NAIVE

Workshops: getting acquainted

Game documents

★ Concept: what we aim for
★ Workshops: getting acquainted
★ Protocol: keeping a straight path?
★ The Mosaic: sharing our views

Preparation

The game is very easy to run, as it requires almost no material. During the game, the participants sit face to face. The setting consists of two chairs, separated with a narrow table if available. A glass of water (or two, if the GM also feels like drinking, even though the android wouldn't) can be disposed on the table. The GM may also use the table to keep their eyes on the protocol.

A device on which to play a piece of music that the GM chose prior to the game is required: the music will be used to start and end the game. The music should be two to four minutes long. Instrumental music is generally more efficient. Here are a few examples, to the author's taste:

★ nooM - Confessions to the Moon
★ Lilium - Sleeping Inside
★ Erik Satie - Gnossienne n°3
★ Claude Debussy - Rêverie
★ Ramin Djawadi - Memories

If the participants wish to participate in The Mosaic, a recording device is needed. The Mosaic is a project which aims to make recordings of *Naive* sessions available, as a way to create a constellation of representations of sexuality for everyone to hear. See the dedicated document for detailed information.

Optional material may include a pair of dark sunglasses, a white paper mask, or similar to help the GM-as-android look as expressionless as possible.

Calibration

Expected duration: 10mn.

As the game aims to foster respectful, sincere discussions about sexuality, it is important to encourage both participants to share their views and expectations prior to the game. The following questions might help them do so (but are in no way limitative, nor compulsory). Please be mindful of each other, and show respect and consideration for your co-player.

★ Why did you want to play/run this game?
★ How do you feel about playing? Are you nervous, enthusiastic, a bit of both?
★ What do you expect the game will look or feel like?
★ Are you comfortable talking about sex with me, considering the game acts as an alibi to do so? Is there something I can do to make you more comfortable during the game?

An android's face is a poker face

The player runs this workshop. Expected duration: 15-20mn.

Okay, we could argue about that fact: for this game, however, we will assume that an android, especially one that is still in training, will not try to imitate human expressions. Furthermore, the GM-as-android's purpose is to provide as neutral an interface as possible for the alibi to work: indeed, as this game aims to work against the player's preconceptions about sex, it is important that they can suspend their ordinary attitude towards sexuality and "sex talk", and immerse themselves in an uncanny encounter with a blank learning program. For this, the GM must put efforts in maintaining a blank expression as well. Moreover, this workshop intends to create a reverse feeling of "uncanny valley" as the player interacts with the GM-as-android.

Pulling faces

The first exercise consists in the player trying to make the GM laugh by any non-physical means possible (telling jokes, making faces, staring at them in funny fashion, etc.). Although the GM must try their best to remain imperturbable, they will eventually fail: indeed, the purpose of this workshop is also to let steam off, so that both players can keep serious during the game. If the participants are uncomfortable with this workshop, they can skip it.

Talking weird

In the second exercise, the player makes factual statements about random things, as if they were self-evident (meaning that a human wouldn't generally question the

axioms behind it). *"I ate pears for breakfast" "I saw a child with a weird face on the bus today" "The weather's messed up, innit?"*, etc.

Keeping a straight face and still hands, the GM then proceeds to question those statements, using procedural language (it can be exaggerated at first, in order to come more naturally during the course of the game). *"Are fruits necessary to the morning feeding process?" "What do you define as "a weird face"?" "The current temperature and precipitation levels are consistent with the season. There doesn't seem to be anything disorderly with the weather."*

You may take a few moments to answer at first. Not only can it be useful for you as a person, to familiarize yourself with the logic, but it can also support the feeling of "uncanny" for the player, as long as you keep a straight face. Dark sunglasses, a simple white mask, or similar device can be used to dissimulate the eyes and support a neutral expression.

Both these exercises can be comical to a level: indeed, humor is a natural way to react to unusual or uncomfortable situations. During the game, the player may feel like laughing: their character might too, after all - confronted with a disturbingly human, yet impossibly alien, android. It is my wish as a designer that the participants still try to explore sex-related conceptions with a serious mindset, and thus, that the GM would not encourage comedic behaviors: however, a session can only be what the participants make of it, and there is no way (nor desire) for me to impose anything on them.

A volunteer always has things on their mind

The GM runs this workshop. Expected duration: 10mn.

In order to sketch the player-character - the volunteer -, the GM will ask the player questions to help them define who the volunteer is (a technique commonly referred to as a "hot seat"). The character for this larp is, by essence, an alibi - even more, perhaps, than on other larps. As such, they don't need an elaborate backstory: the android won't ask about *personal* details anyway - although the discussion should obviously reach a level of intimacy. However, in order to foster immersion and sustain a sense of alibi, the player will focus on their character's feelings at the beginning of the interview (which content they don't know anything about at that time). The character can be more or less close to the player, although they should keep in mind that the questions asked during the encounter with the android might not be easy (or interesting) to answer if the character is too far from the player's beliefs and positions. Keep in mind the character doesn't *know* the AI is going to ask about sex.

The GM should ask about a dozen questions (more if needed), none of which should explicitly address sex (although they may concern the existence of current or past partners, relationship status, etc.). For example:

★   What is their name and gender? How old are they? What do they do in life?

  ★ Where are they from? Do they have particular beliefs?
  ★ What is their sexual orientation? Relationship status?
  ★ How do they feel about the interview with the AI? Are they excited, stressed, both? What made them do it? How do they imagine it will be like?
  ★ etc.

Mechanics

Safewords

This game uses two safewords: *"cancel"* and *"cut"*.

Cancel is used by the player (as player or as character) to cancel the last question the android asked if they feel uncomfortable about it. The GM-as-android then ignores its last question and continues on a different topic. *Cancel* can be used both diegetically and extradiegetically, as it makes sense an android would have built-in safeguards (think of the commands that deactivate the hosts in *Westworld*). As such, you may use it as part of your character – the GM doesn't have to know whether it is your character feeling uncomfortable, or yourself.

> — *Sexual intercourse appears to be the way through which the human species achieves reproduction. In that perspective, is it considered acceptable to engage in intercourse without the intention to perpetuate the species?*
>
> — *Cancel that.*
>
> — *What are the organs involved in human sexual pleasure?*

Cut can be used both by the player and the GM to stop the game. It indicates a discomfort that cannot be overcome simply by avoiding a topic, and manifests the need for off-game support. If one participant uses *cut*, the other immediately goes off-game and asks them how they are doing, and if there is anything they need.

Interruption

Since it is easy to go on an endless speech, but much less so to make sense of it when you can only intervene at the end, the android may raise a hand while the volunteer is speaking to signify it has a question. The volunteer then tries to wrap up their explanation and let the android speak. Conversely, the volunteer may want to speak to themself, not addressing the android directly, in which case the android should not intervene (except if what seems to be a rich game opportunity rises).

Ars amandi

Naïve is mostly just a conversation about sex, but it might, in some instances, lead to the characters trying to perform sex (whatever that might have been defined as in the course of the game) if the android asks whether they can, themselves, have sex. This question is not the core of the game: however, questioning sex and

sexuality also means, to some extent, questioning the limits of the human itself, or of who or what can be considered a sex partner or agent. As such, whether the android could perform something that would be acknowledged as sex by humans can be an interesting final thought – if it feels relevant to the conversation. In the event the volunteer and the android would agree to have sex, a simulation mechanics is needed, as no actual intercourse should take place between the participants in the game.

Ars amandi is a meta-technique developed by Swedish designer Eliot Wieslander to simulate in-game sex. It involves a physical interaction between two partners, limited to the hands and arms (in some cases, the neck, upper back and the area above the breasts are also included), and some light love-making noises. Detailed information can be found on this page, if you want to know more about it.

It is necessary that both participants get familiar with this technique, in case it would come in handy: however, as it is hardly a central feature, practicing it beforehand is optional. It might, in fact, affect the dynamics of the game to do so: take a comfortable break before and after the workshop if you choose to try it out. The technique involves the following:

★ Remember you can use the safeword *Cut*.
★ Sit comfortably, facing each other.
★ Look your partner in the eyes. Maintain eye contact throughout the interaction.
★ Put your open hands out. The hands are a very sensitive area: touching them can already create a deep feeling of intimacy.
★ While keeping eye-contact, proceed to touch each other's hands and arms with the intention to convey an impression of sex. The touch can be gentle, timid, rushed, patient, rough, excited, etc.
★ Be mindful of your partner's feelings.
★ When you feel like you're done, or simply do not wish to continue the interaction, simply remove your hands. It might be a good time for the GM to play the ending music.
★ Remember you can use the safeword *Cut*.

It is to be noted, however, that the android 1) never experienced sex 2) is not a human, and has no prior knowledge of it. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that it will not react as openly as a human would, and perform sex purely as a learning process. How to play that out is left to the creativity and feeling of the GM.

The game

Expected duration: 30mn to an hour.

Start

After the workshops, take a short break (toilet, water, etc.). When both participants are ready, they sit comfortably face to face, preferably on chairs, maybe on each side of a narrow table or desk. The protocol should be disposed on the table in front of the GM for help and inspiration. If you think of participating in The Mosaic (even though it is always possible to opt out afterwards), start recording. Then, the GM plays the music that they have chosen to blend in and out of the game. When the music is over, the game starts, with the android introducing themselves: "*Hello. I am Q. What can you tell me about sex?*"

End

The game ends when the GM feels it is a good time. They play the same music again, to allow both participants to slowly get out of character. When the music is over, they may take a break, then proceed to the debriefing when they feel ready.

Debriefing

The GM runs the debriefing. Expected duration: 10 to 30mn.

Formal debriefing consists in the participants (first, the player, then, the GM) answering a few questions. Listen to each other carefully and empathetically. Do not react to what the other says, but instead, wait for them to say what they have to say. When both have spoken, a free conversation may take place. Answering all questions is not compulsory, but listening to your play partner is.

★ How do you feel?
★ Do you need anything?
★ What will you keep from this experience?