



fish

fucking

by Karolina Soltys

Title taken from the poem [Fish Fucking](#) by Michael Blumenthal.

*A world so beautiful, so divine in its generosity
that even the fish make love, even the fish live
Happily ever after, chasing each other, lustful
as stars through the constantly breaking water.*

About the larp

In this 2 hour online or in-person larp we'll explore romantic relationships in a setting where fish evolved legs, developed intelligence, started living in cities, working in corporate jobs, and forming romantic relationships with all the trials and tribulations known to human couples. However, they still kept the mating strategies they used back in the ocean, be it having to draw a really beautiful circle in order to mate, permanently merging with their partner after copulation, or even having to devour them. Will play several scenes of the relationship getting increasingly serious, from their first date, through their decision whether to commit to having children, to the implications of that choice.

While there are some lighthearted elements in this larp, it can also get quite emotional. It may include topics like codependence, grief, childlessness, inadequacy, break-ups, jealousy, being misunderstood. However, there is no play on non-consensual sex. The larp uses a quite "sexy" sex meta-technique (mirroring each other's sensual movements), but it is no-contact and the players are always in control of their own bodies.

The larp works for any number of players between 2 and infinity, and can be played online or in person. I'll describe the 4-11 player online version first, and then explain the changes needed for 2-3 or 12+ players, or for in-person play. The players need to be 18+. The larp isn't recommended for absolute beginners to larping.

The players will need a private room and a stable video connection. Some characters will need a pen and some paper. The players are encouraged to wear clothes that make them feel sensual, and perhaps adjust the lighting to make it more romantic. Optionally, you can listen to [sensual music](#) together (e.g. using [watch2gether](#)).

Safety

The safety of the players is more important than a cool scene. Escalate slowly and take care of yourself and each other – if you're getting uncomfortable, say "**off-game**" and calibrate with the other players (or disconnect/leave the room if you need).

Setting

A world almost exactly like ours, but rather than just one intelligent species, it is inhabited by 5 equally intelligent species:

- **anglerfish**, who in order to breed need to merge into one individual
- **pufferfish**, for whom successful mating depends on one partner being able to draw a really beautiful circle
- **mantisfish**, for whom copulation ends with one partner killing the other
- **manakinfish**, for whom mating has to be assisted by a third individual
- **clownfish**, who are fiercely competitive and need to establish clear dominance even within romantic relationships

These species successfully coexist, work together, form close friendships, share the same spaces. There is no systematic speciesism, and various societal and legal accommodations have been developed to ensure a fair and functional society (e.g. mantisfish mating isn't considered murder).

In most of these species, an individual is born as a specific biological type¹. In order to successfully reproduce, they have to do it in a very specific way, which is described in the respective section. All

¹ In biology it would be called "sex", but I purposefully wanted to avoid drawing any parallels to real world sex, gender, gender roles etc.

these species are capable of having sex just for pleasure, which doesn't have to conform to the same restrictions, or have the same repercussions, as reproductive sex.

You can tell which species (and which type within a species) someone is by the colour of their gills, which by now are purely decorative. Other than that, there are hardly any visible differences between the species – they all evolved in parallel and, conveniently, ended up looking very much like humans! Psychologically, all of them also very much resemble humans, though some species are slightly more likely to exhibit some traits (e.g. clownfish on average tend to be a bit more competitive, pufferfish – artistic, etc.). Note: it is important that the players understand they're not playing fish with flippers living underwater, they're playing humanoid "fish" capable of e.g. riding a bike, and that the setting is pretty much the same as the modern world, so the couples can discuss e.g. a romantic trip to Paris or quarrel about a failed investment in bitcoin – essentially, we're playing "humans with strange mating strategies".

In this larp, we will explore romantic couples (or, in the case of the manakinfish, a thruple), who want to have biological children.² They all work in different roles for the same big company – perhaps this is how some of them met their partners.

Sex meta-technique

There will always be one leading partner, the other will be the follower. The character initiating sex will be the starting leader. The leader will touch their own face, hair, neck and upper body in sensual ways, and the follower will mirror that with their own body. You can undress a bit, but by default keep nipples covered. The players will be given time during the workshop to discuss in couples their individual comfort zones and preferences when it comes to this technique, but the rule of thumb is: if as the follower you don't want to do what the leader is doing, simply don't do it. When the leader sees you didn't follow, they should dial back and try something less risqué. Be sensual, but don't have actual camsex.

After about 30 seconds, the leader should touch the webcam (or extend an arm towards the follower, if playing in person), and the follower does the same – this represents passing the leadership to the follower. Now, it will be that player dictating the movements, until they eventually pass the leadership back to the starting player.

Your characters can definitely keep on talking throughout the sex scene: it might make it more interesting and less awkward than doing it in solemn silence!

Workshop

1. Explain the setting and structure of the larp, discuss safety and demonstrate the sex meta-technique. (5 min)
2. Summarise, or ask people to read, the available characters. Each player chooses 2 species they'd most like to play, and the GM assigns them in a way that maximises satisfaction.

² Note about queerness: We will only be exploring relationships which are normative from the perspective of reproductive biology of fictionalised fish. There definitely exist some fish attracted to the same type, or to another species, or not wanting to have children at all, or not identifying with their type, or pursuing non-standard relationship structures – but there is no room to explore it in this 2 hour, 4 page larp. Let's assume that queerness is accepted in this society, but these characters happen to be dating, and want to have biological children, within reproductively viable configurations.

However, you'd be very welcome to take this setting and queer it up if that interests you! I'd be very curious to see love stories of two manakinfish betas, or of a polyamorous anglerfish thruple, or a pufferfish/clownfish meet-cute.

3. Brainstorm together some facts about the company the characters work for. What does it do? Are there any quirky office customs? (5 min)
4. Calibrate in couples/thruples. Discuss any emotional boundaries or preferences on where to take your story. State any boundaries when it comes to the sex meta-technique. Establish some shared facts about your characters' lives. (5-10 min).

Structure

The larp has 5 scenes: 3 are played in couples (or the manakinfish thruple), and 2 are a company-organised support group for prospective/new parents. Each scene will last about 15 minutes. Before starting each couples scene, have a brief out-of-character discussion to frame the scene, e.g. "How about the company cafeteria is really crowded and they have to sit together for lunch?", "Let's say it's now 5 years later and they've moved in together. The scene starts in their bedroom on a Sunday morning, I've just brought you coffee." When the scene draws to a natural close, or if your character would leave the scene, you can switch off your camera, or say "cut". Then, just wait until the GM announces the start of the next scene – you can talk out-of-character while you do so, e.g. discussing what happened to your characters in the meantime.

1. First meeting (or first date, if that's more interesting).
2. A discussion when they decide they would like to have children.
3. A company-organised support group for prospective parents. There will be 2 group chats; partners should go to different groups (the manakinfish will need to split 2-1 in any configuration they find the most interesting). The members of the support group are strangers or acquaintances at most, so they should introduce themselves. The intention of the scene is for the characters to discuss any doubts they have about reproducing, and try to give each other advice. Note: while we won't be playing on structural speciesism, it is fine for the characters to not be very well informed on the reproductive strategies of the other species, make wrong assumptions, or, if the discussion gets particularly heated, say things like "You're complaining about having to draw a circle?! You're so entitled! I'll have to completely give up my independence!".
4. The characters have decided that they want to try for a baby, and start having sex. Play through a few rounds of the sex meta-technique. After a few exchanges, it is time for the characters to make the final decision whether they want to try to reproduce. To signal this, one of the characters should ask "Do you really want to do this?". If the other character confirms, you should progress to the "climax" part, which is different for each species and explained in the respective sections. It should always be a consensual decision. It is equally valid and interesting for one or both characters to decide they don't want to reproduce, and move on to processing the dramatic implications of that: will they stay together and remain childless? Or will they break up and find partners with whom they can have children?
5. A year later, another company-organised support group. Gather in the same groups as before. If the anglerfish mated and merged, they should go to the same group. If the mantisfish mated and the Sacrifice was killed, the Sacrifice joins the same group as the Killer, but stays silent and has their camera switched off. This is mostly intended as a round of sharing epilogues.

Debrief

I recommend mentioning the concept of "[romantic bleed](#)" to the players if they are not yet familiar with it. The players should have an off-game chat with their partners to discuss how they are feeling about what happened in the game. To help bring the players back to real life, encourage them to mention to each other 3 differences between them and their characters.

Variants

For a 2-3 person game, instead of the 2 support group scenes, the players take turns giving inner monologues where their characters describe their feelings – the other players will hear these, but their characters won't. Note: in a 3-person game, the players have to play Manakinfish. A 12+ person larp is possible by essentially running multiple copies of this game in parallel.

In an in-person game, the partners should be sat facing each other, some distance apart, perhaps across a table. The sex meta-technique remains no-contact.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my lovely playtesters: Lu, Raúl, Ingrid, Sydney, Mike, Patrik, Andrea, Kit, Bea, Martyna.

Characters

Anglerfish

Types: Host and Dependant

Strategy: After mating, the Dependant merges with the Host, basically giving up their independent life to be a passive companion in the Host's life. The only remaining part of the Dependant's body will be their head, which will be sticking out of the Host's shoulder. The Dependant will still be capable of thinking and talking, but the Host will be in control of their shared body.

Meta-technique: During climax, the Host should have control. The Dependant's movements become smaller and smaller, and eventually they can only sit still and observe the Host climaxing.

Characters:

Host: An introverted software engineer.

Dependant: Extraverted, works in HR, has many friends and hobbies.

Pufferfish

Types: Creator and Assessor

Strategy: The Creator needs to draw a beautiful, elaborate circular pattern. The Assessor will only be physically able to mate with them if the circle is objectively good enough – even if they love their partner and really want to have children with them, they aren't capable of faking liking the circle.

Meta-technique: In scenes 2-3 the Creator should be drawing a circular pattern on a piece of paper. The Assessor should have a blank sheet of paper to mirror the movements in scene 4. In scene 4, during climax, they reveal their design to the Assessor. Then, they hand over control. The Assessor then either embraces the sheet of paper, or tears it up.

Characters:

Assessor: a graphic designer with a fine eye for art, working on improving the "O" in the company logo to make it more appealing to the pufferfish demographic.

Creator: accountant with no visual imagination, since getting together with the Assessor has been taking intensive classes on circle drawing but is undermined by lack of confidence

Mantisfish

Types: Killer and Sacrifice

Strategy: Mantisfish can only mate when they are 30. During the climax, the Killer has to kill the Sacrifice. Note: Sacrifices who haven't mated tend to age very quickly and die by 32.

Meta-technique: During the climax, the Killer should be in the lead. They mimic strangling themselves. The Sacrifice mirrors that, and dies. Note: it is okay to do the “strangling” on the chin, or on the collarbones, if you’re uncomfortable doing it on your neck.

Characters:

Killer: Sales representative. Was childhood friends with Sacrifice, then they became high school sweethearts. They have a very loving, perfect relationship.

Sacrifice: Sales coordinator. They always dreamt of becoming a writer, but they are only halfway through writing their novel when they turn 30. Maybe if they didn’t mate, they could finish it – but is that worth leaving their partner childless?

Manakinfish

Types: Omegas, Alphas and Betas.

Strategy: All Alphas are born as Betas. Betas tend to form close friendships with one other Beta. Over time, the more successful/confident/charismatic of the two becomes an Alpha, though initially there might be some uncertainty about which of them it will be. Beta helps Alpha approach Omega and win their affections. They are a constant presence in the initial years of the relationship between Alpha and Omega, helping Alpha be a good partner and resolving any conflicts. After Alpha and Omega finally mate, however, it is customary for Beta to disappear completely from the life of the couple to not interfere with the childrearing. Then, Beta becomes an Alpha and is ready to find an Omega of their own, and a Beta friend to help them create a relationship.

Meta-technique: Beta is motionless and observes Omega and Alpha mating, and suggests movements to Alpha when Alpha is leading. If the mating seems to be going well, Beta switches off their camera.

Characters:

Omega: A hiring manager. By now, Omega is in love with both Alpha and Beta.

Alpha and Beta: Alpha used to be a security guard, but after their friend Beta, who works in advertising, offered them a chance to model for an ad, Alpha has become the face of the company. Both Alpha and Beta are in love with Omega.

Clownfish

Types: No types.

Strategy: In each group of clownfish only the dominant two can reproduce (only achieving top or second-to-top status activates their gonads). Clownfish are fiercely ambitious and competitive, and even after forming a romantic relationship they tend to have a strong need to establish who is the dominant partner.

Meta-technique:

The regular sex metatechnique works slightly differently for you: while mirroring the leader’s movements, the follower also “struggles” against them. Rather than the leader passing control, the follower can “pry” their arm free to touch the webcam – the leader needs to follow, and that swaps control. During the climax scene, you can play towards making it more harmonious like the default meta-technique, keep struggling, or clearly establish dominance with the submissive partner giving up on fighting against it. (Note: the struggling absolutely should not represent non-consensual sex).

Characters:

A and B were both senior managers in the Department of Mergers & Acquisitions, competing to be made VP of that department – with the assumption that this would help them finally properly establish the dynamics of their romantic relationship (currently it’s “enemies who fuck”), and start a family. However, the department got split; A became the VP of Mergers, while B became the VP of Acquisitions. Their gonads are finally active, but they’re not sure how to proceed.

Appendix

Real pufferfish art

