



The Kick Inside
GAME MASTERS
BOOKLET

The Kick Inside consists of three indirectly connected stories, with four players in each and is played out in four different acts. All stories are played through all four acts.

The game is for 12 players and one or more gamemasters. In a pinch the gamemasters can also double as players since the game really doesn't play well with less than 12 players. The characters are 6 females and 6 males. Playing a character of a different gender should be no problem for mature players.

Apart from this booklet, there is a Players' Booklet, and a couple of labels used for marking different areas of the gaming location. Print one copy for each player. To play The Kick Inside you also need ample space (at least 30 square meters) and a roll of masking tape. The game area will be marked on the floor – with tape. If you've seen von Trier's movie *Dogville*, you know what to expect.

It is essential that all gamemasters read the Players' Booklet, which contains all the story lines and characters. We have deliberately omitted all such information from the Game Master Booklet. If you haven't read the Players' Booklet yet, do so now, or much of the following will make little sense to you.

If you feel that there are things that you're unsure of how they work in this game, we suggest that you go with the interpretation that fits you the best. If it works for you, it works for the players.

Key Concept: Surrealism

While The Kick Inside is not in itself a surrealistic game, it borrows some dream-like elements: while our four characters – Agnes, Marcus, Olivia and Thomas – are the same people in different parts in life, all three stories nonetheless take place in the contemporary now. Also, the cabin is identical in all three stories but represents different, unrelated places.

Simply ask the players to accept this if they question it. Metaphysical explanations are not needed to enjoy a good story, nor for playing characters faithfully. There is no hidden meaning with this arrangement, just the convenience of the story.

Before the Players Arrive

Construct the house using marking tape (see backside of the booklet). Tape the room sheets on the floor, somewhere near the entrances to the rooms. Use whatever you have for furniture. For instance, three chairs could easily be a sofa. A fireplace in the living room and maybe a small kitchen table facing the garden is nice as well.

When the Players Have Arrived

Give each player a copy of the Players' Booklet and cast the characters. Ask everyone to first read their own character, then the other characters in the same generation and finally all other versions of the character. Remaining characters can be read at leisure. The gamemaster should be prepared to answer questions, they will come.

Next, explain to the players how the house works: that tape can neither be crossed by you, the characters nor the players. Walk through the house together with the players and talk about each room almost like you are selling them a piece of real estate property. Tell them that each generation has two locations that “belongs to them”. When physically present in those locations, the players of that generation will always be their characters. In any other location, they will be ghosts (see below). The toilet does not belong to any generation. Place a chair there if you have a spare.

Be sure not to walk through walls, and make sure the players aren't either; this is a good time to start treating the tape markers to get a good routine going.

Point out the room labels adjacent the “door openings” on the floor. Each has a word connected to it. This word is meant as input to the events in the room, not as a constraint or limitation. If a player gets a vibe, inspiration, etc. from the word, then she should roll with it.

Act One: Shelters

The first act introduces the game's three story arcs: “The House”, “Summer Lodgings” and “Cabin Fever”. Each generation has its own story arc, which are clearly marked in the Players' Booklet.

The players will take turns playing scenes from the different story arcs described in the Players' Booklet. The gamemaster will cut between them, and might cut in the middle of a scene. When the gamemaster “cuts back” again, players need not take off from exactly the same spot where we left off. The players make that call themselves.

Between the cuts, if necessary, the gamemaster might move the story forward, set the scene for what we are about to see etc., depending on the circumstances. A brief statement, like “And then there was the time when Agnes threatened to file for a divorce” introduces a lot of stuff. Another approach is to be vague and insinuating, like talking about how every relationship will have one big crisis, where someone is backed into a corner and forced to give an ultimatum. If the players are clearly going somewhere with a story, it might be a good idea to let them do that on their own, and not steal their thunder by talking about things they have not yet introduced but that you suspect is coming up.

Instruct the players to place themselves in the following locations:

- The four characters from “The House” in the Garden.
- The four characters from “Summer Lodgings” in the Hall, as close to the main entrance (the connection between the Hall and the Garden) as possible.
- Marcus from “Cabin Fever” in a chair in the kitchen, next to the Garden.
- The other characters from “Cabin Fever” in the kitchen entrance (the connection between the Kitchen and the Hall).

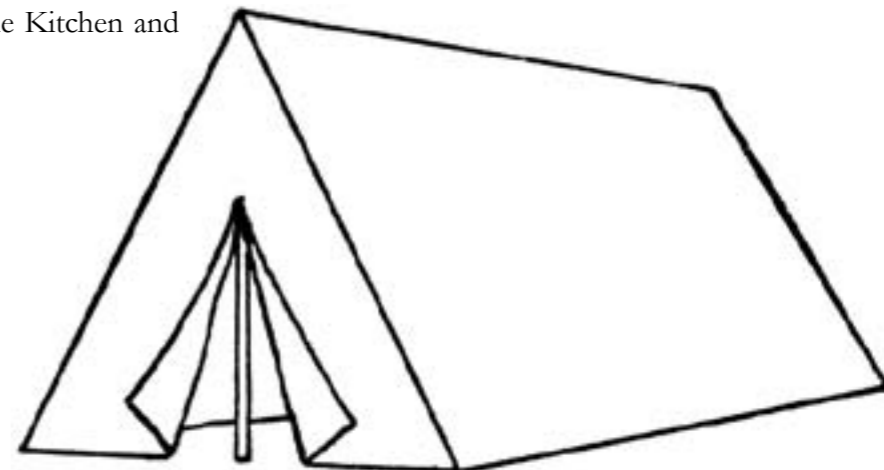
In the first act, the stories are played one at the time. Instruct the players that are not currently playing to be focused and find a posture that belongs to the character, not the player. Tell them that the scenes that they are about to play will end the instant one of the player leaves the current area. While this means that it's possible to end each of these scenes in about 5 seconds, ask your players to hold out for 5 minutes.

Also tell the players that you will talk between the scenes during the first act. You will do a little narration between the scenes. It's only when a narration is finished that a story gets to play. Use your own words to set up the scenes, based on the information in the Players' Booklet.

The first scene is from “The House”. The teenagers probably want to rush in so use your gamemastering to be a moral voice. As soon as a character rushes into the house, end the scene, then move the teenagers to the Living Room (through the Hall) where they can watch the other scenes.

The second scene is from “Summer Lodgings”. A Hall is often a place you don't stay in very long and so this is going to be tricky. This scene also has a different kind of energy than the first scene - there's neither action nor personal drama - so it's quite ok to let this scene be about nothing. When the scene ends, move the two pairs to the Bedroom (through the Living room) from where they watch the final scene.

The third and final scene of the first act is from “Cabin Fever”. Marcus will already be sitting by the kitchen table when the others come in. This scene is all about personal drama, the gamemastering should emphasize this by stirring up emotions (primarily Agnes'). When the players end the scene, move the elders to the Shed (through the Hall and the Garden).



Act Two: Expectations/Disappointments

Instead of taking turns at playing, act two is played out with all stories happening in parallel. Thus, the players will learn what it is like to play characters whose pasts and presents unfold simultaneously in adjacent rooms. Instruct the players to sometimes lay a bit low, so that they have time to listen in on what the others are doing.

- The players should at the end of the first act be in the following positions:
- The four characters from “The House” should be in the Living room.
- The four characters from “Sommer Lodgings” should be in the Bedroom.
- The four characters from “Cabin Fever” should be in the Shed.

Tell the players that all stories will be played out in parallel rather than in turns. Also tell them that the act will play for 15 minutes. Then present the set-up for all scenes outlined in the Players’ Booklet. Use your own words to re-cap and narrate. Don’t rush it, take your time.

Act Three: The Kick Inside

In act three, the game will start using a technique called “ghosts”. When a player enters a room belonging to another generation (or the toilet), she will stop acting her characters and become a ghost. Ghosts have two

main functions in the game: they allow a player to explore the inner play of her character as she experiences its past or future played by other players; and they allow giving input across generations that highlight how the characters have changed, not changed, etc. Or simply just watch.

A ghost can whisper, hold a monologue, touch other players, try to block their movements, etc. The other players will be affected by this, but their characters will not see, hear or feel anything.

The ghost player retains her character’s personality in the sense that it may have an agenda or try to send a message.

This style of play can be hard for beginners to grasp if they haven’t seen anything similar before. In our experience, these things are much harder to explain than do, and often, what takes 30 minutes to explain takes 30 seconds to demonstrate. Some players will propose very clear signals to avoid misunderstandings. Accept any such ideas – as soon as a player has tried, she will realise that such signals are not needed, and their use will wear off quickly. Ensure the players that what now might seem vague will become clear very soon. They will simply have to trust you.

If it feels reasonable, we feel it is a good idea for players to focus on the younger/older versions of their character, when ghosting.

There are no instructions for where to start in the third act. A player might even start out as a ghost. Some time has passed since the end of the second act, but not too long. This act should run for 90 to 120 minutes. It’s the main act of the game.



Act Four: The Kids are All Right

The last act is short but sweet and very surreal. In a very unspecified dream-logic, all characters may now interact with all other characters and move about freely. For example, this means that there might be three differently aged Agnes’ in the same room at the same time, having a conversation.

The goal of the fourth act is to offer opportunity for catharsis or some kind of closure. The different versions of the characters may finally say things to each other that they might have wanted all along, or something else. Tell them that they have between five or ten minutes of this before the act concludes and the game ends. There is no specific end scene or any special state that must be reached when the game ends. Cut it when it feels right, and clearly state that the game is over.

Have some kind of debrief, talk about the game, let the players get some closure now that their characters have had some. Make sure it does not degrade too much into

“let me tell you about my character”, and clearly mark when the “official debrief” has ended and it is OK to leave.

Music, lighting and pacing

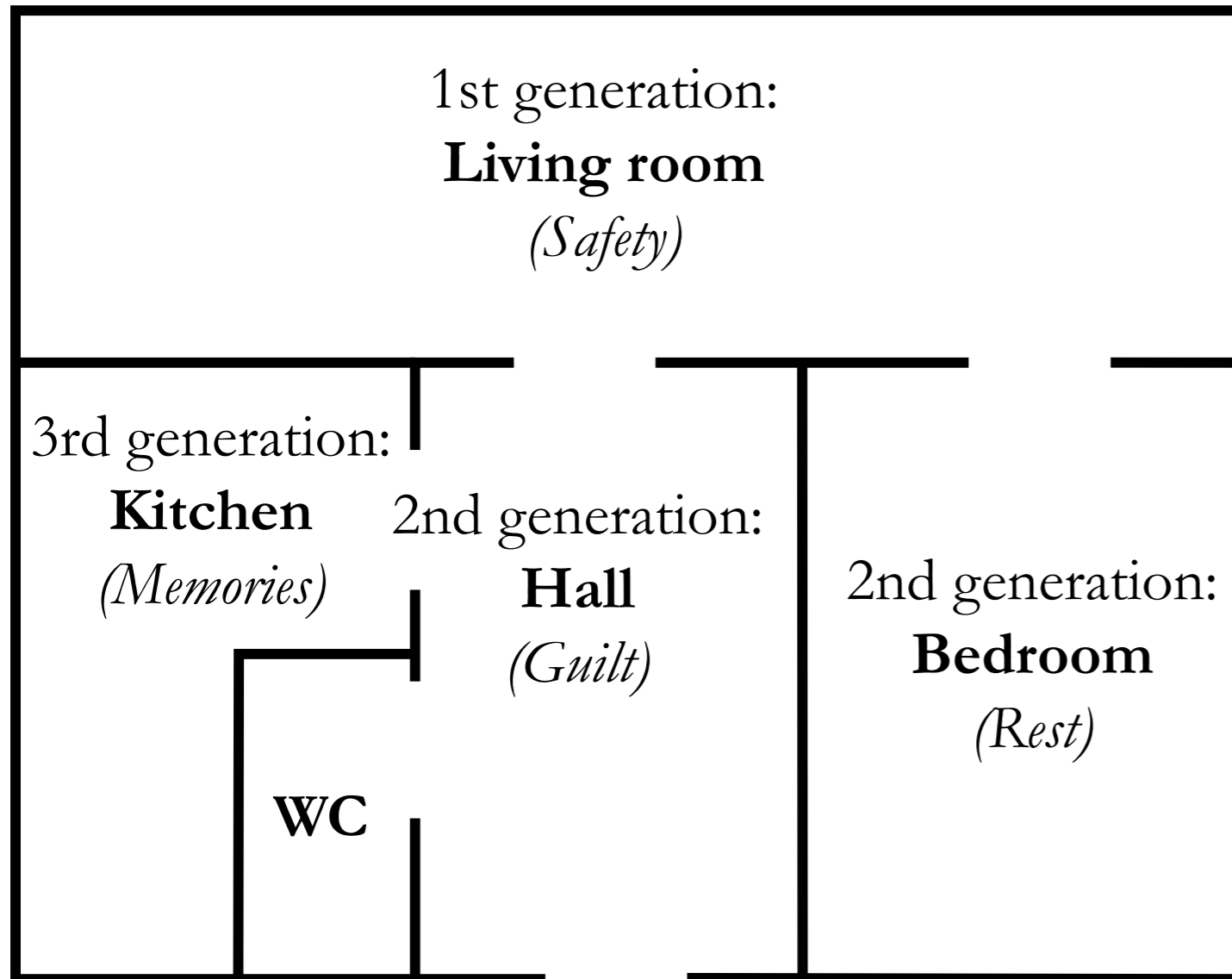
Background music is a powerful tool for getting the players into the right mood. Don’t just casually throw a playlist together, but choose wisely. It is not a bad idea to have different musical themes for the different acts. The first act can be played without music. (Our music of choice is anything by Clint Mansell.)

Lighting can be very effective as well, but premier enough light for people to stay awake over very forceful spots in an otherwise dark room. Lights of different colour and warmth can be used in a way similar to mood music.

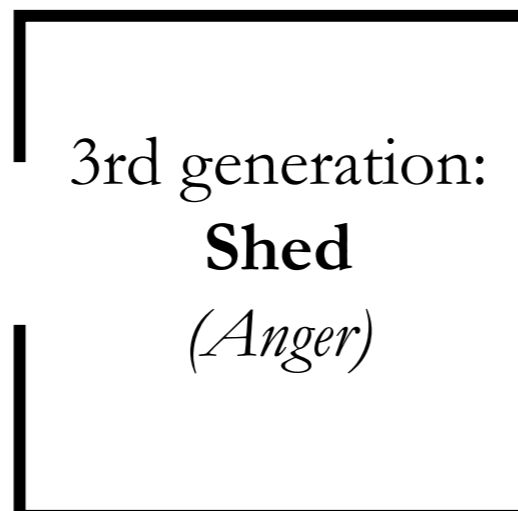
Music and lighting can also be used to end acts. The signal to end an act should be as strong as possible – preferable a pitch black room and a high rumbling sound.



House and environments



1st generation:
Garden
(Worries)



Use tape to mark the house. Use either the floor plan on the other side or a floor plan of your own design - see to it that you make sure to not directly connect areas that belong to the same generation if you choose to design your own tape home. Also, don't forget the floorsheets.

Use whatever materials you have to mark furniture. The rest of the house is made up of pure fantasy.

A short description of what to expect in each room:

Living room: A fire-place. Dry wood. A sofa (a bed-sofa actually). A TV that only shows static (because of the change between analog and digital broadcasts).

Kitchen: A chair and a small kitchen table by the "window" (next to the Garden). A coffee maker. A telephone jack (but no telephone). A kitchen.

Bedroom: A double bed. Closets.

Hall: Pretty barren - the hallmark of an effective hall.

Shed: A ramshackle little house, cluttered with stuff. Amongst other things an old typewriter and the telephone that used to be in the kitchen.

Garden: A lawn. Sunloungers. The garden continues past the gaming area - there is forest and water nearby. A car - sometimes.

