

Medea's diary

a larp on human nature
by Lorenzo Trenti



It's not just the four of you passing a night in the woods. You are the fulcrum of many more things that will happen on Earth. And some of them will come back to read, write or rip the pages of your lives. Will your words and thoughts be the seeds of the sixth mass extinction?

Now I am Medea; my nature has grown through suffering.
(Seneca, *Medea*)

Setup

This is an asymmetrical larp that you can play in a gaming convention or other public venues where you can have a lot of people passing by; or you can play it outdoor, like in a park or a forest; or you can play it online. Play it at your discretion, applying safety rules where suitable (concerning health conditions, the use of public spaces, and so on). Sensitive themes include birth control, children's death, terrorism, climate crisis.

Aside from the facilitator role (probably it's you reading this text), you'll need a cast of 4 players with a fixed character, plus a supporting cast consisting of 1-10 players, that will alternate temporary characters. You can choose whether:

- you, the facilitator, play all the supporting cast;
- or, you gather 1 to 5 people and distribute the 10 temporary characters among them;
- or, you play in public and ask for volunteers to briefly play a supporting character and then go away.

If any of the players has children, they can be part of the supporting character (especially the one marked with a "C") as in-game children and roam freely around.

Print this entire document and also provide tape and pens. You can add stickers to identify the name of the main characters and the year from where every supporting character comes.

The game is meant to be played without prior knowledge of the characters from the players, but, if they have already read or played them, they can still play the game.

Every character has some questions that need to be answered, thus personalizing the backstory.

Game structure

The four main players will play a group of friends in their 20-something, going on a hike in the Italian Alps; they'll spend a night together before they part from each other and go to study in different parts of Europe. One of them, Maria Elena, is keeping a diary; this diary, in the future decades and centuries, will become the foundation of many movements, groups and even religions. This night marks a fulcrum in human history: people from the future will briefly appear during the night and will try to understand the origin of the sacred text of *Medea's diary*.

Explain to the players that the game will consist of alternating scenes:

- 5 minutes the main characters alone discussing things among themselves, while another player picks a random supporting character card and answers the questions on the sheet, thus fleshing out the character;

- 5 minutes the visitor appears and interacts with the main characters;
- the visitor asks a question to Maria Elena and then disappears;
- Maria Elena writes a new page of her diary (maybe the answer to the question, maybe something else) and sticks it to the wall.

This cycle will iterate 10 times, one for each of the supporting characters.

The pages of the diary are extra-diegetic so you can't interact with them. If you play in a public venue, they are the evergrowing byproduct of this larp scenario, that everyone can read (including occasional passers-by and players waiting to fill the role of supporting characters).

The characters won't leave the game space – give yourself an in-game reason if you need one – and will interact only verbally with each other, unless you define together a policy about touch.

If you can, try and have some sort of meal that the 4 participants can cook and consume during the night.

The Future History

This is the history of what will happen in the future, or perhaps what has already occurred in the original timeline from which some time travelers will appear. The behavior of the characters throughout the scenario might eventually alter these events in the epilogue.

- **2007:** The birth of Maria Elena De Angelis, Pietro Benedetti, Marcus Kirchner, and Niki Rumor.
- **2027:** Tonight's events. Maria Elena De Angelis chooses her life partner (Pietro Benedetti instead of Marcus Kirchner) and begins writing her diary. Niki Rumor is also present during the event.
- **2029:** Iris, the only daughter of Maria Elena and Pietro, is born.
- **2045:** Iris dies of a rare congenital disease. Maria Elena devotes herself entirely to the study of environmental biology and becomes a leading figure in the global scientific community. Her character is irreparably transformed, becoming cynical and pessimistic. By the end of the year, her husband Pietro divorces her, unable to recognize the woman she once was, and immerses himself in his own research in quantum physics.
- **2066:** Pietro dedicates himself to microparticle physics in an attempt to explore the possibility of altering the flow of time. It's unclear — even to him — whether he is driven by a desire to avert the incumbering environmental catastrophe or for personal reasons related to his relationship with Maria Elena.
- **2067:** Maria Elena De Angelis wins the double Nobel Prize in Chemistry and Peace for her research on environmental conservation. In her acceptance speech, she declares that humanity's last chance to reverse climate change is enforcing a strict one-child policy, to gradually reduce the global population. Despite fierce opposition, the measure is adopted by most nations: it becomes known as the *Pyongyang Protocol*. Marcus Kirchner, Secretary of the European Union, resigns in strong opposition to this plan.
- **2077:** Maria Elena De Angelis is killed in an assassination orchestrated by the Gaia's Children, a radical naturalist sect that never accepted restrictions on natural procreation. Niki Rumor, an old acquaintance of Maria Elena, is implicated in the assassination. The *M.E.deA.'s Diary* begins circulating clandestinely, turning Maria Elena into a martyr.

- **2079:** The Servants of Medea, a schismatic offshoot of Gaia's Children, emerge. Their motto, "We are Nature," reflects their belief that humanity must step aside and extinct itself to allow nature to reset through the Sixth Mass Extinction.
- **2126:** The environmental crisis arrives much sooner than expected. The planet is ravaged by biosphere depletion, and humanity, reduced to mere millions by both the crisis and the Pyongyang Protocol, teeters on the edge of extinction. The Servants of Medea remain the last organized religion.



Main characters

Maria Elena De Angelis

You are graduating in environmental biology and are here with your closest friends to spend one last night together, chatting, dreaming, and sharing hopes before each of you goes to study in different European countries.

For a few months, you've been in a relationship with Marcus, a boy who gives you a lot of security. However, Pietro, with all his awkwardness, intrigues you, and he's made it clear that he's interested in you. You will dedicate your time to only one partner: tonight might be the right opportunity to clarify your thoughts. He needs to be the right person to become the father of your many children.

You consider yourself a loving, patient person who listens to others.

- *Why have you never kept a diary until now?*
- *As you arrived at the place that will host you tonight, you noticed a small bird with a broken wing on the ground. How did you react?*

Pietro Benedetti

You are graduating in quantum physics and are here with your closest friends to spend one last night together, chatting, dreaming, and sharing hopes before each of you goes to study in different European countries.

You're an awkward nerd, not very good at social interactions, but you know you're a genius, and you suffer greatly because of this condition. Maria Elena attracts you for her confidence, intelligence, and kindness, but you have no idea how to make her understand that... and what hope could you have compared to her current boyfriend, Marcus?

You've decided that this will be an epochal night, a fulcrum for your lives, whose space-time coordinates will remain forever etched in the continuum (or at least in your mind).

- *What clever and incomprehensible metaphor will you use to explain this concept to your friends?*
- *Why have you always thought that if you ever had a daughter, you'd name her Iris? Why will you talk about it tonight?*

Marcus Kirchner

You are graduating in political science and are here with your closest friends to spend one last night together, chatting, dreaming, and sharing hopes before each of you goes to study in different European countries.

You are smart, charismatic, athletic, and come from a great family. You've always had the best in terms of schools, status, and girls. This has made you very confident, but you strive to be down-to-earth and tolerant of those who have been less fortunate.

For a few months, you've been in a relationship with Maria Elena. You like how she challenges you with her strong character.

- *Something happened at school that made you promise yourself you'd do everything possible for a fair and welcoming society when you grew up. What happened?*
- *At your age, it's rare to think about having children. Yet, you already know that you'd like to have some. How do you imagine them? Would you like to tell your friends?*

Niki Rumor

You are graduating in psychology and are here with your closest friends to spend one last night together, chatting, dreaming, and sharing hopes before each of you goes to study in different European countries.

You are easily angered and prone to mood swings, which might be the reason you've chosen this field of study. Still, you cannot stand illogical behavior or actions that harm others. Luckily, your friends are the best you could have found (and they are very patient with you).

Maria Elena is your best friend, and you always want to advise her for the best. But you feel that sometimes she doesn't fully open up to you.

- *You once killed a large animal. What happened? How did you feel? Why do you feel the need to tell this story tonight?*
- *Why do you believe you'll never have children? Why do you need to talk about this deeply personal issue tonight?*

Supporting characters

Introduction for every time traveling character

You come from the future, thanks to a quantic collider built by famed scientist Dr. Benedetti. Somehow it's been calibrated so it sends its user to a fixed moment in time in 2027, for a maximum of 5 minutes. You can't touch or be touched and you don't know if it's possible to change the past. Reveal things from your future at your discretion. Always end your journey with a question, then disappear before the answer.
(now go and read the Future History)

Remember that the supporting characters will be played in random order.



1.

Name: Mamadou Bagayoko

From year: 2066

You time traveled because: you are Dr. Benedetti's assistant and are the first human to test the machine. You always wondered why he broke in tears before entering the device and asked you to test it. You admire him so much that you didn't hesitate a second to risk your life for him. It's like a father for you, after all (*why? what happened in your life?*).

Question to Maria Elena: what's wrong with you?

2. [C]

Name: Nagasawa Yoichi

From year: 2067

You time traveled because: you already have one child and want to have at least one more. It's not easy to support a family, especially in your condition (*why? what happened in your life?*). The Pyongyang Protocol shocked you. If you can't change Maria Elena's mind, you might resort to armed protest.

Question to Maria Elena: why do you hate children?

3.

Name: Serge De La Fontaine

From year: 2068

You time traveled because: you were Marcus Kirchner attaché at the European Parliament. After his resignation, he fell into disgrace and now wanders as a homeless man. Thanks to his absence, your power has grown, but you've realized that falling from the top can happen in an instant (*why? what is your greatest fear?*). So you took the device and used it to look for Marcus at the beginning of his career.

Question to Maria Elena: are you aware that your actions can destroy the life of a man?

4. [C]

Name: Angela Calipari

From year: 2069

You time traveled because: You were a classmate of Iris before the illness took her away. On her deathbed, you promised to visit her mother. Then you grew up, started a family... but she didn't (*what did she say? what did you reply? what has held you back from talking to Maria Elena until now? why using a time machine?*).

Question to Maria Elena: what would Iris have wanted you to do, if she had still been alive?

5. [C]

Name: Vilho Tuomaala

From year: 2072

You time traveled because: you are an artist and an activist against the climate crisis. You created an event where the mythological story of Medea sacrificing her children was illustrated with giant comic panels as large as whole squares. The protagonist had the face of Maria Elena De Angelis, specifically to criticize her (*who destroyed your work? what did those who didn't appreciate it say?*). Now you have nothing left, and you want to face the woman you believe is responsible for your downfall.

Question to Maria Elena: how can you live creating these divisions among those around you?

6. [C]

Name: Abril Maldonado

From year: 2074

You time traveled because: you are a governor and one of the last to implement the Pyongyang Protocol. You delayed pushing the law because you wanted the chance to have more than one child, which attracted a lot of criticism (*how did the public find out about your intent? what was the worst protest you faced?*). Yet you believe that, overall, it is the only sensible solution to the problems of your time.

Question to Maria Elena: how do you withstand the hatred directed at you?

7. [C]

Name: Florence Aretino

From year: 2077

You time traveled because: you built the bomb that killed Maria Elena. You didn't know who would end up using it, but you suspected it (*how did you know Niki? why couldn't you say no?*). You have never had sympathy for those who limit others' freedom, but you are left with the pang of conscience that you may have contributed to killing the wrong person.

Question to Maria Elena: do you deserve to die?

8.

Name: Thanat Tansoongnen

From year: 2080

You time traveled because: Medea's diary has become the sole reason for your existence. You approached the Children of Gaia (*why? what traumatic event led you down this path?*), and you climbed the ranks, until you had the honor of briefly visiting the one who wrote the pages of your sacred book. Only fragments of it remain, and apocryphal versions also circulate, so the idea of tracing it back to the source excites you.

Question to Maria Elena: why did you write the diary?

9.

Name: Daisy Gonzales

From year: 2099

You time traveled because: humanity is increasingly sparse, thanks to you, Children of Medea. Your preachings, in cities now abandoned, are having more and more of an effect (*who still insists on having children? how do you manage this issue? why does it exhaust you?*). Now you have the chance to tap into the very source of your thought, to give new momentum and energy to your missionary activity.

Question to Maria Elena: what is the most important thing written in the diary?

10.

Name: Ursa Flores

From year: 2126

You time traveled because: there are few of you left. The difficulties are many, yet you do not complain, just as the ash tree that dries out or the raven chick that falls from the nest does not complain: because You Are Nature. Certainly, the stories remain (*what do you think you miss most about the world from a hundred years ago? what is the hardest aspect of life in your time?*). You have the chance to activate the machine one last time, which they say will bring you face to face with the one who wrote your sacred text.

Question to Maria Elena: what is your nature?

Ending the game

After the last time traveler has disappeared and Maria Elena has written down the last page in her diary (at least for tonight), it's time to wrap up things.

Every supporting character enters the gaming space and stays silent. The 4 main characters don't see them, but they're here as a memento of the future.

Now let everyone of the main characters speak about this night. What do they do? Everyone shares a phrase or two about what they will do in the future. Let Maria Elena speak as the last person, telling in loud voice what she'll write down as the last entry in the diary for this night. Who will she choose as her lover? What will she do next?

As for the future of the characters and humankind: it's yet to be written.

Curtain.