

Devon

Frame Character

~

Grandpa died last week, they told you. Mom asked you to write down something you remembered about Grandpa, but honestly, how does she expect you to remember? You were four the last time you saw him! Sheesh.

It's always nice to see your aunts and uncles though. Especially Aunt Jessica and Aunt Faith. They're cool. When you're an adult, you want to work for a TV station like Aunt Jessica does, or at least live in the city. You don't know how Mom and Dad stand it living out in the suburbs - it's so lame here! But all Dad ever wants to do is sit on the computer and play his games anyway, so you guess it's okay for him.

The Loudmouth is here too. That's what you call your sister Lily. She has opinions about everything. You can't stand her.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Faith

Frame Character



You never really knew Jessica's father the way she did, but he always seemed to you to be a tragic figure. A man of great talent and true passion, who had his two greatest loves taken away from him in the prime of his life. Who could blame him for locking himself away? His family would have just been one more reminder of what he'd lost.

This weekend has been difficult even beyond that, though. You've never Jess's sisters much - mother hen Kathy with her sniveling husband and spoiled kids, and vapid, shallow Lindsay. Milo is okay, though, and you're glad to see him again. And you finally get to meet Uncle Larry, the distant, estranged one who went off to war and never quite rejoined the rest of them.

Overall, it's been an interesting time, if for purely anthropological reasons. You wonder what this "family business" Milo wants to talk about could possibly be, though. It's just a will, right?

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulroney hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulroney had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Jessica

Frame Character

~

Poor Dad. He was never really happy since Mom died. Saying that in the eulogy took a lot out of you. You were worried about some of the things you had written there, but it's best to be honest and not candy-coat the man.

It's a shame Faith never got to know Dad as well as you wished. He had his lift accident a little before you met her, and he started becoming more and more distant after that. And Milo must have been shocked when he called out of the blue and asked for help with the will.

Even in the best of times, Dad wasn't that easy to get along with. Poor Milo.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Kathy

Frame Character

~

Even now, at your father's memorial service, Patrick is making you be the responsible one.

"Oh, I have to wear a suit? If I'd known that I would have had it dry cleaned!" Yes, Pat, of course you have to wear a suit. No, Pat, it's ok, I'll clean it. And get the kids ready. Sigh.

So here you are, late of course. At least it's nice to see Milo, Jessica and Lindsay again - it's been far too long.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Larry

Frame Character

~

Your brother and you were never particularly close. Sure, you grew up together, but he always had his nose in a book or inside the hood of a car. Never had time for you. You barely missed him at all after you enlisted and shipped out to Pearl Harbor. And by the time you retired, he'd been married with four kids and lost his wife to a car accident.

You tried over the years to spend time with him, but he just wasn't interested. You never really felt like part of the family anyway after you came back from the Navy. Hell, this is the first time you've met some of your nieces' kids.

Regrets? Sure, you've got some. But you've lived your own life, not his.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Lily

Frame Character

~

You have literally never seen Grandpa in your whole life, and now you never will. Except you saw him once when you were a baby. But you can't remember that, so it hardly counts. You guess that means it's not correct to say you have "literally" never seen your Grandpa. Whatever! It's a funeral, nobody cares if you're misusing adjectives.

You started sixth grade last month. It is so easy. You can't imagine why everyone else is having so much trouble. Class is frightfully boring. But it beats sitting around the house, helping Mom cook or watching Dad play his stupid video games. Don't most fathers play with their kids? You don't know for sure, but you suspect you're somehow being cheated of a normal childhood.

The memorial service earlier today was surreal. You kept feeling like you should know this guy everyone kept talking about, but instead of the memories you should have of your grandfather, there's just a black hole.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Lindsay

Frame Character

~

Is it wrong you're not more broken up about Dad dying? Seriously though, it's been like he's dead ever since he locked himself away in that old house and stopped taking phone calls and visitors. Shudder. You hope you don't end up like that.

Honestly, you're more upset that apparently he talked to Milo to set this whole thing up. Milo, the golden boy. The leader. The nerd.

But you have to set a good example for Rick and the kids, right? Rick would never let his anger show, not even to you. So you just push all those hard feelings down into a place nobody will ever see them. Just like always...

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Milo

Frame Character

~

The letter hadn't come as a surprise. *Milo*, it read, *come see me as soon as you can. We need to talk about my will. - Dad*

Dad was nearing 90 years old, and he had been disturbingly reclusive ever since Mom died. So thoughts of his eventual death weren't news to you and, as the one attorney in the family, you had been expecting to end up as the executor. You called your secretary and had her book you a flight out as soon as possible.

When you got to the old house, you found Dad in his study at the same old typewriter. Reams of paper were scattered about the room. "Well, what took you so long?" he snapped. Sigh. Same old Dad.

Dad explained to you that the papers were his life's work. He was writing, he explained, a unique and world-changing novel. And as his last wish, he wanted it to be published posthumously. He was going to finish it, and then he was going to die.

"But - " you started. "No buts!" said Dad. "This novel's going to get done, and then I'm going to die. And you and your brothers and sisters are going to see it gets published."

"Well, what's it about?" you asked. "No spoilers!" Dad shouted. "Read it after it's written. Now go! Get out of my house and leave me to my writing. Send me a will and I'll sign it. Do whatever you want with my money, just make sure it says my novel has to get published or nobody sees a dime."

Some things never change. Dad was as stubborn and intractable as ever. You went home the next day and did exactly as he had instructed. Dad was as good as his word: a week later, you got back a signed and dated copy.

It was scarcely a week after that that you got the phone call from the hospital. A stroke, the doctor said. You thanked him and hung up. The air around you felt heavy. After a while, the moment passed. You picked up the phone again and called the funeral parlor.

The memorial service passed you by with barely any effect. You just felt numb. Afterwards, you took the close family members into a side room. Here, you had placed two large packing crates, each with reams of typewritten paper. It was time for the reading of the will... and the reading of the novel.

NOTE: *Your function in this scene is to explain to your family the situation regarding the novel quickly. You can allow them a short time to react, but before long, you should ask them to split into three groups of 4 so they can begin reading through the novel. Players will split into groups according to their scene placement cards.*

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Noah

Frame Character

~

Your grandpa just died. You know you're supposed to be sad, but it hasn't really sunk in. You never really knew him, so it's not like you can really miss him. Even your mom doesn't seem that broken up about it. Mostly you just wish you could be back home hanging out with your friends. There are no other kids here your age. Your sister is the next youngest, and she's two years older than you. Plus she's your sister. Lily and Devon are both in middle school as well. If they hang out with you at all they'll make fun of you.

You were supposed to be playing soccer this weekend. That would have been much more fun. Maybe you can at least get your dad's attention. He's not involved in all the family stuff.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Patrick

Frame Character

~

Ugh. Kathy's family.

These affairs are always a pain: the whole bunch is made up of resentful, uptight people who think they're God's gift to the universe. Seeing them is always awful: you know how they look down their noses at you. Seriously, just because you graduated from a junior college doesn't make you some kind of moron. Even Kathy gets that way when she's around her siblings.

At least Devon and Lily won't grow up like them. You're raising them right. Now hopefully you can just get on with this and get back home. You've got a raid with your WoW guild tonight and it'd suck if you had to miss it.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was a Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Paula

Frame Character

~

Your grandpa just died. You never met him. What's worse is, now you never will.

It isn't fair. Dad says life isn't fair, and it's important for us to realize that. Maybe so, but you think Dad just doesn't understand. Anyway he spends all his time at the hospital, so what does he know?

Mom doesn't understand either. She says it's okay, you wouldn't have had fun with your grandpa anyway, he was such a strange old man by the end. But that's not fair either. Just because she doesn't like him doesn't mean you wouldn't have. Why wouldn't she let you see him? She says he didn't want to see anyone, but how could he have not wanted to see his grandchildren?

And your stupid baby brother Noah, he's the worst. He doesn't care about anyone except himself. Why are you the only one who cares?

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.

Rick

Frame Character

~

This is a solemn occasion. A loved one has died. And even though you hardly knew your father-in-law, it is your responsibility to be there for Lindsay in her time of mourning.

Your children are here as well. Truly, a tragedy that they never got to know their grandfather. At least your parents have been somewhat more welcoming than Lindsay's father was. In any case, it is good for Paula and Noah that they experience the passing of a loved one - this is an important part of child development.

You hope this meeting with Milo can be over with quickly. Lawyers make your skin crawl, and your brother-in-law is no exception.

What to Expect from This Game

~

Structure

The structure of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is quite unusual. First, it is a story-within-a-story game, in which you'll spend much of the game roleplaying a character from a story being told to or by the characters in the frame story. This structure is not unheard of in LARPs; however, unlike most such LARPs, this one is focused primarily on the inner story, as opposed to the frame story. You'll be cast both as a frame story character and an inner story character, but you'll be spending most of the game playing the inner story character and, as such, we cast *A Garden of Forking Paths* with more emphasis placed on the inner story.

This is a game for twelve players; however, the inner story has only four characters in it. This is because we'll be running three separate instances of the inner story simultaneously. (The frame story provides an explanation for this.) The inner story has two acts, each consisting of four scenes. The choices made in each scene will persist and affect future scenes. Between scenes, we will ask certain players to switch from one instance of the inner story to a different one, playing the same character as before. Because you are entering a new instance of the story, things in the past will now be different than in the story you left.

Mechanics

There is no combat in *A Garden of Forking Paths*. The characters in this game should not need to physically fight. If you feel it absolutely necessary to do so for dramatic and/or story reasons, please pantomime it out with the other players improv-style in a safe and fair manner.

A Garden of Forking Paths has no items, special abilities, magic, or stats.

There is one storytelling-related mechanic. In the inner storyline, the choices you as a group must make are each given a letter. For example, in the first scene, the choices are "A" and "B". Your scenario packet will contain two cards: an "A" card and a "B" card. Once you've made a choice, your group should take the card representing the choice you have made and tape it to the wall with blue painter's tape we'll provide. This will give new people entering the group an easy way to track what's happened in the story so far.

Genre and Play Style

The overall genre of *A Garden of Forking Paths* is literary fiction. This is a story about people having realistic problems and attempting to work through them as best they can.

This is not a story with winners and losers: in a sense, everyone wins or loses together. Bad things will happen to good people, sometimes for seemingly no reason at all. You'll be asked to make choices without fully knowing the ramifications of each option. The characters in the story do not understand the ramifications either, and yet they must choose.

Program

~

Prologue: After the Memorial Service, a Family Meeting

Act I

- Scene 1: A Question of Marriage - Barbara's twenty-first birthday
- Scene 2: A Question of Fidelity - two years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Divorce - two years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Care - five and a half years later

Intermission: The Second Box is Opened

Act II

- Scene 1: A Question of Money - four years later
- Scene 2: A Question of Parenting - eight years later
- Scene 3: A Question of Love - six years later
- Scene 4: A Question of Generations - fifteen years later

Epilogue: Game Wrap & Discussion

Family Background

~

Jessica's Eulogy for Dad

Stories are important. The stories people tell about themselves define who they are. This is the story of my family.

Let me tell you about Dad. Dad fixed cars for a living, but he would have done it even if old man Mulronev hadn't paid him. It was a lifelong fascination for him - practically a calling. On his breaks, he read books. Science, literature, anything he could get his hands on. The other guys looked at him funny, but they didn't say anything - he was the best damn mechanic in the place and they knew it too.

The books were how he and Mom met. She was shelving books in the library to make some extra money. He knocked over the book cart by accident, and they both bent down to pick up the mess, and their eyes met... you know the drill.

Mom and Dad got married and bought a house together. Dad couldn't afford much on his mechanic's wages, but it was cozy. Before too long, they had a baby boy. That was Milo. Kathy followed shortly after, and by the time Mom had me and Lindsay, old man Mulronev had retired and left Dad the garage. Now most people, being put in charge of a business like that, would stop fixing cars, but not Dad. He had motor oil in his veins.

So it was doubly tragic that it was a car accident that took Mom from us. I was 15. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Dad, but it just about killed us kids. And we could tell Dad was hurting too. He tried to put on his bravest face for us, but we could tell. He was distracted, perturbed, on edge all the time. He just wasn't Dad.

And so it was that Dad forgot to check the safety lock on one of the lifts and lost both his legs. By that point, I was in college and Milo was already in his first job, but we all immediately came home to help. We got him the best wheelchair we could find, put a lift on the stairs, made the house safe for him.

After that, Dad didn't go into the garage much anymore. Driving just wasn't the same in his new, specially-equipped sedan. He became increasingly distant, and eventually he just stopped returning our calls altogether. I haven't spoken to my father in over ten years.

You know what the last thing Dad said to me was? We were coming back from the park. I had to catch the bus back to the airport, so I was just going to take him home. He got this weird gleam in his eye, and he turned to me and asked me if I believed in fate. I said I wasn't sure. He said, "Well, I don't know. I just can't help thinking that if one little thing had gone just a little differently..." Then he trailed off, wheeled himself over to the lift, cast one long glance back at me, and waved.

Do you think that's true? If one little thing had gone differently, would our lives be completely changed? If that lift had fallen differently, would Dad have been fine? Or would his distraction have led something else to go wrong?

I don't know either, Dad. But I love you, and I miss you, and nothing that could have happened would change that.

The Funeral

Dad passed away last week. The doctors said he went peacefully in his sleep and there was nothing anyone could have done. Milo, being the lawyer in the family as well as the closest to Dad, made most of the arrangements.

Dad was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery next to Mom. It was a small, private ceremony. Afterwards, a memorial service was held at the cemetery, during which several family members gave eulogies.

Milo has asked the family to stick around after the service so that they can deal with some family business concerning Dad's will.

The Family

- **Milo** is Dad's oldest child. He's a partner in a law firm in the city, and mostly works on contracts for corporations. He is not married.
- **Kathy** is Dad's second child. She is married to **Patrick**, a systems administrator at a shipping company. Kathy used to work as an administrative assistant at the same company, but quit when she and Patrick had their first child, **Devon**. Devon and his younger sister **Lily** are both in middle school.
- **Jessica** is Dad's third child. While in college, Jessica started dating **Faith**. The two of them came out to Dad and Faith's parents a year later, and both families were supportive and accepting. Jessica works as a video editor for NBC News, and Faith is a restaurant inspector for the city.
- **Lindsay** is Dad's youngest child. She writes a syndicated advice column for a newspaper. She is married to **Rick**, a neurologist. They then have two children, **Paula** and **Noah**. Paula is in sixth grade, and Noah is in fourth grade.
- **Larry** is Dad's younger brother. He is a veteran of World War II, in which he was an Navy pilot in the Pacific. After retiring from the Air Force, Larry opened a sandwich shop, which he runs to this day.