



TITANIC

SAVE OUR SOULS

**A DRAMATIC LARP SCENARIO PLAYING THE FINAL HOURS OF THE RMS TITANIC
EXPLORING LOVE, GRIEF, AND LOSS. WRITTEN BY LUTZ SCHMITT.**

16-40 Players (more with additional preparation steps)

1 Game master

1-2 Assistants

2-3 hours duration (incl. pregame workshop)

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Check <https://lutzschmitt.com/larp/titanic> for updates.

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Fine Print

Attribution and Thanks

Thank you to the many lovely people especially on “It’s full of Larp” conventions, which played the game and helped me evolve it from a simple idea to an intense experience.

Thank you to my oldest son Dante, who made me read the memorial plaques in that seafarer’s church on top of a cliff in Normandy, what gave me the inspiration for the last act.

Other copyrights are stated, where needed. As there are soundfiles that were used to create the soundtrack, which were recorded by the users marec, turtlelg, n1ihthawk, ecfike, and jagadamba published on freesounds.org and licensed under a CC By 4.0 International.

About the author

Lutz Schmitt plays larps since the late 1990s. He writes scenarios like this one since a while and is always happy, when he learns about someone playing his scenarios. So, let him know via larp@lutzschmitt.com and visit <https://lutzschmitt.com/larp> for updated versions of this scenario and to discover others.

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**If you need to change the scenario for your run to make it fit your context, then please feel free to do it. I just want to stop people publishing other versions of this scenario. Instead give me feedback for future versions, please.*

Introduction

Gamemaster info: Share this introduction also with you players.

It's Sunday, 14th April 1912, short before midnight. In less than three hours the RMS Titanic will sink to the bottom of the North Atlantic and will take 1503 souls with her:

"This is the captain speaking. Everybody please remains calm. For security reasons, you're all asked to enter the lifeboats. Women and children first."

All participants will play passengers of the Titanic. You will play couples. The great drama of the Titanic will be your personal drama. Will you strive for survival, or will you die for your beliefs in honour, dignity or charity? Will you leave your partner behind, or will you stay together, at all costs? How will you feel, when the time has come to give your loved one the last farewell?

TRIGGER AND BLEED WARNING

This game is designed for "bleed" and is loaded with triggers. A core rule of the drama is that of every couple – without exception – one character will die during the shipwreck. The game aims to make the loss of a close person a tangible experience.

Dropping out during the game is possible, but only as a couple.

Structure of the Game

Introduction to the Pregame Workshop

The game master introduces the players to the play mechanics and the couples are formed and get the chance to co-create the characters and couples' relationships.

Introduction the First Act: Welcome Aboard

You are finally in your cabin, alone after the hectic boarding. You talk about now, the cruise, your future and you prepare for the upcoming dinner: "Darling, have you seen my bow tie?"

Introduction to the Second Act: Death Will Do Us Part

This is played on the deck, during the last moments of the Titanic. Will you make it to the lifeboats? Will you rather die, than give up your ideals? Will you save your partner, at any cost or rather die, than leave him or her behind? Yet remember the eternal rule: Women and children first! This act is full of drama! Nobody will die during the act. Your fates are decided, only after the act ends. You will be left with nothing than uncertainty.

Introduction to the Third Act: Farewell

A few days after the shipwreck. You gather for the funeral service for those who stayed at sea. In this act, it will be revealed, who died. You will feel the loss and get a chance to bid a last farewell.

That's all folks!

The next pages are only relevant to the game master. But there are no spoilers for players, so everyone can read it.

Preparations for the Game Master

Number of Participants

As everybody will play couples, naturally you will need an even number of participants. If you have an uneven number, there is one couple that is a ménage-a-trois. Find it after as the last roles in the role description document.

If you wonder, how you could run this game with fewer people. Not well. Test-runs showed, that the overall experience for the players were mediocre with fewer players.

You wonder, if you could run the game with more people? Yes, you can! You just need to create more characters and you need to have enough game masters or assistants and need to consider how to control such a large crowd. But yeah, running this on a cruise ship with hundreds of players is a dream of the author.

Number of Game masters and Assistance

Ideally, even with a small group of of players you have not only one game master, but also an assisting person. With a larger group you ideally have two game masters, that know the scenario well and can split up tasks. Maybe one handling the first class and the other the third class players during the workshop and so on.

Material

- This document printed out
- The character document printed out (and hand-outs prepared)
- A pen and paper for each player
- A chair for every player
- At least one six-sided dice, ideally one per two players
- Masking or gaffer tape or else to mark areas on the ground
- Something to play the audio files. Loud party volume needed!
- Ideally, a loud bell (to stop or start workshop parts or scenes)

Audio-Support

Along with this package, there are five audio-files:

1. Workshop waltz for “finding the couples”
2. Act 1 Scene 1 - Ending
3. Act 1 Scene 2 – Background music medley
4. Act 1 Scene 2 – Ending
5. Act 2 - Ending

Additionally, you need a song that is played through act 3. The recommendation is “Amazing Grace” interpreted by Judy Collins. It’s under copyright, so I can’t bundle it, but here’s a link to a YouTube version: [youtube.com/watch?v=AtteRD5bBNQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtteRD5bBNQ).

Role Description Paper Slips & Survival / Death List

These are the other PDF-document. Print it out and prepare the role hand-outs. Hand them out in the pre-game workshop step “Distributing roles”.

Per player couple, there are three paper slips: The common about the pair for both and the slip only for the player of the character. They contain secrets. Let the players decide, if they want to play with open secrets or hidden secrets. *Hint: For easy handling clip them together.*

Note on the characters: The first 20 pairs have dominant male characters, the last 20 pairs are reversed (and renamed) with dominant female characters.

Reminder for an uneven number of players: There is a menage-a-trois for three players.

Preparing the Room for the Game and Deciding Lifeboat Number and Size

The room must be structured for the upcoming acts. Split the room in a large main part and a small as possible “sea” part with markings on the floor or a row of tables.

Wall markings or signs on two opposite ends of the main room part indicating “First class” and “Third class”. You will need that in act 1.

Add enough simulated lifeboats (see box) along the separation with tables, chairs or tape on the “sea”-side. Make them small. You will need those in act 2 and 3.

Lifeboat size & number

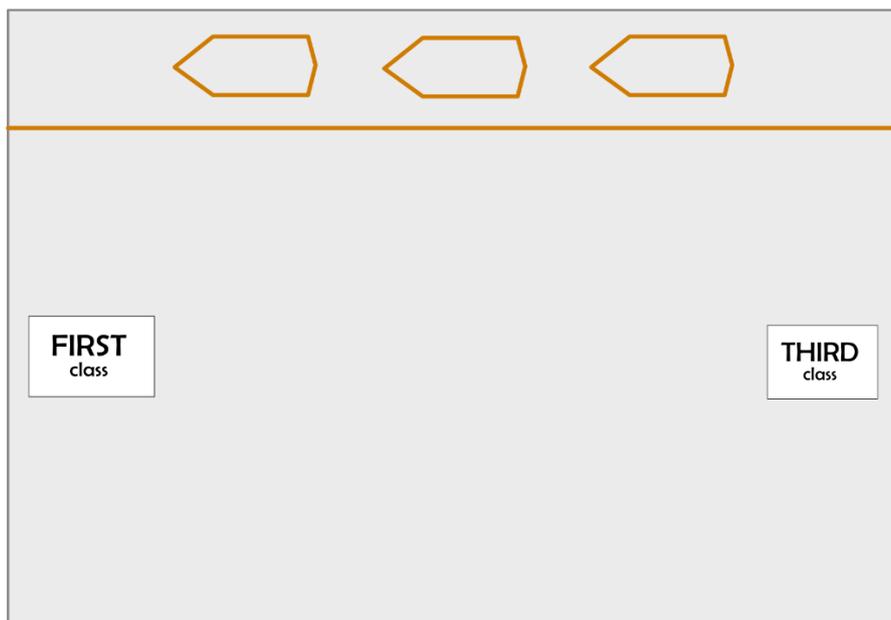
In general there should be about 4-5 seats per 10 players.

Examples

For 18 Players go for 2 lifeboats with 4 seats each.

For 32 players go with 3 lifeboats with 5 seats each.

For 40 players go with 4 lifeboats and 5 seats each.



Pre-Game Workshop

Prerequisite announcement: This game is about love, grief and relationship, not gender issues. The game is written to play hetero couples, with the dramatic element “women and children first” in mind, but feel free to adapt the roles and genders to whatever you like. Anyway, cross-gender play is encouraged, to have an even number of female and male characters.

Safe Play Introduction (5min)

Walk your players through safe play rules, and especially clarify what kind physical interaction is OK. Here are rule proposals, that worked in during playtests well.

Safe Words

Stop the whole play for everyone for safety reasons: Stop!

Leave a situation immediately, but don't stop the play: Quicksilver

Calm the situation, but don't leave it: Hashish

Couples' Intimacy (All acts)

Touching each other is important to create intimacy but ensure that both of you agree to a level of physical intimacy. Take care of yourself and the other!

Physical interaction when entering the lifeboats (Act 2)

The situation invites to physical fights or at least holding back or pushing people. But always play it safe! Don't really force someone but play together! Play for drama!

Finding the couples (5min)

Before you can start playing, you need to find the in-game couples. Equally split the players into men and women. The men create a circle facing the outside. Now, the women walk around the circle and ask a man for a dance. If he accepts, they form a couple and start dancing together.

The newly formed couples may dance until all couples are found. Give the late ones also a short period to dance together.

Distributing roles (5min)

When the couples have found each other, distribute the roles. You should do this randomly, only asking for first- or third-class preference.

First class passengers are usually meant to feel superior and more delicate, while third class passengers are used to be inferior and more robust. Make sure, that the same amount of first- and third-class couples are distributed.

Each couple gets two paper slips, one for each player. The “Pair Info” is shared knowledge. The “Personal Info” only for the individual player. Their decision to keep that a secret or share with the partner. **Remind them to keep their paper-slip for later use!**

Invite to ask questions to you about the roles. Offer to switch characters. if a couple is uncomfortable with the picked ones.

Recommended music:

There's a Waltz in this package, to support the exercise.

Cross-gender play?!

Of course, players can choose freely, if they want to play wives or husbands.

Uneven number of players?

Use the Menage-a-trois pairing. See the other Roles-document.

Getting into the roles and relationships (15min)

Begin with asking the partners to introduce themselves to each other. Help them with keeping the time. Each player has about a minute to introduce themselves to the other.

Then, send the couples around for a walk, continuing their conversation and developing on the body and movement to fit the character and synchronize the couple's behaviour.

Ask them to act in character during the walk, like greeting other couples, if they cross each other. If the room isn't large enough, you can send them outside, but make sure, that they are all back after about 10 minutes again.

Additionally ask the players to build their common history during their conversation: "Darling, do you remember when we first met?" or "Do you remember, when aunt Emma found us kissing in the garden?" "Yes, of course, it was in your uncles house in Summerset," and so on. What they say, becomes true, but can altered through additions.

Creating Intimacy (10min)

To build empathy and create a bond between the players, they will do a partner meditation. It's about awareness, mindfulness and opening up to the other.

Setup

Each couple sits down facing each other. Ask them to sit upright, comfortable, and able to touch each other's fingers, when reaching out. Divide the couples as evenly as possible across the room. Decide before, if a circle or row arrangement is most efficient.

Menage-a-trois:

Only two of the three will face each other. The third will only stand behind the listener in both halves. The trio needs to discuss, who that will be.

Meditation Proceedings

The meditation is happening in halves. In each half one partner will talk and one will listen. It doesn't matter who goes first, as the roles are switched in the second half.

When talking, the player describes what they are sensing. The breath flowing through the lungs, their heartbeat poking in the chest, maybe a tickling somewhere, the feet standing on the ground, the sun warming their arm, ...

When listening, the players just listen, they don't interact. No answers, no nodding, no mimic. They shall focus completely on listening to the other. This is not a conversation.

Important: The couples shall keep eye contact, during the whole exercise.

Running the meditation

Ask to decide who talks first. Then softly ring a bell. The listener asks: "What do you sense?" and the other starts describing, what they sense. After a good two minutes softly ring a bell again. The listening person says: "Thank you."

Then, they switch the roles, and the new listener asks: "What do you sense?" and the other partner describes their sensations. After two minutes softly ring a bell again, and the listener closes the meditation with saying: "Thank you."

Writing a Love Letter (5min)

The final part of the workshop is writing a love letter. Everybody gets five minutes to write a letter to their partner, focussing on all the wonderful aspects of him or her, maybe highlighting a dear moment of the relationship. Reassuring her or him of their love. Get romantic! Use the big words! Also think about how you address your partner, it might say a lot about your relationship

After writing, the players should fold the letter and keep it safely with them.

Clean up the room (2min)

Now, ask all players to clean up the room. Put all chairs, tables unused material, etc. aside. They won't be needed any more. Remind the players to keep their letters.

As GM you should do a sound check. Also apply the wall and floor markings, if you haven't done it already.

This is also a perfect moment for a break, as the workshop is done, and the play will start.

Act 1 – Welcome aboard

Structure

This act is meant to give the players the chance to get into the play and their roles. Before you start the act, locate the spots, where first and third class should gather in the room to end the act. Direct them as needed.

Scene 1 – In the cabin

Ask the players to find a spot in the room, wherever they like and introduce the act: You as a couple are in your cabin, finally alone after the hectic boarding. You talk about now, the cruise, your future and you prepare for the upcoming dinner: “Darling, have you seen my bow tie?”

Give the players the time to get into their characters and the couple situation. End the scene with playing the attached audio-file or read out loud this announcement. If you have a bell, it comes handy to silence the players before.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome aboard the Titanic. The passengers of the first class are now invited to the captain’s dinner at the central restaurant. Passengers of the other classes will find dinner prepared in the mess halls at the lower decks.”

*Ending Announcement
Track 2*

Give the players a moment to close their conversation and cut the scene.

Scene 2 – An unpleasant Announcement

All first-class passengers gather in one spot, starting conversations and the third-class passengers do as well aside. They have time for conversations, maybe a dance, the leisure life of the Titanic. Like everybody would expect it to be. This scene should last as long as the players are enjoying themselves.

*Background Music Medley
Track 3*

The GM or an NPC might also support the play as servants and walk around.

GM needs to find the right moment to end the scene and plays the attached audio-file or instead read out loud this:

*Ending Announcement
Track 4*

“Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m very sorry to inform you, that an incident occurred, that requires everybody to enter the lifeboats. This is just for your safety and to follow security procedures. The crew is working on a solution and I’m sure, we’ll be able to have a midnight supper together, later on.

Please stay calm, there is no reason to panic. With your cooperation, we will handle this situation easily. The crew will guide you safely.”

Dear Gentlemen, I require your assistance during boarding the lifeboats. Please help all women and children to enter the lifeboats before you. There are enough seats in the lifeboats, so that you can follow later. Thank you for supporting a safe and fast evacuation.”

Give the players a few moments to play out the reactions on the news and then cut the scene.

Act 2 – Death Will Do Us Part

Introduce the second act to the players. Briefly explain the setup of act 2: All passengers are required to enter the lifeboats, but there aren't enough spots for all. Now, this is a perfect set up for the big drama. **Play for drama, play together! Make this memorable.**

Rules and Mechanisms

The following rules must be respected and can't be broken:

1. Whenever there is conflict, the potential victim decides the outcome, e.g. getting wounded, tossed into the sea, pushed back aboard the Titanic.
2. All lifeboats are initially attached to the Titanic and players can switch between lifeboat and Titanic at will.
3. If X* players raise a hand and shout: "Release the lifeboat", the game master answers with shouting: "The lifeboat is released!" and ringing a bell. Now it's floating in the sea. *(X is the number of seats in a lifeboat.)
4. A player can jump from anywhere into the sea but can't get back aboard the Titanic and can't enter a lifeboat without assistance. See next.
5. Two players in the boat can decide to rescue a swimmer, but the lifeboat needs a free seat.

And then there are in-game rules that can be broken:

1. Women and children go first and only if all have a spot, men can join the lifeboats
2. First class passengers have privileged access, before the third-class

Game Master Advice

Ideally, do a test run of entering a lifeboat, so players can try the rules and mechanics. Also, before starting the scene remind them, that the characters might want to get on the lifeboat, but that the players should aim for the big drama and maybe even play to lose.

Intro Act 2 – Scene 1

To start act 2 ask all players to close their eyes, hold hands with their partner and calm down. Tell them about the situation:

"You are on the deck of the Titanic now, it's dark and cold. The wind blows and you recognize that your dinner clothing is merely a leaf against the nature's forces. There's a significant tilt of the ship, that makes your senses revolt. You realize: This is not about some inconvenience, this is about survival, hundreds of miles away from any coastline. If you want to see the next day, you need to get on one of those lifeboats!"

Then let them open the eyes and play. Watch the scene and follow the drama. Monitor the release of the lifeboats. As long as the majority of the players is still highly engaged, the scene can continue. Head over to the end, when you recognize, that the pace slows down in general.

Failing on the drama

In some runs, players were just too fast with entering the lifeboats, so no drama play was possible. Hence the recommendation of the test run.

If the actual scene still doesn't feel tense and lacks drama, don't hesitate to stop it early and replay it.

Ending Act 2 – Scene 1

Play the audio-file. When only the morse code is left, cut the scene and ask for silence. Let all listen to the rest of the audio file. There's about a minute to calm down.

*Audio for Ending
Track 5*

If you want to play the experimental scene 2, cut the scene, stop the audio and proceed without calm down time.

Experimental Act 2 Scene 2: Where are you?

Note: This scene has not yet been play-tested, because the idea is too new. If you play this scene, please give feedback.

Immediately after cutting the previous scene, ask all players in the lifeboats and in the water to remain where they are and the other players to line up on the opposite side of the room.

Lighting

Ideally, to set the stage, only illuminate the lifeboats and their surroundings.

“The impossible has happened. The Titanic is gone. You're the few, who made it to the lifeboats or at least you're still afloat nearby. You shout the names of your partners in hope that they answer – but they remain silent. Will you stay strong or give in to the agony?

And those others that don't answer? Are you still there? Can you hear your partner shouting? Are you still fighting, or have you surrendered to the sea?”

Rules for this scene

- Two people in a lifeboat can still agree to rescue someone floating in the sea
- A lifeboat will still capsize, while too many people are on board
- Characters that remained on the Titanic must remain silent

Make this scene brief, it's only meant to wrap up the drama from before. Avoid comedic relief situations. Cut soon.

Intermediate & Aftermath

Ask the players to gather and form again the couples. Ask them to mark their role slips with their status at the end of act 2. This can be also done by just rip the paper slip at the correct result, no pens needed.

The GM now checks the role slips and decides who dies and who lives. Go silently through the ranks and check the final situation of each character as marked on the slips and note it down on the character's list, that is part of the character document.

While collecting the results an assistant or a player can read the waiting text on the next page.

On every couple one person must die and one must live. This is the moment the rule "Women and children first" really has an impact. Have a 6-sided dice ready. Also, a second person should read the waiting text below – just to fill the time. This can be done by a player, or the other GM or assistant.

Calculation for a small group (less than 10 couples)

You should have time to roll a dice for all. Have at least one six-sided dice ready, or pre-roll several at once to speed up the process.

Situation	Dice-Roll
One in Lifeboat – other else	1: Person on Lifeboat dies 2–6: other person dies
One tried to escape – other stayed	1–2: Person tried dies 3–6: other person stayed dies
Both in the same situation*	1–4: man dies 5–6: woman dies

For a bigger group (more than 10 couples)

you will need to hurry up the decision-making process, with the guidelines below you should only need to roll a few dice for decision making.

Situation	Dice-Roll
One in Lifeboat – other else	No roll. Other person dies.
One tried to escape – other stayed	No roll. Person that stayed dies, with exceptions at will of GM
Both in the same situation*	1–4: man dies 5–6: woman dies

*It's unusual, that both characters end up in the same situation, so we prefer the women characters for the "women and children first" rule.

Waiting Text

Read slow, while the survival statistic is collected.

The story of the true tragedy

On its maiden voyage across the North Atlantic ferry route, the RMS Titanic carried some 2.200 passengers and crew. After stopping at Cherbourg in France, and Queenstown in Ireland, to pick up some final passengers, the massive vessel set out at full speed for New York City – but with only 20 lifeboats, instead of supposed 64.

However, just before midnight on April 14, the RMS Titanic failed to divert its course from an iceberg and ruptured at least five of its hull compartments. These compartments filled with water and pulled down the bow of the ship. Because the Titanic's compartments were not capped at the top, water from the ruptured compartments filled each succeeding compartment.

This caused the bow to sink and the stern to be raised up to an almost vertical position above the water. Then the Titanic broke in half, and, at about 2:20 o'clock at night, stern and bow sank to the ocean floor.

Because of a shortage of lifeboats and the lack of satisfactory emergency procedures, more than 1.500 people died. Most of the 705 survivors were women and children.

- In the 1st class the survival rate was 60%,
- going down to 42% in the 2nd and
- 25% in the 3rd class.

Each lifeboat was constructed to offer room for 65 people – however on average only 35 people sat in a lifeboat.

One hour and 20 minutes after the Titanic sank, the Cunard liner “Carpathia” arrived. The survivors in the lifeboats were brought aboard, and a handful of others were pulled out of the water.

It was later discovered that the Leyland liner “Californian” had been less than 20 miles away at the time of the accident but had failed to hear the Titanic's distress signals because its radio operator was off duty.

So many more souls could have been saved, this night.

Act 3 – Farewell

Game Master Instruction

GM: This is the final act. There's no more free play. and gives players the opportunity to experience feelings of loss and grief through their characters.

Ask all players to form an audience, like standing in rows facing the “seaside” of the room. The couples should be together, holding hands, holding each other, whatever comforts them. Ask them to imagine being in a large church, some time after the dramatic events aboard the Titanic.

Explain, that the scene starts when the priest (you) begins with the eulogy and ends, when the song ends or is faded out. While the song plays you will read out the names of those, that died at sea.

The named players should leave their partner in silence, walk across behind the priest – ideally the seaside of the room – and face their partner. Remind them, that they have love letters, that they're allowed to read then. Or just keep eye contact, till the scene ends.

Note: While the players sort themselves for the scene, make sure that you have the death list ready and the song prepared to play instantly with a volume, where you can easily be recognized reading out the death list. (Test volume settings before the play!!!)

Scene 1 – The Eulogy

When everybody is ready and scene mechanics are clear, ask everybody to close their eyes, calm down, and only open the eyes, when the Eulogy starts. The script is on the next page. Take a moment to start reading the eulogy.

When the Eulogy ends, make sure to start the farewell song without delay to avoid interruptions.

Take some seconds into the song, before you begin reading out the intro to the list and then the list of the dead. Make sure, that players have enough time to react on being called out and walk over. It's a precious moment. You have a lot of time to read out the list. Below the Eulogy there's an intro and outro script for the death list.

*The Farewell Song
Play “Amazing Grace” in the background while reading out death list.*

Eulogy Script

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Survivors, Relatives and Friends,

As we gather here today, still shocked from the tragic death of so many beloved ones, we are scared and angered at the unfairness and senselessness that took them from us. We seek to make sense of this, to understand the reason why this happened. To grasp the understanding, that a beloved person is now gone, and we’re left alone with our grief.

Well-meaning people will tell us that it is all part of God’s plan, or that this was just their time to go, that they’re now in a better place. But we cry out that while God certainly knows his plan, we do not. They may indeed be in a better place now, but we want them to be here with us.

Let us close this gathering in memorizing our lost ones in all their beauty and kindness. Let us remember together, what made them special to us, what we loved about them, what they meant to us and will mean for us, till we will meet again.”

Intro for the death list

“So many stayed at sea, but let us call them by their names, as everyone was special to someone here:”

Here you announce the names of those who died. It should only be one character per couple (with the exception of the menage-a-trois, where it might be two).

Outro for the death list

“God, please save their souls. Please save our souls.”

You can fall in silence for a minute or so, while the farewell song still plays. Fade it out and cut the scene eventually.

Cool Down

When the last act has ended, applaud the players, thank them for their contribution. Invite them to cry – what many of them will do anyway - or hug each other. The last scene will bleed heavily into the players!

Remind them, that bleed also might occur later and that they should be careful with life changing decisions in the next few hours. Offer to talk to them at any time, if they feel the need.

Give them the opportunity to shake off their roles, like introducing each other with real names, tore apart the love letter, telling character secrets, excusing for role behaviour, if necessary, clean up the room, etc.

At the end remember all of them, that they ultimately leave the Titanic and their roles behind, when they leave the room.

Optional Comedic Relieve
With all the drama, a bit of comedy can be a relieve.
Hand out signs reading
“Free hugs” to any player,
that wants a sign and invite
them to make heavy use of
it.