you to slow down, that you probably were stressed, maybe hitting the wall. You lost some weight as well – that part was mostly nice, since you could finally fit into some cool old clothes. It was probably just a phase, so you went on with your life.

Then you got really sick with the flu, and went to the doctor, who performed many tests on you. Long story short, you had cancer. Leukemia. Very advanced. You hate to take up extra space with this disease of yours, to get this extra focus on you, but the doctor has only given you a 10-20% chance of surviving the next couple of months. He also offered you a bunch of nasty treatments. You decided to do the things you really wanted, then sign in to the hospital and let them hit you with their best shot. Maybe you'll make it out alive.

So you called up Kim and asked if you could go to the old cabin, where you'd all been so many times before. Kim said, "I have to work," of course, but you said it was for old times sake and Kim agreed. Then you persuaded Alex to tag along, even though Alex always wants to keep everything open until later. But eventually you convinced Alex as well. You knew that's how it would happen.

But you won't tell them about this silly disease of yours. You want one last weekend with everything as it used to be. Everybody should be happy, just as it was when you were a family back at the theatre school. You'll write small plays; you'll have fun and talk all night. Kim will tell you all about some dream projects, and Alex will talk about that latest partner. And you'll listen, comfort them, and just be happy. You do not, under any circumstances, want to burden them with your disease, or even acknowledge its presence. The doctor has given you pills to make you just like normal. Sure, you'll still have extra bruises and feel more tired, but you don't need to put any extra focus on that do you?

That is how you want it: one this last weekend, just like old times.