Player Briefing

LOGISTICS

Game will run in Zoom (see email for link). If you have not used Zoom before or have questions, please contact us and we will help you sort it out.

Please test your tech beforehand to make sure camera, mic, etc. are working. If you have technical issues or questions, contact the GMs and we will do our best to help you sort things out.

Costumes/Zoom backgrounds/set dressing are optional.

When you log into Zoom, please change your Zoom name to match the one you used on your casting survey. This will make it easier for us to assign players to breakout rooms. You can change your name by mousing over yourself in the Participants list and clicking More>Rename. (When you log out of Zoom, it will reset your name to the account default.)

In your Video Settings, make sure the “Hide non-video participants” box is checked. This will allow the GMs to visit your breakout room without distracting you from the flow of play. (To find Video Settings, click on the menu button next to the video-camera icon.)

We will have a brief logistical intro for all the players, then split you into pairs and assign you to breakout rooms.

Once you are in your breakout room, you may change your screen name to your player name if you want (as this is a two player game, it should be clear who’s playing which character in any case). Spend a few minutes with your partner doing pre-game negotiation (see below). When you are ready to start game, turn off your cameras. To signal the start of game, Alex’s player should turn on their camera, then Casey’s player can turn theirs on when they’re ready to “arrive.”

This game is intended to run 90 minutes. We have a 2-hour slot to allow time for briefing at the beginning and debriefing/de-roling at the end. The player of Casey is responsible for declaring the end of game and should keep an eye on the time. You do not need to end at 90 minutes on the dot; feel free to end a little earlier or later, when you find a natural stopping point. However, do be aware of the official end-time of the slot, and do not overshoot it unless both partners have explicitly agreed to do so.

The GMs will conduct a group debrief/de-role in the main Zoom room for those who want to participate. This will consist of lightly-facilitated group conversation, plus a short de-roleing exercise.

When you have finished playing, you are welcome to chat with your partner out of game before rejoining the larger group. You're also welcome to skip the group debrief if it's not your thing; please let the GMs know you're leaving just so we can keep track of what's going on.

SCENARIO

Alex and Casey met in college, got married and invented time-travel together. Since they turned on their time-travel machine, Casey has gone on a series of visits to Alex's past, unable to predict or control when they will "leave" to visit the past or in what order they will experience the episodes from Alex's past. Living with time-travel has strained their partnership. Now, Casey has traveled to Alex's future. They both know that this will be the last time that Alex gets a visit from Casey, but it may not be the last visit Casey will experience. This "final" conversation offers an opportunity for long kept secrets to finally come to light...but what do they risk losing?

GAME WORLD/BACKGROUND

This game is set in the USA in 2021. The characters were born in 1975, grew up in the 1980s and went to college in the 1990s. Apart from the existence of time-travel, assume that you are in the real world and feel free to refer to real-world events/cultural references/etc.. (Alex's knowledge extends to 2021; Casey does not have knowledge of real-world history past the year they traveled from.) However, real world events and history are not very relevant to game, as the story focuses on the characters' relationship and the personal interactions they've had over their lives. In particular, this is not a story about the covid-19 pandemic.

Game starts when Casey appears in Alex's apartment in Alex's present-day (i.e., 2021). Casey is intangible and cannot physically interact with Alex or the physical environment (this is represented by the video call).

GAMEPLAY

In this game, the only action the players can take is to talk with each other. Although there is no in-world reason why the characters can't physically leave Alex's apartment or have Alex contact the outside world via phone/internet/etc., this kind of action is beyond the scope of the story.

The focus of play is the relationship between the two characters, and the decisions they have to make in game around about whether/how to reveal their secrets and how to address their emotional needs.

For satisfying play, the characters will eventually need to reveal some of their secrets and talk about things that they're reluctant to talk about. However, don't feel you need to reveal all the information you have before the end of game. It's perfectly valid to decide your character wants to keep a particular secret. Also, there will probably not be enough time to talk about all the things the characters might want to discuss. (That's fine; the goal is a satisfying story.)

The game is NOT about solving puzzles or figuring out how to use time travel to change history. The *characters* are concerned with issues of causality and the potential for time-travel to change the past, and may believe that there are “right answers” for them to discover. Those are themes you can play on to drive interesting character interactions, but the discoveries that happen in game will mostly be about secrets and misunderstandings between the characters.

PRE-GAME NEGOTIATION

When you enter the breakout room with your partner, before you start play, spend a few minutes negotiating about play boundaries to ensure the comfort and safety of both players. Be sure to touch on these topics:

- Topics/themes either player wishes to “veil” or de-emphasize during play (if any).
- In addition, all player pairs should decide to what extent they with to engage with or “veil”:
    - current events of the past few years (in particular, the pandemic)
    - the sexual aspect of the characters’ relationship
- What general level of emotional intensity and tone players are comfortable with (for example, is it okay if the scene ends up dominated by negative emotions or the characters failing to understand each other, or should you steer towards a lighter tone?) Note: this is not intended to be a scene-planning conversation, just a check-in about general boundaries.
- Whether you want to use the Zoom text chat for out-of-character communications, including safety check-ins
- Any hard time constraints players have and how much leeway you want to give yourselves for end of game timing. (By default, you should aim for 90 minutes, with a little flexibility in both directions to let you reach a satisfying conclusion. However, there can be extra flexibility if both partners agree.)

SAFETY

Players are more important than game. Take care of yourself and your fellow player.

The door is always open; if you need to leave game for your comfort and safety, you may do so at any time. If you can, let the GMs know that you are leaving so that we don’t wonder whether you had a technical problem.

We will use a traffic-signal style system to allow players to check in with each other and calibrate play to each other’s comfort levels.

Use the “OK check-in” if you are concerned that the other player might be having a hard time and want to check in without stopping the flow of play.

- Hand signal: make an O with your fingers and hold it up so the other player can see it
- Zoom chat: type “O?” or “OK?”

There are three possible responses:

- Player is feeling OK and game can continue as-is
    - Hand signal: Thumb up
    - Zoom chat: “Yes”
- Player is feeling so-so or is not sure how they’re feeling
    - Hand signal: Thumb horizontal or flat hand
    - Zoom chat: “Eh”
- Player is not feeling OK
    - Hand signal: Thumb down
    - Zoom chat: “No”

If you receive a “so-so” or “not OK” response, pause game and ask the other player what they need. They may want to continue playing but back off on the intensity or steer away from a particular subject. They may need to take a break. Or there may be something going on that the two of you need to resolve as players in order to be comfortable continuing with game.

Players can also give calibration signals pre-emptively, for example:

- Show thumb up to signal to your partner that you the player are having a good time even though your character is upset
- Use the verbal signal “Largo” to indicate to the other player that they should keep playing but lower the intensity of what they’re doing
- Use the verbal signal “Cut” to tell the other player you need to stop game action to resolve a problem

It is also okay to break character and talk out of game if you need to resolve an issue or recalibrate.