



The Kick Inside
PLAYERS' BOOKLET

The Kick Inside is a scenario about different stages in life and how we cope with changes. Major themes are identity, choices and acceptance.

We get to meet four people - Agnes, Marcus, Olivia and Thomas - and follow them through three different stages in life. Three parallel, separate stories, each running through four acts. All stories take place in cabins that are curiously alike.

This is the Players Booklet. Each player needs one. If you want to you can access this booklet at any time during the game but you do not need to know it by heart. The important thing is not to get all nuances right but for you to explore your character.

MARTIN BRODÉN • KRISTOFFER LINDH • 2010

WITH ADDITIONAL IDEAS BY
PETTER KARLSSON AND JOEL ÖSTLUND

Also many thanks to Tobias Wrigstad and to the many playtesters
at A Week In Stockholm 2010 and Knutpunkt 2010

Storylines

The four acts

The game is played in four acts. All three stories run parallel through these four acts.

In Act I, the three scenes are played one at a time, youngest generation first. These scenes are rather short but try to get them going for 5 minutes.

In Act II, all players play at the same time. This act should take approximately 15 minutes to play.

Act III is the main act. Players can enter scenes played by the other generations as ghosts. This act should take about 90-120 minutes to play. At the end of the act the boundaries between generations starts to blur.

Act IV is the closing act, the climax. The boundaries between the three generations are dissolved and all characters interact freely. This act should take less than 15 minutes to play.

1st generation: The House

Thomas, Marcus, Agnes and Olivia are a gang of teenagers that has known each other for a couple of years. They share a nerd bond – they all love speculative fiction like fantasy and science fiction as well as the occasional gaming.

One summer they are out camping. They've been out for a couple of days when, one evening, they are surprised by a storm that rips their tent apart. Marcus remembers seeing a cabin a little bit up the road. They quickly scramble to the cabin but when they get there they discover that no one is home.

Act I: Shelters

Olivia feels on the door and it's unlocked but she dares not get inside. Thomas feels unsure about the morals of breaking in into someone else's house. Agnes is wet and sour. The teens have an argument on the lawn, in the pouring rain, until someone loses his or her senses and just goes through the door.

Act II: Expectations/Disappointments

To their surprise, the teenagers find some dry wood and a fireplace in the living room. They are all soaking wet. No one is hungry or thirsty, but they're all kind of tired and the warmth of the fire is cosy.

Act III: The Kick Inside

When the teenagers wake up they're still in the house, scattered around the house. The sun is shining. Slowly, the humidity is emancipating. No one really feels like leaving. Even though they should. They stay just a little while longer .

Act IV: The Kids Are Alright

Played together with the other groups.

2nd generation: Summer Lodgings

Olivia and Thomas have been struggling to have a baby for several years. Olivia has had some kind of strange uterus disease and has a lot of problem getting pregnant. She must go through tiring and bothersome medical procedures that don't even work. The procedures are expensive and consume much of the couple's energy – what if they can't get kids?

To get away from it all for the weekend they decide to rent a cabin together with another couple. Their friends Agnes and Marcus – who just had their first child. This weekend is their first time away from their daughter Liv (Agnes mother has agreed to babysit for the weekend) since she was born a couple of months ago.

Act I: Shelters

Suddenly they're there. The cabin smells of cabin. The luggage is in the hall with them – they've packed lightly so no one has brought very much. But one thing will have to be decided right away – it turns out that “two double beds” is in reality one double bed (in the bedroom) and a bed sofa (in the living room).

Act II: Expectations/Disappointments

They're all in the bedroom. One of the couples sleep in this room – they've already started to unpack, their suitcases on the bed. Maybe they would like some time alone but the other couple is there as well, talking about trivialities such as dinner and maybe cleaning out the cabin – it turns out that the previous occupants haven't done their share of cleaning.

Act III: The Kick Inside

The weekend passes. It's nice to get away from jobs and the city but there's something brewing under the surface.

Act IV: The Kids Are Alright

Played together with the other groups.

3rd generation: Cabin Fever

Late in life, Marcus finds himself lost and confused. Life's just gone by him little by little while he was trying to do live it. He finds himself drawn to the cabin that he and Agnes still own, where they used to spend the summers with their daughters, the girls Liv and Embla, when the kids were growing up.

That summer, he goes to the cabin alone for a couple of weeks. He disconnects the telephone. After two weeks without her husband, Agnes starts to worry. She promised she wouldn't but not getting through, she fears the worst. She convinces their old friends Thomas and Olivia to go with her in the car out to the cabin.

Act I: Shelters

As Agnes, Olivia and Thomas storms into the kitchen, Marcus sits by the window. He's seen the car coming, of course, but hasn't gotten up from his chair. Thomas and Olivia are the stable persons here, and they want both Agnes and Marcus to be happy. Both Marcus and Agnes have guilt, though – Marcus for unplugging the telephone cord, Agnes for breaking a promise.

Act II: Expectations/Disappointments

Marcus takes the others to the shed. He shows them that amongst all debris he made himself a writer's corner. An old typewriter from the 70-ies stands on the smallest table ever. A sheet of paper is tucked into the typewriter but there are only a couple of sentences written on it and all the other sheets on the table are empty.

Act III: The Kick Inside

Marcus still doesn't want to get home and Agnes refuses to leave him. Thomas and Olivia, being the stable couple, follow the others through memory lane, hoping to get their old friends back.

Act IV: The Kids Are Alright

Played together with the other groups.

Generation 1:

“The House”

Thomas

Torn between his ideals and his needs. He pictures himself as a knight in shining armor, never backing down from his high morals. But at the same time his thoughts have turned more and more carnal and sexual lately. He has a hard time hiding his love for Olivia but his high standard denies him to express it. If he told her his feelings, would she feel threatened? Would she hate him for it? Would she speak to him again, ever? She's so delicate. What if he scares her away?

“Can we really break into a person's home?” It's a question that Thomas has difficulty to answer. His high morals give a clear answer – the rules in society are there for a reason. It's a question of respecting the property of others – this cabin is probably a sacred place to the people living here. Probably. But things are becoming unbearable out here. Sooner or later he has to accept that whomever this cabin belongs to probably have a heart and wouldn't let four youngsters catch pneumonia.

Thomas' Relations

Olivia: I wish she would love me, I know I would make her happy.

Agnes: I think she thinks I love her. But she cares too much how other people view her.

Marcus: He's the man. I wish I could be as carefree as him.

Olivia

She can stare at a flower or a bird on hours at end. She never gets tired of the little things in life and sees a miracle in the smallest insect or snowflake. Do the others find her boring? Is she too old for her age? Sometimes she feels that the others doesn't see her as a friend, but rather accepts her and lets her come along. She makes friends with boys easier than girls for some reason. It has always been that way. Perhaps she is one of the boys to them?

She wants to feel loved, but love doesn't seem to be coming her way. Thomas is so sweet, but it's clear he has no interest in her, other than as a buddy. And she is OK with that, she'd rather have friends than not have them, and being alone in life has its advantages. Though she hates herself for being so scared of everything and everyone and would really like to change.

Olivia's Relations

Agnes: I envy her, but still I'm glad I'm not like her. Weird.

Thomas: I think I love him. But I don't think he loves me so why bother?

Marcus: He treats me just as he would treat any other buddy. I like that.

Agnes

Agnes comes from a good home, at least that's how she sees things. Agnes' parents have always supported her. Always. It's just that... well, there's just really nothing to revolt to. Her older siblings, a couple of years older than her, are all just as successful as her parents and walking in their footsteps. But she's always been a bit of an afterthought for her parents. She would like to do something different. It's just so hard to break family patterns. Especially when they are not so pronounced.

Open-minded and single. Likes to read books but considers herself social enough. Has no problem with being classified as a geek girl. Would like to study “something” at the university, preferably a modern language – maybe study abroad? Comfortable with being single, has high standards on a partner due to a somewhat romantic view of life. Not impossible standards though, she is curious after all.

Agnes' Relations

Olivia: I really like Olivia. She's a bit introverted but I hope she will open up soon.

Thomas: His standards are too high, but that is far better than too low.

Marcus: I feel that he is the glue holding this group together.

Marcus

It was Marcus' idea to go camping. Without him, what would this gang be? He often feels himself as the engine in the group – a feeling that makes him proud but at the same time annoys him. Why aren't the others coming with initiatives? Are they taking him for granted? Don't they care? What would happen if he stopped, would the group crumble? For Marcus, the gang is important. He has an easy time making friends but *these* friends are important to him. He likes to be part of this group and he'd like the others to feel the same. This thing they share, it's special.

Marcus wants life to always be like this – amongst friends, being free. It makes him feel safe, secure. He dreams about finding the right girl and he secretly has crushes on both Agnes and Olivia. But he's casual about it. Marcus lives a happy-go-lucky life. Sometimes he feels guilty when he compares his, rather easy, life with the others', and he wonders if it is his lack of darkness that makes it hard for him to connect with them.

Marcus' Relations

Olivia: If she understands that Thomas and me both love her, she is hiding it really well.

Agnes: She's so cool. I wish I were as cool as her.

Thomas: He's my bro. He's my moral beacon.



Generation 2: “Summer Lodgings”

Thomas

The guilt is eating Thomas from the inside. Why can't he be the one who has to go to the doctor's once a week? Why doesn't he have to take the hormone shots that give you pimples and mood swings? It would feel nice to be able to be the one who could do the sacrifices. Now, the only thing he can do is to watch. He feels so helpless.

At work they want him to be the responsible one. He can feel it. He tries his best to be that as well. He sometimes gets mad at his co-workers but he never shouts at them. It's important for him to be civilized. He's frustrated that people aren't trying as hard as he is, that they just see work as work, that they don't have morals and high expectations, that they never go that extra mile. One day Thomas will be their boss but right now it just feels good to be with friends, a long way from work.

Thomas' Relations

Olivia: I love her, but sometimes I can't stand her. I feel so guilty for that.

Agnes: I heard she got her child by accident. It provokes me, but it's not their fault, I know that.

Marcus: Still the man, I wish we could meet more often.

Olivia

When on the hormones, Olivia can be cruel. Nothing is good enough for her and everything Thomas does is wrong. Then the guilt hits her and everything just gets worse and she can't even talk to him. She can't stand it but the thought of never becoming a mother is much worse. It's a miracle that Thomas still wants to stay with her and she's always afraid that he might leave her. In a way, she's lucky to have him but it's so difficult to show that.

The trip to the cabin was her idea. Maybe spending time with Agnes and Marcus is precisely what they need. They get to share their thoughts with people who have gone through the procedure of getting pregnant and giving birth and this will give Olivia and Thomas some perspective on things. Agnes is like a sister to Olivia, but secretly Olivia is also envious. It's hard to see someone not even trying to get pregnant get pregnant. But Olivia must not show her envy and that is hard too, of course. There's so much going through her right now.

Olivia's Relations

Agnes: I wish I could be happy for her, but I can't.

Thomas: I can't understand how he puts up with me. I love him so much for that, why can't I show it?

Marcus: Just as care-free as always, he makes me feel bad for being sad.



Agnes

Agnes' pregnancy was accidental but welcome. Being a mother is a feeling unlike any other. She knew that, of course, before her child was born but knowing is one thing, feeling is another. She is very proud, of course. She was the one to carry the life within her and she was the one giving birth.

But right now Agnes' mother has agreed to be baby sitter for the weekend. Agnes constantly struggles with the feeling of wanting to call her mother but she has promised herself not to. And she trusts her mother – the model Agnes herself tries to be to her child. Being suddenly freed from her responsibilities brings forward a younger version of herself. Not that she would have made any other decisions could she go back in time.

Agnes' Relations

Olivia: She must be going through a really hard time, I feel guilty that it was so easy for me.

Thomas: He'll be a boss someday, he's really going places.

Marcus: How could I miss that he was the one for me? I love him.

Marcus

Life is sweet. Marcus sometimes feels that he couldn't possibly have deserved this life – not that he has any bad consciousness about it but, you know, aren't you supposed to struggle, at least a little, to get this? When he was younger he had placed Agnes on a pedestal, believing that she could never even consider dating a guy like him, and then suddenly, they were a couple. There wasn't even a hint of resistance.

Marcus is very happy and very proud of Liv. Marcus knew that he would like a kid with Agnes somewhere down the line and they've discussed it but there were never any timetable and how do you know when it's time? You make time; that's how it works and there are oodles of time anyway. Agnes had to do all the hard work so Marcus' role was just to be supportive, and that's Marcus specialty.

Marcus' Relations

Olivia: I know it's the hormones, but she can be really unbearable at times.

Agnes: She's just so lovely. I can't find anything wrong with her.

Thomas: He seems to be able to put up with anything. In his shoes, I would break.

Generation 3: “Cabin Fever”

Thomas

Change is scary. But scary isn't always bad. The kids turned out to be really decent people. Thomas is in the process of finding his new role in his children's life, he is no longer the care giver and protector, but more an equal, it is as natural for him to call them for comfort as the other way around. But sometimes he wonders if that's a sign of healthy relationship to your kids or not.

Thomas and Olivia

Olivia and Thomas have rediscovered each other. Their son Albert is studying abroad and their daughter Viola works at a drug store. Before the kids moved out, Olivia and Thomas were parents – now they can be lovers again. In a way, they are the same as when they first met, but in a way not at all. When they were young they feared that they would become boring when they got old, but life is as adventurous now as it was back then. Olivia and Thomas are planning a trip to Mongolia, and they think it would be a great idea if Agnes and Marcus joined them.

Thomas' Relations

Olivia: We found each other again. I'm so glad we didn't give up.

Agnes: She doesn't seem to handle aging very well. People should learn to just roll with it.

Marcus: What happened to the old Marcus? He used to be so fun. I'll help him get back on track.

Olivia

Things turned out pretty good in the end, didn't it? She would really like to meet her younger self telling her that things wouldn't turn out so bad as she thought. Both her kids have moved out, gotten lives of their own. Sure, there was a time she missed having them around, but it has made Thomas' and her relationship evolve, they can meet as equals, and it's really nice to see how well they turned out. Change isn't always bad – the new Olivia is not the same as the old, maybe not better, but definitely happier.

Thomas and Olivia

Olivia and Thomas have rediscovered each other. Their son Albert is studying abroad and their daughter Viola works at a drug store. Before the kids moved out, Olivia and Thomas were parents – now they can be lovers again. In a way, they are the same as when they first met, but in a way not at all. When they were young they feared that they would become boring when they got old, but life is as adventurous now as it was back then. Olivia and Thomas are planning a trip to Mongolia, and they think it would be a great idea if Agnes and Marcus joined them.

Olivia's Relations

Agnes: She is now like I was in my thirties, I can relate to her.

Thomas: It feels just like when we first got together, it's so awesome.

Marcus: Come on! Don't be so damn passive, life is what you make it, so make it something.



Agnes

A couple of years ago Agnes' last sibling died. People die all the time. That's supposed to be a natural thing. Agnes doesn't fear death. But surviving them all gives her a feeling of guilt. They die and she gets to live. Her children are grown up now, they live their own lives and don't depend on her being there anymore, other than the occasional baby-sitting. She's proud of her grand children but, well... that's just the point, isn't it, the generations will just keep on coming and that's all there is to it. A sense of meaninglessness comes to her.

It's not that she doesn't like her life or what has become of her; it's just that lately she's been losing focus in life. There is nothing that she's done with her life that she regrets but she wants to find back to the sense of fulfillment and the meaningfulness somehow. And she couldn't cope with any more loss.

Agnes' Relations

Olivia: I know she really deserved this, but I can't help being jealous of her.

Thomas: I like him, but he provokes me at times. He feels he is flawless, I just want him to show some weakness.

Marcus: I still love him but I feel that I don't know him anymore. I can't remember how he was before the kids.

Marcus

On one hand, Marcus realizes that he has all the time in the world now that he doesn't have to think about their grown up kids, or work, but within him he also realizes that most of his life has already been lived, that time is running out and the only thing he's leaving behind so far are his children. He'd like to leave more. Some sort of lasting impression on this world that he's not ready to leave.

He loves the cabin though. There is certain tranquility to the place that soothes him. He likes the way that this place never changes – the smell, the old wood slowly rotting away and the pictures, in his head, of the children playing around. He'd like to spend the rest of his days here. Now, if only he could leave something behind. When he goes out to the cabin he makes room for the typewriter in the shed. He's going to write his memoirs but so far not many words have been written.

Marcus' Relations

Olivia: She turned a 180 on us. Now she's all happy. Good for her.

Agnes: It seems we are drifting apart, and it's my fault. I need to fix this.

Thomas: If he could take it a bit easier, things would be just perfect.

