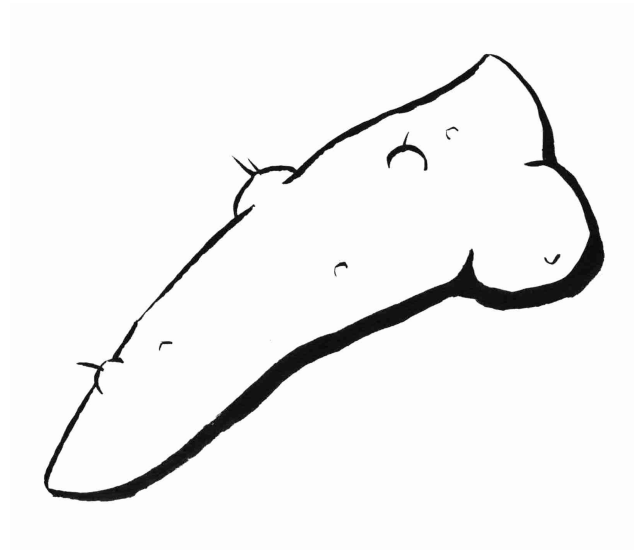


Midlife Blues 2 – Weird Sisters



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Fastaval 2024

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When a witch turns 40, her nose suddenly grows long and crooked, adorned with at least one wart. In this scenario we follow two witch-sisters on their journey towards the big four-o and the inescapable nose.

No. of players and facilitators: 3-4 players plus a co-playing facilitator

Total runtime: 1½ hours

Age limit: 15+ - middle age is not required

Material to be read: 1-2 pages

Practicalities

Print in black and white, one sided, as landscape. You need a table to play around, and it should be possible to switch places fairly swiftly. So, it will also be a good idea for you to use a small side table or the like to organize your notes on. If you play online, everyone needs a file with the overview on page 24 (cut it out yourself or ask the writer). Also, the facilitator introduces all scenes online.

Thanks to...

...my playtesters: Cecilie Juel Greis Fakkelskov, David Silset, Ivan Kalatchev, Lærke Hvid Pedersen, Mads Egedal Kirchhoff, Marie Skouenborg and Terese M. O. Nielsen.

Thanks to Kristian Bach Petersen for feedback on the synopsis and the preview, to Oliver Nøglebæk for the amazing witch nose, to Lotte Melchior Larsen for proofreading and finally to Christina Goddard Christensen for the Witch's Cave.

This is a sequel

Weird Sisters is an independent sequel to *A Werewolf's Choice* from 2021. If you like *Weird Sisters*, you will probably also like *A Werewolf's Choice*.

Welcome to the lives of the weird sisters

When a witch turns 40, her nose suddenly grows long and crooked, adorned with at least one wart. In this game we follow two witch-sisters on their journey towards the big four-0 and the inescapable nose. The game approaches its subject, middle class women and their struggles against ticking clocks, with a sharp eye but lots of love. We are in our familiar world of today, but with witches and vampires ...and HR consultants. The players explore the lives of the twin sisters Clio and Zoe as they approach 40 in order to help them figure out what to do about family and career.

Midlife Blues 2 – Weird Sisters is a storytelling game with elements of character play. The focus of the game switches back and forth between the two sisters, and the players take turns picking scenes. The players take on different roles and functions throughout the game, but everyone helps ramp up the pressure with escalating references to noses.

Player Type: You want to take part in warm, humorous storytelling where the group explores the lives of the two weird sisters and their way to their fortieth birthday. You own the characters in common and you play more for smiles that warm you all the way through than for thigh-slapping punchlines. Not a difficult game.

GM Type: You are the player who has read the game in advance and helps the other players keep track of what to do. In a few scenes, you have special cutting duties. You contribute creatively along with the other players, and you cheer on everyone and everything.

Three Keywords: Comedy, witches, midlife crisis

Runthrough of the game

Here is a condensed overview of the phases of the game, which is useful at this point. For use during play, and with notes about the family, see the overview on page 24 (in five copies so everyone can have one).

- **Introduction**
- **Prologue** – three brief, narrated scenes where you introduce sisters and noses.
- **Starting scene** – ramps up the tension, introduces a mechanic for two people playing one witch.
- **Exploration scenes** – there are four scenes per sister, eight in all, and you must pick and play six of them.
- **Decision scene**
- **Epilogue**

Daughters of Arkana

The main characters of the game are the two witches and twin sisters, Clio and Zoe. At the beginning of the game they are planning their 35th birthday, and the climax of the game is them planning their 40th birthday. Their mother is a French witch named Arkana, but both mother and daughters live in Denmark – the father of the sisters is not in the picture.

Clio has a well paid business office job and her career is going strong, but in spite of determined dating, she has been unable to find a man that she wants to have children with – and she really does want both a partner and children. An attractive partner is hard enough to find, and it will not be easier once she gets a real witch nose...

Zoe has a nice, hardworking boyfriend, Martin, and a lovely pair of twins, the son Villads and the daughter Mégane. Zoe has been so busy with her family that she has never really had a job for long – at least not a job that made her real money and had career potential. Zoe longs for both money and accomplishments that are *hers*, beyond the family. A good job is hard enough to find, and it will not be easier once she gets a real witch nose...

Each of the twin sisters longs for something that their sister has.

Ticking clocks and menacing noses

The game is about middle class women and time pressure, 'ticking clocks'. It is about balancing work and family, and about both longing for what you do not have and holding on to, or losing, what you do have. The bit about witch noses that pop on your 40th birthday is a way to frame it hard, and to give the idea of time pressure a clear, visual image.

It is not given in advance how things will turn out for the two sisters. Each sister can attain or not attain what they want, and they can keep or lose what they already have. The scene seeds of the game are designed to let the players play with the issues of the two sisters, and they are open so they can point towards attaining/keeping or towards losing, depending on how the players play them. After a handful of scenes, the group will form ideas about where the lives of the sisters are heading.

However, the game also has a nice, little twist at the end. No matter what the sisters gain or lose, in the epilogue they end up being happy together after all. It is not that it doesn't matter what the players explore their way to, as this forms the feel of the players for the main characters as people (without which the story is irrelevant), but it is important that even though it can FEEL as if nothing good will happen to women after they hit middle age, of course this is not true. It is just something that our culture and the pressure of expectations will yell at people really loudly.

Why witches?

Witches are full of menacing twists on female stereotypes, and inserting these into a modern, everyday context is obvious comedy fodder. Also, pop culture has two very different witch images – the young, seductive witch (with a normal nose) and the old, hideous witch (with the iconic, warty nose). That division serves my purpose perfectly!

Urban fantasy

Stories with supernatural elements set in modern times. The supernatural elements are typically things like vampires, werewolves, witches and faeries. For the ordinary people in the stories, the supernatural elements are often unknown and confusing, but for the audience, they are typically quite recognizable – we are introduced to a vampire, and then we basically understand what we're dealing with. There may be twists (e.g. vampires that glitter in sunlight rather than bursting into flames), but the model is familiar. This is unlike actual, old folklore, where things quickly get very strange and confusing when you dig into the concrete stories.

Examples: Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Twilight, True Blood, Being Human

The role of the facilitator

The facilitator is a player who knows a bit more than the others about what is going on – because the facilitator has read this text. If you are reading this, there is a good chance that the facilitator is you. Basically you are here because pure run-from-the-page games are demanding and vulnerable. Here is a summary of your role in bullet points.

- **Player** – aside from what else you might be, you are a real, live player of the game.
- **Moderator** – guiding the group through the start of play and the scenes is your job. In particular, you must drive the game forward and make sure that you do not lose momentum *between* the scenes.
- **Example** – you play, and the other players will naturally look to you to learn how to play the game.
- **Cutter** – in much of the game, cutting scenes is a collective duty, but there are some scenes in the beginning and the end where you must be the one to say that now, the scene is over.
- **Backstop** – if doubt & hesitation about procedures arise during play, you help move the game along.
- **Cheerleader** – it lifts the game enormously if you smile and nod when someone does something right, and laugh if someone says something funny.

Four or five participants?

In principle, your role as facilitator is the same regardless of whether there are four or five participants (ie you and three or four others), but in practice, some things need to be handled a little differently. If there are five of you, you must participate but take care not to take up too much space. However, if there are four of you in total, you should (without dominating!) take up your full fourth as player in the exploration scenes – though preferably without picking a scene as the first.

Scene framing

You introduce the prologue, starting scene, decision scene and epilogue, but the other players can pick and introduce the exploration scenes – in fact, you must choose one each. Based on the scene overview (everyone has a copy), one player chooses a scene. Then you find the scene and give it to them (if they are not you). Then they read the scene seed and introduce the scene. If a player does not wish to introduce (say, because they are unsure or dyslexic, but they need not explain themselves), you can offer to do it, or they can ask you to do it.

No game master!

It would not be hard for you to take control of the game, and then the other players would expect you to be funny, and to tell them about the lives of Zoe and Clio. This is not my intention. Based on the scenario, you should be funny together, and explore the lives of the sisters together.

Exploration

To be able to decide how things turn out for the sisters, you must explore their lives. It is important that everyone understands that exploration is a player obligation, and that it matters a lot how you interpret both the witches and the other characters. The scenario will take off in earnest if you are playfully curious together. This is also the reason why everyone gets a scene overview, not just you – to make it clear that everyone is a full partner in choosing, introducing and playing the scenes. Also, this is the reason why you must discard two scenes – when it is clear that you will not play all four scenes about each of the witches, it also becomes clear that it is important what you choose to explore.

Round robin

All scenes in the game are played 'round robin' style. This means that the players sit around the table and take turns saying something, going round clockwise. Most scenes contain a conversation between two characters, but the two players speaking for the characters do not get to just ping-pong. The turn to speak goes around, and characters speak when it is their players' turn. Other players might describe the place.

For it to work well, everyone should be on board with not making long speeches, just a sentence or two. And as usual with group narration, it gets best if people relax a little and

just say what comes to mind, so that the story flows. It is better to say something obvious and pass the ball on than to hesitate and blunder into lengthy explanations in an attempt to say something groundbreaking and fabulous.

Conversations had in a round-robin manner are slower than if two players just have them, and they are more a part of a wider situation than a thing in themselves. This is good! The focus is on tasting situations and relationships, and completing the conversation is really not that important.

Inner vs outer witch

Other characters are played by a single player, but when one of the sisters is in play, she is played by two players. One plays the inner life of the witch, what she feels and thinks, while the other plays what she actually says and does. This lets the group play with indecision, overthinking and inconsistency between thought and speech.

Generally the witch speaks before she talks, so that the speech player gets to react to what the thought player says about what else is going on in the scene. There is an established order for scenes with two witches (see the diagram on page 22) and for scenes with one witch and one other character (page 23). When starting each scene, you must distribute positions/functions between you, and you should be ready to move physically so that you sit where your position requires you to be.

Cutting scenes with noses

In most scenes, you cut using noses. This is two-factor cutting, which means that when two players have mentioned or clearly alluded to noses, the scene ends. This means that cutting is a group matter, and no single person controls the cutting of scenes.

When you have a good feel for the situation and the relationship, you can cut. The scene does NOT have to be done, as a little drama with a full and complete curve – unfinished business is a good thing! Anyone can suggest it by mentioning noses for the first time, and then everyone knows that the scene can end at any time.

Anyone can cut, whether they play a character or describe. Both the word 'nose' and synonyms such as 'spout' or 'snout' count, and an obvious allusion counts as well. If you are in doubt as facilitator whether something is a nose cut, do ask. And you should keep track of the cutting and confirm it to avoid confusion.

What does cutting scenes with noses do? It makes it impossible for scenes to be about noses (as scenes end the moment you have a conversation about noses), but at the same time, everyone is on the lookout for and thinking about noses. They are never far away! Also, it becomes a running gag, which is always nice in a comedy.

The start of play

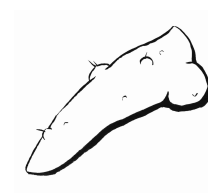
Start by introducing these things (the group sorter will do it at Fastaval):

- **Noses**, witches and 40th birthdays.
- **Urban fantasy** meets everyday life.
- **The family** – see Arkana's daughters, page 4.
- **Focus** – we explore together in order to find out how Clio and Zoe fare in family and career matters.

If you play at Fastaval, this is the time when you will get sorted into groups and go to your rooms.

Anyway, here is what you should remember to tell the other players when you are gathered in your room:

- **Co-playing facilitator** – you are the player who has read the game in advance, and you have a few cutting duties.
- **Warm, easy humour** – no need to chase punchlines, just relax and say the obvious thing. Trust that you will be funny together as a group.
- **Round robin** for both description and character play.
- **Overview** of the family and the scenes. Pass out the overview (page 24-28), direct attention to the family notes and ask the others not to read their way through all the scenes right now. Now, it is time to play...



Prologue

Three narrated scenes in which you storytell your way to familiarity with the sisters and the role of noses.

First, you must describe the homes of the two sisters, one by one, while noone is home. Note that by describing their homes, you are also describing their lives and personalities.

Here, you must *cut the scenes using noses* (see page 7). This means that when two different players (including the facilitator) has mentioned or alluded to noses, the scene ends. In description where noone is present, it might for instance be pictures on the wall or a shape reminiscent of a nose.

This is an opportunity to learn, so please interject to correct, comment and praise! In particular, if someone makes very lengthy descriptions, then please break in just after and say that this is fine description but in the future description should be briefer in order to make the conversation flow well.

The home of 34-years-old Zoe

If noone else has mentioned noses when the turn to speak has gone twice around the table, do it yourself and draw attention to the fact that you are doing it.

The home of 34-years-old Clio

A tip – to add a little spice and set standards for what you can do, in the second round I usually mention a drawer full of sex toys.

Arkana's nose

Obviously, cutting with noses is not in effect here! When the group has said enough, you cut as facilitator.

Together, you must describe the majestic witch nose of Arkana, the mother of the sisters, in intimate detail. Not the person around it, just the nose.

I believe cutting after about two rounds will often be good.

And now it is time to move on to the starting scene.

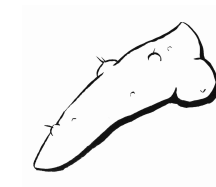
Starting scene

– planning a 35th birthday party

You explain the situation.

The twin sisters Clio and Zoe are sitting together in a café, planning their 35th birthday party. This is where you as a group move into them and their situation.

You are introduced to two players playing one witch – here, four players playing two witches. Agree on who plays Clio thinks, Clio speaks, Zoe thinks and Zoe speaks. If you are five players, the facilitator should stick to just facilitating.



- **Fixed positions, two witches.** Put the page 22 diagram on the table and (quickly!) agree on who is to have which functions. Seat yourselves to fit the diagram. In all of the game, you must always be ready to switch places depending on who takes on what functions in a scene.
- **Intro: One round of pure description.** All scenes that contain character play start in this manner. Describe the place and the people based on the scene seed. Everyone gets to say one brief thing.
- **Round robin,** clockwise, pure character play. Start with Clio speaks.
- **Cut using noses** as you know it from the prologue.

Exploration scenes in general

There are eight exploration scenes, four for each witch. You must play three for each witch, six in total. As facilitator, you start by explaining the general principles, and later on you obviously facilitate in case any confusion arises. You can see the titles of the scenes in the overview.

The order is free. You play scenes until you have each picked one, and then you pick scenes together until you have played six exploration scenes in total. When you have played a scene about one sister, the subsequent scene must always be about the other, until you are done playing exploration scenes.

Chronologically, the scenes do not necessarily take place strictly in the order that they are played. Some scenes specify how old Zoe's twins are, and as the order is free, you might for instance play a scene where they are age 11 after you have played one where they are age 14.

The purpose of the exploration scenes is to enable you to make decisions about how things go for the two sisters after they turn forty. Do they attain what they desire? Do they manage to hold on to what they have? This is not something that any one given scene can determine in itself, but taken together, they give you impressions that you can use in the decision scene.

In each scene, you must 'taste' the scene and what it says about the witch, and cut when you have an impression. You do *not* have to keep going until you know how everything turns out. Unfinished business and loose ends are great!

By default, whoever picks the scene plays the other character, and then you quickly agree on who is the witch thinks, the witch speaks and who describes (two if you are five players). Switch places so you are sitting correctly, and then play.

The scene picker can get the scene seed from you and set the scene, or they can ask you to set the scene.

- **Fixed positions, witch and other.** The other starts. See the diagram on page 23. Do keep it on the table so you can use it to orient yourselves.
- **Intro: One round of pure description.** You have the place, witch and other character to describe together. If you don't get it all in one round, the describer(s) can follow up later.
- **Round robin,** clockwise, mixed character play and description. Start with the other character.
- **Cut using noses.**

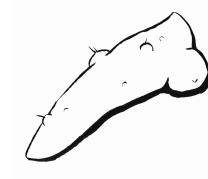
Exploring Clio: A hot date

– there is nothing wrong with him

Clio is on a date, in a pretty hot place with a pretty hot man. He is probably fine for sleeping with, but she wishes he were boyfriend material, perhaps even someone to have children with. Having fun is fine, but she longs for a more long-term, committed relationship, and over the last few years she has discarded a good handful of men as unfit for her purposes.

Clio and her date have a witty, flirty conversation while she fantasizes disaster scenarios about all the things that could turn out to be wrong with this one.

Date instructions: Play a charming man who is worth having, not a total jerk. But as a player you should listen to what Clio's thoughts fear and flirt with that.



Exploring Clio: Intense financial conselling

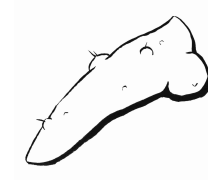
– from a vampire banker

Clio needs a loan to become partner in a very promising cosmetics startup company. To get it, she is meeting with the bank customer representative Stelton.

Stelton is a vampire. Her office is a subterranean crypt in black marble, business gothic. Stelton is very beautiful, and her style walks a fine line between business and extremely sexy goth.

Clio is out to get her loan and wants to talk about the promising business concept, but Stelton has done her reading and is more interested (intensely interested!) in Clio's hopes and dreams.

Stelton instructions: Speak in an intensely sexy manner, and seize any opportunity to go for sexual double entendres. Play to Clio's fears and desires, both financially and sexually.



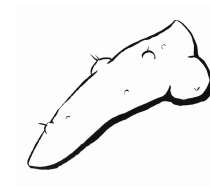
Exploring Clio: Sudden childcare

– for the boss' aggravating daughter

Clio is in the office and is pretty busy with a report. Because of a family crisis, the boss has brought his 11 years old daughter Isabella to work, but he ALSO has a Very Important Meeting. So, he has unloaded her on Clio for the next couple of hours.

(It is a school holiday but not a work holiday.)

Isabella instructions: Your father is more important than other people, and so you are more important than other people. It is Clio's duty to entertain you, but everything is boring. Needle and prod Clio's anger, in character as a precocious, arrogant girl of 11 years.

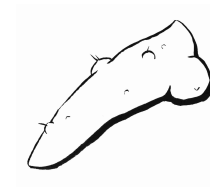


Exploring Clio: The cool aunt

– who is not stupid like mom

Mégane, Zoe's daughter and Clio's niece, has rung Clio's doorbell on a rainy Thursday night. She is here to talk about how *STUPID* and *UNREASONABLE* mom is, and to cry on her aunt Clio's shoulder. What is Clio to do with that? Zoe will not let Mégane use the kitchen as a potions laboratory, and the accident was not *THAT* bad!

Mégane instructions: No, your mother Zoe has not abused you terribly. She just will not let you do things that are *TERRIBLY* important for you as a teenage witch. Balance between being unreasonable and relatable. In this scene, Mégane is 14 years old.



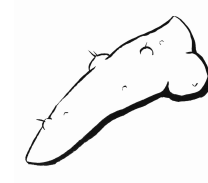
Exploring Zoe: Romance is a noble art

– in bed with Martin

Zoe and Martin are in bed together. Zoe would like some sex now, but Martin needs to talk about some worries regarding his job.

There are rumours about a coming round of layoffs, and Martin feels safe enough, but his good friend Hans is at risk. Martin is afraid that Hans, who has recently had sick leave due to stress, might get fired. (If you have established that Martin is independent, he is afraid that an important customer is going bankrupt.)

Martin instructions: Be relatably worried, NOT weak. You want to be there for Zoe, but you also NEED to talk, and you have kept it in while the children were up.



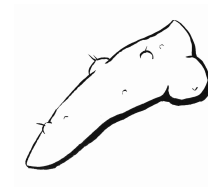
Exploring Zoe: Coffee interview in the park

– with an HR witch

With help from her sister Clio, Zoe has set up a 'coffee interview' with Yaris, who is both a Human Resources consultant and a witch. They talk about career options for Zoe, what she wants and what she can do with her (work-)life.

They go for a walk in the park while they talk. There are young couples kissing and families on picnics.

Yaris instructions: Yaris is friendly, understanding and helpful. Also, she maybe wishes, just a LITTLE bit, that she were in a sunchair on a tropical beach, parasol drink in hand – but of course, she doesn't say so.



Exploring Zoe: The Witch's Cave

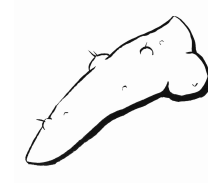
– the café customer is always right

Zoe has put such savings as she and her boyfriend have into starting a café that she has named The Witch's Cave. We are in the recently opened café, on a Saturday at brunch-time.

The children Villads and Mégane are there, and in this scene they are 11 years old (Martin has a deadline coming up and cannot take care of them right now). The children are playing vigorously, in an attention-seeking manner. The describers narrate them.

A brunching café customer is considering renting the entire café for a wedding anniversary reception, and wants to talk about it. The customer is polite but demands attention. Zoe must serve the customer and answer questions AND handle her children.

Café customer instructions: Push Zoe (in collaboration with her children) without being a total dick about it. It is just that it is really important to you that the reception must be a success.



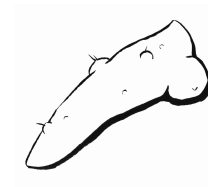
Exploring Zoe: Middle aged invisibility

– a friend daydreams out loud

Zoe is visiting her friend Fabia in Fabia's allotment witch's hut, a nice little hut with a nice little garden. They are having tea while their children are playing with each other. Fabia tells the secret of how her mother Octavia came into money, and Zoe considers if this might be a possibility.

Fabia's mother Octavia found out that invisibility spells become A LOT easier when you are a somewhat older witch, so she became a professional shoplifter. What else could you do with invisibility magic?

Fabia instructions: Talk about invisibility as a funny, slightly embarrassing family story. Daydream about the possibilities, but YOU are not thinking about the future...



Decision time

– planning a 40th birthday party

You explain the situation.

Clio and Zoe are sitting together in a café, planning their 40th birthday party.

You must find out if it will go well with their family and work lives after their 40th year. The basis is the six exploration scenes that you have played.

- **Fixed positions, two witches.** Put the page 22 diagram on the table and (quickly!) agree on who is to have which functions. Seat yourselves to fit the diagram.
- **Intro: One round of pure description.** All scenes that contain character play start in this manner. Describe the place and the people based on the scene seed. Everyone gets to say one brief thing.
- **Round robin,** clockwise, pure character play. Start with Clio speaks.
- **The facilitator cuts** (once everything is decided)

Clio speaks is responsible for asking questions to help *Zoe thinks* arrive at answers to her two questions. The answers must be clear either/or answers, not muddled middle-of-the-road answers.

Zoe thinks must answer two questions:

- Will Zoe have a satisfying work life after 40?
- Will Zoe keep having a satisfying family life after 40?

Zoe speaks is responsible for asking questions to help *Clio thinks* arrive at answers to her two questions. The answers must be clear either/or answers, not middling middle-of-the-road answers.

Clio thinks must answer two questions:

- Will Clio have a satisfying family life after 40?
- Will Clio keep having a satisfying work life after 40?

The facilitator should not play ...*thinks*, and should primarily serve as facilitator(/helper if it gets difficult) if you are five players. Cut when you can see that there are clear answers to all four questions. If you are in doubt about any of the answers, ask.

Epilogue

Now the sisters are 45 years old, and both have received their noses and become used to them. Of course, this has changed some things in their lives, but they are alive and doing well. You say goodbye to them with a pair of purely narrated scenes where you see their homes.

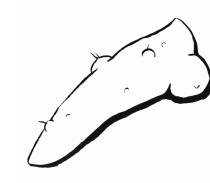
The home of Zoe, 45

The facilitator cuts the scene, so you are welcome to say as much or as little about noses as you like.

The home of Clio, 45

Played in two parts. First you describe Clio's home in 1-2 rounds, and then the facilitator says that Clio and Zoe enter together – they are happy and lively (*it is important – say it!*). Then everyone can describe the sisters and the home. You see it from the outside and cannot quite hear what they are saying (so no dialogue), but you can see them.

The facilitator cuts, and then the game is over.



ZOE THINKS

ZOE SPEAKS

TWO WITCHES

CLIO SPEAKS

CLIO THINKS

Start here



WITCH THINKS

WITCH SPEAKS

WITCH & OTHER

DESCRIBES

DESCRIBES 2

OTHER

Start here

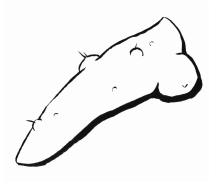


Overview – family & scenes

The family

- Mother **Arkana**
- Sisters **Clio** and **Zoe**
- Zoe's boyfriend **Martin**
- Zoe's son **Villads** and daughter **Mégane** (twins, can be 10-14 years old in the scenes)

Martin has a pretty good job that Zoe, Martin and their children can live off reasonably well, even with Zoe mostly staying at home – as long as he just works a *little* too much.



Extra witch names, use as needed: Sienna, Silvia

The scenes

Prologue, p 9

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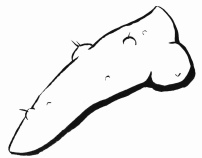
Epilogue, p 21

Overview – family & scenes

The family

- Mother **Arkana**
- Sisters **Clio** and **Zoe**
- Zoe's boyfriend **Martin**
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Martin has a pretty good job that Zoe, Martin and their children can live off reasonably well, even with Zoe mostly staying at home – as long as he just works a *little* too much.



Extra witch names, use as needed: Sienna, Silvia

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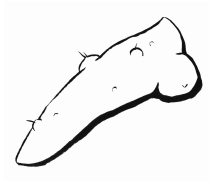
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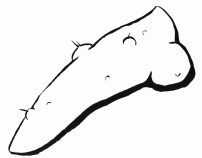
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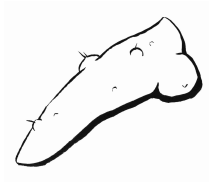
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