

Mama: A Fastaval 2022 Synopsis

A Free-form scenario for 2 players and 1 facilitator

Playing Time: 4 hours

By Kat Jones

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Kat Jones (she/they) is a queer Latina game designer from the US. Kat has attended Fastaval sporadically since 2010. She co-authored *Uwe Boll's Big Gay Wedding* which was accepted to Fastaval in 2014. She and Julia B. Ellingboe have co-authored several scenarios together including *#WeAreNecropolis* which is played on Discord, and *The Sleepover* which was recently adapted for play in Second Life. *#TheRealColdtown*, a live action version of *#WeAreNecropolis*, premiered at BlackBox Copenhagen in 2019. Kat co-authored two entries in *Honey & Hot Wax: An Anthology of Erotic Games*.

Description

This scenario is about vampires, mothers, and the overlaps between them. Players create stories centered around themes related to vampirism and motherhood and play through scenes that focus on vampires and mothers making hard choices: a vampire sire has a fraught meeting with their vampire childe, a vampire contemplates abortion, a vampire meets with their elderly human child. While each scene uses new characters and settings, players will generate two common themes that will be carried through the scenario highlighting particular aspects of vampires and mothers that they want to explore.

This scenario is meant to be emotional, intimate, and intense, but with a literary focus that highlights the themes tying the distinct scenes together, rather than a deep immersion into the stories of particular characters throughout the entire scenario.

This scenario should appeal to players who enjoy thinking on their feet, playing for short bursts of emotional intensity, moving quickly through different characters and emotions, playing with literary devices, and intimate scenarios with few players.

This scenario will require a facilitator who is comfortable taking an active role in guiding scenes, facilitating character creation and scene setting, pushing for emotional intensity, and playing with literary devices.

Notes for the Facilitator

The Role of the Facilitator:

The role of the facilitator in this scenario is to aid the players in exploring core issues they've chosen at the beginning of the game, as well as the additional elements they generate during gameplay. The facilitator may need to take a more active role in character creation or scene setting depending on how comfortable the players are with improvisation.

Vampire Lore: Let the Lore work for you

This scenario is about vampires, but it uses vampires as a metaphor for exploring other issues such as family, mortality, responsibility, etc. It's important that discussions of vampire powers and lore not come to dominate the game.

It might be useful to establish some facts about vampires before playing the first scene, if they don't come up during character creation or scene setting, but always tie the lore to the Core Themes chosen for your game.

If it seems fitting that vampires cannot go out during the day because one of the themes of your game is restriction, then establish that. If, however, your themes are beauty and vengeance, it may be fine that your vampires are able to be out during the day and move easily in human society.

The players and facilitators should feel free to introduce lore that might help to further enhance the themes. For instance, in a game with the theme of intimacy, one of the players introduced the lore that vampires smell each other in greeting.

Questions may come up about vampire pregnancy or child vampires, depending on which scenes you choose to play. Again, let the lore be determined by the themes you've chosen, let the lore enhance play rather than feeling beholden to any one set of ideas about vampires. And feel free to re-establish the lore between scenes. Play for what will be most juicy rather than feeling constrained by ideas of consistency.

Playing the Game:

- 1) Introduce the game and how the game will play. (Page 1)
 - 2) Generate themes to be used in the game. (Page 4)
 - 3) Go over collaborative play and safety tools. (Page 5-6)
 - 4) Generate characters and setting for the Opening Scene. (Page 7-8)
 - 5) Play Opening Scene
 - 6) Choose the next scenes to play. Veto any scenes you don't want to play. (Page 9)
 - 7) Generate characters and setting for the next scene.
 - Scene A is on Page 10-12
 - Scene B is on Page 13-14
 - Scene C is on Page 15-16
 - 8) Take a 5-10 minute break to reflect on the next scene.
 - 9) Play next scene.
 - 10) Repeat steps 6-9 depending for the other scenes you've chosen to play.
- ** (Start the Closing Scene when you have 1 hour left of your slot). ****
- 11) Answer questions for the Closing Scene. (Page 17-18)
 - 12) Make sure to leave 20-30 minutes for debrief. (Page 19)

Choosing Themes:

Start the game by discussing some key themes from media about vampires and motherhood that the players want to explore. Think about themes that come out of narratives about vampires and mothers, rather than traits of either vampires or mothers. Some example themes for vampires are: Immortality, isolation, beauty. Some example themes for motherhood are: selflessness, responsibility, unconditional love.

You should aim to generate an initial list of 3 positive themes and 3 negative themes about vampires, and 3 positive themes and 3 negative themes about mothers. It's okay if these categories get a bit blurry, some themes can be interpreted as positive or negative, and that will make for a richer game. For example, selflessness may be seen as a positive theme in certain narratives about mothers, but other narratives may focus on the harmful aspects of selflessness. Or in narratives about vampires, immortality has been portrayed as both a blessing and a curse.

Go in a circle so that everyone has an opportunity to generate at least one theme in each category. You want everyone to have an equal voice in this process.

Once you're satisfied with your list, the players and facilitator should collectively choose one positive and one negative theme (or two themes that can have both positive and negative interpretations) to be the guiding themes for the whole game. Make sure that these are themes that players are excited about and feel comfortable examining in play. Give them the opportunity to strike certain themes from the list. Let players know that just because they generated a particular theme doesn't mean they have to use it.

Starting Play: Collaborate and Improvise

This is a game in which much of the story world, characters, and fiction are collaboratively generated. This means that players may make decisions about a character they are not playing. It's important that players understand this before play starts.

To enable to collaborative process it is a good idea to discuss the concept of "Yes, and..." or "No, but..." and to establish some safety tools to use during the game.

Encourage players to go along with suggestions made by their co-player and facilitator, but let them know they always have veto power if they really disagree with, or are uncomfortable with, something suggested.

In general, it's a good idea to establish any dynamics that players are uncomfortable with before starting a scene. For instance, a player commenting that they want their character to be dying of an unspecified, but physical rather than mental, ailment. Or another character specifying that they did not want to play the character contemplating an abortion.

The verbal commands from the Script Change tools: "pause," "rewind," or "fast forward" may also be useful here. Script Change is a series of tools that allow you to alter the content of a game. You may say "**fast forward**" if you'd like to skip over something, leaving it in the fiction, but going through it quickly. You may say "**rewind**" if you want to go back to something earlier than happened and change it to something you're more comfortable with. Finally, you may say "**pause**" to stop a scene if you want to have a conversation or check in with everyone.

The facilitator should feel able to use this veto power and the safety tools as well, in case anything emerges in play that they are uncomfortable dealing with or want to skip over. For example, a player introduces the Ancient Order of the Red Sisters but is vague about what this group will do with an infant that is donated to them. The facilitator might say that they would prefer this order trains humans to be vampire servants, rather than using the infant's blood for magical rituals.

Creating Characters

This is a game in which characters will be generated collaboratively, often through answering questions. Sometimes these questions will establish facts about the other character. The co-player always has veto power, the power to reject a fact about their character, but this should only be used when a player is strongly against the suggestion. Players should keep the attitude of “yes, and...” building off of their co-player and facilitators suggestions, unless they are strongly uncomfortable with, or do not want to play on the suggestion offered. If this happens, players should use “no, but...” to redirect the conversation, offering a counter suggestion rather than simply shutting down the dialogue.

The Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator should make sure that this process goes smoothly. Stepping in with reminders in case players seem overly cautious or overly contentious in their collaboration. They should also feel free to make suggestions if players seem to need help generating ideas but should feel free to step back if players are freely generating content.

The facilitator should remember their role is to facilitate play, rather than to push a particular set of ideas on the players. Make suggestions to see what gets players excited and pay attention to what players are saying. Make suggestions that you think will enhance their experience, draw more fully on the themes they have chosen, and lead to more impactful narratives.

Opening Scene: It's Been a Long Time

A vampire sire has a meeting with their vampire childe after a long absence.

Creating Characters:

Each character will have a Core Issue, a Character Goal for the scene.

The players will also generate Scene Outcomes and answer the scene setting questions of How long? When? Where? And Who?

Core Issue:

Each character will choose a Core Issue for their character. This Core Issue needs to be related to the Core Themes of the game.

Example: Core Themes of the game are Intimacy and Restriction. The Sire choose the core issues "Saturated"—they have already experienced everything, "What's left?"

The Childe chooses the core issue, "Is this all there is?" based on the restrictions they feel due to not being able to go out during the day or make human connections.

Character Goal:

The player should establish their *character's* goal for this scene. What do they hope to accomplish by meeting with the other vampire.

Example: The Sire is hoping to get their Childe to accompany them on their next adventure. And the Childe is hoping the Sire can give them advice about their existential crisis.

Scene Outcomes:

The scene outcomes should be the *player's* goals for the scene. This means they may directly contradict the character's goals, but they don't have to. This can also be a way to calibrate the dynamic of the scene.

For example: The Childe doesn't want to sire any vampires, but their Sire is a vampire evangelist with lots of kids. The Childe's player specifies that while this can come up in discussion, they don't want the Sire to convince the Childe to sire another vampire. The Sire's player decides they want their character to realize the loneliness that led to them meeting with their Childe.

Scene Setting Questions:

Now you want to answer the following questions to make sure everyone is on the same page before starting the scene.

How long has it been since the Sire and Childe have seen each other?

- 10 years?
- 50 years?
- Something else?

When is this scene set?

- Contemporary?
- The Past?
- In this country?
- Somewhere else?

Where are the Sire and Childe meeting?

- Somewhere public?
- Somewhere private?
- What is the significance of this location to them?

Who contacted who?

What does the Childe call their Sire? What does the Sire call their Childe?

Starting the Scene:

The facilitator should set the scene descriptively, using the answers to the earlier questions. Ask each player to describe their character and ask “How can you tell that this character is _____?” referencing the character’s Core Issue.

If you’re playing in person literally set up the scene using the furniture available to you. Ask additional questions to set the scene: who arrives first, are they early or late. And then give the players the go ahead to begin.

Facilitating the Scene:

The facilitator should gauge how involved to be in the scene by watching the players interact. If it seems like the scene is taking off, feel free to hang back. If the scene seems to be faltering, step in to offer suggestions. You can always call “pause” to check in, or “fast forward” to a more intense part of the conversation—for instance if the characters spend a long time making small talk without getting to the core issues they want to deal with, or “rewind” and restart the scene if that seems like the best approach.

You want to give the scene some time to develop and players to get a feel for their characters, but you don’t want to let the scene drag out too long. When it seems like the scene is reaching the outcomes discussed by the players don’t let it run for too much longer. If, however, one outcome is being dealt with but the other is not, feel free to intervene making suggestions or introducing elements that might help move the players towards the outcome. You can always call “pause” to remind players of the outcome if necessary.

When the scene has run its course give the players a minute to come out of character, especially if the scene was intense. Then transition to the character generation and scene setting for the next scene.

After you’ve played the Opening Scene, decide which scene to play next: A, B, or C. You may not get a chance to play through all three scenes, so choose the one that everyone is most excited to play.

Additional Scenes:

Scene A: I didn't even know I could get pregnant!

(Page 10-12)

A recently embraced vampire discovers they are pregnant. They discuss what to do about this unexpected pregnancy with their vampire sire. Will the vampire keep the pregnancy or have an abortion?

Scene B: One Happy Family?

(Page 13-14)

A vampire tries to convince a human mother to allow their (human) child to be transformed into a vampire. Will the mother agree?

Scene C: Saying Good-bye?

(Page 15-16)

A vampire meets with their human child when the child is dying of old age. What form will this meeting take?

Playing Additional Scenes

Once you have chosen a scene to play you will go through the character creation and scene setting process again. The characters in these scenes are not the same characters from the Opening Scene or to any of the other scenes. They are tied together by the two common themes of the game. If you choose you might set all the scenes in the same location or time period, but avoid re-playing characters as these scenes are meant to explore new relationships and new interpretations of the Core Themes.

When you have about an hour left of your time slot move to the Closing Scene and remember to leave 20-30 minutes for debrief before your play session ends.

Scene A: I didn't even know I could get pregnant!

A recently embraced vampire discovers they are pregnant. They discuss what to do about this unexpected pregnancy with their vampire sire. Will they keep the pregnancy or have an abortion? Remind the players of the Core Themes of the game before answering these questions.

Character Creation Questions:

Questions for the pregnant vampire:

What frightens you about raising a child as a vampire?

What do you like best about being a vampire?

What do you like least about being a vampire?

What was your relationship with your own (human) Mother like?

Questions for the vampire Sire:

What knowledge is guiding your advice?

What do you like most about being a vampire?

What do you like least about being a vampire?

What was your relationship with your own Sire like?

Character Goal:

The player should establish their *character's* goal for this scene. What do they hope to accomplish in this meeting?

Example: The childe may want practical advice on getting an abortion as a vampire. The Sire may wish to support their childe with their ancient and arcane knowledge.

Scene Outcomes:

The scene outcomes should be the *player's* goals for the scene. This means they may directly contradict the character's goals, but they don't have to. This can also be a way to calibrate the dynamic of the scene.

For Example: The childe's player does not want their character to be talked out of having an abortion, they want their character to get the knowledge and support they need. The Sire's player decides their outcome is proving they are a better Mother than the childe's human mother.

Scene Setting Questions:

Now you want to answer the following questions to make sure everyone is on the same page before starting the scene.

Where are the vampires meeting?

- A neutral location?
- A location associated with the Sire?
- A location associated with the Childe?
- Something else?

When is this scene set?

- Contemporary?
- The Past?

- In this country?
- Somewhere else?

What does the Childe call their Sire? What does the Sire call their Childe?

Does the Sire know the Childe is pregnant before this meeting?

Do this Sire and Childe meet regularly or is this a rare occurrence?

What is the dynamic between this Sire and Childe?

What are the circumstances of the pregnancy?

- This happened while the Childe was still human.
- This happened after the Childe became a vampire.
- Anything else the players want to establish:
- was the pregnancy the result of a one-night stand?
- the result of a long-term (human) relationship?
- the result of a secret tryst with another vampire?
- Something else?

Take a Break for Reflection:

Once you've created characters and answered the scene setting questions, have the players take a short 5-10 minute break. They can take a short walk, go to the bathroom, grab snacks or drinks, but they should also use this time to reflect on the new characters and scene they are going to play.

If you're running this virtually, encourage players to get up from the computer and go somewhere else during the break.

Starting the Scene:

Once everyone has returned from the break, the facilitator should set the scene descriptively, using the answers to the earlier questions.

If you're playing in person literally set up the scene using the furniture available to you. Ask any additional questions you might need to set the scene: what emotional state the characters are in, how the characters have prepared for this meeting.

And then give the players the go ahead to begin.

Facilitating the Scene:

The facilitator should gauge how involved to be in the scene by watching the players interact. If it seems like the scene is taking off, feel free to hang back. If the scene seems to be faltering, step in to offer suggestions. You can always call "pause" to check in, or "fast forward" to a more intense part of the conversation—for instance if the characters spend a long time making small talk without getting to the core issues they want to deal with, or "rewind" and restart the scene if that seems like the best approach.

You want to give the scene some time to develop and players to get a feel for their characters, but you don't want to let the scene drag out too long. When it seems like the scene is reaching the outcomes discussed by the players don't let it run for too much longer. If, however, one outcome

is being dealt with but the other is not, feel free to intervene making suggestions or introducing elements that might help move the players towards the outcome. You can always call “pause” to remind players of the outcome if necessary.

When the scene has run its course give the players a minute to come out of character, especially if the scene was intense. Then transition to the character generation and scene setting for the next scene.

Scene B: One Happy Family?

A vampire tries to convince a human mother to allow their (human) child to be transformed into a vampire. What is the vampire offering the mother? A relief of a burden? A hard bargain? A better life? Something else?

Remind the players of the Core Themes of the game before answering these questions.

Character Creation Questions:

Questions for the Vampire:

- What do you like best about being a vampire?
- What do you like least about being a vampire?
- Why do you want this child?
- What was your relationship with your own Sire like?

Questions for the (human) Mother?

- What do you like best about being a mother?
- What do you like least about being a mother?
- What is your opinion of vampires?
- What do you want to provide for your child that is out of your reach?

Character Goal:

The player should establish their *character's* goal for this scene. What do they hope to accomplish in this meeting?

Example: The Vampire craves intimacy and wants to convince the Mother to become a vampire along with their child. The Mother wants to determine that the Vampire will take care of their child's material *and* emotional needs before agreeing to anything.

Scene Outcomes:

The scene outcomes should be the *player's* goals for the scene. This means they may directly contradict the character's goals, but they don't have to. This can also be a way to calibrate the dynamic of the scene.

For Example: The Vampire player wants to realize that the Mother is a much better parent than they would be. The Mother's player wants to realize that the restrictions of being a vampire are not worth the benefits for them or their child.

Scene Setting Questions:

Now you want to answer the following questions to make sure everyone is on the same page before starting the scene.

How old is the child?

How did the Vampire meet the Mother and the child?

Where is this scene taking place?

- Somewhere public?
- Somewhere private?
- Somewhere cosy?
- Somewhere intimidating?

- Something else?

When is this scene set?

- Contemporary?
- The Past?
- In this country?
- Somewhere else?

What is the stated purpose of this meeting? Does the Mother know the offer the vampire is going to make?

Take a Break for Reflection:

Once you've created characters and answered the scene setting questions, have the players take a short 5-10 minute break. They can take a short walk, go to the bathroom, grab snacks or drinks, but they should also use this time to reflect on the new characters and scene they are going to play.

If you're running this virtually, encourage players to get up from the computer and go somewhere else during the break.

Starting the Scene:

Once everyone has returned from the break, the facilitator should set the scene descriptively, using the answers to the earlier questions.

If you're playing in person literally set up the scene using the furniture available to you. Ask any additional questions you might need to set the scene: what emotional state are the characters in, how the characters have prepared for this meeting. And then give the players the go ahead to begin.

Facilitating the Scene:

The facilitator should gauge how involved to be in the scene by watching the players interact. If it seems like the scene is taking off, feel free to hang back. If the scene seems to be faltering, step in to offer suggestions. You can always call "pause" to check in, or "fast forward" to a more intense part of the conversation—for instance if the characters spend a long time making small talk without getting to the core issues they want to deal with, or "rewind" and restart the scene if that seems like the best approach.

You want to give the scene some time to develop and players to get a feel for their characters, but you don't want to let the scene drag out too long. When it seems like the scene is reaching the outcomes discussed by the players don't let it run for too much longer. If, however, one outcome is being dealt with but the other is not, feel free to intervene making suggestions or introducing elements that might help move the players towards the outcome. You can always call "pause" to remind players of the outcome if necessary.

When the scene has run its course give the players a minute to come out of character, especially if the scene was intense. Then transition to the character generation and scene setting for the next scene.

Scene C: Saying Good-bye?

A vampire meets with her human child, when the child is dying of old age.

How does the vampire feel about their child's impending death? Will you offer your child eternal life? How does the human feel about their impending death? Do they want to become a vampire? Remind the players of the Core Themes of the game before answering these questions.

Character Creation Questions:

Questions for the (Vampire) mother:

- Why did you choose to become a vampire?
- What do you like least about being a mother?
- What did you like most about being a mother?
- What kind of mother have you been since becoming a vampire?

Questions for the (human) child?

- How did your mother disappoint you?
- Why did you refuse to become a vampire in the past?
- What is the thing you appreciate most about your mother?
- How do you feel about your impending death?

Character Goal:

The player should establish their *character's* goal for this scene. What do they hope to accomplish in this meeting?

Example: The vampire wants to finally make the offer to turn their child into a vampire. The child wants to say good-bye to his mother, because he wasn't able to say good-bye before his husband died suddenly.

Scene Outcomes:

The scene outcomes should be the *player's* goals for the scene. This means they may directly contradict the character's goals, but they don't have to. This can also be a way to calibrate the dynamic of the scene.

For Example: The vampire player wants to realize they can no longer protect their child. The child's player wants to convince their mother they are prepared for death.

Scene Setting Questions:

Now you want to answer the following questions to make sure everyone is on the same page before starting the scene.

Where is this meeting taking place?

- At a hospital.
- At home.
- In the child's favorite park.
- Somewhere else.

How long has it been since these two have seen each other?

When is this scene set?

- Contemporary?
- The Past?
- In this country?
- Somewhere else?

Take a Break for Reflection:

Once you've created characters and answered the scene setting questions, have the players take a short 5-10 minute break. They can take a short walk, go to the bathroom, grab snacks or drinks, but they should also use this time to reflect on the new characters and scene they are going to play.

If you're running this virtually, encourage players to get up from the computer and go somewhere else during the break.

Starting the Scene:

Once everyone has returned from the break, the facilitator should set the scene descriptively, using the answers to the earlier questions.

If you're playing in person literally set up the scene using the furniture available to you. Ask any additional questions you might need to set the scene: what emotional state are the characters in, how the characters have prepared for this meeting. And then give the players the go ahead to begin.

Facilitating the Scene:

The facilitator should gauge how involved to be in the scene by watching the players interact. If it seems like the scene is taking off, feel free to hang back. If the scene seems to be faltering, step in to offer suggestions. You can always call "pause" to check in, or "fast forward" to a more intense part of the conversation—for instance if the characters spend a long time making small talk without getting to the core issues they want to deal with, or "rewind" and restart the scene if that seems like the best approach.

You want to give the scene some time to develop and players to get a feel for their characters, but you don't want to let the scene drag out too long. When it seems like the scene is reaching the outcomes discussed by the players don't let it run for too much longer. If, however, one outcome is being dealt with but the other is not, feel free to intervene making suggestions or introducing elements that might help move the players towards the outcome. You can always call "pause" to remind players of the outcome if necessary.

When the scene has run its course give the players a minute to come out of character, especially if the scene was intense. Then transition to the character generation and scene setting for the next scene.

Closing Scene: Once Again

Another meeting between the sire and their child from the Opening Scene.

In this scene we revisit the same characters from the Opening Scene, but the players and facilitator can decide if this scene takes place temporally before or after the Opening Scene (a flashback or a flash forward). The Core Issues remain the same for both characters, but you may interpret them differently if needed.

Remind the players of the Core Themes of the game before answering these questions. Let the players know that this is the final scene of the game. It should function as the Epilogue for the game. This is a chance to re-visit the character's from the Opening Scene and explore the Core Themes one final time.

Scene Setting Questions:

When is this taking place?

- Before the Opening Scene (flashback).
 - How long before the Opening Scene?
- After the Opening Scene
 - How long after the Opening Scene?

Where is this meeting taking place?

How long has it been since these two have seen each other?

Why are they meeting?

Character Questions:

What is different about the characters?

What is different about their relationship?

Take a Break for Reflection:

Once you've created characters and answered the scene setting questions, have the players take a short 5-10 minute break. They can take a short walk, go to the bathroom, grab snacks or drinks, but they should also use this time to reflect on the new characters and scene they are going to play.

If you're running this virtually, encourage players to get up from the computer and go somewhere else during the break.

Starting the Scene:

Once everyone has returned from the break, the facilitator should set the scene descriptively, using the answers to the earlier questions.

If you're playing in person literally set up the scene using the furniture available to you. Ask any additional questions you might need to set the scene: what emotional state are the characters in, how the characters have prepared for this meeting. And then give the players the go ahead to begin.

Facilitating the Scene:

The facilitator should gauge how involved to be in the scene by watching the players interact. If it seems like the scene is taking off, feel free to hang back. If the scene seems to be faltering, step in to offer suggestions. You can always call “pause” to check in, or “fast forward” to a more intense part of the conversation—for instance if the characters spend a long time making small talk without getting to the core issues they want to deal with, or “rewind” and restart the scene if that seems like the best approach.

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When the scene has run its course give the players a minute to come out of character, especially if the scene was intense. Then transition to the character generation and scene setting for the next scene.

Debrief

Make sure to leave 20-30 minutes for the debrief.

After the Closing Scene finishes take some time to check in with the players and yourself. How is everyone feeling? Do they need a drink or a snack? Shake out some tension from their bodies? Then introduce yourselves out of game.

Players should take turns discussing ways they are different from the characters they've played as well as ways they are similar. The facilitator should say a bit about themselves.

See if players would like to share some of their experiences from the game:

- Favorite moments?
- Something the other player or facilitator did that they really appreciated?
- Something that happened in game that they want to think more about?
- Favorite vampire movies?

The debrief does not have to be overly long or even particularly formal—if it devolves into chatting about the game experience or favorite vampire movies, or even what you're playing after this, that's all fine. You want to give the players, and yourself as the facilitator, a chance to mindfully leave the game space and prepare to enter the “real world” space once again. Some players may want to talk about the game and other players may need more time before they're ready to reflect on their experience. You should also check in with yourself and see how you're doing and what you need to transition away from the game.