



Game Design Document

Design by "Sonny" Eugene L. Moxley

DreamLIFE is an Interactive Fiction created in Inform 7 for "Z-machine" Interpreters.

This game is intended for Older Teens and Adults.

Rating: M (Mature 17)

Delivery Date: May 13, 2011

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Game Story

Having been shot, the character awakes to see a hospital room from a gurney. During an interview with a Police Officer, the character is filled with anxiety and experiences a *Code Blue* before reliving scenes of his life from early childhood to the present day. The player is then forced to make character revealing decisions and moral choices that affect and shape the progression of the following scenes. The doomed character is experiencing flashbacks from his life before dying, *unless* something in his life choices or past can save and extend the character's life. And there may be more than the character's own life at stake.

During the flashbacks the character befriends a bullied child, has a teenage romance with a young woman, and becomes a father to a newborn girl. Over the course of his life, the friendship could be abused or fostered, the woman jilted or loved, and the daughter neglected or cherished. But when the daughter has a brush with a dangerous Columbian gang it could have an impact on each of them.

As the character works to disentangle his daughter from the appetites and whims of the dangerous Verrugosa (the wart covered gang leader), he is shot in the abdomen and left for dead during a drive-by shooting in front of his home. It is at this point that the game began. As described above, he wakes in a hospital room having been operated on, only to suffer a heart attack when he remembers who shot him as he sees them enter his room. Are they coming back to finish the job? Is the shooter a gang member, Verrugosa himself? Don't worry; there is a way out no matter who pulled the trigger.

Game Play and creating the Playable Character

In DreamLIFE the playable character is not a super hero, he has no special abilities, no weapons. Instead he is a blank slate that the player must develop, a *Gumby* if you will. It is the player that gives him a name and makes his important life choices. These choices, starting from early childhood up to the present grave situation, are what make the character who he is.

By forcing choices that answer questions that might be found on a Myers-Briggs or a Big Five Inventory test, a character profile will be created and Gumby will be what the player wants him to be. This hidden personality testing in the scenes will shape the character's job, his environment and how he lives. But most important are the choices made involving the personal relationships of the character. These choices will affect how each of the other characters feel about Gumby, and that is the key to surviving the present conflict.

Most of the game play is linear and less like a traditional Interactive Fiction. The player will be able to investigate the objects and settings of each scene, but the story hinges more on the people and the choices made about the situation presented in each scene. The game play has four parts:

- **Growing Up** – The choices made during this part are what form the adult character.
- **Living Life** – This is how the adult character lives and treats the people in his life.
- **The Conflict** – This is the past week leading up to the shooting, and confronting the gang.
- **Here and Now** – This part shows the result of the "Life" lived and the conclusion of **The Conflict**.

Game Flow

For the game to work, the player's perceived threats need to be the Boss Enemy Verrugosa and his Columbian gang the Bushmasters. Going head-to-head with such a group would be impossible and even suicidal, but in order to save Gumby's daughter it appears that is what needs to be done.

In order to achieve this perceived threat, "White-Hispanic" tensions should be present in the background of the **Growing Up** part of the story. During the **Living Life** and **The Conflict** parts of the game the player will hear about despicable crimes and indignations perpetrated by the young gang members. While Verrugosa and the Bushmaster Gang are dangerous to those who come in contact with them, they have no bearing on whether Gumby lives or dies, or if the player wins or loses.

How to win: In order to survive and win the game the character must gain the *trust* and *love* of at least two of the Non-Playable Characters (NPCs) during their lifelong relationships. It is those NPCs that will save Gumby in the end. If the player chooses to alienate the people that Gumby is suppose to care for the most, he will die in the hospital bed. Therefore the game comes down to Gumby's relationships; specifically the feelings that the NPCs have towards Gumby, and how deep those feelings run in either direction.

Here are the variables and their possible states. Each *strike* or *stroke* that the player makes towards one of the characters will change the variable state for that NPC.

What feelings (variables) do the NPCs have towards Gumby?

- Trust or Distrust (the default is *Trust*)
- Love or Indifference or Hate (the default is *Indifference*)

Then take it this step further:

- If there is [*Distrust* and *Love*] is there?
 - Anger or Forgiveness (first pass default is *Forgiveness*)
- If there is [*Distrust* and *Hate*] is there?
 - Anger or Forgiveness (first pass default is *Anger*)

And finally how deep does the love go:

- If there is [*Trust* and *Love*] is there?
 - Dedication or Respect (first pass default is *Respect*)

Notes about the missing combination of choices:

- There would not be *Anger* or *Forgiveness* with *Indifference*.
- There would not be *Trust* where there is *Hate*.

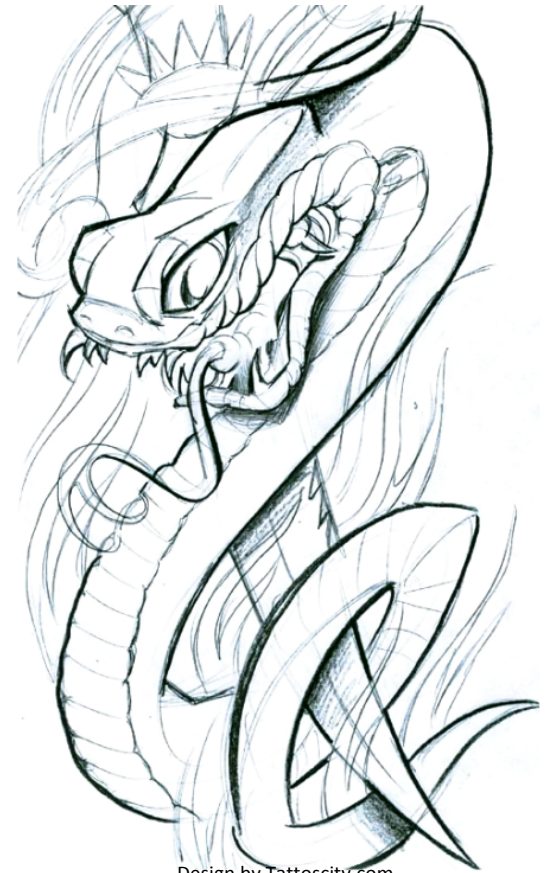
Also please note that variables will also be needed for the Myers Briggs personality tests.

Known Enemies and Bosses

Enemies

The Bushmasters are a Columbian based gang that has caught the attention of the public and law enforcement with several flamboyant murders, and are now known for injecting their victims with venom as a means of intimidation and execution. The gang's median age is 19 but ranges from age 9 to 35. They are known for selling marijuana, cocaine and meth from Columbia but are now suspected in kidnapping young children to be sold into kiddy-porn and prostitution rings in other parts of the country.

They are named for the South American Bushmaster snake (*Lachesis muta*), which is the largest pit viper in the world. Although shy when sought by professionals, it is a highly venomous and aggressive reptile that should be avoided at all costs. It can reach lengths up to 12 feet and has fangs up to two and a half inches long. It is related to a rattlesnake and similar in that it vibrates its tail when alarmed, but the Bushmaster has no rattle. This has led to one of its nicknames, "The Silent Fate." It has many other nicknames depending upon which region you are in, but in Columbia it is known as Verrugosa because its scales often resemble spiky warts.



Design by Tattocity.com.

Please note that this is intended to be a placeholder.

While only a few of the Bushmaster Gang members have successfully been caught and prosecuted, the Police and the Special Gang Task Force have not been able to bring down any of the sergeants or the gang's leader, Arnau Verrugosa.

Bosses

Arnau Verrugosa is the wart covered Boss Enemy who commands the small army of sadistic and violent thugs known as the Bushmasters. Arnau in Spanish means "Strong Warrior." Verrugosa is 31 and a Columbian by birth. He came to the US illegally but has forced one of his American minions to legally marry him for citizenship. He is very charismatic in a callous backhanded way, but ooh his temper. Verrugosa is not to be trifled with; you don't want to piss him off.

While Verrugosa did not go after Sevita, he certainly will defend what he believes is his for the taking.

Non-Player Characters

While the perceived enemies above are dauntingly scary, the actual enemy and threat to Gumby is someone he knows. Depending on how the player chooses to live the character's life, the shooter can either be Juan the childhood friend, Priya the former girlfriend/wife/ex-wife, Sevita the daughter (helped by Verrugosa) or Jade the want-to-be girlfriend/mistress, each having their own motive for the killing.

Here is a short profile to build on for each of the characters:

Juan is the little boy that is bullied on the playground. Gumby can choose to befriend or bully him also, but they become bound to each other because of the close proximity of where they live, and because their fathers become friends. Juan becomes infatuated with Jade and later obsessed with having her.

Priya is Gumby's first love. Her name means "Beloved" and her exotic looks make it easy for her to live up to that name. Her long dark wavy hair, large eyes and bright smile make it impossible for her to be missed when she enters a room. She has smooth, dark, beautiful skin, as well as an infectious enthusiasm for life. She is a joy to be around. Priya is a well-adjusted second generation American who is very comfortable in U.S. culture. Her mother was brought up with much of her parent's Indian roots and culture still intact.

Sevita is Priya's daughter, born when Priya was just 17. She grows to have her mother's good looks and optimism. Gumby may or may not be Sevita's father (depending upon the choices the player makes), but regardless Gumby loves her just the same and wants to do right by her. Named after her great grandmother, Sevita means "Cherished" and she very much is by both her mother and Gumby, at least at first. Sevita has the potential for great things, but she also can be collateral damage to a troubled relationship between Priya and Gumby. In that situation she could seek another kind of *extended* family to take care of her, one not quite so loving.

Jade is one of the little girls watching in the background of the playground scene; she is a year and a half younger than Gumby. She has grown into a very attractive woman with red hair, green eyes and freckles, lots of Irish in this one. You might say she is a fighter too; she certainly doesn't give up. She has been in love with Gumby her entire life. She has watched him from a distance as well as thrown herself at him, but as a teen he has barely noticed her eclipsed by Priya.

Platform Specific Features

Unlike a graphical based system, the text-based nature of Interactive Fiction (IF) lends itself to exploring a character's abstract actions—the act of choosing something over another, rather than shooting or swinging a weapon—and the intangible ideas or feelings created by the player, such as loves, likes and dislikes, biases or prejudices. Because of this, a great deal of time and energy is expected in the creation of a dictionary to interpret those intangible non-standard terms that this nontraditional IF might encounter.

Game World

The Game World setting is contemporary United States during the late 1970s through 2012. The hope is to include some detail or flavor of the current events and culture for the years profiled. As the game progresses the World hints at tensions between White suburbia and Hispanic immigration. Layered upon this is the influx of youth crime manifested as violent gangs. This however is not the focus of the story but merely the backdrop and the scenery that the characters of the game bump into and negotiate around.

Mechanics

The mechanics of the gameplay are based on the concept that the character is having a flashback of his life. He will jump from one environment and situation to another, where the player must gain important knowledge and then make life-changing decisions before advancing to the next disjointed scene. Much like a ping-pong ball in a drainpipe, being swept forward by the currents of information, and going in one direction or another when a T-connection is encounter and then into the next pipe.

Power-ups

Collectible items in DreamLIFE are elusive in that the bulk of the game is played in unconnected flashback settings that are linked to each other and the **Here and Now** only through memory. At the beginning and end of the game, the character is in a hospital bed having gone through emergency surgery and has almost no belongings. Personal possessions such as clothing, wallet and the everyday things one would have in ones pockets most likely would be present in a closet away from the character; it is possible that a wedding band might be worn. Family and friends could bring other items into the hospital room to comfort Gumby, possibly including a baseball from a game attended, pictures and get-well flowers.

These possessions might be proof of strong ties with other characters and could give Gumby hope when there is little, but would not necessarily make for meaningful "Power-ups." I could be persuaded to change my mind on this if feedback testing provides plausible reasons to make them so.

Main Gameplay Concepts

- During the introductory scene, the first **Here and Now**, the player is introduced to:
 - Our hero (or at least his good intentions)
 - The Boss Enemy, Verrugosa
 - The Princess in distress (Sevita)
 - And the dangerous nature of **The Conflict**
- From this the player should want to play in order to answer these questions:
 - Who is my character really and why has he been shot?
 - Will he ever get out of his hospital bed?
 - Who is Sevita and why does he feel compelled to help her?
- Personality traits, character attributes and moral fiber are tested and formed by the paths taken during each flashback scene, which then dictate what happens next.
- The character can be a saint or a sinner, but must make life choices wisely in order to survive.
- Explore interesting settings, character relationships and story lines that include multiple endings.
- Who pulled the trigger? Was it:
 - **Verrugosa** for your interference and impetuosity in seeking him out
 - **Priya** because you cheated on her
 - **Juan** for all the shit he has taken from you or that you took the girl he loves
 - **Sevita** as part of a gang initiation and because you were such an absentee father
 - Or **Jade** because if she could not have you, no one was going to have you

The Sequence of Play includes five parts (the last part being a continuation of the first), each with various scenes or situations. Below are some of the key scenes that must be played. This detail is not complete as some choices create paths less traveled and those may not be shown below. Also the story is still being developed and expected to change during the production of the game.

Here and Now

- **Hospital Room – 2012, age 37.** This scene shows the grave situation that the player finds the character in, but it poses more questions than the information it provides. The thing the character remembers is trying to help his daughter Sevita escape the clutches of Verrugosa and the Bushmaster Gang. This setting also sets up the flashback scenes that follow.

Growing Up

- **Preschool Playroom – 1978, age 3 ½.** Assesses likes and how Gumby plays with others.
- **Neighborhood Playground – 1981, age 6 ½.** Choices include joining or rejecting a group of bullies, befriending the targeted kid afterwards.
- **Power-Up Electronics – 1989, age 14.** This is a shoplifting peer pressure scene and bonding time with father.
- **Boy Meets Girl – 1991, age 16.** Priya and Gumby meet.
- **Losing It – 1993, age 18.** Priya and Gumby are making out hot and heavy. Do they go through with it?
- **“I’m Pregnant” – Two months later.**
- **Maternity Ward – April 1994, age 19.** While feeding the baby girl and looking at her little fingers and toes, a strong bond and connection is developed. Gumby sees a legacy and wants to make a difference in the girl’s life.
- **Funeral Home – 1995, almost 21.** Depression sets in over losing Gumby’s father.
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Living Life – This part consists of snapshots of various years during the character’s adult life. Each snapshot looks at the different aspects of his life such as his career, home and personal lives.

- **It is 1998, you are 23.** The economy is good. Life is good. You are making money and having fun.
- **It is 2005, you are 30.** The country is at war. Things could be better and turning thirty is a bit disturbing.
- **It is 2009, you are 34.** The economy has gone bust. Times are hard for most.
- **It is early 2011, you are 36.** Sevita is just 17 (the same age Priya became pregnant) and she has caught the attention of the gang.

The Conflict

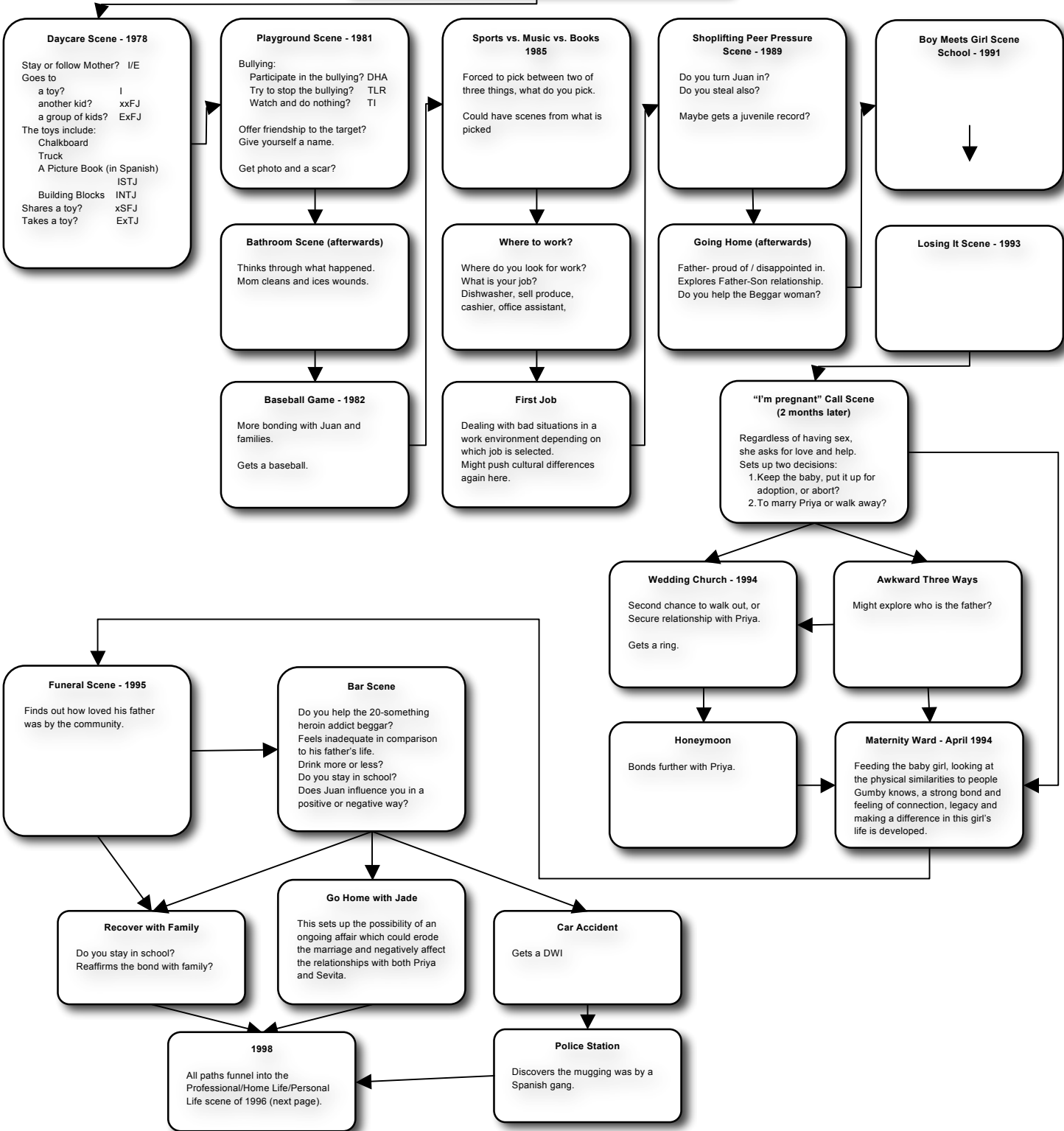
- **It is 2012, you are 37.** This is the beginning of the end game. This part would represent the occurrences of the final week leading up to your hospitalization and confronting the gang. Lots of work to do here.

Here and Now (again)

- **Hospital Room II** – You are revived from the heart attack, but before you become fully conscious you remember two things before having the episode and the flashbacks beginning:
 - 1.) Who it was that came into your room right before the pain started.
 - 2.) And ... who shot you!

Here and Now: The Hospital Scene – sets up the flashbacks of the character’s life.

Growing Up – is the rest of this page.



Living Life: The next four colorized blocks are snapshots of different scenes corresponding to that part of the character's life during the indicated year, be it professional, home or relaxation.

It is 1998, you are 23. The economy is good. Life is good. You are making money and having fun. Each column represents a different possible path for that aspect of the character life. The player would be placed in one scene (or cell) from each row of possibilities based upon their earlier choices.

<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p> <p>Just out of school. You work in a large corporation in middle management, ready to start climbing the ladder.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p> <p>You did not finish college but have a good job as ... The money and the benefits could be better but you are happy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p> <p>Married: You go to Sevita's dance recital as a family and enjoy</p> <p>NOT Married: Sevita: She is 4.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p> <p>Married: Priya is good but you have seen Jade on the side here and there and no one knows. NOT Married: Sevita: She is 4. You go to</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p> <p>Play in a Men's Softball League. Juan is in the league and you see him and his wife regularly, socially out and at home cookouts.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>

It is 2005, you are 30. The country is at war. Things could be better and turning thirty is a bit disturbing. Again one of each row would be picked as a scene, and each could have offshoot scenes.

<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Professional Life</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Life</p>

It is 2009, you are 34. The economy has gone bust. Times are hard for most.
Again one of each row would be picked as a scene, and each could have offshoot scenes.

Professional Life	Professional Life	Professional Life	Professional Life
Home Life	Home Life	Home Life	Home Life
Personal Life	Personal Life	Personal Life	Personal Life

It is early 2011, you are 36. Sevita is just 16 and has caught the attention of the gang.
Again one of each row would be picked as a scene, and each could have offshoot scenes.

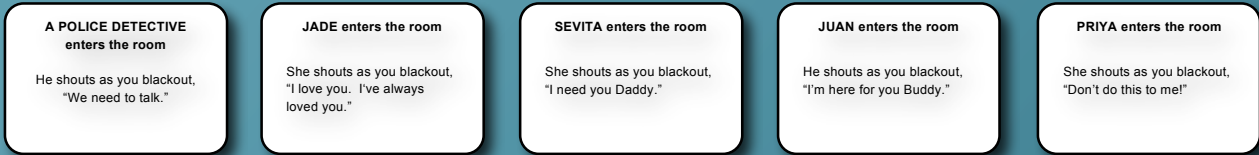
Professional Life	Professional Life	Professional Life	Professional Life
Home Life	Home Life	Home Life	Home Life
Personal Life	Personal Life	Personal Life	Personal Life

The Conflict: It is 2012, you are 37. This is the beginning of the end game.

This part would represent the occurrences of the final week leading up to Gumby's hospitalization.

Here and Now: The Hospital Scene II -- You are revived from the heart attack, but before you become fully conscious you remember two things before having the episode and the flashbacks beginning:

1.) Who it was that came into your room right before the pain started.



2.) And ... who shot you!

You wake up and they are sitting there waiting for you. They need to explain before continuing.

