

Les Petites choses oubliées

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Back-cover

In the beginning everything was magic; you loved each other so much. But, as time passed, something went wrong. The breakup was too painful for you. So, one day you enter the cabinet of a psycho-surgeon, in order to undergo an erasing procedure. Your memories of this relationship will be completely removed. But, if some fragments remained, would you give yourself another chance?

An [example of play](#) may be found on the Adept Press forum.

Before playing

Presentation

Les Petites choses oubliées is a game for two players whose goal is to narrate, using everyday life pictures, some of the bitter-sweet memories of a couple. A play lasts for about one hour.

The game is divided into three movements. The first is used to picture the meeting of the soon-to-be couple. Each player unveils their character by portraying some of their particularities.

At some point, their relationship becomes flawed somehow and they decide to break up. This is so painful that they willingly decide to undergo an erasing procedure. Each player takes turn in describing some memories of the relationship. They use pictures as inspiration and the partner may react to this by providing some nuance.

Finally, the players explore the future of their character in a scene set after the surgery.

Preparation 10'

Each player secretly selects six printed or digital pictures that inspire them. Among those pictures, there must be at least one object and one activity. However, portraits are not allowed.

Everyday life in all its disorderly charm is a better starting point than a polished and posed subject. Personal pictures of a quirky nature provide the best basis for play. Choose among your own pictures the ones that already tell a story; a messy apartment after a party, a bicycle in a water canal, a car trunk packed the rim with all kinds of stuff.

The pictures will be used as a starting point to invent the memories of the relationship between the two characters. The players exchange the pictures before the game begins.

The encounter

Setting the stage 5'

The game begins by the creation of two characters; two fundamentally good people. Of course, like everyone, they have their flaws, but they were fully engaged in this love story. They weren't toxic

people who tried to take advantage of the other or to make them suffer voluntarily. First, the players establish the setting in which their characters meet. Then, each player secretly chooses three little things that their characters love to do or dislike to endure and that can be expressed in the chosen setting. For example if the setting is “at an official meeting for new citizens”, a player could choose “love to wear eccentric socks”, “always has to align everything within reach” and “hates to walk on the wrong side of the street”.

The opening 10’

The players then take turns to narrate what their character is doing and how they become somehow attracted to each other. To do that, the player can freely base their narration on the little things of their characters. One way to do this is to imagine the scene as if it was happening in a movie, and thus describe everything from an exterior point of view, using the third person singular.

For example, a player could start like this: “Just before the mayor begins her speech, a man in his thirties walks into the room. His clothes are quite classic. But, as he takes a seat at the back, one can see that he’s wearing flashy yellow socks.” The other player then takes their turn.

Each player's intervention should at least contribute a new significant information, description or action, and then the other player continues. They go on like this at least until each character's tree little things have been mentioned and until we can see why they like each other. This part provides an opportunity for both players to discover the characters and their mutual attraction. The players should feel free to make it last as long as they want.

The erasing procedure

Context

The next events take place at an unspecified moment after the break-up of the couple in the cabinet of a mnemonic psycho-surgeon. The players know that their characters have done all they could to stay together, but that something went wrong. The break-up was so painful that they both individually went to see this specialist. By drawing an emotional map of the memories, the psycho-surgeon may then remove all traces of the other, of the pain and of the procedure itself. The characters are admitted to an interview where they describe some memories of the relationship using pictures. This allows the technician to locate the root of the memories that need to be erased. The psycho-surgeon keeps a recording of the appointments.

The memories 30’

Taking turns, each player chooses a picture among those they received. Using the main subject or a comical detail as an inspiration, they describe a memory of their character. These memories might illustrate:

- What they love about each other or about the couple: personality, values, habits or interests;
- What they dislike or what is maddening;
- Recurring problems of the relationship;

- Significant moments in the couple's history: first argument, signs of commitment;
- Causes or events that triggered the break-up or the decision to undergo the procedure.

Every description must contain a concrete example of an event and explore the emotions this memory brings up for the character. The player can also base their narration on the encounter or on another memory. The memories aren't required to be told in the order in which the events occurred. One way to do this is to describe the memories from the character's vantage point, using the first person singular.

For example, a player chooses a picture representing the luminescent sign of a Chinese fast train. One of the players says: "We were travelling through China on a very fast train. When I saw we were racing along at 302 km/h, I was struck by how fast everything was passing by. I started wondering if we'd have the time to do all the important stuff in our lives or if we were completely missing the essential things. This train was like the time, flitting by. Straight ahead."

Once the memory is told, the other player has four possibilities:

1. Remain silent: they accept the memory as it is, without giving their character's point of view.
2. Continue the memory: they carry on the narration in the voice of the character that was just talking. However, the content has to be about their own character. In other words, they can't ascribe past actions to the partner's character. For example: "He noticed something was wrong, but he didn't insist, maybe he was too scared."
3. Offer an alternative description: the same events are retold through their character's point of view and experience, without referencing the initial memory. For example, still reacting to the same memory: "She was often lost in her thoughts. She'd never share what she was thinking about. Riding this Chinese train, she suddenly went quiet. It was impossible to carry on our conversation and to pull her out of her day-dreaming. Only after our break-up did I realize that on this day, she was very frightened by the pace of our life, perhaps also her youth fading away. But at the time, I didn't understand what was going on."
4. Ask a question: play the psycho-surgeon and ask a question in order to clarify the emotions felt at the time or the events themselves. The question doesn't have therapeutic virtues; it's just a clarification for mnemonic purposes. It's also not a moral judgment on what the player just told. The initial narrator then answers briefly. For example: "Did you have a conversation about it?" "Yes, but only much later. At the time, I didn't want to spoil the trip."

These choices give an opportunity to depict another viewpoint on the events and the relation. The characters are good people and if their break-up was so painful, it was because they were sincerely hopeful. There were probably a lot of misunderstandings and behind the clumsiness there were surely good intentions.

The player then moves on to the next picture, without any possibility to intervene on this passage anymore. Five pictures are used in this manner by each player. The leftover one represents one of the numerous memories that will be completely lost after the procedure.

The epilogue 5'

The player then think about the story they just discovered together. They speak freely about what they thought of the characters and the couple. The discussion has to address the following questions. Some may seem obvious for both players and don't need to be longly discussed, and others may demand a little more thought.

- Did the characters seem happy in the relationship?
- What went wrong between them?
- Why did they choose to undergo the procedure?
- Do they deserve a second chance?

Once the players have discussed these points, each player describes a final scene for their character, which takes place some time after the procedure. How do they feel? What are they doing? Did they keep or retrieve some memories of the couple? Any explanation is possible: perhaps the procedure wasn't a complete success, or maybe someone gave them the psycho-surgeon's recording.

Do they meet again? If yes, under what circumstances? And... was the encounter really the first one?

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Credits

Role-playing games

Shades (2005), by Victor Gijsbers.

Breaking the Ice (2005), by Emily Care Boss.

S/lay w/me (2009), by Ron Edwards.

Prosopopée (2012), by Frédéric Sintes.

Bliss Stage (2007), *Clover* (2011), and *Hot Guys Making Out* (2013), by Ben Lehman.

Movies

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004), by Michel Gondry, Charlie Kaufmann and Pierre Bismuth, with Kate Winslet and Jim Carrey.

Amélie (2001), by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Guillaume Laurant, with Audrey Tautou and Mathieu Kassovitz.

A Very Long Engagement (2004), by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Guillaume Laurant and Sébastien Japrisot, with Audrey Tautou and Gaspard Ulliel.

Dark City (1998), byf Alex Proyas, Lem Dobbs and David S. Goyer, with Rufus Sewell and Jennifer Connelly.

Questions for playtesters

After reading

Was the text clear enough for you to contemplate the possibility of playing the game?

Where would you like more guidance?

After playing

Is 6 a good number of photographs? If not, would you like more or less?

Does the structure of the game make sense to you? Did it go smoothly?

Do you think the four possibilities of reactions to memories are enough? Did you use the psycho-surgeon's question? If yes, how?

What do you think of the "little things"? Quaint, touching, silly, petty, distracting, colourful, etc.?

Did you ever feel you had to make decisions in a way that didn't seem appropriate? If yes, when?

Where you ever stuck (not just contemplating possibilities, really stuck)? If yes, when?

What did you think? Was play satisfying? Would you play again?

Who did you play with (relationship-wise)? Who would you consider playing this game with in a possible future?

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