

Ed Fornieles
Sim Vol. 1

May 19th–?, 2017

From MIDDLEBURG REPORT:

The first session of Sim Vol. 1 took place over Google Hangouts from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM EST on Wednesday, February 8th 2017. Four players, Harrie, Sasha, Jesse and Rebecca, played from Middleburg while the Project Manager communicated from Montreal. Each player went through a profile building session prior to the first meet-up, which attempted to realistically quantify players' attributes, putting a numerical value to knowledge, skills and temperament. The reason for an in depth profile creation process was to place emphasis on the players being themselves. Allowing their actions to be guided by their own limitations, strengths and moral code as opposed to that of a detached avatar. The first session began with the Project Director asking players to improvise scenarios that had happened during and after the coming of The Great Freeze. As a result, the group created a collective vision of each other's hardships and traumas, as a way to begin negotiating a collective reality. These initial improvisations started with the Project Director making a proposition, in the form of the start of a sentence that the player could then take up and improvise from. For example, the PD may say something along the lines of "Can you tell me about what happened to your neighbor during The Great Freeze, it must have been very hard" and the player could continue this story by responding with their sentiments and ideas. As one person outlined their history, the scenario's parameters, logic and limits began to become clear.

FIRST ACTION

Shortly after their arrival in the simulation, the players were faced with their first event. A frail pre-teen arrived at the door asking to be hidden from gang members who were chasing her. Taken by surprise most of the players agreed to take her in, under pressure. Harrie was the only one to offer protest, questioning why the girl [Mia] had to hide in the first place. Nevertheless, Mia's fate was decided by the power of the majority, who hid her from the guards that followed. The group managed to fool and distract the guards, while gesturing to Harrie to remain silent. The first scene became important in making explicit the group dynamics, as some players identified with the power of the gang and others defined themselves against it. Although these positions would change as Sim Vol. 1 progressed, their status during Mia's arrival made certain characteristics of the players explicit.

Sasha: Identified with those in need of help, acting as a protector with a skill in communicating her values and intentions to the group.

Harrie: Identified himself with authority, valuing the gang's capacity to maintain order and its vital role in rebuilding after the Great Freeze.

Jesse: Distinctly prioritizes friendship above all others, drawing a clear line between those within his circle of trust and all others. His complicity in the above scenario was driven by his allegiance to Sasha more than an innate social duty.

Rebecca: She seemingly facilitated the group's going along with the consensus, but remained reserved in coming to her own views that were sometimes radically different or opposed to the group.

As Sim Vol. 1 continued, Mia was played by the Project Director. This allowed the group to get to know her through a question and answer process. This became important in creating a bond between players and non-player characters, transforming new characters from abstract ideas to fully fledged, dynamic beings.

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