

# JULIA'S LOST TREASURES

“YOU KNEW HER BETTER THAN MOST, WHICH IS TO SAY, YOU HARDLY KNEW HER AT ALL.”

*A free-form storytelling game by Tim Devine  
Inspired, in part, by Julia Sudakis "Auntie"*

This game is about piecing together the life of a person who helped shape yours. You will be playing as Julia's "Lost Ones". Though grown up now, you were all runaways as children, who drifted into her care. You've all lived in and out of Julia's home during different times of your life and she played an integral role in your becoming who you are today. In this game you will play as adults exploring Julia's treasures which may provide some clue as to what her life was like and who she really was.

**Players:** 2 to 6 playing the roles of Julia's "Lost Ones"

**Time:** 1 to 2 hours

**Environment:** Try to create a space that feels like an old attic. Dark, quiet and able to support silence.

**In Person Materials:** Each player needs a piece of blank paper and something to write with. You will also need flashlights, or something to simulate flashlights. A cardboard box, or something to represent Julia's chest. Three physical items per person to represent the items you will be removing from the chest. Optional: Name Tags & scissors.

**Online Materials:** If playing online, you will want to use webcams and a program that allows everyone to see everyone else. You will want to turn the lights off or low in the rooms. The computer screens will provide the effect of flashlights. You will each need one sheet of paper. Optional: A virtual table or shared presentation that can simulate the chest and physical items.

## FACILITATOR

One person will take on the role of the Facilitator, though they may also play as one of the Lost Ones. Certain sections of the game will need to be read aloud at specific times and they are marked with a **[F]**. If you are the facilitator, you will provide the prompts and follow the structure of the game. You will also be the keeper of the space, meaning that if anyone becomes uncomfortable, needs to be reminded of the safety tools or even be excused, you will be able to assist. It is not your job to control the experience for others, just to hold the space and guide the flow.

## SAFETY

**[F]** The goal of this game is to create a shared experience with others and it is important to create a safe space. In this regard, it is highly recommended that you and the others agree to a set of safety tools before the game begins. One such tool is the cut, break, and OK check-in mechanics. Anyone can say "cut" if they need the scene to stop immediately for emotional safety, or if somebody else is seen in distress. Say "break" to signal to people to de-escalate a scene so you can easily role-play your exit from it. Physical touch boundaries should be agreed upon before the start of the game.

**Content Warnings:** Death, adoption, runaways, childhood trauma, emotional trauma, family issues, loss

## JULIA

**[F]** You knew her better than most, which is to say, you hardly knew her at all. She was older, though no one knew how old. She was tall and strong, even for her age. She was evasive and extremely quick witted. She seemed harsh when you'd expect soft and soft when you'd expect harsh. She disliked delving into the past, talking about herself and holding onto keepsakes. She had no known relationships with anyone in the community and had groceries and services delivered, rather than venturing out. In fact, you have no clear memories of her leaving the house. Julia lived in a rundown old home, full of Lost Ones, as she called the young runaways who came into her care in various ways. She always seemed both omnipresent and distant. Each Lost One had a totally different relationship with Julia, though all would agree that there was something very secretive about her. Something she was hiding. Regardless, you all knew that she was there and that she had created a safe space for you in a time of need. You knew that without her, you may not have made it. Without her you would not be where you are and who you are today.

# CHARACTERS

[F] Julia gave nicknames to her Lost Ones. We will be selecting which character we will be playing as by passing around this paper. If you see one you want to play as, carefully fold and tear it from the page and then pass the page to the next person. If none of them call to you, or you choose to play with more than six, you may create your own using the following template.

## Character Template:

[NICKNAME], the \_\_\_\_ of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were \_\_\_\_\_. She always said you \_\_\_\_\_. Your time in the house was \_\_\_\_\_. Your relationship with Julia towards the end was \_\_\_\_\_. The last time you saw her \_\_\_\_\_.

**DODGER**, the oldest of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were ten or eleven years old. She always said you had an old soul and knew you were waiting to become an adult. Your time in the house was harder than most, as your seniority made your relationship with others more challenging at times and your need to escape into the world of adults caused you to run away for weeks on end. Your relationship with Julia towards the end wasn't good. The last time you saw her, you left without saying goodbye. As an adult, you've found happiness and actively help shape the lives of children.

**KOALA**, the caregiver of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were fourteen. She always said you should focus less on others and more on yourself. Your time in the house was mainly spent caring for the other Lost Ones. Chores, lists, schedules and meals all fell under your self-assigned responsibilities. Your relationship with Julia towards the end wasn't what you wished it was. The last time you saw her was when you hand delivered your wedding invitation, which she did not attend. As an adult you found a partner who cares for you as much as you cared for others and a career that lets you travel the world.

**MOZART**, the musical prodigy of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were eight years old. She always said you craved the spotlight too much and she rarely mentioned your musical gifts. Your time in the house was minimal, as you were always with instructors or at concerts. Julia was dismissive of your talents and you were never sure if she ever attended any of your concerts. The last time you saw her was when the cab picked you up and carried you off to pursue your formal musical education. As an adult, you've found fame and fortune in your craft, but never got the approval you needed from Julia.

**ROCKY**, the problem child of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were twelve. She always said you were trapped behind the wall you built. Your time in the house was sporadic, as you often left whenever times got tough. You always kept your distance from everyone. Your relationship with Julia towards the end was very difficult. You showed vulnerability and received the wrong response and then shut down. The last time you saw her, you revealed a secret about yourself and it did not go well. As an adult you've found a strong support group in a circle of friends as well as a passion that has turned into a career.

**WHIMSY**, the dreamer of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were nine years old. She always said you had been sent to the wrong world and time. Your time in the house was filled with reading and stories since Julia provided you with every fantasy novel and comic you could want. Your memories of your childhood are so intertwined with fiction that you can't separate them. Your relationship with Julia towards the end was good, though distant, as you began to pursue your new life as an author. The last time you saw her was somewhat recently, back at the house when you were retrieving a few books. You had a hard time finding it and she handed it to you and smiled. As an adult, you've found success and a healthy balance between the real and imaginary worlds.

**SQUIRREL**, the youngest of the Lost Ones. You came into Julia's care when you were eleven. She always said you were late to the party. Your time in the house was mostly spent being taken care of or "parented" by the other Lost Ones. You never saw much of Julia, though there were a few key moments in your life when you were dealing with some heavy identify stuff, that Julia was there for you. With little nudges, she helped guide you through and even revealed one secret about her own feelings about personal identity that you've never shared with anyone else. Your relationship with Julia towards the end wasn't what you hoped it would be. The last time you saw her was right before graduation. Since becoming an adult, you've had happiness and success.

# OPENING

[F] The last week has been... complicated for you. Since receiving the letter about Julia's passing, your mind began wandering back to that house. Julia's house. Fragmented memories from your childhood are returning, some forgotten with time and others through therapy, substance use or sheer will. Julia is gone... Impossible. She always seemed eternal, never aging or changing. As a child runaway she took you in. You became one of her Lost Ones. Her's was a safe space, though not always warm. You stayed as long as you needed and drifted back as needed. Julia was something different to everyone and she was a mystery.

You considered not attending the funeral, but finally decided to go. After the service you and a few other Lost Ones gathered back at the old house, so empty, so cold without her there. You were given a note by the attorney, and told to pick up an item that Julia left for you up in the attic, a place that had been off limits as a child. Now you all climb the creaking, folding ladder and climb into the dark, dusty attic. Using only your flashlights, you find a large chest and on it you see the word "Treasures."

Gathered in a circle around the chest, you lift the lid. Within you see many things, wrapped in cloth and old clothes. The objects you are about to reveal may give you some clue as to who Julia really was and what her life was really like. Some of you eager and some with hesitation, you all begin to pull items from the chest, unprepared for the treasures Julia had saved within.



# PART I: THE ATTIC

[F] We begin by preparing the Attic, the physical or virtual space we will be playing in. The box will be placed in the center of the space and physical items placed within. You will place three items per player into the box. You can use the prompts from the final page of this game, but any physical items will work, such as tokens, coins or cards.

**NOTE:** If playing virtually, you will simply imagine a box and the physical items placed within. Instead, each of you can place three physical items near you and as you pull one from the box, you can place it somewhere else to simulate removing it.

# PAGES

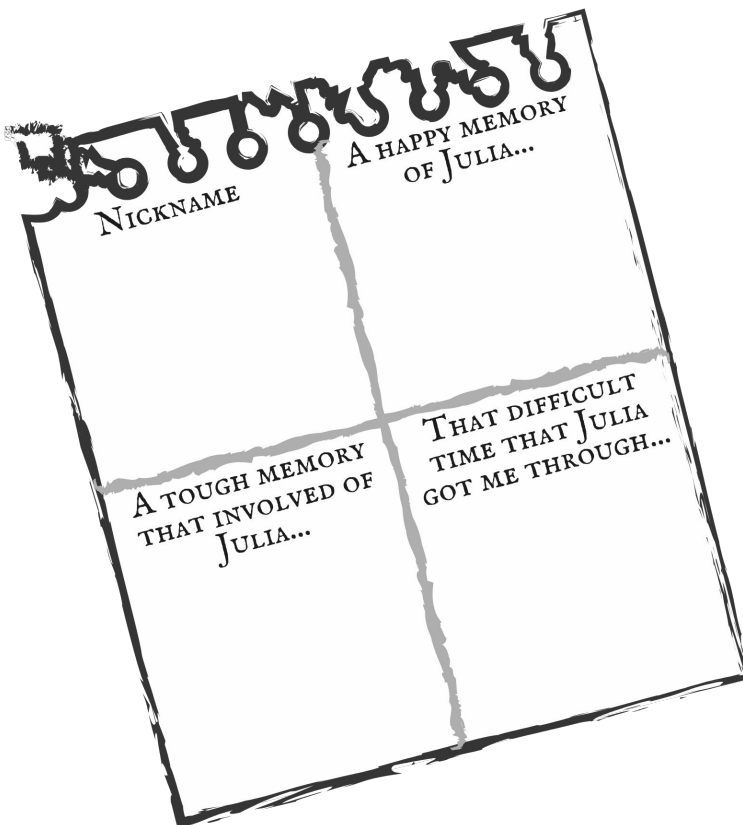
Figure out who will begin and in what order the turns will follow. We will now reflect for a few moments to get into the mind of who we will be playing as and what we know of Julia. Next, each of us will take a piece of paper and fold it into four equal sections. In each section, you will write something down, but leave space, as you may write more things in the spaces during the game. In the first section write your Lost One's nickname in the top-center, but leave the rest empty. In the other three sections write down the 3 prompts below, one in each section, leaving space to add more words during the game.

- A happy memory of Julia...
- A tough memory that involved of Julia ...
- That difficult time that Julia got me through...

**NOTE:** The paper you are using will need to be physically torn, however you may use scissors if you choose.

Once everyone is ready with who they will be playing, proceed to Part II.

Take a break first, if needed.



## PART II: THE CHEST

**[F]** Everyone is sitting in a circle around the dusty old chest and looking through the items within. Each of us will take turns pulling out and imagining an item that Julia might have kept from her past, then describe it to others. Then, starting with the person to their right, each other Lost One will ask something about the item and what it could reveal about Julia's secret life. These questions are not to be answered, they are rhetorical, more like observations in a questioning tone.

### Examples items:

*Photos, postcards, newspaper clippings, event tickets, yearbooks, plane tickets, keepsakes, trophies, awards, etc.*

### Example questions:

*"How young was she in this picture?" "I didn't know she was a rock climber!" "Is that a real Picasso?" "Julia won an Oscar?" "Who is that other woman with her arms around Julia?" "She was arrested?" "Holy crap! Is that Julia protesting?"*

**[F]** The Lost One who pulled the item originally will consider what's been said and look at their paper, choosing one of the three sections, other than the one with their nickname, and sit in silence for a minute. The others will respect that silence. They may write down a few words if they like and then share a memory from their time with Julia that fits a prompt in the chosen section. Do not give Julia a voice. These are told from the perspective of your Lost One while you describe it in your voice.

Once the memory is shared, physically tear the section from the paper and choose one of the following:

- Fold it and keep it.
- Fold it and give it to another Lost One.
- Tear it up and release it.
- Fold it and place it in the chest.



Continue this cycle until each Lost One has only their final section remaining. Then move to Part III.

## PART III: THE TRUTH

**[F]** Still sitting in the circle, we place the flashlight, or light source, into the center and spend a few minutes talking about Julia's life, who she was, and how it makes us all feel about our time growing up in her home. Consider how things may have been different if you had known some of these things about her. We will speculate about parts we still don't know. To do this we will take turns posing questions to prompt short discussions about her. Example questions could be "Why was she alone?" "Did she ever love?" "What made her collect Lost Ones?" "Why did she remain alone in this rundown old home the rest of her life?"

**After everyone has posed a question, the Facilitator will read the following:**

**[F]** As the conversation continues, someone notices something strange at the bottom of the chest. It's a book of some kind. As it is lifted you realize it is a scrapbook... A scrapbook of you. As the dust is brushed from the cover you see an engraving. It says... "My Lost Treasures."

The scrapbook has a page for each of you. A photo that you never knew she had acquired and some sentimental item you never thought she would have noticed, let alone found and saved in this way. While sitting in silence, each of us will reflect on the truths revealed about Julia's life and about the memories you just recalled. Then write a few words on your final section of paper. There was something unresolved between you and Julia. You never knew how she truly saw you and what you meant to her. You never really knew until now what she meant to you. Once you've written these words, fold your paper and wait until everyone has done the same. Finally, each of us will take a turn and, if you choose to, you may share this truth aloud. This is your choice.

## DEBRIEF

Take all the time you need before moving on from the final part. Once everyone is ready you can turn on the lights or remain in the space if you choose. If you are using name tags you can remove them. Go around and take turns saying your real name and sharing the name of a relative or someone from your past that this game made you think about. You can choose to share the memories of that person or simply say their name and who they were to you. **Take your time. Breathe. Reflect & respect.**

# ITEMS

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

From her childhood

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

A family portrait

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

Something adventurous

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

Someone was torn out of it

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

Of her with someone famous

**A PHOTOGRAPH...**

From her school years

**A POSTCARD**

From a trip she took

**A POSTCARD**

From someone overseas

**POSTCARD**

From a friend or romance

**AN OBJECT**

Something small yet sentimental

**AN OBJECT**

An award of some kind

**AN OBJECT**

From her childhood

**AN OBJECT**

Something very valuable

**AN OBJECT**

Something she made

**AN OBJECT**

Something you made

**PAPER**

A newspaper article of Julia

**PAPER**

Something you drew her

**PAPER**

Autograph of someone famous

**A LETTER**

From a possible romance

**A LETTER**

One she wrote but never sent

**A LETTER**

Revealing something shocking