

Stockholm Syndrome

By Kamilla Kate Brichs



Preview

Frank has kidnapped Karen and her two children, Louise and Anton. He forces them to live out his fantasies of an idyllic family life. As long as everyone behaves, everything will be OK.

After Dad died, Karen's life has fallen apart. Her failures are mostly on the domestic front, where she leaves everything to her teenage daughter. When Karen finally starts coming out of her shell, she meets Frank – and that's the worst thing that has ever happened to her.

Frank kidnaps the family and uses them to live out his memories and fantasies of a happy family life. There is no escape, and the family tries to make life with Frank work.

Is it only a matter of survival? Or is Frank, in his own twisted way, the best thing that could have happened?

Stockholm Syndrome is a scenario about a broken family, and how they cope when their lives are suddenly torn away from under them.

Imprint

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Introduction

Can a broken family ever be whole again when many of the pieces have been replaced?

In Stockholm Syndrome we follow Karen, Louise and Anton as they are kidnapped by Frank, who moves them to his bunker. Here he lives out his fantasies of a happy family life with them.

Is it okay to love the new dad, when he sometimes has to use violence and the threat of violence to look out for you?

Theme and tone

The scenario is about our ability to empathise and harbour positive feelings for a person who is harming us, while also taking care of us. To find light and hope in an otherwise unbearable situation.

The scenario is not about escaping; the players will not escape from the bunker or kill the antagonist, Frank. Instead, they need to accept their fate and resolve their inner conflicts, while experiencing a twisted family dynamic.

The story

The story begins shortly before the first scene of the scenario. Karen and her two children, Louise and Anton, used to be a happy family. But Dad died, and Mum withdrew into her own mind. She won't even tell the children how Dad died. She shut down completely, and all responsibility now rests on Louise's shoulders, as she is the eldest.

She needs to step into the role as surrogate mother for Anton while also taking care of everything at home. Anton isn't doing well in

school and misses his parents terribly. He loves his sister, but it just isn't the same as having a real mother.

The one thing Karen is capable of is holding on to her job, so at least they have money, and when viewed from the outside, things don't look too bad. After about a year, Karen starts venturing out into the world again, but is afraid to tell her family, because she fears failing them yet again. Internet dating becomes her attempt at living a little, and this is where she meets Frank.

Frank is a sweet and charming man, who is patient and allows Karen to approach this at her own pace. Finally, she agrees to a date, which results in the family ending up in a bunker with a man and his fantasies.

The family is now forced to live in a bunker with a man they don't actually know, but who is controlling their lives to the most minute detail. Frank has loads of rules for the family to keep, otherwise he loses his temper. It's easy at first, but Frank's idea of an idyllic family might not be to everyone's tastes. Along the way he also forgets which roles the different family members have to play; he can't avoid starting to note Louise, after he's gotten what he wants from Karen. All the while he's also becoming better and better friends with Anton, who can't seem to do anything wrong. Everything culminates one final night, when everyone except for Anton are asleep. He realises that the Forbidden Door is open, and must now make a choice: The old, broken family? Or the new, whole family, with any flaws they might have?

Roles

The scenario has four roles. Every character symbolises a specific aspect of grief, and each has their own inner conflicts, which will be challenged throughout the scenes. Here's a short overview of the roles, so they are easier to remember.

Mum/Karen

Karen is a broken woman. She's ended up with a deep depression after losing her husband. Since his death, she has simply given up on life. She functions when she's out in society, but as soon as she enters her own front door, she goes to pieces.

Karen is forced to be a mother again, but not in her own way – this time, it's how Frank envisions a mother. Can Karen do anything but fail her family... again?

Louise (18 years old)

Ever since Dad died, Louise has been the one holding the family together. She's been the caregiver for Anton and has put her own life on standby. It's not easy being a teenager, who's forced into adulthood.

And it's not easy at all, suddenly losing everything she's built up after Dad died, and once again having to be a teenage daughter. Louise is also the character who truly sees through Frank's façade: Anton and Karen are largely followers, but Louise sees Frank for the sick, sick man he actually is.

Anton (7 years old)

Anton is a dreamer. He's a nice, caring and optimistic boy who uses adventures and books as a means to escape reality. He misses having a father figure in his life, but he also misses his Mum, who withdrew into depression after Dad died. He feels very alone, because even though Louise has taken on the role of being his mother, he still needs a friend.

Anton is socially awkward, especially around kids of his own age. Anton needs to be recognised and seen. This makes him less critical of *who* seems to be giving him attention. Anton also really misses having someone on his side.

Frank

Frank has lost his family – they left him. His lack of self-control and his violent outbursts became too much for them. He has convinced himself that they are dead. Frank has stalked Karen for a while, and when she finally "notices" him, Frank seizes the occasion to have a family again.

Frank is very sick, but has no insight into his own psyche. Frank has a clear picture of how things should be – and when that picture crumbles, he explodes. There is a very slim margin for error before Frank believes others are not playing their part.

How to gamemaster the scenario

The gamemaster's primary role in this scenario is as director: You need to set the scenes and cut the scenes. To have a lot of exciting moments, while avoiding having a lot of overlong scenes with no clear goals, it's important that you cut the scene as soon as the goal is reached. By cutting the scenes in this fashion, you condition the players to go for the goal of the scene instead of pussyfooting. It might seem intense to play like this for the first few scenes, but once everyone is on board, it gives the scenario a great flow.

The scenario is played semi-live, with a focus on realism. Let your players use the fact that you are in a closed room, and let them imagine the Bunker how *they* see it.

There are two kinds of scenes: Either the scene starts with a conflict, or it ends on one. The conflicts are often between two or more players, but it could also be an internal conflict.

What the players choose to do in a tough situation – how the characters reach the goal and handle the predicaments you place them in – is entirely up to them.

The scenes either build up to a tough situation or happens right after the tough situation. But the actual conflict (be it violence, rape, or anything else) will never happen in play. We work with the fear of what *could* happen, and the handling of what *has* happened.

The scenario tries to have every character experience at least some aspects of Stockholm Syndrome. But it is mainly Anton who will experience the full ride.

Setting and cutting scenes

Before starting each scene, sum up the scene:

- Who is in the scene
- Read the text for this particular scene
- If there is one: Read out the goal for the scene

For most scenes, the purpose of the scene is written at the bottom: It's a text for you, as the gamemaster, to know which way to point the players if necessary. While or immediately after reading the text for the scene, ask the players to close their eyes and put themselves in their character's place. Agree upon a sign for the players to use, to show they are ready. That way, everyone is in the right mindset right from the get-go.

The players' free choice: The scene may have a specific purpose, but how the players get there is completely up to them. It might be a good idea to reiterate this to the players a couple of times – especially for the first few scenes of each character.

Starting the scene: Mark how you start and how you cut a scene. Use the same signal every time, so the players get used to it. For instance, you could simply start the scene by saying: "Start", and: "Cut" when the scene is over. It's a good idea to use the same signals during the warm-up, so everyone knows your language, when you start playing the scenario.

Cutting the scene: Several of the scenes have a specific goal the players must reach for the scene to end. In these scenes, it's easy to make a sharp cut, when the goal is reached. The rest of the scenes start on a conflict, and you will need to cut each of these scenes, as soon as it has been resolved. These scenes are tougher to cut as sharply, but use your gut feeling. It is better to cut more

sharply and leave them wanting more, than to allow the pace to fizzle.

Violence in the scenario: I don't want violence in this scenario. I've not included any scenes with violence from my end. I've mentioned it before, but the scenario is more about the build-up and the fallout from horrible situations; not the situations themselves. It's just like a good horror story: As soon as you actually see the monster, it becomes much less scary.

The gamemaster must always cut the scene right before violence/the conflict!

Introduction for the players

When you first meet the players, there are a few things you need to go through before you can start playing. First of all, make sure everyone has been introduced to the scenario – that everybody knows where this is going.

Present the scenario

This scenario is about a family that is being held captive in a bunker. It's about the fear of what will happen, the reactions to what is happening, and how to cope with their new life.

There is no violence in the scenes, only build-up and fallout.

The scenario is not about escaping. You will not escape the bunker or kill the antagonist, Frank. You need to accept your fate, resolve your inner conflicts while experiencing a twisted family dynamic.

Scenario background

The story begins shortly before the first scene of the scenario. Karen and her two children, Louise and Anton, used to be a happy family. But Dad died, and Mum withdrew into her own mind. She won't even tell the children how Dad died. She shut down completely, and all responsibility now rests on Louise's shoulders, as she is the eldest.

She needs to step into the role as surrogate mother for Anton while also taking care of everything at home. Anton isn't doing well in school and misses his parents terribly. He loves his sister, but it just isn't the same as having a real mother.

The only thing Karen is capable of is holding on to her job, so at least they have money, and when viewed from the outside, things

don't look too bad. After about a year, Karen starts venturing out into the world again, but is afraid to tell her family, because she fears failing them yet again. Internet dating becomes her attempt at living a little, and this is where she meets Frank.

Frank is a sweet and charming man, who is patient and allows Karen to approach this at her own pace. Finally, she agrees to a date, which results in the family ending up in a bunker with a man and his fantasies.

At this point, it might also be a good idea to talk a bit more about the play-style: Semi-live roleplaying with an emphasis on realism.

It's important to stay in character and not fall into the trap of speaking as players between the scenes. Falling out of character between scenes makes it too easy to cope with the tough situations by joking, but it ruins the mood, so save it for the debriefing after you're done, or over a beer or a cup of cocoa.

Warm-up

The purpose of warming up

The players need to make themselves ready for a pretty uncomfortable scenario, so you need to build trust and intimacy between everyone.

You also need to introduce how scenes are set and cut during play, to make everything run more smoothly.

But first of all, we need to get to know each other a bit better.

The warm-up will begin by everyone answering the following questions:

- Why did you choose this scenario?
- What do you expect from this scenario?

Physical boundaries

Because this scenario is played semi-live, it's important that we discuss our boundaries, while also being willing to change these on the fly if necessary.

First off, everybody gives each other a hug. This is to give everyone a positive experience before playing scenes where physical contact can become uncomfortable. The gamemaster needs to participate as well.

Now, talk a bit about your boundaries. Is it too much if someone grabs you? Try out some of the things you discuss on your own bodies – that will make things easier once you're all in-game.

In this scenario, there will be no physical contact in the bikini area.

How to set and cut scenes

Every scene either starts with a conflict or works towards a goal or a conflict. The conflicts can be external or internal.

Before each scene, the gamemaster will sum up the scene:

- Who's in the scene
- Read the text for this particular scene
- If there is one: Read out the goal for the scene

Assignment: A bar brawl

The purpose of this warm-up scene is to introduce the players to the playstyle of the scenario. In other words, to teach them that we're working towards a goal, and as soon as that goal is reached, the scene is over.

It also serves to show the players that scenes are cut before any outbreak of violence.

For the players: *You're at a bar. There are no roles here, but everyone has had something to drink. Suddenly, one of you bumps into one of the other characters – perhaps a little too roughly?*

The scene ends: *Right before the fight turns physical.*

Run through the bar brawl scene a few times, changing up who initiates the fight. Test each other's boundaries and get a better sense of one another.

Casting

Present the four roles for the players. Use the short descriptions earlier in the scenario, but give only the bulletpoints – this part is meant to be fast.

It's important that whoever plays Frank and Louise aren't afraid to challenge the other players – not just physically, but also psychologically. But the other players also need to understand that it's everyone's job to offer each other opportunities for interesting roleplay, so don't just shut each other down.

Anton is a good character for the player who wants to push everyone's buttons in a charming way.

Karen is not your classic mother-character. She has a lot of internal conflicts and can be a difficult role to play. More inexperienced players might not have a good a time playing Karen.

Let the players read/listen to their role and ask them to introduce their characters for each other.

Finding the family's style:

This part is mainly intended for Karen, Louise and Anton. The purpose is to let the players find their family dynamics before having to handle Frank as well. This exercise is here to give the players the feeling of family and belonging.

The family has a tradition: Movie night!
What kind of movies do you watch?
What type of candy is always on the table?

Louise: What story did Mom use to tell you, as a bedtime story?
Anton: What kind of food is Louise the very best at making?
Mum/Karen: How can Anton and Louise always make you laugh?

Frank's rules and the meta-rules

There are two sets of rules in this scenario: There are Frank's rules, which you will be introduced to when you meet Frank. And then there are meta-rules.

The rules (**Handout A**) will be put up somewhere easily accessible for everybody. These rules are common knowledge.

Meta-rules

1. No talk about what Frank does to you between the scenes (everybody knows, but nobody talks about it).
2. Everybody knows everything that's going on. You can't choose not to hear because you are sleeping, or for any other reason – the walls are simply too thin.
3. There will be no scenes with direct violence, rape or sex. **The gamemaster will always cut the scene before that happens.**

Frank's rules

1. *Frank is always in charge.*
2. *Never close the door to Frank's or your own rooms.*
3. *Everyone must participate in every meal.*
4. *No phones, Internet, etc. It's not healthy (no contact with the outside world).*
5. *Frank can always make up new rules as needed. Frank is always in charge.*

Break

In order to get the best flow possible, I recommend avoiding breaks once the scenario has begun. So use this time before the first scene to get something to drink, eat, or whatever else you might need.

This is also a really good time to spend a few minutes getting into the mindset of the character you're going to play, and getting to know him or her a little better.

Scenes



Mum's priorities

In this scene: Karen and Anton

For the players:

As always, Mum comes home late: You're basically used to this by now. Louise has made dinner, as always. Anton has just finished his homework, for which Louise naturally had to act as tutor. Anton has basically talked non-stop about the movie night you're having tomorrow since he came home.

Tomorrow is the first movie night since Dad died. Anton is choosing the movie you'll be watching.

Mum has completely forgotten your plans and has a date the same evening. She tells Anton that movie night is cancelled.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

The players need to build up the conflict between Anton and Mum.

Louise has to take responsibility

In this scene: Louise and Karen

For the players:

Mum is putting on her coat and is almost ready to leave for her date. Louise confronts Mum, saying that Louise yet again has to stay home and take care of Anton – and on a Friday, when she'd much rather be partying with her classmates, whom she barely sees anymore.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

To show the players there's also a conflict between Louise and Karen.

A glass of wine and then you're mine

In this scene: Frank and Karen

For the players:

You arrive at Frank's small but cozy house. You both feel the chemistry and are eager to get to know each other a bit more. Frank plays some easy listening on the stereo and finds a good bottle of wine and two glasses. You both get comfortable on the couch, each with a glass of wine. You start talking about the horrible food at the restaurant, and how awful the waiter was.

The scene ends: When the first glass is empty, and Karen begins to feel more dizzy than she should after a single glass of wine

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

Frank needs to give Karen a feeling of safety and to let her know that she is desired. Frank's real purpose is to get the damn wine in her, so he can move on to the next stage.

Mum should have been home by now

In this scene: Louise and Anton

For the players:

It's late. Way too late. You've seen two movies, and it's way past Anton's bedtime, but Mum is still not home yet. Anton is getting nervous: Why is Mum not home yet? Louise gets even more annoyed. She knows why Mum is still out.

The scene ends: When Louise calms Anton down and gets him tucked in.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

Anton gets to be nervous and must find a way to cope with that inner conflict.

Mum's new boyfriend and his rules

In this scene: Louise, Anton and Frank

For the players:

Even before you open your eyes, you can feel something is wrong. The bedding feels different and smells of a different kind of soap than you normally use. You can hear voices. It sounds like Mum is speaking with a man in another room. They speak softly, but the man has a harsh tone.

The light from the other room has a different colour than the light at home.

Where are you?

*The man Mum is talking to enters the room! Frank introduces himself to the kids as Mum's new boyfriend. Once he has explained the rules in your new home (**Handout A**), you're allowed to go to Mum in the other room. It's time for dinner.*

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):
Frank's rules need to be introduced, to enable him to dominate the other players.

Dinner in a minefield of rules

In this scene: Everyone

For the players:

You enter a room that is deceptively small considering it includes a small kitchen, dinner table and living room all in one. The walls are rough and have visible water damage. The air is stuffy and dry. The furniture looks extremely worn.

Mum is already seated at the table when you enter. Frank tells you where to sit from now on. Can you remember all of Frank's rules? Otherwise, he will have to reprimand you.

The scene ends: When you've seen Frank's rules and you may have gotten an answer to the many questions rummaging through your heads.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):
To give Karen, Louise and Anton a chance to experience Frank's rules, and the consequences you might face if you fail to follow them.

Fear makes you do nothing

In this scene: Karen and Anton

For the players:

*Anton has an inner monologue, answering the questions in **Handout B**.*

1: Why are you so scared that you wake up in the middle of the night?

2: Explain why you're afraid to go to the bathroom, even though you really, really need to pee.

3: End the scene by explaining how you end up wetting the bed.

Anton is crying softly, but Mum hears him and wakes up. She must now manage her own fear as well as Anton's accident.

The scene ends: When you've found a solution – or when the conflict reaches a climax.

More wine, are you still mine?

In this scene: Karen and Frank

For the players:

Louise is in the other room tucking Anton into bed. Frank puts some music on the stereo and finds a bottle of wine. It's the same brand as on your first date.

You get comfortable on the couch, and Frank starts talking about your first date, and how he's so very happy that you're all together now. Karen tries to keep up with the romantic conversation.

After some time: Describe how it's a bit later, and the bottle is empty. It is now time for Frank to try to seduce Karen, so she'll come with Frank into his private room.

Karen, does he expect you to have sex with him? Do you want to? Can you say no?

The scene ends: When Karen goes to bed – alone or with Frank.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):
To mirror the first date.

The next day (she said yes last night)

In this scene: Louise, Anton and Karen

For the players:

It's after breakfast, and Frank has left to get more supplies. Frank seemed really happy today and tried to spread good cheer. Now you're alone and have time for a little breather.

Karen is lost in her own thoughts. Louise tries to talk about Frank and how fucked up everything is right now. Anton can't handle more fighting at this point.

The next day (she said no last night)

In this scene: Louise, Anton and Karen

For the players:

It's early morning, and Frank has left for more supplies. He seemed annoyed, and everthing you did was wrong. Now you're alone and have time for a little breather.

Karen sits hunched over a cup of tea.

Louise and Mum have it out

In this scene: Karen and Louise

For the players:

Mum has been mentally absent all day, and once again all responsibility falls back on you. You feel abandoned, and now you let all your feelings loose – everything is Mum's fault!

Karen is still affected by last night with Frank.

Never all alone

In this scene: Frank and Anton

For the players:

Anton is sitting in the living room, hiding under a blanket. The fight between Mum and Louise has been going on for most of the afternoon, and Anton feels like everything is his fault.

Frank comes home with the supplies and finds Anton hiding in the living room.

The scene ends: When Frank comforts Anton and lets Anton know how much he means to him.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

The point of conflict in this scene is Anton's fear and his need for solicitude.

Three glasses of wine, who will be mine?

In this scene: Everyone

For the players:

It's time for another one of Frank's Family Dinners. Frank is in a good mood again today and brings out a bottle of his good wine, along with three glasses. Louise is almost an adult, and a beautiful woman, so of course she deserves a glass of wine as well.

Louise and Karen are still burdened by their fight earlier. Frank uses the silence to get to learn even more about Anton.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

Frank's focus has moved on to Louise and Anton. He needs to become better friends with Anton, all the while letting Louise know how much he appreciates her.

Frank is such a nice guy

In this scene: Anton and Karen

For the players:

Anton and Karen are alone in the room. Mum should probably be busy tucking Anton in, but she's not really doing anything. To fill the silence, Anton starts talking about all the fun he's been having with Frank, who's really a nice guy. It's so great that Frank and Mum found each other.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

Anton is poking at Mum's feeling by letting her know he's warming up to Frank.

Best friends don't keep secrets

In this scene: Frank and Anton

For the players:

Anton and Frank have been reading fairy tales or been playing all day. They are talking about secrets, and Frank becomes inquisitive.

The scene ends: Once Anton has spilled the beans about some of the things he knows about Louise and Karen.

The purpose of the scene (for the gamemaster):

Frank sees a chance to use Anton as more than just a friend, but rather as a pawn in the game with the women.

The hand on the thigh

In this scene: Frank and Louise

For the players:

*It's late, and Louise has just tucked Anton in. Frank has asked her to come back to the couch. They need to talk.
When Louise returns to the living room, there's a bottle of red wine and two glasses on the table.*

The scene ends: When Louise goes to bed, either with Frank or alone.

The next day (she said yes last night)

In this scene: Frank, Anton and Karen

For the players: *Frank is very happy this morning. He's made pancakes and has served a lovely breakfast.*

Frank has let Louise sleep in today, since she was up very late last night.

Anton and Frank are having a great morning. Mum knows all too well what has happened.

The next day (she said no last night)

In this scene: Frank, Anton and Karen

For the players:

Frank is very happy this morning. He's made pancakes and has served a lovely breakfast.

Frank has let Louise sleep in today, she might be coming down with something...

Anton is the grownup

In this scene: Louise and Anton

For the players:

Anton wakes up and hears someone weeping. It takes a while for him to realise that it's Louise who's crying. Anton has never seen nor heard Louise crying before, and for the first time in his life he needs to be the one giving comfort.

The scene ends: When Anton comforts Louise and lets her know everything will be fine – Frank is going to take good care of you all.

Everything for my daughter

In this scene: Frank and Karen

For the players:

Karen is desperate to get back in Frank's good graces and offers herself to him, in the hopes of drawing Frank's attention away from Louise.

The scene ends: When Mum goes to bed, either with Frank or alone.

The next day (he said yes last night)

In this scene: Frank, Anton and Karen

For the players:

Frank is so happy this morning. He has prepared a wonderful breakfast spread. Anton and Frank are talking about fairy tales as always, and even Mum joins in.

The next day (he said no last night)

In this scene: Frank, Anton and Karen

For the players:

Frank is so very happy this morning. He's made pancakes and a great morning spread. Anton and Frank are talking about fairy tales as always. Mum isn't really eating and doesn't look like she's doing too well.

How can we stop Frank's game?

In this scene: Karen and Louise

For the players:

Louise and Karen use the fact that Frank is out of the house to have a serious conversation about the horrible situation they're in, and how Frank is (ab)using the both of them.

The final glass of wine

In this scene: Frank, Karen and Louise

For the players:

It's Wednesday. Anton has been tucked in, and Frank has asked Louise and Karen to join him in the living room. Today, he has put out three glasses and a bottle of wine. As he pours the wine, you all wonder – who will be the lucky one?

The scene ends: When either Louise or Karen decides to sleep with Frank.

Big choice, small hands

In this scene: Anton (everyone)

For the players:

Everyone's asleep. Anton wakes up, as he often does, to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Something is different. The air smells different, and it's a bit colder than usual. The forbidden door is open!

The scene ends: When Anton has made his choice. Too much noise might wake the wrong people. And it's always possible to simply close the door...

Roles

Mum/Karen

You'd think the worst thing that could happen was when your husband, Danny, died. But being a single mother and having to fight your own depression after losing the love of your life was even harder. You fell into a dark void and left all responsibilities to your daughter, Louise. You're failing your children and you know it – but you simply can't find the energy. You have a hard time getting up in the morning, but you manage to get to work every day. But once you've spent all your energy at work, there's nothing left when you come home to your children.

Earlier, you were always happy and had fun with your kids. There's nothing of that old you left today. These days, you basically don't want to spend any time with them. Louise used to be your best friend, and you could talk about everything. Anton had such a rich imagination, and Danny and him would always play.

You're starting to resurface. Whether it's because it's been so long since Danny died or something else, you don't know. But you long for intimacy, and have the energy for it as well. "Single mom with two kids" is a hard sell, but slowly, you started getting hits on your dating profile. That's how you met Frank.

The kids are beginning to notice that you're a bit happier. You don't dare telling them what's going on in your life, though. You don't want to give them the wrong idea – and even if you should meet a great guy, he won't be meeting the kids on the first date. That's still a ways off.

How you view the other characters:

Louise: You know you shouldn't depend so much on Louise. It's just so easy... and you can almost convince yourself that it's for her own good. It's such good practice for when she will move out soon. But hopefully not until you're in better shape. You often bicker over the smallest things these days. You never used to – back then, you could talk about everything. Boys. Make-up. Hopes and dreams. These days you never talk about anything, except housekeeping. Louise is so fucking tired, but doesn't she understand that so are you? Deep down you know that you're putting her in an impossible situation, but you really need her help. Why can't she understand?

Anton: He's there all the time. A-I-I the time. Is there no off-switch on that kid? You can't do anything but disappoint him. He has placed you on a pedestal, and the fall from up there would definitely kill you. You used to be the fun and silly Mum. It's worse when he's sad. You've never known how to comfort him, you always say the wrong thing. How will you ever get a healthy relationship again?

Frank: Finally! A man who is understanding, who doesn't push you when you can't take it. He's charming and makes you feel things you didn't think you had room for anymore. Maybe you can finally get over Danny. At least Frank makes you want to try.

Louise - 18 years old

... Dad is dead. It's like I can't hear the world around me. Everything is so fucked up. Mum won't tell me even the slightest thing about what happened, like I can't handle it. I can fucking handle it so much better than what she is capable of. She cried all the time. Seriously, every single day! She won't even prepare Anton's lunchbox anymore, she forgets every appointment, and she looks like shit. I'm sad too, and miss Dad. But honestly, how can she leave the house without make-up on?!

Louise, it's not easy being you. Everything rests on your shoulders, but you get no recognition for everything you're doing. You keep the house running, and you're even managing to get good grades at the same time. You're so tired all the time – but most of the time you're just sick and tired that your Mum can't get her shit together.

I have to help out more and more at home. Mum can't even bother to get up and send Anton to school, so that's on me as well. I take him swimming and drive him to Cub Scouts, I do the laundry, the dishes, and make dinner every day. It's so hard trying to take care of everything.

You're the family's protector. You do what you can to protect everyone – but most importantly, Anton. He's so small and innocent and doesn't deserve to get caught up in all this. You might have a tendency to veer into being overprotective.

Ever since Dad died, I've had so much responsibility. It's not fucking fair! Not fair that I have to take care of everything. It's not like Mum is doing her part. Fuck, I miss being able to talk to Mum. We always end up fighting instead.

How you view the other characters:

Anton: *it was so tough having to be the adult all of a sudden. Things were so much easier when I could just go to my room and shut the door. But he's so nice and patient with me. I keep making mistakes, but then he just gives me a hug. Anton is a bit special – he gets all weird as soon as Mum and me disagrees in the slightest.*

Anton is your primary focus these days. As long as he's happy and thrives, you're happy. You have kind of accepted the role as his protector and guardian.

I love him so much.

Mor/Karen: *I'm so tired of Mum taking advantage of me, leaving me with all the responsibility. But at least she goes to work every day, even on her worst days. I'm afraid she'll break even worse. Then I'll have to do literally everything. I just want for her to remember that I'm also her daughter. It seems like she's getting a bit better – sometimes I see her sitting in front of the computer, smiling. That's a little progress.*

I wish Mum wouldn't try to hold me back and make me feel bad every time I bring up moving out.

I actually used to have a really good relationship with her. I could go to her if I needed to talk, so when Dad died I really thought we'd be there for each other. But she won't let me in. I really need to be able to talk to my mom again.

Anton - 7 years old

I love reading. Because when I read, I go so far away from home. I go on the craziest adventures far, far away. I often dream that if I lived in an adventure, everyone would be happy and spend a lot of time together, all of us. We'd have fun, we'd eat dinner, all of us, together, and we'd sleep in a huge bed and share everything! And then one day Mum would find a new Dad, and everything would be all better again.

Your father died. At first, you didn't understand. Mum cried all the time, and every time you asked where Dad was, it just kept getting worse.

Dad was my bestest friend. We built forts, made up fairy tales and read so many books. I miss my best friend. Luckily, Louise is super cool and keeps trying to make up new stuff for us to do.

Anton has difficulty dealing with conflicts and doesn't like it when people fight. It feels like they're letting him down, every time they involve him in a conflict. Mum never comforts Anton when he's sad, she always tells Louise to take care of him.

You have noticed that Louise always covers for Mum, at least when she isn't fighting her.

Anton misses being a whole family, because he's not doing well in school either. Anton doesn't like school. He loves to learn, but is bored in school and has no friends. He doesn't like having to go to Cub Scouts or swim practice, but keeps doing it, just to get out of the house with his sister.

Anton needs to be seen. That's why he's also less critical when considering just who is giving him attention. He really misses having a friend who's completely in his corner.

How you view the other characters:

Louise: This last year, you've become real close. You didn't use to have a lot in common, since she's so much older than you. She always tells you what to do and when to do it. She knows your schedule every day. It's amazing and super annoying at the same time. Sometimes it feels like it would be easier to go back to when she didn't have to be so grown-up all the time.

The worst thing about Mum and Louise fighting all the time, is that it almost always feels like it's your fault. They always fight because Louise thinks it's too hard having to take care of you all the time.

Mum/Karen: You miss your mother. She always used to be so happy and nice. She was never the one who comforted you when you were sad; that was dad. But Mum was the one who was always joking and happy. Now she's just... nothing. It's like she doesn't even like you. She always avoids you and often says stuff like "Can't you just ask Louise?"

You loved how Mum was always making jokes. She used to come up with small games. One time, you opened your lunchbox, and the mouse had taken a bite out of every piece of food and left a piece of chocolate instead! She used to be so much fun.

I really hope she gets back to the way she was. Soon.

Frank

Frank has lost his family – they left him. His problems with control and his violent outbursts because too much for them. He has convinced himself that they are dead. Frank has stalked Karen for a while, and when she finally "notices" him, Frank seizes the occasion to have a family again.

Frank is very sick, but has no insight into his own psyche. Frank has a clear picture of how things should be – and when that picture crumbles, he explodes. There is a very slim margin for error before Frank believes others are not play their part.

Frank changes his mind all the time, but if he's disappointed in you, it's very hard for him to forgive and forget. The only one he's good at forgiving is Anton – who get's a lot more rope than the others.

How you view the other characters:

Karen/Mum: Karen said yes to your date, and to you. So now she's yours. But she pales in comparison to the expectations you had of her. You had assumed that once you got home, she'd liven up and become a good mother again. But she's stuck in her old patterns. You just need to push on with your new traditions – if she finds a new routine, she'll be what you want of her. The next time you get intimate, she won't be affected by the spiked red wine. That's going to be really nice.

Anton: He's just a little kid. So you're very forgiving if Anton might say or do something wrong. At the same time, he's a pawn in your game, because if you make Anton like you, it will be much easier to control the rest of them. So your plan is to get close to Anton, in a pleasant and convincing way.

Louise: Maybe, if Karen doesn't work out, Louise can take over the role as Mum. Anton is already viewing her as more of a mother than Karen. Louise is really a hot little number, and it's really hard not to see her as an adult, when she's acting the way she is.

To Frank's player:

You're calculating, but nice and warm-hearted. You can be charming, while also being hard to figure out.

You're keeping an eye on everyone. It's always nice having something to use against them if they're misbehaving.

You have an important job of balancing being lovable and loathsome. You'd never hurt or be mean to Anton, as he is simply too young. But Karen and Louise is another story completely...

Throughout this story, you will play the most important role in the new life of this family. You will build a relationship with Anton that borders on infatuation, and you will be the driving force behind a love triangle with Karen, Louise and yourself – a triangle with you pushing both of them to be with you or face the consequences.

You should feel more than welcome to add rules throughout the game. Remember, Frank, that you control everything in the home – so it's perfect to show this by inventing new rules.

Because you have so much power over the story, you also have a lot of responsibility resting on your shoulders. You will be giving the other players something to play up against. You're the villain with everything that entails, and by the end of the story, the others will have the option of leaving you – let's hope you haven't made that choice easy for them.

Handout A

Meta-rules

1. *No talk about what Frank does to you between the scenes (everybody knows, but nobody talks about it).*
2. *Everybody knows everything that's going on. You can't choose not to hear anything because you're sleeping, or for any other reason – the walls are simply too thin.*
3. *There will be no scenes with direct violence, rape or sex. **The gamemaster will always cut the scene before that happens***

Frank's rules

1. *Frank is always in charge.*
2. *Never close the door to Frank's or your own rooms.*
3. *Everyone must participate in every meal.*
4. *No phones, Internet, etc. It's not healthy (no contact with the outside world).*
5. *Frank can always make up new rules as needed. Frank is always in charge.*

Handout B

For Anton in the scene: Fear makes you do nothing

- 1: Why are you so scared that you wake up in the middle of the night?*
- 2: Explain why you're afraid to go to the bathroom, even though you really, really need to pee.*
- 3: End the scene by explaining how you end up wetting the bed.*