

SERAPH

The Key to all you Desire



Design Document



Journeys
& Tales

The Game Of Seraph

Seraph is a Nordic Style, mechanics light, occult thriller larp for 24 participants and 2 guaranteed reserves that deals with the topics of loss, desire, and how far people are willing to go to obtain what they want the most. It will be a personal, Type 2 experience focusing on deeply interconnected roleplay and giving players an intense, emotional game that doesn't necessarily guarantee a happy ending.

All characters crave something they cannot obtain. Some have lost a loved one, some have given up on a cherished dream, and others are consumed by longing. In desperation, they have turned to the occult and have spent the last 12-15 months in an online esoteric study group led by a man named Gabriel, who has the power to provide them with a chance to have what they desperately want.

With Seraph, we want to create a setting and characters that allows participants to lean in and have deep, intense, and meaningful interactions. We will use the "slow escalation" and tap-out system for in-game calibration and will have thorough workshops to ensure that both personal trust and understanding of the system are in place to create impactful play.

The larp is a Type 2 event that heavily focuses on close connections between characters and how these affect the decisions and actions of those around them. All characters entered the study group with a primary partner, such as a partner, family member, or similarly close relationship. Although characters have a close partner, participants are not required to sign up in pairs but will be able to identify people they want to play with

After working so long at a distance, everyone has gathered at Gabriel's retreat to meet in person and to summon a mighty angel named Sedaël, Holder of Keys. They will try to prove themselves worthy to Sedaël, and if they do, they will receive a key that will allow them to achieve their heart's desire. Gabriel has warned them not everyone succeeds in proving their worth and that Sedaël may demand more from them than they are willing to give up.

Before the weekend ends, characters must answer several difficult questions, and Sedaël grants them the opportunity to earn their key:

How far are you willing to go to obtain what you desire?

What are you willing to give up in exchange?

Is any cost too great to stop you when you're so close?

during the signup. We will pair people who do not identify a potential partner during the casting process.

While this relationship will be the most significant for each character, it will not be the only one. Everyone has come to know each other during the study group, but some formed closer bonds than others. These relationships with change and evolve during the game, devolving and developing as they meet for the first time in person and begin their final rituals.

The participants at the retreat will work to earn their key from the angel Sedaël, a feat that Gabriel has warned many people fail. They will need to confront the secrets, truths, and lies they have kept hidden from the people they are closest to and prove themselves worthy - to each other and Sedaël.



Setting and characters

During the early days of the COVID pandemic, you struggled to function and continue your life. You were terrified, helpless, and forced to confront your mortality and all of the desires that you had never achieved. But then you found him. *You don't remember exactly how you found Gabriel's Fellowship... but that doesn't matter. Within his study group, you found an eclectic group of individuals from all over the United States, all of whom were like you and suffering from a desire that was impossible to achieve.*

Over the next year, you studied and learned alongside your fellow devotees, even as some in the group drifted away, disappearing from the group and your memory. You learned esoteric history, and how Sedaël, judicious and generous, had influenced the lives of the world around you. There were lessons on rituals, self-

awareness, and desire, all of which you devoured as if the knowledge was as essential to you as air. These lessons have been powerful and terrible, and they've brought you close to the other participants, some of whom you are closer to than your own flesh and blood.

But now it's September 2021. Your studies have ended, and it's time to use what you've learned. You're gathering at Gabriel's retreat, ready to perform the ritual to summon Sedaël that can only happen every five years and to finally meet one another in person for the first time instead of over a computer screen. Your heart is filled with tension and excitement; Gabriel has promised that while Sedaël's demands may be steep, your unattainable dream is merely hours away... if you are worthy and willing to pay the price.

Each character in the game will be living somewhere in the United States when the game takes place and will come from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds. In general, no specific ages will be given for the characters on the sheet, but characters will range from 28 to 50 years old.

Participants are welcome to request specific character aspects at the time of sign up (*I would like my character to not work in the medical field, I would like to play a parent*) though we cannot guarantee that we will be able to accommodate all requests. Additionally, the sign up form will ask people to identify character triggers that they would not feel comfortable exploring in the larp, such as: *abuse by a family member, illegal drug use, infidelity, institutionalization, and murder.*

None of the characters are truly good nor truly bad; however, their opinion of themselves may be radically different than the opinions of those around them. Each character has a unique set of traits, both good and bad, that shape them and their actions, such as generosity, creativity, adaptability, courage, narcissism, envy, anger, and selfishness. However, all of the characters in Seraph share one abiding trait: desperation.

All characters will be written the second person (you) form and will be written ungendered to allow for more flexibility for the players and in casting. The sheets are expected to be 3-6 pages long.



Vision And Themes

At Seraph, we are portraying individuals who have a singular goal they are desperate to achieve. They've sought the occult as a last act to get what they want, and now need to find out if their heart's desire is worth what they will need to do and the price they will need to pay to earn it.

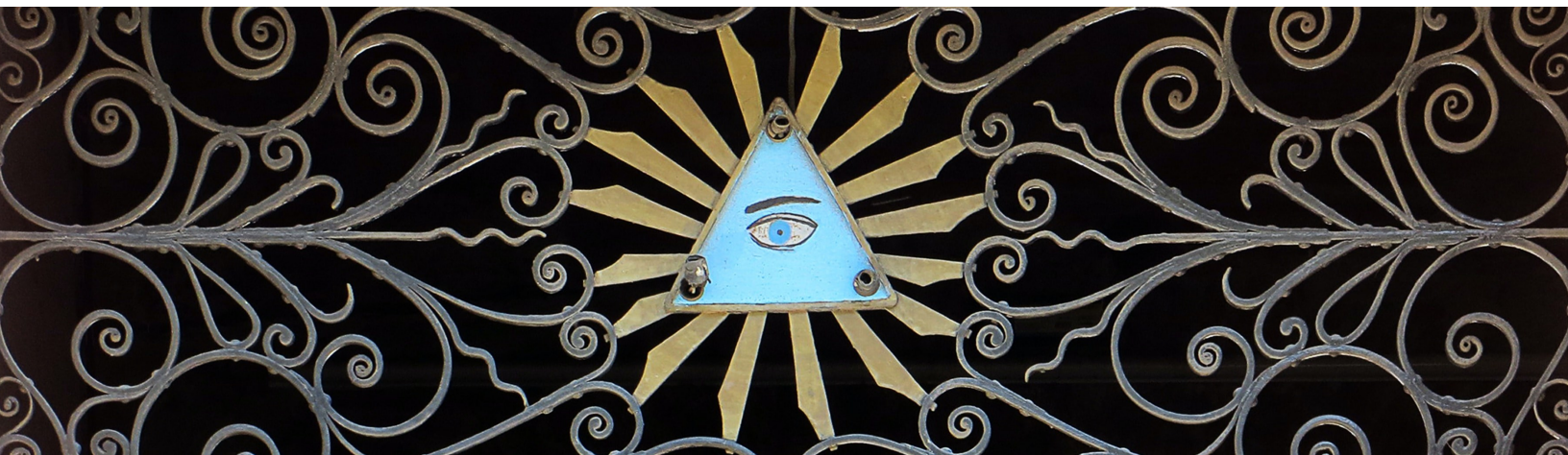
Through tight and transparent design, as well as extensive and thoughtful workshops, we will create a level of trust and confidence between the participants that will allow them to create very impactful and emotional roleplay throughout the weekend. The play style is immersive and heavily focuses on each character's personal journey. We want our participants to engage in close relationships and in safe exploration of boundaries, thoughts, and philosophies.

Throughout the game, our participants will have the calibration systems and trust to delve into hard, emotional play. All character sheets will have heavy themes, such as deceit, honesty, manipulation, romantic feelings or lack

thereof, and mental illness. Characters will need to confront these topics and explore how these themes affect themselves and the people around them in order to prove themselves worthy of achieving the key to receive what they want.

The occult setting is a backdrop to drive the story forward, and we will use rituals and like activities to evoke a mood and create impactful play. It is a setting piece and underlying guiding thread more than a mechanic or a system to be engaged with. Seraph is not about magic or using powers.

Additionally, we aim to create a story where some characters will fail in their quest to acquire a key from Sedaël for one reason or another. The ultimate decision on the story of the characters will lie with the players, but our goal is to make it possible to create a storyline where the tragic outcome may sometimes be a better choice than the happy one.



There will be many themes in Seraph that people may find challenging to play on. These include, but are not limited to, deceit, abuse, manipulation, romantic feelings or lack thereof, and mental illness. People who sign up to play will be given the opportunity to list which themes and topics they prefer not to engage with in their own character, but those themes and topics may still be present in the game. Participants must be comfortable leaning into these and other topics that are often difficult or challenging to discuss in real life; avoiding them or refusing to engage with these topics will affect the integrity of the larp and affect others' experiences.

Keywords are: Drama, supernatural, occult, type 2, loss, angels, rituals, sensual and romantic play, shouting, pushing, altercations, psychological manipulation, flirting, heartbreak, betrayal, toxic relationships, yelling and arguing, crying, hugging, touching, trust between players, unhappy endings.

Safety System & calibration mechanics

Journeys and Tales have a safety system with calibration mechanics in place to ensure players know what to expect at the larp, how to have calibrations with fellow players when a scene is taking place, and if necessary, how to leave the scene and be taken care of afterward.

For Seraph, our safety system is built around informed consent before the game, which includes: pre-game information with themes and ingredients, baselines for interaction, expectations for personal responsibility and enthusiastic consent, and how to use slow escalation and tap-out mechanics. We've chosen this system as we believe it will allow for the most immersive and intense roleplay at this event and create a very unobtrusive system for calibration and interactions.

Pre-Game Information:

- **Themes and ingredients.** We will provide clear and accurate information on the topics and themes of the larp and characters. That way, everyone will know what to expect in the larp and opt-in. This information can be found on the website, in the design document, and for individual characters once they are distributed.
- **Baselines for Interaction.** Players should be comfortable with the following actions from other players as a general part of the larp: shouting, pushing, general altercations, psychological manipulation, yelling and arguing, crying, hugging, general touching, romantic play, and sexual situations.
- The exceptions to this are that we expect everyone not to grab people from behind and also not grab the "beach body," i.e., the area covered by a bikini.

Ownership of interactions:

- **Personal Responsibility.** We expect you to have self-knowledge of your own limits and be responsible for all actions that happen to you and your character. You are responsible for your boundaries and safety and communicating these clearly to other players and organizers.
- **Enthusiastic Consent.** We want everyone to feel safe and secure, and we expect players to show enthusiastic consent to scenes and interactions. We ask everyone to demonstrate this by being present and calibrating accordingly. If a player does not give a clear "yes" for interaction, it should be considered a "no," and further slow escalation should continue.

Calibration mechanics during play:

- **Off-game Discussion.** We expect everyone to calibrate their play through off-game discussions. These can happen during the workshops, off-game periods, before big scenes, or even from interactions outside this larp. The goal is to get a general idea of how the interactions should go between players and let that guide the play.
- **Slow Escalation.** Our aim with this during play is to have a seamless, unintrusive, and intuitive system. Slow escalation means clearly communicating your intentions in character and getting a clear, enthusiastic response before you proceed. Essentially we're talking about dropping not-so-subtle hints about your intentions. Examples could be:
 - "I'm going to beat you up!" "Well, do your worst" *starts physical interactions.*



- “Oh my, you look so good I could kiss you” “Well, I might just let you” *slowly leans in for a kiss.*
- “If you keep that up, I will shove you against that wall and teach you!” “That does not sound fun” *doesn’t move forward with the interaction.*
- Players will read each other’s body language, listen to their words, and respond accordingly. This applies to interactions that have not been negotiated or are part of the baseline, such as:
 - Violence.
 - Touch beyond the established boundaries between players.
 - Taboo concepts.
- **Enthusiastic Consent.** We want everyone to feel safe and secure, and we expect players to show enthusiastic consent to help calibrate scenes and interactions. Players will demonstrate this by clearly communicating their consent during slow escalation in how they respond to fellow players. If a player does not give a clear “yes” for interaction, it should be considered a “no,” and further slow escalation should continue.
- **Tap Out.** If you find yourself in a situation where you would like to de-escalate or leave a scene, you will tap your co-player’s arm or another convenient part of their body twice, repeating this action as many times and as hard as you need to get their attention, at which point you can end, change the scene or leave as required without any questions or repercussions. We encourage players to use tap-out as a part of the collaboration so all participants can have a fantastic and safe larp without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.

If a Tap Out occurs...

- Everyone in the interaction will stop what they’re doing. If you are holding someone, you release them; if you are screaming, you take a break from screaming; if you are blocking someone’s path, you make sure they are free to go; and so on.
- If a player chooses to leave, they are allowed to go, no questions asked, not during the scene and not after.
- If they stay, it means they’d like to continue the scene, but with just less of whatever was going on. This is a good opportunity to take a step back and reengage with the slow escalation mechanic.
- The player who taps out may offer suggestions on playstyle without needing to explain why. Examples include: “I’m good with the scene, but don’t grab me,” “I’m ok with our interactions, but don’t call me a bastard,” or “We can keep going, just don’t yell so loud.”

Decompression Options:

- **Your own room.** You are welcome to take a breather in your own room at any point during the game.
- **Care Room and Facilitator Assistance.** Should you need to decompress with people, we will have an off-game care room available with snacks, soda, and similar items. You can also ask a facilitator to help you process things. Remember, they are not trained psychologists but can help talk and support you. If you are unsettled in any way, we prefer you take this option rather than going to your own room, as we will not be aware you are in distress if staff cannot see you.

Workshops:

We will practice these principles and mechanics with everyone in the workshops before the game and ensure you are comfortable with the system. You will also have an opportunity to bring up any exceptions to the baseline and communicate those to fellow players.



Is this larp for me?

This larp are for people who enjoy play centered around a type 2 drama dealing with loss, desire, intense relationships, how far you (your character) are willing to go to get what they want. Participants will engage with a personal and intimate story set in an occult modern-day setting.

All characters will have significant positive and negative relationships that can be explored in a safe and impactful manner through extensive workshoping and practice before Seraph begins. A lot of your connections will have intense play full of conflict and unhealthy relationships. Flirting and romance play will also happen if the players desire. And players should expect sexual play in the game, though they do not have to engage with it.

Players should experience a larp with impactful and emotional scenes, with close play with other participants within a safety and calibration system that has been extensively workshoped. You should be willing to play with an ingame calibration system be based on Slow Escalation and Tap-Out mechanics centered around personal responsibility and enthusiastic consent. We encourage you to read more about this in our safety and

calibration mechanics section.

As a participant, you should be comfortable with the following actions from other players without expecting any calibration beforehand: shouting, pushing, general altercations, psychological manipulation, yelling and arguing, crying, hugging, general touching, and romantic play.

The exceptions to this are that we expect everyone not to grab people from behind and also not grab the “beach body,” i.e., the area covered by a bikini. There will also be no design based on sexual assault.

Part of the design is that not every character will get what they want, but we aim for the players to be able to decide, and able to carry out telling either a story of loss and heartbreak, or of getting what you desire – though it may have cost too much.

